



**The Occasional Papers Institute for Culture and Society**  
**tOPICS**

**The Occasional Papers, Institute for Culture and Society**  
**(tOPICS)**

Volume 7, Number 3

<http://doi.org/10.4225/35/57bf78e9fbf60>

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September 2016

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# For the Love (or Not) of Art in Australia

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## Abstract

This paper presents the findings of a 2015 survey of cultural tastes and practices relating the visual arts. Administered to a main sample of 1202 Australians, and to boost samples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Lebanese, Chinese, Italian and Indian Australians, the survey included questions on visitation practices in relation to a range of art museum types, art genre preferences, and knowledge of, and liking for, a range of Australian and international artists. The paper interprets these findings via multiple correspondence and cluster analyses of the patterns of knowledge about, tastes for, and participation in the visual arts in Australia that they evince. It also correlates these items with indicators of social class, ethnicity, gender, and level and type of education. The differential patterns of involvement that emerge from these analyses suggest the operation of powerful cultural barriers inhibiting participation in the Australian art field just as, among those who do manifest a 'love of art', there are significant social divisions regarding their tastes for different kinds of art. In addressing these questions the paper also considers the light that they throw on the appropriateness of the National Gallery of Australia's choice of Tom Roberts' work as the subject for a special exhibition to mark a rehang of the Gallery's Australian collection.

**Keywords:** Australian art field, taste, cultural capital, figurative art, non-figurative art

In December 2015 The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) heralded its exhibition of the work of Tom Roberts as being 'among the nation's best known works of art', 'loved by all Australians'. This was at a time when we had just started work on the data produced by a survey of Australian cultural practices which, among other things, asked the respondents whether they had heard of, seen, and liked (or not) the work of ten Australian artists.<sup>1</sup> Roberts was one of these artists and we were able to show, in an opinion piece contributed to *The Conversation* (Bennett 2015), that far from being 'loved by all Australians,' 63 per cent of our main sample had never heard of Roberts. There were, moreover, some distinctive characteristics shared by those familiar with his work: women were more likely to have heard of his work than men; widely known among the over 60s, he scarcely registered with the under 25s; and familiarity increased consistently with level of education, peaking among those with postgraduate qualifications, and with middle-class identification. While Indigenous Australians approximated the general level of familiarity with Roberts exhibited

by our main sample, our boost samples of recent migrant communities told a different story, with only 13 per cent of Chinese Australians, 11 per cent of Lebanese Australians, and 8 per cent of Indian Australians recognising him.

These are not particularly surprising figures given the position that Roberts occupies within the Australian art field. Active in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, he occupies a nodal position within a number of Australian art history narratives. Although to-ing and fro-ing between Europe and Australia, he was one of the early representatives of an ‘antipodean perspective,’ particularly in his use of colour. He was commissioned to paint the opening of the first parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, and was also a key portraitist of significant national figures during the early years of Australia’s (relative) political independence from Britain (McQueen 1996). As a member of the Heidelberg school, he was an influential representative of the Australian *plein air* movement which, in its turn, was a significant incubator for Australian Impressionism. The combination of these considerations made him one of Australia’s most emblematic painters at a key moment in nation formation that was given its sharpest definition in the development of Australia’s White Australia policies. Roberts’ work, like that of the Heidelberg school more generally, resonated with this aspect of Federation in a number of ways. If the *plein air* movement took artists away from the city (but never too far away) and into the bush, it was a bush that was evacuated of any significant Aboriginal presence, just as its depictions of rural economies — heavily dependent on Aboriginal and Chinese labour — focused exclusively on white men.<sup>2</sup>

The other Australian artists in our survey were chosen in view of their equally distinctive, but different, positions within the history or current disposition of the Australian art field.<sup>3</sup> John Glover was one of Australia’s most important mid-nineteenth-century colonial artists. Primarily a landscapist, he brought a pastoral perspective, in the Constable tradition, to bear on the depiction of Australian scenes in ways that resonated with the increasing prominence of pastoralists in both Australia’s economic and political systems and in its arts patronage (Hoorn 2007). Albert Namatjira, active from the 1930s through to the late 1950s, was a water-colourist noted for his reworking of Western landscape traditions from an Aboriginal perspective, and for being the first Indigenous artist to achieve widespread recognition from the Australian art world.<sup>4</sup> Sidney Nolan and Margaret Preston are key representatives of Australian modernism during the mid-twentieth century, Nolan as a critic of earlier radical national traditions, drawing on motifs of desert nomadism as a potential source of aesthetic and political renewal of earlier white nativist positions, while Preston was the first modernist to find in Aboriginal art resources for a reworking of Australian national identities. Brett Whiteley belongs to a later period as one of Australia’s most significant post-war contemporary artists, strongly influenced by 1960s pop art and emerging postmodernist trends, while the work of Imants Tillers, Australian born but of Latvian parentage, explores the themes of migration, displacement and diaspora through a critical engagement with Australian landscape traditions. Ben Quilty represents a critical continuation of Australian contemporary art traditions, particularly in the field of portraiture, on the part of a later generation of painters acquiring national prominence in the early 21st century. Tracey Moffatt is a contemporary Indigenous film and video artist whose work also troubles essentialist interpretations of the category of Indigenous art. Ken Done, finally, is a successful commercial artist, noted for visually striking depictions of iconic Australian scenes, particularly Sydney harbour, but with little recognition from Australia’s main institutions of legitimation: the galleries of the various States, the National Gallery of Australia, and academic art history.

