

About this education resource

This resource has been designed by Heide Education to complement the Visual Arts curriculum for middle to senior secondary years. The lesson plans included are structured to support: The Australian Curriculum; The Arts, and the Victorian Certificate of Education; Art, Studio Art and Visual Communication Design. It has relevance to content descriptions in the Making and Responding strands that emphasise consideration of the broader contexts of artworks, such as the social, cultural and historical contexts and the role of the artist and audience. It presents a range of historical artworks that can be explored through applying the skills of analysis and aesthetic understanding.

Year levels: 7 to 12

Topics: Painting, European art, Art movements

Teachers are encouraged to use this resource as a guide and adapt material as necessary to suit their individual students learning requirements.

The PowerPoint slides include images and key information for display on an interactive whiteboard or via a laptop and data projector. In the notes section you will find information that provides background and greater context to support your teaching and for student learning in relation to the exhibition **Abstraction–Création: J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938**.

Associated lesson plans and student tasks to accompany this resource are available from the Heide website: www.heide.com.au/education/resources. **Look for:** Heide Education - Abstraction–Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf



About the exhibition

Abstraction–Création: J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938
15 November 2014 – 22 March 2015

Curators Ann Stephen and A.D.S. Donaldson

Heide Curator Lesley Harding

Venue Heide II, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne

Australian born J.W. Power originally trained in medicine and after serving as a doctor in World War I he turned to art, joining the London Group before studying in Paris with Fernand Léger at his Académie Moderne in the mid-1920s. J.W. Power then joined the international group of abstract artists in France known as Abstraction–Création.

J.W. Power was equally at home in London, Paris and Brussels. His acceptance into these artist groups led to a unique style of painting: part abstract-surrealism, part surreal-abstract, part psychedelic fantasy, combining organic forms and elaborate geometries.

This exhibition recreates J.W. Power's major solo show, held at Abstraction–Création's gallery in 1934. It includes fifty major paintings and oil sketches from the Edith Power bequest, University of Sydney, together with his sketchbooks and his collection of Picasso pochoirs held in the National Library of Australia collection.

Who was J.W. Power?

Heide Museum of Modern Art
HMAA

- John Joseph Wardell Power (1881-1943)
- J.W. Power was an important figure in the Parisian art world in the inter-war years
- Paris was the international capital of the avant-garde during this time

"...I make available to the people of Australia the latest ideas and theories in plastic arts by means of lectures and teaching and by the purchase of the most recent contemporary art of the world [...] so as to bring the people of Australia in more direct touch with the latest art developments in other countries."

J.W. Power's instructions for his bequest to the University of Sydney

John Joseph Wardell Power
1881-1943
Heide Museum of Modern Art
www.heide.com.au

Who was J.W. Power?

John Joseph Wardell Power was born in Sydney in 1881. From a young age his mother encouraged him to draw and paint and he showed much talent. J.W. Power studied medicine at Sydney University and graduated in 1905; he was 24 years old. J.W. Power was also a talented amateur musician and mathematician of independent financial means. In 1906 he left Australia, travelled to London and became a medical officer in the World War I. When the war had ended he decided to leave medicine to focus on his art practice.

In the early 1930s J.W. Power became connected with the group of artists responsible for the formation of the Association Abstraction–Création. J.W. Power never returned to Australia. Instead he made Europe (London, Paris and Brussels) his home and became a successful artist and important figure in the European art world. His avant-garde art experimented with Cubism, Surrealism and Abstraction and he exhibited his artworks among artists including Piet Mondrian, Josef Albers and Barbara Hepworth. But he remained an unknown artist in Australia. J.W. Power died in France 1943. He bequeathed his art collection and a large sum of money to Sydney University who founded a new art history department and supported the establishment of the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Investigate

Which avant-garde art movements were taking place in Europe in the 1920s and 30s?

Research World War One.

J.W. Power served as a medical officer during this war, how do you think his experiences might have influenced his art? Explain your reasons why.

