



PAUL SELWOOD : PERSPECTIVE CUTOUTS

— *Education Kit* —

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >1

---

*If the house is the first universe for its young children, the first cosmos, how does its space shape all subsequent knowledge of other space, of any larger cosmos?*

---

**John R. Stilgoe**

[COVER TOP] PAUL SELWOOD : *Mainstay* 2008, steel, varnish, 242.5 x 122.5cm

[COVER BOTTOM] PAUL SELWOOD : *A complex silence* 2009, steel, varnish, 242.5 x 245cm

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >2

---

# CONTENTS

---

---

> FOCUS WORKS 4>9

---

PLATE 1 > *We are where we are not*, 2009, steel rusted and varnished, 242.5 x 490cm

PLATE 2 > *House of my childhood*, 2008, steel rusted and varnished, 242.5 x 122.5cm

PLATE 3 > *A story and its telling*, 2010, steel, rust and varnish, 190 x 110 cm

PLATE 4 > *A little window*, 2008, steel rusted and varnished, 190 x 110cm

PLATE 5 > *My old home*, 2009, steel rusted and varnished, 120.5 x 158.2cm

PLATE 6 > *Druids Dream*, 2010, galvanised steel, painted and varnished, 244 x 366cm

---

> NOTES ON USE 10

> FURTHER READING 11

> THE EXPRESSIVE FORM 12>15

> A QUESTION OF PERSPECTIVE 16>19

> SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENT'S UNDERSTANDINGS

---

> *Early Childhood and Primary students* 20>22

> *Secondary and Tertiary students* 23>26

---

> ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 27

---



## PLATE 1

[ABOVE] PAUL SELWOOD : *We are where we are not* (installation shot), 2009, steel, rust and varnish, 242.5 (irreg) x 490 (irreg) cm

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >4

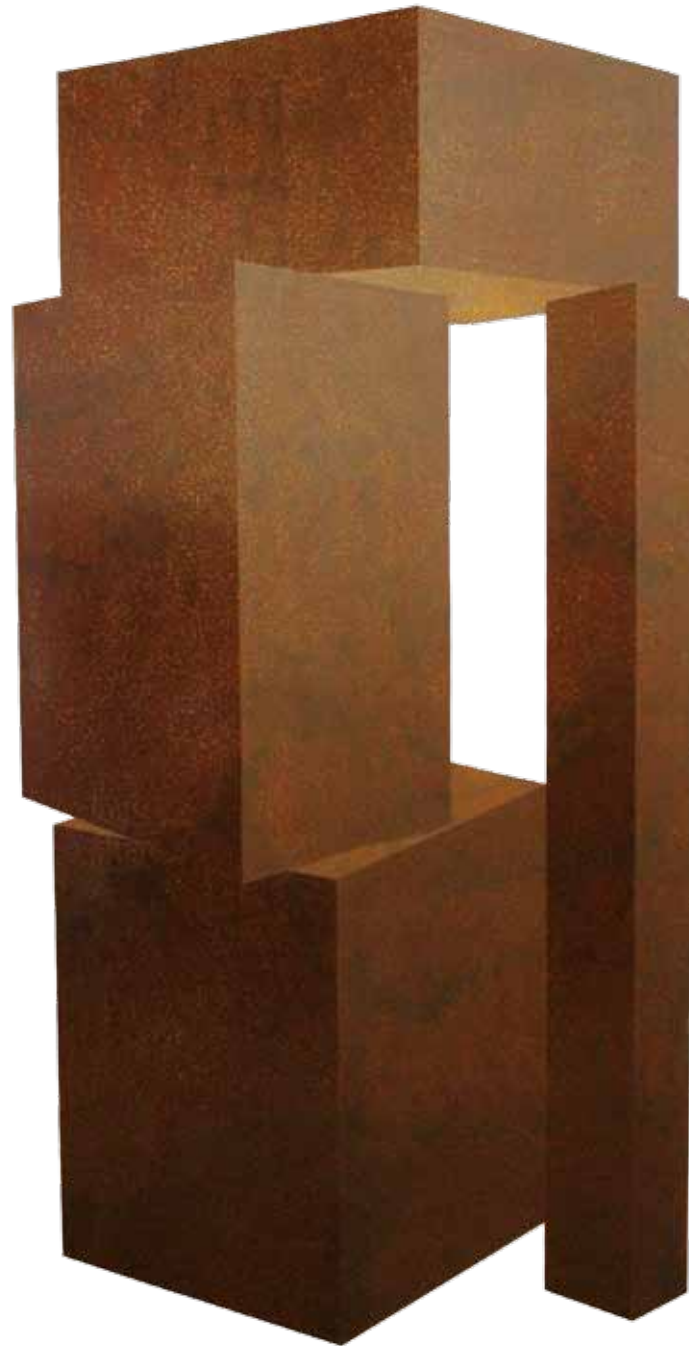


PLATE 2

[ABOVE] PAUL SELWOOD : *House of my childhood* 2008, steel, varnish, 242.5 x 122.5cm

