



Jackson Pollock

American, 1912–1956

Blue Poles 1952

oil, enamel, aluminium paint with glass on canvas

212.9 × 489.0 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 1973

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6

INDUSTRY, AUDIENCES AND ISSUES

The art industry is not just about creating art. Artworks are also displayed, collected, discussed and debated. Audiences play an important role in the art industry.

The art industry is dynamic. It changes over time and is different in different cultures and societies. The social and cultural values and ideas of particular places and times influence how art is made, viewed, valued and interpreted. Different values and ideas about art can provoke controversy, which can stir heated debates about art.

Learn about:

- the working lives of artists
- the display of art
- art issues.

Learn by:

- exploring professional art practice, including artists' rights
- examining how and where artworks are displayed
- discussing and communicating ideas and opinions about art ideas and issues
- comparing, analysing, evaluating and interpreting artworks.

ART IN PRACTICE

6.1

ARTISTS AT WORK

Although the story of every artist's working life follows an individual pathway, many Australian artists start their careers by attending art school. In many Indigenous communities, local art centres play an important role in supporting the production and promotion of artists' work.

The Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body. Its role includes awarding grants, doing research and promoting Australian arts nationally and internationally.

The National Association for the Visual Arts is the national peak body for the visual and media arts, craft and design sector. Its website includes many videos of Australian artists, which provide insights into current artists' art practices.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about the Australia Council for the Arts and the National Association for the Visual Arts.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for an overview of facts about the art industry in Australia.

Art school

Today, most professional artists in Australia have attended art school before they begin their artistic careers. Most art schools are part of a university or other tertiary institution. Art schools offer a range of art courses, which are generally focused on particular artforms, such as painting, photography or new media.

At art school, students learn practical and creative skills by making art and by studying the work of other artists. Students also learn about other aspects of the art industry, such as exhibiting art. The lessons learnt at art school and the people artists meet during their studies have an important influence on an artist's work and career.

- 1 List three reasons why someone interested in working as an artist might attend art school even though formal qualifications are not necessary to become an artist.

Getting started

An artist's professional career usually begins when they start exhibiting their work. An emerging artist will often start with exhibitions at art school or artist-run galleries. Exhibitions are an important way for emerging artists to present their work to art audiences, including critics, **curators**, dealers, collectors and the public.

Getting recognised

Positive comments from **art critics** and invitations from dealers or curators to participate in exhibitions are important forms of recognition for most artists. Positive reviews of exhibitions can lead to more exhibition opportunities, increased audiences, **commissions** and opportunities to sell artwork. Having an artwork purchased by a public art gallery or included in a significant art publication is an important form of recognition for an artist.



Reilly Gaynor, student, Victorian College of the Arts

For love or money?

Artists identify passion and persistence as important factors to advance their careers. This is just as well because, despite their high levels of education, visual artists often struggle to earn a living from their creative work.

Some artists earn significant incomes from their art; however, most artists' incomes include money earned from work other than art-making. Often, extra income is from an art-related field, such as art teaching, but many artists work in other industries, such as hospitality. Even artists whose works are widely exhibited and highly regarded can sometimes struggle to make a living from their art alone.

One reason why earning a living from art can be difficult is that, while many people in Australia are interested in art and visit art galleries, the number of people who purchase art, especially contemporary art, is relatively small.

- 2 Imagine you are an artist. Which would you consider the most important form of recognition for your work: an art critic making positive comments, a collector or public gallery purchasing your work or something else? Why?

3 Why might people choose to become artists even though they are aware that their income might be limited?

Support for artists

A range of privately and publicly funded **grants**, awards, prizes and other opportunities are available to Australian artists.

One of the most famous art prizes in Australia, the Archibald Prize (pp. 218–19), is organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, but there are many others.

The Australia Council for the Arts provides the most significant publicly funded support for artists. It offers a range of grants, which artists can apply for to fund particular projects, and it has a number of overseas studios. Australian artists can apply for overseas studio residencies to visit, study or work overseas. Many artists have pursued new artistic directions as a result of living and working overseas.

Applying for grants, awards, prizes or studio residencies can be very time-consuming. It is also very competitive. In spite of this, the financial support, professional recognition and opportunities that these forms of support offer can have a significant and positive effect on an artist's work and career.

4 Why do you think individuals, organisations and governments might choose to support art and artists?

5 Suggest two ways that a grant, award, prize or residency at an overseas studio might influence an artist's work or career.

Indigenous communities

In many Indigenous communities, especially in central and northern Australia, art centres play a critical role in supporting artists.

Most art centres are community owned and operated, but they often employ art advisers or coordinators from outside the community to support the production, marketing, exhibition and distribution of art. The art centres are also important cultural and community hubs, and they provide a critical source of commercial income for communities.

6 Based on your understanding of Indigenous art and culture, suggest why art centres are valuable for supporting artists in Indigenous communities.

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be employed in visual arts and crafts occupations in their main job (52%) than non-Indigenous people (9.7%).'²²



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Aboriginal arts centres.

EXPLORE

Research the training and role of artists in another historical period or culture (such as mediaeval Europe, ancient China or South Pacific island communities).

Briefly outline the working life and training of artists in this culture or period. How does it compare with Australian artists today?



AAP Image/Dan Peled

Local artists learn about business practices at the Arlpwe Art & Culture Centre in the Aboriginal community of Ali Curung, 400 kilometres north of Alice Springs. The centre enables local artists to create and sell their work as well as run bush tucker tours for visitors.

6.2

WHERE WERE ALL THE WOMEN?

When you are studying the art of the past in books, online or in galleries, have you ever wondered why most of the artists are men?

When the British Royal Academy of Arts first admitted a female student, it was by mistake. Hopeful students had to submit a drawing of some part of the human body. In 1860, the examiners chose a drawing that was marked only with the initials LH. They were later shocked to find out that these initials stood for Laura Herford (1831–1870), who became the first female student at the academy.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Laura Herford and women's struggle for equality at the Royal Academy of Arts.

A struggle for education

In western culture in the past, it was not easy for women to train as artists. Women's lives were governed by social restrictions that made it difficult for them to become apprentices to experienced artists or to attend the art academies where most artists were educated from the middle of the seventeenth century. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that some of the important art academies accepted women students. This was a significant disadvantage for women because the art academies were very powerful. They set standards for art and were often responsible for presenting exhibitions and awarding prestigious prizes and **commissions**.

Most academies did not permit women to attend **life-drawing** classes until the late nineteenth century, making it difficult for

women to develop the skills required to make the large-scale figure compositions that were the most highly valued artworks at the time.

A battle for recognition

While women were generally not encouraged to pursue a serious career in art, by the late nineteenth century, many well-off women studied and pursued art as a hobby. Their creative efforts focused on subjects and artforms that were readily accessible to them, including domestic scenes, flowers or miniature portraits. Many women developed extraordinary skills working with crafts such as embroidery. These subjects and artforms, however, were not recognised or valued in the same way as the more 'serious' subjects and artforms, such as large-scale figure paintings.

Despite significant obstacles, there have always been female artists who have worked with the same subjects and artforms as men; however, often, because of their gender, the work of these artists was not taken as seriously as that of their male colleagues. It was also less likely to be purchased for public collections and less likely to be recorded in the history books. **Feminism** has played an important role in focusing attention on these issues and ensuring that **art history** includes women.

- 1 Suggest why artforms such as flower painting and embroidery were not as highly valued as the large-scale figure paintings made by many male artists.
- 2 Do you think that there are artforms or subjects that are more highly valued than others in art today? Explain.



Frederick McCubbin surrounded by his students at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1893. Although a high percentage of the students shown here are female, women were not taken seriously and very few of these women went on to pursue careers as professional artists.

Jane Sutherland

Australian artist **Jane Sutherland** (1855–1928), who attended the National Gallery Art School in Melbourne, was a colleague of the **Australian Impressionist** artists (pp. 124–25). Like these artists, Sutherland was interested in working **en plein air** to capture an impression of the light and colour of the landscape, as seen in *Field Naturalists*. During the 1880s, Sutherland made daytrips to the artists' camps on the outskirts of the city, but it was not socially acceptable for women to stay. It would also have been a challenge to social convention for a female artist to travel further into rural Australia looking for 'typically' Australian subjects as Tom Roberts did when he painted *Shearing the Rams* (p. 150).

Sutherland was actively involved in her profession and well respected. She was the first woman to be elected to the Victorian Artists Society and one of the first women in the Melbourne Buonarotti Club (a society for promoting the arts).

Like many successful female artists, Sutherland had encouragement and support from her family, including some financial support, which allowed her to pursue her career. She devoted herself to her career and never married or had children.

Sutherland's work was not well known or highly valued compared with the work of her male colleagues. The highest price she ever asked for a painting was £21, in 1903. At the same time, some of the male artists she worked with were asking up to £210 for a painting.

Two of Sutherland's paintings were donated to the National Gallery of Victoria, one in 1962 and the other in 1972, but her paintings were not purchased by public galleries until the 1970s.

- 3 What impression of the Australian landscape has Sutherland created in *Field Naturalists*? Describe the scene, the atmosphere and how the artist has used paint and art elements to convey this information.
- 4 How might Sutherland or other female artists of her time have been disadvantaged by not being able to spend more time at the artists' camps or travel into rural Australia looking for 'typically' Australian subjects?



Jane Sutherland
born United States 1855, arrived Australia 1864, died 1928
Field Naturalists, c. 1896
oil on canvas
80.9 × 121.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs EH Shackell, 1962 (1062–5)

Feminism forward

Since the 1970s, feminism has had a significant influence on the visual arts. **Art history** has recognised the contribution of artists such as Sutherland, and many artists have addressed issues related to feminism in their work (pp. 128–9, 175). Women today play an equal and significant role in all aspects of the art world, and they do not face the same discrimination as their predecessors. Despite this, research reveals that women still face some disadvantages, and they earn less than male artists despite spending similar amounts of time on their creative practice.

DISCUSS

Does the work of female artists have a distinctive feminine quality in its subject matter or style?

Do you believe the work of female artists is different from that of male artists?

Why do some critics believe that the perceived differences between the art of male and female artists are artificial, and that to emphasise them will once again marginalise and disadvantage women?

Give evidence for your answers based on your observation of a range of artworks.

6.3

MEET JON CAMPBELL

Jon Campbell (b. 1961) was born in Northern Ireland and arrived in Australia in 1964. He studied art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (1980–82) before undertaking further studies in painting at the Victorian College of the Arts (1984–85). His work is represented in major public and private collections, and it combines images and text from Australian popular culture with the visual language of modern abstraction.

The tertiary orientation program was an alternative to conventional Year 11 and 12 study programs. It has since developed into a TAFE course.

Undergraduate studies are tertiary courses that result in a degree or diploma. Postgraduate studies are higher level tertiary courses undertaken following undergraduate studies.

Gertrude Contemporary, formerly 200 Gertrude Street, is a non-profit contemporary art complex of gallery spaces and studio facilities in Melbourne that provides professional support to artists.

What inspired you to become an artist?

Art and sport were my two main things at high school. There were not enough students at my high school to continue art, so I went and did a tertiary orientation program year. That is when I got more heavily involved in art. There was a lot of practical work, leading to getting a folio together and going on to art school; however, it was not really until I was in my second year of art school, when I started going to exhibitions and I had a bit more to do with artists who were lecturing me, that I got more of an idea of how artists lived, what they did and how they survived. Then, I thought, 'I could do this'.

