



James MORRISON

Elizabeth (detail)

2004

oil on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney)

Cover image design

Design By Pidgeon

An Asialink/
Heide Museum
of Modern Art
exhibition toured
by NETS Victoria



Heide
Museum of
Modern Art
Heide



T H E W O R L D I N P A I N T I N G

INTRODUCTION

Despite regular forecasts of painting's demise last century, the medium retains its strong presence, undiminished for thousands of years. Figurative or abstract in imagery, expressive or conceptual in character, painting is everywhere today.

Contemporary artists are well aware of the lengthy history of this medium, and while some pursue established conventions, others develop innovative forms and strategies, challenging the conventions of art. Painting is a response to and illuminates its surroundings, reflecting multiple ways of testing, being in and imagining the world.

The world in painting presents recent work by eight established Australian artists who believe in the strength of their medium as a visual language. Brought together for the first time, these artists hail from both metropolitan and regional areas, span different generations and cultural backgrounds, and employ a range of diverse approaches. Some use painting to explore the zone between reality and fiction in life, or to envision the potential for experiences beyond the self; of an imagined shared humanity, both past and future. Their works comment on contemporary life and its conditions or values, observe the effects of subjectivity and power, and encourage viewers to enact personal forms of creativity.

Many artists today argue that art cannot be solely defined by its medium because meaning and creative potential reside in, or are conveyed, by more than materials and techniques alone. This attitude frees painting to take other material forms, and thus ceramic, plastic and fabric, as well as paint and canvas, are included in this exhibition. Whether connecting to modernism and its history, preserving disappearing narratives, or conveying certain subjectivities arising from our fast-paced, global existence, the works in *The world in painting* are personal vehicles for contemplating larger realities.

Zara Stanhope

Curator

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSION

***The world in painting* is an exhibition that asks audiences to question their perceptions about the practice of painting in contemporary culture. The following questions are useful ideas to discuss and debate with your students before visiting the exhibition.**

- What is the difference between modernism and postmodernism in the visual arts?
- What is painting? Is there a simple and clear definition?
- Is there a limit to the media that can be classified as painting materials?
- Is there a difference between the conventions of western and non-western painting?
- Can artists' works be defined by the culture in which they are made?

KEY ART TERMS

Abstract: Non-representational art, usually created from exaggerated or simplified shapes, forms or objects.

Composition: The way that objects and/or visual elements are arranged within an artwork.

Expressionistic: Art that emphasises the expression of emotions, particularly through the use of gestural brushstrokes.

Juxtapose: To put things side by side.

Modernism: Western art movement (between about 1860–1970) that challenged social, political, religious or artistic values of the previous era, such as classical composition and heroic subject matter. Modernist art embraces the concepts of constant innovation, originality and linear progression.

Postmodernism: Art style of the late twentieth century that reacted against modernism. Postmodern art challenges traditions, such as the concepts of originality, history and progress. Humour, irony and appropriation are common stylistic features of postmodernism.

Style: The characteristics of an artwork that make it identifiable to a particular movement or school.

Stylise: Simplification or abstraction of a form.

Subject matter: The objects, forms or events represented in an artwork.

Technique: The way an artist uses media (art materials).



John CITIZEN

Interior (Grey Couch)

8 Jan 2007

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Sutton Gallery (Melbourne)

THE ARTS: EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

Artworks, commentaries and questions for consideration

John Citizen (born Monto, Queensland 1955) paints contemporary interiors, their forms composed as graphic outlines and given unattractive colours. Citizen considers his *Interior* paintings as reflecting the unappealing values and vacuousness of middle class, urban Australia. John Citizen is an alter-ego for established artist Gordon Bennett, used by Bennett as a pseudonym to avoid associations with his reputation as a successful contemporary Indigenous artist. Citizen is his attempt to create an identity which operates as an 'other', a status to which he is sympathetic.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

In this series of works, John Citizen is making art about modernism and interior design. His paintings reflect objectiveness, canvassing imagery from the public domain, such as stylish and opulent images from interior design magazines and 'lifestyle' designer catalogues. Colour and line are important elements in this *Interior* series, which depicts the values of contemporary western society.

