Charles Darwin University Art Gallery and Artback NT present

Marina Strocchi

a survey, 1991–2015

EDUCATION RESOURCE

School group bookings

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12 November 2015 – 19 February 2016
CDU Art Gallery

Building Orange 12 (ground level),
Charles Darwin University, Casuarina campus
Wednesday to Friday 10–4pm, Saturday 10–2pm
www.cdu.edu.au/artgallery

This education resource was developed by Gillian Mercer in collaboration with CDU Art Gallery
Marina Strocchi: a survey, 1991–2015 is a gaze into the wondrous art of Marina Strocchi (b. 1961–) and her musings on life in the Red Centre and Top End, and other places in between.

The exhibition features more than 90 works by Marina Strocchi including sketches, screen-prints, gouache on paper, oil and acrylic on linen, including a selection of 15 etchings and lithographs from the Charles Darwin University Art Collection that Marina created during her residency at the University’s print-making studio, Northern Editions in 2006.

Over the past 24 years, since Marina Strocchi arrived in the Northern Territory from Melbourne, she has created evocative and playful renderings of landscapes, natural forms and post-colonial industry.

The art of Marina Strocchi propels us on a journey of the Northern Territory. Her paintings and prints consist of both imagery and narrative, through a distinctive style that combines lines, patterns, colour and one-dimensional perspective. Her art is laden with iconic motifs of jabiru, fish, windmills, boats, buffalo, feral cats, donkeys, desert oaks, ghost gums, spinifex, mangroves and mulga.

In 1979, Marina enrolled in a BA Visual Arts at the Graphic Design School, Swinburne Technical College, Melbourne, where she studied screen-printing and developed a passion for life drawing.

From 1992–97 she resided in Haasts Bluff, where she established the Ikuntji Art Centre, together with her partner and fellow artist, Wayne Eager. In 1998 Marina established a home based studio practice in Alice Springs which she continues until today. She has also worked as a Lecturer in Art and Craft at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (2000–2002).

This engaging, lively and expressive exhibition is the culmination of her artistry.

‘The painting instinct is alive in her work,’ Sioux Garside, 2014.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

This education resource has been developed to assist primary, middle school and senior secondary teachers and students to maximise the educational value and enjoyment of the exhibition Marina Strocchi: a survey, 1991–2015.

The aim of this resource is to provide teachers with information about selected works in the exhibition.

There are a number of key works that can be studied and discussed in the classroom. It provides discussion questions and related activities for students.

The material in this resource is intended to encourage teachers and their students to plan a visit to this exhibition and to engage directly with the artist’s works within the exhibition.
This painting depicts palm trees with a specific reference to Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), a pioneer of modernism whose sculpture *Endless column* is created from simplified geometric shapes. Strocchi’s palm trees show unusual 3 dimensional qualities and the different tones enhance the strong forms of the tree trunks. The flat lines and patterns of the palm fronds evoke abstract repetition in a monochromatic colour scheme.

### Primary

**Discussion**

Have you seen palm trees that look like this?

Look closely at the trunk and bark texture of some palm trees and feel the roughness of the texture.

**Activity**

Take some paper and crayons and make rubbings of palm tree bark. Enlarge those patterns and create some strong abstract shapes. Add some cut paper shapes to extend this into a collage.

### Middle School

**Discussion**

What are the art elements evident in this artwork?

How has the artist created depth in the shapes of the tree trunks?

Look at the use of negative space. How does the background emphasise the shapes of the trees?

**Activity**

Draw 4 tree trunks using repeated geometric shapes. Use a different geometric shape for each tree. Shade each shape to make it appear 3 dimensional. Use a monochromatic colour scheme.

### Senior Secondary

**Discussion**

In what way has Strocchi been influenced by Brancusi in this artwork? Why are artists’ often seen to have elements of other artists’ work and in some cases, appropriate other artists’ ideas?

**Research/analysis**

Look at the concept of appropriation and find examples of artworks that have been appropriated. Research Brancusi’s work and write a comparison between Strocchi’s palm trees and Brancusi’s *Endless Column*. 

This was Marina Strocchi’s first print created when she was at primary school. It demonstrates that she had a clear understanding of line, shape and pattern at that early age.