Think

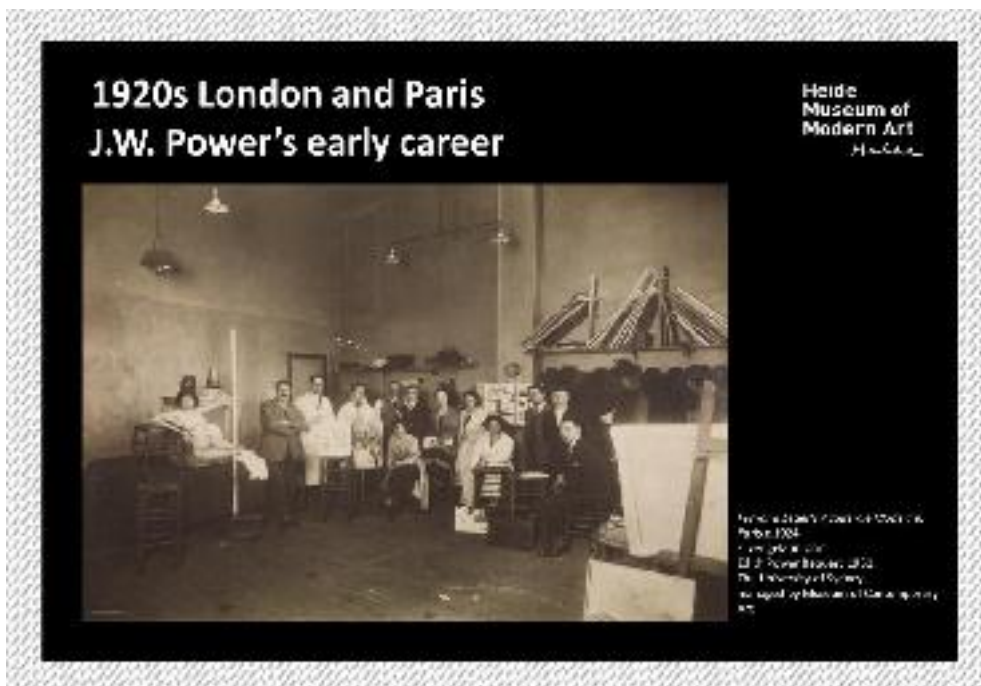
Do you consider J.W. Power an Australian artist? Why/Why not?

Do you think J.W. Power should be called an Australian artist? Why/Why not?

How do you think that an artist's cultural identity impacts on their art making? Explain why. Can you research or do you know of other artists who have also fought in wartimes?

Plastic arts is a term broadly applied to all the visual (non-literary, non-musical) arts.

Avant-garde describes new and experimental ideas and methods in art, music, or literature.



1920s London and Paris

J.W. Power first emerged as an artist in 1921 alongside the British modernists in the London Group, with whom he exhibited annually for the next decade. He moved from London to Paris and studied under [Fernand Léger](#) at the Academie Moderne, a studio that was influential in avant-garde art between the wars. J.W. Power kept a studio in Paris and from 1925 was represented by Parisian gallery owner Léonce Rosenberg. His first solo exhibition was in London in 1927 but it was the publication of his book in 1932, *Éléments de la Construction Picturale*, that truly marked his arrival in Paris.

After World War I, J.W. Power had studied in the Parisian atelier of the Brazilian Pedro Luiz Correia de Araújo. In 1924, he became part of Fernand Léger's class at the Académie Moderne. Léger's teaching was crucial to the development of the international avant-garde in the interwar years.

- In this photograph Fernand Léger is second from the left and J.W. Power is fifth from the left.

Investigate

Who was Fernand Léger?

Research Léger on the internet to discover three important facts about this artist. Share these facts with your peers.

Discuss

View Léger's artworks. How are they similar or different in style to J.W. Power's?

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction—Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf

See: Compare and Contrast Léger, Picasso and J.W. Power p.22



Abstraction–Création

The Association Abstraction–Création was established in 1931 by Auguste Herbin and Georges Vantongerloo to foster abstract art. Abstraction–Création’s membership included artists such as Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, Hans Arp, Josef Albers and Barbara Hepworth. It was underpinned by a philosophy connecting artistic abstraction with freedom—in contrast with Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia where abstract art was forbidden. By 1932 the group had declared its opposition to all forms of oppression and to limitations on art imposed by considerations of race, ideology or nationality. J.W. Power was a member of Abstraction–Création from 1931 to 1936.

Investigate

Find some of examples of these artists’ artworks. Do any remind you of J.W. Power’s art? What elements and principles do they share?

Create

Design your own visual communication for the Abstraction–Création journal.