Gordon Bennett, 2007

Art Elements

Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to John Citizen's *Interior (Grey Couch)* (2007). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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How would you describe the style of Citizen's *Interior* paintings? Do they remind you of the work of any other artists?

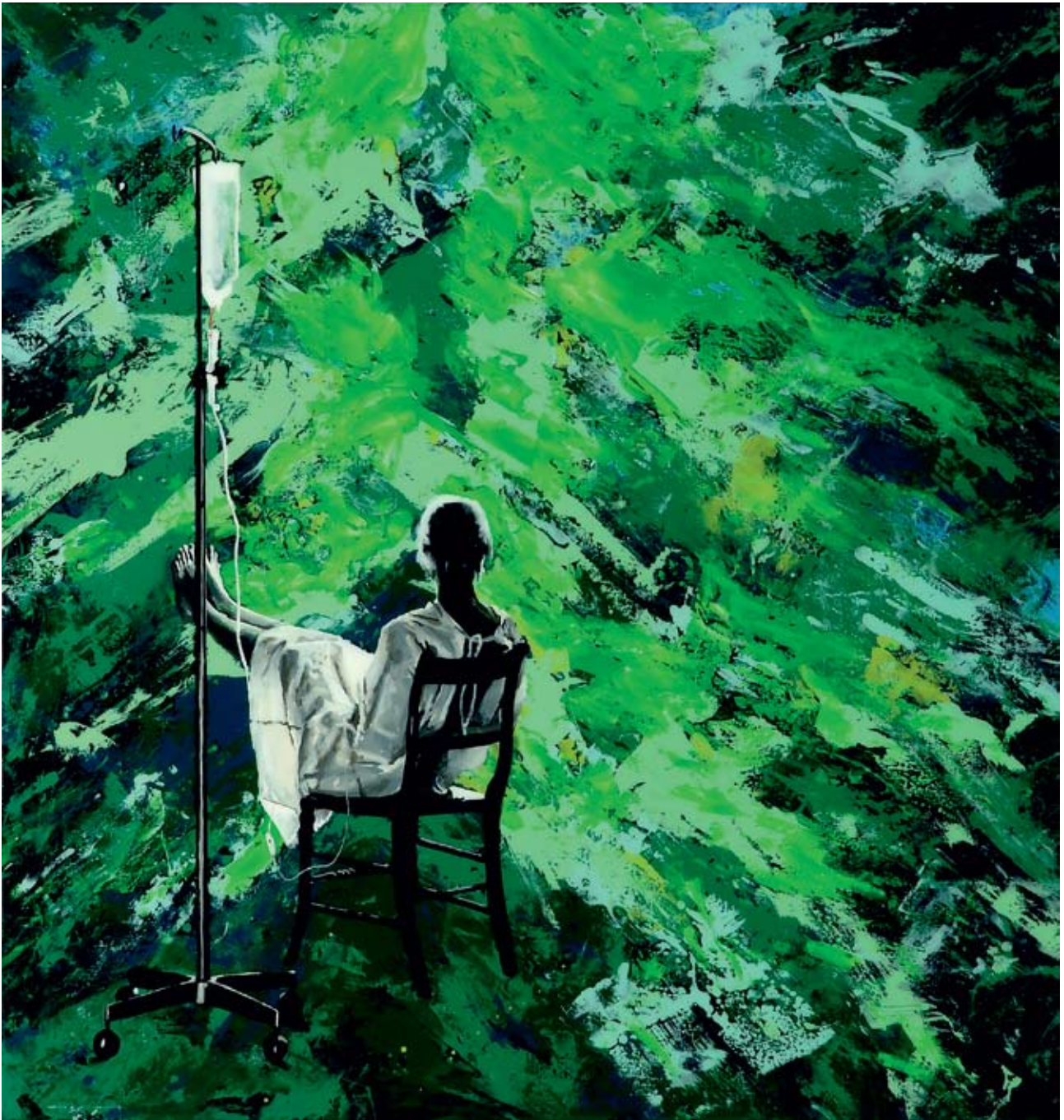
What do Citizen's *Interior* paintings communicate about modern domestic life?

From where do you think the inspiration for these works comes?

Why do you think Citizen uses dull or clashing colours in the *Interior* paintings?

What is the significance of the paintings reproduced on the walls of his *Interior* works?

