UNVEILING THE NARRATIVE

Barbara Campbell, Conradiana, 1994. Typewriter text on 20 Chinese rice paper scrolls and video, scrolls 572 x 30.5 cms each, video 7:00 minutes. Griffith University Art Collection. Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australian council, its art funding and advisory body. Courtesy the artist.

Featured at the far and wide: Narrative into Idea exhibition, UTS, 2014.
CONTENTS

Unveiling the Narrative word glossary pg. 3
The Structural frame pg. 4

CASE STUDY 1: PAUL GAUGUIN pg. 5
Paul Gauguin Overview + Early Life pg. 6
Paul Gauguin Narrative 1: Paul Gauguin, When will you marry me? (Nafea Faa Ipoipo), 1892, 102 x 78cm / 40” x 31” pg. 7
Paul Gauguin Narrative 2: Paul Gauguin, Tahitian women on the beach, 1891, Oil Paint, 61 x 91 cm. pg. 8
Paul Gauguin Legacy: Pg. 9

CASE STUDY 2: NEWELL HARRY pg. 10
Newell Harry Biography pg. 11
Newell Harry Narrative 1: Newell Harry, Untitled gift mat series, installation view, Untitled (12th Istanbul Biennial), 2011 pg. 12
Newell Harry Narrative 2: Newell Harry, (Untitled) Six Anagramatic banners. (2013). All works are Tongan Ngatu (bark cloth, ink, 279 x 118 x 6cm. Pg. 13
SHORT ANSWER RESPONSE QUESTION 1 Pg. 14

CASE STUDY 3: BESTABEE ROMERO pg. 15
Betsabee Romero Biography + Artist Quote: Betsabee Romero, talking about the symbols of cars being used in her installations at the Nancy Server Gallery, ACT, (2010) NANCY SEVER GALLERY pg. 16
Betsabee Romero Narrative 2: Betsabee Romero, Tattoo Car, 2010, site specific installation, variable dimensions. Pg. 18
SHORT ANSWER RESPONSE QUESTION 2 Pg. 19
Activity 1: Betsabee Romero- Unveiling the narrative in Betsabee Romero’s works. Pg. 20

CASE STUDY 4: MICHAEL LINDEMANN Pg. 21
Michael Lindeman Biography Pg. 22
Michael Lindeman Narrative 1: Michael Lindeman, Dear Art Enthusiast, 2014, pencil and acrylic on canvas, 204 x 142cm, 2. Dear Michael, 2014, pencil and acrylic on canvas, 204 x 142cm Courtesy the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney. (Both works featured at the far and wide: Narrative into Idea Exhibition, UTS, 2014.) Pg. 23
Michael Lindeman Narrative 2: Michael Lindeman, Dear Trustees (self-portrait), 2010, pencil and acrylic on canvas. 204 x 142 cm Pg. 24
Michael Lindeman Newspaper Article: Taylor, A, 2014, Archibald rejects find new home, SMH. Pg. 25
Activity 2: Michael Lindeman: Students are to critically analyse Michael Lindeman’s, Dear Art Enthusiast, (2014) in the following 2 part investigation. 26-27

CASE STUDY 5: BARBARA CAMPBELL Pg. 28
Barbara Campbell Biography, influences and Working with video Pg. 29
Barbara Campbell Narrative 2: Barbara Campbell, Conradiana, 1994, Typewriter text on 20 Chinese rice paper scrolls and video, scrolls 572 x 30.5 cms each, video 7:00 minutes. Griffith University Art Collection. Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australian council, its art funding and advisory body, Courtesy the artist.
(Work featured at the far and wide: Narrative into Idea exhibition, UTS, 2014.) Pg. 31
SHORT ANSWER RESPONSE QUESTION 3 Pg. 32

IN CLASS ESSAY BASED UPON N.S.W PAST HSC STRUCTURAL FRAME QUESTIONS. Pg 33.

FURTHER READING: Pg. 34

REFERENCES: Pg. 35-36
**UNVEILING THE NARRATIVE WORD GLOSSARY**

**Geometric:** shapes and forms that are man-made shapes such as triangles, etc. with regular edges; nonrepresentational shapes

**Installation:** artistic genre of three-dimensional works that are often site-specific and designed to transform the perception of a space.

**Medium:** the materials used to create an artwork such as acrylic paint, pencil, charcoal, watercolor, paint, etc.

**Narrative:** a story or account of events, experiences, or the like whether true or fictitious.

**Pattern:** the repetition of elements of combination of elements in a recognizable organization; Motif: the repeated elements

**Primitivism:** sometimes a conscious; sometimes an unconscious attempt to recapture the simple directness of primitive people.

**Post Impressionism:** Breaking free of the naturalism of Impressionism in the late 1880s, a group of young painters sought independent artistic styles for expressing emotions rather than simply optical impressions, concentrating on themes of deeper symbolism.

**Symbol:** commonly, a pictorial sign which reveals to the informed an instructive message.

**Symbolism:** conveying an artistic message by means of associated idea.

**2D Art:** having the dimensions of height and width only: a two-dimensional surface. (of a work of art) having its elements organized in terms of a flat surface, especially emphasizing the vertical and horizontal character of the picture plane: the two-dimensional structure of a painting.

**3D Art:** a system or effect used in a movie or object to provide three dimensions - width, length and depth.

**4D Art:** combining a 3D film with physical effects that occur in the theatre in synchronization with the film. (Note that 4D films are not actually four-dimensional in the geometric sense of the word.)