Our survey also explored tastes in relation to a number of international artists in view of the degree to which Australian art practices have been shaped by Euro-American art traditions, as well by the strong institutional relations between the Australian art field and, initially, European art fields centred on London and Paris, and, subsequently, the American art field centred on New York (Gardner 2011, Inglis 2011, Van den Bosch 2005).<sup>5</sup> We included Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt as widely-known foundational figures of European art traditions, and Caravaggio as a later Renaissance artist whose work, although ‘re-canonised’ in recent decades, is still less widely known. Monet and Van Gogh were selected as Impressionists and post-Impressionists with a formative influence on twentieth-century modernisms. We included Jackson Pollock as an American modernist whose work has a particular resonance in Australia in view of the controversies occasioned by the purchase of his *Blue Poles* for the National Gallery of Australia,<sup>6</sup> and Jeff Koons as an heir to the earlier traditions of American pop art whose work, like *Done’s*, is commercially very successful while also eliciting a greater degree of (somewhat grudging) recognition from official art institutions. Tracey Emin was included as a contentious contemporary feminist installation artist and Ai Weiwei as a contemporary Chinese political artist and activist. We also, alongside these named artists, asked our respondents which two art genres they liked most, and which two least, out of ten options. These options were complemented by questions exploring rates of visitation to art galleries, both in general and with regard to specific kinds of art galleries and events, the ownership of art items (art books, original drawings or paintings, and limited edition prints), and uses of the Internet for a range of purposes relating to the visual arts.

This is, then, a rich resource from which, following Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel’s (1991) path-breaking *The Love of Art*, to explore how the patterns regarding the love — or not — of art are organised in contemporary Australia. In doing so we also follow Bourdieu in pursuing the connections between tastes and the distribution of the capacities required to be *au fait* with the aesthetic codes that inform the appreciation of consecrated forms of art. One of the central aims of *The Love of Art* was to take issue with the the assumptions underlying André Malraux’s conception of cultural action: namely, Malraux’s view that free entry to art museums would make the world of art universally accessible. Policies regarding entry fees for art galleries have had a varied history in Australia. Currently, general entry to art galleries is free. There are, then, no economic barriers to participation in Australian art galleries; but, as we shall see, the differential patterns of involvement in the art field are shaped by the operation of powerful cultural barriers just as, among those who do manifest a love of art, there are significant social cleavages regarding the tastes for different kinds of art. We look first, though, at the relationships between the tastes for different kinds of art and artists and the patterns of art gallery visitation.

### **Mapping the internal economy of tastes**

Frequency of participation in art institutions varied from around 35 per cent of the main sample never visiting art galleries, through 35 per cent visiting about once a year, and 30 per cent visiting a few times a year, with 7 per cent going once a month or more. Of art events or institutions visited during the previous year, public art displays were the most popular at 54 per cent, with visits to regional and State galleries, each around 35 per cent, the next in line. Commercial galleries and museums of contemporary art came next at 29 per cent and 26 per cent respectively, with arts festivals and University galleries each close to 15 per cent. About

two thirds of the sample, however, had not taken part in any of the activities listed, with half of the sample also registering no use of the Internet to engage with artists or art institutions in any way, and a third not owning any art books, limited edition prints or original paintings or drawings.

With regard to genres, the most popular were landscapes at 52 per cent, followed by Aboriginal art at 26 per cent, portraits at 24 per cent, and modern art at 17 per cent.<sup>7</sup> Impressionism and Renaissance were in the middle of the table of positive tastes for art genres at around 15 per cent each, while abstract art, colonial art, pop art, and still lifes elicited the lowest positive responses ranging, in order, from 13 per cent down to 7 per cent. The pattern of least-liked genres was different, with abstract art, pop art, and modern art topping the list, respectively, at 40 per cent, 36 per cent and 18 per cent. Colonial art, Impressionism and still lifes were bundled closely together at around 15 per cent each, with Aboriginal art, portraits and Renaissance art also clustered at around the 10 per cent mark. Landscapes were the ‘least least-liked’ at only 7 per cent.

There are, of course, notorious difficulties associated with working with such ‘broad-banded’ genre categories as these in view both of the different interpretations that can be placed on them and of their manifold internal differentiations. However, while these are crucially important matters for art history, they are less so for our concerns here as the focus is on the ways in which these terms are mainly understood by our survey respondents. To explore these questions we looked at the relationships between most and least-liked genres to see if any general patterns informing the relationships between them could be detected. Table 1 presents the ratios expressing how much more those who liked the genres in the first column disliked the genres identified in the second column relative to the rest of the sample.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1: Relations between most-liked and least-liked genres**

<b>Genres most liked</b>	<b>Ratios for least-liked genres relative to the rest of the sample</b>
<i>Group 1</i>	
Landscape	Impressionism (1.94), Modern art (1.7), Pop art (1.69), Abstract art (1.65)
Portraits	Impressionism (1.84), Aboriginal art (1.59), Abstract art (1.46), Modern art (1.12), Pop art (1.02)
Renaissance art	Modern art (1.76), Aboriginal art (1.49), Pop art (1.38), Still lifes (1.15), Landscapes (1.1), Abstract art (1.01)
Colonial art	Pop art (1.59), Abstract art (1.38), Impressionism (1.29), Aboriginal art (1.17), Modern art (1.10)
Still lifes	Renaissance art (1.38), Aboriginal (1.34), Abstract art (1.22), Pop art (1.2), Modern art (1.19), Impressionism (1.13)
<i>Group 2</i>	
Abstract art	Landscapes (3.9), Portraits (2.82), Colonial art (2.4), Aboriginal art (2.01), Still lifes (1.9), Renaissance art (1.59)
Pop art	Landscapes (3.37), Colonial art (2.5), Renaissance art (2.1), Still lifes (1.81), Portrait s(1.45), Aboriginal art (1.25)
Modern art	Colonial art (3.0), Landscapes (2.7), Portraits (2.1), Renaissance art (1.97), Still lifes (1.46), Aboriginal art (1.12)
Aboriginal art	Portraits (1.63), Landscapes (1.27), Still lifes (1.25), Colonial art (1.14), Impressionism (1.09)
Impressionism	Colonial art (1.55), Still lifes (1.51), Landscapes (1.44), Portraits (1.41), Pop art (1.2), Aboriginal art (1.1), Modern art (1.08)

