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SYLLABUS CONNECTIONS: 2008 ARCHIBALD PRIZE

Framing the Archibald: discussion questions and activities K–6 and 7–12

- Pushing practice
- Challenging the past
- Professional context
- Two plus one
- Animal attraction

Analysing the winner

Years K–6

- Visual Arts and links with key learning areas

Years 7–12

- The Frames
- Conceptual Framework and Practice

Focus works:

issues for discussion

- Eolo Paul Bottaro *The Archibald*
- Alexander McKenzie *Sarah Blasko*
- James Powditch *Aden Young in 'Once upon a time in the inner west'*

Archibald Prize 08: finalists

Note: Unless otherwise cited, background information and artists quotes are taken from the Archibald Prize exhibition wall texts, AGNSW 2008

PUSHING PRACTICE



10. Jun Chen *Ian Smith*

Ian Smith is a prominent Australian artist. His strong concept- and drawing-based paintings explore universal themes through personal and local imagery. Chen has painted Smith for the Archibald four times but this is the first to be selected. 'The first one, in 1998, was a full figure,' says Chen. 'In 2004 I painted him nude. Last year I did a half-body painting, which was hung in the Salon des Refuses. This year I said to him, "I think I should be painting your face."'

How does this portrait gain your attention? Why is the sitter gazing out of the picture? What is Smith looking at or thinking?

Describe how the artist has applied paint to the face and the background. List the types of tools the artist used to create the various surface qualities.

Research the work of Ian Smith. Compare and contrast the painting style of Smith and Chen. Do you think it would be a challenge for an artist to paint another artist? Give reasons for your answer.



13. Peteris Ciemitis *Grabowsky*

"To me the triangulation of ear, eyes and mouth represents a metaphor for the interplay of intellect, heart and 'voice' in Paul's music," Ciemitis says. "The painting contains subtle links tracing connections between these elements, and back to the viewer through the fixed gaze."

Is this painting a portrait of a young or older person? What clues in the painting help you to come to this conclusion? Describe the sitter's personality.

Look at a close up reflection of yourself in a mirror. What is your initial reaction? Is this a flattering view of your image? How would you react if your cropped close-up was on display for all to see?

Note the use of pencil on Grabowsky's face. Identify the areas where lines or the absence of line suggest form. What sections of this image remind you of a landscape? Discuss portraiture as a means of mapping the facial landscape.



14. James Cochran *Akira*

'My own work – a form of pointillism, which I call the Drip Paintings – carries a strong urban sensibility and during the last year I had made two trips to Japan drawing inspiration from city streets. This influenced my connection to Akira with his innovative use of materials and his simultaneous respect for tradition.' (James Cochran)

Akria Isogawa is one of Australia's most celebrated fashion designers. Is he standing in a formal or casual pose? Cochran comments that he was intrigued by Akira's personality and delicate sensibility. Describe the expression on Akira's face. Create a speech bubble for Akria which expresses what he is thinking at this moment.

Cochran describes his drip paintings as a form of pointillism. Observe the painterly surface of the canvas. Note how the dots overlap and drip. Consider the process of creating this effect. What media or tool has the artist used to create this image? Suggest the type of experimentation used by the artist to achieve this control over the drips.

Investigate how colour theory has influenced the art practice of Cochran. List the colours you can see. How important is the use of colour in this painting? In what way does colour enhance the overall feeling of this artwork?

CHALLENGING THE PAST



21. Zai Kuang *The sisters – Celia and Julia*

Most of Kuang's paintings are about domestic life. 'My aim is to explore spaces in a domestic environment,' he says. 'I want to create a tranquil atmosphere in my painting. I like to draw and paint figures and objects that I know well because they are familiar to me and I have a range of feelings for them.'

Where is each girl sitting? Assess whether the window is open or shut. How old are the children? Describe their expressions. Is it a warm or cool day? Explain why. Debate whether this work is a staged situation or it occurred by chance.

How would you feel sitting still for your portrait? Time how long you can hold a pose for.

Examine the personalities of Celia and Julia from this painting. Imagine the relationship between the sisters. Invent a reason why the child indoors is laughing. Write a story to accompany this painting.

How does the colour scheme used support Kuang's aim of creating 'a tranquil atmosphere' in his painting? Extend this image to create a larger picture. Adopt Kuang's colour scheme.



