

# *It's all about the light:* *works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

18 January - 14 April 2013



## PART II

## TEACHERS' RESOURCE AND ACTIVITIES

## *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

### EDUCATION RESOURCE

This education resource is intended as a starting point for generating ideas and classroom activities before, during and after a visit to *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*. The resource is intended to complement the exhibition and be used in addition to information provided in the exhibition catalogue.

The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, suggested points for discussion and practical activities for primary and secondary school students.

Teachers can either select relevant sections of this resource to compile their own exhibition response sheet for students prior to their planned visit, or use the attached worksheets.

### PART II

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##### STILL LIFE, INTERIORS AND SELF PORTRAITURE

- Looking and Thinking
- Making and Doing

##### BRIEF HISTORY OF STILL LIFE

- 14<sup>th</sup> Century – 21<sup>st</sup> Century

##### ACTIVITIES

- Colour and design elements
- Shape and Composition
- Homage to Manet

Education Resource and Learning Activities written and developed by Robyn Sweaney  
Education and Audience Development Officer, TRAG



Greg Weight  
*Posters* 2011  
photograph: permanent pigment ink on cotton rag paper  
26.7 x 40cm  
Pending donation to Tweed River Art Gallery collection

## *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

### EXHIBITION FOCUS MATERIAL

#### Still Life and Interiors

Refer to the following paintings:



*Kitchen still life with fennel* 1975  
oil on composition board  
66.7 x 90.2cm  
Collection of The University of Queensland.  
Gift of Dr Cathryn Mittelheuser AM through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 1998  
The University of Queensland Art Museum  
Photo: Carl Warner



*Kitchen still life* 1976  
oil on hardboard  
67.0 x 89.0cm  
University Art Collection, The University of Sydney  
Donated by Dr Margaret Olley AC through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2001



*Ranunculus and pears* 2004  
oil on hardboard  
76.0 x 101.0cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Edward Stinson Bequest Fund 2005

## *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

Looking and Thinking	Making and Doing
<b>K-2</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Margaret Olley has made a painting of objects that you may find in someone's house.</li> <li>• What can you see?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw as many things that you can think of that you may find in your kitchen.</li> </ul>
<b>3-6</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look carefully at this painting and describe what you see?</li> <li>• What do you think connects all the objects in this painting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think carefully about what is in your bedroom or lounge room. What is your favourite thing in the room? Think about why it is so important.</li> <li>• Draw a picture of it.</li> </ul>
<b>7-9</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has Margaret Olley used colour in these works and many of the other paintings in this exhibition?</li> <li>• Describe her use of warm and cool colours to express different times of the day and depth of field in her paintings. (Refer to colour notes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What objects can you find in your kitchen or from around your home that you could make a still life arrangement from?</li> <li>• Are these objects man made or natural?</li> <li>• Draw or photograph a number of different arrangements with selected objects from home.</li> </ul>
<b>10-12</b>	
<p>Margaret Olley was one of only a few Australian women to be able to make a career as an artist in the mid 20th Century. She is best known for her painterly still life work and interiors. Her paintings reveal the surfaces and texture of objects and the mood and atmosphere through the use of light and colour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has Margaret Olley used colour in these works and many of the other paintings in this exhibition to create mood and atmosphere?</li> <li>• Find other works in the exhibition that are good examples of using either cool or warm colours to express different times of the day and depth of field in her paintings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Practice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw, paint or photograph a still life created from objects from home, or an interior. Investigate the meaning or possible significance of the furniture and objects from your still life or interiors. Are they everyday objects or were they purchased overseas, from a holiday, or are they a gift from someone special.</li> </ul> <p><b>Art Criticism and Art History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate 'still life' as subject matter. Research how the still life theme developed in Western Art as a subject matter in its own right. Refer to <b>Brief history of still life notes</b> and compare the work of still life artists from the 15th to the 21st Century. Look at changes in subject matter, style and mediums.</li> </ul>

## *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

### EXHIBITION FOCUS MATERIAL

#### Still Life and self portraiture

Refer to the following paintings:



*Bedroom Still Life* 1997  
oil on board  
61.0 x 91.0cm  
Purchased by Maitland Art gallery Society, 1998  
Maitland Regional Art Gallery Collection



*Self portrait* 2001  
oil on board  
76.0 x 61.0cm  
Gift of the Margaret Olley Estate, 2012  
Tweed River Art Gallery collection



*Interior* 1972  
oil on board  
69.0 x 61.0cm  
Cairns Regional Gallery collection  
Donated through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program by Ray Croke, 1999



*Self portrait with everlasting* 1974  
oil on board  
59.3 x 74.6 cm  
Anne von Bertouch OAM bequest through the  
Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation 2003  
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