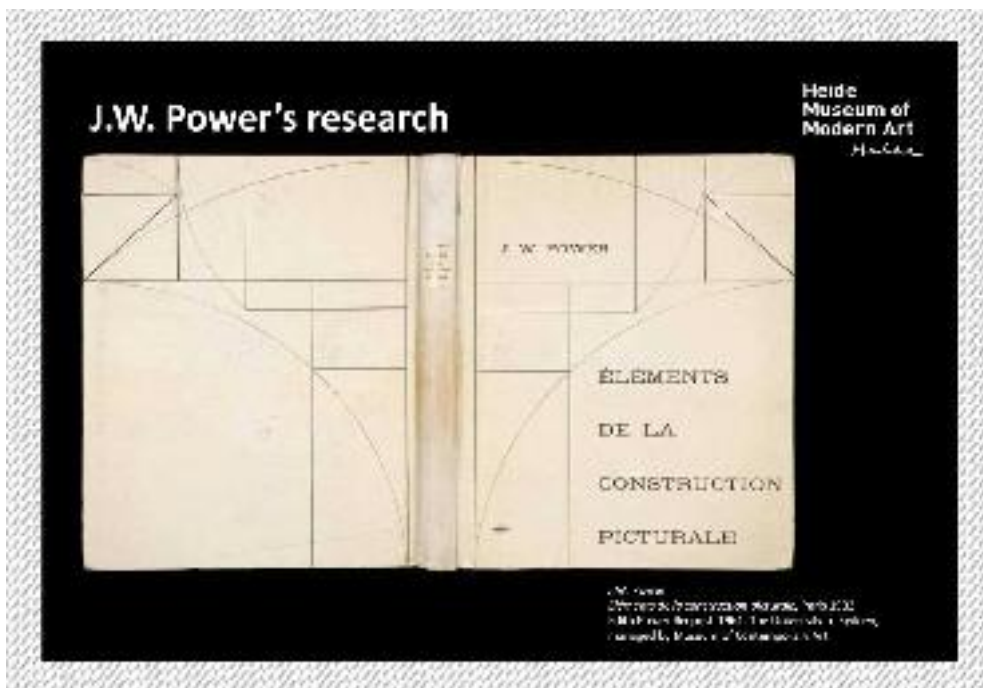
Information to include: artists, dates, title, publication details, edition and cost. Will you include images or develop a design purely from typeface like the journal covers on display?

Discuss

In relation to the work of J.W. Power, discuss how a historical style and movement influences the production of contemporary visual communication.

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction–Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf
See: Analysing Typography p.20



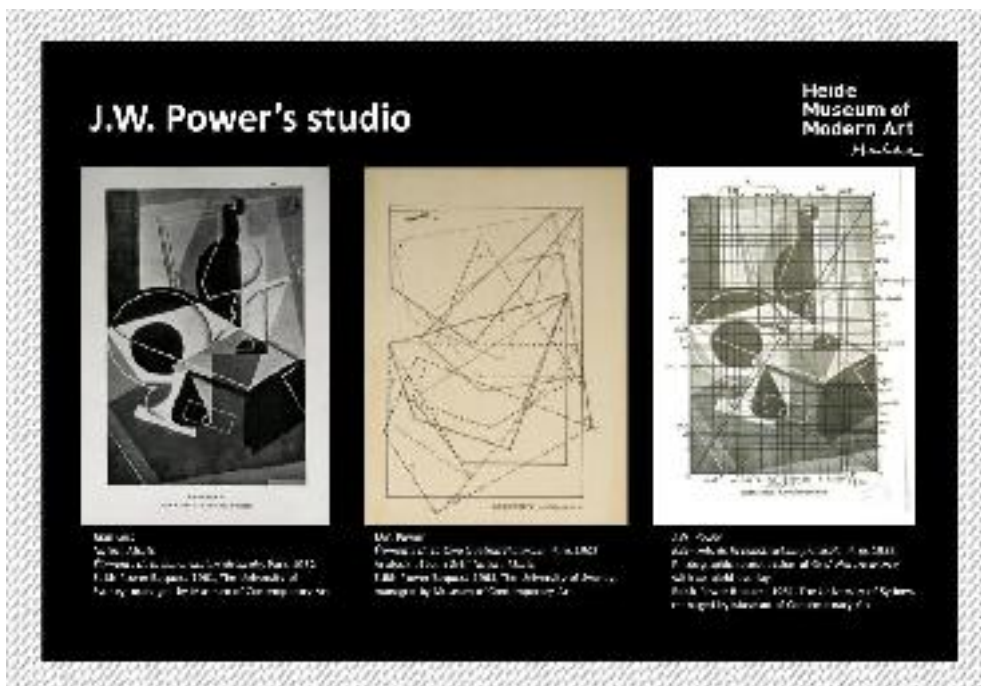
J.W. Power's research

During his lifetime, J.W. Power was fascinated by the music, theatre, dance, architecture and mathematics of both Eastern and Western cultures. He collected contemporary European art and amassed a substantial library of art books and journals.

In the early 1930s, J.W. Power published his influential *Éléments de la Construction Picturale*. It was the first theoretical art thesis to be published internationally by an Australian. J.W. Power's art marries his interest in geometry and mathematics with the formal concerns of Cubism, and the decorative inclinations seen in much late cubist painting.

Investigate

Do some research on the internet. Can you find other artists who have written and published their ideas and theories about art?