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<td><strong>Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;Look at the way the artist has used bold black and white shapes in this artwork.&lt;br&gt;Which are the positive and which are the negative shapes?&lt;br&gt;Why do you think Strocchi used rows of continuous lines around the fruit shapes?</td>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;How has the artist used positive and negative shapes in this artwork?&lt;br&gt;Look at how Strocchi has made the positive shape of the fruit into a negative shape with the lines of the cores showing.</td>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;How do you think the flat shapes and continuous lines in this work have influenced her later works?&lt;br&gt;Do you think that an artist benefits from studying art at an early age?</td>
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<td><strong>Activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Draw the outline of some fruit shapes on coloured paper.&lt;br&gt;Cut out these shapes and arrange them on another coloured paper.&lt;br&gt;With a contrasting colour marker pen draw lines around the shapes to create a pattern.</td>
<td><strong>Activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Cut some fruit in half. Look at the shapes inside the fruit.&lt;br&gt;Draw the fruit shapes almost touching and then use lines to fill in the background.&lt;br&gt;Convert your drawing to a lino print paying attention to positive and negative shapes.</td>
<td><strong>Research/analysis</strong>&lt;br&gt;Find evidence of another artist’s work as a child.&lt;br&gt;Explain how that artist has progressed and developed as an artist from that time.</td>
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This gouache painting on paper explains Marina Strocchi’s first fascination for the ‘red centre’, the ever changing colours of the landscape and the magnificent ranges and textured plains. Through these early works she, like Albert Namatjira, drew inspiration from the landscape. Her work from this period shows the beginnings of a flattened landscape and repetitive elements that feature so well in her later work. The colours of this landscape are so vibrant and powerful that they are bordering on the arbitrary and abstract colours of her later works.

**Primary**

**Discussion**
- Have you ever been to Central Australia?
- Have you ever seen colours like this in the desert?
- Did you know that colours of the landscape change with the time of the day and weather patterns?
- Next time you watch a sunset, look at the reflection of the sun on the land and think about what you see.

**Activity**
- Use a horizontal line to divide your page in half. That can be your horizon.
- Draw a rock or a mountain on the top half of your page.
- Paint the rock, the land and the sky in the brightest colours you can find.
- Paint some trees, scrub, spinifex and grasses over the land area using texture.

**Middle School**

**Discussion**
- You know that Uluru is a monolith. How does this painting convey to you the majestic size of Uluru?
- Does it look a long way away?
- Look at the size of the trees.
- How has the artist used size to show perspective?

**Research**
- Use a horizontal line to divide your page in half.
- Draw a mountain range across the top half of your page.
- Paint the mountain range, the land and the sky in arbitrary colours.
- Draw some trees, scrub, spinifex and grasses in perspective over the land area using texture.

**Senior Secondary**

**Discussion**
- What is the feeling this painting gives you?
- How has this effect only been achieved using the opacity of gouache paints?

**Research/analysis**
- Look at the watercolour paintings of Albert Namatjira and/or the landscape paintings of Fred Williams.
- Write an essay comparing and contrasting the gouache paintings of Marina Strocchi with these 2 artists.
- Research the qualities of gouache paints and experiment to see what you can do with them.
This large painting is full of delightful imagery depicting so much activity from the northern coastline to the desert. These elements and shapes are assembled into visual rhythms of human and animal activity, which leads your eye from one image to another and back again. The images are a combination of natural and man-made objects. The juxtaposition of feral and native animals and the exploitation of the land by mining are all expressed in this painting.

### Discussion

**Primary**
- Name all natural images that you can see in this painting.
- How many different trees are there?
- How many different animals are there?
- What are the man-made objects in this painting?

**Middle School**
- Look at the painting from top down. See how the top depicts the coastline and it leads you down into Central Australia. Look at the vast number of images there are here.
- Look at how the artist has painted the light colour as the negative shapes around the dark silhouettes of the images.

**Senior Secondary**
- The artist was inspired by Henri Rousseau and Alfred Wallis, both naïve artists who use flattened perspective and simplified images.
- How do naïve artists convey a feeling of space without the conventional use of perspective?

### Activity

**Primary**
- Draw an outline of the shape of an animal.
- Fill in the shape with a dark colour to make a silhouette (a dark shape against a light background).
- Do the same with a tree and put them side by side.

**Middle School**
- Paint your paper all over with a dark colour. Lightly sketch the outline of a tree or an animal.
- Use a much lighter colour to paint in the negative space around the object creating a silhouette of your shape.

**Senior Secondary**
- Research the work of Sam Byrne. What does the work of Strocchi and Byrne have in common?
- Prepare a presentation in which you compare and contrast one work by each artist.
This painting depicts the feral animal, the fox surrounded by native vegetation. The artist uses the style of flattened perspective as well as the technique of painting the negative shapes around the positive.

