



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2008 Art examination paper was well received and generally the responses were good.

Areas of strength

- In general students prepared well and approached the examination with confidence. Question 6 showed that many students had developed mature, perceptive and engaged understanding of the topics they researched.
- There was evidence that more students had a good understanding of the material they had studied and were thus able to use that knowledge to accurately address the questions.
- Students who nominated artists, titles and dates of work as required were advantaged as it clearly indicated what the student had written about.
- Some students used the captions of the artworks to support and consolidate their response.
- Students seemed to have a better understanding of the conventions for using an artist's surname only in the body of an essay, rather than using their first name.

Areas of weakness

- Many students are strongly disadvantaged by their lack of knowledge of basic art terminology. Students should learn, understand and apply the elements and principles consistent with the *VCE Art Study Design*.
- Students should not write in pencil and care should be taken with handwriting because if it is illegible, assessors will be unable to mark fairly.
- Reading time needs to be very carefully used. During this time students should choose the questions they will respond to and decide how they will address them. Students should ensure that they understand what each question is asking them to do.
- Many students who did not use the captions of the artworks missed the opportunity to use the information they contained, such as the title, medium, size and dates, all of which can be important in discussing technique, scale and cultural and/or historical context. For Question 1, however, it was not necessary to rewrite the caption provided.
- Many students did not complete their responses. Some students neglected to answer Question 6.
- Many responses were not awarded any marks as they did not answer the question. Some students appeared to have deleted the set question and replaced it with their own. This was particularly evident in both parts of Question 2 where students crossed out 'formal interpretation' on the examination paper and replaced it with a framework of their own choice, and/or for the second part of the question, discussed a different artwork. **No marks could be awarded for either or both parts of the question for such a response.**
- There seemed to be many formulaic essays. Learned responses do not necessarily answer the question being asked.
- Some responses to Questions 4, 5 and 6 appeared to have been copied from past Assessment Reports and were not appropriate to the questions.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

The examination criteria for the 2008 end of year examination were defined as:

- formal visual analysis
- understanding of interpretive frameworks in the analysis of artworks
- application of interpretive frameworks used in the analysis of artworks
- understanding of ideas, issues and/or arguments expressed in commentaries on art
- knowledge of artists and/or artworks from before and since 1970
- application of skills and knowledge in the analysis of artworks to support the presentation of points of view about the meanings and messages of artworks
- analysis of artworks to comment on their meanings and messages
- understanding and appropriate use of art terms and vocabulary.



Section A

Students who scored well in this section applied adequate knowledge of the formal elements to the selected artworks and made strong use of appropriate comparisons.

Some students still struggled to identify, understand and apply appropriate frameworks when making their selections from the images offered. Students appeared to have a poor understanding of the meanings and limits of these frameworks and tended to apply them to a definition of their choice.

Students need to read and understand the frameworks as presented in the *VCE Art Study Design*, pages 20 and 21.

Many students waste time and space by repeating the information given with the images without providing the appropriate context.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	2	9	16	29	24	19	4.2

- Illustration A: *Broadway Boogie Woogie* – Piet Mondrian
- Illustration B: *Man Absorbed in Landscape* – John Olsen
- Illustration C: *Women and Dog* – Marisol Escobar
- Illustration D: *Entities suspended from a Detector* – Robert Klippel

The most popular choice for both Colour and Line was a comparison between Illustrations A and B.

Many students did not gain full marks because they did not make any comparisons. In these cases descriptions of the works replaced any comparisons.

Students who wrote on only one artwork for each of the two formal elements did not gain any marks because their responses lacked the comparison required by the question. Many students spent too much time on this question. The mark indicates the weighting of the question and should have given students an idea of the amount of information required in their response. Responses should be short and direct. Students who wrote lengthy responses and included unnecessary descriptions and appreciations of the work were not advantaged. Overly long responses used up valuable time that could have been better applied to later questions.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses to Question 1.