J.W. Power's studio

J.W. Power saw a synthesis between science and art demonstrated by the underlying geometry of paintings. In his text he analysed artworks from the Renaissance to Cubism, showing how they could be broken down into mathematical formulas, such as the [Golden Mean](#). He included diagrams and transparent overlays to show how the artworks were created from abstract elements.

Collaborate

Think about the Maths topic you are currently learning about; for example Algebra, Calculus or Probability. Brainstorm some ideas about how you could you create an artwork that makes use of these mathematical ideas.

What are the symbols and rules involved?

Which materials would you use to make your artwork?

What would it look like?

Investigate

What is the Golden Mean? While researching the Golden Mean, have you seen it called anything else? Find examples of the Golden Mean appearing in artworks, architecture and nature.

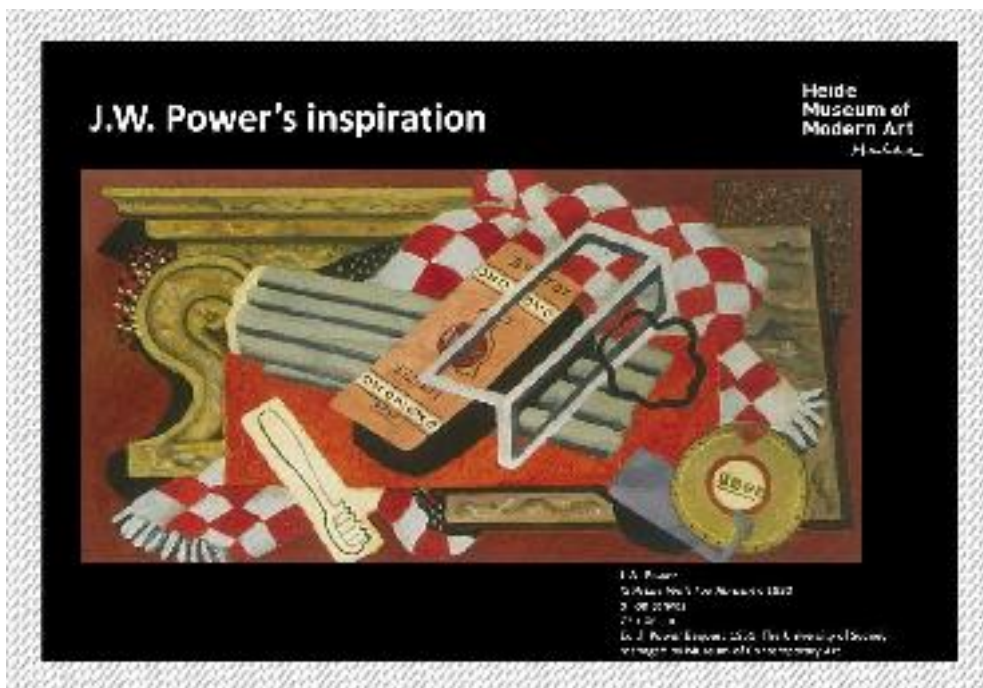
At Heide

If you are visiting the Abstraction–Création: J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 exhibition at Heide Museum of Modern Art, you can bring along copies of the Golden Mean printed on acetate/transparency to use in the gallery.

Explore the exhibition with your Golden Mean transparency. Hold your transparency up to view the paintings through it. Make sure you are standing back from the paintings and mindful of artworks around you. Can you see the Golden Mean in any of J.W. Power's artworks?

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction–Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf
See: Geometry and the Golden Mean p.14



