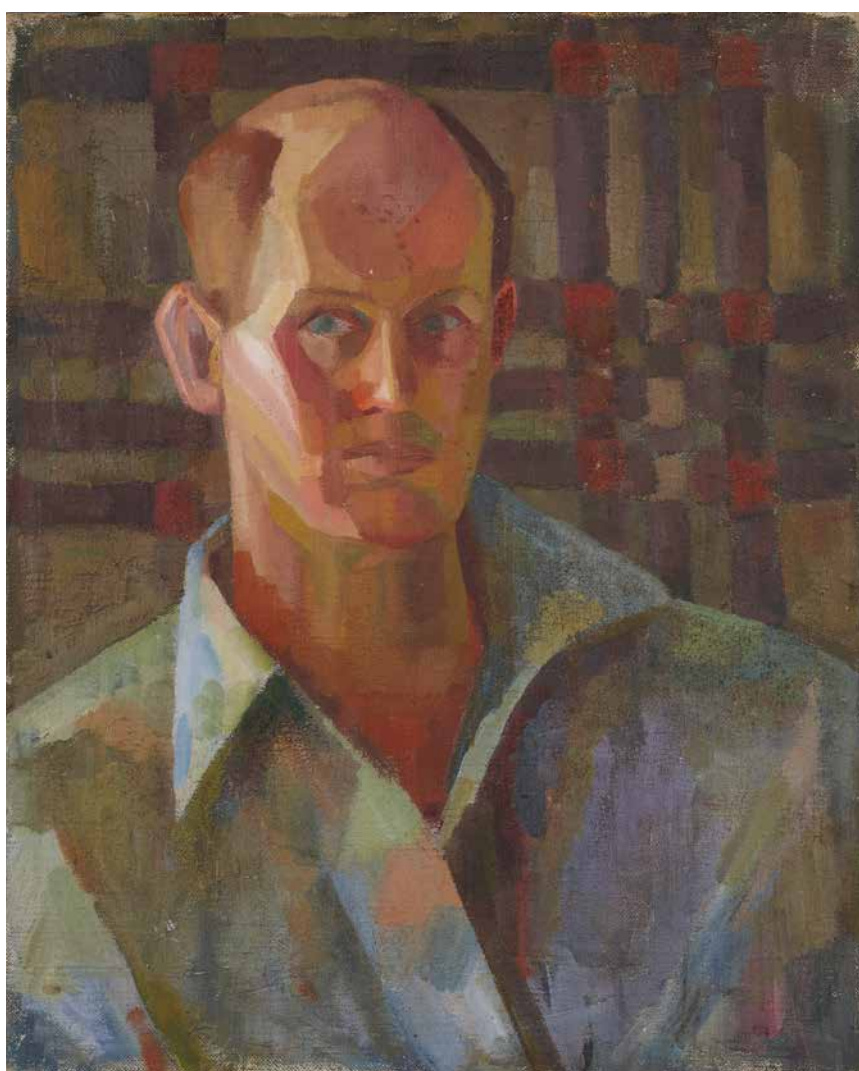


GUY GREY-SMITH

A R T A S L I F E



EDUCATION RESOURCE

Art Gallery of Western Australia

GUY GREY-SMITH

A R T A S L I F E

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition features more than 100 works by Guy Grey-Smith (1916-1981), a Western Australian artist whose challenging paintings of the Western Australian landscape secured his national importance in the 1960s and 1970s.

Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life is the first full retrospective of the artist's work since his death and focuses on recurrent themes and motifs to illustrate his powerful and unique contribution to the Australian painting in the post-war period. In particular, Grey-Smith's great achievement as an artist was to bring a new imaginative power to the depiction of the Western Australian landscape.

The exhibition traces Grey-Smith's development from his earliest completed paintings to the monumental landscapes of the late 1970s, and includes still life and figure studies as well as works on paper and ceramics. By tracing the artist's development and focusing on periods of intense artistic activity and achievement in his work, *Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life* provides a new insight into the remarkable achievements of this determined Modernist.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

This education resource has been developed by the Art Gallery of Western Australia to assist primary and secondary teachers and students to maximise the educational value and enjoyment of the 2014 exhibition *Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life*.

The aim of this resource is to provide teachers with succinct information about the artist, his life and the development of his artistic practice over time by focusing on a number of key works which can be studied and discussed in the classroom. It offers analyses of the selected works as well as contextual information, and provides discussion questions and related activity ideas for primary and secondary students.

The material in this resource is intended encourage teachers and their students to plan a visit to *Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life* to engage directly with the artist's works and the didactic panels and extended labels within the exhibition. It is also intended to complement the information provided by the exhibition catalogue, written by exhibition curator Melissa Harpley. This resource has been written with reference to the Western Australian Curriculum Framework and the Australian Curriculum: The Arts.



Midhurst 1945

Midhurst was Grey-Smith's first finished oil painting and is a view from the sanatorium in which he was housed at the end of World War II, in the town of Midhurst, England. The sanatorium, built specifically to treat tuberculosis sufferers while researching its cure, offered art therapy classes which, for a time, were taught by artist and former patient Adrian Hill. Grey-Smith was inspired by Hill's lectures on famous artists, his practice of hanging paintings and prints in the wards and his modern approach to art-making. Influenced by European modern artists such as Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh and the Fauvist painters, Hill encouraged students to take an analytical

approach to the subject and to communicate what they felt about it, rather than striving for neatness and realism. *Midhurst* demonstrates that Grey-Smith had learned much from Hill, through the exaggerated use of colour in the sky, the simplification of shapes such as the trees and clouds and the way the painting is a summation or interpretation of a view, rather than simply a representation.