30. John Phillips *Wendy after two cups of coffee*

Artist John Phillips commented that his portrait of Wendy Whiteley doesn't portray her "in a singular moment, but is a moulding of what I was able to capture of her during sittings over a five-week period," ... "Fragments of her expressions and gestures combine on the canvas, in a way they perhaps never have done in the natural world."

Survey this painting. Identify the things you can see. Describe what Wendy is wearing. Is Wendy inside or outside?

What do you think Wendy is thinking about? Is this a casual or formal pose? How does Wendy's pose engage the audience? Write a dialogue between Wendy and the artist John Phillips.

Describe the mood this work is projecting to the audience. Explore the effects of light and shadow on the mood of this work. What role does colour play?



31. Rodney Pople *Art is what you can get away with – self portrait*

The title of this painting is a quote from Andy Warhol, a truism that also reflects Pople's attitude to making art.

Focus on the central figure. How has Pople depicted himself? What is the figure of Pople doing? Is Pople in danger? Why is there a camera documenting this event? Is this occurring during the day or night? What details suggest the time of day?

Do you recognise the building in the background? Compare Pople's clothing to the clothes worn by the soldiers. Which elements belong to the 21st century and which do not?

What does this image tell us about the artist's personality? How is Pople making a comment on the Archibald Prize? What could Pople be suggesting about the artworld?

This work is a direct appropriation of the Spanish artist Francisco de Goya's, *The shootings of May 3rd 1808*. Pople commented, 'It's about execution and spectacle – the execution and spectacle of ideas, of the artist and of the painting itself. In contemporary times, executions are staged in the public eye...'. Compare both images and discuss the similarities and differences.

Research Pople's previous Archibald entries. Explore how Pople utilises humour and parody in his art practice.



24. Barry McCann *Simpatico*

Maggie Beer and Simon Bryant co-host *The cook and the chef* on ABC television. Barry McCann trained as a commercial chef and loves the program. McCann recalls Beer using the word 'simpatico' to describe how well certain ingredients worked together. 'But it's so applicable to them too,' he says, referring to the title of the portrait. 'They get on together so well, they are real mates.'

Watch an episode of *The cook and the chef* and describe how Maggie Beer and Simon Bryant relate to each other. Does the double portrait reflect a similar relationship? What would their conversation be at this moment? Invent speech bubbles for both figures.

Imagine what they are looking at. Read the body language of the figures. Do you think McCann directed the two sitters into this pose? Read the wall text and compare your responses.

Look at the objects in the background. List what you can see. Find five objects made of glass. Imagine the smells you could smell if you were present in this portrait. How does the artist suggest this?

Assess how McCann's experience with watercolour may have influenced his approach to oil painting. Discuss how an artist may move between various media depending on the objectives for the work.



37. Nick Stathopoulos *At the movies with David Stratton – aka The big sleep*

When Nick Stathopoulos told esteemed film reviewer David Stratton about the portrait he planned to paint of him, Stratton was more than a little apprehensive. 'I can't blame him,' says Stathopoulos. 'On the surface it seems like I'm poking fun at a very staid and serious critic – and David is nothing if not serious about film.'

Imagine sitting in one of the vacant seats in the cinema. How would you feel? Invent an identity for the woman in the background. Read the text panel to discover her identity and significance to the composition.

Explain the role of a film critic. Discuss the irony within this picture. What is David Stratton supposed to be doing? Compose the review David Stratton would write for the film he is supposed to be watching. Explain how this artist comments on the world of David Stratton.



39. Yi Wang *Long hair*

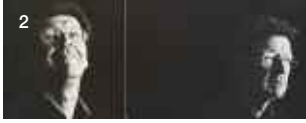
The word 'long' has the same pronunciation as 'dragon' in Chinese. 'There is some conflict about the dragon between China and western countries,' says Wang. Whereas in Western countries a dragon is often thought of as evil or at least frightening, in China the dragon is seen as something divine: 'a thing of worship and a kind of lucky charm'.

Suggest what Wang is looking at. Where is he? Assess the direction of the light source. Describe the range of colours used in this self-portrait. Debate whether Wang worked from his reflection in mirrors or photographic images.