**HSC TERMINOLOGY** (http://hsc.csu.edu.au/visual_arts/glossary/2248/glossary.htm)

**Analyze:** Identify components and the relationships between them; draw out and relate implications.

**Explain:** Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how.

**Compare:** Show how things are similar or different.

**Contrast:** Show how things are different or opposite.

**Critically (analyze/evaluate):** Add a degree or level of accuracy, depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to (analysis/evaluation).

**Describe:** Provide characteristics and features.

**Discuss:** Identify issues and provide points for for and against.

**Identify:** Recognise and name.

**Investigate:** Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about.

**Justify:** Support and argument or conclusion.
THE STRUCTURAL FRAME

THE STRUCTURAL FRAME OVERVIEW.

THE STRUCTURAL FRAME
This frame relates to the way an artist structures the art elements (tone, colour, shape, perspective, pictorial depth, texture, line etc.,) to create their artwork. It also relates to the signs, symbols and codes that are used by the artist to create visual meaning.

With the structural frame you identify the ways the artwork communicates the ideas or emotions of the artist to you.

The meaning of the work is understood in relation to the system by which the symbols used by the artist communicate about their world.

If you are asked to use the structural frame to discuss an art work, here are some questions you could ask yourself:

What is it made of? How is it made? What are the qualities of the various art elements (line, tone, shape, colour, texture)? Is one emphasised more than another? How do the different elements relate to each other (composition, arrangement, presentation, scale)? What signs or symbols do you see? How do you ‘read’ this system of visual language? What does the artwork communicate? How does it communicate this?

WRITING ABOUT ARTWORKS FROM THE STRUCTURAL FRAME

1. Explain how the artist uses and arranges the various elements and principles of design and composition
2. Give a detailed description of the artwork
3. Try to describe and interpret how the artist has used elements such as colour, symbols, shape, tone, size and composition
4. Write about the media used and anything special about the techniques the artist has used.

The structural frame relates to the visual structures in an artwork and how their use affects you as the audience. You look for the link between structural decisions and the effect they have.

The structural frame invites you to look at form, media and techniques in an artwork and at how the elements in the artwork are arranged.

Relating the Structural frame to an artwork inspired by a narrative:

Narrative Definition: “A story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious.” (Macquarie Dictionary)

How has the narrative been symbolised or visually communicated in the artwork? Is it through text, colours, composition, mediums? What materials have been used to create the artwork? Does this allow the audience to understand the narrative the Artist is trying to convey?
CASE STUDY 1: PAUL GAUGUIN

Paul Gauguin, *Nave, Nave Moe (Miraculous Source)* also known as *Sacred Spring*, 1894, oil on canvas 73 x 98 cm,

-on a Tahitian queen...

With the beautiful instinct of her race she dispersed grace everywhere about her, and made everything she touched a work of art. (Paul Gauguin, 1891)
PAUL GAUGUIN OVERVIEW

French post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin was an important figure in the Symbolist art movement of the early 1900s. His use of bold colors, exaggerated body proportions and stark contrasts in his paintings set him apart from his contemporaries, helping to pave the way for the Primitivism art movement. Gauguin often sought exotic environments, and spent time living and painting in Tahiti which are reflected in his Gauguin’s artworks which have become visual narratives.

EARLY LIFE

Famed French artist Paul Gauguin, born in Paris on June 7, 1848, created his own unique painting style, much like he crafted his own distinctive path through life. Known for bold colors, simplified forms and strong lines, he didn't have any art formal training. Gauguin instead followed his own vision, abandoning both his family and artistic conventions.

Gauguin was born in Paris, but his family moved to Peru when he was a young child. His journalist father died on the journey to South America. Eventually returning to France, Gauguin took to the seas as a merchant marine. He was also in the French Navy for a time, and then worked as a stockbroker. In 1873, he married a Danish woman named Mette Gad. The couple eventually had five children together.

Gauguin began painting in his spare time, but quickly became serious about his hobby. One of his works was accepted into the "Salon of 1876," an important art show in Paris. Gauguin met artist Camille Pissarro around this time, and his work attracted the interest of the Impressionists. The Impressionists were a group of revolutionary artists who challenged traditional methods and subjects, and had been largely rejected by the French art establishment. Gauguin was invited to show at the group's fourth exhibition in 1879, and his work appeared among the works of Pissarro, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet and other artistic greats.

By 1883, Gauguin had stopped working as a stockbroker so that he could fully devote himself to his art. He also soon parted ways from his wife and children, and eventually went to Brittany, France. In 1888, Gauguin created one of his most famous paintings, "Vision of the Sermon." The boldly colored work showed the Biblical tale of Jacob wrestling with the angel. The following year, Gauguin painted "The Yellow Christ," a striking portrayal of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Gauguin was one of the art world's more colorful characters. He referred to himself as a savage, and claimed to have Inca blood. Fond of alcohol and carousing, Gauguin eventually contracted syphilis. He was friends with fellow artist Vincent van Gogh. In 1888, Gauguin and van Gogh spent several weeks together at van Gogh's home in Arles, but their time together ended after van Gogh pulled a razor on Gauguin during an argument. That same year, Gaugin produced the now-famous oil painting "Vision After the Sermon."
NARRATIVE 1: Paul Gauguin, *When will you marry me?*, 1892

In 1891, the founding father of Primitivism, Eugene Henri Paul Gauguin travelled to Tahiti in search of “an edenic paradise where he could create pure, “primitive” art.”* By escaping from the European society, technology and cultural traditions, Gauguin hoped to capture spiritual primitive societies he thought were unspoiled by the modern world.

But the Polynesian reality did not meet Gauguin’s expectations of rural and primitive life. Tahiti was colonized as early as in the 18th century, so by the time the artist arrived there he failed to find the culture he was looking for. Two thirds of the native population was killed by European diseases, and the indigenous religion was destroyed by Catholic and Mormon missionaries.

