



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**



Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery

Education Kit - 2

**Modern Australian Landscapes, 1940s-1960s:
Works from the University of Western Australia Art Collection**

5 May — 18 August 2018

2.1 TWO EXAMPLES OF A BRIEF ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



Sidney Nolan, *Landscape Carnarvon Range, Queensland, 1948*, Ripolin on board, 91 x 121 cm, The University of Western Australia Art Collection, Tom Collins Memorial Fund, 1953

SIDNEY NOLAN

Born in Melbourne in 1917, Nolan lived, studied and worked in Victoria until after World War II. In 1942 Nolan was conscripted into the army where he was promoted to Lance Corporal in Charge of Stores in and around country Victoria. He performed these duties until in 1944 he went “Absent without Leave”, prior to being called for duty to New Guinea; finally stating that his role as an artist and as a soldier were incompatible. In 1951 Nolan traveled overseas to England for the first time. He soon returned to live more permanently in London in 1955, where he remained until his death in 1992 (Rosenthal, 2002).

Sidney Nolan is one of Australia’s most renowned artists of the Modernist era. He embodied a ‘non academic’ attitude towards painting and held a deeply ingrained desire to use new materials. His unconventional use of art materials included using commercial enamel house paints, roof tiles and boot polish. Nolan also produced exciting, unique and innovative results in surface qualities with his use of ripolin paint in many of his works (Kubik, 2006).

His work often focused on Australian visions, myths, legends, heroes and struggles that were linked with the forging of Colonial Australia. Nolan is well known for

depicting narratives including the figures of Ned Kelly, Burke and Wills and the Convict and Mrs Fraser and on the theme of Gallipoli.

Nolan was committed to figurative representation of the landscape, resisting abstraction but he often rendered the scrubby bush with a flick of the brush, reducing shapes in the landscape to their essential form (Rosenthal, 2002).

Endless horizons and searing heat is captured in many of his works that feature a powerfully simplified landscape and the use of intense colour and bold brushwork.

REFERENCES

- Rosenthal, T. G, *Sidney Nolan*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2002.
- Kubik, Maria E, ‘Looking behind Kelly’s helmet: The methods and materials of Sidney Nolan’, *AICCM Bulletin*, 30:1, 2006, pp 5 -11. DOI:10.1179/bac.2006.30.1.001



Fred Williams, *Foothill landscape*, 1968, oil on canvas, 122.5 x 132.5cm, The University of Western Australia Art Collection, The Joe and Rose Skinner Bequest, 1981, © Fred Williams Estate



Fred Williams, *untitled (trees in a landscape, Mittagong)*, 1957, oil on board, 94 x 88.5cm, The University of Western Australia Art Collection, Tom Collins Bequest Fund, 1961, © Fred Williams Estate

FRED WILLIAMS

Fred Williams (1927- 1982) was born and lived in Melbourne, Victoria. He studied in Melbourne at the National Gallery School and George Bell's School of Art until moving to England to study at The Chelsea School of Art in London from 1951-1956. Williams then returned to live and work in Melbourne until his death in 1982 (McCaughey, 2008).

When returning to Australia, Williams focused on interpreting the unique aesthetic of the Australian bush and landscape. Many of Williams' works are devoid of focal points and have strong or prominent horizon lines that indicate his fascination with the meeting point of the earth and the sky. He sought to depict vast horizons and to reinterpret the pictorial planes of the landscape, devising his own perspective by altering the horizon that calls to mind approaches in Indigenous art. (Coleman, 2017)

Williams' work often explores opposing interpretations of the Australian landscape; in doing this, at times he renders the landscape as luminous, shimmering, and filled with light and heat, and then, alternatively, the visions can be stifling, gloomy and even oppressive. (McCaughey, 2008)

Williams' minimal aesthetic embodies the vast Australian landscape and its spaciousness. Forms within landscapes can appear to be reduced to abstract geometric shapes, with often, the inclusion of daubs and dashes that have become characteristic of his style. Small sumptuous brush marks are often made to denote vegetation; with the use of a restricted palette, and the application of warm earth colours, including brilliant ochre, yellows, rich browns and sienna, that often fill the picture plane. (McCaughey, 2008).

REFERENCES

- McCaughey P, *Fred Williams 1927-1982*, Murdoch Books, Sydney, Australia, 2008.
- Coleman S, 'Fred Williams Changed the Way We See.' *Art Guide Australia*, 2017, August 15, pp 1-5. Retrieved from <http://art-guide.com.au/fred-williams-changed-the-way-we-see>

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2.2 ANALYSIS TASK

The following analysis task has been adapted with permission from a Visual Arts General Year 11 sample assessment task produced by the WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

Describe artworks, using specific art language and terminology. Discuss the relationship between the compositional devices evident in the artwork and how these contribute to its meaning.