## *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

Looking and Thinking	Making and Doing
<b>K-2</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you see in these paintings?</li> <li>• Who is the person in the painting?</li> <li>• What do you think the person is looking at?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where would you see a reflection of yourself?</li> <li>• Paint or draw a picture of yourself reflected in a mirror inside your home.</li> </ul>
<b>3-6</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look carefully at these paintings and describe what you see.</li> <li>• Who is the person in the painting?</li> <li>• What do you think the person in the painting is doing or thinking?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paint or draw a picture of yourself reflected in a mirror inside your home.</li> </ul>
<b>7-9</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think the person in the painting is doing or thinking?</li> <li>• What clues does the artist give the audience as to what the painting may be about?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate other artists who have used a mirror or objects to create a self portrait.</li> <li>• Draw, paint or photograph a 'self portrait' still life created from objects from home. Include yourself somehow: either with a reflection, a photograph of yourself or a significant personal item.</li> </ul>
<b>10-12</b>	
<p>Cultural framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss how these works play on the idea of the viewer/audience and the reflected self portrait in an art work.</li> <li>• Margaret Olley usually only painted objects belonging to herself, her friends and family so, in this selection and representation of subject matter, a still life can be seen as both a social statement and a description of the sitter. Discuss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research the way artists over time have used reflections and mirrors to include themselves in the composition. Find historical examples.</li> <li>• Create a series of self portrait photographs using reflective surfaces.</li> </ul>

## It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections

### EXHIBITION FOCUS MATERIAL

General exhibition questions and activities.



Looking and Thinking	Making and Doing
<p><b>K-2</b></p>	
<p>Margaret Olley has arranged objects to make compositions. These are called still lifes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look carefully at one of Margaret Olley's paintings and describe what you see?</li> <li>• What colours has she used?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw or write a list of your favourite things that you own, or would like to own.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3-6</b></p>	
<p>Margaret Olley made pictures using objects that she either owned or belonged to friends. These are called still lifes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think objects can describe what type of person you are?</li> <li>• List all the different objects you can find in paintings in the exhibition.</li> <li>• Can you find an object that has been used in more than one painting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut objects and things from magazines that you would like to own or you like the look of. Arrange and glue them down to create a collage still life.</li> <li>• Set up a simple still life with your favourite things. Draw, paint or photograph your composition. Try different views, either from the front or above.</li> <li>• List words that describe yourself. They can include what you look like, your family, your personality or your interests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7-9</b></p>	
<p>Margaret Olley said that, "painting an interior is like painting a portrait".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think objects, or someone's room rather than a likeness of a person, can best describe their personality? Think about the things in your own bedroom that you treasure; do you think they say something about your taste, personality or interests?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research other artists that have created portraits from objects. e.g. Tim Storrier, Arcimboldo and Michael Zavros.</li> <li>• An artist can manipulate colour to create mood, atmosphere and for aesthetic reasons. Create a tonal drawing of an interior or still life. Photocopy or scan the image and hand colour or print out the image using other variations of colour. Discuss how this effects what you see or feel.</li> <li>• Make a drawing of objects on a shelf, dressing table or desk in your bedroom.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10-12</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might different audiences respond to Margaret Olley's paintings?</li> <li>• How do you think including objects from Margaret's home in the exhibition space affects the viewing of the paintings? Why?</li> <li>• How has Margaret Olley used light or colour in her paintings to create an emotional or atmospheric composition?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a list of significant objects or consumer goods that you own or covet that could best describe your interests, passions, hopes and desires. Compare this list with others in your class and discuss how these things create a narrative of contemporary culture.</li> <li>• Create a still life in 3D using different media. e.g. cardboard, wire, clay, papier-mâché.</li> </ul>

## Brief history of Still Life in Western Art

*Still life* has been one of the principle genres or subject types of Western art since ancient Greek and Roman times. The Italian artist Giotto (1266/7-1337) revived still life painting depicting everyday objects in his religious fresco paintings. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, still life remained primarily an adjunct to Christian art, and conveyed religious and allegorical meaning.

During the 15th Century Flemish Masters Jan van Eyck (c.1390-c.1441) and Robert Campin (c.1375-1444) introduced still life to their paintings. The development of oil painting techniques made it possible to paint everyday objects in a hyper-realistic style. One of the first artists to break free of religious meanings in art was Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). da Vinci created watercolour studies of fruit around 1495 as part of his scientific interest in the natural world.



After this time, still life painting was gaining in popularity but it remained generally less regarded than paintings of historical, religious, and mythical subjects. The Italian painter Caravaggio (1571-1610) applied his influential form of naturalism to still life. His *Basket of Fruit* (c.1595-1600) is one of the first examples of a still life painting as it is not overtly symbolic.

2

In the 17th Century the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) created luminous paintings that celebrated the intimacy of domestic interiors. Though he didn't create paintings of independent still lifes, they featured in his evocative interiors such as *A Maid Asleep* or *A Woman Asleep* (c.1656-57) and *The Milkmaid* (1660).



3

By the 18th Century, the religious and **allegorical** connotations of still life paintings were less relevant, and still life paintings evolved into depictions of varied everyday objects displaying compositions of form and colour. The French aristocracy employed artists to execute paintings of bounteous and extravagant still life subjects that graced their dining tables. The Rococo love of **artifice** led to a rise in appreciation in France for **trompe-l'œil** painting for the interiors of their homes.

With the rise of the European academies in the 19th Century, still life began to fall from favor again as it was considered the lowest order of subject matter. However most artists still included the genre in their **oeuvre** such as the French artist Édouard Manet (1832-1883), who painted a number of still lifes including *Still Life with Melon and Peaches* (c.1866). An exception was the French artist Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904) who was famous for his exquisite traditional flower paintings and made his living almost exclusively painting still life for art collectors.