Gauguin painted *When will you marry me* during his first stay in Tahiti in 1892. He successfully settled into the local life and had taken a young girl named Teha’amana as his native wife. Their marriage was arranged by the girl’s family, who considered it a great privilege to have their daughter marry a white man, while to Gauguin it was an informal union by any European standard. And though his Tahitian life was not as primitive as Gauguin anticipated, he stayed. During that period he produced a number of his best-known “Gauguin paintings” of Tahitian women, and it is most likely that Teha’amana was the model for many of these pictures.

All the features identifying primitivism – flatterine of forms, intense colors and distorted perspective are present in this painting. Gauguin depicted two women, who also appear in his other works – one wearing a traditional Tahitian costume (foreground) and the other is dressed in a missionary dress (background). This contradiction is dress speaks to the changes evident in Tahiti at the time when Gauguin was staying there. Paul Gauguin’s innovations in color treatment would ultimately set the stage for Fauvism and Expressionism.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
This article ©galleryIntell
Narrative 2: Paul Gauguin, *Tahitian Women on the Beach*, 1891.

Paul Gauguin spent much of his artistic career traveling the world, searching for artistic purity. With that goal in mind, Gauguin obtained permission from the French government to travel to the French Polynesian islands to study the cultures, customs and landscapes. In 1891, he boarded the ship Océanien and set sail with the third class passengers. Gauguin was on his way to "escape the European struggle for money - to be "free at last."

After arriving in Tahiti in June 1891, he painted *Tahitian Women on the Beach* that summer. He shows two women sitting in the sand, one facing the viewer, one facing away. The young woman on the left sits with her back towards us, her head down, indifferent to the viewer. She wears a red Pareo, cloth wrapped around the body forming a skirt, with a white floral print and white top. Her dark hair is tied back with a yellow ribbon, an influence of western contact, contrasted with a white flower behind her hair. She leans on her right arm creating a straight hard edge within the painting. The woman on the right is shown facing the viewer and not just in a contemplative stare; she is performing an action. She sits with her legs crossed as she weaves fiber to start a basket. Like the woman on the left, this woman doesn't interact with the viewer. Her gaze goes beyond. Unlike the woman on the left, she wears a full dress influenced by the missionaries. Neither woman is shown exactly as she was. You would not confuse Gauguin's paintings for photographs. He shows them with distorted proportions, faces that can resemble masks, and colors separated by dark outlines.

They are both shown in stark contrast against the light sand they sit in. Behind them the green water of the lagoon sits before the blackness of the sea, highlighted with the white from the waves breaking. The painting shows duality in both the foreground and background. With the two women, we see the rich history of Tahiti – one woman dressed in the traditional sarong while the other shows western influence. One woman sits unoccupied by anything, while the other faces the viewer, performing one of her daily duties, weaving the basket. Like the women, we have calmness in the lagoon and movement in the sea. Gauguin went to Tahiti to discover the primitive and purity in Polynesian life and escape the modern France, but he almost immediately found and started painting the melancholy of the women and the colonial influence.
Gauguin's naturalistic forms and "primitive" subject matter would embolden an entire, younger generation of painters to move decisively away from late Impressionism and pursue more abstract, or poetically inclined subjects, some inspired by French Symbolist poetry, others derived from myth, ancient history, and non-Western cultural traditions for motifs with which they might refer to the more spiritual and supernatural aspects of human experience. Gauguin ultimately proved extremely influential to 20th-century modern art, in particular that of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque and their development of Cubism from about 1911 to 1915. Likewise, Gauguin's endorsement of bold color palettes would have a direct effect on the Fauvists, most notably André Derain and Henri Matisse, both of whom would frequently employ intensely resonant, emotionally expressive, and otherwise "un-realistic" color.

(Extract from the Artstory.org, http://www.theartstory.org/artist-gauguin-paul.htm)


Paul Gauguin, Self Portrait: Les Miserables, 1888 oil on CANVAS 45x55cm, Gauguin Museum
“The narratives in my artworks have been inspired by my travels. Travel has never been easier than it is now but it remains largely a leisure activity for those of wealthier nations. Migration, of course, is something altogether different. In terms of the impact of shifting cultural influences, although it’s occurring more consistently today than in the past, I’m not so sure anything that different is occurring now than in the days of the Dutch East India Company and early colonial expansion. Trade and economics are still run by large global entities and shipping remains the predominant mode of global industrial transport. Slavery might have been abolished, but many people the world over remain enslaved. So long as nations continue to trade or be at war people will continue shift and migrate at the prospect of better opportunities. This has been going on since year dot and will continue while humans populate the earth. As people move, cultures inherently shift and are influenced by one another.” (Newell Harry, Das Platforms, Contemporary Art, Issue 18, 2011).
NEWELL HARRY BIOGRAPHY


Newell Harry (b.1972) is an Australian artist whose works are inspired by narratives from his travels in a wide range of media touching on everything and nothing from religion, language and cargo cults, to identity and the impacts of imperial trade and globalization in Africa and the Asia-Pacific. An itinerant wanderer, Newell builds his work through his ongoing meanderings between Australia’s eastern seaboard, the Vanuatu archipelago, India and northeast Asia, and his extended family’s home in the rustic townships of Cape Town’s Cape Flats. Although born in Sydney, Newell was conceived in Durban to parents of ‘Cape Coloured’ and French Mauritanian heritage. Indeed, in the early seventies the artist’s family was fortunate to escape the oppressions of apartheid having been politically active with the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party (SACP). This narrative of family exile continues to influence the artist’s thoughts on language, diaspora and cultural exchange, that often result from the pressures of political and/or economic circumstances. Newell is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.