What did you learn from your art studies?

In my undergraduate studies, there was a lot about materials and how to put things together. When I did postgraduate studies, there was a lot of discussion about what to make art about and the context for this, such as how your subject matter fitted into contemporary culture.

How did you begin exhibiting your work?

My first exhibition was a public three-person exhibition at the Victorian College of the Arts at the end of my postgraduate studies. A lot of people saw the show, and it created a bit of interest in my work. I sold a big painting to the National Gallery of Victoria from this show.



Jon Campbell
Australian, b. 1961
'Yeah' Flag, 2005
bunting, polycotton
90 × 180 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney



Photo: Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne

Jon Campbell
Australian, b. 1961
Dream Team, 2012
enamel paint on plywood
22 paintings, installation (variable) 300 × 300 cm
Basil Sellers Art Prize 2012 winner
Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

I was aware of places like 200 Gertrude Street. I ended up getting a studio there in the first year out of art school and had my next exhibition there.

Then there was a group show at Melbourne University, and other things started to come up. A few curators showed interest in the work, and I had my first show with a commercial gallery.

I had a job hanging the exhibitions at the commercial gallery before I got taken on as an artist there, and I also did the same job at Melbourne University. I was up for all opportunities, trying to immerse myself in the art world. No-one came knocking on the door and said, 'You're a great artist; we want to show your work.' It was being around on the scene that led to opportunities.

How have travel opportunities and grants affected your work?

Going overseas was an opportunity to see how other artists work. Travel allows you to think closely about what you do as an artist in the context of both contemporary Australian culture and contemporary art culture around the world.

The development grants have been very helpful with the development of work. They have allowed me to make some large-scale works and to take my work into new media that would otherwise have been cost-prohibitive.

How has your work developed over time?

Personal experiences and popular culture have been consistently important in my work, but I have found different ways of using and presenting them.

Text has become quite prominent. I use words that come from everyday conversation, or words that are particular to the Australian vernacular (slang) and little sayings or stories about a particular time or place. Using words opened up some of the ideas in the figurative paintings and has helped keep the work interesting.

How have the materials and presentation of the work changed?

I still paint on a range of surfaces like plywood, masonite and canvas, but found objects have also come into the work. I have painted over old record covers and used perspex cut-outs for words and figures.

The installation of the work has also changed. In the past, it might have been a painting hung on each wall. These days, there may be a couple of paintings leaning up against the wall, an image painted on the wall and some things hung on top of that or on the floor. I have also made flags and banners that have been presented as public artworks to engage people as they go about their daily routines.

I have thought a lot more about what you actually do as an artist – about the best medium to explore a particular idea and how work can be presented in different ways, in different venues, to reach different audiences.

Tell us about your ongoing work with 'yeah'.

'Yeah' can mean a lot of things. It is conversational and has a positive vibe to it.

I had been using 'yeah' in drawings and paintings. Then, I was invited to submit a design for a flag for an exhibition in New Zealand, and I thought 'yeah' would look great on a flag.

The *'Yeah' Flag* has been flown and displayed in many different contexts. It is exciting to see how the flag has taken on a life of its own and asserted itself in contemporary culture.

What inspired *Dream Team*?

The 22 paintings in this installation each feature the nickname of a past or present Australian Rules football player. Part of our history is making up great nicknames. Australians are legends at it.

- 1 Identify two factors that you believe have influenced Campbell's work and success as an artist. Explain your choices.
- 2 Compare *We Wanna Be Free* (p. 137) with Campbell's more recent work. What similarities and differences can you find in the subject matter, materials, techniques and ideas?

In 2012, Jon Campbell won the prestigious Basil Sellers Art Prize with *Dream Team*. The Basil Sellers Art Prize was established in 2008 and is awarded every two years. It was established by philanthropist and sports fan Basil Sellers to bridge the gap between art and sport in Australian society.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to watch a video of Campbell speaking about his winning entry in the Basil Sellers Art Prize 2012 and to learn more about the prize itself.

See other artworks by Campbell on pp. 137 and 199.

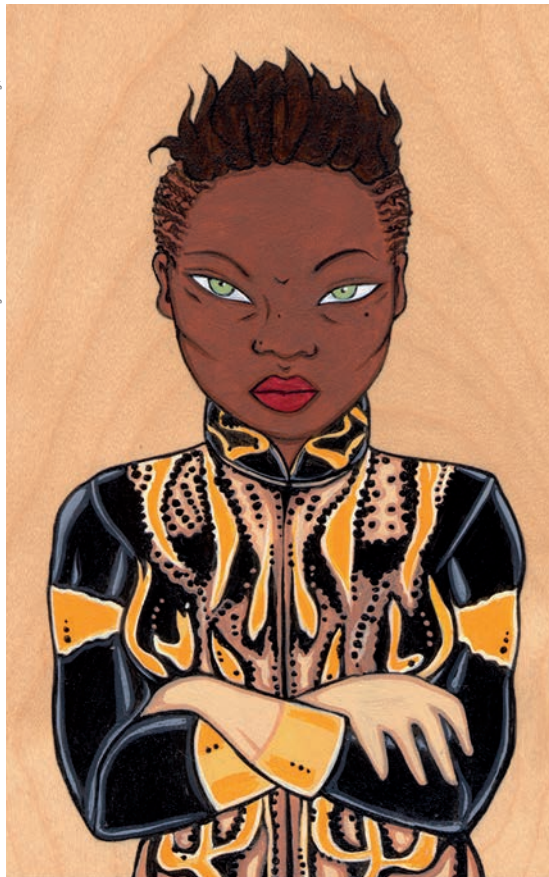
6.4

MEET KATE BEYNON

Kate Beynon (b. 1970) was born in Hong Kong and arrived in Australia in 1974. She studied art at the Victorian College of the Arts (1991–93). Her work is in major public and private collections, and it explores issues of cultural identity in a globalised world.



Kate Beynon in her studio



Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see other work by Beynon and a short lecture by Beynon providing an overview of her work since the 1990s.

Kate Beynon
Australian, b. 1970
Harlem Li Ji, 2004 (detail)
acrylic on maple wood
14.5 × 14.5 cm
Private collection

What inspired you to become an artist?

I have loved drawing since I was about four years old, and art was my favourite subject at school. As a child, I was always making crafty things: clay models, dolls, and arts and crafts projects.

My grandmother taught me how to use a sewing machine, and my mother would help me to sew dolls, soft toys and their clothes. When I was about 15, I did work experience with a fashion designer, and my interest in sewing and textiles really influenced some of my early work.

My grandfather's artwork, his traditional Chinese paintings and calligraphy, is another really important influence. I also loved the designs and symbols found on many of the artworks and furniture my parents had in the house when I was growing up.

What study did you undertake to become an artist?

After Year 12, I applied to the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), but I was unsuccessful. I started a bachelor of arts at university and took night classes in life-drawing and painting because I really wanted to go to art school. In 1990, I left university and did one year of the advanced certificate of art and design, studying a wide variety of media and techniques, as well as art history, contemporary art and film studies. That year was fantastic – to study so many areas of art in an inspiring environment and be taught by renowned artists, including the late Howard Arkley (pp. 12–13, 134–5). I then reapplied for VCA Painting with my folio and was accepted.

How and where did you begin exhibiting?

During my second year at VCA, I had a solo exhibition, which was a great experience. I sold quite a few works, although some were bargains at just \$25!

After graduating, I became involved in an artist-run space, 1st Floor, where I had a solo exhibition in 1994. Being part of the artist-run space was a positive experience

and allowed me the freedom to exhibit challenging and experimental work.

In 1996, I had my first solo exhibition at a commercial gallery, Sutton Gallery in Fitzroy, where I exhibited *Li Ji (Li Ji)* (p. 26), an installation made entirely from chenille sticks.

Tell us something about your use of different media.

At art school, I became antipainting and consciously used traditionally feminine craft materials.

From about 1998, I started to use ink markers and aerosol enamel on paper, influenced by comic-book graphics and graffiti lettering. I was then inspired to make a 2D animated video, for which I applied for and received an Arts Victoria Women's Art Award grant. This project became *Li Ji Warrior Girl* (p. 60), a 14-minute video.

After working on the computer for months, I had the urge to return to painting. Mike (husband and artistic collaborator Michael Pablo) and I had been experimenting with making and spraying stencils directly onto walls, paper and other surfaces. In 2001, I started painting on canvas in acrylic and aerosol enamel.

How have the grants and overseas residencies influenced your work?

The 1999 grant allowed me time to focus and develop my work into an animation. My son, Rali, was born that year, so it relieved some of the financial pressures of being an artist with a family to support.

Before receiving the Australia Council for the Arts grant for the self-organised residency in Harlem, I had unsuccessfully applied three times for the PS1 studio in New York. The street life, culture and night-life of Harlem, New York's famous melting pot, was so inspiring for my work. I saw a fantastic range of exhibitions at galleries and museums.

In Harlem, I made small paintings on canvas and maple wood panels, which became part of a series of works for an exhibition I had at Sutton Gallery on returning to Melbourne, titled *From Harlem to Noco: The Hybrid Life of Li Ji* (2004).

The character Li Ji has been an important part of your work since the mid-1990s. Why does she continue to be important?

I was intrigued by the story of a girl who pretends to sacrifice herself to the giant

python but instead takes a sword and a dog and slays the beast to save the girls in her village. I also wondered about the fairy-tale ending of her becoming queen.

Li Ji represents a major part of my work. I have adapted her from ancient warrior girl to other lives and used her to explore issues important to me, such as cultural identity, family, history and belonging. She is a female warrior spirit who promotes strength and positive energy in today's crazy world.

Tell us something about *Harlem Li Ji*.

Harlem Li Ji was inspired by a young woman I saw walking with her son near our apartment in Harlem. She had a braided mohawk hairstyle, and I thought she represented a fierce street style. In the painting, the figure wears a futuristic body suit based on beetle patterns that remind me of batik material, which my grandmother had given me from Malaysia, as well as the striking and colourful African batik that some ladies wear in Harlem.

What do you enjoy most about being an artist?

I love creating art and expressing ideas, and I especially love painting. I like having an unconventional lifestyle and flexible hours so I can spend time with my son and family.

I stay up very late many nights to work towards deadlines for projects, proposals and exhibitions. Although it can be very stressful, I really enjoy creating a series of works for solo exhibitions. It is also great to be included in group exhibitions, to meet other artists and to experience their work.

I have been fortunate to have my income increase from sales of my work, but it can be sporadic. Applying for grants takes a lot of time and motivation, but it has been worth it to fund projects, exhibitions or travel.

I am really happy to have dedicated my time to what I have always wanted to do and love doing.

- 1 Identify two factors that might have influenced Beynon's success and development as an artist. Explain your choices.
- 2 Explain how Beynon has used Li Ji in her work to explore a range of ideas and interests.

1st Floor Artists & Writers Space was an artist-run space that operated in Melbourne between 1994 and 2002. Along with several other contemporary artist-run spaces, including Store 5 and Art Projects, it made a significant contribution to the Melbourne contemporary art scene and played an important role in the career of many artists, including Beynon.

PS1 is a contemporary art space and institution associated with The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The dog figure that appears in Beynon's works is a guardian spirit that represents companionship and protection.