Adrian Hill also introduced Grey-Smith to experimental modern British landscape painting being made by artists such as Robert Bevan, Charles Holmes and, in particular, Spencer Gore. These influences, together with the introduction of oil painting into Grey-Smith's repertoire, resulted in this landscape painting.

Apart from being his first oil painting, *Midhurst* was also the artist's first landscape painting of note. In preparation for this work, he completed several watercolour studies of the landscape around Midhurst, two of which can be seen in *Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life*. This exploration marked the beginning of a life-long fascination with landscape and place. Although he made still life works, portraits and explored other subjects, it is Grey-Smith's Western Australian landscape works for which he is most remembered.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: Look at the way Grey-Smith has painted the sky. What colours can you see? What different brushstrokes has he used? What was the weather like on that day?</p>	<p>Discussion: Guy Grey-Smith was influenced by his teacher Adrian Hill and other modern British artists such as Spencer Gore in painting this landscape. How important is it for an artist to research and learn from the work of other artists?</p>	<p>Discussion: Compare <i>Midhurst</i> to <i>Sawbacks, Ashburton</i> 1961, also in <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i>. What are the similarities and differences between the two works? How has the artist's style developed in the years between the two paintings (consider use of colour, skills and techniques and composition)?</p>
<p>Activity: On a cloudy day, go outside to create a painting of the sky. Use a range of colours.</p>	<p>Research: Search the internet to find an example of a landscape painting by Spencer Gore. Record the title and date of the work and compare it to <i>Midhurst</i>. What similarities and differences do you see?</p> <p>Activity: Choose a landscape painting from <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i>. Identify what you like about it – colours? Paint texture? Brush strokes? composition? Using photographs of a landscape scene from a place you have visited, make a painting, influenced by what you like about Grey-Smith's painting.</p>	<p>Research/analysis: Throughout his life, Grey-Smith returned time and again to the landscape as a favoured subject. Choose a landscape painting from the exhibition and complete a formal analysis of the work. How successful has the artist been in capturing a sense of place in the painting?</p>



Pot with lizard motif 1951

Guy and Helen Grey-Smith returned from England in the late 1940s and settled in the Hills area of Perth with the intention of raising a family and becoming largely self-sufficient so they could devote their time to art-making, rather than having to earn money. They raised animals, grew fruit and vegetables, and over time, established a studio on the property. Next to the studio Grey-Smith built a pottery from where he made ceramic work and his wife, Helen, produced textiles which were then sold to contribute to the household's income. Making these lifestyle choices provided them with artistic freedom as they did not feel pressured into producing art to suit popular tastes.

While studying at the Chelsea School of Art in London in the mid-1940s, Grey-Smith attended ceramics classes at the Woolwich Polytechnic two evenings a week for almost two years. He became proficient in all aspects of ceramic production including wheel throwing, glazing and firing. Back in Western Australia, at his Darlington studio, he

installed an electric kiln and sourced local clay which he dug from several nearby locations. He experimented with glazing and firing, preferring a spontaneous approach to decoration and the mixing and application of glazes.

This is one of the earliest pots Grey-Smith produced in his Darlington pottery shed. The pot's form is simple and its surface is decorated with hand-painted slip. The lizard motif and the painterly marks beneath it appear to have been applied spontaneously and confidently. Grey-Smith's surface designs were inspired by nature, some being quite figurative, such as the lizard on this pot, while others were more abstract with marks alluding to natural objects such as leaves.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: As artists, Guy Grey-Smith and his wife Helen made artworks which they sold to people so they had money to live. What kind of artworks did they make? What could you make to sell and help support your family? What were some of the other ways the Grey-Smith family saved money and cared for their own environment?</p>	<p>Discussion: The Grey-Smiths tried to live a sustainable lifestyle. What were some of the things they did to ensure they were largely self-sufficient? How did this affect Grey-Smith's art? What can we learn about sustainability from the Grey-Smiths' approach to life?</p>	<p>Discussion: What measures did the Grey-Smiths take to develop self-sufficiency on their Darlington property? How important was it for Guy Grey-Smith to maintain a sustainable lifestyle? Consider his values, ideology and how these affected the development of his art practice.</p>
<p>Activity: Using an air drying clay, create a small pot using a coiling or pinch pot method. When dry, decorate the pot with acrylic paint, creating an all-over pattern first using a thick brush or sponge. Using a brush and black ink, practice drawing a native Australian animal using only a few marks and lines. When you are ready, use black acrylic paint to apply the design to your pot.</p>	<p>Research: Visit <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i> or search the internet to find other examples of Grey-Smith's pottery. List the different kinds of pieces he made. Select a favourite piece and make a drawing of it, annotating it to explain what you like about the piece.</p> <p>Activity: Create a large pot using earthenware clay and a coiling method. Dry the pot to greenware (when the clay is completely dry all the way through) and develop an abstract surface design for the pot from drawings of natural found objects. Apply the design in layers using different coloured slips. Bisque fire and finish with a clear glaze.</p>	<p>Research/analysis: Research Guy Grey-Smith's life and art practice. In your opinion, was his ceramic work an integral part of a holistic approach to his art and life or was it only a means to support the household allowing him to paint? Write a persuasive essay arguing your point of view, using examples of works from the exhibition to support your argument.</p>



Blackboy grove 1950

Once back in Western Australia, Guy Grey-Smith set about fulfilling his ambition to become an artist. He embarked on a process of self-education which involved looking closely at the discoveries of international artists over the previous sixty years. He felt that by working through these styles, he could achieve his own individual vision. In particular, he studied the work of Cézanne, Matisse and the Fauvist painters, and Henry Moore, who had been one of his teachers at the Chelsea School of Art.