SIGNS AND SYMBOLS IN NEWELL HARRY’S ‘REVERSE MISSIONARY (GEIST), (1996-2009)

In this work, Harry has taken a Papua New Guinean traditional house shield from the Green River Valley in the Western Sepik region, by an unknown maker about c. 1970–74, and cast a 1:1 replica in a mixture of pure beeswax and synthetic petroleum-based wax. The shield, with its symbols, had earlier been mistaken for a tribal shield (the German Maltese Cross a possible influence from the German occupation of Papua New Guinea and the presence of missionaries) but is now regarded as of little anthropological value. The neon sign makes two statements: AS VENEREAL THEISTS REST, is an anagram for THE NATIVES ARE RESTLESS. We can take as a ‘sign’ of disquiet and possibly unfinished business. Harry’s ‘readymade’, a bike once owned and decorated by a friend in Vanuatu, is positioned opposite. Harry swapped his own high-tech mountain bike for his friend’s bike, thus continuing the long-standing bartering practices associated with Pacific Island culture.


Reverse Missionary (Geist), medium cast artefact acquired by the artist, purchased 1996, Green River Valley, Western Sepik, PNG (c.1970–4) maker unknown 1996–2009, 25% pure beeswax 75% petroleum wax, 144 x 75 x 5 cm, Courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney. Photo: Ivan Buljan
NARRATIVE 1: Newell Harry, Untitled gift mat series, 2011.

The work of Australian artist Newell Harry draws on his interest through a visual narrative on the notions of currency value and exchange in relation to alternate economic modes. He translates this through his ‘untitled gift mat’ series on show at the Istanbul art biennale 2011. The body of work is a contemporary re-interpretation of gift mats which are a traditional form of tribal legal tender in Tahiti in the south pacific, where they have a utilitarian quality and aesthetic, while still acting as a form of hard currency they are often exchanged or gifted at special ceremonial occasions such as birthdays, burials, christenings and we ach of the mats are made from hand-woven pandanus and dye, and are commissioned from an elderly group of aunties related to Harry’s close Tahitian friend Jack Sivui Martau, a young community leader. The pieces depict phrases and sentences that take most of their linguistic influences from pidgin and creole dialects, paralleled with hip-hop rhyming and the anagrammatic word plays and phonetics used in slang.

Alliteration, assonance, homonym, metaphor, pun and rhyme are features the artist tries to imbue into his phrases. Since living in Tahiti, Harry has noticed the poetic vernacularity of bislama (a melasian creole and the lingua franca of the area), and that it is one of the most linguistically diverse regions in the world. More than 120 tribal dialects in addition to French and English are spoken here. For example ‘condom’ in bislama is ‘plastik blong blokem pikinini’, which means ‘plastic that stops babies’. The truncation of the language incorporates English (‘plastik’ and ‘blong’ as in ‘belong’ which is possessive) and French and Portuguese (pikinini).

NEWELL HARRY QUOTE ON “UNTITLED” Gift mat series, 2011:

‘The work literally and materially speaks of the ‘interwoven’ quality of the cross-cultural discourse (good and bad) that results from globalization. The use of this material as ‘ethnic’ artifact and contextual reference has been a strategy to depart from the overbearing linguistic connections of the 1960s and 1970s. It also attempts to shed the now standardized, globalized canon of conceptualism. A return to the traditional making was an attempt to do this while giving a heads-up to the context where the pieces are made. As the mats are commissioned, there’s a tongue-in-cheek reference to minimalism and its industrial, hands-off fabrication. In the islands this is inverted, as it’s quite ‘hands-on’. Secondly, the use of ‘gap languages’ such as pidgins and creoles, as opposed to European languages, speaks in encoded forms and away from the pomposity of those languages, or for that matter Latin.’ –

This meditative artwork consists of six large scale *tapa* (*traditional bark cloth*) banners on which anagrammatic English words are roughly rendered in block letters, inviting the viewer to contemplate their own narratives through the language systems and word constructions as ephemeral, shifting and ultimately subjective. Harry’s use of metaphorical materials is intrinsic to his practice, and *tapa* (a Tahitian word), which is originally derived from the dye-fig (ficus tinctorial), has for centuries been widely used for ceremonial and trade purposes through Oceania, going by many different names. Here it becomes a metaphor for these complex interrelationships, and the artist’s own wanderings along ancient routes of maritime trade and cultural exchange.

1) (Make a 1 – 2 paragraph long response) With critical observation of Newell Harry’s installation *Untitled- Gift Mat series* (2013) and Paul Gauguin artwork *Please Marry me* (1892), how has Tahiti inspired each artist’s narrative represented in their works? Make references to the visual qualities and materials used by Harry and Gauguin in the creation of their artworks.
CASE STUDY 3: BESTABEE ROMERO

Betsabee Romero, *Cities that Leave*, various sizes, 2004 (4 engraved tires and prints on cloth). Artist’s collection.

From “The House of the Track”

A house made of bricks

With traces of that family that runs,

That runs away dangerously,

That has been run over many times.

BETSABÉÉ ROMERO, SOUTH EXHIBITION, 2014.
Betsabee Romero (b. Mexico City, 1963; lives and works in Mexico City) received a Masters in Art History from UNAM, Mexico, a Masters in Fine Arts from ENAP San Carlos, UNAM, Mexico, a Bachelors of Arts from the Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico, and studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts de Paris, France. She has received multiple international awards including First prize at the Cairo Biennial in 2006 and has exhibited extensively throughout Europe and the Americas at institutions such as the Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Dublin, and El Museo del Barrio in New York. Additionally, she was included in the 8th Havana Biennial, the Puerto Alegre Biennial, Brazil (2003) and the Tamayo Biennial in Mexico City (2002).