In 2015, Beynon's large-format colour hardback book *An-Li: A Chinese Ghost Tale*, based on a retelling of a supernatural Chinese story, was published by Art & Australia. The publication coincided with Beynon's solo exhibition of the same name of paintings, watercolours, suspended sculptural installation and multi-channel animated video work at the TarraWarra Museum of Art.

Beynon has been a finalist in many art awards, including the Archibald Prize, Sir John Sulman Prize, Doug Moran National Portrait Prize, Portia Geach Memorial Award, The Gold Award and the National Works on Paper award.

6.5

PLACES AND SPACES FOR ART

Art can be found displayed in many different places and spaces.

Did you know that more people visit galleries than attend Australian Rules football games?



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for further information about participation in the arts.

The term 'art museum' is used to describe an organisation that collects and displays art. In Australia, such institutions are often also referred to as galleries.

The first public galleries were established in Europe in the eighteenth century. Before then, artworks were collected by the nobility and religious institutions and were mainly made on commission.

Galleries

Art galleries are places devoted to displaying artworks, but not all galleries are the same.

Public art galleries

Would you like to own a fabulous piece of contemporary art or perhaps some ancient Chinese ceramics? You (and the rest of the Australian public) already do!

Collecting art is an important role for most **public galleries**. The major state galleries have large collections that include artworks from many cultures and historical periods. Apart from exhibiting artworks from their own collections, public galleries often present temporary exhibitions of local and international artworks borrowed from other galleries, collectors or artists.

Public galleries take special care to preserve the artworks they collect and exhibit. This is known as conservation. Public galleries are also actively involved in researching art and presenting programs, including talks and workshops, to encourage participation in the arts.

As well as the large state galleries, Australia has many smaller galleries managed by local councils or universities.

Public galleries are partly funded by public money; however, they cover a significant proportion of their costs by other means, including sponsorship.

DISCUSS

Is it important that we have public galleries in our community? Why?

Should funding art galleries be an important government priority? Why?

Most Australian public art galleries are free to visit. Is that important? Why?

Commercial art galleries

Commercial art galleries are privately owned and operated, and they usually represent a number of artists whose works they promote, exhibit and sell. Exhibitions change regularly and are open to the public.

Exhibitions at commercial galleries generally feature the most recent work of an artist. Being represented by a commercial gallery is often the most effective way for an artist to promote, exhibit and sell their artwork. Artists pay the gallery a fee: usually a percentage of the money earned from sales of their artwork.

Artist-run galleries

Artists sometimes form a group and set up an art gallery to provide exhibition opportunities for themselves and others.

Artist-run galleries are organised in many different ways. Artists are usually selected to present an exhibition based on a proposal. Artists pay a fee for using the gallery space and manage their own exhibition organisation.

Artist-run galleries provide artists who are not represented by a commercial gallery with valuable opportunities to exhibit and sell their work. Both emerging artists as well as established artists, who for various reasons might not want to be involved with a commercial gallery, exhibit work at artist-run galleries.



The National Gallery of Victoria, founded in 1861, is Australia's oldest public gallery.

Beyond the gallery

Artworks can be seen in many places other than in art galleries – from private homes to public spaces.

Many towns and cities have public art. In the past, it was common for important community leaders or local events to be commemorated by a public artwork. Monumental sculptures or **murals** were the most common forms of public art.

Public art continues to be important; however, contemporary public artworks can take many forms, and they are not always permanent. Consider, for example, **Jon Campbell's** *Yeah Yeah Yeah Billboard* in Altona, which was commissioned by the local council in 2009 following the popular success of the artist's *'Yeah' Flag* (p. 194). Seeing such artworks does not require a visit to a gallery; audiences pass them as they go about their daily lives. They provide a point of wonder and interest in the environment.

Many contemporary artists choose to display their art in locations other than galleries. Sometimes they do this because of the meaning a location can add to an artwork, for example, when **Patricia Piccinini** exhibited *SO2* at the Melbourne Zoo (pp. 166–7).

Some artists create site-specific art for particular environments. *Arches* by **Andy Goldsworthy** (p. 56) is one of a collection of significant sculptural works, most of which have been commissioned, on a privately owned farm in a spectacular landscape north of Auckland, New Zealand. The farm is open to the public by appointment on a limited number of days each year.

Courtesy Hobsons Bay City Council.
Photo: Tania Blackwell



Jon Campbell
Australian, b. 1961
Yeah Yeah Yeah Billboard, 2009
Koroit Creek Road, Altona
Commissioned by Hobsons Bay City Council

- 1 Identify a public gallery in Australia that you would like to visit. Look at the gallery's website. What would you most like to see there and why?
- 2 Suggest two reasons why a commercial gallery would be an effective way for an artist to promote, exhibit and sell their artworks.
- 3 Name a place where you have seen original artworks displayed, other than in an art gallery. Briefly describe the type of artwork, and how and why it was displayed in this location.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn about some interesting international non-gallery art sites.



Andy Goldsworthy
English, b. 1956
Arches, 2005
pink leadhill sandstone blocks stacked into 11 freestanding arches
each arch, 7 m long; each block, 1.4 m²
Gibbs Farm, New Zealand

Photo: David Hartley-Mitchell, © 2016 Gibbs Farm

EXPLORE

Choose a contemporary artist who interests you from those discussed in this book. Find out at least two different places where this artist's works have been exhibited. Find out two things about each location.

The artwork caption will give you hints about where to start your research. Look online to find other galleries or exhibitions the artist has had work displayed in.

EXPLORE

Find an interesting place, outside a gallery, where one or more artworks are displayed. Prepare a short presentation about the place and the artwork(s) displayed there, and explain how you think the place in which it is displayed adds to the artwork.

Once everyone in the class has presented their findings, vote on the most interesting display.

ON EXHIBITIONS

Artworks are frequently displayed in exhibitions. Exhibitions are permanent or temporary displays of one or more artworks. Exhibitions can be found in dedicated art spaces, such as galleries, and in many unexpected places.

A **biennale** is an exhibition held every two years. A **triennial** exhibition is held every three years. Some international biennales and triennial exhibitions are significant events in the contemporary art world, such as the famous Venice Biennale, first held in 1895.

The Biennale of Sydney and the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane are important contemporary art exhibitions that attract large audiences. These exhibitions present innovative Australian and international contemporary art.

Many famous exhibitions mark significant turning points in artistic and cultural history.

Internationally, these include the Salon des Refusés, Paris, 1863; the International Exhibition of Modern Art, also known as the Armory Show, New York, 1913; the Degenerate Art Exhibition, Munich, 1937; and Sensation, London, 1997, and later in New York and Berlin.

Locally significant exhibitions include the 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition, Melbourne, 1889 (p. 207), and The Field, Melbourne, 1968.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to watch a time-lapse video of the installation of the salon-style display at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Exhibitions about ...

Exhibitions are rarely a purely random selection or arrangement of artworks. Artworks are usually carefully selected and grouped. Often, a **curator** is responsible for developing and researching the idea for an exhibition and selecting and arranging the artworks.

Many exhibitions are curated to focus on one or more of the following:

- an artist
Such exhibitions focus on artworks by one artist. Often, the focus is the artist's most recent work, but a **retrospective** exhibition includes artworks from throughout an artist's career.
- a time or place
Some exhibitions focus on artworks from a particular culture or period in history.
- a style
Some exhibitions display artworks that are related in style. Such artworks are often by artists who have worked closely together, perhaps in a group or as part of an **art movement**.
- an artform, media or technique
Some exhibitions bring together artworks made with similar media or techniques.
- a subject or theme
Some exhibitions focus on artworks that share the same subject matter, such as portraits, landscapes or war.
- ideas or questions
Many exhibitions explore ideas or questions through art. Examples of such themes may include the role of pattern and decoration in art, how national identity is expressed in art and the links between art and science.

The National Gallery of Victoria displays some of its nineteenth-century art in a salon-style hang.

The art of display

How people see and understand any artwork is influenced by how it is displayed. An artwork's appearance can be enhanced by careful placement, lighting and colour (such as coloured walls). The relationships between artworks in an exhibition are also important because they help make connections between artworks and the themes or ideas that are the focus of the exhibition.

In large art organisations, curators often work with a team of people, including designers, to display artworks. The design of an exhibition – including the structure of the space, the arrangement of artworks in the space, colour, lighting and furniture – can be an important influence on how an audience experiences and understands an exhibition.

The display of nineteenth-century European art at the National Gallery of Victoria includes a salon-style room. In this space, paintings are presented in a dense display that is inspired by how art was presented in the famous Paris Salon exhibitions (1748–1890) and at the Royal Academy of Arts exhibitions in London during the same period.

The Aboriginal Memorial in the National Gallery of Australia is made up of 200 hollow log coffins, which were made by Yolngu artists from central Arnhem Land (pp. 22–3). The work is a memorial to all the Aboriginal



National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

people who have lost their lives defending their land. It was inspired by the Australian Bicentenary in 1988, which marked 200 years of European settlement.

The meandering path that visitors follow through the display was inspired by Arnhem Land's Glyde River, which links the saltwater people of the coast with the freshwater people inland. The different clans' distinctive traditional designs are evident in the designs on the coffins. Each clan's artwork is grouped and positioned along the pathway to show the location of their country along the river and its tributaries.



Ramingining artists
Ramingining, Northern Territory, Australia
The Aboriginal Memorial, 1987–88
natural earth pigments on hollow logs
327 cm (height) (irregular)
Purchased with the assistance of funds from National Gallery of Australia admission charges and commissioned in 1987
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



The Glyde River, central Arnhem Land

During the 1960s and 1970s, the 'white cube' or white-walled gallery became a common convention for displaying **modern art**, and the convention continues to influence the display of contemporary art. Today, however, the diversity and complexity of contemporary artwork mean that it often incorporates elements that need to be presented in a certain way. Artworks may include technology and time-based components (such as sound, video or performance) or **interactive** elements.

Infinity Mirrored Room – The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away by **Yayoi Kusama** is one such complex artwork. It is a mirror-lined chamber that uses LED lights to create an immersive and dazzling display.

Sophisticated design – including multimedia elements and immersive environments – are increasingly being used by galleries.

- 1 Imagine you have unlimited access to any artwork in the world and can curate your own dream exhibition.
 - Decide the focus and title of your exhibition.



Yayoi Kusama
Japanese, b. 1929
Infinity Mirrored Room – The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away, 2013
installation, mixed media
287.4 × 415.0 × 415.0 cm
© Yayoi Kusama
Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore, David Zwirner, New York

- List the details (artist, title, date, collection) of at least six artworks you would like to include in your exhibition.
 - Briefly explain why you have included each artwork in the exhibition.
 - Note ideas about how you will design your exhibition and display the artworks.
- 2 Explore tools for digitally curating exhibitions and create an online exhibition. Present your online exhibition to your class and explain the advantages and disadvantages of the digital curation tool.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for information about the Aboriginal Memorial on the National Gallery of Australia's website.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to watch a video of this artwork by Kusama.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to find several digital curating tools that will allow you to create your own gallery.

IS IT THE REAL THING?

Looking at and learning about art usually involves studying both original artworks and copies. What is the difference between an original and a copy?

Originals and multi-originals

When an artist makes an artwork, it is an original. Just like every live performance, original artworks are unique.