Colour

A similar colour scheme is employed in both A and B – both oil paintings employ predominantly warm colours and yellow is pervasive in both. However, B is an explosion of colours, and earthy reds and browns seem to spit and drip in a pulsating spiral of kaleidoscopic tones, whereas A is painted in flat colours defined by controlled patterns. A is punctuated by red, but B is saturated by it, and both paintings are resultingly imbued with a sense of passion. In A, it appears that the grid of primary colours has been layed over an empty background of white, but in B there is interplay between the lemon – yellow background and the natural reds and browns which are analogous to it.

Line

A and D both use parallel lines to give their works a sense of structure. In D, forms hang from straight lines made from wood and appear still due to the fact that the wooden ‘strings’ are exactly vertical. However A looks rhythmic and the sense that the lines of paint are actually moving comes from the positioning of the lines in an irregular grid-like pattern. The concentration of lines close together on the left and right sides of A balance the work, and D is similarly balanced by the contrasting styles of the lines in its form: the ‘entities’ appear to be outlined in implied lines that are curved, and the carvings on the solid wooden form are jagged, zig-zagged and even swirling. The eye is led around the spiral in D to the protruding knobs, but also around the entire work through the network of carvings. A similar leading of the eye occurs in the lines of A.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	5	7	10	13	16	14	12	10	8	6

Many students did not seem to know what the ‘frameworks’ actually meant and how they might be applied to an understanding of the artworks. Students are encouraged to read the *VCE Art Study Design*, pages 20 and 21, where the frameworks are defined. These definitions should be discussed in class so that students have a common understanding of the meaning and that they understand what is **required** and **acceptable**. All too often the frameworks were confused



and lost reference to specifics within the artwork. Muddled statements could not achieve full marks. Many students named a framework which they then did not apply appropriately. As the artworks are generally unfamiliar, the student's analysis of them depends on their understanding of the framework.

Two frameworks were given in the 2008 examination. Many students lost marks because they ignored the instructions on the examination and substituted the given frameworks for frameworks of their choice. Others lost marks because they used two different artworks when the requirements specifically stated that only **one** artwork was to be discussed. A formal interpretation was required, as well as the application of a second framework of choice to the **same** artwork.

The following excerpts are good examples of the enhanced understanding of previously unseen artworks through the competent application of the required frameworks.

Cultural – Julie Dowling, *Icon to a Stolen Child: Teacher* (1999)

The image 'Icon to a Stolen Child: Teacher' is symbolic the story of an aboriginal child in the context of the events of Aboriginal culture in Australia. The work is immediately distinguishable as Aboriginal in the distinctive use of dot painting and colour patterning. Furthermore the dark tones of the faces identify the children and mother as part of the indigenous culture. The title referring to 'Stolen Child' draws on the cultural event of the stolen generation, involving aboriginal children taken from their parents. The event was one that we now look on with true sympathy and tenderness, and the sad expression and tears of the children truly emphasis the sadness of such a cultural event. The small stick figures also make cultural references to going to church and social interactions in other society identify religion as in imposed aspect into other cultures. In the stick drawings the aboriginals are wearing white clothing highlighting that they have been forced to wear clothes of the white people to conform to European cultures.

Gender – Max Ernst, *The King Playing with the Queen* (1944)

This is representing a masculine perspective, Max Ernst himself is a male, it illustrates the notion of male domination. The imposing 'king' figure is foremost what illustrates this, as it dominates the composition and in comparison to the diminutive queen, which suggest the male is in a 'god like' position of power. This is further enhanced by the King's body position and the hand which guides the queen, suggesting that men have absolute control over women. A sinister quality to this power is also implied in the demonic horns which crown the king's head, these could also be interpreted as bull's horns, further enhancing the sense of dominance of the male sex. Given the relatively recent period in which this was made (1977) and the extremely modern 'masculine' characteristics of the piece, the artist is perhaps suggesting that this ingrained social trend is something which pervades into the modern day and indeed something which is both the way of the past and the future.