Primarily utilizing modified, manipulated and deconstructed automobiles as a platform for addressing social issues, formal concerns, and cultural commentary she has produced site-specific installations for exhibitions such as No todo lo que es verde brilla, in Mexico City (2007), Au Bord du Paysage (Site-specific installation), Art dans la nature Biennial, Farges, France (2005), Art in the Gardens, Chicago, Illinois (2004), Llantas para Ciudades a Flor de Piel, Mas allá de la Potencia y la Velocidad in Kohj, Bangalore, India (2003) She is represented by Galeria Ramis Barquet in New York.

ARTIST QUOTES: BETSEBEE ROMERO, talking about the symbols of cars being used in her installations at the Nancy Server Gallery, ACT, (2010)

NANCY SEVER GALLERY

“Cars that play at saying things one shouldn’t say, dressed to uncover what people hide with their clothes. Cars as body extensions with their own memory tattooed with the scars of a history made up of street characters who cast and see themselves as the guilty.”

“A car with the mask of a multifaceted city, camouflageing, disguising, transmuting and putting on make up. A megalopolis such as Mexico City has a thousand masks to put on.”
BETSBABEE
ROMERO
NARRATIVE 1


(Neart up of the metal arrows sticking out of the car)


A Geography of Objects concept drawing.


**NARRATIVE 2: Betsabee Romero, *The Geography of Objects*, 2014, Site-specific installation, variable dimensions.**

Betsabee Romero’s narrative in *The Geography of Objects* (2014) interrogates prevailing vertical metaphors of North/South relations, presenting a site-specific installation depicting a dismembered car body riding on a sea of small tyres, that have been pierced with 50 spears. The lightweight tyres, representing the South miraculously support the heavy industrial car body of the North, which is simultaneously ‘trampling and crushing’ them.

The Spanish word, Romero used to describe the supporting wheels is llantitas (little tyres), which in Mexican slang also refers to rolls of body fat, like the English expression ‘Love Handles’. This delicious ambiguity references the interrelationships between the seductive products of the developed North, and their consumption by the South. The car body encapsulates the conundrum of modern consumer is- an expensively engineered and marketed product of a particular brand, styling, year- with it’s planned obsolescence, ultimately destined for landfill. By contrast the small wheels signify the low tech ingenuity and ‘make do’ of the developing world, and its daily toil, where materials are endlessly reused and re-purposed.

Lining these two ‘worlds’ the 50 spears, capped with crafted arrow heads, evoke in Romero’s words: ‘a history of losses and massacres, the incisive and unforgiving tip of history, each containing unique memory, rising with dignity, looking at the sky.’
**NARRATIVE 2: Betsabee Romero, Tattoo Car, 2010.**

“In this project I used a vehicle as a reflection of European Culture contrasting this with tattoos drawn onto the vinyl which completely covers the vehicle. The tattoos symbolise the gang members who keep on causing underground conflict in the Netherlands. I came up with this installation concept with renown tattoo Artist, Henk Shiffmacher. He came with his family and students from the Amsterdam School of Art and they teamed up to work on “Tattoo Car”. The reasons for the tattoos being featured on the car is because tattoo’s in European culture can be seen as a historical. Tattoos of the landscape which can be seen all over the vehicle is a reflection of imprisonment and death that has flooded us for centuries. I have seen tattoos which symbolise the war between governments such as the cartels who fight for control of media attention. These symbols of war featured on the car, can be seen on the skin of many ‘Mara’ gang members who have tattooed skin which appears to look like a memorial script which can be used a shield, as a prison in itself. Tattoos gives skin an identity through visual codes of numbers, letters, crosses, names, towers and chains which can make a person internationally recognized and pursued if the higher authorities capture them. Tattooed skin that is full of symbols of deaths can be seen as a metaphor of scars of wounds from a country where all these deaths are the tattoo of a territory marked with death and violence. European gang members who wear these tattoos and who have been rejected by the Mara gang members only have their own skin to fight. When they die and get buried all they are left with is that long calligraphy pain.”

(Betsebee romero, ltropen Museum, 2010).

**WATCH THE MAKING OF TATTOO CAR**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUPvnZ8D3ug
2) How has Betsabee Romero told her stories through signs and symbols in her installations? (Respond to this question using 1 – 2 artworks to support your written response.).
#ACTIVITY 1 QUESTIONS.

Unveiling the narrative in Betsabee Romero’s installations.

How has Betsabee Romero’s political views been symbolized in her installations? (i.e. North vs South, sustainability, crime, Mexican Revolution, Tattoos etc).

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

When viewing the ‘Making of the Tattoo Car (2004) What are the qualities of the various art elements (line, tone, shape, colour, texture) which have been represented on the exterior of the car?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

What do the cars and tyres symbolize in Betsabee Romero’s installations? Are the tyres and cars placed specifically in a certain way to communicate a message to her audience?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________

Identify the ways Betsabee Romero has demonstrated her individuality in the visual codes she uses in her installations. Do the objects she uses have symbolic meaning?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________

In your opinion, what largely drew attention to Betsabee Romero- her artwork or the narrative behind the artwork or both?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________
Dear Your Excellency Sheikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani,

My name is Michael and I live in Australia, not sure if you’ve heard of it. I recently read that you have been named the most powerful person in the Art World, so I figured I might start at the top and work my way down.

