



# American Masters

Secondary education resource

**NGA**  
National Gallery of Australia

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

**TERRA**  
FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART

## Teacher's notes

This *American Masters* education resource invites students to engage with influential modern art movements through responding and making.

*American Masters* is perfectly suited to foster students' critical and creative thinking skills. By applying a sequence of exercises, students will develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of problem solving processes and interpretation. Through the creation of their own works of art students are required to identify, explore and organise information and ideas.

This resource is directly linked to the Australian Curriculum and is designed to develop successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active, informed citizens. Students are encouraged to reflect on *American Masters* from a contemporary perspective and to consider and question values, attitudes, perspectives and assumptions. This resource provides an opportunity for students to develop their understanding of how and why artists realise their ideas through different art practices, processes and viewpoints.

This resource is designed for:

- Secondary students, and can be adapted for upper primary or tertiary students
- Visual Arts students, but also has relevance for English, Philosophy, Science and Humanities and Social Sciences students.

This resource may be used to:

- complement an experience of American Masters through activities and ideas to assist with preparation for the gallery visit
- as a reference when students are viewing the work; or to deepen understanding and engagement post-visit.

The resource includes the following learning activities:

- **Speak your mind:** Talking points or provocations to facilitate contemplation and discussion as well as offer opportunities for students to engage with art history and theory through exploratory research tasks.
- **Get to work:** Creative art making suggestions that explore key concepts.
- Think it through: Ideas, considerations and extensions to aid students in their art making.

The NGA values the feedback of students and teachers on the education resources we have produced. To share students' work, or provide feedback, email: [education@nga.gov.au](mailto:education@nga.gov.au)

Further education resources can be found on our website <https://nga.gov.au/Collections/Resources/>

## Introduction

*American Masters 1940–1980* highlights the strength of the National Gallery of Australia's American art holdings. The collection features 'destination' works such as Jackson Pollock's *Blue poles* 1952 and Willem de Kooning's *Woman V* 1952–53—controversial when purchased in the 1970s, these acquisitions are now considered visionary.

This survey traces key tendencies in the rise of American art on the world stage, starting with the post-World War II period when a generation of young Americans, influenced by émigré artists from Europe, challenged traditions and reinvented modern art. These artists used traditional materials in bold ways, championed new ones and embraced industrial, commercial, found and natural media. They responded to the rapidly-changing world around them, and created a new way of looking at it—one that openly disregarded the rules of art and challenged viewers and critics alike.

This resource addresses the following areas:

- Abstract Expressionism
- Colour-field and Post-painterly abstraction
- Neo-Dada, Pop art and Multiples
- Minimalism and Conceptual art
- Figuration: Photorealism and Funk
- Light
- Land art



**Mark Rothko** 1957 # 20 1957, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1981 © Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2018

## Research links and related resources

Abstract Expressionism

<https://nga.gov.au/exhibition/AbstractExpress/Default.cfm>

Abstract Expressionism secondary school worksheet

<https://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/ABSTRACTEXPRESS/pdf/NGA-AbEx-SecondaryWorksheet.pdf>

Soft Sculpture

<https://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/SoftSculpture/Default.cfm>

Andy Warhol

<https://nga.gov.au/warhol/index.cfm>

James Turrell

<https://nga.gov.au/JamesTurrell/>

Jackson Pollock

<https://nga.gov.au/Pollock/index.cfm>

Frank Stella: Saving Abstraction

<https://nga.gov.au/Stella/>

Kenneth Tyler Collection

<https://nga.gov.au/internationalprints/tyler/artists/default.cfm>

Robert Motherwell: At Five in the Afternoon

<https://nga.gov.au/motherwell/>

MOMA Learning

[https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/tools\\_tips](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/tools_tips)

## Abstract Expressionism

Abstract Expressionism describes the gestural abstract art that developed in New York after World War II and into the 1950s. The style has its roots in the social and artistic climate of the 1920s and 1930s when social realism and regionalism dominated, but would not have emerged without the European émigrés, including some of the Surrealists. New York epitomised the creative intellectual ferment of this period; as a haven for migrants it offered American artists the opportunity to assimilate outside artistic developments.

A group of innovative painters—notably Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Mark Rothko—shared a similarity of outlook rather than a cohesive style. Characterised by a spirit of revolt and aggressive self-determination, as well as an insistence on freedom of expression, Abstract Expressionism is associated with spontaneity, intuition and automatism in addition to symbolism, ritual imagery and the unconscious as the source of art. The words 'abstract' and 'expressionist' do not describe precisely the range of styles of these artists: what links these works is a feeling for what the paint surface itself can express. The artists—called the New York School—are seen as the first major American art movement, marking the transition from Paris as the centre of the Western art world.



**Jackson Pollock** *Totem lesson 2* 1945, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1986 © Pollock-Krasner Foundation. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2018

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**Willem de Kooning** *Woman V* 1952–53, oil and charcoal on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1974. © The Willem de Kooning Foundation, New York. ARS/ Copyright Agency, 2018



## Exploring Expressionism

### Speak your mind

- Compare Jackson Pollock's *Blue poles* and Willem de Kooning's *Woman V*. Work in a small group to brainstorm the similarities and differences that you can see. What are the most prominent visual elements in each work of art? How would you describe the way that paint has been applied to the canvas? What do you think connects Pollock and de Kooning as Abstract Expressionists and what sets them apart?
- De Kooning indicated that his painting *Woman V* drew inspiration from ancient Mesopotamian sculptures of the female figure he had seen at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, as well as magazine images of pinup girls from the 1950s. Examine de Kooning's sources of inspiration and discuss the connections you see with *Woman V*. Consider the representation of form, stylisation of features and the use of distortion and exaggeration. One critic described *Woman V* as a 'disgrace to every woman'. Why do you think this representation of the female figure provoked such criticism?