Gordon Bennett (John Citizen) comments that 'colour and line are important elements in this *Interior* series, which depicts the values of contemporary western society.' Do you agree with this statement? If so, how is this communicated through the works?



Amanda DAVIES

extreme physical conditions are present here

2007

enamel on plastic on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Bett Gallery (Hobart)

The paintings of **Amanda Davies** (born Melbourne, Victoria 1968) suggest their inspiration may be in personal experience or convey instances of internal reflection. Situated in interior spaces, Davies' confronts the viewer with unexpected subject matter in these representations of sites of medicine and health care. Do these compositions portray the artist's own life experience? The visceral impact of Davies' images is accentuated by her technique of painting in reverse on plastic.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

I use personal experiences as a starting point and, through the process of painting, hope that I can be led to something that is unfamiliar and distant with no fixed meanings. I paint to find out what I don't know.

Amanda Davies, 2007

Art Elements

Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to Amanda Davies' *extreme physical conditions are present here* (2007). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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Describe the materials and techniques Davies would have used to paint *extreme physical conditions are present here* (2007). Think about the steps she would have taken to create the painting.

What effect does Davies' use of plastic have on the appearance of the work?

What do you think Davies is communicating about the medical world through these paintings? Consider the titles of the works in your response.



Dina GEORGETTI

All day I've built a lifetime

2006

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Heide Museum of Modern Art Collection

Purchased through the Heide Foundation with the

assistance of Sophia Pavlovski-Ross and Philip Ross 2006

Courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney)

Diena Georgetti (born Alice Springs, Northern Territory 1966) explores and reflects on the role of paintings in the everyday world as an integral part of her practice. Her investigation concerns the effect of certain categories of images as they are brought into existence in her modestly-scaled abstract compositions. Recalling modernist abstraction, architectural fantasies or unrealisable designs, Georgetti's paintings are a homage to creativity and an aid to understanding life.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

what i don't paint is more important than what i do.
 in this way, i refuse my limited gesture in preference for one separate to me.
 for me to work as a deceased architect of the 1940s is somehow truer than any current nature.

Diena Georgetti, 2007

Art Elements

Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to Diena Georgetti's *All day I've built a lifetime* (2006). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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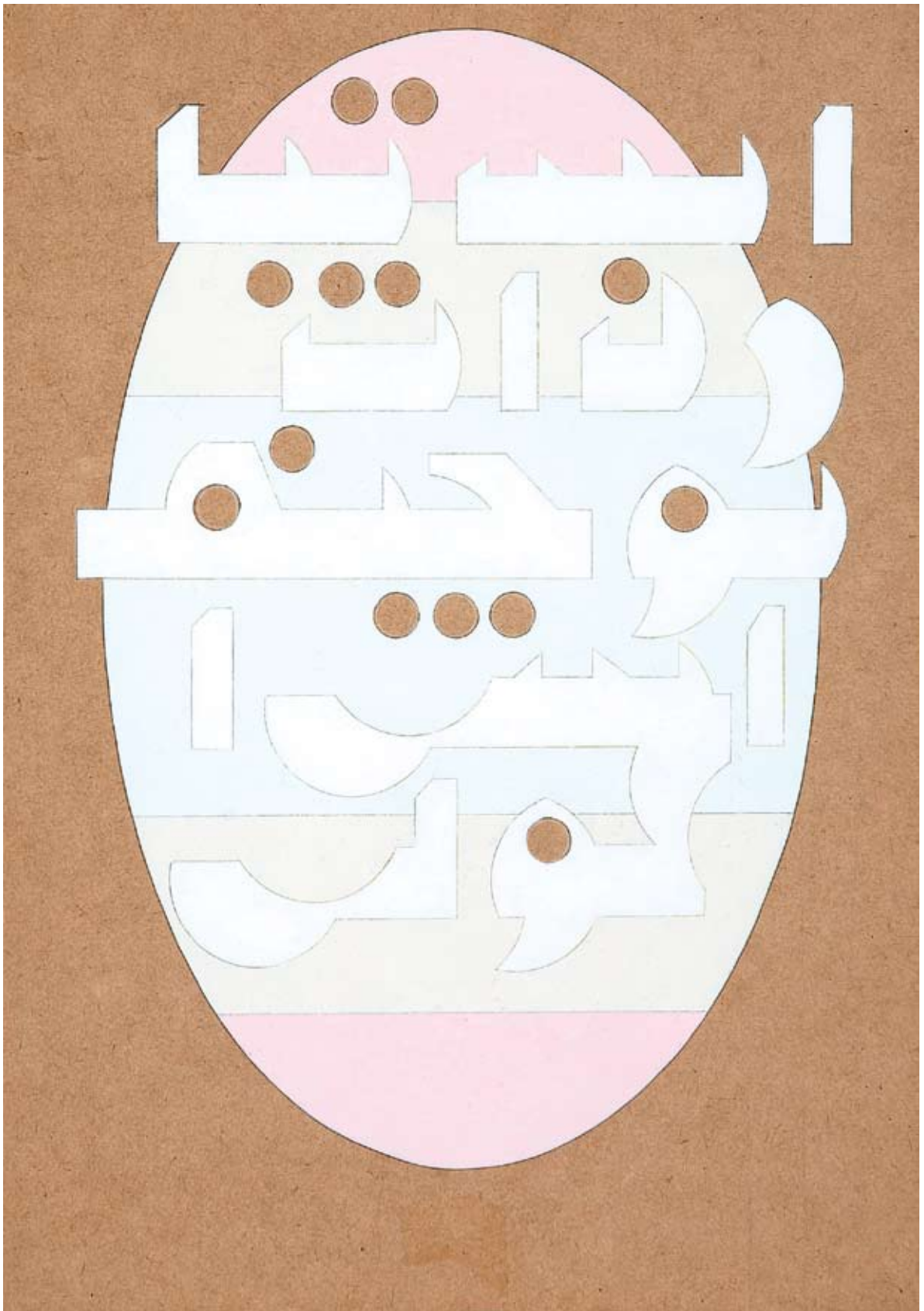
What is the most important design element in *All day I've built a lifetime* (2006)? How does this element feature in the work?