Most artworks are made in such a way that it is only possible to make one original; however, some techniques produce more than one original work. A sculptor can make a **mould** and use it several times to create a set of identical sculptures. Each sculpture is still an original because it is cast from the artist's mould. Photography, video and most printmaking techniques are among other artforms that also produce multiple originals.

When an artist makes a set of multiple original artworks, they are known as an **edition** (p. 37). An edition includes a limited number of originals, and each original artwork is usually numbered and signed by the artist.

A world of reproductions

Reproductions are copies of artworks. They are usually made by photographing original artworks. Looking at a photographic reproduction of an artwork is a bit like seeing a photograph of someone you know instead of seeing them in real life – it is not the same as the real thing. Reproductions can vary significantly in quality and do not always accurately capture the colour, size, detail, texture and form of an artwork.

Although it is ideal to see the real thing, this is not always possible. Reproductions online and in print give you access to an amazing array of artworks around the world. Contemporary technology, including the zoom tools available for some online images, also allow you to see details of artworks that are often not easy to see in real life.

Copyright laws govern the reproduction of artworks (p. 204), but some copyright holders and galleries provide generous access to images for reproduction. The famous Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has made high-resolution images of 200 000 artworks in its collection available online for personal and creative use through Rijkstudio. Rijksmuseum works are now widely collected and shared online and have inspired many creative projects and designs on objects as varied as cars, motor scooters, phone covers, clothing and crockery.

Reproductions of artworks on posters, postcards and books are often called prints. Although the word is the same, these mass-produced prints are quite different from the original prints produced by artists.

The Rijksmuseum now awards an annual prize for the best design inspired by its collection.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to the Rijkstudio and to images and videos of the Rijkstudio Award finalists.



Create a design for an everyday object inspired by an artwork. Your design could incorporate a reproduction of the artwork, or it could be inspired more generally by the colour, the shape or a detail of the work. Think about how the features of the artwork can be used to create a visually pleasing design. You could research works created on Rijkstudio for inspiration.

Jacob Marrel
German, 1614–1681
Two Tulips, a Shell, a Butterfly and a Dragonfly,
1637–45
drawing, parchment, deck
paint, pencil
27.2 cm × 35.0 cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Volkswagen Marrel

Copies can be originals

For as long as people have been making art, other people have been copying it.

For centuries, artists have learnt from other artists by copying their work (pp. 168–9). Before artworks could be reproduced by photography, artists would make copies of famous prints and paintings so that they or someone else could have their own record of the original work. Copies of this sort are still regarded as original artworks because they are made by an artist. The copies can be quite valuable artworks; however, because the ideas and techniques are taken from someone else, they are usually not as highly valued as the artworks they are copied from.

Contemporary artists often copy or appropriate existing artworks to suggest new ways of looking at the subject matter (pp. 170–1).

- 1 List four different places where you can find reproductions of artworks. What types of reproductions are found in each place?
- 2 Although reproductions can never replace original artworks, list three ways that a reproduction can be useful.

A question of attribution

The portrait pictured was once believed to be a **self-portrait** by Dutch artist Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (p. 84).

There had been doubts about this portrait since its purchase by the National Gallery of Victoria in 1933. In 1972, the Rembrandt Research Project, a group of Rembrandt experts, visited Australia and concluded that the painting was not painted by Rembrandt. They found two other Rembrandt paintings owned by the gallery were genuine.

People who have great expertise in a particular artist's work can often tell if a work is genuine just by looking. They can identify a work by the distinctive features of an artist's style, such as the artist's painting technique.

Scientific methods, such as infra-red photography, can also be used to examine an artwork. Science can reveal whether the materials and techniques are the same as those known to have been used by the artist. In 1997, a technical examination of the canvas and ground layer of the portrait of Rembrandt by **conservators** revealed that the painting



Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (studio of)
Rembrandt, 1660s
oil on canvas
76.5 × 61.6 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1933 (104–4)

was probably painted when Rembrandt was alive. Further research has since confirmed that the ground layer used was unique to Rembrandt's studio, and the canvas is from the same bolt as an undisputed painting by Rembrandt. The work is therefore now definitively linked to Rembrandt's studio, and it is believed to have been painted by one or more of his assistants. These discoveries are an important step in uncovering the painting's true story.

- 3 Each artist's style is as unique as their handwriting. Ask a friend or family member for a sample of their handwriting, at least a paragraph long. Annotate the sample, identifying six features of their handwriting that you could use to identify the person's writing elsewhere.

EXPLORE

Choose a well-known artwork and collect as many different reproductions of it as possible. How do the reproductions differ? Which do you think is most like the original? Why?

DISCUSS

How does the knowledge that the painting is not by Rembrandt influence the way the painting is viewed and valued? Why?

In the late nineteenth century, when Rembrandt's work was very popular, the number of paintings believed to be by Rembrandt increased. Many of these paintings were probably copies made by Rembrandt's many students, assistants or admirers but incorrectly attributed to Rembrandt.

Many artworks are rare or valuable. Some people create artworks that are close copies to trick others into thinking that they are the valuable originals.

When a copy is deliberately identified or sold as something it is not, it is called a **fake** or a **forgery**. Professional forgers use many tricks and techniques to make their work look genuine, so it often takes an expert eye to detect a forgery.

Like all fraud, forging art is a serious crime.

Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to a series of mini documentaries about uncovering and authenticating a lost Rembrandt painting.

ORIGINALS AND COPIES

6.8

ARTISTS' RIGHTS

Anyone working with artworks, including copies of artworks, needs to be aware of artists' rights.

The copyright for many Australian artists is managed by their art dealers or by **Viscopy**, a non-profit agency established in 1995 with the help of the Australian Government.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to information sheets on copyright and moral rights.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about the debate about Wanjina street art.

Copyright

How do you feel when someone copies your work and does not ask you for permission or acknowledge your work?

Copyright laws protect artists' rights.

When artists create an artwork, they automatically own the artwork's copyright. When artists sell an artwork, unless they agree otherwise, they still own the copyright on the artwork. Copyright is quite separate from the artwork. Copyright is like property and can be given, sold or transferred to another person, independent of the artwork.

Copyright generally applies to an artwork for the life of the artist and for 70 years after the artist's death. It is very common for an artist's family to own copyright after an artist dies.

By law, anyone who reproduces an artwork must ask the permission of the person who owns the artwork's copyright. The copyright owner has the right to decide when, where and how an artwork is reproduced. They may also charge a fee to reproduce the work.

- 1 Imagine you are an emerging artist trying to establish your career. Would you give permission to have your work reproduced in:
 - a blog post or book about the problems with contemporary art
 - a calendar featuring interesting artworks to be produced and sold by a local business
 - an article in an art magazine about emerging artists
 - a chapter in a school textbook about the working life of an artist?

Why would you agree to or refuse each of the above? Would you charge a fee for any of the above? Which ones and why?

Moral rights

A company purchased a sculpture for the foyer of a building. It was too tall, so they cut off the top. How do you think the artist who created this work might have felt? This story is often told in discussions about why it is important for artists to have **moral rights**.

In 2000, the Australian Government introduced legislation giving artists moral rights over their work. Moral rights allow artists to take action if their work is altered, destroyed or exhibited in a way that may damage the artist's reputation. Artists can also take action if they are not acknowledged as the creator of their work or if their work is falsely attributed to someone else.

- 2 Imagine you are responsible for installing artworks in a public building. List two things you can do to make sure you respect the moral rights of the artists whose work you display.

Cultural rights

Many Indigenous art images have cultural significance and belong to communities rather than to individual people. Indigenous cultural traditions determine who has the right to use particular images in their art and how. For example, the Wanjina is sacred to the

Newspix/Andy Tyndall



A Wanjina-style figure amid graffiti in Perth is one of many that caused controversy.

Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal peoples of the Kimberley, and only these groups, who are all part of the Mowanjum community, have the right to paint Wanjina (pp. 146–7).

In 2006, Wanjina figures mysteriously started to appear in street art around Perth, attracting public and media interest and discussion. Like most street art, the works were made anonymously. Although the identity of the artist is still not publicly known, the artist did eventually come forward and participated anonymously in a short documentary *Who Paintin' Dis Wandjina* (2007) by Taryne Laffar, which presents the perspectives of both the artist and the Mowanjum community. At the request of the Mowanjum community, the artist also stopped painting Wanjina.

- Why do you think the anonymous street artist stopped painting Wanjina at the request of the Mowanjum community but was not deterred by the laws that make many forms of street art illegal?

Art business

Artworks and artists' reputations have been used for commercial purposes that the artist could never have anticipated.

The Scream by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (p. 138) is widely admired as a work of great emotional intensity. *The Scream* inflatable by Robert Fishbone and Sarah Linqvist has also inspired great interest. Hundreds of thousands of inflatables have been sold since they were first produced in the early 1990s.

The commercialisation of the name and work of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) has been described as Fridamania. In 2005, the Frida Kahlo Corporation, established by Kahlo's niece, allowed the Frida Kahlo name and image to be used on a brand of tequila, an alcoholic drink. Other Kahlo products include clothing, jewellery and dolls.

- Consider the use of works by Munch and Kahlo in the objects illustrated.
 - Does the use of the image change the way you feel about the artist or artwork? Explain.
 - What do you think the artist would think about this? Does this matter?



Inflatable sculpture of *The Scream*



Frida Kahlo doll

Photos: Malcolm Cross

Robert Fishbone and his partner Sarah Linqvist are professional mural painters; however, *The Scream* inflatable has been their biggest financial success.

The board game *The Mystery of The Scream* was inspired by the theft of Munch's paintings.

- If you were a director of an art gallery, would you allow these products to be sold in the gallery shop? Why?

DISCUSS

Create a class collection of images of well-known artworks and artists in advertising.

Find out a few facts about each artwork and artist. Suggest why each artwork was chosen to use in this way.

Many people view the use of images of well-known artworks and artists in advertising and commercial products as amusing and clever, and even good for art and artists. Other people believe such products trivialise the artists and artworks. What do you think?

Many artists inspired by ideas associated with **Postmodernism** see themselves as manipulators of images rather than as creators of entirely new images. They often copy and rework images by other artists. The **appropriation** and reworking of existing images can create challenges for copyright law, which is based on the belief that artists have the right to own and control new images they create.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn about Kahlo and her art.