### Get to work

Abstract Expressionists incorporated elements of chance and spontaneity into their painting processes. Traditional tools such as brushes were replaced by unconventional tools including basting syringes, sticks, knives and fluid paint. See Jackson Pollock in action in this archival video <https://www.sfmoma.org/jackson-pollocks-drip-painting-process/> and hear curator Christine Dixon talking about Pollock's painting *Blue poles* in the NGA's video <https://cs.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=36334>.

Create your own 'action' painting on a large piece of canvas or paper placed on the ground. Try using a continuous wrist motion to produce swirling rhythms of lines forming an intricate and delicate lacework. Explore further ways that you can move your body to transfer energy or emotion to the canvas or paper. Allow intuition and spontaneity to guide your process; step back every now and again to consider how each layer interacts with and informs the next.

### Think it through

Free your painting action by devising an unconventional painting tool, such as a paint brush taped to the end of a long piece of timber dowel. Choose a heavy weight paper suitable for acrylic paint to prevent the paper from warping. Taping the edges of the paper to the ground also helps. Use fluid acrylic paint and build up layers of paint. Choose your colours thoughtfully. Restrict your palette to 5 vibrant colours to produce a dynamic painting.



## Colour-field and Post-painterly abstraction

In the cold war climate, post-war American abstract painting, officially promoted abroad, shifted from being the 'radical' vanguard to the status quo. 'Post-painterly abstraction' was a label invented by the influential art critic Clement Greenberg to encompass a diverse array of painters of the early 1960s whose work, he argued, exhibited a perceptible 'clarity and openness'. The decade ushered in a new generation of so-called colour-field and hard-edge painters. Artists who came to the fore in the 1960s were more likely to be American born and bred, although this did not preclude European influences in their work.

Two key artists whose works are represented in the collection are Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis. Frankenthaler is recognised for her groundbreaking technique of pouring paint onto an un-primed canvas allowing it to soak in and create a staining effect. Louis was influenced by Frankenthaler's approach and is known for his monumental works that celebrate the liquid materiality of the paint and give as much significance to the white areas of the canvas as the painted sections.

This section of the exhibition also features Louise Bourgeois' work which developed over decades and incorporated a wide range of media, remaining relatively unknown until the 1970s. The acquisition of sculptures such as *C.O.Y.O.T.E.* 1941–48 by the National Gallery signalled a renewed interest in her practice.



**Louise Bourgeois** *C.O.Y.O.T.E.* 1941–48, painted wood, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1981 © The Easton Foundation. VAGA/ Copyright Agency, 2018



**Helen Frankenthaler** *Other generations* 1957, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1973 © Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2018

**Morris Louis** *Dalet zayin* 1959, synthetic polymer paint on unprimed canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1974 © Morris Louis. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2018

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## Approaches to abstraction

### Speak your mind

- Compare Helen Frankenthaler's *Other generations* and Morris Louis' *Dalet zayin*. Work in a small group to brainstorm the similarities and differences you can see. What are the most prominent visual elements in each work of art? How would you describe the aesthetic or style of these works? What ideas or experiences do you think each artist was interested in expressing, and what do you see that makes you say this?
- Louise Bourgeois's *C.O.Y.O.T.E.* and Alexander Calder's *Night and day* are abstract sculptures. While they explore different themes in their work, drawing is an integral part of each of their art practices. Research [Bourgeois](#) and [Calder's](#) processes of translating their ideas from drawing to sculpture, and discuss the similarities and differences in their approaches. How do the themes they are exploring manifest in their works?

### Get to work

Alexander Calder introduced movement into his sculptural practice, making suspended works called mobiles, such as *Night and day*. Before making mobiles, Calder used wire to create 3D line drawings of people and animals. Explore the concept of movement by creating your own 3D line drawing out of chenille sticks (pipe cleaners). Start by looking through books and magazines for photographs of people or animals in action, such as a person dancing or a horse jumping. Select a photograph and use a pen or pencil to make a contour drawing, only using line to describe the edges of your subject. Use this drawing as a starting point for your 3D line drawing. Explore different methods of construction; for example, create coils by wrapping the chenille sticks around a rod.

### Think it through

Think about how to present your 3D line drawing: freestanding, mounted on a board or hanging from the ceiling. Consider collaborating with your classmates to join your 3D line drawings together in a mobile that interacts with the surrounding space as it moves with the flow of air. Notice how the structure of Calder's *Night and day* incorporates multiple points of connection to encourage complex patterns of motion.

## Neo-Dada, Pop art and Multiples

Pop art was an international movement based on consumerist imagery and mass culture: in the mid-1950s, 55% of American homes had television sets and by the early 1960s archetypal images shaped by vernacular and contemporary mass culture were impossible to ignore. As well as creating works that reflect the prosperity of the post-war period, consumerism, technological prowess, commercialisation, conformism and the mass media, Pop artists hinted at less-celebrated aspects of American society—civil unrest, urban poverty and cold war tensions.