4

It was not until the rise of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters that technique and colour harmony triumphed over subject matter, and still life was avidly practiced by artists. In Impressionist still life, allegorical and mythological content is generally absent, as was the meticulously detailed brush work. Variations in perspective and composition were also tried, such as using tight cropping and high angles.



Vincent van Gogh's (1853-1890) sunflower paintings are some of the best known 19th Century still life paintings. His *Still life with a plate of onions* (1889) is a self-portrait in still life form, with van Gogh depicting many items of his personal life, including his pipe, onions, a book, a wine bottle and a letter, all laid out on a table. He also painted his own version of a **vanitas** painting *Still Life with Open Bible, Candle, and Book* (1885).

5

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) found in still life the perfect vehicle for his revolutionary explorations in spatial organisation. For Cézanne, still life was a primary means of taking painting away from an illustrative or mimetic function to one demonstrating the elements of expression, colour, form, and line, which was a major step towards abstraction.



6

During the 20th Century the still life genre continued to evolve and adjust with the stylistic changes in art movements. At the beginning of the century, Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) painted *Still Life with Sunflowers* (1901) as homage to his friend van Gogh who had died eleven years earlier. Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) took up Gauguin's harmonic theories and added elements inspired by Japanese woodcuts to his still life paintings. Henri Matisse (1869-1954) reduced the rendering of still life objects even further to little more than bold, flat outlines filled with bright colours. He also simplified perspective and introduced multi-colour backgrounds. The Fauvist André Derain (1880-1954) explored pure colour and abstraction in his still lifes.



The Cubists Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Georges Braque (1882-1963) and Juan Gris (1887-1927) subdued their colour palette and focused instead on deconstructing still life objects into pure geometrical forms and planes.



7

Rejecting the flattening of space by Cubists, Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) and other members of the Dada movement went in a radically different direction. The Dadaists were the first artists to create 3D 'ready-made' still life sculptures.



In Italy during this time Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964) was the foremost still life painter. His paintings are noted for their tonal subtlety in depicting limited, simple subjects and compositions from vases, jars, bottles, bowls and kitchen implements. In England, Eliot Hodgkin (1905-1987) was using tempera for his highly detailed and realistic still life paintings.

10



9



11

Starting in the 1930s, Abstract Expressionism reduced still life to raw depictions of form and colour. Pop Art in the 1960s and 1970s reversed this trend and created a new form of still life. Much of the content in Pop Art, such as Andy Warhol's (1928-1987) *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962), is based on still life. Roy Lichtenstein's (1923-1997) *Still Life with Goldfish Bowl and Painting of a Golf Ball* (1972) combines the pure colours of Matisse with the pop iconography of Warhol. Wayne Thiebaud (1920- ) is known for his painterly portrayal of cakes, pastries, boots, toilets, toys and lipsticks. The Neo-dada movement, including Jasper Johns (1930 - ) returned to Duchamp's three-dimensional representation of everyday household objects to create their own brand of still life work, as in Johns' *Painted Bronze* (1960) and *Fool's House* (1962).

A significant contribution to the development of still life painting in the 20th century was also made by Russian artists, among them Gevork Kotiantz (1909-1996) and Sergei Zakharov (1900 - 1993).



12

In the in the early years of the 20th Century the Australian artist Margaret Preston (1875-1963) explored the genre of the still life in her vibrant prints and paintings. She was a highly influential and well-regarded artist and teacher known for her modernist works and for introducing Aboriginal motifs as subject matter. Decoration without ornamentation was one of Preston's many **aphorisms** and remained a primary objective and pre-occupation in her work.

Margaret Olley (1923-2011) travelled overseas to work and view artworks by the modernists and other artists that she admired. Olley created still lives over the entire period of her artistic career. These works ranged from bright colourful paintings to tonal moody studies but her subject matter was always sourced from her own environment or that of her or friends. Light and an essence of exuberant joy d'vivre were always present in her works.



13



14

The rise of Photo-Realism in America in the 1970s reasserted illusionistic representation, while retaining some of Pop Art's communication of the blending of object, image, and commercial product. Typical of this style are the paintings of Don Eddy (1944- ) as in *Dreamreader's Cabinet* (1985) and Ralph Goings (1928- ) *Still Life with Red Mat* (1988).

In the 21st Century contemporary artists have expanded beyond the historical framework to create still life from media besides painting and print methods. These include sculpture, photography, computer art, as well as video, sound and installation work that can extend from ceiling to floor in a gallery. The Chinese artist Song Dong (1966- ) in the installation *Waste Not* (2005) used more than 10,000 items belonging to his father and collected by his mother over 50 years of his life.



15



In the sculpture *Line of Control I* (2008) the Indian artist Subodh Gupta (1964- ) used hundreds of brass and copper utensils which 'translate the conceptual art format of the readymade into a rich exploration of everyday life in India and shifting notions of artistic and economic value'.<sup>2</sup> For her project *Contraband* (2010) the American artist Tarin Simon (1975- ) photographed over 1000 items at JFK International Airport and the U.S. Postal Service that were detained or seized from passengers and express mail entering the U.S. from abroad.

16

Now still life artists can also, with the use of the video camera and photography, reinterpret the idea of traditional still life imagery by incorporating the viewer into their work. They can also create a series of images which alters the perception that objects in a still life are only static or inert. For example, the British artist Sam Taylor-Woods (1967- ) *In A Little Death* (2002) uses multiple stills to create a video depicting the time lapsed decomposition of a hare.