ART AND CONTROVERSY

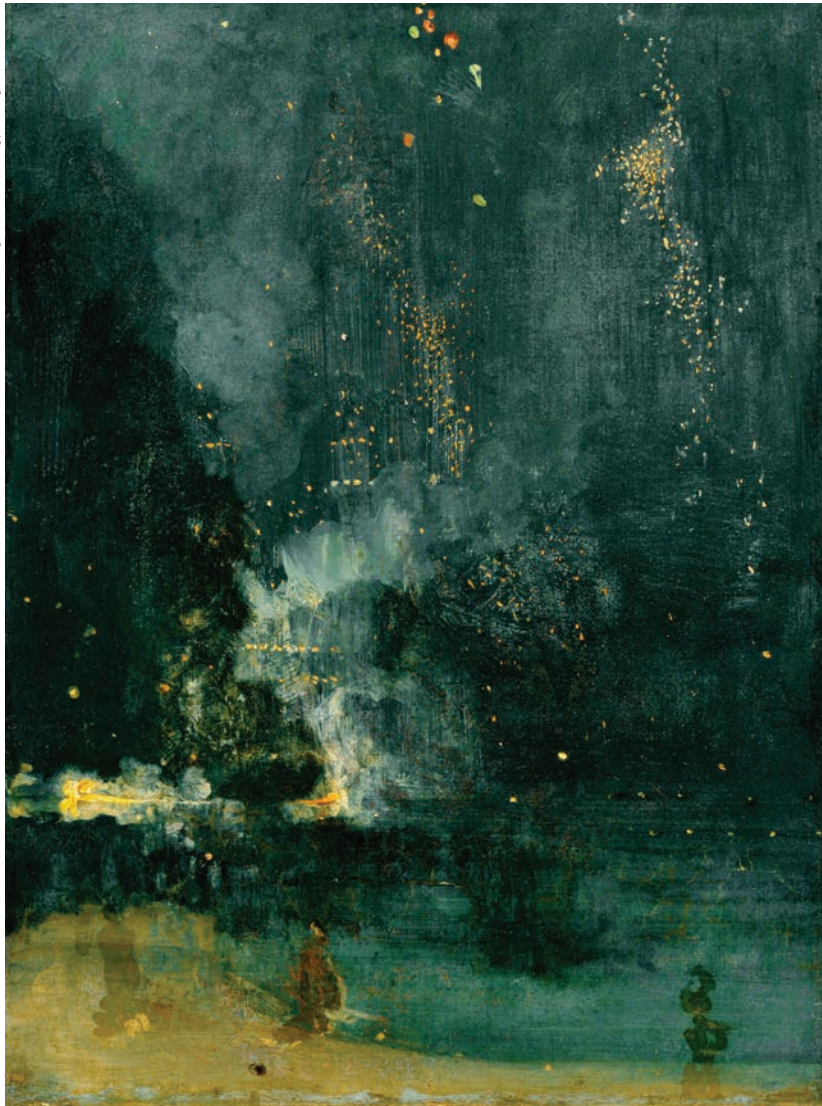
6.9

CHALLENGING CONVENTION

People have many ideas and beliefs about what is important or valuable in an artwork, but these ideas vary from person to person and across history and cultures.

When ideas about what is important or valuable in artwork clash, there is often controversy. This often happens when artists challenge convention.

Niday Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo



James Abbott McNeill Whistler
American, 1834–1903
Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket,
1875
oil on panel
60.2 × 46.7 cm

Art for art's sake

Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket by American-born, London-based **James Abbott McNeill Whistler** (1834–1903) focuses on the abstract beauty of fireworks exploding against a foggy night sky. The composition of the painting is dominated by a mass of velvety black, deep green and blue-grey tones. This mass is illuminated by contrasting strokes and scattered specks of brilliant yellow and white,

inspired by distant lights and the sparks of fireworks floating in the air. A few small figures can be made out in the foreground, but they are cloaked in darkness.

Whistler's focus on the abstract beauty of his subject reflects the 'art for art's sake' philosophy of the nineteenth-century **Aesthetic Movement**. In works such as *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, Whistler translated visual experience into poetic tonal and colour harmonies. His works were a radical departure from conventional painting styles that valued narratives, morals, clearly defined forms and descriptive details. Whistler often used musical terms such as 'nocturne', 'harmony' or 'arrangement' in the titles of his paintings to emphasise his focus on aesthetic qualities.

Art on trial

When *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* was exhibited in London in 1877, it provoked a strong reaction from the influential art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900). Ruskin accused Whistler of asking for 'two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face'.²³

Whistler sued Ruskin for libel. Their court case generated widespread media coverage and discussion among art experts and the public about what was valuable and important in art.

To nineteenth-century audiences accustomed to traditional styles of painting, the work looked unfinished. The satirical magazine *Punch* characterised the painting as 'Above, all fog; below, all inky flood. For subject – it had none.'²⁴

Whistler had to vigorously defend his painting, which he explained was an artistic arrangement rather than a view. In response to a question about how long it had taken him to make the painting, he replied it was made 'in a couple of days'.²⁵

When queried about whether he was asking 200 guineas for the labour of two days, he replied dramatically, ‘No. I ask it for the knowledge I have gained in the work of a lifetime.’²⁶

Whistler won the court case, but he was awarded only a token amount for damages and had to pay half the court costs.

- 1 Explain two concerns that emerged from the controversy about *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*.
- 2 Identify and explain two points that Whistler made to defend his painting.
- 3 What do you think Whistler meant by the ‘knowledge [he had] gained in the work of a lifetime’? Why did he believe this contributed to the value of the painting?

DISCUSS

Do the ideas about art that were debated in the Whistler versus Ruskin controversy or the comments by critics of the 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition have any relevance to contemporary art? Explain.

Creating an impression

In August 1889, a group of artists associated with the development of plein-air painting around Melbourne – including **Tom Roberts** (pp. 124–5, 150), **Charles Conder** (pp. 124–5), **Arthur Streeton** (1867–1943) and **Frederick McCubbin** (p. 104) – presented an exhibition of some of their recent work to the public. The title of the 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition was inspired by the size of many of the paintings (9 × 5 inches, approximately 23 × 13 centimetres) and the artists’ intention to increase the public’s interest in and awareness of **Impressionism**.

Rather than descriptive detail and clearly defined forms, Impressionist painters sought to capture a general impression of colour. The direct painting techniques and relative informality of the paintings, evident in the sketch-like appearance of works such as *Mentone*, broke with many of the conventions of traditional studio painting.

The influence of Whistler was evident in many aspects of the exhibition. Many of the



Tom Roberts
Australian, 1856–1931
Mentone, 1888
oil on wood panel
11.0 × 18.8 cm
National Gallery of
Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased 1955 (3194–4)

paintings had tonal and colour harmonies and compositions inspired by Whistler’s work. The paintings’ presentation was also influenced by Whistler; the paintings were displayed in large, plain wooden frames, and the exhibition space was decorated fashionably with silk drapery, Japanese screens and fresh flowers.

The critical response

The artists sold a substantial number of paintings and attracted positive reviews, but they also were criticised. The influential art critic James Smith (1820–1910), a trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria, wrote a scathing review in *The Argus* newspaper on 17 August 1889.

The modern impressionist asks you to see pictures in splashes of colours, in slap-dash brushwork ... In an exhibition of paintings you naturally look for pictures, instead of which the impressionist presents you with a varied assortment of palettes. Of the 180 exhibits catalogued on the present occasion, something like four-fifths are a pain [in] the eye. Some of them look like faded pictures seen through several mediums of thick gauze; others suggest that a paint-pot has been accidentally upset over a panel of nine inches by five; others resemble the first essays of a small boy, who has just been apprenticed to a house-painter.²⁷

The artists displayed the review at the entrance of their exhibition, which drew interested and curious crowds.

- 4 In what way does *Mentone* reflect:
 - the artists’ ideas about Impressionism
 - shared interests with Whistler?
- 5 What do Smith’s comments reveal about what he thinks is important in art?

Two hundred guineas, the price of Whistler’s painting, was a large sum of money at the time.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for more information about Whistler’s work and the controversial court case.

Many of the paintings in the 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition were painted on wooden cigar box lids.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about the 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition on the National Gallery of Victoria’s website.

ART AND CONTROVERSY

6.10

ANYTHING GOES?

Artists today create art using a wide range of materials and techniques, some of which challenge not only art conventions but social and cultural values. Does anything go?

© Reuters/Picture Media



The Sensation exhibition was shown in New York City at the Brooklyn Museum in 1999

Sensation was scheduled to travel to the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, but the exhibition was cancelled due to problems associated with the exhibition's commercial sponsorship.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to read more about Quinn and to watch a short video of the director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, speaking about *Self 2006*.

Photo: Marc Quinn Studio

Pasteurisation is a process most commonly used for milk. Milk (or in this case, blood) is carefully heated to kill microorganisms that may cause disease or fermentation.

When Quinn is making his blood sculptures, he visits the doctor every six weeks. The blood is collected in the same way as it is collected for a blood donation.

The art of Sensation

Sensation was a famous exhibition of contemporary art. It was first presented at the Royal Academy of Arts in London between 18 September and 28 December 1997, and later shown in New York and Berlin.

The subject matter and materials used in a number of the artworks shocked some



audiences. British artists **Marc Quinn** (b. 1964) and **Damien Hirst** (b. 1965) were two of the artists represented. Since Sensation, each of these artists has continued to make art that sometimes causes a sensation.

Lifelike

Self 2006 is a very lifelike **self-portrait** in more ways than you may at first anticipate. The artwork is a cast of the artist's head filled with 4.5 litres of his blood. The sculpture is displayed in a special refrigerated case that keeps the pasteurised blood frozen.

Self 2006 is now in London's National Portrait Gallery and is the fourth in an ongoing series. The artist made the first sculpture in 1991, and he has continued to make a new version every five years. Many of Quinn's works deal with themes related to death and the human body. This series records the artist's ageing and physical deterioration.

Rembrandt's extensive series of self-portraits were a source of inspiration for Quinn's self-portraits. Quinn has explained that the work reflects his desire 'to push portraiture to an extreme, a representation which not only has the form of the sitter, but is actually made from the sitter's flesh'.²⁸

1 Identify two things that you believe Quinn is trying to achieve in this series of self-portraits. Use a PMI chart to evaluate Quinn's work. Do you think he has been successful in achieving his aims? Why?

DISCUSS

Are there materials, subjects or themes that are not appropriate for artists to explore?

Marc Quinn
English, b 1964
Self 2006, 2006
blood (artist's), stainless steel, perspex and refrigeration equipment
208 × 63 × 63 cm
Courtesy Marc Quinn Studio

2 Identify some of the challenges that you think this work might present for

- the artist
- the gallery displaying the work
- audiences.

Consider the making, collecting, displaying and preservation of the work.

A matter of life and death

The **installation** *In & Out of Love (White Paintings & Live Butterflies)* was first created by Damien Hirst in 1991. The work is a specially humidified room with white canvases around the walls. Butterfly pupae were attached to each canvas and, during the course of the exhibition, the butterflies hatched, fed on flowers, fruit and sugar water, bred and eventually died.

The installation is part of the artist's ongoing investigation into themes related to life and death, including the difficulties many people have with ideas related to death. Butterflies appear in numerous other works by Hirst. The artist is fascinated by how they maintain the appearance of life after death. He also sees butterflies, which are widely viewed as symbols of freedom, as having a universal meaning and appeal to audiences.

When *In & Out of Love (White Paintings & Live Butterflies)* was included in a major exhibition of Hirst's work at the Tate gallery in 2012, a controversy erupted about his use of live butterflies. Numerous headlines focused on the fact that thousands of butterflies died during the exhibition.

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals argued:

Damien Hirst's quest to be edgy is as boring as it is callous ... Butterflies are beautiful parts of nature and should be enjoyed in the wild instead of destroyed for something predictable and unimaginative.²⁹

The Tate gallery and the artist worked with a butterfly expert to create the work. A Tate spokesman explained:

The butterflies used in this work ... were selected from varieties known to thrive in the conditions created. The butterflies lived out the final stage of their natural



life cycle inside this room. Approximately 400 butterflies were introduced to the exhibition over the course of each week, with many enjoying longer lifespans than in the wild due to the high quality of this environment.³⁰

Patrick Barkham, a natural history writer, wrote, 'Hirst's butterflies encourage us to reflect on how ephemeral life is for every insect – and for their human spectators.'³¹

- 3 People's opinions will be informed by their experience and values. Where can you see evidence of this in two of the opinions presented?
- 4 Which opinion(s) do you find most compelling or convincing? Why?
- 5 Do you think that the critics of this work were only concerned with the welfare of the butterflies or do you think they might have had other concerns about the work? Explain.