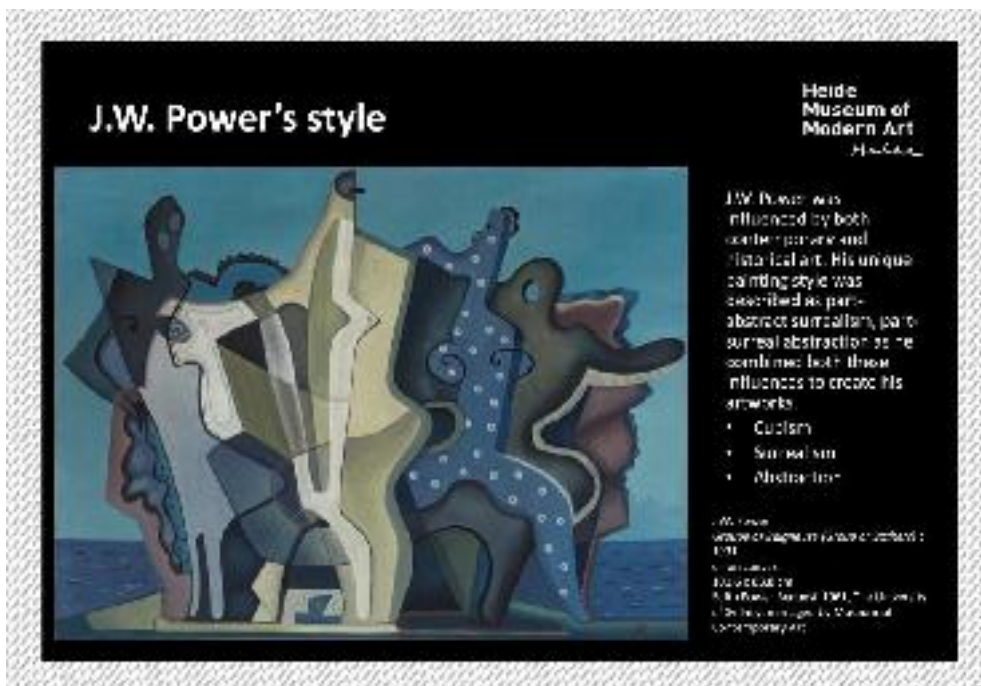
J.W. Power's inspiration

J.W. Power took inspiration from his own life and surroundings. Everyday objects from his home, such as shaving razors and toothbrushes appear in some of his paintings.

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction—Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf

See: J.W. Power Abstraction p. 6 and Technical Drawing p.16



J.W. Power's style

Cubism is an early 20th century style avant-garde art movement. It can be described as the reduction of natural or actual things to geometric shapes or forms. Cubism broke radically with traditional means of expression; distorting and redefining form, exploring spatial relationships and establishing new ways of depicting three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface; it was a reaction against the established, representational way of observing the world.

Surrealism is a 20th-century avant-garde movement in art and literature, which sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind, for example by the irrational juxtaposition of images.

Abstraction (and Abstract Art) can be described as non-figurative, non-objective or non-representational art.

Investigate

Research these art movements to create a visual glossary from the images you find.

At Heide

In the exhibition look closely at J.W. Power's artworks, find examples of the different styles to create a visual glossary with your own sketches.

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction—Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf

See: Visual Glossary p.12



Cubist landscapes

'In *Seaside Still-Life* (1926) three horizontal bands, of pebbles, sea and sky, provide a shallow stage for a slippery game of appearances that alternate between geometric and quotidian forms. J.W. Power rotates the sides of parallelograms across the canvas, their diagonal edges reading sometimes as geometrical line and sometimes as object from red sail to green sea-filled cone, from bucket to spiral in complimentary colours.'

A.D.S Donaldson and Ann Stephen, *J.W. Power: Abstraction–Création*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2013, pp. 13–14

Discuss the mood created by J.W. Power in these landscape paintings and how he has achieved this. If you didn't know the titles of these paintings, would you classify them as landscapes? Why/Why not?

Respond

Imagine that you are standing in one of these landscapes. Describe what the environment and your surroundings might look like in real life.

How do you think that the landscapes reflect the places that J.W. Power visited and experienced while painting them?

Compare

Look at the artworks presented on this slide.

- *Paysage Cannes, (Landscape Cannes)* 1927

What similarities and differences can you see in these two landscapes? How has J.W. Power applied the elements of shape and form in these paintings?

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction–Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf

See: Cubist Landscape Painting p.2



J.W. Power and Pablo Picasso

J.W. Power collected art made by his contemporaries and the artists that he admired and influenced his practice. His art collection included works by Léger, Araújo, Amédée Ozenfant, Juan Gris, Albert Gleizes, Diego Rivera, El Lissitzky and Georges Vantongerloo. He also owned a set of ten pochoir prints by Pablo Picasso.

Discuss

Have you heard the name Pablo Picasso before?

What do you know about this artist?

Why do you think that so many people have heard of Picasso but very few know who J.W. Power is?

Pablo Picasso

b. 1881 d. 1973

Picasso was the most prolific artist of the 20th century. He is credited with creating/introducing Cubism alongside Georges Braque. Picasso was a painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramicist and stage designer and was recognised as one of the most influential artists of his time.

