



Knut Bull (1811–1889) *The wreck of the 'George the Third'* 1850 oil on canvas 84.5 x 123.0 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased with funds from the Nerissa Johnson Bequest 2001

# TASMANIA



Knut Bull (1811–1889)  
The wreck of the 'George the Third' 1850  
oil on canvas 84.5 x 123.0 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased with funds from the Nerissa Johnson Bequest 2001

The wreck of the 'George the Third' depicts the aftermath of a shipwreck in 1835. On the evening before it was due to arrive in Hobart, George the Third, a convict transport ship, struck an uncharted rock as it entered D'Entrecasteaux Channel near

Southport, Van Diemen's Land. In the catastrophe that followed 133 people died, including 127 of the 220 convicts on board. Rescue attempts were made overnight and the next day. A memorial for the victims was placed on Southport Bluff in 1839.

A huge sky dominates this image of the broken ship, painted by convict artist Knut Bull. The darkly shadowed foreground is echoed by an ominous cloud in the centre of the sky. A few small figures on the beach attempt to salvage goods from the wreck being washed up by the waves. The low horizon line and the scale of the ship and figures in comparison to the sea and sky suggest human vulnerability. Knut Bull trained in Denmark and Germany and would have been familiar with landscape painting which depicted the power of nature.

It is not surprising that Knut Bull chose to paint the fate of the George the Third. In 1845 Norwegian-born Bull was tried in London Central Criminal Court for the attempted forgery of a 100-dollar Norwegian bill. He was sentenced to fourteen years transportation and after a period at Norfolk Island arrived at the Saltwater probation station in Van Diemen's Land in 1846. From 1849 he was permitted to work in the colony as an artist under a certificate of general good conduct and by 1853 had received a conditional pardon. Bull married and continued to work as an artist and teacher in Van Diemen's Land and later in New South Wales where he moved in 1856.

The colonial market for painting was primarily landscape painting commissioned by wealthy landowners or merchants who wanted to record their material success. Bull has created a history painting by recording a significant event in Van Diemen's Land's development as a colony. The loss of life and the rescue of survivors from stricken vessels was reported by the newspapers of the day, commemorated in poetry and depicted by artists.

## DISCUSSION

Examine the brushstrokes Knut Bull uses to depict the waves and the sky. What is the overall effect of the painting?

How does Bull communicate the relationship between the early settlers of the new colony and the environment?

Why might this incident, the shipwreck of the George the Third in 1835, appeal to an artist twenty years after the event?

## RESEARCH

Investigate the number of shipwrecks in Australian waters during 1835 and the loss of life. Compare these with the fatalities from car accidents today.

What kinds of painting were popular in colonial Tasmania? How easy do you think it was for artists to survive financially from their painting? Find the work of other artists in Tasmania who painted marine subjects. How are they different from The wreck of the 'George the Third'.

## ACTIVITY

Photocopy one of the images in the exhibition. Crop the image so that you have a strip of the painting where the land meets the sky. Glue this strip onto a piece of paper so that it becomes the foreground. Repaint the sky and discuss how the image has changed.



Elioth Gruner (1882–1939) Murrumbidgee Ranges, Canberra 1934 oil on canvas 51.6 x 89.0 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Bequest of Stuart A. Johnston 1964

## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



Elioth Gruner (1882–1939)  
Murrumbidgee Ranges, Canberra 1934  
oil on canvas 51.6 x 89.0 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Bequest of Stuart A. Johnston 1964

Murrumbidgee ranges, Canberra depicts the landscapes south-west of Canberra, towards the Tidbinbilla and Brindabella ranges. In this painting Gruner has used colour to depict the clear light of the Canberra region and the velvety softness of the surrounding

mountains. The painting can be divided into three bands, with the foreground providing a path to the hills and sky in the distance. Shadows connect each section while the line of diminishing trees on the right-hand side and the smoke in the middle distance connect the landscape with the sky.

Born in 1882, Gruner became a successful artist during the early years of the twentieth century, winning the Art Gallery of New South Wales Wynne Prize for landscape painting seven times. He displayed an early talent for art and by the age of twelve was attending lessons with Julian Ashton, a well-known artist and teacher. During a visit to England in 1923, Gruner met Sir William Orpen, an English artist and critic who advised him to use smaller canvases and a thinner, more pastel-like application of paint. After his return to Australia, Gruner put this advice into practice and combined it with an emphasis on the structure, pattern and rhythm of forms in the landscape.

In 1928 Gruner purchased a car and the following year made his first painting trip to the Canberra region. Murrumbidgee Ranges, Canberra won the Wynne Prize in 1934, the same year in which it was painted.