Describe Georgetti's style and technique.

Do you think Georgetti's works are purely abstract or abstracted versions of objects that can be found in reality? Do the shapes and compositions remind you of anything you have seen before?

Georgetti is influenced by architecture, interior design and fashion. Where do you see evidence of this in her works?

Georgetti says, 'what i don't paint is more important than what i do'. What do you think she means by this?



Raafat ISHAK

Responses to an immigration request from one hundred and ninety-four governments (detail)

2006–08

oil and gesso on composition board

Courtesy the artist and Sutton Gallery (Melbourne)

In 2006 **Raafat Ishak** (born Cairo, Egypt 1967) commenced a project which extends his critical reflection on the lived reality of concepts such as citizen, subject, home, nationality, language and cultural bias. Having sent requests to immigrate to 194 countries, Ishak painted the replies as a series of panels. To date, 61 responses have been painted. Each country is represented by its flag, symbolically depicted in pastel tones, and an excerpt from its response, such as ‘...go visit and see for yourself’ in stylised Arabic.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

I am an Australian citizen who wishes to immigrate to _____ and settle there permanently. I was born in Cairo, Egypt in 1967 and migrated to Australia in 1982. I obtained my Australian citizenship in 1985. I have an undergraduate degree in fine arts and a post-graduate degree in architectural history and conservation practice. I have 10 years employment experience in the art conservation field and have been practicing as a visual artist for 15 years.

I have sufficient finances to settle in a new country and start a small business. I have no criminal or prison records. I speak fluent English, Arabic and French.

I plan to immigrate alone and have no known relatives or friends in _____. I am able to wind up my financial and personal affairs in Australia as soon as I have been granted an immigration permit.

I hope you look favourably at this initial request for immigration and let me know at your earliest convenience what steps I should take next.

Yours sincerely
Raafat Ishak

Raafat Ishak, 2007

Art Elements

Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to Raafat Ishak’s *Responses to an immigration request from one hundred and ninety-four governments* (2006–2008). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork’s overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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Write a detailed description of the series *Responses to an immigration request from one hundred and ninety-four governments* (2006–2008). What images and symbols can you identify?

Why do you think Ishak has used a stylised version of Arabic in his paintings?