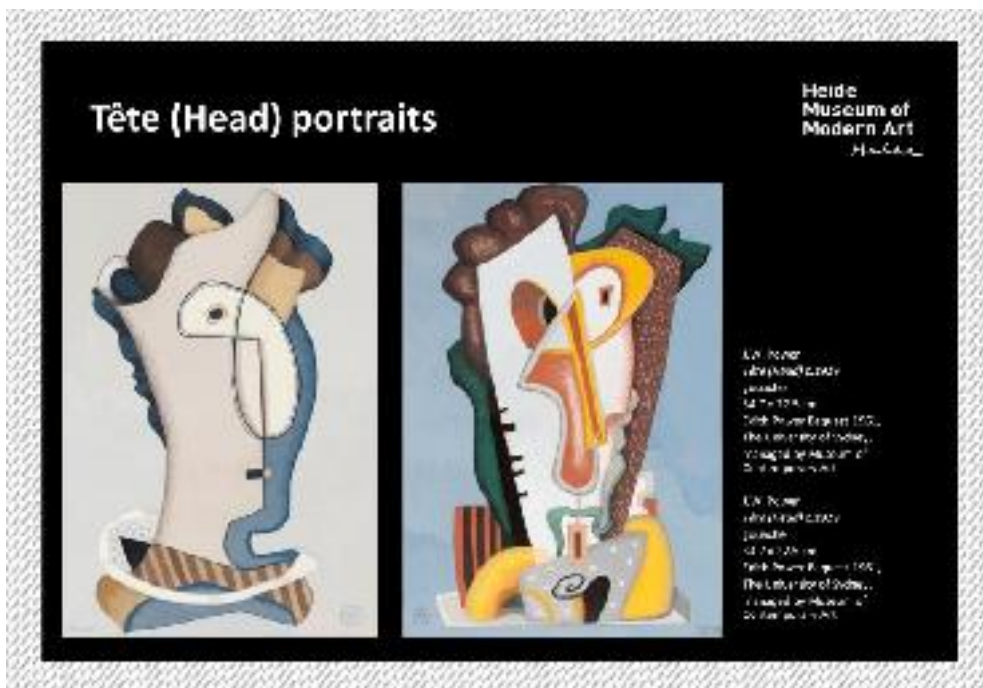
Keyword

Pochoir is the French word for 'stencil'. It is a highly refined technique for making limited edition screen prints.

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction—Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf

See: Compare and Contrast Picasso and J.W. Power p.25



Tête (Head) portraits

J.W. Power created many portraits simply entitled *Tête (Head)*. In these paintings he explored the human face through the abstraction and displacement of facial features. Some of the Tête paintings demonstrate subtle abstractions of the forms and shapes while others are barely recognisable as faces.

Discuss

Look carefully at the Tête paintings in the exhibition and on the following slides. They can be described as part Surrealist and part Cubist. Which portraits are the most Surrealist, the most Cubist or the most Abstract? Explain your reasons why.



Tête (Head) portraits

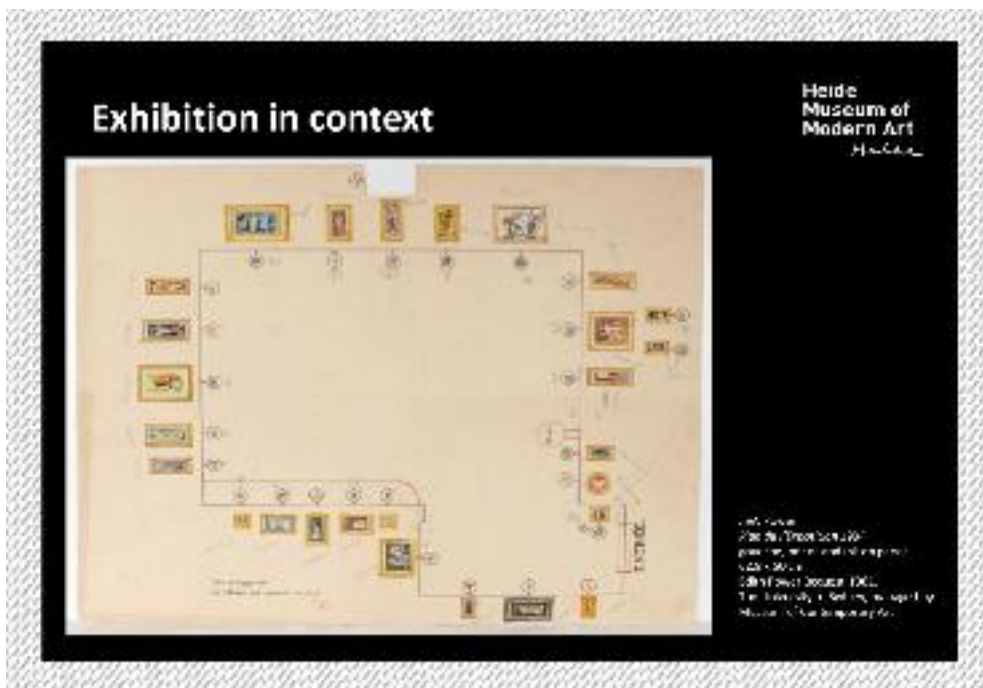
Research other portraits created by Cubist and Surrealist artists, for example Picasso and Salvador Dali. In comparison to J.W. Power's Tête paintings what similarities and differences can you see?



Tête (Head) portraits

Create your own cubist portrait.