### DISCUSSION

Compare Murrumbidgee Ranges, Canberra 1934 with Grace Cossington Smith's *The bridge in building* 1929–30. Discuss the artists' different approaches through their technique, use of colour, composition and subject matter.

### RESEARCH

Find out who the artist Julian Ashton was and why he was important in the development of Australian landscape painting.

### ACTIVITY

Paint a background landscape where the colour of the sky and the ground become progressively lighter towards the horizon. Go outside and on a separate piece of paper draw a number of different sized trees and bushes. Cut out these trees and use them to create depth in your landscape. Add elements that indicate human presence in the landscape.



Clarice Beckett (1887–1935) Sandringham Beach c. 1933 oil on canvas 55.8 x 50.9 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

## VICTORIA



Clarice Beckett (1887–1935)  
Sandringham Beach c. 1933  
oil on canvas 55.8 x 50.9 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Sandringham Beach is located in Port Phillip Bay, fifteen kilometres south of the centre of Melbourne. It is surrounded by suburbs such as Beaumaris where the artist Clarice Beckett lived with her parents.

Beckett captured this scene from a cliff looking down onto the beach. It is a dynamic composition of sand, bathing boxes and beach walkers. The forms shimmer and shift under the midday sun in a composition of vibrant colour relationships. The sea is just visible in the top left-hand corner. It is a cool refuge from the expanse of hot white sand. Brightly striped bathing boxes are depicted on the right-hand side of the painting. Beckett emphasises shape and colour rather than detail in this work. A brushed line is used for the tree branch and shadow on the bathing box in the upper right corner. Beach shacks or bathing boxes were a key motif in Beckett's work.

Beckett generally painted quickly, using thin paint smoothed onto canvas or board. In 1917 she attended Max Meldrum's public lecture on tonal painting in Melbourne and was inspired to enrol in his classes. Meldrum was an influential artist and teacher in Melbourne whose tonal theory was based on a belief that there are no lines in nature. Beckett absorbed his ideas and then applied them in an original way to produce landscapes composed of shape, colour and tone.

She was a dedicated outdoor painter. Her painting materials were all contained within a small cart she could easily wheel around in order to paint directly from the landscape. In 1935 Beckett was painting when she was caught in a rain storm. She died soon afterwards from pneumonia. (Sandringham Beach is one of Beckett's largest paintings as she generally chose to work on smaller panels.)

### DISCUSSION

Does this painting include the horizon? Compare Sandringham Beach with *Flying over the Shoalhaven* by Margaret Preston and *Inland Australia* by Sidney Nolan.

Find other images in the exhibition that use the beach as their subject. Is the beach always depicted as a site for recreation and relaxation?

### RESEARCH

Another work in the exhibition is called *Ricketts Point, Beaumaris*. It was painted in 1890 by Charles Conder. Research the work of Charles Conder and the Heidelberg School of artists he was associated with.

### ACTIVITY

Draw where you are now from an aerial perspective concentrating on the relationships between shape and colour.



Jeffrey Smart (b.1921) Wallaroo 1951 oil on plywood 68.4 x 107.0 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1959

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Jeffrey Smart (b.1921)  
Wallaroo 1951  
oil on plywood 68.4 x 107 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased 1959

Wallaroo is a town 160 kilometres north-west of Adelaide on the western side of the Yorke Peninsula. This area experienced substantial economic growth from 1859 until the 1920s when copper deposits were found in the area. The Hughes Chimney, built on the foreshore of the town in 1861 and referred to

as the 'big stack', is a remnant of this era. The artist Jeffrey Smart visited Wallaroo in 1951 and made several watercolour studies of the town which he later combined to develop this composition.

Two men are depicted carrying a boat from the waters' edge towards an arrangement of buildings on a curved horizon line. Each element in the painting has been placed to achieve a compositional balance. The height of the chimney relates to the weight of the two figures, which are then echoed by the strange hillocks and the two poles standing upright on the beach. As the eye is drawn around the painting, the viewer wonders where these men are going. Possible destinations such as the church and the chimney stack reveal the strange emptiness of the town.

Smart has used a naturalistic technique to paint his image based on this once-thriving copper mining town. One characteristic of this technique is the use of tones, created by a light source from the left-hand side of the painting. The sky, including the moon, is painted in gradations of grey, a disquieting backdrop for the brightly lit foreground. Through his use of colour and placement of each element, the realism of the scene has been subverted.

Poetry had an influence on many artists between the wars, particularly *The Waste Land* written by T.S. Eliot in 1922. The idea of the empty centre described in the poem resonated with artists attempting to redefine Australian landscape painting.