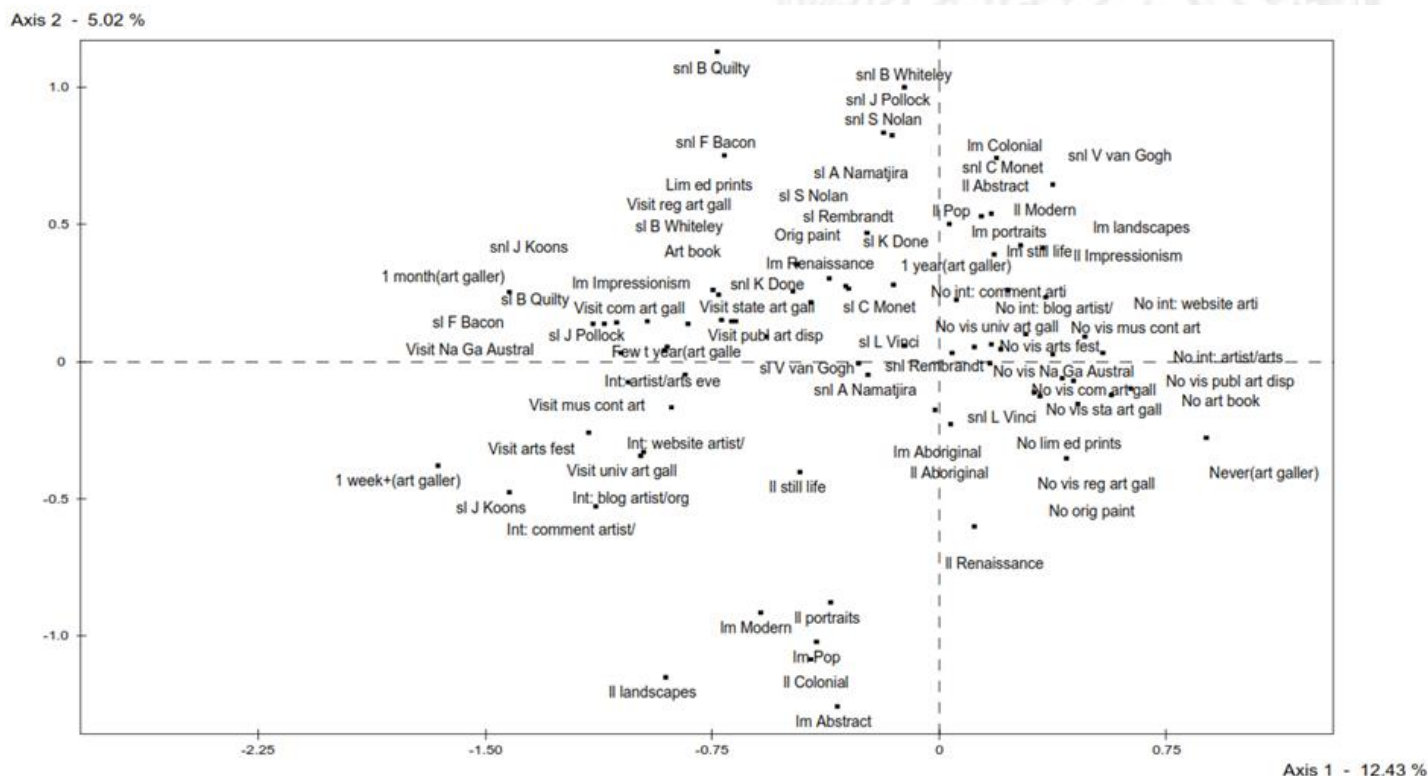
While the logics underlying these ratios are no doubt variable when probed more closely in relation to the aesthetic preferences of particular groups and individuals, it is notable that those in Group 1 are associated with positive preferences for genres which are mainly figurative in their associations. Group 2 cannot be as clearly defined. Although Impressionism, modern art and pop art are strongly non-figurative in their associations, they also include significant figurative practices. While the same is true for Aboriginal art, its predominant associations are also with abstract forms. It is, then, in this relative sense that Group 2 can be identified as comprising a set of tastes that cleaves towards a preference for non-figurative practices. There is, however, also a temporal logic informing the relations between the two Groups, the first including the historically defined genres of Renaissance and colonial art, while the genres comprising the second group are largely late-twentieth-century in origin. Viewed in this light, perhaps the most striking aspect of this table is the much greater sharpness of the dislikes for figurative and more traditional practices that is evident in Group 2 relative to the dislikes for genres in Group 1. The markedly high ratios of the dislikes for landscapes, portraits, and colonial art on the part of those who like abstract, pop, and modern art — 3.9 for landscapes on the part of those who like abstract art, for example — have no parallels in Group 1, where the highest ratio is that of 1.94 relating to a dislike of Impressionism on the part of those who prefer landscapes. We return to these considerations later in the light of the social dimensions informing these tastes, which are the issues that we turn to in the next section.

## **Tastes and participation: social dimensions**

We now explore both the social patterns of participation in the Australian art field and those informing the tastes for different genres and artists by means of the multiple correspondence analysis that we conducted on our data.<sup>9</sup> We shall not review the principles of this method here except to note, for the purpose of interpreting Figures 1 and 2, that each point on them is a spatial presentation of the statistical mean for all the members of the survey who shared a specific taste or practice in Figure 1 or social position in Figure 2. The background dots in Figure 3 constitute the sample ‘cloud of individuals’: that is, the positions that the individual members of the survey occupy in the social space produced by the combination of the horizontal and vertical axes. The distribution of the tastes and practices in Figure 1, and of social positions in Figure 2, thus represents the positioning relative to one another of the statistical nuclei for those members of the ‘cloud of individuals’ that they recruit.