Cézanne was perhaps the strongest influence in the development of Grey-Smith's painting

style at this time. He not only admired Cézanne's discoveries about the way blocks of colour can describe form and light on a two dimensional surface, but also his belief, reinforced by Adrian Hill, Grey-Smith's influential teacher from the Midhurst Sanatorium, that a painting should be an idea or an interpretation of what the artist sees instead of being a direct copy of a scene.

Blackboy grove is an example of a work in which the artist applied modernist principles to the interpretation of the landscape. Influenced by Cézanne, Grey-Smith created a landscape scene made almost entirely from shapes

and blocks of colour, with fragments of pale colour spread throughout the canvas giving the impression of shards of shimmering light. He reduced the forms of the native Western Australian grass trees (or blackboys as they were termed at the time) to circular shapes, composed of geometric blocks of colour, supported by long, vertical brush strokes representing trunks. Despite the flatness of the forms within it, the painting is still strongly figurative. Grey-Smith has incorporated space into the composition using traditional principles of pictorial depth such as the diminishing size of objects towards the horizon line.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: Look at some photographs of native Western Australian grass trees. Compare the photographs to the way the artist has painted them. What is similar and what is different?</p> <p>List all of the different colours you can see in the grass trees. What colours has he used in the shadows on the ground?</p>	<p>Discussion: Describe Grey-Smith's painting techniques and the arrangement of the composition in <i>Blackboy grove</i>. Has he shown depth and space in the painting? If so, how has he achieved this?</p>	<p>Discussion: Identify the elements and principles of art that Grey-Smith has used to develop the composition of <i>Blackboy grove</i>. Describe how each contributes to the composition. Compare the painting to <i>Grass trees 1956</i>, in <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i>. What similarities and differences do you see?</p>
<p>Activity: Begin by using photographs of the West Australian bush, cropped, with sections enlarged. From these cropped pictures, make collages on thin coloured card using many different shapes of multi-coloured papers. Experiment with light and shadows.</p>	<p>Research: Search the internet to find an example of a landscape painting by Paul Cézanne. Record the title and date of the work and compare it to <i>Blackboy grove</i>. What similarities and differences do you see?</p> <p>Activity: Visit an area of bush land or forest near your house or school. See if you can draw a section of the bush using only simple shapes. Back in the classroom or at home, translate your design into a painting, dividing the shapes up into further shapes and using a range of colours.</p>	<p>Research: Guy Grey-Smith studied the work of British and European modernists at length in his quest to become an artist with his own individual vision. How important do you feel it is for artists to learn from the work of contemporaries and those who came before? Use works from <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i> as examples to support your research.</p> <p>Activity: Take photographs within an area of bush land. Enlarge several that you like and, using a viewfinder, select a favourite area of one photograph. Make a design sketch of this section, reducing forms to geometric shapes. Divide these shapes into further, smaller shapes. With a soft graphite pencil, use a range of lights and darks to render the shapes and create a tonal drawing. This drawing could then be used as the basis of a large painting on canvas.</p>



Rottneest 1954-1957

The Grey-Smiths spent nearly two years in England in the 1950s, visiting France during this time and encountering the work of the Fauves. This reignited Grey-Smith's enthusiasm for the Fauvist use of bold, bright colour and *Rottneest* is an example of the way he was influenced by this modern style. He began this landscape painting while in England, and completed it once he had returned to Western Australia.

The most notable feature of *Rottneest* is the use of bold, unnatural colours, characteristic of Henri Matisse and the Fauve painters. Grey-Smith is said to have been directly influenced by Henri

Matisse's use of bright red. Initially the sky was under painted with a cornflower blue. Small bits of this colour peek through the red creating a shimmering effect and reflecting the same blue in the lake placed centrally in the composition. The bright greens spread throughout the work are complementary to the red, further adding to the vibrant surface.

Apart from the large, flat areas of red, most of the composition comprises thick strokes of paint quickly applied in layers, with predominantly flat brushes of different sizes. A final layer of calligraphic brush marks in dark grey has been

added to emphasise details and pull the painting together. The artist has used thinner, round brushes to create these lines which are similar to those that can be found in Fauvist paintings.