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >5



### PLATE 3

[ABOVE] PAUL SELWOOD : *A story and its telling*, 2010, steel, rust and varnish, 190 (irreg) x 110 (irreg) cm

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >6



PLATE 4

[ABOVE] PAUL SELWOOD : *A little window*, 2008, steel, rust and varnish, 190 (irreg) x 110 (irreg) cm

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >7



PLATE 5

[ABOVE] PAUL SELWOOD : *My old home*, 2009, steel, rust and varnish, 120.5 (irreg) x 158.2 (irreg) cm

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >8





## PLATE 6

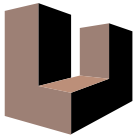
[ABOVE] PAUL SELWOOD : *Druid's Dream*, 2010, galvanized steel painted 244 (irreg) x 366 (irreg) cm

A MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOSEPH EISENBERG >9

---

## NOTES ON USE

---



This document has been produced by Maitland Regional Art Gallery (MRAG) as supporting educational material for the touring exhibition *Paul Selwood: Perspective Cutouts*. It aims to support teachers of primary and secondary students and focuses on NSW Visual Art Syllabi for years K-6, 7-10 and 11 - 12. Additionally, this resource can be utilised by public program staff, tertiary students, and the general public whilst visiting the exhibition.

MRAG strongly supports experience-based learning, particularly in the area of arts and culture. This education kit should be used as part of a unit of work that includes a visit to the art gallery to view *Paul Selwood: Perspective Cutouts*.

*Suggestions for developing student's understandings* have been included in this education kit. This section contains several suggestions for further study, art making activities, and questions or concepts relating to the exhibition that could be expanded upon in the classroom. You may need to adapt these ideas to suit the specific needs of your students.

---

## FURTHER READING

---



### ADDITIONAL EXHIBITION PUBLICATIONS

> *Paul Selwood: Perspective Cutouts* (2011). Catalogue, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Australia. Catalogue essay by Anthony Bond OAM, preface by Joseph Eisenberg, OAM. ISBN: 978-0-9807520-8-3

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES VALUABLE TO EDUCATORS

P. Selwood, T. Maloon, (2010) *Seeing in the round: Paul Selwood in conversation with Terence Maloon*. Art & Australia, Vol 48, No 2 pp300-309.

G. Bachelard , (1958) *The Poetics of Space*. 1994 edition: Beacon Press Massachusetts.

A. de Botton (2006) *The Architecture of Happiness*. 2007 edition: Penguin, London.

Seriousart.org, (2006) *Paul Selwood: the interview*. Available: [http://www.seriousart.org/archive/selwood\\_interview.html](http://www.seriousart.org/archive/selwood_interview.html) (Sourced January 31, 2011)

(Television series) *The Perfect Home*. First aired in 2006, Channel 4 (British Public-Service Television Broadcaster) Available: <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-perfect-home/4od> (sourced March 5, 2011)

---

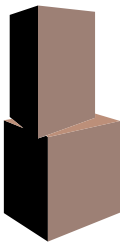
## THE EXPRESSIVE FORM

---

*You have to have a relationship with my sculpture. You won't get it in one glance as you walk past. The more you engage with it, the more it will give back to you.*<sup>1</sup>

---

Paul Selwood



Paul Selwood has been making abstract sculpture for many years. Speaking with him about his work gives you an impression of an artist who is disciplined, robust in his knowledge base, and controlled like the steel in which his works are made. Born in 1946, Paul lives and works in Wollombi in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales a short drive from Maitland.

At nineteen, Paul travelled to Europe and lived there for many years, spending the majority of his time in London. He worked as a technician at the Royal College of the Arts and also taught sculpture at Bath Academy of Art until returning to Australia in 1971. Upon returning to Australia he has also taught at the National Art School in Sydney and in other institutions in New South Wales and Queensland. In 1986 he purchased some land in Wollombi and established a studio there. For a more comprehensive explanation of Paul's life, read the *Perspective Cutouts* catalogue essay, written by Anthony Bond, in the catalogue that accompanies this exhibition.