Make preparatory sketches by drawing your subject from different viewpoints. How can you combine these alternative views into your finished work?



Exhibition in Context

This exhibition recreates J.W. Power's major solo show, held at Abstraction–Création's gallery in Paris in 1934. It includes fifty major paintings and oil sketches from the Edith Power bequest, University of Sydney, together with his sketchbooks and his collection of Picasso pochoirs held in the National Library of Australia collection.

In 1934, J.W. Power held the first solo exhibition at Abstraction–Création's gallery at 44 Avenue de Wagram. For his show, J.W. Power prepared a detailed *Plan de l'Exposition*, on which he positioned miniature gouache versions of the paintings to demonstrate the order in which the works were to be displayed.

This plan has enabled the precise recreation of J.W. Power's exhibition, including 25 of the 28 works. It reveals that the exhibition was a survey of his work over seven years, and traces his move away from Cubism towards his own unique combination of abstraction and Surrealism.

Think

J.W. Power's exhibition diagram has helped the curators plan the 2014 exhibition designs at the National Library of Australia and Heide Museum of Modern Art, referencing the original Abstraction–Création exhibition. How do you think the layout would differ if they did not have access to this document?

Create an exhibition of your own using the Heide II floor plans. Illustrate miniatures of your own or other's artworks to suggest your preferred display of artworks in an exhibition.

For student tasks go to www.heide.com.au/education/resource. Look for:

Heide Education - Abstraction–Création J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938 - Learning Materials.pdf
See: Abstraction-Création Exhibition in Context p.27



Curatorial choices

Interview with Heide curator Lesley Harding

How did the exhibition *Abstraction–Création: J.W. Power in Europe 1921–1938* come about at Heide Museum of Modern Art?

- *I first included J.W. Power’s work in an exhibition at Heide in 2009 – Cubism and Australian Art, and knew there was a fascinating story to tell. When Ann and Andrew (the curators from the National Library of Australia) recreated J.W. Power’s 1934 exhibition at Sydney University we all felt that it needed a wider audience, and would be perfectly suited to Heide II.*

How have the artworks been kept safe while travelling to and from Heide?

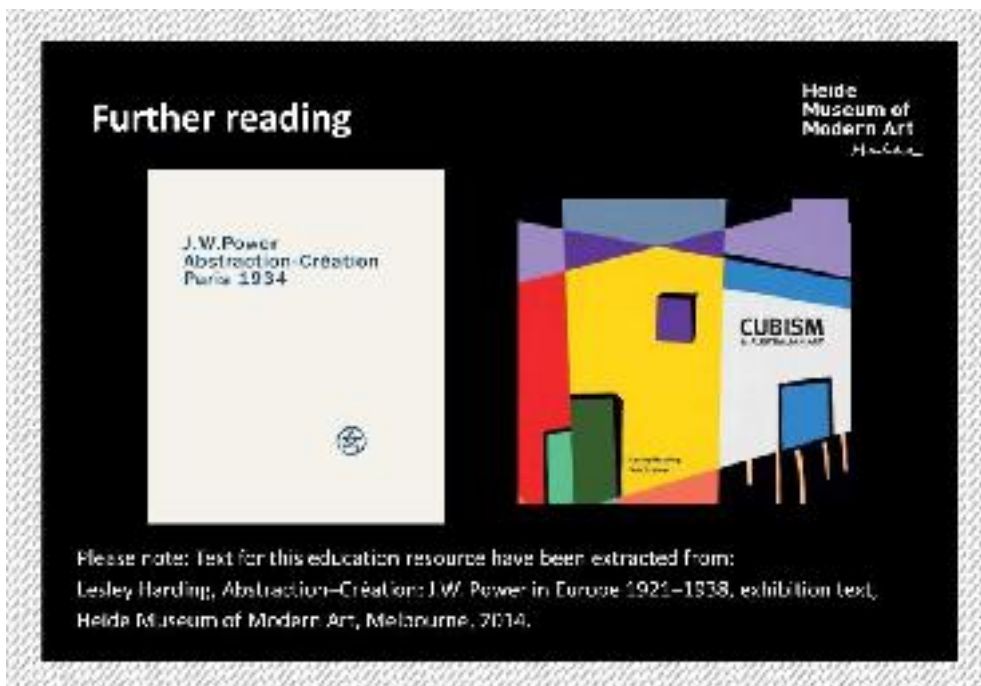
- *The works are carefully packed in custom-made travelling frames inside crates, and transported in climate-controlled trucks. They are carefully inspected and condition-reported on departure and arrival.*

What factors related to conservation would have to be considered in relation to handling, transporting and displaying works of art for this exhibition?