The first point to note in relation to Figure 1 is that the differences that it registers are more significant with regard to the horizontal axis, which accounts for 12.43 per cent of the variation between practices that this graph plots compared to the 5.02 per cent accounted for by the vertical axis. We therefore look first at the differences that are laid out across this axis, reading from right to left. The extreme right of the graph offers a condensed visual summary of the third of the sample who take little or no part in the Australian art field. There are congregated here those who never go to art galleries, who did not visit any art institutions in the previous 12 months, who do not use the Internet for any purpose connected with the visual arts, and who own no art books, prints, or original paintings or drawings. The main organising principle of this axis is thus that of degree of participation in the art field. The positive tastes that are registered here are mainly for figurative genres — landscapes, colonial art, portraits and still lifes — but also include the more ambivalent category of Aboriginal art, while the genres least liked are Impressionism, modern, pop, and abstract art, and Renaissance art. No named artists are identified as having been seen and liked, with da Vinci, van Gogh, and Monet the only artists who had been seen and not liked.

Figure 1: The distribution of art tastes and practices



Looking to the middle of the space — defined, roughly, by a line running north to south from the label representing those who had seen and liked Ben Quilty at the top of the graph — we can see, first, indications of more active levels of participation in the art field, albeit of a distinctive kind. Art gallery visitation is registered at once a year, with a strong preference for State or regional galleries. These are the oldest art galleries in Australia, dating mostly from the late nineteenth century, and compared to museums of contemporary art — dating mostly from the 1990s — the balance of their activities is tilted more toward heritage functions (the maintenance and exhibition of an Australian canon) than to the promotion of contemporary art practice, albeit that this is rapidly changing. Art books, limited edition prints and original drawings or paintings are owned too, but the Internet is not used for any purpose. The genres most liked here tend mainly toward the non-figurative — modern, pop, and abstract art — but also include Renaissance art. The least-liked genres are still lifes, portraits, and Aboriginal art, although it should be noted here that ‘disliking’ and liking Aboriginal art are placed very close to one another within the graph reflecting, perhaps, some of the semantic ambiguity of the term. Artists seen and liked include Namatjira, Nolan, Rembrandt, Done, Monet, da Vinci, and van Gogh. Nolan, Done, and Namatjira also register among the least-liked artists, along with Quilty, Bacon, Whiteley, and Pollock. Dislikes for contemporary artists cluster toward the top of the graph; likes for figurative genres and ‘dislikes’ for non-figurative ones cluster toward the bottom of the graph. The organising principle of the vertical axis is thus that of more conservative tastes, in the north, compared to more contemporary tastes—for abstract and pop art, for example—in the south.