### List of images

1. Jan van Eyck (c.1395c.-c.1441) *Saint Jerome in His Study* (detail) c.1435 oil on linen paper on oak panel 19.9 x 12.5 cm City of Detroit Purchase Detroit Institute of Arts, USA
2. Michelangelo Caravaggio (1571–1610) *Basket of Fruit* 1596 oil on canvas 45.92 x 64.46 cm Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan, Italy
3. Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) *A Woman Asleep* (detail) c.1656–57 oil on canvas 87.6 x 76.5 cm The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Bequest of Benjamin Altman
4. Édouard Manet (1832 – 1883) *Still Life with Melon and Peaches* c.1866...oil on canvas 68.3 x 91cm Gift of Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer 1960 National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
5. Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890) *Still Life with a Plate of Onions* 1889 oil on canvas 49.6 x 64.4 cm Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands.
6. Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) *Still Life with Compotier* 1879-1882 46 x 55cm collection Mr. and Mrs. Rene Lecomte, Paris
7. Henri Matisse (1869-1954) *The Dessert: Harmony in Red Year* 1908 oil on canvas 180 x 220cm Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
8. Juan Gris *Newspaper and Fruit Dish* 1916 oil on canvas 92 x 60 cm Yale University Art Gallery, USA
9. Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) *Bicycle Wheel* 1913 Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
10. Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964) *Natura Morta* 1956 oil on canvas private collection
11. Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) *Still Life with Goldfish Bowl and Painting of a Golf Ball* 1972 oil and magna on canvas 132 x 106cm private collection
12. Margaret Preston (1875-1963) *Aboriginal design with Sturt's pea* 1943 woodcut 30.6 x 38.2cm Queensland Art Gallery, Purchased 2002. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant
13. Margaret Olley (1923-2011) *Still life with marigolds and oranges* c.1973 oil on board 61 x 75cm Cbus Art Collection
14. Ralph Goings (1928- ) *Still Life with Red Mat* 1988 oil on canvas 111 x 157cm Private Collection New York, NY
15. Song Dong (1966 - ) *Waste Not* (2005) Installation of household goods
16. Subodh Gupta (1964 - ) *Line of Control (1)* 2008 Brass and copper utensils, stainless steel and steel structure 500 x 500 x 500cm Collection: The artist Courtesy the artist and Arario Gallery, Beijing

1. TATE Collection, online Glossary, Still Life, National Archives, UK

2. GOMA The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Subodh Gupta *Line of Control 1* (2008) Art Statement



**Margaret Olley 1923-2011**

*Kitchen still life with fennel* 1975

oil on composition board

66.7 x 90.2cm

Collection of The University of Queensland.

Gift of Dr Cathryn Mittelheuser AM through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 1998

The University of Queensland Art Museum

Photo: Carl Warner

## Glossary

### Still Life

The term 'still-life' only appeared during the mid 17th Century. Prior to 1650, the term 'stilleven', meaning 'the quiet life' was used by the Dutch. The French term for still life is 'Nature Morte', meaning 'nature dead'

**Memento mori** is a Latin phrase translated as 'Remember your mortality', 'Remember you must die' or 'Remember you will die'. It refers to a genre of artworks that varies widely but which all share the same purpose: to remind people of their mortality, an artistic theme dating back to antiquity. In the still life genre, skulls, candles, clocks, hourglasses, rotten fruit and dead animals have been used as symbols of Memento mori.

**Vanitas** is a type of symbolic work of art especially associated with still life painting in Flanders and the Netherlands in the 16th and 17th Centuries, though also common in other places and periods. The Latin word means 'vanity' and loosely translated corresponds to the meaninglessness of earthly life and the transient nature of all earthly goods and pursuits.

**Allegory** refers to a symbolic work in which the characters and events are to be understood as representing other things and symbolically expressing a deeper, often spiritual, moral, or political meaning.

**Artifice** is the deception of people using cleverness or subtlety.

**Trompe-l'œil** is a French term meaning to 'deceive or trick the eye'. Trompe-l'œil is a technique whereby the artist creates realistic imagery in order to create the optical illusion that the depicted objects exist in three dimensions.

**Oeuvre:** a work of art or literature, or such works considered as a unit, especially the complete work of a single artist.

**Aphorism** is a succinct statement expressing an opinion or a general truth.

## *Space, space is the key – Vermeer, Chardin, Morandi.....<sup>1</sup>*

### Selected still life artists

#### Fifteenth Century

Robert Campin (c.1375-1444) Flemish  
Jan van Eyck (c.1395c.-c.1441) Netherlandish  
Jacopo de' Barbari (c.1440-c.1516) Italian

#### Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century

Juan Sánchez Cotán (1560-1627) Spanish  
Georg Flegel (1566-1638) German  
Michelangelo Caravaggio (1571 - 1610) Italian  
Ambrosius Bosschaert (1573-1621) Dutch  
Willem Claeszoon Heda (1593/1594-c.1680/1682) Dutch  
Pieter Claesz (c.1597-1660) Dutch  
Francisco de Zurbarán (c.1598-1664) Spanish  
Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) Dutch