The earliest Pop artists were called Neo-Dada, as their use of commonplace objects and subjects suggested an affinity with the readymades of Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. Pop artists adopted impersonal machine-like surfaces, often duplicating commercial techniques by hand. Many Pop objects confuse notions of what is painted illusion and what is reality. Pop art and the idea of the multiple, a three-dimensional object issued in an edition, came together to produce a natural embodiment of this art form. Multiples, like their precursor the editioned print, furthered the democratic ideal of making avant-garde art available to the widest possible audience, undermining the exclusive nature of the unique and 'original' work of art.

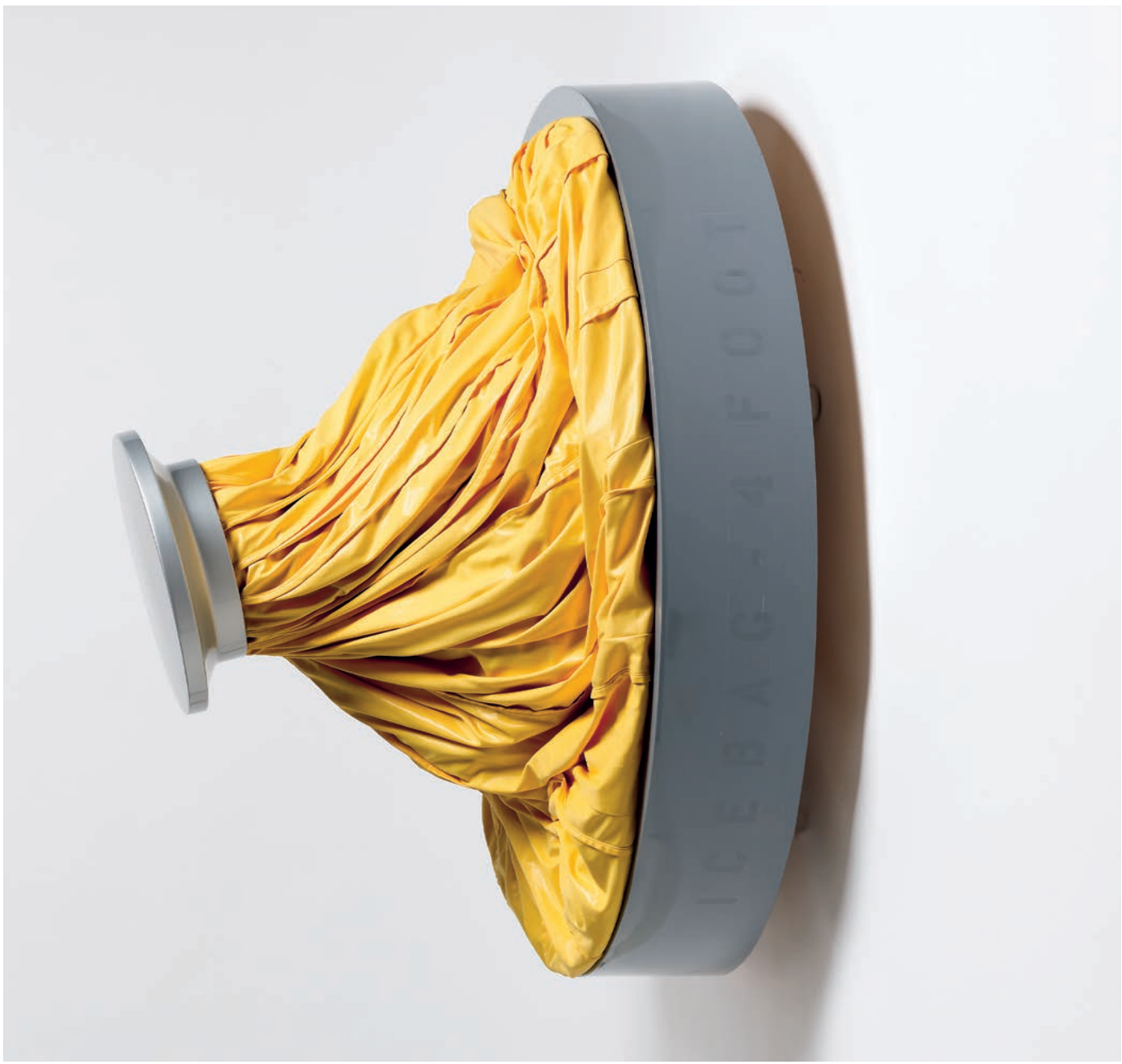


**Man Ray** *Pain peint* [*Blue bread: favourite food for bluebirds*] 1958, painted plaster 'bread' and metal scales, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1977 © Man Ray. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2018



Andy Warhol *Campbell's Soup* 1968, screenprint, printed in coloured inks, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, The Poynton Bequest 2006 © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2018

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**Claes Oldenburg** *Ice bag—scale B* 1971, yellow nylon fabric, moulded coloured synthetic polymer, muslin lining, self-adhesive vylene tape, silver lacquer, anodised parts, steel hydraulic mechanism, zipper, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1975 © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen

## Pop art perspectives

### Speak your mind

- Compare Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup I* and Claes Oldenburg's *Ice bag—scale B*. Work in a small group to brainstorm the similarities and differences you can see. What are the most prominent visual elements in each work of art? What ideas might these artists be exploring in their work and what do you see that makes you say this? What do you think connects Warhol and Oldenburg as Pop artists and what sets them apart? How do the visual elements and ideas explored in Pop art differ from Abstract Expressionism?
- Pop art, short for 'popular art', greatly appealed to the general public of the time. Andy Warhol's works are well known for featuring famous people and consumer products of the 1960s and 1970s. He once said, 'I just paint things I always thought were beautiful, things you use every day.' Refer to the work *Campbell's soup I* by Warhol and discuss how this image, produced using photographic screen-printing techniques and repeated many times, is similar or different to ordinary advertising images. Find examples of other works of art that use repetition and share with your class. You could also include examples from poetry and music.