- *Oil paintings are fairly robust, but great care is taken when handling and hanging. Environmental conditions including temperature and humidity are monitored, as are light levels. The Picasso pochoirs are works on paper, which are more sensitive and require low light levels – 50 lux maximum.*

How important has J.W. Power’s *Plan de l’Exposition* been in designing the exhibitions at the National Library of Australia and Heide?

- *J.W. Power’s plan is an important archival document and was essential to identifying both the paintings in the original exhibition, and the sequence in which they were hung. It was key in allowing us to recreate J.W. Power’s 1934 show with historical accuracy.*



Further reading

Publications

A.D.S Donaldson and Ann Stephen, *J.W. Power: Abstraction-Creation*, Power Publications, Sydney, 2013.

Lesley Harding and Sue Cramer, *Cubism and Australian Art*, Miegunyah Press and Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2009.

Articles

J.W. Power exhibition at NLA: Modernist rescued from obscurity

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/jw-power-exhibition-at-nla-modernist-rescued-from-obscurity-20140716-ztbz5.html#ixzz3LMhRceYQ>

Websites

National Library of Australia

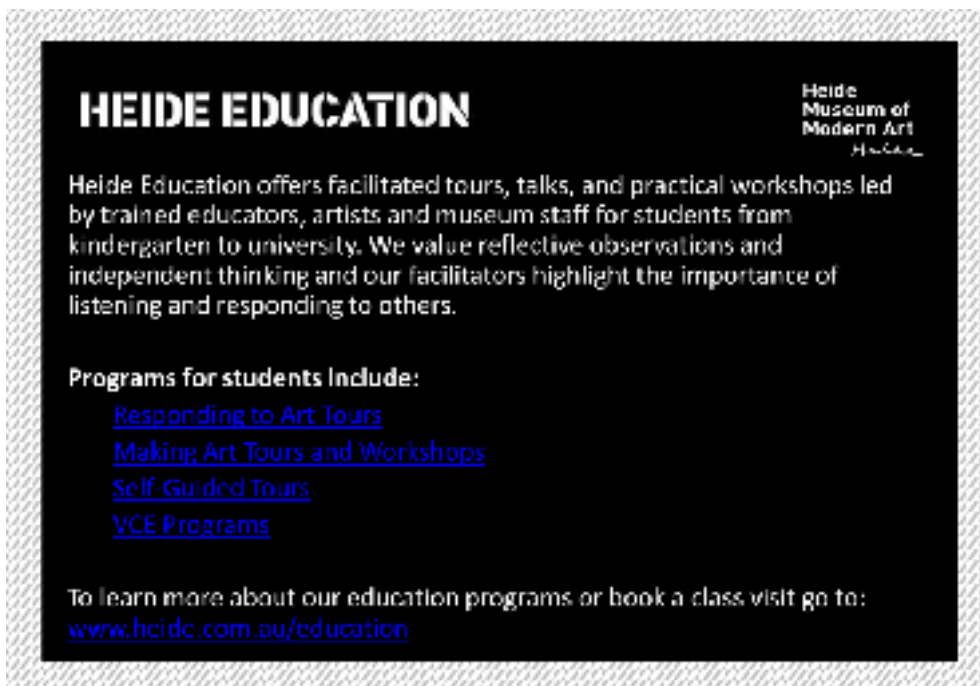
<https://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/abstraction-creation>

Museum of Contemporary Art

<http://www.mca.com.au/artists-and-works/mca-collection/about-mca-collection/jw-power-collection/>

The University of Sydney

<http://sydney.edu.au/museums/exhibitions-events/abstraction-creation-tour.shtml>

A black rectangular graphic with a white border of small, repeating 'H' characters. The text is white and blue. The title 'HEIDE EDUCATION' is in large, bold, white capital letters. The Heide Museum of Modern Art logo is in the top right. The main text describes the education programs. A list of program types is provided with blue underlined links. The contact information is at the bottom.

HEIDE EDUCATION

Heide
Museum of
Modern Art
Heide

Heide Education offers facilitated tours, talks, and practical workshops led by trained educators, artists and museum staff for students from kindergarten to university. We value reflective observations and independent thinking and our facilitators highlight the importance of listening and responding to others.

Programs for students include:

- [Responding to Art Tours](#)
- [Making Art Tours and Workshops](#)
- [Self-Guided Tours](#)
- [VCE Programs](#)

To learn more about our education programs or book a class visit go to:
www.heide.com.au/education

Heide Education is committed to providing high quality educational services. We welcome any suggestions and feedback teachers have that will help us to continually improve our education resources and services we provide to you. Please send your comments to education@heide.com.au.

© 2015 Heide Museum of Modern Art. This material may be downloaded, copied, used and communicated free of charge for non-commercial educational purposes provided all acknowledgements are retained.