Identify the motif on Wang's jacket. Describe Wang's clothing. What do they suggest? What do Wang's gaze and body language suggest about his personality? Devise a set of questions you would ask Wang about his art practice. How does this self-portrait of Yi Wang represent his world? Discuss in class.

Assess the composition of this self-portrait. Wang has placed himself in the bottom right of the image. How does this placement create tension within the space of the image?

Experiment with mirrors and draw yourself from various angles. Make preliminary sketches for your self-portrait focusing on developing the composition. Consider how the audience will interpret the composition. Exhibit the completed paintings in class.



2. Phillip Barnes *Black: White: Red all over*

Phillip Barnes was keen to paint a portrait that explored the tension between the private and public persona and felt that Symons fitted the bill. Barnes felt the monochrome captured the black and white way in which many see Symons. It is also a reference to Symons' science background and the fact that his father was a photographer.



Compare the two portraits of Red Symons. Describe the different expressions. Are these stereotypical expressions for this well-known face?

Observe the surface quality of this work. Note the distinct marks. Create your own portrait by experimenting with graphite over a painted surface.



Barnes usually uses colour. However he altered his approach in order to suit the character and vision for the portrait. Would the portrait have had the same dramatic impact if it was in colour? Debate.

Tension is created through the dramatic lighting of the face. Research artists who have used chiaroscuro in their art practice.

5. Danelle Bergstrom *Two Movements* – Peter Sculthorpe

Peter Sculthorpe is a celebrated Australian composer. His distinctive music has Asian and Aboriginal influences, often evoking the contours, harsh beauty and sounds of the Australian bush. Famous Sculthorpe works include *Kakadu* (1988), *Earth Cry* (1992) and *Requiem* (2004), which featured didgeridoo soloist William Barton.

Discuss the reference to music in the title of the work *Two Movements*. Find examples of his compositions and listen to these in class. Discuss the qualities in his compositions. How do they compare to this portrait?

Compare the profile image to the three-quarter view. What impact does the shadowy background figure have on the composition? Observe the areas of controlled brush strokes and sections left to chance. Describe the mood of this painting. Compose a monologue to accompany this work, incorporating descriptions of texture and technique.

Bergstrom often uses more than one canvas in her portraits to create a time sequence or to capture different aspects of her subject. Research Bergstrom's previous Archibald entries. Compare the portraits and create a list of elements that characterise her art practice.

18. Vincent Fantauzzo *Heath*

'I wanted it to be dealing with self, your own consciousness and your thoughts,' says Fantauzzo. 'An artist is their own biggest critic ... I felt that being a celebrity, you are always under constant scrutiny with so many demands made of you that you have to hold part of yourself back and not give too much away.'

What is the central figure thinking? Describe the expression on Heath's face. Is the central figure being pulled in two directions? Could this be his subconscious depicted? Could the two whispering figures be an angel and a devil? Write a script of dialogue between the three figures.

Observe the tattoo designs on Heath's body. Are these traditional or modern designs? Discuss the symbolism behind his tattoos. Research the history of tattoos and discuss their significance in various cultures.

Why do you think the subject is unclothed? What role does this play in engaging the audience?

Is your response to this artwork influenced by the actor's recent death?

Take a series of digital photographs of a person you know well. Print these images. Select the shots which depict various aspects of your subject. Use the images to create a collage based on your subject.

ANIMAL ATTRACTION

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8. Joanna Braithwaite *Chook, chook, chook*

'In these paintings where I cover myself in animals, humour is evident but there is also a strong underlying curiosity in regard to human relationships with animals and a respect for them and the things we share in common.' Joanna Braithwaite

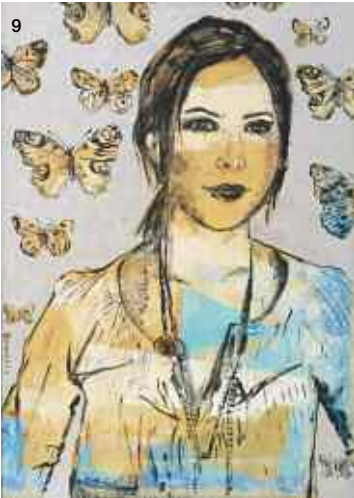
Imagine what it would feel like to have chickens on your bare shoulders. What sounds would you hear? Identify how many breeds of chickens there are. What form do the chickens create?