Historical – Julie Dowling, *Icon to a Stolen Child: Teacher* (1999)

The artist in Artwork 6 appears to be referring to the stolen generation of Aboriginal children that were taken away from their families in the 1900's by the white Australian Government, assumed due to the name of the artwork. The relationship to the Aboriginal culture is made apparent by the technique of painting with dots and simplistic stick figures in the minor narrative included. The small setting illustrates in the left child's mind is a comment on the missionaries that the Aboriginal children were sent to. The white church and formal town houses are symbols of the English culture that the children were forced to live by, whereas the illustration in the right child's mind appears to be a setting of native aborigines in their natural community. These two opposing narratives are perhaps the contrast between the lives that were given to the aboriginal children. As the two children have been depicted with tears in their eyes, it can be assumed that Dowling is attempting to illustrate the sadness that they endured by being taken away from their family, or having their family taken away from them.

Postmodernism – Patricia Piccinini, *Protein Lattice Subset Red Portrait* (1997)

At the time this artwork was created there were many trials with bio-genetics and 'Protein Lattice' is the name of a technique used to grow organs. It is obvious that in this work Piccinini is making a statement about this new technology from both the title and the imagery. The parody of using a model and a rat together also comments on the use of the two 'creatures' in our society; both are 'vessels' used to convey others thoughts or ideas, or in the rat's case, organs. Piccinini did this work in reply to imagery she saw on TV of a rat with an ear on its back. She is making a statement on the ways in which our society is changing, and challenges viewers with the contrast of the beautiful and the ugly. Piccinini's work is also postmodern in that it gives no evidence of the artists' 'hand' in the work. The rat seen was actually made by a company, although the concepts behind the work belong to the artist. This type of conceptual basis for work, the parody of the model and rat and Piccinini's obvious use of photo-editing programs all allow this work to be analysed under the Post-modern framework.

Psychological – Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled* (from *Twilight* series) (2001–2002)

This photograph is eerie and surreal and appears to be an expression of the photographer's mind or a traumatic event or dream. The central figure seems scared, and perhaps confused about how the other-worldly beams of light are escaping into his house. This could be interpreted as suppressed feeling escaping and demonstrative of the fact that these feelings cannot be repressed even when everything seems solid – like a house. The colour blue has connotations of sadness so one could deduce that the artist could be battling with depression and caught in its insidious power that can literally bore through one's life, like the light has bored through the floor. The closet in the background also suggests that there is something hidden, as it alludes to the cliché



'skeleton in the closet' and may indicate that the artist has something he is ashamed of that is infiltrating his life however much he tries to block it off.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	4	5	14	22	32	9	6	6	5.5

Students expressed opinions enthusiastically due to their level of identification with the practice and viewing of street art. The majority of students wanted the work to remain in its original location and became quite passionate in presenting their reasons for its continuing display. Most students were keen to see the work age with the passage of time as befitting the nature of street art. Many students were well acquainted with Banksy's importance in this field of expression. While some students conceded that the monetary value of the work made it vulnerable to exploitation, most who wanted it relocated to a safer environment did so because of the need for its conservation.

Many students failed to gain full marks because they did not meet **all** the requirements. The question asked for reference to the commentaries **and** illustrations, **and** a personal response to the issue. A surprising number of students neglected to refer to the illustrations presented with the question.

The following excerpts show clear references to the illustration.

The small figurative stencil is a simplistic work using black and pale blue to create a mysterious figure with a question mark. This work ultimately creates a strong viewpoint and while Banksey remains unknown, plugs into the idea that this piece creates great meaning in it's context.

... street art makes a comment on society or, in many cases the placement is important to the work. As shown in the imagery on page 6, this work appears hard to see when just walking by. This indicates that perhaps the artist wanted people to look closer at/for his work

Banksy's piece depicts a small figure in a large coat, hand in pockets, with a large, round circular helmet covering the face, however with three air-hole vents placed at the position of the ears, and one above the centre of the head, open. It can be argued Banksy is reframing a political question of gas emissions ... as there is a question mark placed on the left hand side above the helmet.

The following is a complete response which addressed all assessment criteria.