Therefore, in your capacity as the head honcho of the Qatar Museums Authority, I was wondering if you would like to acquire one of my recent paintings? The article I read about you estimated that you spend more than £600 a year for the museums of Qatar, that’s close to one billion Australian dollars I think, so I’m sure it could happen.

If the price of my painting is an issue, I’ll throw in the freight costs, if that sweetens the deal. Just let me know what your address is and I’ll organise it, no problem at all. You wouldn’t even notice the funds leaving your account, on the other hand it would really help me out. I don’t think I’d go crazy with the money either, it would go straight back into new paintings after I pay a couple of bills. Cash is always good but cheque or direct deposit is also fine. Bank: National Australia Bank
Account name: Michael Lindeman
BSB: 082 080 Account #: 843670694

No pressure, maybe just have a think about it.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,

Michael

Michael Lindeman, Dear Your Excellency Sheikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, 2014, pencil and acrylic on canvas, 204 x 142 cm

“My conceptual practice has always been engaging, and ultimately challenging, the role of the spectator and not ‘simply trying to be a smart arse’. While the form of these paintings encourages the viewer’s attention, it’s the emotional pull of the visual language that keeps the viewer on board – or not. I try and create a gap between the object and the language raises questions about the nature of art itself.”

(Michael Lindeman quote from Notes to self/letters to others, 2014, Theartlife.com)
Michael Lindeman (b. 1973) is an Australian artist who attained his Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours (First Class) and Master of Fine Arts at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Lindeman’s paintings, sculptures and ready-mades respond to global consumerism, planned obsolescence and a fabricated popular culture of indulgence. Residencies at the Los Angeles Studio (2001) and the School of Visual Arts, New York (2002) focused Lindeman’s attention on the ubiquity of discarded objects and a moral order dominated by plasticised cartoon characters that promote childish notions of good and evil. His approach combines serious intent with ironic playfulness.

Donald Fitzpatrick, Senior Lecturer and Head of Visual Arts at Queensland University of Technology, refers to anxiety and muted nostalgia in Lindeman’s work, where ‘objects are used … the way a hip-hop sound artist might use a piece of existing music but manipulated into a different circumstance’. He goes on to say: ‘Michael Lindeman seems like many artists of his generation to use editing as a political means to deal with/cope/make a space in the plethora of images generated by the industrialisation of culture. Here editing allows for some type of disjuncture, even dysfunction, to occur in the production of the works and our reading of them.’

Michael Lindeman seeks to recuperate the vernacular and rarely acknowledged aspects of life. One of his paintings is a replica of a letter of certification he received as a dishwasher attendant for Sizzler Restaurants. Another is a replica of a handwritten letter to the viewer entitled *Dear Art Enthusiast* (2014) in which Lindeman simultaneously recalls his casual job and questions society’s expectations of artists. In recent abstract paintings he has traced the resemblance of retail newspaper advertisements and non-objective painting.

Lindeman embraces open letter form of contemporary portraiture with considerable possibilities for commentary and humour. Drawn to Pop Art and its critique of social distinctions, his letters effect are elevation of the banal through strategies of appropriation, replication and translation. Lindeman’s confessional register, however, is held in check by his sense of the absurd and the accentuated surfaces of his paintings.

Lindemans textural referencing of forms from graphic design, literature and popular illustration is one example of the dynamic of Conceptual Art and its legacy in the exhibition. While all the artists display a critical relationship to society’s dominant narratives, stylistically, Conceptualism’s influence is most evident in the formal language of Lindeman’s work.

(Source: Hannah Matthews’ essay for her exhibition, *Power to the People: Contemporary Conceptualism and the object in Art*, which she makes the distinction between Conceptualism and the Object in Art, in which she makes the distinction between Conceptualism as a style and as a diversity of critical practices has been important as a reference. See *Power to the People Contemporary Conceptualism and the Object in Art*, exhibition catalogue, Melbourne Festival and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2011, p.7.)
Michael Lindeman, *Dear Trustees (self-portrait)*, 2010, pencil and acrylic on canvas, 204 x 142 cm

This large-scale replica of a handwritten open letter is a radical contribution to the genre of portraiture. Lindeman’s painting is a conceptual portrait, perhaps conveying more about the sitter than any conventional portrait painting. ‘I wanted to create a portrait that presented some of the conditions that a contemporary artist must deal with, in order to find their place in society and contribute something new to culture,’ he says.

Through a shared experience with the viewer, *Dear Trustees (self-portrait)* aims to distil and connect with many emotions. The portrait is at once sad and humorous, sarcastic and sincere, absurd and deeply serious. The act of translating what is ordinarily an intimate gesture – a handwritten letter into an amplified painting on canvas – results in a portrait that is courageous and abandons any pretension. Lindeman admits he was initially slightly anxious about submitting it for the Archibald Prize but was encouraged to do so by his art dealer.

Lindeman has been working in the area of conceptual text painting for sometime now. He is committed to creating paintings that challenge the audience and provoke discussion and interest in contemporary art. In 2010 he was awarded the Sulman Prize for one of his text-based works that precisely replicate published classified ads. In 2011 and 2012 he was a finalist in the Archibald and Wynne Prizes respectively, and this year is also represented in the Sulman Prize.
Archibald rejects find new home

Date: July 12, 2014.

Andrew Taylor

Read more:

Archibald Prize entries come in all shapes and sizes, but few artists would be brave enough to enter what appears to be a hastily drawn head on a scrap of paper.

But Michael Lindeman is not afraid to experiment with the art of portraiture.