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<td>Did you see the fox straight way when you looked at this painting?</td>
<td>Do you think the artist intended the fox to look like he is comfortable in his surroundings?</td>
<td>Do you think this is a detail of a larger painting or a painting in its own right?</td>
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<td>Do you think the artist deliberately camouflaged the fox into its surroundings?</td>
<td>What damage does a fox do to the native vegetation?</td>
<td>Do you think it is easier to paint large or small? Why?</td>
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<td>What is a feral animal and why is a fox regarded as a feral animal?</td>
<td>Do you think the artist creates a feeling of fear of the fox? How?</td>
<td><strong>Research/analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Name some adjectives usually given to foxes.</td>
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<td>Find examples of artists who usually work small.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draw or paint an animal then draw plants all around your animal and see if it looks camouflaged.</td>
<td>Discover another feral animal to Australia. How was that animal introduced to Australia?</td>
<td>Research/analysis</td>
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<td>Compose a drawing in Strocchi’s style showing what you think should happen to feral animals in Australia.</td>
<td>Find examples of artists who usually work small.</td>
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<td>Compare and contrast a small painting with a large one. Is size important in an artwork?</td>
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Etching is traditionally the process of using strong acid or mordant to cut into the unprotected parts of a metal surface to create a design in intaglio (relief) in the metal.

In 2007, Marina Strocchi created this etching during a residency at Northern Editions print studio.

Although still naïve in style, this composition shows more depth in the roundness of the hills and the houses have some perspective. *La Vendemmia* (The Harvest) shows rows of vineyards and a tractor pulling the trailers full of the harvest. It embodies the lushness and activity of a human event with simplified and ornamental qualities.

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<td>This artwork is a print, which means that many copies can be made from it.</td>
<td>This artwork is about a grape harvest. What fruit do we harvest annually in the Top End? Look at Vincent Van Gogh’s <em>The Red Vineyard</em>. Both artworks include vines and human activity. Compare and contrast Van Gogh’s painting to Strocchi’s etching.</td>
<td>How does the process of etching change the style of Strocchi’s work? How important do you think printmaking was to the development of her artistic practice? Do you think that a print holds as much value as a painting? Why/why not?</td>
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<td>What can you see in the picture? The title of the print is Italian for harvest. What do you think is being harvested here?</td>
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<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Using cut and torn paper make your own orchard or vineyard. Cut small pieces of paper of a contrasting colour as the fruit of your trees. Draw the people who are harvesting the fruit.</td>
<td>Use pen line and a cross hatching technique to draw rows of fruit trees or grapevines. Use the theory of perspective to give the trees depth. Use water colour to add colour to your artwork.</td>
<td>Find out about the etching process and record some of the vocabulary associated with the technique.</td>
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Marina Strocchi’s pictographs are associated with Egyptian hieroglyphics as abstracted pictorial drawings made up of signs and symbols. These paintings also reflect the playfulness of ‘doodling’, or just playing around, something with which we can all identify.

The flow and expressive abstract mark making of artists like Ian Fairweather, Tony Tuckson and Roy Jackson and is reflected in Strocchi’s pictographs.

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<td><strong>Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;A continuous line is one that has no beginning and no end. In Red drawing, follow the line with your eyes and see where it goes.</td>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;Look at the painting Full bloom. Considering the title, what do the shapes remind you of?</td>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;In what context can ‘doodling’ be meaningful?&lt;br&gt;Look at the artists named above and any others you can find and evaluate the art of abstract mark making.</td>
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<td><strong>Activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Put your pencil on the paper and, slowly, make a continuous line that flows and crosses itself many times and joins up with itself eventually. Give the line a double thickness and go over the line with a solid paint line. Fill in the negative shapes with a contrasting colour.</td>
<td><strong>Activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Look at some Egyptian hieroglyphics. Using line only, draw your own examples of symbols that have meaning only to you. Join them up with a wandering line and use colour to complete your artwork.</td>
<td><strong>Research/analysis</strong>&lt;br&gt;Look at the work of Ian Fairweather, who uses expressive abstract lines and painterly gestures in his work. Compare and contrast Epiphany by Fairweather and Full bloom by Strocchi.</td>
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Marina Strocchi is fascinated by boats and many appear in her paintings, mostly in the form of canoes. Boats are an important part of our lifestyle and our history. Most post World War 2 migrants came to Australia by boat and the term ‘boat people’ has become part of our language describing asylum seekers.

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<td>What are some different types of boats? Canoe, dingy, fishing boat, yacht, catamaran, kayak, speed boat, cruise ship, cargo ship, naval vessel, ferry, etc.</td>
<td>Brainstorm the many different types of boats there are and their uses: canoe, dingy, fishing boat, yacht, catamaran, kayak, speed boat, cruise ship, cargo ship, naval vessel, ferry, etc.</td>
<td>How successful do you think the artist has been in capturing a sense of place of the Northern Territory in this painting?</td>
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<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Divide your paper into irregular shapes with straight lines. In some of the shapes draw different kinds of boats. In others draw different kinds of fish. What other things can you draw that are related to boats?</td>
<td>Draw many different kinds of boats. Cut out the shapes of these boats from coloured paper and collage them together overlapping on a background of wavy lines symbolising ocean.</td>
<td>Research artists from European and Asian cultures who have used boats or the sea as their main theme in their work. Chose one artist from each culture and compare and contrast aspects of their work.</td>
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