<sup>1</sup> P. Selwood, T. Maloon, (2010) *Seeing in the round: Paul Selwood in conversation with Terence Maloon*. Art & Australia, Vol 48, No 2. p309

To create the artworks in *Perspective Cutouts*, Paul left sheets of steel out on the grass of his property so that patterns of damp grass and trails left by insects would be inferred onto the metal's surface as it rusted. To this, Paul scored the lines of a series of stacked geometric shapes, cut out the exterior overall shape, and then applied matte varnish, gloss varnish, or left other sections plain. The result is the implication of form; the suggestion of shadow upon a three dimensional surface despite its two dimensional reality. The works appear to protrude off the wall, they are imposing and arresting in their stately, dignified silence. The stillness and calm inferred in these works is not of time being arrested, but rather of time having passed. Like wise old buildings which have seen many things, the works in *Perspective Cutouts* imply experience and wisdom somehow encapsulated in a structure.

Although Paul has had no formal building or architectural training, *Perspective Cutouts* is undoubtedly informed by his personal experiences and keen interest in the subject. Paul has imbued his works with a feeling reminiscent of walking through a centuries-old space, where history and experience appear to permeate the physical location. The deteriorated surfaces of his works imply a life lived; their size evokes the imposing facade of monolithic structures. The names of the artworks additionally conjure poetic and personalised notions. Titles such as *We are where we are not* are almost like the beginning line of a story. Other titles, such as *House of my childhood* and *A little window* lead us to ponder our own personal and intimate histories with the spaces we have encountered throughout our lives. From our secret hiding places as children to the

depressing sensation of fluorescent lights in hospital waiting rooms, we not only utilise and inhabit our buildings; we are indelibly marked by them.

*In the past, the attic may have seemed too small, it may have seemed cold in winter and hot in summer. Now, however, in memory recaptured through daydreams, it is hard to say through what syncretism the attic is at once small and large, warm and cool, always comforting.*<sup>2</sup>

French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884 – 1962) established his early career in areas of physics and science before moving into aesthetics and poetry. In his book *The Poetics of Space*, he writes eloquently of how architecture influences and shapes us, using the conduit of poetry as a source for thought. Bachelard writes, that if he were asked to state the chief benefit of the house, he would respond; *the house shelters daydreaming*.<sup>3</sup> One of the primary functionalities of personal space is that of its ability to protect us to the extent of letting our mind wander. Buildings are more significant to use than merely the security they provide of physical safety, insulated by that security we are enabled to experience our thoughts and dreams.

More recently, the philosopher Alain de Botton (1969- ) writes of the distinctive contribution architecture makes to our happiness in the book *The Architecture of Happiness*. de Botton prompts us to consider how our society's desired attributes are often encapsulated in our great architecture. Additionally, our personal houses are not only a place of lodging, but a structure through which we convey to our peers who we

<sup>2</sup>G. Bachelard, (1958) *The Poetics of Space*. 1994 edition: Beacon Press Massachusetts. p10

<sup>3</sup>G. Bachelard, (1958) p6

are and what we are like. In this way architecture is an expressive form, where upon reflection, our greatest hopes and fears are conveyed.

*[W]e are drawn to call something beautiful whenever we detect that it contains in a concentrated form those qualities in which we personally, or our societies more generally, are deficient.*<sup>4</sup>

*Perspective Cutouts* is able to encapsulate some of the notions of architecture of which de Botton and Bachelard write, and succinctly too, for as abstract artworks they conjure both the personal and societal experience simultaneously. The duality of Paul's works is intriguing. At once, we perceive both the intimate architectural experience and the common one; we struggle between the three dimensional implied form and the two dimensional reality; we are drawn back and forth between the turbulence of the rusted steel surface and the calm of the overall work. As Anthony Bond writes: *The viewer is made intensely aware of the surface and the process of its production... while at the same time being drawn into an imaginative experience of space and atmosphere.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A. de Botton (2006) *The Architecture of Happiness*. 2007 edition: Penguin, London. p157

<sup>5</sup> A. Bond (2011) Catalogue essay, *Paul Selwood: Perspective Cutouts*. Catalogue, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Australia. p16

---

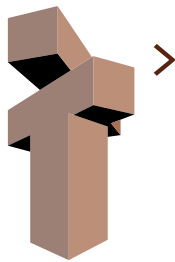
## A QUESTION OF PERSPECTIVE

---

*I don't know if I'm a modeller or a carver or a constructor, or whether I need to limit myself to those concepts, although I do appreciate all the formative ways through which sculpture comes about.*<sup>6</sup>

---

**Paul Selwood**



Increasingly in our current artistic landscape artists are compelled to push the boundaries. With each new exhibition contemporary artists are challenging our understandings of art and its function, value or meaning. The inevitable result is a fluctuating art world, where new forms of art and new approaches to art making add to art's evolution or to its dismantling.