### Get to work

Claes Oldenburg finds inspiration in familiar everyday objects which he reproduces as sculptures. He changes the materials, size, and texture which makes the result far removed from the source object. He makes hard objects soft and small things enormous. In the sculpture *Ice bag—scale B*, Oldenburg increased the size and included both movement and sound to transform and animate a mundane object.

Create a sculpture based on an everyday object. Change it by altering its physical characteristics. For example, you could make a hard object seem soft or a large object small. Be as creative as possible to show the object you select in a new way. Consider constructing your work using clay techniques, plaster or canvas stuffed with cotton fibre. Pop art was often humorous so be as outrageous as possible!

### Think it through

Some of Claes Oldenburg's sculptures have been created on a monumental scale as [public art](#). Imagine your sculpture is a maquette for a large-scale public art installation—where would you locate it? Take a picture of an appropriate site and collage an image of your sculpture into the photograph. Present this to your class and discuss why you have chosen that specific site for your work.

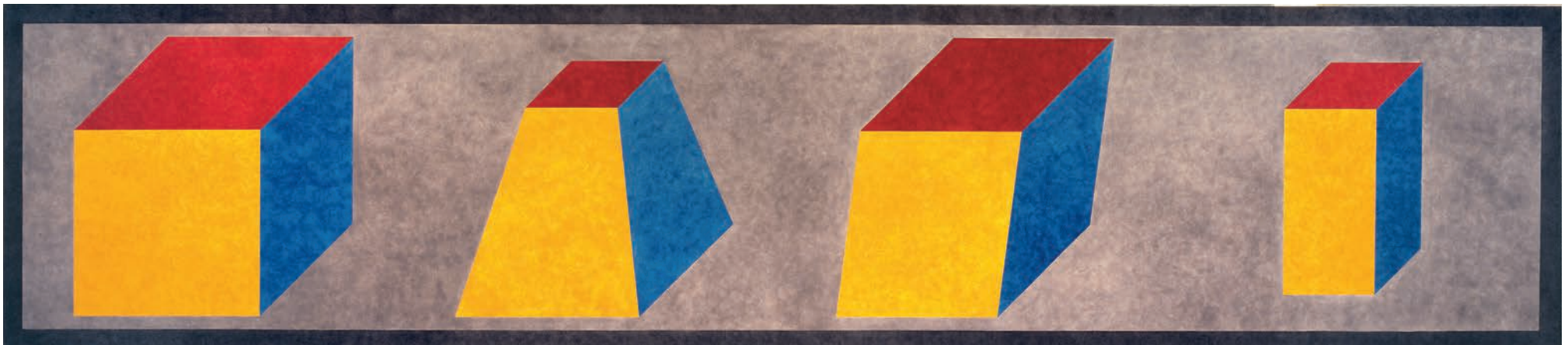


## Minimalism and Conceptual art

Minimalism and Conceptual art were primary movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Minimalism describes radical developments within the New York art scene of the 1960s and is principally characterised by austerity. Sculptures consist of reductive or primary forms in modular and serial arrangements, fabricated using industrial materials and methods. Paintings are simple, geometric, and often monochromatic. The movement, which caused initial outrage among conservative critics and bewilderment from the public, is now regarded as one of the foundation stones of contemporary art.

Later, Conceptual artists took the Minimalists' criticism of Western art and capitalism one step further and sought to practise outside the art market. Favouring an engagement with ideas over a unique object, Conceptual artists' use of text, multiples, performance and other 'actions' were intended to radically demystify the art-making process. Ironically, their work served to distance the audience the artists tried to appeal to—neutral and cool in its presentation, the new movement appeared bland and unemotional. Conceptual art at its best is challenging, even liberating, and remains a potent force for many artists working today.

For more works by Conceptual artists from Europe, North America and Australia, see [Power & Imagination: Conceptual Art](#) in the Project Gallery on Level 2, open until 28 January 2019.







## Minimalism and Conceptual art: material, space, language

### Speak your mind

- Compare Donald Judd's *Untitled* and Eva Hesse's work *Contingent*. Work in a small group to brainstorm the similarities and differences you can see. What are the most prominent visual elements in each work of art? How would you describe the materials and processes that each artist has used? What ideas do you think each artist was interested in exploring or questioning, and what do you see that makes you say this? What do you think connects Judd and Hesse as Minimalists and what sets them apart?
- Conceptual artists often worked with ideas, language and performance to investigate how we think and create meaning. John Baldessari experimented with puns and word games to produce photographs and paintings that explore the relationships between text and image. Research [Baldessari's](#) use of words and discuss how and why he uses humour in the creation of his work.

### Get to work

Choose a word from the dictionary that you find fascinating. Look at the range of meanings associated with this word and consider how you might create a conceptual work of art that interrogates its meaning. You could choose to create an artist's book or a series of printed texts. Research the work of [conceptual](#) artists who work with [language](#) such as [Bruce Nauman](#), [Mary Kelly](#) and [John Baldessari](#) for inspiration.