As a member on a panel of experts, I would certainly choose for the artwork to be left where it is. I disagree with commentary two's statement that 'it's hardly accessible tacked to the wall of a city lane next to some rubbish bins.' It is the hidden, ambiguous locations of the 'radical' art that makes them a true treasure when they are accidentally stumbled upon. Personally I find it truly splendid when I discover such pretentious, modern arts hidden amongst alleys of the Melbourne city. It forces me, and the public of Melbourne, to stop and appreciate the beauty and power of artistic expression in our world. This is why the piece is truly valuable as a public artwork. Like commentary 3 says, 'it should be left to interact with the urban environment from which its made.' If it is taken from this context the interaction between the viewer and artwork is no longer valid. Furthermore I think the image, of an alienated figure with hatch opening from its metal head, wearing a parker, is symbolic to the dark and edgy streets of Melbourne. With a question mark above the head it makes a playful comment about the vastness of the mind, and in fact leaves the interpretation to the respective viewer/bypasser. It almost challenges the viewer with its ambiguity, serving to the true goals of public art, in broadening the artistic perception of the public. Artwork like this, as the artist believes 'is setting a world standard for graffiti and street art.' And as Melbournians we should value our standards amongst the wider world. By removing this art from the street, we are removing the artistic expression that makes Melbourn truly unique. I agree with commentary three when he/she says 'if it get damages, so what? Stencil art isn't made to last.' I think the ephemera non-permanent nature of art truly challenges the public conceptions that art has to last to have value. And while commentary two is concerned about putting it in a gallery 'to preserve it' they should be reminded that art does not need to be a commodity in an art gallery in order to be valuable, the true beauty in the work lies in the fact that like the building and streets of Melbourne, it could be damaged, destroyed at any time. The graffiti belongs on the streets of Melbourne – as an unexpected surprise for bypassers and as a way to challenge the public conceptions about the expression in art.

Section B

Generally, interpretive frameworks were handled differently in Section B than in Section A. In Section A students tended to define the frameworks themselves and apply them in an inappropriate manner. In Section B students tended to be more aware of the requirements of the study design and applied the frameworks more accurately. There was an obvious distinction between students who had followed the study design and were familiar with the frameworks and students who did not understand the meaning of the frameworks or how they could be applied. To respond



appropriately, students should ensure that they know exactly what a specific framework means and how it may be used as a tool in the analysis and interpretation of an artwork. Section B responses ranged widely across artists and media.

Students need to read questions carefully and address the required time frames for the artworks they are citing. VCE Unit 3 and 4 students are expected to be familiar with the correct spelling of artists' names, titles and dates for the works they have been studying.

Some students who appeared to be poorly prepared resorted to using the images from the insert. Other students used sample responses from previous Assessment Reports, which was not acceptable.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	7	5	9	12	15	19	17	15	4.2

Question 4 specified the use of the formal interpretation framework (visual analysis and/or style and/or technique) so **no marks** were awarded for the application of any other framework to this question. A visual analysis is **not** a simple description of content.

The most popular artists chosen for discussion were Frida Kahlo, Francisco Goya, Albert Tucker, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Edvard Munch and Vincent van Gogh.

The following are high-scoring responses to Question 4 and demonstrate the application of the formal interpretation framework.

Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column*, (1944)

The oil painting depicts Kahlo in the centre of the composition, nude with a sheet obscuring her genitalia. There is an open chasm in the centre of her abdomen which is the focal point of the piece. In the area where her spinal cord is located Kahlo has painted a traditional marble column with cracks running through it as it crumbles and breaks. The expression on her face is ambiguous, a stoic façade but tears can be seen running down her cheeks. There are nail puncturing the skin of her body, the largest one positioned near her heart. A steel corset seems to keep her open body together, the fine detailed lines indicate the tension and struggle that is taken to do so. The background balances with the cool colours of her body as the barren fissured ground has a red, warmish tinge of pigment to it. This barren landscape complements the intense detail of her physical features as it doesn't draw attention away from the small, specific brushstrokes.