Paul's works in *Perspective Cutouts* can be viewed as unintentional contributors to one of the art world's most popular modern debates. When new works continue to blur the lines between classifications, such a seemingly mundane issue of categorisation can lead us into interesting questions. How do we make distinct, the differences between different categories of art such as drawing, sculpture, or painting? Many significant competitions and art prizes will have interesting case studies in their histories. How do works compete against each other when the boundaries of classification are so muddled? What impact does the artist's intent for categorisation have on our understanding of their work? In this

<sup>6</sup>P. Selwood, T. Maloon, (2010) p30



and similar arguments, it emerges that any comprehensive conclusion or answer, is really merely a question of perspective.

Paul's significant artistic career to date has been focused on the medium of sculpture. Seen in light of his artistic achievements, *Perspective Cutouts* can thus be justifiably viewed as the most recent development of Paul's sculptural oeuvre. On the other hand however, we must acknowledge that the works themselves are two dimensional. While surface imperfections give the work an inconsistent veneer, they have height and width, but no depth. Can a sculpture be two-dimensional? Clarification through definition leads to little result. The Macquarie Dictionary uses the following three descriptors as means of classifying sculpture; *figures or designs in relief, in intaglio, or in the round*.<sup>7</sup> *Relief* and *intaglio* are both descriptions of carving a surface to create depth. *In the round* is a sculptural phrase which infers the ability to walk around an artwork's form. It would seem that while depth is strongly inferred, the necessity of three-dimensions is only implied.

Artworks made from found or ready-made objects could be used to support the claim that Paul's cutouts are sculptures. The iconic ready-made work, *Fountain* (1917) by Marcel Duchamp, was simply the repositioning of an everyday urinal inside the context of an art gallery, turning the object into art. Can the same be said for *Perspective Cutouts*, if the artist defines the works as sculpture, does that make it so?

But does Paul support the idea of his works being viewed as sculptures? Anthony Bond in the catalogue essay refers to Paul's works as *wall*

<sup>7</sup> *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1999) p1913

*sculptures*,<sup>8</sup> however in conversations with the artist during installation Paul conveyed his preference for the works to be seen as drawings. Adding to our confusion, later in the catalogue essay, Bond suggests that the best way to categorise Paul's previous three-dimensional sculptures should be in fact to consider them *three dimensional drawings*.<sup>9</sup>

So perhaps Paul's entire artistic career has lived in the haze between sculpture and drawing. Objectively, we can concede that the works in *Perspective Cutouts* have been born from a sculptural background more than from drawing; the technicality we get caught on is the question of dimensional form. *Perspective Cutouts* has no depth, but yet, it *implies* depth. Paul's artworks refrain from being a 'drawing of' or a 'painting of' something; they deceive the eyes *towards* form. This idea is reinforced by evidence revealed in the edges of the works. The edges are not the edges of the page or the canvas, they are the actual edge of the work, rarely seen employed in drawing or painting but a natural reality of sculpture. Even the medium of steel resides better with sculpture than drawing.

Contemporary drawing however is a vast and pervasive art form, a foundational artistic skill and a constantly changing medium. We have all drawn at some point, and you do not need pencil on paper to achieve a drawing. You can draw dragging a stick through wet sand on the beach or wiping dust from a window pane with your fingertip. Even the rusted finish of Paul's works, cut and ingrained into the work by dampness and exposure, is another form of drawing which embraces the haphazard chance markings of nature. The implication of three-dimensional form discussed prior is in fact achieved through the application of paint and

<sup>8</sup>A. Bond (2011) p12

<sup>9</sup>A. Bond (2011) p19

varnish, and so ironically, drawing is implicated in our argument towards sculpture. Television and photography also imply three dimensions to the audience, yet this does not compel us to consider them sculptures. The vehicle used to convey this implied form is perspective – an idea deeply imbedded in drawing and painting. You can't have perspective in a sculpture – you can only have form.