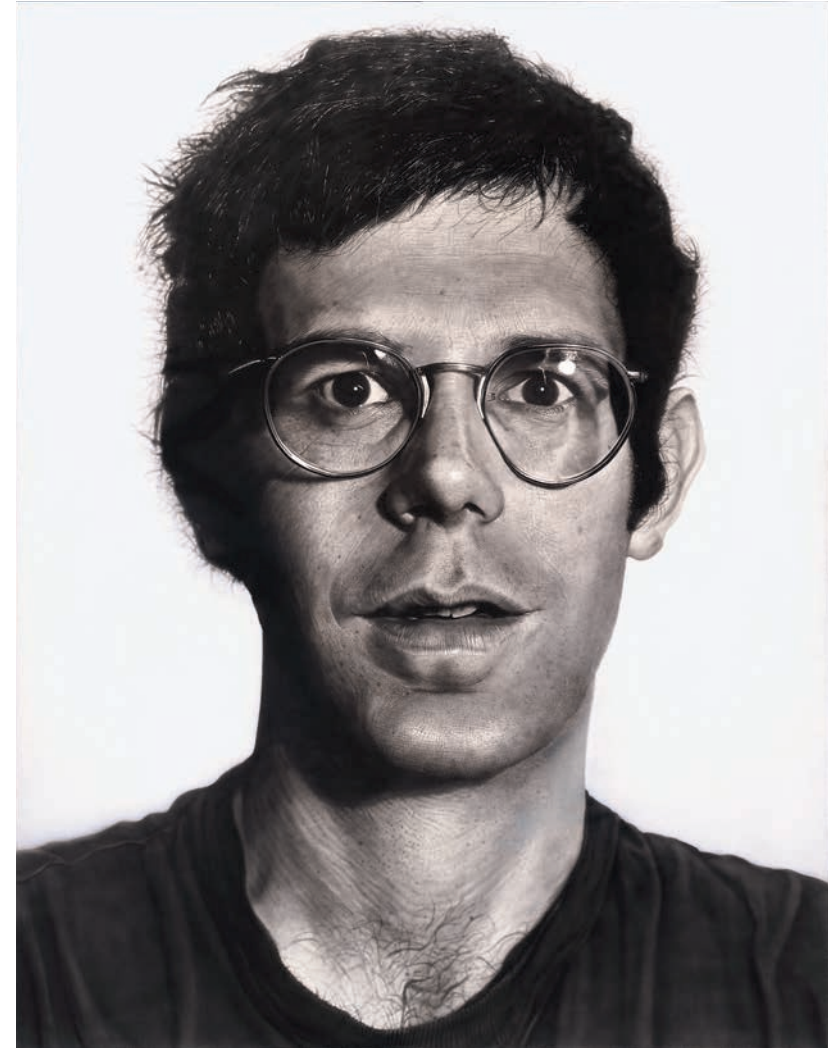
### Think it through

Sol LeWitt's work combines the aesthetics of Minimalism with Conceptual artists' questioning of the nature of thinking, representation and art. When the NGA purchased *Wall drawing no.380 a-d* the work was provided as a set of instructions for the gallery installation staff to follow. Consider the ideas you explored in making a text-based work. How could you explore the same ideas, but have someone else make the work? Use this prompt as a starting point to make a set of instructions for a work of art to be created by someone else. Look at the instructions by Sol LeWitt on [this page](#) for ideas.

## Figuration: Photorealism and Funk

A return to figurative art in the late 1960s and early 1970s is often characterised as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism, Conceptual art and Minimalism. New forms of realism, Photorealism and Funk emerged out of Pop art. They are dependent on, and to an extent developed out of, photography as an art form, but take the idea of the camera's immediacy, accuracy and objectivity to its logical extreme: a lens provides a pseudo-scientific masking for the artist's individuality.

Photorealism—also known as Super- or Hyperrealism—exhibits a photographic precision in painting or mimics actual objects. The painstaking technique has a long line of historical predecessors, from the verism of Dutch painting of the seventeenth century to nineteenth century academic painting and Surrealism in the twentieth century. Unlike earlier realists for whom the subject was paramount, for Photorealists the act of looking is of primary importance. They make themselves into visual machines, disguising their creative contribution. On the other hand, art that is 'Funky'—the word was originally used in the sense of 'smelly'—celebrates the deliberately distasteful. Funk art or Sick art often carries an implied criticism of concrete reality and the urban, Western world, presenting fantasy or highly-coloured satire.



**Chuck Close** *Bob* 1970, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1975 © Chuck Close

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## Photorealism: bodies in the picture

### Speak your mind

- Compare Audrey Flack's *Jolie Madame* and Cindy Sherman's *Untitled #92*. Work in a small group to brainstorm the similarities and differences that you can see. What are the most prominent visual elements in each work of art? What ideas do you think each artist was interested in exploring or questioning, and what do you see that makes you say that?
- Both of these artists are interested in how women are represented in popular culture and in the experience of femininity. Their works have been described as exploring stereotypes and archetypes of female identity. What is the difference between an archetype and a stereotype? What do you think Flack and Sherman are saying about the experience of being women in these works?
- The photorealist painter Chuck Close once said "I think most paintings are a record of the decisions that the artist made". With this in mind look closely at his painting *Bob*—it is almost indistinguishable from the photograph it was based on. Discuss the compositional choices the artist made in creating this work. How does the scale of the work and the artist's choice to use black and white contribute to its meaning and how we experience it?

### Get to work

Drawing inspiration from Chuck Close's portrait *Bob*, produce a black and white portrait of a friend using pencil. Begin by taking a head and shoulders photograph of yourself or a friend. Convert the photograph to black and white and zoom in so that the head occupies the whole picture. Now print it. Rule up a pencil grid on the print dividing it into equal squares. On a sheet of cartridge paper draw a second grid with the same number of squares. This is the same technique of scaling up images one grid at a time Chuck Close used to create *Bob*.