His portrait of Andrew Denton, Note to self, takes the form of a large-scale replica of a Post-It note on which appears to be a pen drawing of the television personality with a thought bubble containing the phrase “Slave to the algorithm”.

A pun on Grace Jones’ song Slave to the rhythm, the phrase was inspired by an article Denton wrote for Fairfax Media about being disengaged from the world of social media.

However, Lindeman did not win over the trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW who judge the Archibald Prize; his portrait of Denton is not among the 54 finalists in contention for the $75,000 prize, which will be awarded on Friday.

But his painting will be displayed in the Salon des Refuses exhibition of works rejected by the judges of the Archibald and Wynne prizes.

Other Archibald Prize entries in the exhibition at the S.H. Ervin Gallery include Robert Hannaford’s portrait of Phillip Adams, Michael Vale’s portrait of Mic Conway titled Mad world and Justin Feuerring’s painting of John Safran.

The Salon des Refuses follows a tradition established by Napoleon in Paris in 1863, when he insisted that the large number of artworks rejected by the Academy be displayed for the public to view and judge.

The director of the S.H. Ervin Gallery, Jane Watters, said the Salon des Refuses was not a competition like the Archibald Prize.

“The main criteria for the Salon is that it is a good painting first, and that it is engaging, innovative, irreverent or all of the above,” she said.

Watters said Lindeman’s Note to self portrait was amusing and unconventional.

“Andrew Denton is regarded as one of the leading thinkers and innovators of his generation, but is also a very clever comedian so I am sure he would enjoy it as much as the Salon selectors did.”

When Denton was asked what he thought of the portrait, he said he was “happy with everything but the subject”.

A two-time Archibald finalist and past winner of the Sulman Prize, Lindeman was a finalist in last year’s Archibald Prize with his Dear Trustees (self-portrait), which took the form of a letter to the trustees asking them to consider his “challenging” work because it would help him pay his tax, rent, legal bills and hecs debt.

Lindeman said he was not disappointed about missing out on this year’s Archibald Prize.

“If an artist gets upset about things like that - totally out of the artists’ control - they’re in the wrong game,” he said.

The Salon des Refuses is on at S.H. Ervin Gallery from July 19 to September 14.

Read more:
ACTIVITY #2 QUESTIONS.

Students are to critically analyse Michael Lindeman’s, *Dear Art Enthusiast*, (2014) in the following 2 part investigation. (5 marks)

PART A: Identify in the 5 boxes below, 5 key points about how the structural frame applies to Michael Lindeman’s, *Dear Art Enthusiast*, 2014.

1. Michael Lindeman, *Dear Art Enthusiast*, 2014, pencil and acrylic on canvas, 204 x 142cm
PART B: How does Michael Lindeman’s artwork Dear Art Enthusiast (2014) communicate a narrative as a system of signs and symbols? Is there a limitation to this view of art?
“My works operate to reveal the complexity of relationships between the narratives, symbols of selfhood, and the subjective dependence upon or investments of objects.”

(Barbara Campbell, 1999)
BARBARA CAMPBELL BIOGRAPHY

Australian performance artist, Barbara Campbell (b.1961) has performed in both hemispheres, in museums, galleries, public buildings, photographs, on film, video, radio, and the internet in silence and with words, still and moving, since 1982. She has had a long fascination with the visual and adaptive qualities of text and in works such 1001 nights cast and the News Haiku series, has been exploring the idea of the empirical now in newspaper stories.

After completing undergraduate degrees fine arts and art history, Barbara Campbell was awarded a Master of Visual Arts from Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney in 1998. She has undertaken residencies at Griffith University, Queensland, The University of Melbourne, The University of Sydney, Australia Council studios in Santa Monica and New York, the Power Institute studio, Paris and Bundanon Trust (the Arthur Boyd estate), NSW. In 1994 the NSW Ministry for the Arts awarded her the Women and Arts Fellowship and in 2004 she received an Australia Council Fellowship to produce 1001 nights cast.

Campbell has held workshops in drawing, writing and performance in the USA, UK, Hong Kong and Australia. Her recent teaching work includes courses in experimental drawing at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney and in media art projects at the University of Wollongong. In 2002 the Department of Performance Studies at Sydney University produced a survey exhibition of her 1996-2001 performances with an accompanying catalogue, Flesh Winnow (Power Publications: 2002) and she is now an Associate Artist with the Department. Artefacts and objects created in and around Campbell’s performances are in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia; Griffith University; Queensland University; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; the State Library of Queensland and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

VIDEO INFLUENCES

“Artists/social context: peers within the Sydney Super 8 Film Group; Films of 60s minimalists: e.g. Stan Brakhage; Technologies: Any medium that became domesticated and therefore accessible to the artist/amateur. Education: Student in Film Studies taught by Alan Cholodenko, Rex Butler and Keith Broadfoot at Power Dept of Art History, University of Sydney, 1987. Texts associated with this course included French Film Semiotics, e.g., Metz, Baudry, Bazin, Baudrillard & Bellour.