### **Eighteenth Century**

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779) French

Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755) French

Anne Vallayer-Coster (1744-1818) French

### **Nineteenth Century**

Édouard Manet (1832-1883) French

Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904) French

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) French

Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) French

Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) French

William Michael Harnett (1848-1892) Irish-American

### **Twentieth Century**

Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) French

Henry Matisse (1869-1954) French

André Derain (1880-1954) French

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) Spanish

Georges Braque (1882-1963) French

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) French

Juan Gris (1887-1927) Spanish

Margaret Preston (1875-1963) Australian

Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964) Italian

Sergei Zakharov (1900-1993) Russian

Eliot Hodgkin (1905-1987) English

Gevork Vartanovich Kotiantz (1909-1996) Russian-Armenian

Wayne Thiebaud (1920- ) American

Margaret Olley (1923-2011) Australian

Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) American

Andy Warhol (1928-1987) American

Ralph Goings (1928- ) American

Jasper Johns, Jr. (1930- ) American

Don Eddy (1944- ) American

### **Twenty First Century**

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott (1935- ) Australian

Pam Tippett (1950- ) Australian

Angus McDonald (1960- ) Australian

Marian Drew (1960- ) Australian

Cressida Cambell (1960- ) Australian

Subodh Gupta (1964- ) Indian

Song Dong (1966- ) Chinese

Ricky Swallow (1974- ) Australian

Tarin Simon (1975- ) American

Sam Taylor-Woods (1967- ) British

*'Space is the secret to life' she has said, 'It is everything, and I have used it to suit me not only in my surroundings but also over time. Here in my house I can sit and work things out, move from one room to another, voyage within myself as it were. Unfortunately though, your space gets harder to defend the older you get. People and things encroach is you don't manage it properly.'*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barry Pearce, Introduction, *Margaret Olley, exhibition catalogue*, The Art Gallery New South Wales, 1997 Edition p. 20

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 14

## *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

### **MARGARET OLLEY'S PAINTINGS**

Primary – Secondary Education Resource

#### **Subject Matter**

Still life, interiors and self-portraits

To make her paintings Margaret used design elements such as line, shape, form, space, colour and texture. (See the definition of these elements on the following page)



Margaret Olley's paint palette with brushes and cornflowers

#### **Communicating with colour and light**

Colour and light are very important parts of Margaret Olley's paintings. The colours Margaret used and the way she put them together created different moods and effects. This is called a **colour scheme**.

She generally used loose strokes of paint to capture an impression of her subject matter rather than painting in great detail. Many of her paintings show us how the light at different times of the day affected the look of her subject matter, especially its colour. To capture the mood of a certain time of day and place Margaret sometimes changed the colours of the objects to those that we may not see in real life. Margaret saw colours in everything she looked at, even in the shadows and at night.

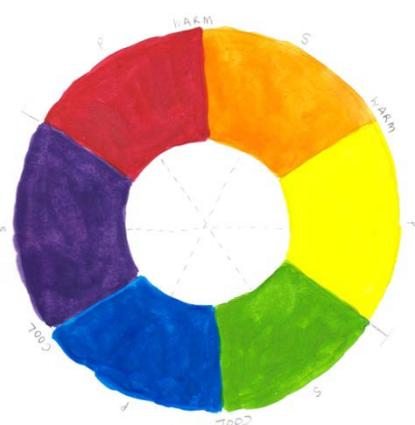
#### **ACTIVITIES - Colour**

We react to colour. They remind us of things and make us feel things.

##### **Mixing colour**

Knowing how to mix and use colours is a very useful skill for any artist. Although many colours can be bought from a shop you really only need the three basic colours, **red**, **yellow** and **blue**, and white (tint) and black (tone) to mix a large range of colours.

##### **THE COLOUR WHEEL**



This is an example of a simple colour wheel. This colour wheel shows us the three primary and three secondary colours.

**PRIMARY:** **RED**, **YELLOW**, **BLUE** (cannot be made by mixing any other colours)

**SECONDARY:**  
**GREEN** (made by mixing equal parts of blue and yellow)

**ORANGE** (made by mixing equal parts of yellow and red)

**PURPLE** (made by mixing equal parts of blue and red)

## Colour Contrast

### Complementary or opposite colours

These colours are found opposite each other on the colour wheel.

e.g. red and green, orange and blue, yellow and purple

When you put them next to each other they clash and seem to vibrate. Artists use them to create a feeling of energy and movement in their work.

Here are two of Margaret Olley's paintings that use:

### Complementary or opposite colours.

orange and blue



red and green



### Hot and cold colours

Colours are either warm or cool.

The colours of fire - red, orange and yellow can make us feel warm or hot.

### Warm colours



### Cool colours

The colour of water or the bush – blue, green or purple can make us feel cool.



## Images page 15 from top to bottom

*Allamandas I* c.1955-58  
oil on canvas  
75.0 x 92.3cm  
Purchased 1961  
Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

*Basket of calendulas* 1967  
oil on composition board  
74.5 x 100.0cm  
University Art Collection, The University of Sydney  
Donated anonymously 2002

*Green Grapes* 1989  
oil on board  
64.6 x 51.9cm  
Donated by Pamela Bell to the Southern  
Downs Regional Council Collection and  
held at the Stanthorpe Regional Art Gallery

*Lilies and Grapes* 1958  
oil on board  
100.5 x 75.0cm  
Lismore Regional Gallery Permanent Collection  
Acquired 1958

*Basket of mandarins* 1967  
oil on composition board  
76.0 x 61.0cm  
University Art Collection, The University of Sydney  
Donated anonymously 2002

*Early morning still life* c.1975  
oil on composition board  
60.0 x 89.6cm  
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased 1975

## Warm and cool colours Creating distance.

Warm colours look like they are coming towards us, while cool colours look further away. Many artists use this effect to suggest distance and space in their paintings.