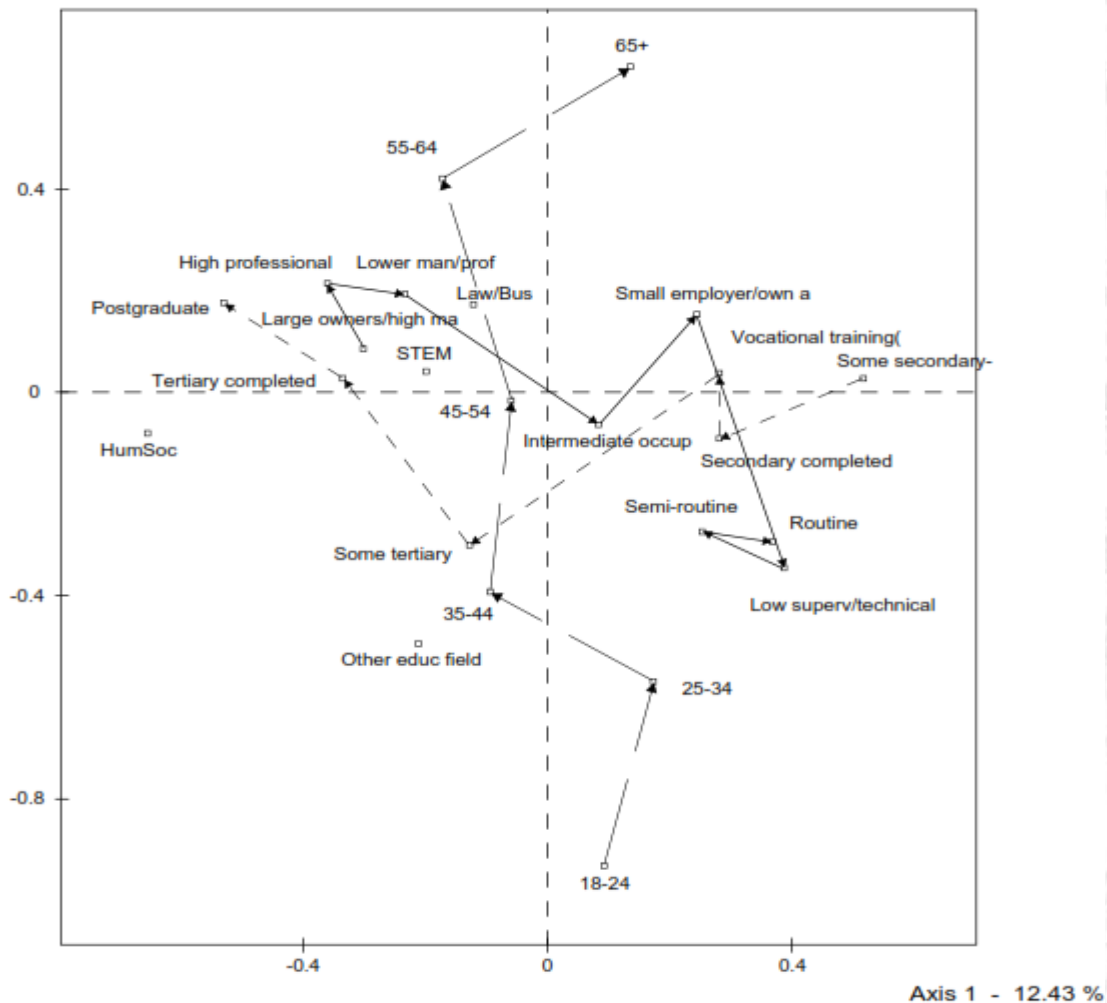


The degree of involvement in the art field increases dramatically to the left of this imaginary dividing line: rates of gallery visitation range from several times a year through once a month to weekly visits; the Internet is used for all of the purposes that we asked about; and gallery visitation here includes museums of contemporary art, commercial and university galleries, arts festivals, and the National Gallery of Australia — a balance tilted toward more recent institutions. All, apart from the last, are located in the bottom left quadrant of the graph, as are all the uses of the Internet. The genre that stands out as being most liked here is Impressionism: Whiteley, Quilty, Bacon and Pollock register as liked in the top left quadrant. Koons is disliked, but liked in the bottom left quadrant.

Figure 2 presents an overview of how this distribution of tastes and the degrees and kinds of participation in the art field correlate with a range of social position indicators. Level of education maps directly onto the right-left distribution of practices, running in a more-or-less straight line from lower levels of education on the right to those with tertiary and postgraduate qualifications on the left, but dipping in the middle to the south — where the younger members of the sample are located — for those with partially completed qualifications. With regard to those who have completed tertiary qualifications, those who studied humanities and social science subjects occupy the far left of the space, and with those who studied STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) and law and business subjects clustered more toward the centre. Occupational class follows a parallel trajectory, with routine, semi-routine and lower supervisory and technical workers occupying the lower right quadrant, small employers and own account workers and those working in intermediate occupations nudging more toward the middle of the graph, while the upper left quadrant is occupied mainly by lower managers and professionals, the owners of large enterprises and higher level managers, and, at the extreme left, higher level professionals. Although gender is not recorded here, it has its differentiating effects, albeit relatively muted. On the whole, it is the similarities between women's and men's art tastes and practices that are most striking. Women visit galleries more frequently than men at a ratio of roughly 1.3:1, and the ownership of art objects is more-or-less the same, except that women are more likely to own art books at a ratio of about 1.3:1. The greatest difference in genres most liked is for still lifes, which women are more likely to prefer, but registering more marked differences in their 'dislikes' for landscapes and colonial art at ratios of, respectively, around 1.6:1 and 1.3:1. Women are about twice as likely as men to like Margaret Preston, with marked preferences also for Quilty, Done and Roberts among Australian artists, and for Emin, Monet, and Koon — in that order — among international artists.

**Figure 2: The distribution of social positions**

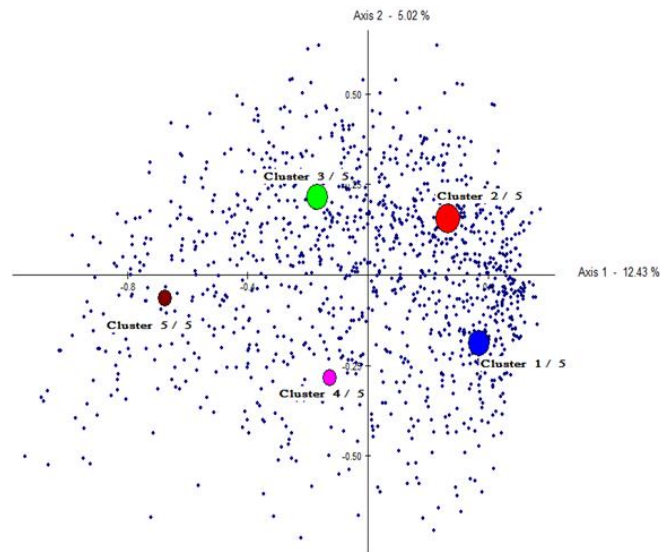
Axis 2 - 5.02 %



To summarise, then, the horizontal axis is defined chiefly in terms of degrees of participation which also correlate with differences in taste, with preferences for non-figurative and more contemporary genres increasing with level of participation. The strongest social connections link level of participation and non-figurative preferences to ascending class positions, higher levels of education, and, among the tertiary educated, to training in the humanities and social sciences relative to those in law, business, and the sciences. The vertical axis is also informed by a significant contrast between figurative and non-figurative preferences that is linked to variable levels of Internet usage and participation in different kinds of art institutions – differences that are mapped onto age differences with younger age groups preferring less traditional institutions and genres.

We now explore these patterns more closely by looking at a cluster analysis (Figure 3). This brings together, in each cluster, a range of taste, participation and social position indicators in view of the strength of their association with one another relative to the items defining the other clusters.

**Figure 3: Cluster analysis**



The most strongly defining feature of Cluster 1 (Table 2), comprising 23 per cent of the sample, is that of zero levels of participation in the Australian art field. The items showing the strongest association with this cluster are those comprising the first three columns, and in the order listed for each of those columns.<sup>10</sup> These are followed by social position indicators, again in the general order indicated, running from working-class identification, through secondary levels of education, young to early middle age groups and working-class positions. Expressions of taste for particular genres play a minor role in defining the cluster, and there is no discernible logic underlying them. No preferences for named artists are registered.

**Table 2: Cluster 1**

Visiting or not	Owning or not	Internet	Genres	Named artists	Social position
Never goes to art galleries; not visited a regional gallery, public art display, State gallery, commercial gallery, museum of contemporary art, NGA, art festival, or university art gallery.	Not own art book, original painting, or limited edition prints.	Not used for any purpose.	Like Renaissance art least; like Aboriginal art and abstract art most.	None.	Identify as working class; some secondary education (self and partner), don't know education levels of mother or father; 25-34, 18-24, & 35-44 year olds; lower supervisory, technical, routine and semi-routine occupations; male.