If you were to paint a similar self-portrait, what animal or bird would you select to be surrounded by? Explain the reason behind your choice of animal. Create a self-portrait based on this theme.

Compare this painting to the other finalists. Identify the elements which make this a unique entry. Discuss the use of humour in this painting.

Research the art practice of Braithwaite. Find images of Braithwaite's work entered for the Portia Geach Art Award: *Birds of a Feather* 2005 and *Pleasant Point Revisited* 2006. Discuss the use of animals in her art practice.

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9. David Bromley *Louise Olsen*

The portrait of Louise Olsen has been in Bromley's head for a long time. 'I wanted it to be fairly pared back so I went very acoustic with it,' he says. 'It has a reasonable boldness to it. But Louise isn't a very gregarious person so I wanted it to have a subtlety as well without too many raucous colours – even though the pieces she makes use luminous colours.'

Imagine what Louise is gazing at. Is Louise aware she is being painted? Discuss the impact of the bold black brush work. Explore the similarities this work has with commercial posters. Experiment in class with screen printing techniques to create a series of portraits of someone you admire.

Count how many butterflies are in the background. Discuss the symbolism behind their use. Why do you think butterflies are there? What does the background remind you of? Explain.

Examine the application of colour on the canvas. Assess where the artist has used a paintbrush or roller. Describe the colour scheme. What mood does the shimmery quality of the paint suggest?

Bromley combines figurative expressionism and pop art in an engaging colourful style. Research Bromley's art practice and map his development. Discuss artists who may have influenced his style. Find out the celebrities Bromley has painted before.

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23. Song Ling *Angelina Pwerle*

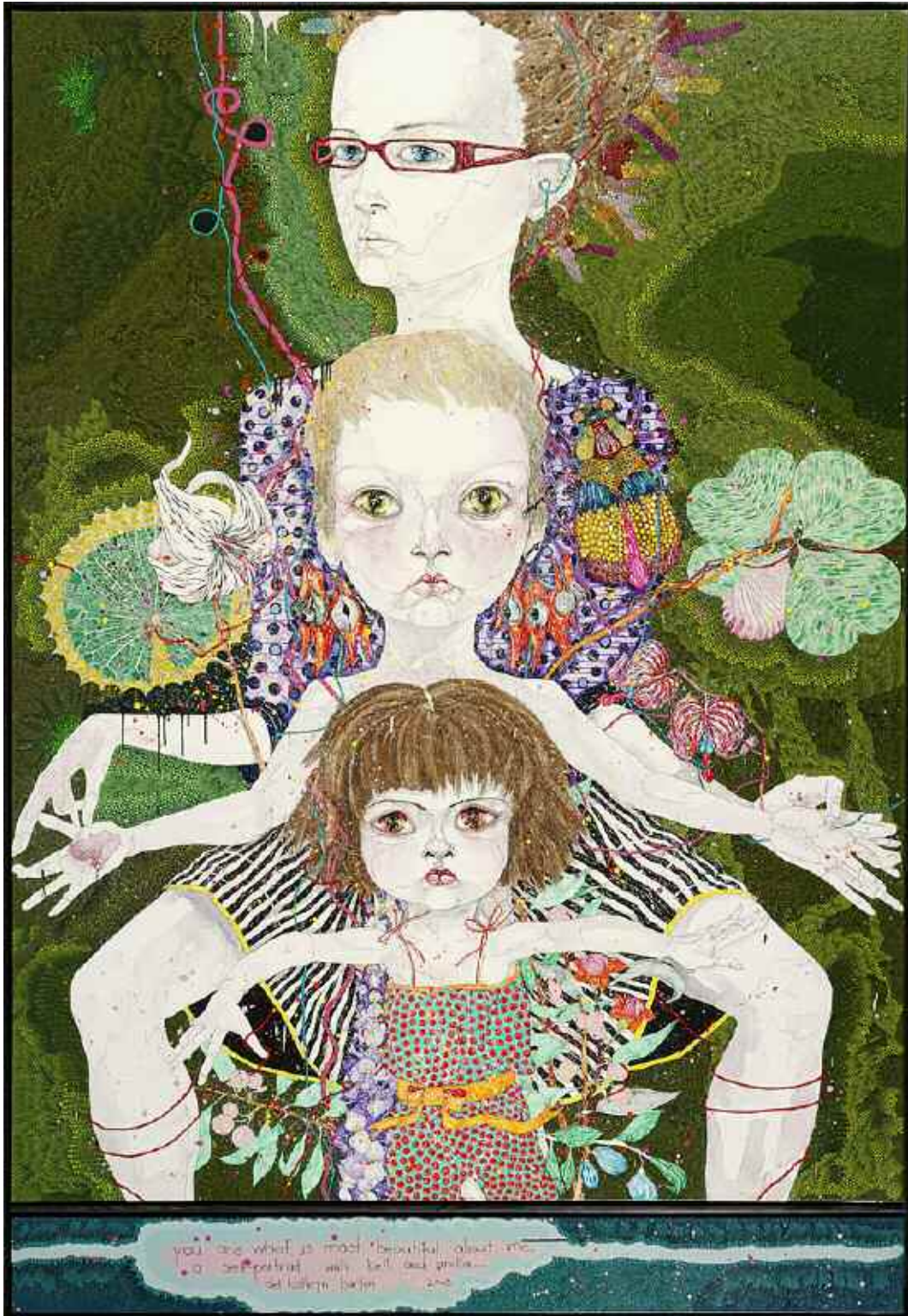
Angelina Pwerle is a prominent indigenous artist who lives and works in Ngkawenyerre, Utopia in the Northern Territory. Angelina Pwerle and Song Ling show at the same Melbourne gallery, Niagara Galleries. Ling's work is known for its vivid colours and bold, illustrative style.