*Oranges* 1964  
oil on composition board  
74.8 x 100.3cm  
Gift of the Toowoomba Art Society, 1965  
Toowoomba City Collection

## Colours and feelings

Some colours make people remember a feeling or a thing.

Draw connecting lines to the words that you think match the colours, red, yellow, blue.

<b>YELLOW</b>	happiness	water
	blood	
		stillness
	anger	energy
	sun	sadness
	movement	love
	brightness	
		<b>RED</b>
		<b>BLUE</b>

Because colour can communicate to us in many different ways it can be a very powerful tool for an artist. Now when you look at an artwork look at its colours and ask yourself.

- What colours has the artist used and how have they been put together?
- What effect do they make and how does it make you feel?



*Still life with melon* 1962  
 Oil on composition board  
 100.0 x 75.0cm  
 Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 1962  
 The University of Queensland Art Museum  
 Photo: Carl Warner



*Still life – agapanthus and plumbago* 1962  
 oil on composition board  
 102.0 x 75.8cm  
 Collection: Geelong Gallery  
 Gift of anonymous donor, 1999

## Elements of design



**Line** is a mark with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal, straight or curved, thick or thin.



**Shape** or **form** is a closed line. Shapes can be: geometric like squares and circles; or organic like fruit or shells. Shapes are flat and can express length and width. **Forms** are three-dimensional shapes, expressing length, width, and depth. Apples, oranges, bowls, vases, furniture and people can be expressed as forms.



**Space** is the area between and around objects. The space around objects is often called negative space; negative space has shape. Space can also refer to the feeling of depth. Real space is three-dimensional; in visual art when we can create the feeling or illusion of depth we call it space.



**Colour** is light reflected off objects. Colour has three main characteristics: hue or its name (red, green, blue, etc.), value (how light or dark it is), and intensity (how bright or dull it is).



**Texture** is the surface quality that can be seen and sometimes felt. Textures can be rough or smooth, soft or hard. Textures do not always feel the way they look; for example, a painting of flowers may look prickly, but if you could touch the artwork, the paint is still smooth.



**Tone** is light and dark value of objects. It is used to create contrast, define the shape or form of an object or place an object on a flat surface to create a 3D illusion.



**Size and scale** is the proportion and relationship of objects. It relates to the relative size measured against other elements in a composition.



**Pattern** can be natural or manmade and refers to the characteristic of an object or a repeated design. Patterns result from the repetition of shape, size, colour, texture, value, direction, position and orientation, either singly or in combination.

*It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

**Exhibition Activity Sheet**

**Colour**

Find the Margaret Olley painting titled ***Still Life – agapanthus and plumbago***

List all the colours you can see in the painting.


Find a painting that is mostly cool colours (blues, greens, greys, browns, purple).

Title:

--

Find a painting that is mostly warm colours (reds, yellows, oranges, pinks).

Title:

--

Find a painting that has both warm and cool colours.

Title:

--

Find a painting that makes you feel happy or sad.

Title:

--

Which is your favourite painting?

Title:

--

List what you can see?

--

What colours are in the painting?


Draw your favourite painting in the frame.



## *It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections*

Practical and written activities – for school or home

### Colour

#### **Make your own colour wheel**

Draw a large circle and divide it into 6 equal parts. Use the sample wheel from the colour notes as a guide. In every second segment paint a primary colour. Mix the three secondary colours from the primary colours and paint in the spaces in-between. Note: The three primary colours that are best to make your secondaries are cerulean blue, magenta and lemon yellow.

#### **Other colour mixing exercises**

When you have created your colour wheel mix your leftover paints with different amounts of white and then black to see how many more colours you can make. These are called tints and tones.

Cut out a range of warm and cool coloured squares from magazines. Glue these colours onto separate pieces of paper. One sheet for cool and one for warm. Mix up some paint colours to match your cut out squares to make a sample sheet of warm and cool colours.

#### **Still Life**

Set up a still life using objects from home or school. Draw a simple line drawing your still life. Scan or photocopy your drawing and print 2 copies. Colour your still life with different combinations of colour.

This can be done also with a photograph. Change colour digitally in Photoshop or by hand colouring.

#### **Further investigations**

The following artists all used or use colour in interesting ways in their still life paintings. Choose two of these artists and find an example of their artwork.

- Make simple copies of these paintings trying to match the colours the artists used.
- Describe how colour has been used in the artworks.

**Paul Cézanne** (1839-1906) French

**Giorgio Morandi** (1890-1964) Italian

**Pierre Bonnard** (1867-1947) French

**Jean-Baptiste Oudry** (1685-1755) French

**Mikhail Larionov** (1881-1964) Russian

**Juan Sánchez Cotán** (1560–1627) Spanish

**Édouard Manet** (1832-1883) French

**Margaret Preston** (1875 – 1963) Australian

**Don Rankin** (b.1947) Australian

**Kevin Lincoln** (b.1941) Australian

**Pam Tippett** (b.1950) Australian

**Cressida Campbell** (b.1960) Australian

**Angus McDonald** (b.1961) Australian

## It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections

### SHAPE AND COMPOSITION



Space or negative space is a really important element in creating a successful still life composition.