DISCUSS

How does Hirst's work differ from a live butterfly house in a zoo? Why do exhibits in zoos not attract the same controversy?

Damien Hirst
English, b. 1965
In & Out of Love (White Paintings & Live Butterflies), 1991
installed at Tate Modern, 2012

primer on canvas with pupae, steel, potted flowers, live butterflies, formica, MDF, bowls, sugar-water solution, fruit, radiators, heaters, cool misters, air vents, lights, thermometers and humidistats dimensions variable
© Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2016. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to Hirst's website, further information about his 2012 Tate exhibition and news articles related to the controversy surrounding his work.

ART AND CONTROVERSY

6.11

A CONTROVERSIAL ACQUISITION

Collecting art is an important part of a public art gallery's role; however, occasionally a new acquisition can spark controversy.

Approximately 600 art students signed a petition in support of the purchase of *Blue Poles* and sent it to the director of the National Gallery of Australia.



Price, politics and a public gallery

One of Australia's most famous controversies over an acquisition by a **public gallery** erupted in 1973 when *Blue Poles*, by American artist **Jackson Pollock** (1912–1956), was purchased for the still incomplete National Gallery of Australia. The \$1.3 million paid for the painting set a world record for the work of a twentieth-century artist. The price of the painting, differing ideas about the painting's artistic value and what the gallery should collect, and contemporary politics all contributed to the controversy about the purchase.

Painting Blue Poles

As a young artist, Pollock explored a variety of painting styles until, in the late 1940s, he abandoned traditional painting techniques and tools, and he began working on large-scale paintings. Placing a sheet of canvas on the floor, he would then move around the painting, pouring and dripping paint onto it. His painting tools included sticks, hardened paint brushes and even cooking utensils.

Although Pollock worked freely and allowed paint to naturally flow, pool and drip, he carefully controlled the process. A close look at the surface of his paintings, such as *Blue Poles*, reveals many layers of paint and trails of different colours weaving and looping across the surface. From a distance, these apparently random markings create strong visual rhythms that give the painting a sense

of energy and movement, and draw viewers' attention across the entire surface of the painting.

Pollock's unconventional painting technique and style were ridiculed by some in the popular media, and he was given the nickname Jack the Dripper; however, his significance as a key figure in twentieth-century art is widely recognised. He is particularly known for the role he played in the development of **Abstract Expressionism**, an influential style of **non-representational art** in which colour and paint are used expressively.

The media response

Immediately following the purchase of *Blue Poles*, the cost of the painting became the focus of media attention. Allegations were made that the artist must have been drunk when he painted it.

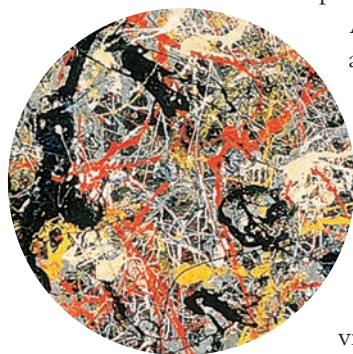
In 1973, colour photographs in newspapers were rare; however, months after the purchase, *The Herald* featured a large colour reproduction of the painting on the front page under the headline 'Would you pay \$1.3 m. for this?'³²

1 Imagine you are a journalist. Write a short article, with a suitable headline, about the acquisition of *Blue Poles* by the National Gallery of Australia. Your article should help people understand the painting and its importance for the gallery.

The politicians

Some saw the purchase of *Blue Poles* as a symbol of the progressive character of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's Labor government; however, it was also a source of political trouble for the government when concerns about the cost and artistic merit of the painting were raised in federal parliament.

Some senators tried to prevent the government from getting the money they needed to pay for the painting. TA Hartley, a



Jackson Pollock
Blue Poles, 1952 (detail)

DISCUSS

Consider the headlines and reports relating to the purchase of *Blue Poles* and other media reports about controversial artworks. What role do you think the media plays in creating or contributing to art controversies?



Western Australian MP, said it was ‘damn foolish’ to spend such a large amount on the painting:

Really. Just put a measuring stick on it. It probably took six months to paint. If there is anyone whose work is worth \$1.3 million for six months, I’d like to know who it is.³³

2 Why might the purchase of the painting have been seen as a symbol of the progressive nature of the government?

The art world

The art world’s reaction to the painting was varied. Australian artist Sir William Dargie (1912–2003) said that he would not have spent \$1.3 million on the painting. ‘For that amount of money or more, it would have been wiser to buy a really top European master’s work.’³⁴

Australian artist Andrew Sibley (1933–2015) said that it would be better to use the money to buy contemporary Australian works or the painting of a great master:

Pollock is a great painter, but he stands alone. He is not the sort of artist you can use to educate people in the wonders of art. With Pollock people may think art is simply a matter of bringing out your oil can and dripping paint everywhere.³⁵

Eric Westbrook (1915–2005), Victoria’s director of the arts at the time, said:

Jackson Pollock was one of the key figures of contemporary art and *Blue Poles* is the summit of what he did. In a few years’ time people won’t care what it cost – only that Australia has it.³⁶

3 Identify three different ideas about the purchase of *Blue Poles* in the comments above. Choose one of the opinions and explain why you agree or disagree with it.

Blue Poles today

Today, *Blue Poles* is often described as a **destination work**: an artwork that attracts people to visit the gallery where it is exhibited.

In 1998–99, the painting was included in a major **retrospective** of the artist’s work in New York and London; its inclusion showed the significance of the painting within Pollock’s **body of work**. Estimates of its value were then \$20–30 million.

In 2002, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the National Gallery of Australia, the gallery presented an exhibition focused on the painting and published a book about *Blue Poles*.

Jackson Pollock
American, 1912–1956
Blue Poles, 1952
oil, enamel, aluminium
paint with glass on canvas
212.9 × 489.0 cm
National Gallery of
Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1973
© Pollock-Krasner
Foundation/ARS. Licensed
by Viscopy, 2016

DISCUSS

Blue Poles was chosen by the director of the National Gallery of Australia and the purchase was approved by gallery trustees. Should politicians have interfered in the painting’s purchase? Why?

DISCUSS

It is sometimes important that an art gallery buys a certain artwork, even if some people do not approve of the artwork or its price. Why do you think this is so?

ART AND CONTROVERSY

6.12

ART IN THE NEWS

Some artworks become well known to the public through the way they are represented in the news. How does this affect the way audiences perceive and interpret these works?

Pablo Picasso
Spanish, 1881–1973, worked
in France 1904–73
Weeping Woman, 1937
oil on canvas
55.2 × 46.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Purchased by donors of The
Art Foundation of Victoria,
with the assistance of the
Jack and Genia Liberman
Family, Founder Benefactor,
1986 (IC1–1986)
© Succession Picasso.
Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



Pablo Picasso
Spanish, 1881–1973, worked
in France 1904–73
*Portrait of the Mother of
the Artist (Portrait de la
mère de l'artiste)*, 1896
pastel on paper
49.8 × 39 cm
Picasso Museum, Barcelona

The Print Collector/Alamy Stock Photo



DISCUSS

Over time and because of their circumstances and history, artworks can accumulate layers of meaning and significance that the artist could never have anticipated. Discuss this idea, referring to the *Weeping Woman* and other artworks you are familiar with.

How valid or important are these layers of meaning?

The Weeping Woman

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) completed his epic work *Guernica* (p. 156), a powerful response to the massacre of civilians during a bombing blitz in the Spanish Civil War, by July 1937, but he had not finished with this subject. A series of paintings he completed later that year, each focusing on a single weeping woman, have been described as postscripts to *Guernica*. The women in the paintings are directly linked to the figure of the screaming woman cradling her dead child to the left in *Guernica*.

In this example from the series, the intense grief of the distraught mother in *Guernica* is powerfully concentrated in the fragmented and contorted shapes and lines of the woman's features and in the clashing of acrid green and mauve colours. Dark, angular shapes surround the woman's crazed eyes, which overflow with tears. The jagged form of the woman's nose and her open mouth are seen in profile. Both are starkly outlined against the plain white handkerchief. The thrust of the woman's tongue suggests a loud and powerful scream. The emotional intensity of the image is strengthened by the enclosed, grey space and the looming, dark shadow in the background.

The model for *Weeping Woman* was Dora Maar (1907–1997), an artist and Picasso's companion between 1936 and 1944. Maar was a strong and passionate personality, and the anguish and emotion in *Weeping Woman* may also reflect the complex relationship she shared with Picasso.

Weeping Woman demonstrates Picasso's innovative and radical approach to art-making. Picasso showed a prodigious talent for art at a young age, and he completed many traditional, lifelike portraits, such as *Portrait of the Mother of the Artist*, in his teens.

Picasso's interest in **modern art** styles drew him to Paris, where he finally settled

in 1904. Between 1907 and 1922, he played a significant role in the development of **Cubism**, a style that had a far-reaching effect on the visual arts. Picasso never stopped experimenting with new ideas. He worked in many styles and artforms throughout his long career, and he is recognised as one of the key figures in twentieth-century western art.

- 1 Compare *Portrait of the Mother of the Artist* with *Weeping Woman*. Suggest reasons for the differences between the two works.

A major acquisition

The *Weeping Woman* was acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria in 1985. At the time, its \$1.6 million price tag made it the most expensive painting ever purchased by an Australian gallery. The next most expensive painting was *Blue Poles* (p. 211).

As with many other well-publicised and expensive acquisitions, there was some negative public reaction to the purchase. Under the heading ‘Monstrous Picasso’, *The Age* published a letter from Anna Encel:

Horror of horrors. What a monstrosity. Picasso or no Picasso, who gives them the authority to buy without consulting the ordinary person in the street? We pay taxes; we have nothing to say at all!³⁷

The significant funding required for the painting was raised by the gallery through the Art Foundation of Victoria and a private donation. The painting was a major purchase for the gallery, which recognised that it was important to have a Picasso in its collection.

When the acquisition of the painting was announced on 6 December 1985, the gallery director, Patrick McCaughey, declared, ‘This face is going to haunt Melbourne for the next 100 years. Everyone will come to know it very well indeed, I hope.’³⁸ His words were more prophetic than he might have imagined.

- 2 What are Anna Encel’s concerns about the Picasso? Imagine you are a representative of the gallery. Write a letter to Encel addressing her concerns.

Stolen!

In August 1986, eight months after it had been acquired, the *Weeping Woman* was removed from the walls of the National Gallery of Victoria. In its place was a notice regularly used by the gallery when works

were removed from display on official business. Alarm was raised on Monday morning when a ransom note was received, and an investigation found the painting had been stolen.

The ransom note was addressed to the Victorian Minister for the Arts. The note demanded an increase in arts funding and the establishment of five art prizes for artists under 30. After the government refused to pay the ransom, a second note was sent. It included a burnt match and threatened to destroy the painting.

The media and the public followed the case closely.

Finally, following a tip-off to *The Age* newspaper on 19 August, the painting was found in a luggage locker at a major Melbourne railway station. It had been carefully wrapped and was undamaged.