Caravaggio, *Madonna di Loreto*, (1603–1606)

Caravaggio's 'Madonna di Loreto' depicts the Madonna & child on steps above two pilgrims. The two pilgrims kneel in prayer, as the Madonna & Child, living in the eyes of faith, gaze out in gentle sympathy. Halos appear on the heads of the two holy figures but show no hint of arrogance. The delicate rendering of the Madonna and child show the pair in their ideal nobility; the expressions on each figure's face immediately comprehensible. The implied lines of the outline of each figure, their eyes and clothing is all evident, while the heightened use of light & dark in the artist's use of chiaroscuro creates a focal point in the soft glowing of the child & Madonna as their light radiates out to the two pilgrims. The colours are earthy, muted and polychromatic and contrast with the velvety red of the Madonna's dress and the baby's white blanket, both of which promote ideals of Christian virginity and purity. The dirty soles of the male pilgrim's feet are so close to the viewer that they cannot be avoided and these highlight the pilgrims dirty clothes and perhaps, lack of money, suggesting God loves all, no matter how rich or poor.

Picasso, *Guernica*, (1937)

In Picasso's 'Guernica' he expresses his abhorrence at the military caste that plunged the people of Spain into an ocean of misery and death in the Spanish civil war. 'Guernica' is an extremely large piece, approximately 349.3 x 776 cm in scale. The size of the piece enables the viewers to fully interact with the work as though they themselves are a part of it. The work itself is a cramped and chaotic composition that is symmetrically balanced in three different sections. The scene portrayed within a small room depicting the bombings of the small village of Guernica has a horse with a jagged tongue standing on the central axis. Visual weight of a bull stands to the horse's left and a Spanish civilian burning in flames screams to the right. There is a high contrast in the work of the stark colours of black and white. The black presents a feeling of death and doom. The two flat planes of colour create shape and line that is jagged adding movement and chaos to the claustrophobia and hysteria of the scene ...

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	11	4	10	12	14	18	15	15	4.1

As there was no nominated space for the inclusion of the chosen framework, many students did not nominate a framework at all, and the body of their response did not include sufficient information for the chosen framework to be identified. Again, many students did not nominate accurate dates and/or titles and chose artists outside the required time



frame. VCE Unit 3 and 4 students are expected to be familiar with the correct spelling of artists' names, titles and dates for the works they have been studying.

The most popular artists chosen for discussion were Peter Booth, Gordon Bennett, Brett Whiteley, Howard Arkley, Jean-Michel Basquiat and George Gittoes.

The following are high-scoring responses to Question 5 and demonstrate the application of the formal interpretation framework.

Cultural – Bill Henson, *Untitled*, (1994/95)

In Henson's Untitled, 1994/95 the cultural interpretive framework can be used to further extract meaning and messages from the work. Henson is influenced by cultures of the past, and this type C photograph demonstrates that. His influence from the Renaissance and Baroque periods are evident in his use of chiaroscuro and the gentle glowing of the two, nude, adolescent figures relate directly to the early use of chiaroscuro in religious art. Henson also draws on different contrasts in imagery and elements to highlight the 'sub-culture' of youth. He does this through the contrasts of black and white, male and female, organic and rigid, natural and man made imagery which all help in highlighting the adolescent phase of life. This ambiguous depiction of this phase also promotes the phase as a culture all in its own. Henson's reason for working like this is that he finds the subculture of youth both aesthetically and conceptually inspiring.

Gender – Tracey Emin, *I've Got It All* (2000)

Tracey Emin's work often has a sexually provocative attitude which firmly locates her work within the feminist communication. Emin takes on the feministic belief of the 'personal as political.' In Emin's I've Got It All inkjet print 2000, Emin creates a self portrait in a barren room where she has her legs spread wide open as she shoves money to her pubic region. Emin highly influenced by the expressionist artist Edvard Munch as he was able to create a self manifestation exposing his inner weakness. However Emin's work exposes her confession subjects including rape, abortion, rejection and promiscuity. Emin creates this sexually provocative representation in order to protect her inner weakness and create a tough persona. Emin has been accused of cynically exploiting the public's darkest levels of voyeurism. She portrays herself as little more than a commodity of quick consumption and gratification by the male. The use of monochrome red in the work creates an allegory for desire, lust and love in turn evoking the audience to become engaged as she challenges them with graphical representation. However Emin created this piece in order to show how she is a successful female artist who has overcome her critics and reviewers.