Imagine your reaction to a kookaburra landing on your head. How heavy would the bird feel? Create the expression your face would make if you were in this situation. Describe the expression on Angelina Pwerle's face. Who is the boss? Angelina or the kookaburra?

How has Ling approached mark-making upon the canvas? Identify the elements of this work which have been appropriated. Discuss the impact of appropriation in this portrait.

Observe this painting up close and from a distance. Note the references to computer graphics, commercial posters and newsprint illustrations. Explore how this painting illustrates the influences of the contemporary world and new technologies upon the artist's practice.

Archibald Prize 2008
Winner



3. Del Kathryn Barton
*You are what is most beautiful about me, a self portrait
with Kell and Arella*

synthetic polymer paint, watercolour, gouache and pen on polyester canvas

Analysing the winner
Years K–6
Visual Arts and links with key learning areas



DEL KATHRYN BARTON
You are what is most beautiful about me,
a self portrait with Kell and Arella
synthetic polymer paint, watercolour, gouache
and pen on polyester canvas

Del Kathryn Barton's self-portrait depicts her with her son Kell and daughter Arella.

'This painting celebrates the love I have for my two children and how my relationship with them has radically informed and indeed transformed my understanding of who I am,' she says.

'The title of the work – *You are what is most beautiful about me* – alludes to that utterly profound "in-loveness" that all mothers have for their children. Both my children have taken my world by storm and very little compares to the devotion I feel for them both. The intensity of this emotion is not something that I could have prepared myself for. The alchemy of life offered forth from my inhabitable woman's body is perhaps the greatest gift of my life.'

Known for its vibrant, figurative imagery, Barton's work combines traditional painting techniques with contemporary design and illustrative styles. Although she does a lot of figurative work, much of it self-referential; she doesn't do a great deal of portraiture. She was, however, represented in last year's Archibald Prize with a painting of art dealer Vasilii Kaliman.

Born in Sydney in 1972, Barton has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW, where she taught for three years until 2003. She has had regular solo exhibitions since 2000 and has participated in national and international group shows including the Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship, the Blake Prize for religious art and the Sulman Prize. She was a finalist in the 2007 Dobell Prize for Drawing.

Years K-6

VISUAL ARTS AND LINKS WITH KEY LEARNING AREAS

Visual Arts: Look into a mirror. **Make** different facial expressions. **Select** an expression which you feel comfortable with. **Create** a line drawing of your reflection. **Use** watercolour washes over your drawing. Once dry, outline your line drawing with a marker pen. Then select areas to add decorative detail and bold areas of colour.