The theft remains an unsolved crime.

- 3 What would the consequences have been for the gallery and audiences if the painting had been damaged or destroyed?

Picasso in popular culture

The status of the *Weeping Woman* as Australia’s most expensive painting and its subsequent theft thrust the painting into the media spotlight. The painting became very well known to many people, although perhaps not in the way McCaughey had hoped.

People continue to be fascinated by the story of the theft, which has inspired a short film and several novels. The *Weeping Woman*’s place in popular culture is reflected in sometimes unexpected references to the painting, such as Jim Pavlidis’s 2012 cartoon that shows Essendon Football Club coach James Hird in the guise of the *Weeping Woman*, lamenting the poor performance of his team.

- 4 What do you think McCaughey had in mind when he expressed his hope that people would get to know *Weeping Woman* very well indeed?

The Art Foundation of Victoria is now known as the NGV Foundation. Its role is to attract and encourage cash donations, gifts, bequests and endowments to support the development of the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria. Contrary to popular opinion, public money does not fund acquisitions in most public galleries.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to information about the theft of *Weeping Woman*.



Ron Tandberg



Jim Pavlidis

Essendon football coach James Hird laments his team’s performance.

DISCUSS

Do you think the publicity surrounding the *Weeping Woman* has helped or hindered people getting to know the painting? Why?

ART AND CONTROVERSY

6.13

A PUBLIC ART DEBATE IN MELBOURNE

Public artworks are made for large audiences. Individuals and groups in these audiences often have very different ideas and opinions about art.

What is public art?

Public art is created for public places and spaces. It may be paid for with public funds or with money from private individuals or organisations. Sometimes, developers of public spaces and buildings are obliged to spend a percentage of their budget on artworks.

In the past, monumental sculptures and **murals** were the most common forms of public art; however, public art can now take many forms. Public artworks were usually permanent additions to a site, but in recent years some public artworks have been installed temporarily for periods ranging from a few weeks to a number of years.

You can find public art in a range of places and spaces, including parks, laneways, railway stations, hospitals, offices, schools and billboards.

A book on the *Vault* controversy, *Peril in the Square: The Sculpture That Challenged a City* by Geoffrey Wallis, was published in 2004.

DISCUSS

What is the role of public art? Who benefits from public art and how?

A sculpture for Melbourne

In 1978, the Melbourne City Council invited three artists to submit designs for a sculpture for the new City Square on Swanston Street. The square's architects specified that the artwork should relate to their modern, streamlined design and be a focus, perhaps through its size or colour.

In December that year, it was announced that Australian artist **Ron Robertson-Swann** (b. 1941) had won the **commission** with his sculpture, which he later named *Vault*. The announcement began a long and often bitter public debate about the project. Many people got involved, including the Melbourne City Council, the arts community and the public.

Vault is a striking sculpture made from seven massive slabs of yellow fabricated steel that are arranged at dramatic angles. Like many artists of his generation, Robertson-Swann was influenced by modern **non-representational art** styles that emphasised formal elements, such as bold, geometric shape and colour.

Opposition

Opposition to the sculpture was led by Councillor Don Osborne, who did not hide his preference for traditional and realistic art. Osborne called the sculpture a 'monstrosity' and was quoted as saying it looked like an 'advertisement for a harvesting machine' and 'left-over equipment from the Town Hall air-conditioning'. He was also responsible for nicknaming the sculpture the 'Yellow Peril'.³⁹

Others argued against the work, including the Australian Guild of Realist Artists, the Victorian Artists' Society and Councillor Keith Southwick, who wondered whether the sculpture might have been more suitable for a children's playground.

Support

The strongest support for the sculpture came from Lord Mayor Irvin Rockman, Councillor

Vault in the City Square



Geoffrey Wallis

Osborne's political opponent. The debate was at times politically driven, but Rockman had an interest in art and believed that the sculpture would become a symbol of progressive thought.

Among other notable supporters were a number of art critics, including Jeff Makin (b. 1943), who wrote:

The sculpture is a flash of colour, and a 20th-century inspiration in what is essentially a conservative 19th-century space. A space that now wants to reject it because it's afraid of new ideas, progress, youth, and the future.⁴⁰

The result

Opposition to the sculpture posed a serious threat to the project. Robertson-Swann did not get final approval to start work until March 1979. The sculpture was installed in time for the official opening of the square in May 1980, but the battle was not over.

Osborne lobbied to have *Vault* moved from the square. Further debates, protests and a public rally to save the sculpture were to no avail. In the very early hours of 12 July 1981, the sculpture was relocated to Batman Park, under development on the Yarra River. The park finally opened in October 1982 and *Vault* attracted little controversy in its new location.

Vault was again moved in 2002 when the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art moved to a new building in South Melbourne. It now stands, and is likely to remain, alongside the dramatic, angular rusted-steel facade of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art building.

- 1 If you were commissioning a public artwork for your school, would you favour a temporary or permanent artwork? Why?
- 2 Suggest why Councillor Osborne and others were opposed to *Vault*.
- 3 Give two reasons why the supporters of *Vault* thought it would be an appropriate sculpture for the square.
- 4 Do you think that moving *Vault* from City Square was appropriate? Why?
- 5 Robertson-Swann said, 'It's not all that dreadful, but I don't like it. The Batman Park site attempts to tame the sculpture. It's usually seen at a considerable distance which shrinks the scale somewhat.'⁴¹

Look at the photograph of the sculpture in Batman Park. Do you agree? Explain.

- 6 Look at the photograph of *Vault* in its current location. Do you think this location is more or less suitable for the sculpture than Batman Park? Explain why.

DISCUSS

Should developers of buildings and public spaces be required to spend money on artworks? Why?

EXPLORE

Research a public artwork in your community. Find out who made it, who commissioned it, why it was made and the intended audience.

What is your opinion of the work? Has there been any controversy associated with the work? Why?

DISCUSS

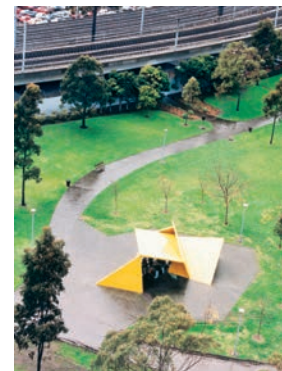
Vault was judged to be the most suitable work for the square by the architects, a professor of fine arts and an artist. Do you think it was fair that the council later changed its mind and ignored the advice of these people? Why?

DISCUSS

Moral rights legislation was introduced in Australia in 2000 to protect artist's rights (p. 204). Do you think such legislation might have helped Robertson-Swann at any point during the controversy surrounding *Vault*? Explain.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to read more about the *Vault* controversy.



Vault at Batman Park

Geoffrey Wallis



Vault in its current location outside the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne's Southbank

Geoffrey Wallis

ART AND CONTROVERSY

6.14

AN INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC ART DEBATE

The spectacular **public art** projects of Christo and Jeanne-Claude often attract international interest and debate.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Artists **Christo** (b. 1935) and **Jeanne-Claude** (1935–2009) met in Paris in 1958. At that time, Christo was making artworks that involved wrapping everyday objects. In 1961, they began collaborating on large-scale projects and have since created many monumental and spectacular artworks for both urban and rural environments, using fabric as their main medium. Examples of their work include wrapping part of the Australian coastline, *Wrapped Coast*, Little Bay, Sydney (1969); surrounding 11 islands with hot-pink floating fabric, *Surrounded Islands*, Biscayne Bay, Florida (1980–83); and wrapping the German parliament building, *Wrapped Reichstag*, Berlin (1971–95).

The Gates

Central Park is 843 acres (341 hectares) of parkland in New York, one of the world's busiest cities.

After moving to New York in 1964, Christo and Jeanne-Claude began thinking about creating a major public artwork for the city. Their initial unsuccessful proposal was to wrap high-rise buildings in Manhattan. A project to wrap gates in Central Park was started in 1979 and rejected in 1981; however, in 2003, they were given approval to proceed with *The Gates* in Central Park. *The Gates* was completed in 2005.

The 7503 gates were installed along 37 kilometres of curving paths in the park.

The gates were all 4.87 metres high and varied in width to span the paths. Saffron nylon fabric panels were suspended like curtains from the top of each rectangular gate, falling to just above head height. Christo and Jeanne-Claude describe their work on their website:

For those who walked through *The Gates*, the saffron colored fabric was a golden ceiling creating warm shadows. When seen from the buildings surrounding Central Park, *The Gates* seemed like a golden river appearing and disappearing through the bare branches of the trees and highlighting the shape of the meandering footpaths.⁴²

A matter of time

After 26 years of planning and costs of US\$21 million, paid for with Christo and Jeanne-Claude's own money, *The Gates* were officially launched on 12 February 2005. They were removed only 16 days later, on 28 February.

Unlike most other artworks, the works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude cannot be bought or owned. While they are in place, anybody can view them. When they are gone, all that remains are photographs, books, films and the memories and experiences of the audience.

Art practice

The massive **environmental art** projects of Christo and Jeanne-Claude involve years of careful planning. For each project, they make preliminary artworks, such as drawings, collages and models. They then organise materials and permissions, and plan the construction.

An estimated 4 million people visited Central Park during the 16 days that *The Gates* were on display.



Photo: Wolfgang Volz/iaif/Picture Media



Photo: Wolfgang Volz/iaif/Picture Media

Christo and Jeanne-Claude
The Gates, Central Park,
New York City, 1979–2005
© Christo and Jeanne-Claude,
2005

Each work involves many people and organisations, including public officials, engineers, property owners and manufacturers. Often, hundreds of people are employed on a project to manufacture the materials, install the artwork and remove it.

Care is taken to ensure that the artworks cause no damage to the environment. At the end of each project, most materials are recycled.

All costs associated with their artworks are paid for by the artists. The artists do not accept sponsorship, and they generate income to support their work by selling earlier works and the preliminary artworks made for each project.

Audience response

The Gates project generated a lot of public interest, including positive and hostile commentary.

*'The Gates' is an abomination. Call me a Philistine, but how can one improve on trees, lakes and rocky outcroppings with miles of plastic-treated cloth? ... the color of these bed sheets, plunked down on metal frames every 12 feet throughout the park, is so atrocious that the project's creators ought to be charged with assault.*⁴³

Andrea Peyser

Central Park was transformed ... On that chilly morning bathed in the milky tea of February sunlight, the Gates kept changing their character. Around the Great Lawn they looked like medieval pavilions. Down near Central Park South, normally a boring part of the park, the Gates fluttered over the stone bridges like the standards of samurai.

They caught every breath of wind. Whole rows rippled with a sudden gust, turning the saffron to white gold in the winter light.⁴⁴

Patrick McCaughey

- 1 What evidence can you see in photographs of *The Gates* that Christo and Jeanne-Claude thought carefully about the physical features of the park and how the park is used when planning their work?
- 2 Would an audience viewing *The Gates* in the park differ from an audience attending an art gallery? Why?
- 3 How do you think the temporary nature of an artwork like *The Gates* might have influenced the audience's perception of the work?



Photo: Wolfgang Volz/aiif/Picture Media

Christo and Jeanne-Claude
The Gates, Central Park,
New York City, 1979–2005
© Christo and Jeanne-Claude,
2005

- 4 What are the main ideas expressed in Peyser's and McCaughey's comments? Suggest reasons for their different views.
- 5 What is your personal opinion of *The Gates*? Why?