From 1948 to 1950 Jeffrey Smart travelled to Paris to study with Ferdinand Leger. On his return to Australia Smart moved to Sydney and in 1964 to Italy.

### DISCUSSION

Compare *Wallaroo* by Jeffrey Smart with *Boy running*, *Cooktown* by Russell Drysdale. Examine each artist's technique – brushstrokes, use of colour and the composition of the image. Discuss how each artist uses a realistic style of painting to suggest quite different interpretations of the landscape.

### RESEARCH

Investigate the influence of Surrealism on Australian artists during the 1940s and 1950s.

### ACTIVITY

Download images from the website [nga.gov.au/OceantoOutback](http://nga.gov.au/OceantoOutback) or photocopy images from the education resource. Use multimedia manipulation as well as collage, frottage (rubblings of texture onto paper), drawing and painting to produce an entirely new landscape based on the paintings in the exhibition.





Howard Taylor (1918–2001) *Trees* 1950 egg tempera on hardboard 40.5 x 50.8 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Gift of Esther Constable in memory of her husband Dr Roy K. Constable, Perth 1987 courtesy Howard H Taylor Estate/Galerie Düsseldorf

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Howard Taylor (1918–2001)  
Trees 1950  
egg tempera on hardboard 40.5 x 50.8 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Gift of Esther Constable in memory of her husband  
Dr Roy K. Constable, Perth 1987

Trees, painted by Howard Taylor in 1950, displays his interest in colour and light. The painting depicts a small grove of trees in a simplified landscape. Trees is painted using egg tempera, a

medium which meant the artist thoroughly planned his paintings. Repetitious brushstrokes animate the surface through carefully modulated colour combinations to create light and shadow. Taylor's technique of shifting and indistinct outlines is suggestive of nature in a constant state of change. The trees appear to rotate, their leaves and branches interwoven. It is through the representation of light and colour that texture and movement are created. In an interview in 1986 Howard Taylor said, 'One valuable gain in working directly from nature is that you acquire greater sensitivity about light and seeing generally'.<sup>1</sup>

As a young man Taylor was fascinated by aerodynamics and spent a lot of time designing model aeroplanes. In 1937 he enlisted in the Australian Air Force and in 1939 transferred to the Royal Air Force. In 1940 he was captured by the Germans and interned in prisoner of war camps in Germany and Poland until 1945. During these years Taylor decided to become an artist and he began to draw with the help of fellow prisoners with art school training and materials supplied by the Red Cross. After the war Taylor studied for two years in England before returning to Australia. Taylor lived and worked in the hills east of Perth and later near Pemberton south of Perth.

1. Howard Taylor interviewed by James Murdoch in 1986 for the Australia Council Archival Art Series

### DISCUSSION

Look carefully at the surface of *Trees* to see what technique the artist has used to create this image. Identify the combinations of colours used in different sections of the landscape.

### RESEARCH

*Trees* was painted shortly after Howard Taylor returned to Australia. Find out how his work developed and research his interest in sculpture.

Find out more about the colour theories developed by the group of artists known as the Pointillists in France in the 1890s.

### ACTIVITY

Observe and record the effects of light on the landscape at different times of the day. Draw the sky, shadows and tonal differences between objects in the landscape.

Paint a twelve-section colour wheel. Identify the complementary colours.

Draw a simple object, such as a cube, and use small dabs of complementary colours to create the effects of light on the object.



Russell Drysdale (1912–1981) Boy running, Cooktown c. 1952 oil on canvas 51.0 x 77.0 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1959 © Estate of Russell Drysdale

## QUEENSLAND



Russell Drysdale (1912–1981)  
Boy running, Cooktown c. 1952  
oil on canvas 51.0 x 77.0 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased 1959

In 1951 Russell Drysdale spent a number of months travelling throughout northern Queensland and the Cape York Peninsula. This experience provided the imagery for paintings such as *Boy running, Cooktown*. In this painting Drysdale includes a long street leading to a vanishing point on the horizon and a dramatic sky.

*Boy running, Cooktown* suggests a story. An Aboriginal boy in the foreground is captured mid stride as he runs across the road. Only the vertical walls of buildings and a memorial punctuate the flat landscape. The wide street is empty as far as the eye can see. Where is the boy going and how does his figure relate to his surroundings? He appears to be running at right angles to the town, a European style settlement. The deep ochre sky and the overall tonal colour range of the painting create a stifling tunnel-like effect in contrast to the wide flatness of the landscape.