Below is a line drawing of Margaret Olley's painting *Still life with leaves* c.1960. Colour in with pencil the negative space around and behind the objects.

*Still life with leaves* c.1960  
oil on hardboard  
77.5 x 103.0cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Sali Herman Gift Fund 1982

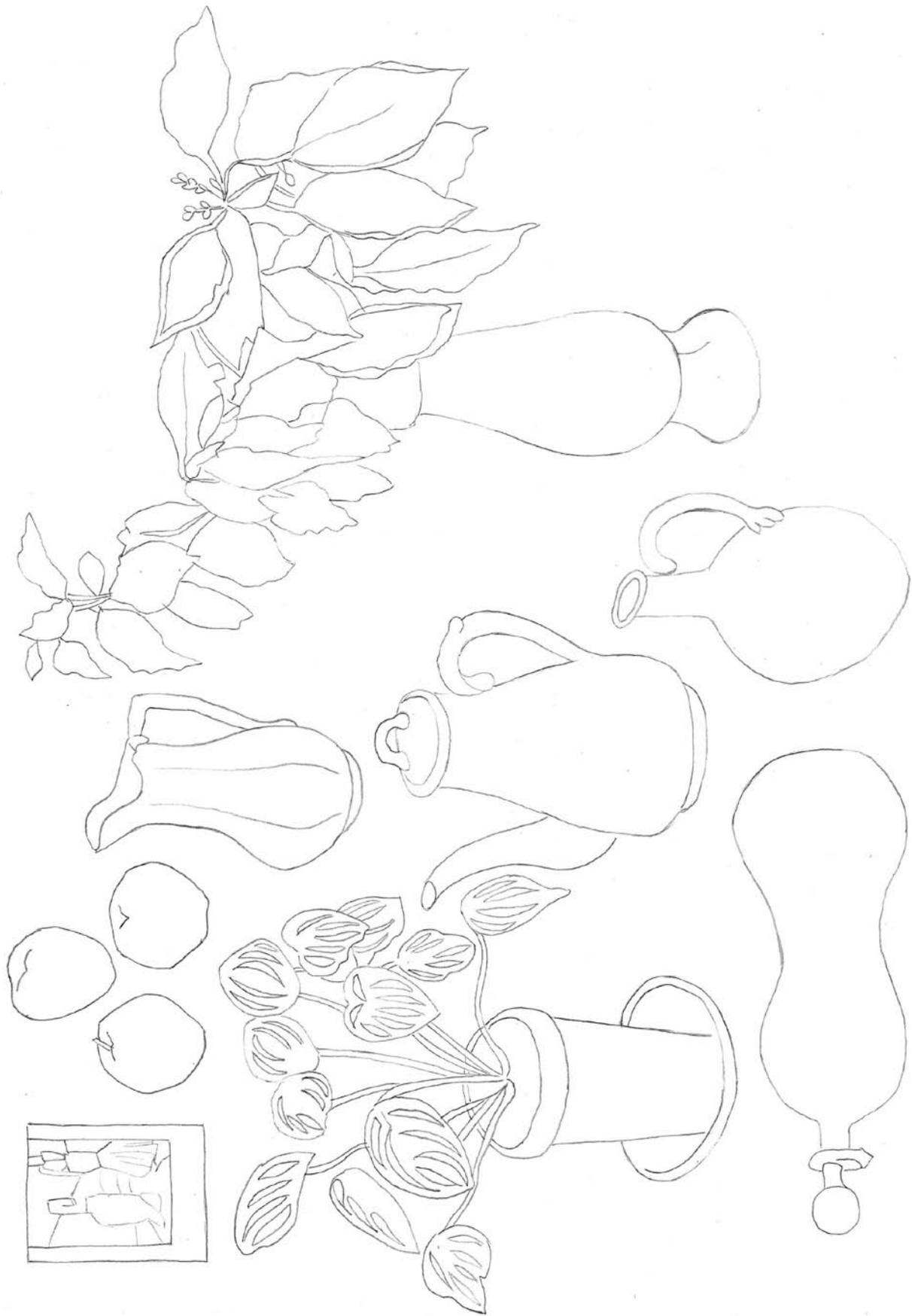


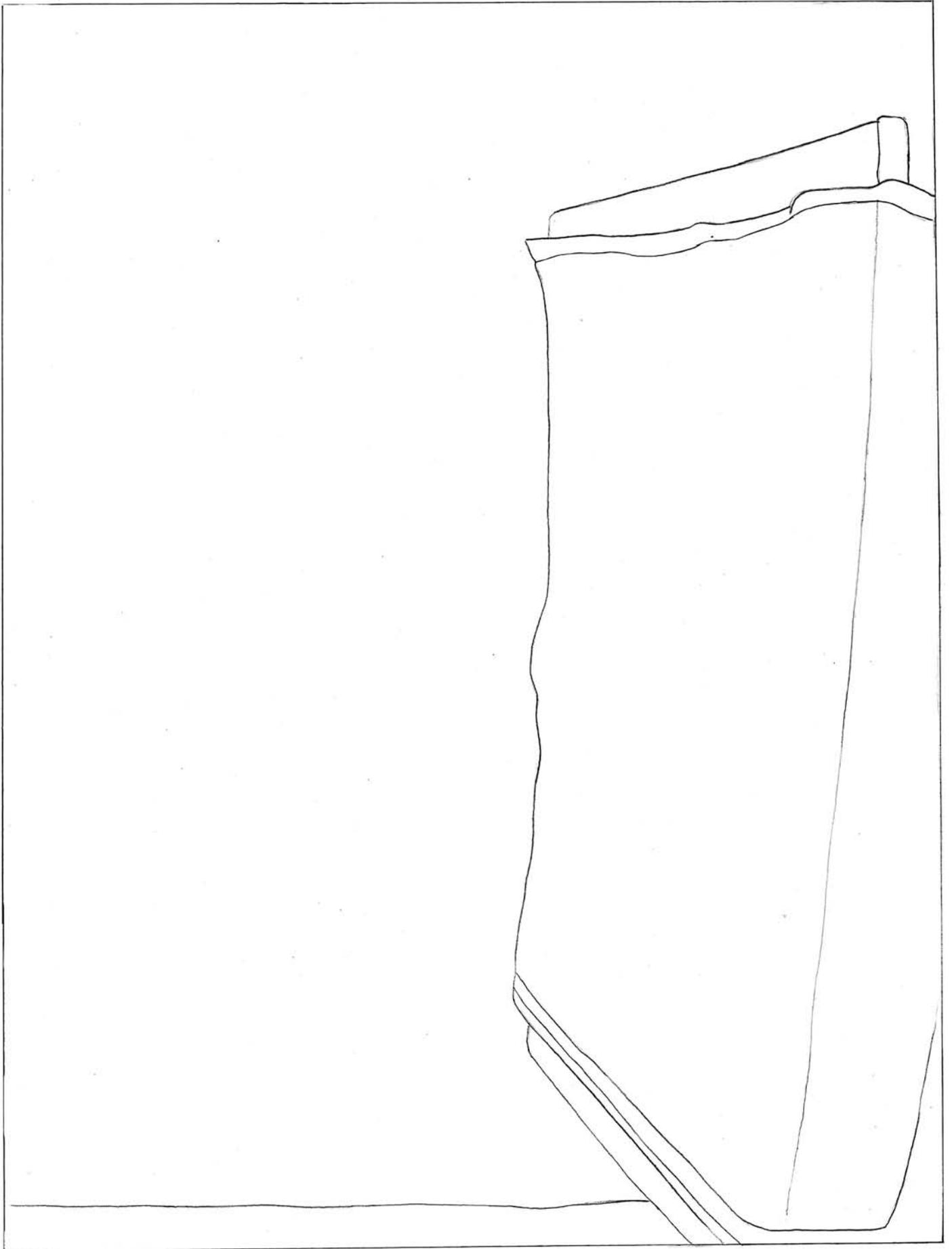
### PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Shape and composition

Print out the following two pages to A3 size. These are the shapes of objects that Margaret Olley painted in *Still life with leaves* c.1960

Cut out the objects and create your own still life composition by rearranging the shapes on the empty table top. (They can overlap). Once you are happy with your arrangement, glue the objects down to the sheet. Paint or colour in, using different colour combinations to the original painting.





**It's all about the light: works by Margaret Olley from public collections**  
**Homage to Manet**



Margaret Olley  
*Homage to Manet* 1987  
 oil on hardboard  
 76.0 x 102.0cm  
 Art Gallery of New South Wales  
 Gift of the artist 2001

The tradition of including objects from overseas in still life painting goes back to the 16th Century when exotic novelties symbolised bourgeois prosperity. In today's world of jet set travel these pieces may often be catalogues or posters of artworks seen abroad. From her very earliest works such as *Portrait in the Mirror* 1948, Margaret Olley has made reference to reproduction artworks.