Symbolism – Ah Xian, *China China bust*, 36, (1991–92)

Ah Xian's exquisite sculpture China China bust 36 is full of symbols and motifs representational to his cultural background, China. A large red fire breathing dragon wraps and coils around the head of the sculpted bust. The dragon – one of the most significant creatures in Chinese mythology – symbolises power and vigour. Its placement onto a male bust reveals a symbiosis between sculptural form and surface design. Furthermore as the dragon wraps around the sitter, it partially obscures the facial features of eyes/nose/mouth. This particular placement is symbolic of the repression of the Chinese government who silenced these people who speak out. The sitters eyes are blinded to truth, its mouth silenced, and from its nose the breath of life is cut. This holds a potent symbolism for the repression from communication. Furthermore it is confusing mix of the western conventions of the bust, and the traditional Chinese face design that in fact symbolises Ah Xian's feelings of cultural displacement and confusion after moving from China to the west. It symbolises his trouble cultural identity. The fact that his collection of busts stand passively done and isolated is furthermore symbolic of his feelings of alienation and isolation in not knowing and understanding where he culturally belongs.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
%	20	3	5	5	7	7	10	9	10	8	8	10	5.4

The most frequently discussed artists in Question 6 were Bill Henson, Peter Booth, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Gordon Bennett, Howard Arkley and Brett Whiteley. Patricia Piccinini and Tracey Moffatt were the two most frequently discussed female artists. It was good to see that a wide range of artists was chosen for discussion and covered a broad range of media.

Although there was little evidence of personal gallery experience, there was obviously a high level of enthusiastic exploration in the research of individual artworks. Despite a pleasing improvement in student engagement with the commentaries, and their increasing confidence in the use of these commentaries, it is still of concern that some students did not discern the quality of some of the comments with which they supported their arguments. Some students seemed to realise that an attributed quotation was of value in their discussion but then followed a worthwhile and legitimate quote with a word or a phrase from a dubious or unnamed source.

Commentaries are defined in the *VCE Art Study Design* as coming from 'a broad range of written and transcript material. These could include published commentaries in newspapers, periodicals, journals, Internet sites, exhibition



catalogues or monographs by art critics/historians [together with] other transcript commentaries such as lectures, museum guides and wall text, radio, video and film documentaries.'

Rather than discussing which of the commentaries was most helpful in deepening their personal understanding of specific artworks, some students chose to critique the comments of various 'expert' writers. They argued about the correctness of acknowledged expert opinions without referring to their relative value, as required in Question 6, in the development of a personal understanding of the artwork.

The following are excerpts from responses which addressed the requirements of the question in an appropriate way.

Yayoi Kusama installation, *Tender are the stairs to heaven* (2004)

The commentaries from Time Out New York art critic Joao Ribas, have helped me understand the work by challenging my own perceptions and forcing me to justify and strengthen my views to myself.

I strongly disagree with this statement, which see as highly parochial ... However, I am inclined to agree in part with Ribas' criticism of the work as 'so literal it is bland.' I think that the literalness of the work constitutes a weakness in it, as I believe conceptual art to be stronger when the underlying meanings and symbolism require more effort on the part of the reader ...

Ribas' claim that the work is a 'fetishistic illusion' is a snide comment that I prefer to interpret in a different way thanks to the perspective Whitely and Kusama have given me.

Commentaries have helped my to understand this work, and even those I disagree with have given me a lot to think about and have been as thought-provoking as the work itself.

Julie Rrap, *Philosophies of a Boudoir*

... she says, 'if I were to photograph another woman, I would be doing the same thing whilst trying to refigure it.' And this for me has a very strong insight into the mind of Rrap who thinks conceptually with true knowledge. I agree with her use of her own body 'to prevent the objectification of another female'. I think it is clever and unique. This is why I found this commentary the most helpful in allowing me to understand the artist Rrap and her work. It showed me just how personal Rrap was about conveying underlying meanings.