The 2009 MCA exhibition *I Walk the Line*,<sup>10</sup> was a showcase of the works of some thirty-odd Australian artists who each demonstrate an emerging trend of artists pushing the boundaries of what can be considered drawing. In this exhibition, video, performance art, animation and indeed three dimensional objects are included as drawings. Perhaps the distinction of two or three dimensions is not enough to classify a work either as a drawing or a sculpture, which leads us, infuriatingly back to the beginning. The Macquarie Dictionary is equally vague in its definition of a drawing, describing a drawing as a *representation by lines*.<sup>11</sup>

The argument for categorising Paul's cutouts as sculptures or as drawings appears evenly split, and leads us to remain in the middle ground between the two mediums. Perhaps there is some suitability to this situation.

*A lot of works start of as drawings on a flat sheet - sometimes a sheet of steel, sometimes paper. The drawings on paper, if they are going to become sculptures, can function like maquettes... There was a point when I began to realise I could actually make a sculpture out of a drawing by cutting it and folding it around. Drawing is the key.*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *I Walk the Line: new Australian drawing*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. 17 March - 24 May 2009.

<sup>11</sup> *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1999) p648, <sup>12</sup> P. Selwood, T. Maloon, (2010) p303

---

# SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS

---

## > *Early Childhood and Primary students*

---

### > CREATIVE ARTS

#### ARTMAKING

> Explore a series of origami activities, focusing on precision during folding. Like Paul's works, the finished origami piece will only look 'right' if the folds or lines intersect with accuracy. Use this exercise to develop an appreciation for the precision inherent in geometric forms.

> Draw a range of simple geometric shapes and cut them out of cardboard. Using aluminium foil and a glue stick, cover the cardboard shapes. You can experiment with different surface qualities by covering the different shapes with the shiny or matte side of the foil. Experiment with composition before securing the shapes on a plain sheet of cardboard.

#### ART APPRECIATING

> How are we the audience positioned by the artworks? Are we forced to look at them from a particular place? Stand up close to the works and inspect their detail. Next, withdraw as far as possible from the works and look at them from that distance. What different details do you notice?

> What colours are present? What colours are missing? What do the colours Paul has used remind you of? Are they happy or sad colours?

## > LINKS TO OTHER KEY LEARNING AREA

### ENGLISH AND LITERACY

- > Use the title of your favourite work as the inspiration for a poem. Compile a book of poems by the class.
- > Imagine you are a news reporter. Write a newspaper article about the exhibition.

### MATHEMATICS

- > String art, also known as pin and thread art, was a decorative craft popularised in the late 60s and early 70s. Use *Perspective Cutouts* as inspiration for a blocky, abstract geometric pattern, and create it as a string art work.
- > Use the works from *Perspective Cutouts* to investigate mathematical concepts also present in art; such as symmetry and asymmetry, the Golden Ratio, and perspective.

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- > Collect a range of metal samples, such as steel, aluminium, copper and brass. Place all these samples in the same environmental situation, for instance a damp flowerbed, and monitor the effect the environment has on the surface quality of the metal over a school term.
- > Investigate the production of steel, and its usage in industry. What process has made the surface of *Druids Dream* (2010) different from the surface of all the other works in the exhibition? What substance is needed to cause rust?

HUMAN SOCIETY  
AND ITS  
ENVIRONMENT

- > Research the prehistoric monument, Stonehenge, England.
- > Consider how building blocks and games that encourage building, engineering and structural experimentation such as cubby building, help with child development. Play with building blocks in class and discuss what children learn when they play in these ways.

PERSONAL  
DEVELOPMENT,  
HEALTH AND  
PHYSICAL  
EDUCATION

- > Working as a team, take a long rope or string into the playground, and reproduce some of Paul's works, using students as anchor points for the geometric design.
- > Using a range of safe materials, construct a cubby house as a team. Evaluate your design, firstly on its structural integrity, then on its qualities as a home; comfort, safety, beauty and other attributes you can think of.

CREATIVE ARTS  
(MUSIC AND  
DRAMA)

- > Develop a composition on a glockenspiel and then compare your composition on a piano. How does the sound of a glockenspiel differ? Does it have an impact on the 'feel' of the piece?
- > Write a monologue called '*My old home*' from the point of view of any living thing, human or animal.

---

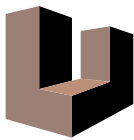
# SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS

---

> *Secondary and Tertiary students*

---

## > ARTIST



> The linear perspective Paul has created in these works was developed 'by eye' meaning that Paul used his artistic judgment, rather than working back to vanishing points, to create the illusion of three dimensions. Look critically at the works, stand far back and hold a ruler up to each line. Look for technical faults in the perspective at use. Consider the task of creating perspective by eye on such large sheets of steel. Discuss the difficulties of working in large scale. Do the perspective imperfections add or detract from the works? What psychological implications could be inferred by the subtle imperfection of perspective?