Use a critical analysis framework (STICI) to analyse the work of a selected artist and his/her work. Discuss how art elements and design principles have been used in the composition.

What you need to do

Visual analysis

Examine artworks: Graffiti/placemat activity

Study the landscapes produced by Australian artists in the *Modern Australian Landscapes, 1940s -1960s: Works from the University of Western Australia Art Collection* exhibition, including those by John Passmore, Howard Taylor, Guy Grey-Smith, Elise Blumann and Fred Williams.

Complete a graffiti or placemat sheet responding to their work. Write their name in the centre circle and then analyse their artwork according to the following headings

- ideas and concepts
- colour palette
- media and techniques
- elements and principles.

Analysis worksheet:

Choose one specific artwork to analyse in more detail. Complete the guided questions on the worksheet. Use full sentences to answer.

Personal response

Representing the Australian landscape

Explain the relationship between the elements and principles used in the work e.g. line and the illusion of depth, colour and unity, shape and rhythm and pattern. Discuss compositional devices and textural effects, you find most appealing about the artwork.

Meaning and purpose

Interpreting artworks

What unique features of the Australian landscape have been communicated in the work? Refer to the artist's compositional devices, use of colour, media and techniques. How effective do you think the work is in describing the Australian landscape?

Social, cultural and historical contexts

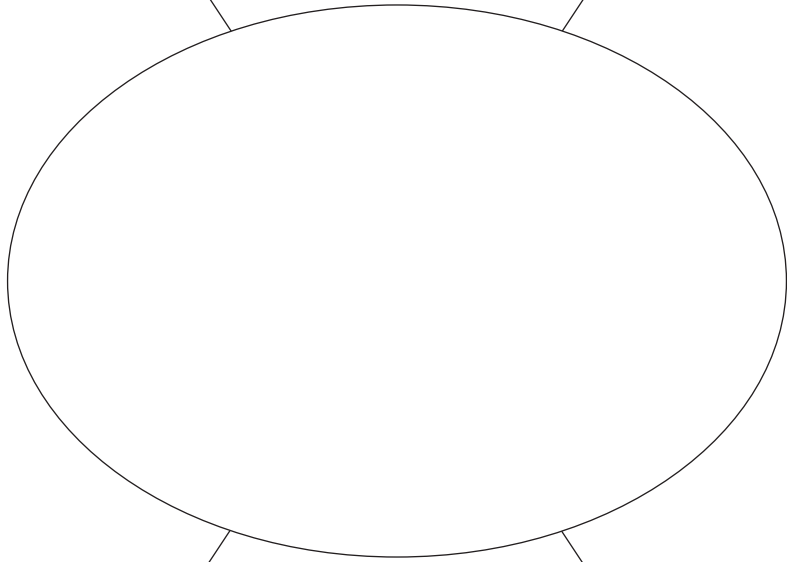
Research Modernist views on the Australian landscape. Consider the effects of the Second World War and of returning soldiers working as artists. Look for reasons why artists were seeking to review Romantic visions of the Australian landscape. What influences can be seen from European art movements such as, Cubism and Surrealism and artists such as, Cezanne and Matisse. Summarise this information in paragraph form.

Ideas and Concepts

Media and techniques

Colour palette

Elements and principles



CRITICAL ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Name: _____

Analyse the painting using the following guided questions.

Artist's name: _____

Title of artwork: _____

Media and dimensions: _____

1.

List ideas and feelings communicated by the artist e.g. vast distance.

2.

What is the main subject of the painting? Describe how the artist has composed the painting.

3.

Explain the relationship between the elements and principles used in the artwork you are critically analysing e.g. line and the illusion of depth, colour and unity, shape and rhythm and pattern.

4.

Can you find symbols of the Australian landscape in the work (e.g. water holes, camp sites, windmills)?

5.

How does the artist achieve an illusion of space, depth and distance? Is there an aerial view? Are there overlapping shapes? Are the objects diminishing in size from foreground to background?

6.

How has the artist unified the composition i.e. choice and application of colour?