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to Christo and Jeanne-Claude's website.

EXPLORE

Look at the website of Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Why do you think maintaining a comprehensive website about their work is an important part of their art practice?

Do you think having a website is more or less important for Christo and Jeanne-Claude than it would be for other artists who have a more traditional art practice? Why?

DISCUSS

If Christo and Jeanne-Claude were interested in making an artwork on land or property that you owned, would you consider their proposal? Why?

DISCUSS

Why do you believe artworks such as *The Gates* are extensively filmed and photographed? How are such records used by artists and art audiences?

A CONTESTED PRIZE – THE ARCHIBALD

Art prizes often spark debate, especially when opinions about the prize-winners are widely divided.

The annual Archibald Prize for portraiture attracts many entries and many opinions. It has had some famous controversies in its history.

About prizes

Each year, a significant number of art prizes are awarded. Artists submit artworks, sometimes by invitation. The artworks are then judged, generally by a number of art experts. An exhibition of the entries is often an important part of art competitions.

Many art prizes focus on one particular type of artwork, such as the Blake Prize for religious art and the Basil Sellers Art Prize for art and sport (p. 195).

Making and transporting artworks for a competition can be expensive for artists; however, the prize money, travel opportunities and recognition that some art prizes offer can be very important in an artist's career.

The Archibald Prize

The Archibald Prize for portraiture, named after **Jules François Archibald** (1856–1919), is one of Australia's best-known art prizes.

In addition to the main prize, judged by art experts, the People's Choice award was introduced in 1988, allowing visitors to the exhibition to vote. Since 1991, the Packing Room Prize has been awarded by the gallery staff who unpack and hang the entries.

In 2013, the Art Gallery of New South Wales introduced the Young Archies, a portrait prize for artists 5–18 years.

- 1 The Archibald Prize attracts interest from a broad audience, including many people who are not otherwise interested in art. Suggest reasons for this.
- 2 Why do you think the People's Choice award and the Packing Room Prize have become such a popular part of the Archibald Prize?

William Dobell

William Dobell (1899–1970) is one of Australia's most important portrait painters.

His painting technique continued the traditions of the great masters of European art. He would build up a painting using thin layers of paint to create rich, glowing colours; however, Dobell broke with tradition in his approach to portraiture. When he painted a portrait, he was not just interested in showing what a person looked like, he wanted to capture the person's personality or character. This often led him to distort or exaggerate aspects of a sitter's appearance.

Dobell's *Joshua Smith* depicts a fellow artist and close friend. The two met when they worked together as camouflage painters in the army during the Second World War.

- 3 What evidence can you find in *Joshua Smith* of Dobell distorting or exaggerating the sitter's appearance?
- 4 What does this distortion or exaggeration suggest to you about the sitter's personality or character?

A controversy and a court case

Dobell was awarded the 1943 Archibald Prize for his portrait of Smith. The painting differed significantly from the conservative, realistic style of previous winners. Many critics supported Dobell's work and felt that it represented a new direction for the prize; however, others were shocked and outraged. A period of intense public debate followed, and record crowds visited the gallery to see the painting.

JS MacDonald (1878–1952), an art critic and former gallery director, was well known for his traditional views about painting and his dislike of modern art. He said:

Mr Smith is pilloried to eternal, skeletal deformity in the name of up-to-the-minute portraiture ... this epitome of ugliness, malformation and gruesome taste!⁴⁵



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about the Archibald Prize.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn about the Young Archies.

Responding to his critics, Dobell said that when he painted a portrait he was:

trying to create something, instead of copying something. To me, a sincere artist is not one who makes a faithful attempt to put on canvas what is in front of him, but one who tries to create something which is living in itself, regardless of its subject ... The real artist is striving to depict his subject's character and to stress the caricature, but at least it is art which is alive.⁴⁶

One of the artists who had entered the competition, Mary Edwards (1894–1988), was reported as saying that pregnant women and children should not visit the exhibition. Edwards and another entrant were convinced that the **distortion** and exaggeration in Dobell's painting made it a **caricature** rather than a portrait, and therefore not eligible for the prize under the terms of the competition. They took legal action to prevent the prize from being awarded to Dobell.

Many experts were consulted during the subsequent court case, but at the end of the case the judge supported Dobell's right to be awarded the prize. He concluded that the painting, 'although characterised by some startling exaggeration and distortion ... nevertheless bore a strong degree of likeness to the subject and undoubtedly was a pictorial representation of him.'⁴⁷

- 5 What do you think were the main concerns of Dobell's critics? Why?
- 6 Based on your understanding of Dobell's aims, explain why you believe Dobell's work attracted the critics' scorn.
- 7 Do you think it was important for the Archibald Prize for Dobell to win the court case? Explain why.
- 8 Imagine you are living in 1943. Write a letter to a newspaper stating your opinion of the portrait and whether you think Dobell deserved the prize.

DISCUSS

What are the positive and negative effects of the debate and controversy that often surround the Archibald Prize?



EXPLORE

Other paintings that have won the Archibald Prize have also attracted controversy.

Research another controversial Archibald Prize entry. The Art Gallery of New South Wales's website is a good place to start.

William Dobell
Australian, 1899–1970
Joshua Smith, 1943
oil on canvas
122 × 81 cm
Private collection
© William Dobell. Licensed
by Viscopy, 2016

DISCUSS

Dobell's *Joshua Smith* was nearly destroyed by fire in 1958. It was so badly burnt that Dobell refused to restore it. It was eventually repainted in London from a photograph, but the repainting leads to new questions about the work. Is it still a Dobell painting or is it a copy? What do you think?

ART AND CONTROVERSY

6.16

ISSUES OF JUDGEMENT

The judging of popular art prizes often brings contemporary art issues to public attention.

Each year, alongside the famous Archibald Prize for portraiture (pp. 218–19), the Art Gallery of New South Wales awards the Wynne Prize and Sir John Sulman Prizes.

The Wynne Prize is offered as a result of a bequest from Richard Wynne (1822–1895). It was first awarded in 1897.

Leach won both the Archibald Prize and the Wynne Prize in 2010. At the time, he was only the third artist to win both prizes in the same year. The other two artists to do so are William Dobell (pp. 218–19) and Brett Whiteley (p. 134).

Leach's work had attracted controversy before. In 2008, he was a finalist in the Archibald Prize with a portrait of himself that clearly refers to a well-known photograph of the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

It is a winner

In 2010, *Proposal for Landscaped Cosmos* by **Sam Leach** (b. 1973) won the prestigious Wynne Prize, which is awarded annually by the Art Gallery of New South Wales to the best **landscape** painting of Australian scenery or to the best figure sculpture.

Leach's small work depicts an **idyllic** landscape with a view of distant mountains reflected in the glassy surface of a river or lake. In the darkened foreground, a large tree with spreading branches and a fallen log

artfully frame the view. The scene is bathed in a soft glowing light.

Like a number of artworks by Leach, this painting is made using a fine, traditional painting technique. The painting clearly refers to art history. An unexpected addition to the scene (and hard to see in the reproduction) is a grid of tiny stars in the top-left corner and a similar grid of tiny red LED lights in the lower right. In conjunction with the title of the work, these elements provide a clue that the painting is drawing on tradition but also portraying the landscape in a contemporary way.



Getty Images/DeAgostini



Adam Pynacker
Dutch, 1622–1673
Boatmen Moored on the Shore of a Lake, 1660
oil on canvas on panel
97 × 85 cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Sam Leach
Australian, b. 1973
Proposal for Landscaped Cosmos, 2010
oil and resin on wood
30 × 30 cm
Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

A copy or new and distinct?

Several weeks after the announcement of Leach's Archibald and Wynne wins, a controversy erupted when *Boatmen Moored on the Shore of a Lake* by Adam Pynacker (1622–1673), a seventeenth-century Dutch artist, was identified as the inspiration for Leach's winning entry.

The similarities between the two paintings are striking, but there are also some important differences. A group of figures and livestock create a clear **focal point** in Pynacker's composition. The absence of figures in Leach's painting creates a stillness that, with the addition of the stars and LED lights, has an eerie mystery about it.

Images of the paintings side by side at the same scale (Pynacker's painting is actually much larger than Leach's) were reproduced in the media, and sensational headlines fuelled a debate that raised many issues about copying.

Commentators discussed the tradition of artists copying the work of other artists (pp. 168–9) and **appropriation** (pp. 170–1).

What I see of it, it's not influenced by that Dutch painter, it's actually copied from him. So, from my point of view, it's a flicker of that rather odious post-modern practice of appropriation, which essentially is theft.⁴⁸

Tim Storrier, landscape artist

Leach argued that despite the similarities, it was really a new and distinct work:

I wanted to take out those things [the figures] that sort of gave me a feeling of that sort of golden, idealised past and turn the meaning of the painting into something that's about ... projecting that idea into the future.⁴⁹

For some people, the problem was that the artist had not explicitly acknowledged Pynacker's painting. Others disagreed, saying that such acknowledgement was not necessary when it was obvious that a work clearly refers to a recognisable tradition.

Leach argued that the stylistic links were obvious and that to focus on them would detract from what his work was about. He resisted the suggestion that the title of his own work should mention Pynacker. For Leach, titles are a way that he 'can give the viewers a guide into the painting', and 'the original painting itself is not actually what my work is about. My work is about an idealised future.'⁵⁰

An Australian landscape?

Entangled in the debate about the practice of copying was another problem: the Wynne Prize is for Australian landscapes. Did Leach's painting qualify as an Australian landscape?

Leach had not only appropriated a Dutch painting's composition, the Dutch painting was inspired by an Italian landscape. Leach claimed that his idyllic scene had strong connections to the Australian landscape.

Many Australian landscape painters, including John Glover (pp. 168–9), had drawn on the European landscape tradition in forging their own views of the Australian landscape. European traditions have also influenced the physical environment in Australia; this can be seen in the sculpted gardens and European trees in the area of the Adelaide Hills where Leach grew up. Leach recalled that when he first saw Dutch Italianate paintings in the Rijksmuseum, he felt a strong sense of connection between them and the landscape that he grew up in. Leach claimed that his landscaped cosmos was an imaginative one, influenced by his experience of constructed landscapes in art and real life.

The final word

Following discussion about the debate, the Art Gallery of New South Wales reconfirmed that Leach was the winner of the Wynne Prize. The gallery issued a statement:

The Trustees acknowledged that at the time of the judging they noted that Leach's painting had the light and air of a Dutch 17th century landscape but also recognised and appreciated its quality and its mysterious implications of the natural world ... The Trustees also agreed that what might constitute an Australian landscape was a matter of interpretation and had changed enormously since the Wynne Prize was first awarded in 1897.⁵¹

- 1 Suggest how the artist has communicated his interest in an idealised future in this painting. Consider the use of appropriation and other elements in your answer.
- 2 Explain the two issues that you think are most important in the debate. What is your personal view on each and why?
- 3 Do you believe the statement by the Art Gallery of New South Wales clarifies the debate? Explain.



Leach's painting includes tiny stars and LED lights. Sam Leach *Proposal for Landscaped Cosmos*, 2010 (detail)



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to Leach's website and further information about the prizes awarded by the Art Gallery of New South Wales.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to newspaper articles focusing on the debate about Leach's painting.