

HEAD-TO-HEAD: shifting perspectives in Australian portraiture

EDUCATION RESOURCE

About this resource

This resource is designed to support self-guided visits to the exhibition. It is pitched at middle years' students with scope to adapt for junior and senior year levels. Suggested activities include partner and group based discussions, independent drawing, and writing exercises. Students are asked to engage with selected art works and respond to guided questions about portraiture and representations of the human subject. Questions also guide reflections on individual identity and the inner self, and broader themes of cultural identity. Allow 60 – 120 minutes depending your focus. Guided tours can be arranged by appointment.

Exhibition catalogue available [here](#)

Flinders University Art Museum

Ground floor | Social Sciences North

Off carpark 5 | Humanities Road

Flinders University | Bedford park

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Opening hours

Mon – Fri 12 – 2pm or by appointment



Alignment with the Australian Curriculum

Learning Areas: The Arts, English, Humanities and Social Sciences

Cross Curriculum Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture

General Capabilities: Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding

Introduction to the exhibition

HEAD-TO-HEAD: shifting perspectives in Australian portraiture assembles 25 works to explore the evolution of portraiture in Australia from the late 19th to the early 21st century.

Formal portraits commissioned to suggest the power, status, virtue, beauty, or other qualities of the sitter, hang alongside less conventional works in which artists have depicted public figures as well as acquaintances, friends and family to express both personal and political narratives. Innovative interpretations of portraiture are also evident in the style of works ranging from the realist and representational to the abstract and performative.

In addition, a number of revelatory self-portraits expose shifting notions of identity and constructions of the self. Together, these portraits reflect upon the changing language of representation and evolving relationships between artist, subject and viewer.

Key themes encountered across the works include the historical and contemporary representation of Indigenous Australians, first and second generation migrants, and women. The exhibition also highlights the choice of unusual subjects in the depiction of unlikely heroes and everyday Australians, as well as the influence of our social and political preoccupations in the formation of cultural identity.

Focus questions

1. What is the difference between a portrait and self portrait?
2. Why do artists make portraits and self portraits?
3. Which symbols or objects would you choose to represent yourself?
4. What does the word 'identity' mean to you?
5. How would you describe 'Australian' identity?

Suggested activities

1. Find your favourite work in the exhibition, describe why you like it.
2. Write a story about a person depicted in a portrait.
3. Find two works that are similar, with a partner talk about why have you chosen them.

Look Again! Emily Kame Kngwarreye



Emily Kame Kngwarreye c.1910 - 1996
Australian, Eastern Anmatyerre people

Awelye 1994
screenprint, ink on paper
edition 4/36
85 x 56.5 cm

Gift of Rodney Gooch (The Rodney Gooch personal collection)
Flinders University Art Museum collection 3715
© Emily Kame Kngwarreye/Copyright Council, 2018

Eminent Indigenous Australian artist Emily Kame Kngwarreye began painting around the age of 70. A custodian of Alhalkere, a tract of land north-east of Alice Springs, her works are expressions of the Eastern Anmatyerre beliefs and traditions that informed her life.

The bold horizontal stripes of *Awelye* are inspired by women's body paint designs used for ceremonial song and dance, which typically cover the breasts, neckline and upper shoulders, and represent the associated knowledge of country. These gestural and rhythmic marks simultaneously make reference to Kngwarreye's 'Dreaming self' and her Country as profound expression of the artist's identity.

This representation of individual and cultural identity could be compared to the symbols of status, wealth and religion depicted in traditional Western portraiture.

Write down three attributes that define your identity.

Make a work that depicts these attributes in a non-figurative way.

Look Again! Ann Newmarch



Ann Newmarch born 1945
Australian

Ann 1994
pastel on paper
56 x 38 cm

Gift of Dr Janice Lally
Flinders University Art Museum collection 4435
© courtesy the artist, 2018

South Australian artist Ann Newmarch has had a long and prolific career as an artist and activist. Driven by the belief that the 'personal is political', a rallying slogan of second-wave feminism, she has used her art practice to tackle social and political issues, revealing inequalities and calling for change. *Ann* is an intimate self-portrait that reflects on the artist's frustrations and will to create.