Create a family portrait from memory. **Develop** a range of symbols which relate to your family. **Exhibit** the family portraits in class.

Focus on the patterns and decorative details used by Barton. **Observe** how intricate patterns are placed side by side. What effect does this have? Where do you think Barton sourced these patterns? **Create** a chart of the various patterns in this work. What do these patterns remind you of?

English: Look into the eyes of the children. **Describe** their gaze. What are the children thinking? **Compare** the face of the children to that of the mother. **Create** a list of descriptive words. **Use** these words in a poem about motherhood.

Maths: Place a grid over a reproduction of this artwork and calculate the ratio of pattern to figures. Using circles, overlapping and isolated, create a tessellated pattern of your own.

Science & Technology: This artwork has a beetle in it. Why do you think the artist has included it? **Search** your local environment for beetles. Where would you expect to find them? **Make** drawings of some of the beetles you find. **Research** the characteristics of beetles. **Investigate** why some beetles are brightly coloured. **Create** a diagram explaining the life cycle of beetles.

HSIE: This artwork is a celebration of motherhood and the love a mother has for her children. **Research** both ancient and modern examples of cultures and societies that honour and worship the role of the mother.

Analysing the winner

Years 7–12

Conceptual framework and Practice



DEL KATHRYN BARTON
You are what is most beautiful about me,
a self portrait with Kell and Arella
synthetic polymer paint, watercolour, gouache
and pen on polyester canvas

Years 7–12

THE FRAMES

Subjective

What is your initial response to the artwork? How does this work differ from others in the exhibition? What features dominate the composition? How does the artist express herself through colour? Imagine being one of the children in this image. How would you respond to seeing this painting in the Archibald prize?

'I feel like I'm revealing something of myself and the two people in the world I care about most ... It's not something I would ever show in a commercial context.' (Barton as quoted by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8–9 March, 2008)

What does Barton mean by this quote? Suggest why Barton is comfortable with entering a high profile competition and yet is hesitant to place this work in the commercial market.

Cultural

Does the title of the work impact on your reading of the image? Research the theme of the mother in art. Consider artworks from a variety of cultures and styles such as ancient cultures, Hindu religion, European Renaissance and contemporary art practice.

Structural

Barton's work has been described as richly illustrative, having applied intricate details. Debate in class whether this artist is an illustrator or a painter. Is there a difference?

Consider Barton's body of work. Look at particular examples and identify recurring symbols. How representative is *You are what is most beautiful about me, a self portrait with Kell and Arella* of Barton's practice? In what way does it differ?

Post-modern

Does this work have feminist concerns? Research female artists of the 1970s to the present day and discuss how Barton has explored feminism in the post-modern world.

Barton takes an intimate theme and exposes it to a wider audience in the public realm. Argue how this approach reflects post-modern qualities.

Practice

Barton cites artists Kiki Smith, Louise Bourgeois, John Currin and Shirin Neshat, Henry Darger, botanical art and fabric design. Research these artists and styles and investigate why she identifies with their approach to art-making.

Conceptual framework – Artworld – Audience

Art critic John McDonald describes Barton's practice as "[having] a Viennese ambience – a touch of Klimt and Schiele and a dash of Hundertwasser. A typical painting is unashamedly decorative ..." (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 8–9 March, 2008)

Debate in class as to whether this is a valid statement. Consider the role of the art critic and how they influence audiences. Find the article and assess McDonald's point of view.

Focus works



7. Eolo Paul Bottaro *The Archibald*

egg tempera and oil on linen

7. Eolo Paul Bottaro

The Archibald

egg tempera and oil on linen

In his painting *The Archibald* Eolo Paul Bottaro has included as many past Archibald prize winners as he could, dating back to 1921.

His own self-portrait features at the bottom of the composition. 'I guess you have the burden of over 50 past winners on your shoulders when you enter the Archibald Prize so the figure is quite small in comparison to the huge hall', he says. 'The pressure of so many winning pictures is something probably every artist feels.'

The choice of works represented and their position in his imaginary gallery were largely dependent on their significance within the history of the prize, the personal impact of artist and/or subject on Bottaro's work, and how these figures relate within the broader sphere of Australian history.