The artist has developed a kind of shorthand to describe aspects of the landscape such as trees and hills. This shorthand incorporates repeated arc-like lines that help to unify the composition. These arcs are also reflected in the foliage of the tree in the foreground. A circular shape is also repeated throughout the composition to describe the low shrub-like trees that are to be found in this landscape.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: Can you recognise this place? Imagine you are there. How does it feel?</p> <p>What colour can you see the most of in this painting? Why did the artist use this colour?</p> <p>What do you see in the distance? How has the artist made these things seem far away?</p>	<p>Discussion: What effect does the large amount of red in this painting have on the mood and atmosphere being communicated? Have you visited Rottneest? If so, do you think this is an accurate description of the place? Give reasons for your answer.</p>	<p>Discussion: Guy Grey-Smith was interested in capturing the essence of various locations and scenes. What are the main strategies the artist has used to present an emotional response to this place?</p>
<p>Activity: Go outside with your paints and a piece of card. Find a scene you would like to paint and instead of mixing the colours you see, paint your landscape in bright, unrealistic colours. Use painted lines to add final details to your scene.</p>	<p>Research: Use the internet to research paintings by Henri Matisse and the Fauve painters. What features of <i>Rottneest</i> indicate that the artist has studied the paintings of Matisse and the Fauves?</p> <p>Activity: Create a painting from memory about a seaside holiday location in Western Australia, using heightened colour to express your feelings about this place. Make initial thumbnail sketches to develop your composition, then paint it on a small canvas board. When next you visit this place, rework the painting or paint another on location and make notes about the changes you made.</p>	<p>Research/analysis: Grey-Smith began this painting while living in England, continuing it on location once back in Australia. What parts of the painting do you think he may have reworked in Australia? How important do you think it is for a landscape artist to make artwork on location, rather than remotely? Give reasons for your answer.</p> <p>Activity: In this painting, Grey-Smith has captured the essence of this place, using bold colours, roughly and urgently applied to the canvas. Complete at least 2 A4 Fauvist-style painted studies <i>en plein air</i> (outside) of a place that is special to you, using bold colours and rapid brush strokes. Work on pre-prepared canvas boards with a range of different brushes. Finish the compositions with a thinner brush, applying dark lines to show detail.</p>



Sawbacks, Ashburton 1961

By the late 1950s, Grey-Smith's paintings were becoming increasingly abstract due, in part, to his experiments with screen printing and frescoes, processes that emphasised flatness and reduction of detail in design. He was also consciously experimenting with abstraction while not wanting to completely dispense with figuration. At this time he began to work predominantly with a palette knife, using it to apply slabs of colour to the surface. He began to use hardboard covered with a layer of canvas or gauze, as he found it a sturdier support to withstand the thickness of the paint and the energetic application that came with using these tools.

His distinctive 'slab' style which evolved in the 1960s was arrived at through exhaustive studies of different locations throughout the Western Australian landscape. Grey-Smith was able to distil his experiences of places into flat slabs of pure colour that vibrate on the surface of his paintings. Inspired by travel in WA's Pilbara region, *Sawbacks, Ashburton* is an example of several works from the early 1960s, which, for Grey-Smith, began the transition into the slab technique. Although the painting demonstrates a move towards abstraction, he has still attempted to define pictorial depth through the depiction of foreground vegetation and the use of cool colours in the background.

It takes a few more years before he arrives at his distinctive slab style, dispensing altogether with these concerns.

The painting comprises brightly coloured slabs of thick oil paint, laid side by side in some areas and overlapping in others, resulting in a shimmering, impasto surface. Contrasting blues and oranges and reds and greens add a rich vibrancy to the composition and help to convey the intense light and heat of the landscape.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: Look at the colours Grey-Smith has used to paint the mountains in the background. What colours can you see? Have you ever looked at hills or mountains in the distance? Do they look blue or mauve?</p>	<p>Discussion: Look carefully at the way the painting has been composed. Discuss what you see in the foreground, middle-ground and background. How has the artist used colour to define these parts of the composition? How does the use of colour help to give the illusion of space or depth in the painting?</p>	<p>Discussion: Compare <i>Sawbacks, Ashburton</i> to <i>Pilbara Country</i> 1980, also in <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i>. What are the similarities and differences between the ways the artist has represented WA's Pilbara region in the two works? How has the artist's way of describing the landscape changed over 19 years (consider use of colour, skills and techniques and composition)? Which painting do you think is more successful in capturing a sense of place?</p>
<p>Activity: Make a painting of a landscape with trees in the foreground and mountains in the middle ground and background. Use cool colours like blues and purples in the background and warm colours in the foreground and middle ground.</p>	<p>Research: Look carefully at the materials and techniques the artist has employed to make this painting. Write a short paragraph explaining how he has composed it and the tools he has used to apply the paint to the surface. Do you think using a palette knife or trowel is a valid way of making a painting?</p> <p>Activity: Using photographs of a landscape scene from a place you have visited, make a painting, inspired by <i>Sawbacks, Ashburton</i>, using only a palette knife as a tool. Use hardboard as a ground and mix your acrylic paint with an impasto medium such as modelling compound to add extra body and stiffness. Use the knife on its edge for thin lines and marks.</p>	<p>Research/analysis: <i>Sawbacks, Ashburton</i> is one of a group of paintings in the exhibition made in 1960 and 1961 which represent Guy Grey-Smith's stylistic and technical transition into 'slab' painting. Write a short answer tracing the development of Grey-Smith's style and technical processes over the decade 1960-70. To what extent do you believe this to be the most pivotal period in the artist's development? Give reasons for your answer.</p> <p>Activity: <i>Sawbacks, Ashburton</i> is a large painting, over one metre in width. In your journal, develop a design for a large painting on hardboard depicting an area of landscape with which you are familiar. Prime the board with a boldly coloured ground and place the board on an easel to paint using trowels to apply slabs of thick paint to the surface. Use oil paint or acrylics with an impasto medium such as modelling compound added to give the paint extra body. Paint in layers, building up the surface over time.</p>



Before the race 1963

By 1963, Grey-Smith's extensive experimentation with oil paint, often mixed with wax, sand and other materials, resulted in seemingly abstract compositions made up of dense slabs of dazzling colour. He applied the paint with palette knives and trowels, building up thick layers of intense colour. Inspired by the impasto, abstract works of Russian artist Nicolas de Staël, Grey-Smith dispensed with detail, preferring to emphasise the materiality of the oil paint.