Cluster 2 (Table 3) is the largest (26 per cent), occupying the top-right quadrant, and is also characterised by low levels of participation in art institutions and practices, but expresses a wider range of tastes. These are also more consistent than those exhibited by Cluster 1: all of the genres and named artists liked cleave toward the figurative, all those ‘disliked’ pull in the other direction. This is a much older group, with marginally higher levels of education, recruited from the self-employed, own-account and intermediate occupations.

**Table 3: Cluster 2**

Visiting or not	Owning or not	Internet	Genres	Named artists	Social position
Not visited a museum of contemporary art, State art gallery, public art display, university gallery, festival, NGA, or regional gallery; never visit art gallery, visited only once a year.	Not own art book or limited editions prints.	Not use for any purpose.	Like most landscapes, colonial art; like least pop art, modern art, Impressionism.	Seen and not liked Van Gogh, Namatjira, Whiteley, Monet, Pollock, Nolan; seen and liked Rembrandt, & Done.	65+; secondary education, partial or completed, for self, partner, father and mother; vocational qualifications; small employer/own account worker, intermediate occupations.

The members of Cluster 3 (Table 4) accounting for about a quarter of the sample (23.2 per cent) occupy the upper-left quadrant, but close to the centre, and display much higher levels of participation in art institutions, going to art galleries frequently, and visiting a range of institutions in the last 12 months, with, however, museums of contemporary art and the NGA being the least frequented. There is ownership of all of the art items we asked about and an intermediate level of Internet usage. Tastes are mixed across the figurative/non-figurative and traditional/contemporary genres. Favourite artists also include a mix of traditional and contemporary, figurative and non-figurative, while dislikes tend more toward the contemporary and non-figurative. There is a clear shift in class location toward the lower management and professional occupations, and in class identification toward the middle classes. Levels of education are higher, with tertiary completion for both respondents and their partners, and a bias toward humanities and social science subjects.

**Table 4: Cluster 3**

Visiting or not	Owning or not	Internet	Genres	Named artists	Social position
Visited public art event, regional gallery, State gallery, museums of contemporary art, the NGA; visit art galleries a few times a year, or once a year.	Own art book; original paintings; limited edition prints.	Use Internet to access information about, and to visit websites of, artists or art institutions.	Like least pop, and abstract art; like most landscapes, Renaissance, Impressionism modern art, colonial art, portraits.	Seen and liked Natmatjira, Monet, Nolan, Roberts, da Vinci, Rembrandt, Whiteley, Van Gogh, Done, Glover, Quilty, & Caravaggio; seen and not liked Pollock, Whiteley, Bacon, Nolan, Done, Quilty, & Bacon.	Lower manager/professional; 55-64, 65+; identify as middle class; tertiary education completed, some secondary; partner completed tertiary; Humsoc.

Cluster 4 (Table 5) is the smallest (13.1 per cent), and also exhibits relatively high, albeit more selective, levels of participation in art institutions, with public art events, university galleries and museums of contemporary art high in its priorities. Ownership of art items is very limited, but Internet usage is high, encompassing all four types that we asked about – both qualities that are attributable to the relative youthfulness of this cluster. While there are not enough positive or negative preferences expressed for named artists to suggest a clear pattern, the genre preferences are more clear cut than those for Cluster 3: that is, for the modern, contemporary and non-figurative against traditional and figurative genres. Age is the key driver of social position here and, related to it, the relatively high levels of partial completion of tertiary studies, particularly in ‘non-aligned universities’: that is, a group of mainly metropolitan ‘second-tier’ universities which recruit significantly from lower socio-economic backgrounds and migrant communities.

**Table 5: Cluster 4**

Visiting or not	Owning or not	Internet	Genres	Named artists	Social position
Visited public art event, university galleries, museums of contemporary art; goes to art galleries once a year, or a few times a year.	No original painting, no limited edition prints	Use Internet to access artist website, read artist blog, find about artists/art events, to comment on artists.	Like most abstract, pop, & modern art; like least colonial, landscapes, still lifes, & Aboriginal art.	Seen and liked van Gogh & da Vinci	18-24, 35-44, 25-34; don't know partner's education, some tertiary, tertiary mother; non-aligned university.

Cluster 5 (Table 6), similar in size to the previous cluster (14.6 per cent), is distinguished not only by the intensity of arts participation across all the indicators, including weekly visitation of art galleries, but also by the distinctive hierarchy of participation represented by its high rates of use of commercial galleries (the only cluster to register these practices), museums of contemporary art, and arts festivals (again, the only cluster to register them). Genre preferences exhibit a clear non-figurative bias, but with a definite order of temporal succession: most strongly for Impressionism and modern art, less so for pop and abstract art. What most stands out, however, is the wide range of artists registered as seen and liked – nearly all those included in the questionnaire — with many artists, particularly women, falling into this category solely in this cluster: Preston, Moffatt, Emin, Tillers, and Ai Weiwei, for example. Dislikes are registered only in relation to artists with markedly popular reputations, notably Done and Koons. In terms of social position, this cluster is most marked by the very high levels of education of the respondents, their partners, and parents. Their bias is toward humanities and social science subjects and toward the ‘Group of Eight’ (elite) universities, with other universities following in the order of their hierarchical ranking in Australia. Class identifications are most distinctively with upper middle-class positions, and members of the cluster are mainly recruited from the higher occupational positions — owners of large enterprises, higher level managers and professionals. The predominant age group is 55-64, the age cohort associated with the high endpoint of most occupational trajectories.