***Homage to Manet* 1987**, is the strongest work. The foreground is filled with a table bearing a compote dish of cherries and a jug of plumbago behind which is a reproduction of Manet's *Le Balcon* 1868-69. To the right hand side is a detail of the same work. This detail is the figure of the painter Beth Morisot. The fact that this is enlarged establishes depth and balances the composition. Apart from its **formalist** considerations it is also important to know that in a continuing tradition Manet's work is indebted to Goya's *Majas on a Balcony*, and that this same detail was the cover to the catalogue of the Manet retrospective held in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in 1983.....In appropriating this image, Olley not only pays homage to Manet but also comments on the universality of reproduced imagery.<sup>1</sup>



Édouard Manet (1832-1883)  
*The balcony (Le Balcon)* c.1868  
 oil on canvas  
 170 x 124.5cm  
 Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Attributed to Francisco de Goya (1746-1828)  
*Majas on the balcony* c.1810  
 oil on canvas  
 194.9 x 125.7cm  
 H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929  
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

**Definition Formalism:** In the case of painting, these qualities are usually understood to be compositional elements such as line, value, colour and texture: they can be distinguished from technique on the one hand and content on the other. Source: Oxford Dictionary

<sup>1</sup>Christine France, *Margaret Olley*, Craftsman House, 2002 edition, p. 78-79. With other references from Charles Sterling, *Still Life Painting from Antiquity to the Present Time* p. 47 and Michael Wilson, *Manet at work: An exhibition to mark the centenary of the Death of Manet 1832-1883*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery, London 1983, p. 26