Rotate both the printed image and the cartridge paper so that the image appears upside down. Look closely at the areas of light and dark on the print a square at a time and reproduce the same tone in the corresponding squares on the grid of the cartridge paper. You will need a soft 2B pencil to build up the tones. Avoid using outline and focus instead on capturing the tonal variations. Gradually add the information into each square and watch the face appear in light and shadow. There is research to suggest that this exercise of considering the image upside down removes some of the assumptions we make in the process of visual perception and allows us to consider lines and shapes more objectively.



## Light

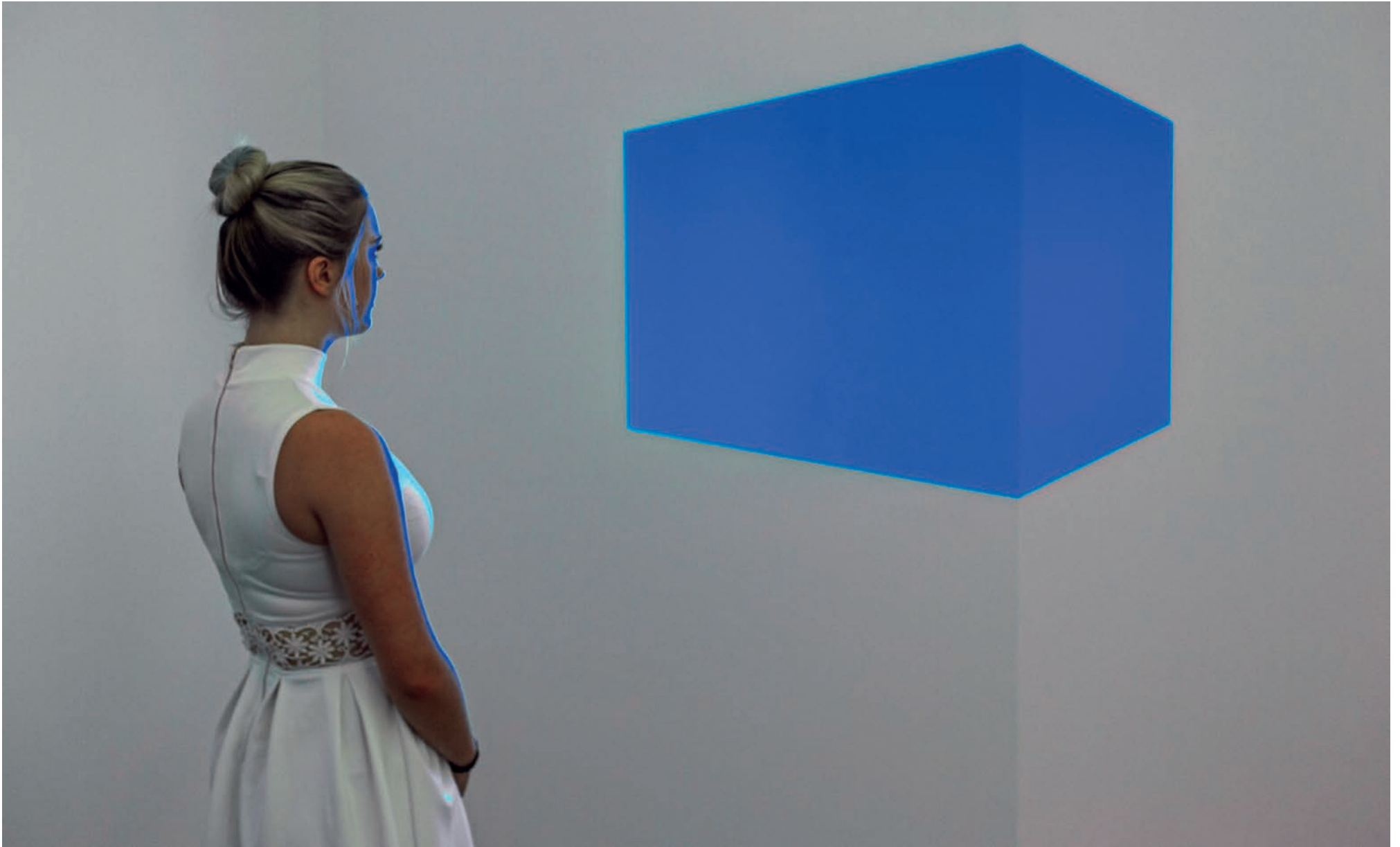
During the twentieth century, non-figurative or abstract modern sculpture all but replaced bronze monuments. From the 1960s—a decade that witnessed space travel, an upsurge in technology and discos with coloured lights, smoke and mirrors—the possibilities of sculpture expanded to include the most ephemeral of means: light. Painters of the nineteenth century had captured the effects of light, most famously the Impressionists; and the Futurists of the early twentieth century conveyed the impact of electric lighting on the modern city. In making art using light itself artists challenged the boundaries and definitions of sculpture.

Ready access to suitable material at low cost created a climate for experimentation, as artists explored the effects of different types of light and surfaces. The use of 'readymade' or off-the-shelf items links the works to Minimalism and Conceptual art, as well as Land art. The term 'Light and space movement' is often used to describe those artists working on the west coast of the United States who were inspired by the radiant light and temperate atmosphere of California to examine the effects of light on the viewer's environment and perception.