**Table 7: Cluster 5**

Visiting or not	Owning or not	Internet	Genres	Named artists	Social position
Visited commercial galleries, museums of contemporary art, art festivals, State galleries, regional galleries, public art displays, university galleries, and the NGA; visit galleries a few times a year, once a month.	Own art books, limited edition prints, & original painting	Use Internet to find out about artist/ events, to access artist websites, to read artist blog, to comment on artists.	Like most Impressionism, modern, pop, & abstract art; like least landscapes, colonial art, & still lifes.	Seen and liked Pollock, Preston, Whiteley, Bacon, Caravaggio, Quilty, Monet, Koons, Moffatt, Van Gogh, Roberts, Ai Weiwei, Rembrandt, Glover, Emin, Tillers, Namatjira, Bacon, & da Vinci, Done; seen and not liked Done, & Koons.	Hum socsci; postgraduate self & partner, tertiary father & partner, postgraduate father, completed tertiary, postgraduate mother, tertiary mother; Group of Eight, innovative research university, technology network, non-aligned universities, regional universities; identify as upper middle class; large owners, higher managers/professionals & lower managers/professionals; 55-64.

**Aesthetic preferences, cultural capitals and art field dynamics**

Let’s go back for a moment to the issues that we raised at the start of the paper in relation to the NGA’s exhibition of Tom Roberts’ work. The comments prompted by the opinion piece that we contributed to *The Conversation* included a few which queried how much reliance could be placed on questions about art and taste administered via a telephone survey. One person asked:

Did the survey ask people whether particular paintings were familiar to them (e.g. showing them some) or just ask about an artist’s name? People can know a painting (or piece of music etc.) without having a clue who created it.

A second responded that, if shown them:

I could recognise the type of paintings from Mondrian, Klee, Pollock, Rembrandt, Whiteley, Picasso, Namatjira, Moffatt, Von Guerin, Constable, Roberts, McCubbin, and many, many others. But if quizzed via phone interview, I would draw mostly blanks.

And a third chipped in to the effect that, although unable to name him, many of the people surveyed would have been familiar with Roberts' work through its circulation on biscuit tins and jigsaw puzzles.

These are valid observations which echo a venerable tradition that has taken Bourdieu's work, and the studies that have followed in its wake, to task for substituting responses to questions about aesthetic categories for the combination of sensorial, affective and emotive responses that are elicited by seeing a work of art.<sup>11</sup> This point was well made in a fourth response, from an Indian-born Australian, who, having migrated to Australia with his parents, recorded his fondness for Roberts' *A Break Away* — an outback scene of sheep mustering — as embodying 'the appreciation from one who has loved ... the bush, since my parents migrated here — not that strange coming from one who spent his formative years in a multi-storeyed building in crowded Mumbai'. We can see, too, the limitations of questions framed in terms of genres given the different interpretations that are often placed on 'broad-banded' generic labels. It is clear, for example, that the category 'Aboriginal art' was interpreted differently, and unsurprisingly so given that, depending on the frame of reference, it might mean traditional Aboriginal art (often given an ethnographic rather than an aesthetic framing), the abstract forms of contemporary acrylic dot painting produced in remote Aboriginal communities, or more contemporary and urban political art traditions (Fisher 2012; McLean 2016). Account finally needs also to be taken of the fact that the boundaries limiting the art field are no longer quite so clearly drawn, particularly in Australia, where artists now increasingly exhibit in other types of museum (Barrett and Milner 2014).

Nonetheless, the light that our data throws on the relations between home, the education system, class position, and the acquisition of competencies pertinent to the art field — the big questions raised by Bourdieu's work — remains powerful. Reading across our five clusters, the general trends are clear: participation in institutions comprising the art field, and the confidence necessary to express judgements of taste within it, increase consistently with inherited cultural capital as evidenced by parental educational qualifications, the cultural capital acquired through the respondents' own level of education, and class position. Although entrance to Australia's art galleries is free, there are clearly — as recent qualitative studies have also shown (Ang 2015) — significant cultural barriers to socially equitable participation in the Australian art field.

The opposition between figurative and non-figurative, traditional and more contemporary art forms also plays a significant role, particularly in differentiating the tastes of the clusters in the right-hand of Figure 3 from those on the left. It is worth dwelling on this point a little in view of the now considerable body of work that has taken Bourdieu to task for an over-reliance on modernist conceptions of art in his account of the relationship between the principles informing post-Kantian and popular aesthetic judgement, the former focusing on the appreciation of form in contrast to popular investments in the content of artworks (Hanquinet, Roose and Savage 2014). While this is a just criticism, its purchase is greatest when brought to bear on the different aesthetic dispositions that are evident among different groups of active participants within art fields (Hanquinet 2013). For those who take little part in this field, the preference for figurative over non-figurative art forms is evident, as is an appreciation for earlier and more traditional art forms over those — both modern and contemporary — representing later stages in the dynamics of art fields.



These temporalities also inform the differences between the aesthetic dispositions of the clusters in the left-hand side of Figure 3. Cluster 3 is characterised by greater participation in heritage art institutions, as opposed to museums of contemporary art, than is true for the members of Cluster 4, and is the most conservative in its tastes, particularly in its dislike of abstract and pop art. While rated positively in both Clusters 4 and 5, these are more highly rated in the former relative to Impressionism and modern art than in the latter. This pattern reflects the age and relative social indeterminacy of Cluster 4 — the youngest of all the clusters and with the highest proportion of tertiary students with as-yet unclear occupational destinies. The significance of such age distinctions among active participants in art fields is now a common finding, sometimes interpreted as manifesting the force of ‘emerging’ forms of cultural capital which, as distinct from the more traditional forms of legitimate cultural capital, stress ‘postmodern’ values of irony, playfulness, or transgression over distanced detachment (Hanquinet, Roose and Savage 2014). Validated by tendencies in higher education that have called into question traditional aesthetic hierarchies, this new form of cultural capital circulates through a newer network of institutions, and is realised in the advantages — of a limited and specific kind — that it bestows in relation to occupations in new industrial sectors stressing the virtues of flexibility. It is worth noting in this regard the association of this Cluster with the non-aligned group of universities, as opposed to the strong association of Cluster 5 with the Group of Eight universities and more traditional markers of higher-class position. This finding suggests that, as in the UK (Savage et. al. 2015), increased access to higher education in Australia has served as a means of differentiating cultural capitals and, thereby, the organisation of new forms of social inequality. In the same vein, it is also likely that an analysis of the internal differentiations within Cluster 5 would reveal some significant cleavages of aesthetic disposition between different sections of the professional, management, and employer groups in view of the differential distribution of cultural relative to economic capital.<sup>12</sup>