Why do you think Ishak chose muted pastel colours?

Do you think it is important to understand the context and concept behind *Responses to an immigration request from one hundred and ninety-four governments* (2006–2008) to appreciate it properly? Give reasons for your answer?

What is Ishak communicating about the migrant experience?



James MORRISON

Elizabeth

2004

oil on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery (Sydney)

Images by **James Morrison** (born Papua New Guinea 1959) derive from both the reality of nature and the artist's imagination. Morrison's landscapes depict plants and animals in detailed veracity; hybrid environments occasionally inhabited by figures or fantastic creatures. In their mix of fictional and natural worlds, these paintings continue a long history of myth-making and pictorial historical narratives, with a surreal twist. Morrison encourages us to look more closely at, and revisit our attitudes toward, the natural world.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

[During my childhood] in New Guinea, the natural world was very much a part of the people, either as food or adornment. I think this had a very large influence on me, the stories and myths that are absorbed as a child. It was here that the merging of an imaginary or mythic world and the natural world happened. It was part of culture and part of life. The colours and rich drama of that landscape are always in the background, even when I am painting the Australian bush.

James Morrison, 2008

Art Elements

Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to James Morrison's *Elizabeth* (2004). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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Write a detailed description of Morrison’s work *Elizabeth* (2004). Discuss the imagery, composition and technique in detail.

Do you think Morrison bases his works on reality or his imagination? Give reasons for your answer.

Morrison’s works are informed by his childhood in Papua New Guinea. Where do you see evidence of this?

Morrison's works have been described as narratives. In what ways does *Elizabeth* (2004) suggest a narrative?

Why do you think Morrison's works are composed as a panorama across a series of horizontal canvases?

What do you think Morrison is communicating to us about the natural world?

Are Morrison's landscapes an idyllic paradise? Give reasons for your response.



Nancy NANINURRA NAPANANGKA

Minna Minna

2004

paint on Belgian linen

Private Collection, Melbourne

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi (Melbourne)

For **Nancy Naninurra Napanangka** (born Wirrimanu (Balgo), Western Australia 1933), painting is a means of expressing a deep affinity with ancestral land. Each seemingly abstract composition conveys a sense of the country over which she has been appointed custodian by her maternal relatives. Painting is important for the individual, family and their community, a way of passing down knowledge and sharing culture with younger generations of Indigenous Australians.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

Art Elements

Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to Nancy Naninurra Napanangka's *Minna Minna* (2004). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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Describe the composition of *Minna Minna* (2004). How has Naninurra arranged the various elements?



Elizabeth NEWMAN

Untitled

2002

wool blanket, cotton

Courtesy the artist and Neon Parc (Melbourne)

Painting today is much more than oil or polymers on canvas. **Elizabeth Newman** (born Melbourne, Victoria 1962) refers to the objects, two-dimensional works and installations that she creates in many media as 'painting'. Newman's employment of everyday processes and affordable materials offer forms of expression and creative inquiry that are more imaginative and generous than the pre-packaged sphere of consumer society. Newman invites the viewer into the creative act, and shares her enquiry into our understanding of the self in the world.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

When I made these 'blanket paintings' (that's what I call them – these wall pieces made from soft fabrics) I thought about how they looked like geometric abstraction or minimalist style works from the past, from the twentieth century. (Of course I am thinking of a Western past.) I thought it was funny that they were soft, limp versions of an auspicious tradition, a tradition that was formative in my own development as, not only an artist, but as the sort of human subject I have come to be. What struck me most about these works was the intensity of the colour, and the depth of feeling that came with it, and how this colour and texture came already-made, by virtue of the material being already-found.