**Bruce Nauman** *The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths* (Window or wall sign) 1967, neon tubing, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1978 © Bruce Nauman. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2018





## Looking into light

### Speak your mind

- Compare Bruce Nauman's *The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths* and Keith Sonnier's *Untitled*. Both these artists create sculptures that feature light as a key element—what are the similarities and differences in their use of materials? How does their use of materials reflect their different ideas and approaches?
- Bruce Nauman's work *The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths* is typical of the satire the artist employed in his early neon installations. By making such a statement about art using the medium of neon, a material usually reserved for advertising signs, what assumptions about art does Nauman want us to question?
- James Turrell has said: ['You don't get to tell people how they should see something. It is only something you demonstrate.'](#) Research Turrell's light installations—what is he demonstrating in the making of his work?

### Get to work

Look at Keith Sonnier's work *Untitled*. He uses fluorescent light tubes to sculpt spaces. Whilst the tubes are arranged in geometric shapes and lines, the focus is on the emission of light and its potential to be used as a creative medium.

Make a sculpture that incorporates light as a main element. First find a large cardboard box and paint the inside white. Turn the box on its side and cut out a round hole on one side to allow natural or artificial light from a desk lamp to enter. Fill the space inside with found objects suspended or fixed. Combine opaque and transparent materials e.g. plastics, wire mesh, glass, and mirrors. Choose objects carefully based on their surface quality with the aim of constructing a sculpture that demonstrates the interplay of light and shadow.

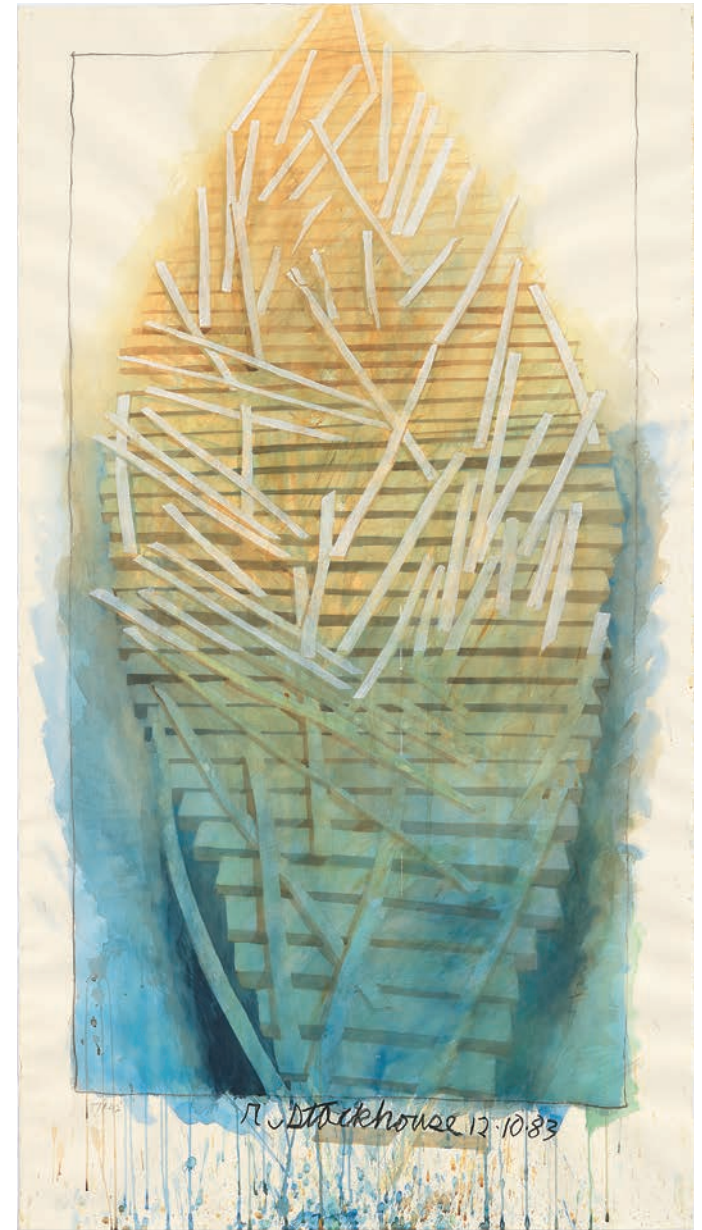
### Think it through

Photograph your light sculpture then change the composition of the objects in the box and rephotograph it. Do this a few times then compare the different compositions; discuss with your peers and decide which is the most effective.