In order to increase the thickness and body of the paint, and for economic reasons, the artist experimented with different additives to mix with oil paint. He eventually settled on

a mixture of beeswax, ammonia, yellow lead oxide and linseed oil, cooked up over a fire outside and cooled until it reached the desired consistency. This meant he could apply the paint in an emphatic way, troweling it onto the hardboard surface and building up layers. This technique also ensured his paintings displayed an increasingly reductive approach to form.

Before the race is a large painting composed of geometric slabs of bright, vibrant colour. Although abstract in appearance, the subject of the painting is figurative, describing a group of athletes at the 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games, which Grey-

Smith attended as a spectator, held at the former Perry Lakes Stadium in Perth. The artist has approached the painting as a formal exercise, arranging the shapes into a visually pleasing composition with a strong horizontal running across the canvas. He has also alluded to the shape of the track in the lower two thirds of the painting, with a subtle arc of white paint enclosing the abstracted shapes of the runners. The intense slab of bright orange placed centrally in the top third of the painting creates a focal point, contrasting with the cool turquoise blues and greens that surround it.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: This painting shows some runners about to start a race. How many runners can you see on the track?</p> <p>Complementary colours are contrasting colours, opposite each other on the colour wheel. What complementary colours can you see in the painting? What shapes can you see?</p>	<p>Discussion: Describe Grey-Smith's painting techniques and the arrangement of the composition in <i>Before the race</i>. Has he attempted to show depth and space in the painting? What do you think were his main concerns in making this painting?</p>	<p>Discussion: Identify the elements and principles of art Grey-Smith has used to develop the composition of <i>Before the race</i>. Describe how each contributes to the composition. Discuss the artist's use of materials and processes in making this work.</p>
<p>Activity: Find or take photographs of sportspeople on fields or courts e.g. cricketers, netballers, basketballers or tennis players. From these photographs, make paintings on A4 pieces of card inspired by <i>Before the race</i> using acrylic paint and small pieces of thick card as tools (instead of brushes). Make sure the surface of the card is completely covered with paint.</p>	<p>Research: Search the internet to find an example of a painting by Nicolas de Staël. Record the title and date of the work and compare it to <i>Before the race</i>. What similarities and differences do you see?</p> <p>Activity: Take a photograph of a dense area of the built environment and, using a viewfinder, isolate an area containing geometric shapes and patterns. Make a relief collage from this area using pieces of scrap cardboard of different thicknesses and surfaces to achieve different heights and textures. Use acrylic paint and a limited colour scheme to complete the composition.</p>	<p>Research/analysis: Research and write definitions for abstraction and figuration in art. Do you consider <i>Before the race</i> an abstract or a figurative work? Give reasons for your answer.</p> <p>Activity: Take photographs of areas within the urban environment that contain buildings and people. Inspired by <i>Before the race</i>, select two of these photographs and translate them into simplified designs composed only of geometric shapes. Take one of these designs and translate it into an abstract A3 painting on a prepared ground of gauze laid over hardboard. Try mixing different materials with acrylic paint, such as flexible gap filler, sand and modelling compound.</p>



Skull Springs country 1966

The Grey-Smith family travelled extensively throughout Western Australia in the 1960s, driving long distances and camping in remote places. Numerous trips to the north-west of the State provided the artist with visual material,

resulting in exhaustive studies of different locations. Over time, Grey-Smith was able to distil his experiences of places into flat slabs of pure colour that vibrate on the surface of his paintings. He explored the materiality of the

paint medium through his studies revealing the underlying solidity of the landscape.

Grey-Smith completed *Skull Springs country* after a camping holiday in a remote, dry and hostile area 100 km east of Nullagine in WA's Pilbara region. In this powerful work the artist employed his now refined, signature slab technique, to capture the monumentality of this vast, dry landscape.