However, rather than speculating further on these matters, we return, once again and finally, to Tom Roberts who, while included in the preferences for both Clusters 3 and 5, is accorded different positions within them. Placed much higher within the former, we can now see more clearly how a fondness for Roberts forms part of a distinctive set of positions in being most strongly associated with a ‘middling’ set of tastes on the part of older white Australians occupying high, but not the highest, class positions, and who see themselves as middle rather than upper middle or working class. All of which, we believe, confirms our initial scepticism as to whether Roberts was the choice for an exhibition intended to mark a significant, forward-looking and culturally inclusive moment in the NGA’s nation-building mission.

### **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to Tim Rowse for his detailed comments on an earlier version of this paper, which have been of real help to us in finalising it for publication.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The survey formed part of the project *Australian Cultural Fields: National and Transnational Dynamics*, funded by the Australian Research Council (DP140101970), and was conducted by Tony Bennett (Project Director), David Carter, Modesto Gayo, Michelle Kelly (Project Manager), Fred Myers, Greg Noble, David Rowe, Tim Rowse, Deborah Stevenson, Graeme Turner, and Emma Waterton. It was administered by the Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland in the first half of 2015 to a nationally representative main sample of 1,202 Australians, augmented by boost samples for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Italian, Lebanese, Chinese, and Indian Australians, to bring the overall total surveyed to 1,462. The discussion here focuses on the main sample.

<sup>2</sup> See, for assessments of the work of Roberts and that of the Heidelberg school more generally in making the bush habitable for a new generation of ‘white natives’, McLean (1998, 2011) and Thomas (1999). While Roberts’ oeuvre does include paintings of Aborigines, these are not typically in bush or rural labour settings. Rather, they are mostly in more distant locations — northern Queensland and the Torres Straits — and have more in common with contemporary anthropological ‘head-and-shoulder’ depictions of Aborigines as a ‘dying race’ than with earlier Australian art traditions (Hoorn 2007: 177; and Hoorn 2015).

<sup>3</sup> See (Grishin 2013) for a more detailed discussion of the position of these artists within the history of the Australian art field, and Bennett (2015a) for an account of the distinctive dynamics of the Australian art field.

<sup>4</sup> The initial art world reception of Namatjira’s work, however, was notoriously racial: his adaptation of European art traditions was imputed to a capacity for mimicry which simultaneously deprived his work of any distinctive Aboriginal progeny (see McLean 1998, 96-101 for further details).

<sup>5</sup> It should be added that Australian art practices have, from their very beginnings, also been inscribed in a wider set of transnational relations, particularly in Oceania (see Brunt et al. 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister Gough Whitlam intervened to secure the purchase of *Blue Poles* for the future NGA in the context of controversies concerning whether the gallery should be a gallery of national art or a national gallery of world art that would include Australian art of an equivalent standing (see Thomas 1999 and Van Den Bosch 2005 for details).

<sup>7</sup> All percentages are rounded up at 0.5 or above, and rounded down at 0.4 or below.

<sup>8</sup> The table only records the cases where the dislikes of those most liking the genre in question on the left are greater than those for the main sample. In order to calculate these ratios, we divided the percentages of the ‘dislikes’ for particular genres of those respondents who said that they most liked the genre in the first column by the percentage of the dislikes of those who did not include the genres identified in the first column among their most-liked genres. To take the first row as an example, 20 per cent of those who included landscapes

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among their most-liked genres identified Impressionism as one of their least-liked genres, while this was true for only 10.3 per cent of the respondents who did not indicate a strong liking for landscapes. The ratio of 1.94 is thus produced by dividing 20 by 10.3.

<sup>9</sup> Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) is a statistical technique within the factor analysis approach. It has been mainly designed to deal with categorical variables (nominal and ordinal ones). For readers who might want to go in-depth into this type of data analysis, Le Roux and Rouanet (2010) would be a good reference. Examples of its use can be consulted in Bennett et al. (2009) in chapter 3, which also provides details of the relevant methodological literature.

<sup>10</sup> The items in each column are arranged, first, in descending order of statistical significance for each category of response (for example, frequency of visiting or the type of institution visited in the last 12 months in column 1) and, then, within each category, in descending order of significance for each category. Categories are separated by semi-colons. Grouping all items belonging to the same category has entailed a reordering of the sequence produced by a purely item-by-item hierarchy of significance.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, chapter 9 of Rancière (2004).

<sup>12</sup> An analysis of earlier Australian data from the 1990s (Bennett, Bustamante and Frow 2013) suggests that higher level professionals are quite distinct from higher level managers and owners in these regards. These differences might also bear residues of the longer-term historical process through which the post-war period emergence of a managerial and professional middle class, dependent on new forms of cultural capital acquired through an expanded higher-education system, has challenged the anti-modernist ethos of Australia's earlier arts establishment associated with the economic and political ascendancy of the rural gentry formation of the pastoralist economy (Rowse 1987).

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