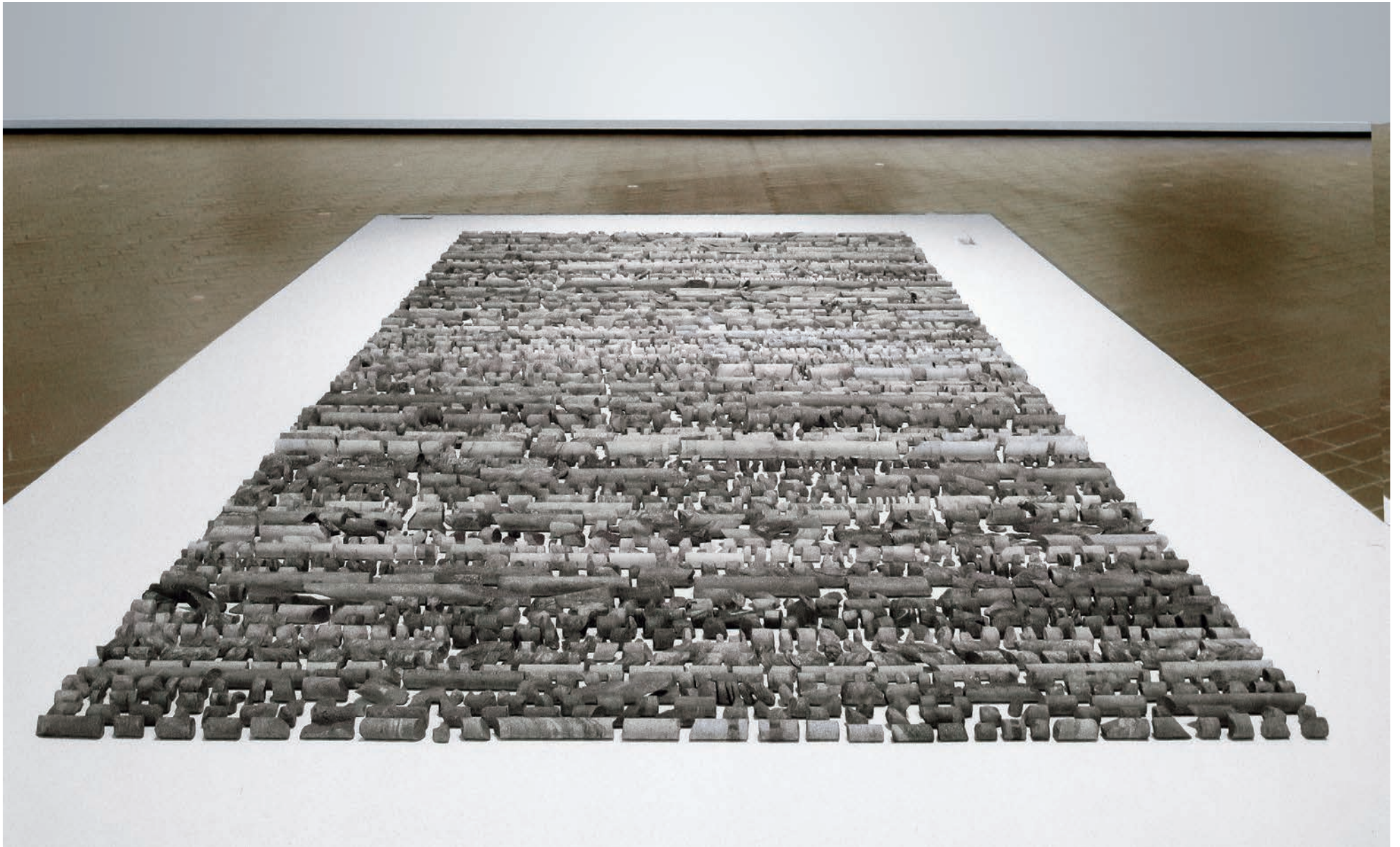
## Land art

Concurrent with a mass awakening to environmental issues, the early 1970s were characterised by a questioning of the status quo and disenchantment with the technology of the industrial world. Land art, Environmental art and Earthworks look to the forces and energies of the natural world as a source of inspiration. Land art was in part a revolt against the disciplines of painting and sculpture, and the perceived commodification of the art market. The artists assembled natural materials, such as branches, earth or pigment, or made large interventions in the landscape, encouraging viewers to question their impact on their surroundings.

In Land art, which adopts many of the strategies of Minimalism and Conceptual art, artists manipulate the landscape or bring objects from nature indoors for installations. For example, Robert Smithson opened the 1970s by using heavy machinery to create the monumental *Spiral jetty* in Utah's Great Salt Lake, while in *Earth Monument to New York* 1979, Alan Sonfist used geological core samples to comment on the relationship between human civilisation and the natural history of our planet.



**Robert Stackhouse** *On the beach again*; drawing of the sculpture 'On the beach again', constructed at the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1983 1983, watercolour, charcoal, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1985





## Land art: investigating the environment

### Speak your mind

- Compare Robert Smithson's *Rocks and mirror square II* and Alan Sonfist's *Earth monument to New York* and brainstorm the similarities and differences you can see. What are the most prominent visual elements in each work of art? How have these artists incorporated natural and human-made elements into these works? What ideas are being investigated through these works?
- Robert Smithson's art practice was shaped by his interest in the concept of entropy—a law of physics that predicts the collapse or the decline of all matter into disorder over time. Research Smithson's work [Spiral Jetty](#) and discuss how the concept of entropy relates to it.
- Robert Stackhouse's [On the beach again](#) is a sculpture located in the NGA Sculpture Garden. How important is the location of this sculpture to its meaning? This sculpture is made of bronze—discuss the significance of the choice of this material for this object. What would change if it were made of timber?

### Get to work

Land art artists challenge the notion of exhibiting in traditional gallery spaces by favouring making and placing work in the landscape. A work that is designed specifically for a location and has an interrelationship with it is referred to as 'site specific'. Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* of 1970 is a particularly famous example.

Create a site-specific land art work on the grounds of your school. Collect natural materials available near the site. Find material such as stones, gravel, twigs and soil and arrange in an aesthetic geometric configuration, circle or a square. Leave the structure exposed to the elements; your ephemeral work will decay and eventually decline into disorder. Take photographs to document the work's relationship with the site and its temporary or 'ephemeral' existence.

### Think it through

Consider how you could further develop the ideas you explored making your land art work. If you were going to make a work on the scale of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, where would you locate it? Prepare a proposal for a large-scale land art work. Identify a site and create a proposal executed as a drawing. Consider materials, scale, and concept when developing your idea.