Grey-Smith has reduced forms such as the hill, trees and shrubs to simplified shapes and the painting appears flat with little concern for pictorial depth. There are a number of layers that have been under-painted, causing the painted surface to appear thickly and unevenly textured. A number of different colours can be seen at the edges of the layered forms. These colours peep through and cause the painting's surface to shimmer, not unlike the heat haze that is a feature of this kind of landscape. The central hill form, painted in browns, is almost triangular, reaching across the painting and unifying the composition. The circular shapes of the vegetation are repeated across the painting, their warm colours contrasting with the cool blue and turquoise of the sky.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: This painting is made up of a mixture of cool and warm colours. Which are the cool colours and which are the warm colours? What shapes can you see in the painting? Describe the texture of the painting. How do you think he made this surface?</p> <p>What kind of landscape has the artist shown in his painting? How would it feel to be in this place?</p>	<p>Discussion: What materials and techniques has the artist used to construct this painting? How do these contribute to the mood and meaning of the work?</p> <p>Describe the colours the artist has used in the painting. Discuss the colour relationships within the work and how they contribute to the impact of the work.</p>	<p>Discussion: What impact does the size of the work have on the viewer? What do you think was the artist's intention in creating such a large work? Identify other paintings around this size in the exhibition and discuss the way scale has helped to communicate meaning in these works.</p>
<p>Activity: Try making a textured landscape painting on board using acrylic paint mixed with sand, gap filler and PVA glue. Draw your landscape on a canvas board or piece of thick strawboard first, using simple shapes. Include objects in the foreground, middle ground and background. Mix sand, gap filler and PVA glue with the paint and apply it to the board using different tools, but not brushes. Cover the whole board and see what kind of textures you can make.</p>	<p>Research: This painting describes a place in the Pilbara region of WA's north-west. How has Grey-Smith used the elements and principles of art, especially colour, shape, texture and contrast to communicate the intense heat, dryness and remoteness of this place through his painting? How successful do you think he has been in doing this?</p>	<p>Research: Skull Springs is the name given to a road in a remote area of the Pilbara in WA's north-west, an area which the Grey-Smith family often travelled to. View the exhibition <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i> and compare <i>Skull Springs country</i> with <i>Bunker Bay 1965</i>, a painting made the previous year from a visit to WA's south-west coastal area. What are the differences and similarities between the two works (consider composition, use of colour and paint application)? In each painting, how successful was the artist in evoking a sense of place?</p>
	<p>Activity: Inspired by the composition of <i>Skull Springs country</i> create an abstract landscape monoprint. Draw a simplified design onto 'litho' paper and roll thin layers of block printing ink onto perspex plates (use at least three colours). Place the 'litho' paper drawing side up over one colour, trace over the lines and fill in solid areas on the drawing. Move to another colour, repeating the process each time a new colour is required. Try not to place the weight of your hand onto the paper while tracing. The monoprint will appear on the reverse side of the 'litho' paper.</p>	<p>Activity: Grey-Smith reduced the forms in this landscape to simplified shapes. Take a landscape drawing you have made and, in your journal, experiment with simplifying the landscape into geometric shapes. Make at least 3 drawings, reducing the form at each stage. Experiment with a colour scheme. Translate one of your drawings into a large painting, mixing modelling compound, flexible filler and sand with the paint and applying it with scrapers, palette knives and other tools (not brushes). Build up the surface with layers, allowing parts of layers underneath to show through.</p>



The Mother Temple, Bali 1968

After returning to WA from England in 1955, Grey-Smith approached his painting practice with renewed vigour, while his wife, Helen, made printed textiles using block printing and screen printing techniques. Inspired by Helen's textile work, Grey-Smith began to experiment with printmaking on paper, seeing its potential for exploring his subject matter in a fresh way. He mastered the use of multiple stencils for screen printing, reducing details in his imagery to suit the medium. This reduction of details and use of layers, in turn, influenced his painting.

The early 1960s was the beginning of Grey-Smith's exploration of Asian cultures with a two month trip to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). During this trip he absorbed many aspects of Ceylonese art and culture and this exposure was to have a significant effect on subsequent mark-making and motif development in his paintings throughout the 1960s.

In 1968 the Grey-Smiths travelled to Bali, where they immersed themselves in Balinese culture and village life for a month. Grey-Smith recorded his experiences by painting and drawing extensively throughout the time. The Balinese trip encouraged him to see the potential for inspiration that South-east Asia contained, at a time when most

Australian artists still looked toward Europe.

The Mother Temple, Bali is a screen print showing a view of Besakih, The Mother Temple, for Balinese people, the largest and most important Hindu temple on the island. Perched nearly 1 km meters up the side of Mount Agung (the largest mountain in Bali) it is an extensive complex of twenty-three separate but related temples. Grey-Smith has created a four colour screen print which appears as a kind of shorthand recording of his experience of the temple. The work is composed of large, flat areas of colour, overlaid with the final stencil that unites the composition. This stencil, printed in black, takes the form of a gestural line drawing, the marks describing the characteristic features of Balinese architecture.

Grey-Smith's travels to Ceylon, Bali and Cambodia in the 1960s influenced the works he made for the next two decades. Marks and shapes such as arcs and circles, although subtly present in his earlier works, became more prominent after his experiences in south-east Asia. These Asian influences can be clearly seen in the many woodblock prints Grey-Smith produced throughout the 1970s.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: The subject of this screen print is a temple in Bali. Have you ever been to Bali? What parts of the print do you recognise from Balinese temples?</p>	<p>Discussion: How did travelling to Asian countries affect Grey-Smith's subject matter and his painting style?</p>	<p>Discussion: Grey-Smith spent extended time travelling in Asia and on each occasion, absorbed much about the social, cultural and political landscape of these countries. Discuss the way his art practice was affected by his experiences of Asian cultures. What benefits do you see there are for Australian artists today to travel in this region?</p>
<p>Activity: Look closely at the lines in this print. Using photographs of distinctive buildings in your area make some quick line drawings using a soft brush and Indian ink. Try to capture the unique features of the buildings.</p>	<p>Research: What places in Asia did Grey-Smith travel to? Search the Internet to find another artwork he made from one of these places and write a paragraph describing what the artwork is about.</p> <p>Activity: Make a simple three colour screen print on paper. Begin by cutting a frame from clear self-adhesive contact paper stick it to the back of the screen. Draw the design directly onto the screen, inside the frame, using thick wax crayons. The lines you make will block the screen and resist the ink. Print the first colour and draw more lines before printing each of the remaining two colours.</p>	<p>Research: Research the history and development of serigraphy (screen printing). For what purposes was it first developed and who were the first artists to see the potential of the medium for creating fine art? What prompted Grey-Smith to begin experimenting with the medium? What impact did it make on the rest of his practice? Use specific examples from <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i> to support your answer.</p> <p>Activity: Inspired by <i>The Mother Temple, Bali</i>, produce a screen print using a photographic process. In a dark room, coat the back of a silk screen with a light sensitive emulsion and dry in the dark. Make an expressive drawing on drafting film or acetate using a brush and black Indian ink. Expose the drawing to the coated screen using a UV light box or by placing in the sun, sandwiched together. Wash the emulsion out in water and dry the screen. The design will be ready to print. This process can be repeated to make a number of different stencils, each of which can be printed over the previous.</p>