Cooktown is north of Cairns in far north Queensland. The main street stretches for nearly three kilometres. Included in this painting is St Mary's, a two-storey convent constructed following the discovery of gold in the area in the 1870s. Drysdale spent his early years in Australia on the land and his travels in the outback inspired him to produce images of inland Australia and the people he met. *Boy running, Cooktown* is one of Drysdale's earliest paintings to include Aboriginal people. Drysdale used visual memory to draw characters and landscapes sometimes days or years after the original experience.

### DISCUSSION

Examine Drysdale's painting technique in *Boy running, Cooktown*. Could this painting have been made outside in one sitting? What makes this image modern in Australia in the 1950s?

### RESEARCH

This is one image Drysdale painted based on his experiences in far north Queensland. Find other images by Drysdale of country towns and the people who live there. In your research consider who Drysdale depicts and why.

### ACTIVITY

Use one-point perspective to enhance an aspect of a landscape. Use light and shadow to exaggerate this effect.



Grace Cossington Smith (1892–1984) The Bridge in building 1929–30 oil on pulpboard 75.0 x 53.0cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Gift of Ellen Waugh 2005

## NEW SOUTH WALES



Grace Cossington Smith (1892–1984)  
The Bridge in building 1929–30  
oil on pulpboard 75.0 x 53.0 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Gift of Ellen Waugh 2005

Grace Cossington Smith's *The Bridge in building* is a dynamic image of one of Australia's most iconic landmarks – the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In an interview in 1965, Grace Cossington Smith said: 'My chief interest, I think, has always been colour,

but not flat crude colour, it must be colour within colour, it has to shine; light must be in it, it is no good having heavy dead colour.'

In *The Bridge in building* Cossington Smith has used contrasting colours of purple and orange to energise an industrial landscape. The purple arc of the bridge curves into the sky from a yellow sandstone pylon which dominates the foreground. A group of workers on top of the arch appear almost antlike and further emphasise the dramatic scale of the bridge, enhanced by the low viewpoint.

The sky, painted in concentric bands of yellows and blues, echoes the curve of the bridge and suggests a realm beyond physical reality. A book on colour theory by Beatrice Irwin called *New science of colour* provided inspiration for Grace Cossington Smith's painting. It expressed ideas on colour waves, auras, vibrations and the capacity of colour to transform our state of mind. Cossington Smith combines Irwin's ideas with those of other modern painters to interpret the modern world.

The construction project of the Sydney Harbour Bridge to connect the central business district with the North Shore began in 1923. Two worksheds at Milson's Point, on the northern side of the harbour, were used to build many parts of the bridge. Between 1928 and 1930 Cossington Smith made a number of sketches of the bridge from Milson's Point. She created drawings surrounded by notes on colour and form to develop into paintings. Grace Cossington Smith celebrated the building of the bridge by documenting what was for many Sydney residents a symbol of Modernism and hope during the years of the Great Depression.

1. Grace Cossington Smith, 16 August 1965, interview with Hazel de Berg, transcript from National Gallery of Australia Research Library, p.1484

