



Wilma Tabacco



Collection connections
Marion Borgelt
Strobe Series 6

Wilma Tabacco. *Cascade*, 2007. Oil on linen 152 x 122 cm. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2012. © Image courtesy and copyright of the artist.
[Themes/Subject/Style: Oil, Abstract]

Wilma Tabacco. Born in 1953. Lives and works in Melbourne.

The arrangement of flat, aubergine shapes against a depthless blue ground is ambiguous. The painting is suggestive of a moment in time, capturing the moment when something breaks apart or charting the moments as particles drift through space. The jagged forms might be shattered glass bursting from a broken windowpane; they could be premature storm clouds against a sunny sky or dead leaves floating on a still pond. Whatever they might be they are fractured things, lacking in wholeness, unstable and indeterminate.

The paintings of Wilma Tabacco continually explore territory like this; her abstract compositions are reminiscent of life's unexpected incidents, the chaotic effects of a world in perpetual motion. *Cascade* in particular recalls the chance collages of Jean Arp, art that was made by randomly dropping paper squares onto a paper support. Like Arp, Tabacco is fascinated with the human desire for control and the tension that arises from being in world that is largely uncontrollable.

Questions and activities

Wilma Tabacco *Cascade* 2007

Wilma Tabacco has said that her paintings "warp the space of the wall." Consider *Cascade* in situ, how does the painting interact with the architectural space around it? Does it transform the space and does it influence the way you feel within it?

Wilma Tabacco was influenced by American artist Frank Stella. Conduct a case study on Frank Stella to find out more about the characteristics of his art practice and conceptual ideology. Compare and contrast the paintings of Stella and Tabacco, why do you think Stella was an influence on Tabacco?

Research abstraction in modern Australian art history and find at least five other Australian artists who make abstract work. What are the key characteristics of their art making practices? What are the central aims of their works and how do they want their work to be experienced by a viewer?

Using acrylic paints, experiment with combining different colours into simple geometric patterns. Explore how different colour combinations affect your perception and emotions. Create a painting that uses two colours and one that uses multiple colours. Which painting is more effective and why?

Choose one shape in *Cascade* and experiment with using your body to create movement in response to that shape. Work in small groups to create an interpretive dance in response to the painting. Reflect on this activity and consider whether it has influenced your understanding of the work.