Karri forest II 1975

Throughout the 1970s Grey-Smith continued to explore printmaking, producing a number of zinc plate etchings in the period 1974 to 1975, before a more thorough exploration of woodblock printing continued throughout the 1970s. Woodblock allowed him to describe the essential elements of his subject with a minimum of expressive marks. This is evident in *Karri forest II*, where, without unnecessary detail, the artist has used quickly gouged, vertical marks in the wood to describe the feel of the forest.

The long, vertical marks the artist has gouged in the wood elegantly capture the shapes of the tall, straight trunks of the majestic karri trees. By printing the block in only one colour – black – the white marks are highly contrasted and give the impression of light filtering through the trees and hitting the trunks. The shapes of the clumps of foliage and the groundcover are hinted at, as the artist directs the viewer's eyes to focus on the dense patterns of vertical shapes created by the forest.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: Look carefully at the print. Can you see where the artist has taken out bits of the wood with tools? What kind of lines has he made in the wood?</p>	<p>Discussion: Look carefully at the composition of this print and discuss the artist's use of line, pattern, repetition, contrast and balance. Can you identify the positive and negative shapes in the work?</p>	<p>Discussion: Inspired by his wife's printed textile work, Guy Grey-Smith experimented extensively with printmaking on paper. How important was printmaking to the overall development of his artistic practice? Do you think a print holds as much value as a painting? Why/why not?</p>
<p>Activity: Woodblock printing is a kind of 'relief' printing. Make a relief printing block using a thin printing foam plate. Draw your design directly onto the plate using different tools such as a ball point pen, thick pencil or the end of a pencil. Objects with textures can also be pressed into the foam. With a roller, roll block-printing ink out evenly onto a Perspex plate. Print the plate as many times as you like.</p>	<p>Research: This woodblock print is a relief print. Research relief printing and discover what other kinds of materials can be used to make relief prints. What is the difference between a relief print and an intaglio print?</p>	<p>Research: Visit <i>Guy Grey-Smith: Art as Life</i> and view all of the woodblock prints on display. Make a list of the works including titles and dates. Compare <i>Karri forest II</i> to <i>Karri forest I</i>, 1975 and <i>Karri forest III</i> 1980, also in the exhibition. What are the similarities and differences between the three prints?</p>
	<p>Activity: Make sketches in an area of bushland near you home or school. From these drawings, develop a design for a single colour relief block print. Transfer your design to a piece of printing rubber. Carve out all areas you wish to remain the colour of the paper. Print your block onto paper as many times as you like.</p>	<p>Activity: Inspired by <i>Mt Augustus rock face</i> 1975 use a very large piece of lino to make a single colour block print of a vast area of landscape. Concentrate on achieving a variety of lines and marks to describe the subtleties of the landscape. Experiment with printing the block on a variety of surfaces – coloured papers, textured papers and collage – and hand colour some of the prints using watercolours or gouache paints.</p>



Karri trees 1979

For the last decade of his life, Grey-Smith's main subjects were the forested landscapes in WA's south-west. Feeling the Perth Hills area had become too suburban and longing for a more peaceful, rural lifestyle, the Grey-Smiths relocated to the small timber town of Pemberton in the mid-1970s, where they purchased a cottage and continued their respective practices.

The artist returned time and again to the towering karri forests as a subject, succeeding, over time, in capturing the essence of these scenes through reduced detail and blocks of thick, vibrantly coloured impasto paint. In addition to large, imposing canvases, he also represented the forest in numerous drawings and woodblock prints. In his later years he joined the cause to save old growth forests and became a committed activist, campaigning in and around Pemberton.

Fittingly, the last landscape painting the artist was working on prior to his death was *Karri forest*, 1981, a highly abstracted view of forest and river painted in blocks of cool blues, greens and turquoises.

In *Karri trees* 1979, fresh turquoise and teal blue slabs of thick oil paint are interspersed with rectangular pillars of warm yellows, giving the impression of sunlight bouncing off the trunks of the trees. The artist has used a trowel or paint scraper to apply the paint, which has been mixed with a wax medium to give it body and stiffness, resulting in a highly textured surface. The paint has been applied in layers so that the edges of slabs of colour underneath peek through, giving the painted surface a sense of vibrancy. The multiple layers of cool blues and greens convey a sense of the feel of the forest – cool, serene and awe-inspiring.