The challenge for Bottaro was to make the picture work as a whole, not as a collage but as a unified painting. 'At one point it looked like a big quilt. Putting certain pictures next to others, I'd find they clashed and I often had to paint one out and reposition it.'

There was also the challenge of simulating the individual painting styles of the winners: 'I tried to do justice to each work and each artist. It was a headache I have to admit. The picture dominated the studio completely for a year and took six months of solid painting.'

The picture is painted with pure hand-ground pigments, using egg tempera first and then oil. 'That's just the way I work', say Bottaro, who is known for the compositional complexity of his realist figurative paintings.

Born in Melbourne in 1974, Bottaro graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1994 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. In 1997 he began researching fresco painting, which led to five months restoring a church in Sicily. He has had regular solo exhibitions since 1999 and has participated in many group shows including *Divisione Interna* in 2007 at Ballarat Fine Art Gallery and in 2008, *Muse*, a travelling show to Mildura Arts Centre and Benalla Art Gallery. He won the People's Choice Award at the 2006 Metro 5 Art Award.

Issues for discussion

Locate Bottaro painting his self-portrait. Explain why you think Bottaro has painted himself so small.

How many portraits can you see? Find one that makes you laugh. Select a portrait that reminds you of someone you know.

The dates 1964 and 1980 are significant in the controversy of the Archibald Prize. Why are they significant and how has the artist represented this controversy in his artwork?

Find the man standing in the brown coat. Who do you think he is? Imagine what he is thinking about these past winning entries.

How does this image reference art history and the history of the Archibald Prize? Discuss how the winning entries reflect the times in which they were painted.



26. Alexander McKenzie

Sarah Blasko

oil on linen

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Sarah Blasko

oil on linen

Singer-songwriter Sarah Blasko's emotive, highly individual music has gained her a huge following in Australia and the US. Her second album *What the sea wants, the sea will have* has just gone platinum and won the 2007 ARIA Award for Best Pop Release.

She and Alexander McKenzie have known each other since childhood. 'Basically I wanted to paint her because I love her music, and the shared memories of being eight-year-olds together at barbecues, picnics and Christmas,' says McKenzie. 'Plus now she's a beautiful woman.'

'Our families were quite close when we were kids, then you hit a certain age and wander off and do your own thing and I didn't see her for 10 years. Then she started winning ARIAs and having sell-out concerts. I got in touch and she invited us to a gig at the Enmore Theatre and I was blown away. She's a terrific songwriter doing something truly unique.'

McKenzie painted Blasko at the ocean pool at South Cronulla beach: significant to both of them since they spent much of their childhood there. The location is also a nod towards the title of her ARIA award-winning album, while the composition of the painting references Leonardo da Vinci's *Madonna of the rocks*. 'It's a classically based idea and I have used a lot of symbolism in the painting as I do with my landscape work', says McKenzie.

Born in Sydney in 1971, McKenzie studied in Sydney before moving to the UK. Known for his evocative landscapes and luminous painting technique, he exhibits regularly in Australia and overseas. He was an Archibald finalist last year and is a finalist in this year's Wynne Prize for the fourth year running. His work is held in many collections including the Royal Bank of Scotland and Macquarie Bank in Australia.

Issues for discussion

Imagine you are the subject of this portrait. What sounds can you hear? What can you smell and taste in the air? How do you feel posing for your portrait outdoors by the sea?

Is the subject, Sarah Blasko, comfortable? Does the portrait give any clues to her profession? Which objects seem out of place in this painting? List the possible objects or symbols in this image that add meaning to the sitter. What is the significance of the sitter being barefoot?

Identify the various light sources in this painting. Was this work painted in the studio or on location? Give reasons for your answer.

Compare the album cover of Sarah Blasko *What the sea wants the sea will have* to this painting.

Focus works



32. James Powditch

Aden Young in 'Once upon a time in the inner west'

mixed media

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Aden Young in 'Once upon a time in the inner west'

mixed media

Actor Aden Young has appeared in films such as *Black robe*, *Metal skin*, *Cosi* and *Paradise Road*. He was in the Sydney Theatre Company production of *Hedda Gabler* starring Cate Blanchett, the New York season of which featured in the ABC documentary *In the company of actors*. Most recently, he has been collaborating as editor with Paul Cox on *Salvation* and *Kalaupapa Dreaming*.