Looking closely at Newmarch's drawing, how do you think she is feeling? What elements of the work illustrate these emotions for you?

Draw a self portrait that expresses your own political or personal beliefs and ideas.

Without looking in the mirror, make a drawing of your face by using your hands to feel the surface and structure.

Look Again! Christian Thompson



Christian Thompson born 1978
Australian, Bidjara people

*Museum of others (Othering the explorer:
James Cook)* 2016
c-type photograph on metallic paper
edition of 6
120 x 120 cm

On loan to Flinders University Art Museum
TAN 1830.001

© courtesy the artist and Michael Reid
Sydney + Berlin, 2018

Christian Thompson's practice explores notions of identity, cultural hybridity and history through the mediums of performance and self-portraiture.

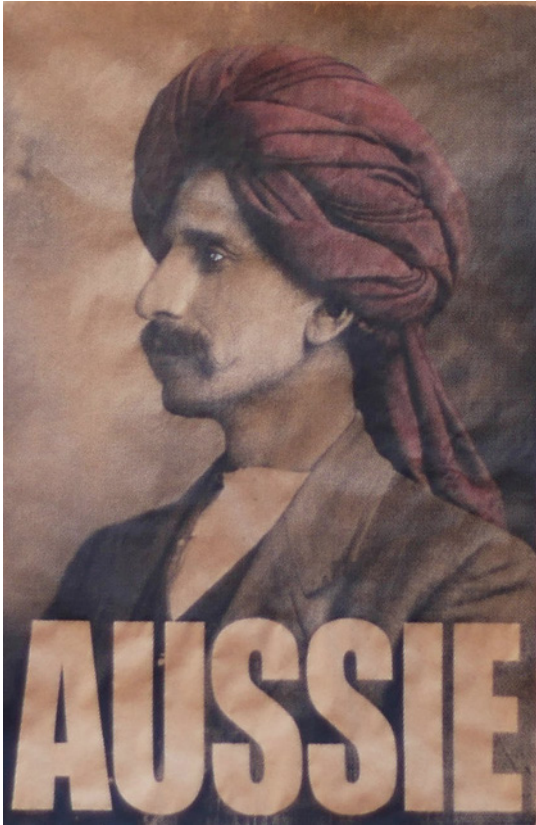
The artist comments that much admiration is given to the authors of the images in collections, whilst the subjects themselves remain nameless. In response he created a 'Museum of Others', reworking the portraits of famous European explorers and anthropologists by removing and replacing the eyes in each with his own.

As Thompson steps inside the sitter, he asks 'how did you divide up and classify your world?' and in doing so, returns a new gaze to unpack the past and produce an entirely different perspective on the present.

Contemporary artists challenge our ideas and assumptions about culture, society and politics. What ideas do you think Christian Thompson is challenging in this photograph? Explain how he does this.

With a partner, discuss what you see in this work of art. Write a list of questions you would like to ask the artist.

Look Again! Peter Drew



Peter Drew born 1983
Australian

Monga Khan from the series *Aussie* 2016
handcoloured screenprint, colour inks on brown paper
116.2 x 80.8 cm

Flinders University Art Museum collection 5669.009
© courtesy the artist, 2018

When you address the public through the street you're entering into a tradition that emphasises our fundamental freedom of expression. over the value of property. [Artist Statement, 2016]

Adelaide-based artist and independent filmmaker Peter Drew's *Aussie* poster campaign continues his line of questioning around Australia's national identity and history of immigration. Sourced from the Australian National Archive, selected images depict individuals who were granted exemptions from the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, due to their work being considered essential to the growing economy. The proud stature of the 'hero poster' Monga Khan challenges public perceptions and can be seen as symbolic of all those who have endured systemic racial discrimination.

Why do you think Peter Drew presents his politically motivated posters on 'the street'?

Monga Khan was a camel driver and a hard worker who contributed greatly to the success of Australia's development. What is the message behind this work of art?

What is your family's cultural heritage? Write a story or draw a picture that illustrates your heritage.