The artist has reduced the forest to its barest essentials in order to capture the essence of the place. The warm yellow sun-lit tree trunks, the dark green/grey river and the surrounding space have been represented as simple geometric shapes. There is no attempt to show pictorial depth as Grey-Smith is conveying the awe-inspiring experience of being in this place. Distilling this experience into sensations of pure colour and simple shapes, devoid of detail, was his primary aim.

PRIMARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SECONDARY
<p>Discussion: What kind of place has the artist shown in this painting? How would it feel to be there?</p> <p>What colours has he used in the painting? What do you think the long yellow shapes are?</p>	<p>Discussion: What materials and processes has the artist used to make the painting? How have these contributed to the mood and meaning of the work?</p> <p>Discuss the composition and the artist's use of space within it.</p>	<p>Discussion: How successful has the artist been in capturing a sense of place in this painting?</p> <p>Is this an abstract work? If so, what features do you think make it abstract?</p>
<p>Activity: Using cut and torn coloured papers make your own forest with tall trees and a river flowing through. Begin with an A4 piece of dark coloured cardex (e.g. purple, dark green or dark blue) and lay the papers down using overlapping simple shapes. Use tissue papers for transparency, as well as other coloured papers. Build up the surface so most of it is covered.</p>	<p>Research: Research Grey-Smith's life and discover what prompted him to become involved in the campaigns to save old growth forests in WA's south-west. To what extent do you think Grey-Smith's involvement in local environmental politics affected his work? In particular, consider his choice of subject matter.</p> <p>Activity: Work from photographs of forested areas and use viewfinders to isolate areas of interest within the photographs. Loosely transfer designs onto vertically shaped pieces of card (matt board offcuts are ideal) and use water-soluble oil pastels to create expressive compositions, focusing on achieving a harmonious colour scheme, a rich surface and variation in mark-making. Use brushes and a minimal amount of water to dissolve and rework the pastels.</p>	<p>Research: Give an account of the way contextual factors (social, cultural, historical) influenced Guy Grey-Smith in the development of his artistic practice. Consider the way these contextual factors shaped meanings communicated in the artworks, how the visual language and conventions of the time influenced the artist's practice and analyse how the artist used formal, stylistic and technical means to communicate ideas.</p> <p>Activity: Visit a forested area and complete vertical studies of sections of the forest, selected through a viewfinder. Choose from drawing media such as pencil, pen and bamboo nib and ink, fine liner pen and charcoal. Focus on using expressive lines to capture the feel of the place. Take photographs of the forest as part of your study. Back in the studio, inspired by Guy Grey-Smith's karri forest paintings; use your studies and photographs to complete a large, vertical acrylic painting on board. Aim to eliminate detail to capture the essence of the forest. Try to use mostly a palette knife and paint scraper and mix modelling compound or another impasto medium with your paint to give it extra body.</p>

LIST OF WORKS



1



2



3



4



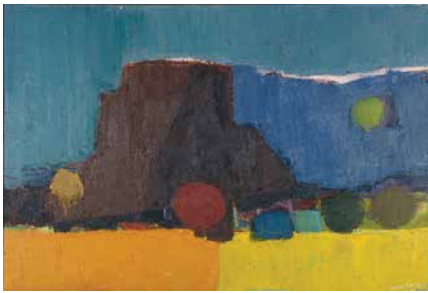
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10



11

1. *not titled [Self portrait]* c1947
(not signed, not dated)
oil on canvas
49.3 x 39.3 cm
Collection of Mark Grey-Smith
Photo: Robert Frith, Acorn

2. *Midhurst* 1945
(not signed, not dated)
oil on canvas
51.0 x 76.5 cm
State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia
Purchased through the Sir Claude Hotchin Art Foundation, Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2008

3. *Pot with lizard motif* 1951
earthenware with underglaze painted decoration
35 x 12 cm (height x diameter)
Collection of Mark Grey-Smith
Photo: Tony Nathan@ImageLab

4. *Blackboy grove* 1950
oil on canvas
54.0 x 75.5 cm
The University of Western Australia Art Collection,
Gift of Dr and Mrs R K Constable, 1985
Photo: Robert Frith, Acorn

5. *Rottneſt 1954-1957*
oil on canvas
61.2 x 76.5 cm
The University of Western Australia Art Collection,
Tom Collins Bequest Fund, 1957
© The University of Western Australia
Photo: Robert Frith, Acorn

6. *Sawbacks, Ashburton* 1961
oil on hardboard
60 x 120 cm
Private collection, Perth
Photo: Robert Frith, Acorn

7. *Before the race* 1963
oil and beeswax emulsion on gauze over hardboard
90 x 120 cm
Private collection, Perth
Photo: Robert Frith, Acorn

8. *Skull Springs country* 1966
oil and beeswax emulsion on hardboard
122 x 183 cm
State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia
Purchased 1967

9. *The Mother Temple, Bali* 1968
colour screenprint on paper, edition 3/23
55.3 x 38.8 cm (sight)
Janet Holmes à Court Collection
Photo: Robert Frith, Acorn

10. *Karri forest II* 1975
(also titled *Forest II*)
woodcut on paper, edition 10/60
30.1 x 20.6 cm
State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia
Purchased 1975
Photo: Tony Nathan@ImageLab

11. *Karri trees* 1979
oil and beeswax emulsion on gauze over hardboard
122.3 x 111.5 cm
Janet Holmes à Court Collection
Photo: Robert Frith, Acorn

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