### DISCUSSION

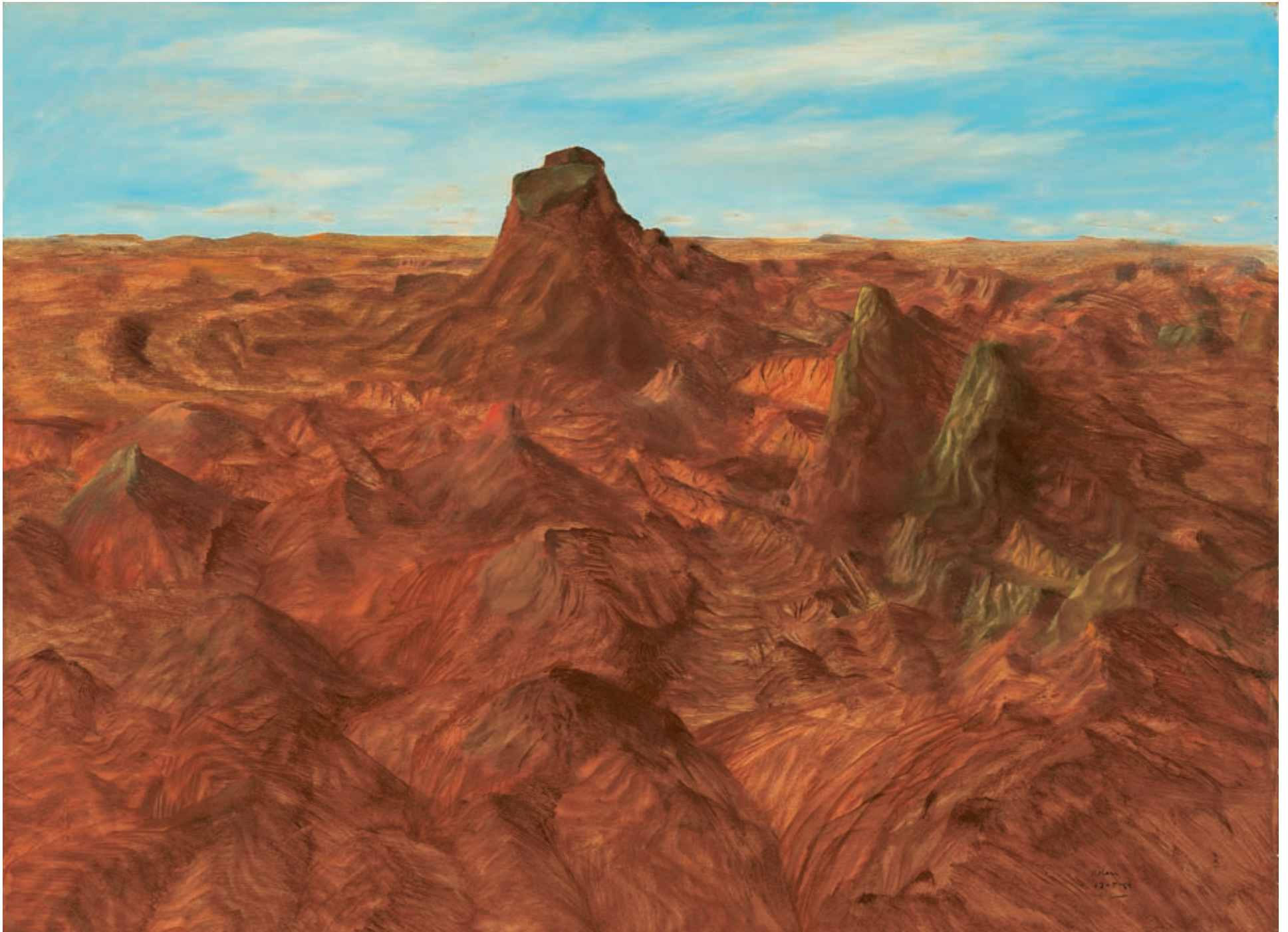
How has Grace Cossington Smith used colour to express her feelings about the bridge?  
Find other paintings in the Ocean to Outback exhibition which use colour in an expressive rather than naturalistic way.

### RESEARCH

How does the viewpoint affect the way we 'read' an image? Study photographs by Olive Cotton, Max Dupain and David Moore. Look for evidence of a shared attitude to image construction between these photographers and artists such as Grace Cossington Smith.

### ACTIVITY

Draw a construction site. Use colour, viewpoint and scale to make your image dynamic.



Sidney Nolan (1917–1992) Inland Australia 1950 oil and enamel paint on composition board 91.5 x 121.0cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1961

## NORTHERN TERRITORY



Sidney Nolan (1917–1992)  
Inland Australia 1950  
oil and enamel paint on composition board 91.5 x 121.0 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased 1961

Inland Australia is an alien and mysterious image of the interior of the Australian continent. Between 1847 and 1950 Sidney Nolan, his wife Cynthia and his stepdaughter Jinx spent months at a time travelling through Australia. A few years later, in her

1962 novel *Outback*, Cynthia Nolan described their experiences from the plane: 'We leaned over in our seats and straining down, our foreheads pressed against the glass windows, found our own land and heard its voice alone.'

In his painting *Inland Australia* Nolan creates the sensation of a dry vastness through the use of reduced colour with the emphasis on the shape and structure of the landforms. When he travelled Nolan used a camera to document the people and places he saw. *Inland Australia* has been painted quickly using sweeping brushstrokes on composition board lying flat on a table. In some areas white undercoat is exposed where the paint has been scraped back.

Sidney Nolan was one of the earliest and most radical members of the Contemporary Art Society, a group of Melbourne artists who were interested in modern European art as well as experimental literature. After a period of army service in country training camps, Nolan's vision of the land and ways to paint it began to develop. Along with Russell Drysdale, Sidney Nolan helped to redefine images of the Australian landscape after the Second World War.

### DISCUSSION

Can you find common elements in the other paintings by Sidney Nolan in *Ocean to Outback*?

### RESEARCH

When did photography begin to be used by artists as a tool to aid painting? What aspect of the landscape could not have been captured by a camera in 1949?

### ACTIVITY

*Inland Australia* is a composite image based on Nolan's experience of viewing this landscape from the air. Use a number of different methods, including internet technology, to look down on a landscape. Capture the image and use digital techniques to enhance a composite image of the place.