Elizabeth Newman, 2007

Art Elements

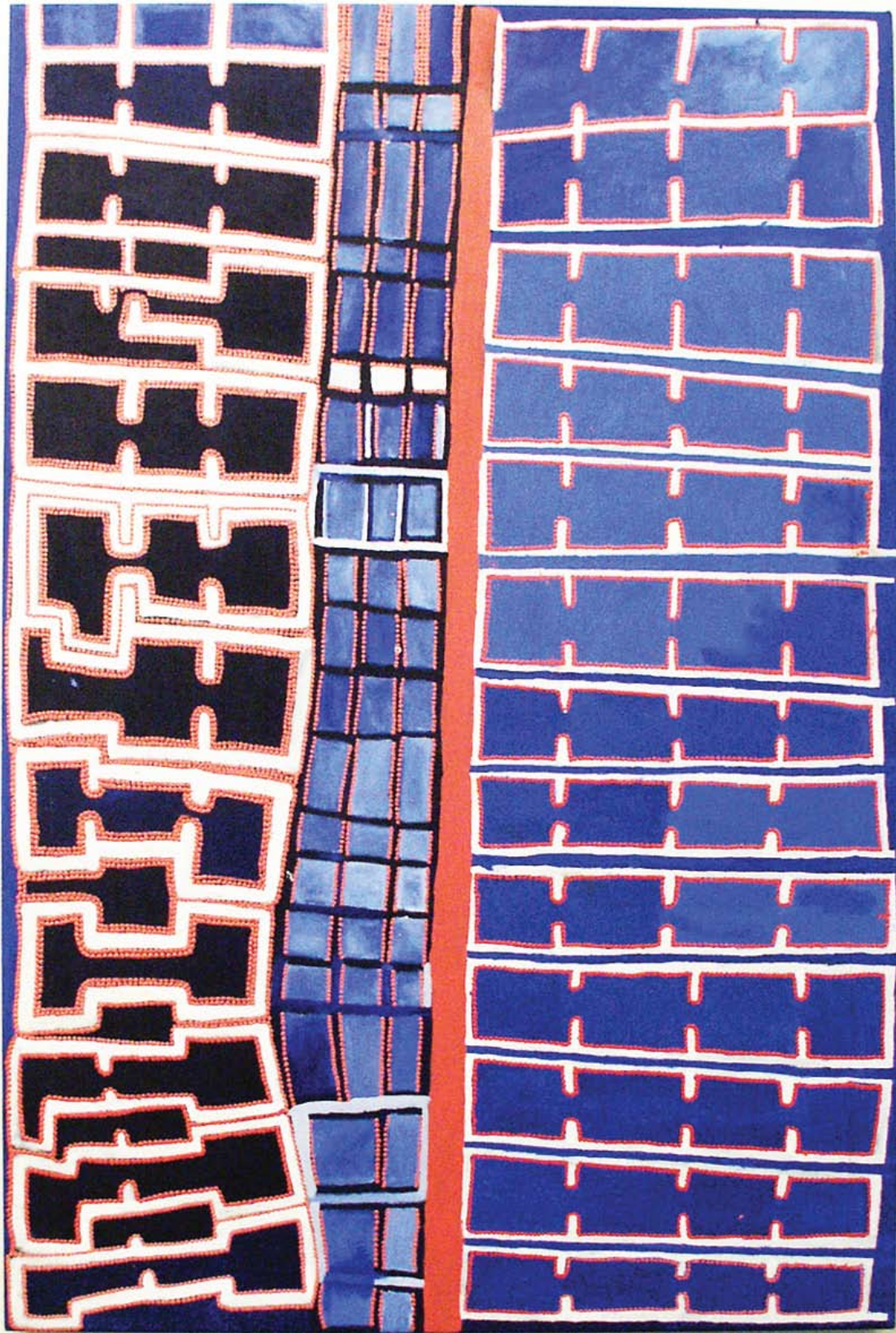
Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to Elizabeth Newman's *Untitled* (2002). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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Newman refers to her works as paintings. Do you think that her works in *The world in painting* can be defined in this way? Give reasons for your answer.

What do the various works by Newman have in common?

Why do you think Newman chooses to work with materials such as felt and wool? What qualities do these materials have?



Boxer MILNERTJAMPITJIN

Purkitji

2004

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Private Collection, Melbourne

Courtesy the artist and Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi (Melbourne)

Licensed by VISCOPY

For **Boxer Milner Tjampitjin** (born Matwanangu, near Sturt Creek, Western Australia 1934) painting is a means of expressing a deep affinity with ancestral land. Each seemingly abstract composition conveys a sense of the country over which he has been appointed custodian by his paternal relatives. Milner depicts Sturt Creek and its many inter-connecting tributaries, as well as the surrounding land.