Campbell says about first working with video:

“It was a natural progression from my interest in the Super 8 medium, which was the artists’ (as opposed to commercial filmmakers’) way into working with film. In the 1980s I was at the beginning of my art practice and was interested in any media that could be wholly controlled by the artist, that is, not just in all areas of production but also exhibition and critical writing. Towards the end of the 1980s, as my work focused more on performance, I continued to use Super 8 and then video as a way of integrating other image sources into the performance frame. Video was particularly useful in setting up live video feedback – the camera and monitor could be used to define relationships between performer and audience that became a dialogue between mediation and ‘liveness’. I continue to use video in this way rather than making stand-alone video works.”
In Inflorescent (1999/2000), performance artist Barbara Campbell presents her body in the all too familiar but nevertheless unknowable figure of a reclining nude. Lying on a chaise longue, painted with cursive botanical motifs, Campbell fans ultraviolet light across her body revealing the patterns in rhythmic waves. This performance art piece informs the audience about a narrative to do with femininity which is symbolized through the tattoo art inscribed on the body which offers the viewer more productive glimpses of how corporeal inscription informs our notions of subjectivity through history. The viewer is immediately struck by the question of what exactly it is confronting them when they gaze upon this strange living thing. In order to make sense of this part cycad, part homosapien the audience must rely upon their individual notion of what characterises the obviously feminine construct. This figure is identifiably feminine, the wave of light that oscillates across the body, revealing the artist’s décolletage, anchors the subject of the piece instantaneously.

Marking the bodily surface in the manner of the tattoo, Campbell complicates the viewing perspective in order to break the linear styled narratives familiar to our conventional notions of history telling. The tattoo, according to Alphonso Lingis is a type of libidinally charged surface inscription that he associates with the primitive over the civilised body. In appropriating the mark of the primitive, that is the tattoo, with its less refined stylistic conventions of Australian flora by botanists such as Joseph Banks and nineteenth century French naturalists, Campbell weaves a specific culturally coded social fabric from symbols and historic practices that contribute to the confrontational experience the audience is faced with in viewing this strange living thing. As Elizabeth Grosz points out; “there is a form of body writing and various techniques of social inscription that bind all subjects, often in quite different ways according to sex, class, race, cultural and age codification, to social positions and relations... these modes are no less permanent or removable than tattooing.” Grosz goes on to further here to develop the idea that there is nothing natural or ahistorical about modes of corporeal inscription. Rather, through such modes bodies are made amenable to the prevailing exigencies of power, so transforming flesh into particular types of body—the primitive, capitalist, white, Australian and so forth. It is just such concerns regarding bodily inscription that Campbell articulates in Inflorescent.

Inflorescent: performance at Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, 1999 and 2002 and at Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2000,

VIDEO LINK:

BARBARA CAMPBELL: 2 Recent Performances by Art Critic Lisa Byrne, Monash University (2000)
Extract: Narrative 2: Barbara Campbell, *Conradiana*, 1994


Barbara Campbell developed her video installation *Conradiana* (1994), after reading Elanor Coppola’s narrative [Notes (1979) of the making of the film Apocalypse now (1979), by her husband Francis Ford Coppola. *Apocalypse Now* was famously inspired by Joseph Conrad’s canonical novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), typing Conrad’s text nearly six times. Campbell sought to undercut the grandeur of the European romantic imagination by juxtaposing the text with the video footage shot on the Jungle Cruise at Disneyland. Campbell looked to daughter Sofia’s (who is now a film director) observation that the film’s location in the Philippines was like the Disneyland ride. In performing the typing of the manuscript, Campbell was also making visible the female labour that facilitates the achievements of individual male genius.

Campbells’ work exemplifies the curatorial premise of the exhibition. By honing her idea, she makes room for audiences’ viewpoints by planning for her intention not to dominate their apprehension of the structure of the work. She may be arranging and orchestrating its intertwined narratives but she is not ‘telling’ the story.

*(Conradiana grew out of the performance Backwash which was presented at Australian Perspecta 1993 in Sydney and later in Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and San Francisco. It was subsequently acquired by Griffith University Art collection in 1997.)*

Barbara Campbell, a performance and installation artist has used text as the starting point for her large-scale installation *Conradania*, in this case Joseph Conrad’s acclaimed novel *The Heart of Darkness* published in 1899 and set on the Congo River in Africa. Campbell spent eight weeks typing out the book word for word on twenty 15ft lengths of Chinese rice paper. She then filmed the Jungle Cruise ride at Disneyland, which is played on a small screen in front of the hanging rice paper. Her ironic and humorous installation started with a fascination with text that developed into a critique of masculinity Western Europe’s exoticism of other cultures. (Detail)
3) Observe Michael Lindeman and Barbara Campbell’s artworks from the exhibition ‘far and wide: Narrative into Idea’ UTS, 2014; how do you think they have created a visual language in their 2D and 4D artworks? Are there limitations due to their choice of materials? (refer to specific artworks from the exhibition which support your response)
Week 6.

In class HSC Essay Response Questions: (25 marks)

1) Evaluate the ways different artists represent ideas and interests in the world through the development of a visual language. (use a minimum of 3 artworks to respond to this. (2003 HSC Visual Arts paper, Section 2)

OR

2) How does art communicate as a system of signs and symbols? What are the limitations to this view of art? (use a minimum of 3 artworks to respond to this) (2001 HSC Visual Arts Paper, Section 2)

TIME: 40 Minutes.
FURTHER READING

PAUL GAUGUIN

- http://www.paul-gauguin.net/

NEWELL HARRY

- http://maxlieberman.net/?page_id=134

BETSABEE ROMERO

- Betsabee Romero- Inspiration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFedI2kR7sI
- http://www.snyderman-works.com/artists/betsabe-romero

MICHAEL LINDEMAN


BARBARA CAMPBELL

REFERENCES

PAUL GAUGHIN


NEWELL HARRY


BETSABEE ROMERO


MICHAEL LINDEMAN


REFERENCES

BARBARA CAMPBELL


http://scanlines.net/person/barbara-campbell

N.S.W HSC SYLLABUS

N.S.W BOS (2001), 2001 HSC Visual Arts paper, Section 2

N.S.W BOS (2003), 2003 HSC Visual Arts paper, Section 2