Artist's name: _____

Title of artwork: _____

Media and dimensions: _____

IDENTIFY

1. In the box below, identify the elements and principles of art.

Elements

Principles

EXPLAIN

2. How effective has the artist been in utilising the elements and principles in their artwork.

DISCUSS

3. Discuss the compositional devices and textural effects you find most appealing about the artwork.

REFLECT

4. How does the artwork make you feel and can you relate to the artist's interpretation of the Australian Landscape?

Artist's name: Fred Williams

NOTE TAKING

1. Use both published material (e.g. books, journals, magazines) and the internet to explore the work of Fred Williams.

SUMMARISE

2. Summarise in paragraph form what you have learnt about the context and inspiration of Fred William's artwork.

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2.3 IMAGE ANALYSIS

Compare and Contrast these artworks

Note the convention for an artwork caption:

Artist name, title of artwork (in italics), date, materials, size (in cm with height x width), name of the collection, means of acquisition*, year of acquisition.

*Means of acquisition may be:

Donor

Funding source (eg Memorial Trust, Bequest, Donated funds).

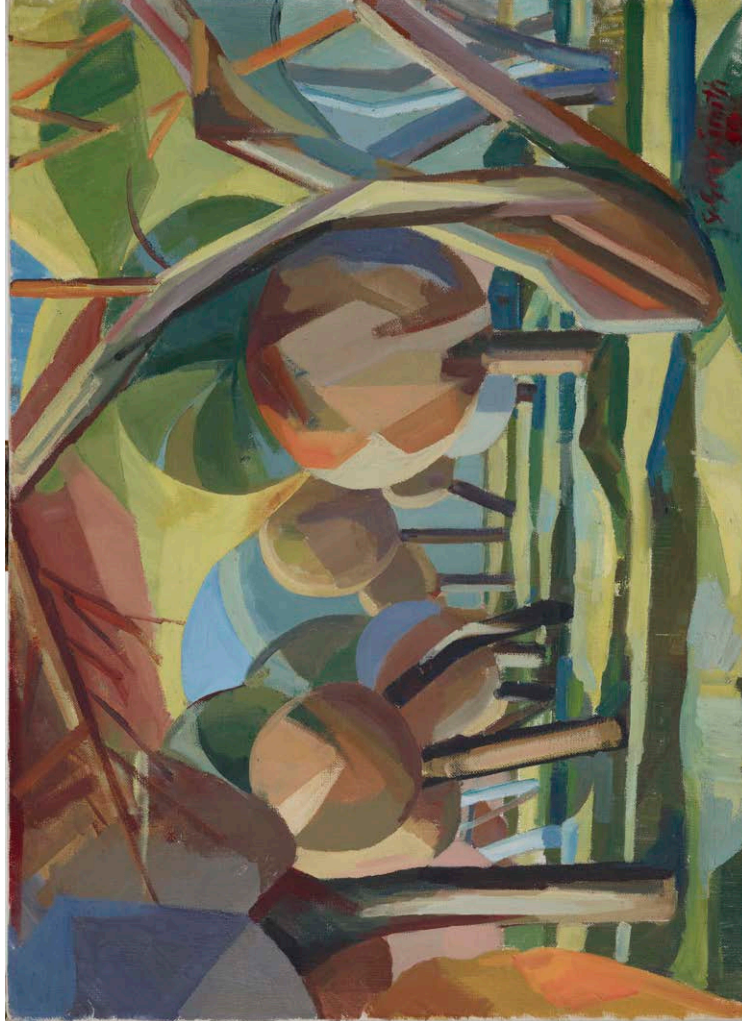
Image Pair

Artwork A



Fred Williams. *untitled (trees in a landscape, Mittagong)*. 1957, oil on board, 94 x 88.5 cm. The University of Western Australia Art Collection, Tom Collins Bequest Fund, 1961. © Fred Williams Estate

Artwork B



Guy Grey-Smith. *Blackboy grove*. 1950, oil on canvas, 54 x 75.5cm. The University of Western Australia Art Collection, Gift of Dr and Mrs R K Constable, 1985. © Guy Grey-Smith Estate

View the Image Pair and complete the tables below addressing the use of elements and principles in each artwork.

What is your first impression?	
Artwork A	Artwork B

How have the artists utilised the elements and principles of art? Elements: Line, colour, shape, space, texture, tone, form Principles: Movement, rhythm, unity, balance, repetition, emphasis, scale	
Artwork A	Artwork B

How have the artists manipulated style, media, techniques and artforms to create their artwork?

Artwork A

Artwork B

Summarise what you have learnt about the context, meaning and inspiration of these paintings.

Artwork A

Artwork B



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CULTURAL PRECINCT

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Gallery open
Tues - Sat, 11am - 5pm
FREE ADMISSION

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Cover image: **Sidney Nolan**, *Landscape Carnarvon Range, Queensland*, 1948, Ripolin on board, 91 x 121 cm, The University of Western Australia Art Collection, Tom Collins Memorial Fund, 1953