'We both live in Sydney's inner west in Marrickville and I met him when he shot his short film *The rose of Ba Ziz* at our place last year', says James Powditch.

Powditch is a huge film buff and collects old movie posters. His portrait of Young is conceived as a giant billboard. The six panels are painted on paper then glued down like a movie poster in the street over other old posters. Film references abound. The title is a play on the Sergio Leone 1968 spaghetti western *C'era una volta il West* (Once upon a time in the west). Young, with his classic matinee idol looks, is depicted as a cowboy, echoing a famous image of Steve McQueen in Sam Peckinpah's *Junior Bonner*. There are also references to *Apocalypse now*, *Reds* and *The warriors*. The text is a reworking of the original *Once upon a time in the west* poster and includes other jokes: The (Marrickville) Metro is a shopping centre Powditch and Young both use; Addison & Addison refers to the name of the road where they both live.

Born in Sydney in 1966, Powditch is well known for making inventive, witty, mixed-media constructions that incorporate painting, assemblage, collage and screenprinting. This is his first time in the Archibald, although his portraits have hung in the Salon des Refusés for the last four years. He is also represented in this year's Wynne and Sulman prizes – he has been a regular finalist in both since 2002. He won the 2007 Mosman Art Prize and was a co-winner of the Blake Prize for Religious Art in 2005. A finalist in last year's Dobell Prize for Drawing, his work has also featured in the ABN AMRO Emerging Artist Award, Sculpture by the Sea and the Woollahra Sculpture Prize. He has been regularly included in the Year in Art Exhibition at the S H Ervin Gallery. He has held numerous solo shows and is represented in regional and corporate collections.

Issues for discussion

What aspects of Powditch's own world does he reference in this work? List these references. How does Powditch's work reflect urban and inner city culture?

How does Powditch's work challenge the traditional notions of painting and portraiture? What other genres are represented in Powditch's work? Does the scale of this work challenge the audience in an exhibition such as this?

In what way is this work outside the mainstream idea of portraiture? Compare this work to the other finalists. Why do you think this work was selected by the selection panel?

Archibald Prize 08: finalists

1	Martin Ball	Neil Finn
2	Phillip Barnes	Black: White: Red all over
3	Del Kathryn Barton	You are what is most beautiful about me, a self portrait with Kell and Arella
4	Anthony Bennett	Portrait of Jon Farriss in a Kylie t-shirt
5	Danelle Bergstrom	Two movements – Peter Sculthorpe
6	Roger Boreham	Dad, what a smile
7	Eolo Paul Bottaro	The Archibald
8	Joanna Braithwaite	Chook, chook, chook
9	David Bromley	Louise Olsen
10	Jun Chen	Ian Smith
11	Zhong Chen	Nicholas Harding
12	Zhansui Kordelya Chi	Julius
13	Peteris Ciemitis	Grabowsky
14	James Cochran	Akira
15	Yvette Coppersmith	In the garland
16	Richard Dunlop	Tim Olsen: the man in black
17	Neil Evans	Blue days, black nights
18	Vincent Fantauzzo	Heath
19	Hong Fu	Dr Joseph Brown
20	Robert Hannaford	Alison Mitchell
21	Zai Kuang	The sisters – Celia and Julia
22	Sam Leach	Self in uniform
23	Song Ling	Angelina Pwerle
24	Barry McCann	Simpatico
25	Neil McIrvine	David Disher
26	Alexander McKenzie	Sarah Blasko
27	Lewis Miller	Tom Lowenstein
28	Anna Minardo	The question
29	Paul Newton	Portrait of Donald McDonald AC
30	John Phillips	Wendy after two cups of coffee
31	Rodney Pople	Art is what you can get away with – self portrait
32	James Powditch	Aden Young in 'Once upon a time in the inner west'
33	Ben Quilty	Self portrait after Madrid
34	Leslie Rice	Quartered, drawn and hung: Adam Cullen on public display
35	Paul Ryan	Peter Booth, study with Cuban
36	Jenny Sages	Anita & Luca
37	Nick Stathopoulos	At the movies with David Stratton – aka The big sleep
38	Xu Wang	Nick Waterlow
39	Yi Wang	Long hair
40	Jan Williamson	Sue McPherson – artist