Zara Stanhope, 2008

Art Elements

Shade the Art Elements bar graph relative to Boxer Milner Tjampitjin's *Purkitji* (2004). Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (01 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

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What is the most important design element in *Purkitji* (2004)? How does this element feature in the work?

Describe Milner's painting technique. How has he applied the paint to the canvas?

Describe the composition of *Purkitji* (2004). How has Milner arranged the various elements?

Milner's paintings depict physical and mythological aspects of his ancestral land, Billiluna, south of Halls Creek, Western Australia and the natural water course of Sturt Creek. What clues are there that these works are landscapes?

THE ARTS: CREATING AND MAKING

Practical art activities inspired by *The world in painting*

- Collect images of home interiors from design magazines as inspiration for a painting in the style of John Citizen. Concentrate on outline and flat areas of colour.
- Using Amanda Davies' works as inspiration, experiment with painting on plastic surfaces, such as transparency sheets and Perspex.
- Focus on the elements of shape, line and colour to create a modernist abstract painting in the style of Diena Georgetti. Use images of architecture, design and fashion to inspire you.
- Explore a social issue that you feel strongly about and create a painting or a series of paintings inspired by the questions and emotions it raises. You may like to work in abstraction or symbolism like Raafat Ishak.
- Create a painting of an environment that you are very familiar with – such as your favourite camping spot or the suburban landscape you live in. Like Boxer Milner Tjampitjin and Nancy Naninurra Napanangka, use an aerial perspective and include major landmarks, either symbolically or realistically. You may like to use a map to assist you.
- Create a colourful panoramic painting in the style of James Morrison by combining mystical and realistic flora and fauna. Collect various photographs of animals, plants and geological features to help you recreate detail.
- Like Elizabeth Newman, use the idea of a cut or void as the basis of a painting. You may like to brainstorm images related to these concepts in your sketchbook first. Think of the openings of vessels, the shape of torn paper or the spaces created by doorways and archways.
- Research the iconography and styles that artists have used to decorate different spiritual places, such as the walls of temples, churches or mosques. Use your research to inspire a painting that recreates a narrative or myth in simple imagery.

FURTHER RESEARCH AND QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

- Research the work of Gordon Bennett and compare it with that of John Citizen. Note the cross-referencing and appropriation that occurs between each artist's work.
- Compare the works of John Citizen and Howard Arkley. Discuss the ways each artist has commented on modern suburbia in their work.
- Research the work of early colonial Australian artists, such as Eugene von Guérard and John Glover. Compare their approach to painting landscapes with that of James Morrison.
- Research the work and ideas of conceptual artist Joseph Beuys, particularly his use of felt as a primary material. Compare his approach and materials with that of Elizabeth Newman.
- Explore the significance of modernist art and design as an influence in the work of Diena Georgetti.
- Compare Amanda Davies' interest in the medical world with that of Damien Hirst.
- Write an analysis of Diena Georgetti's work using the formal interpretation framework.
- Write an analysis of James Morrison's work using the cultural framework.
- Write an analysis of Nancy Naninurra Napanangka's or Boxer Milner Tjampitjin's work using the cultural or historical framework.
- Write an analysis of Raafat Ishak's work using the political framework.
- Write an analysis of Amanda Davies' work using the psychoanalysis framework.
- Write an analysis of John Citizen's, Elizabeth Newman's or Raafat Ishak's work using the postmodern framework.

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exhibitions that foster the exchange of ideas and
promote new works by a diverse range of artists.

Destinations

Newcastle Region Art Gallery

21 February – 10 May 2009

Latrobe Regional Gallery

27 June – 23 August 2009

Warrnambool Art Gallery

19 September – 15 November 2009

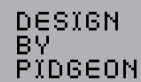
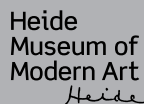
The world in painting toured Thailand, the Philippines
and Vietnam in 2008, courtesy of Asialink

www.netsvictoria.org/theworldinpainting

A comprehensive online resource featuring background
information, tour itinerary, artist biographies, education
resource, and media release.

THE WORLD IN PAINTING

An Asialink/
Heide Museum
of Modern Art
exhibition toured
by NETS Victoria



Indemnification for this exhibition is provided by the Victorian Government

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