> Compare *Druid's Dream* (2010), with any of the other works in the exhibition. The galvanised steel will not rust, and so perspective is implied entirely through the painting of the surface, rather than through rust. Which finish do you prefer? Why?

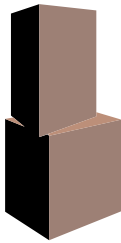
## ARTMAKING

> Using a limited palette of colours and refraining from colour mixing, create an acrylic painting of geometric forms which implies three dimensions in the same way that Paul has done.

#### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

> Research the work of M.C. Escher, and compare his use of dimension and perspective to *Perspective Cutouts*.

#### > ARTWORK



> Hold a class discussion, beginning by looking at the works, and then reading the section in this education kit; *A question of perspective*. Ask the class to vote on whether they feel Paul's works to be sculptures or drawings. Divide the room and host a debate.

> The artworks in *Perspective Cutouts* maintain a limited palette of colours. What sort of adjectives can be used to describe his colour palette? Consider these adjectives and what other connotations they augur.

#### ARTMAKING

> Use pliable Copper Shim (traditionally used for embossing and available in rolls or sheets) to create small works. After developing the composition on paper, score the design into the shim and cover selected sections with clear or coloured lacquer before leaving other sections to expose to the air and elements. Surface degradation will occur, mimicking the surface quality of Paul's works.

#### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

> Research the works of Sol Le Witt, and compare *Perspective Cutouts* with Le Witt's wall drawings.





> The exhibition *Perspective Cutouts* requires large amounts of plain wall space, not only to allow sufficient room to exhibit the works, but to allow each work a space around itself so it can be considered independently. The curators of this exhibition has also chosen to omit the traditional artwork wall plate, which is used in exhibitions to give the audience the details of the work. Instead, the details are compiled on an artworks list. What do you think are the reasons for choosing to exhibit the works in this way?

> Think about the role of the exhibition crew, who install the works. Investigate the works in the exhibition. How are they secured to the wall? Are works made up of one piece of metal or are they in sections? Despite being made of steel, the surfaces of these works are easily susceptible to damage. Research on the internet to find out how an installation crew installs a traditional exhibition. How would their practice differ for *Perspective Cutouts*?

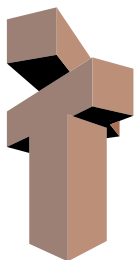
#### ARTMAKING

> As a sculptor, Paul predominantly works in three dimensional forms. Use stiff cardboard, and create a three dimensional artwork inspired by Paul's works. The process is similar to architects, in their creation of scale models.

#### ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

> Research the architect Frank Gehry and his process for developing the exterior look of his buildings.

## > AUDIENCE



> Consider what impact our own individual experiences have on us when we look at artworks. To appreciate a work of art, we can understand its meaning or intent, or, we can also appreciate its aesthetic value and how it was made. Consider how some audience members, who are more mechanically or mathematically minded, might appreciate *Perspective Cutouts* on a different level.

> What do the works remind you of? Building blocks? Buildings or other structures? Why? How does the size of the works impact upon what we are reminded of and how we react to it? Do his works feel ominous at all? Are they calm or turbulent? What other adjectives could be appropriate?

## ARTMAKING

> Audiences perceive artworks according to their context. Distorting the context of an image can drastically change its meaning. Consider for example, if one of Paul's artworks was a logo. What sort of company or product would it represent? Why? What key attributes can we then argue are inherent in Paul's works that would steer our interpretation of them as a logo, into specific industries or areas? Adapt an artwork into a logo and present it to the class.

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

> Research the role of the curator. Write a wall essay as if it were to accompany the exhibition. Given that wall essays are only intended to be brief, what is the most essential information the audience would need to understand his works?

---

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

Paul Selwood is represented by Watters Gallery, 109 Riley St, East Sydney.

Available: <http://www.wattersgallery.com/artists/selwood.htm> (Sourced January 31, 2011)

Written by Lauren van Katwyk, Education Curator, MRAG, (2011)

Designed by Clare Hodgins, Graphic Designer, MRAG

Produced by Maitland Regional Art Gallery

230 High St Maitland NSW 2320

(c) 2011 Maitland Regional Art Gallery

[www.mrag.org.au](http://www.mrag.org.au)

ISBN: 978-0-9871147-0-9