Gordon Bennett

The one commentary, however, that was most useful in helping to deepen my understanding of Bennet's artworks was a statement from the artist himself. Bennett has always stressed a conceptual distance in his art making, and does not feel that emotions play a major role in his work, stating 'My work is largely idea based rather than emotional content emanating from some stereotype of a tortured soul.' This comment stresses that, although Bennett is indigenous he does not want to be look at as some kind of repressed specimen. In many ways, I feel, emotional ties can be seen in his artworks, especially in works such as 'The Coming of the Light' (1987) and 'Altered Body Print' (1994). Bennett's past, his childhood and his ancestral links all play major roles in his art making and the conceptual ideas behind the works. However it was in reading the commentary on his art that I realised that my own perceptions and emotional attachment to Australia's past was actually causing me to form opinions about his work based on his race and indigenous identity. In understanding what the artist was thinking and feeling, and his motivation for making his work, my understanding of Bennett's art as conceptual has been deepened.

Emily Kame Kngwarreye

Emily Kame Kngwarreye's 'Big Yam Dreaming' produced in 1995 is a simple looking artwork yet it is in fact very complex; with what the designs are about, where they are from and the meaning and messages behind this massive 201 x 801 cm black and white work. 'Big Yam Dreaming' is a contemporary aboriginal work that could also be said to be the artist expressing herself. The mass of white tangled intertwined lines based on the black background represent yams (a bush potato) that are gathered by the women of aboriginal tribes. These yam's grew underground, their long tubular roots and stems wound themselves in and out of the ground, taking over the land underground. When ripe, their leaves would die down and the aground would crack, revealing this massive underground tangled plant.

Mary Eagle

Mary Eagle in her article 'Traditions of Representing the Land in Aboriginal Art' (Art and Australia Journal, 1999) stated that '... she (Kngwarreye) was a magician, unravelling a long, long thread in a design that her hands and in due time the earth's gradual lure would faithfully replicate'. This commentary in reply to 'Big Yam Dreaming' reveals how Kngwarreye was closely spiritually and intimately connected to her land, where she grew up an an eastern Anmatyeyere woman in the Utopia area of Alice Springs as part of the Aukahere tribe. Kngwarreye as custodian of the yam dreaming and their dreaming sites of Aukahere country knew that yams would always grow, where they would grow and expressed their abundant growth in her works. Mary Eagle also stated that the size of 'Big Yam Dreaming' helped Kngwarreye to express her message of abundance and life with 'The bigger, the better.' This commentary really cut to the core of understanding of this work.

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Eagle really helped to deepen my understanding of how this work is a celebration and a representation of abundance, life and also how Kngwarreye expresses her association with her country and her ancestral totem, the yam. I agree with Eagle's commentary 100% as they really do express the meaning and messages behind 'Big Yam Dreaming'.

Mary Eagle continued in the same article with 'her hands understood her subject over a lifetime.' Which is very true as over my research about Kngwarreye and 'Big Yam Dreaming' I have learnt and understood that Kngwarreye was born into a traditional aboriginal tribe, was given her ancestral totem, the yam which is evident in her name 'Kame' meaning Yam flower; and she also grew up participating in traditional ceremonies including the women 'Awelye' ceremonies where she first began to paint through the medium of natural ochres and the technique of body painting. It's these Awelye ceremonial body paint designs we see expressed in Kngwarreye's work, but deconstructed and reconfigured to be able to pass on to the future generations and also be viewed by white/non-aboriginal Australians and the world.

So overall Mary Eagle's commentary especially 'Her hands understood her subject over a lifetime', really deepened my insight5 into Kngwarreye's 'Big Yam Dreaming' and how it is really an expression of the artist, her life as a traditionally brought up aboriginal woman, and of her culture and it's beliefs of the Dreamtime. Passing on these Dreaming stories was of a norm in aboriginal culture, and so it is that Kngwarreye is passing on her Yam Dreaming Stories to future generations, to Australians and to the world.