

# History Never Repeats – Inspiration Vs Self-Inspired

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Throughout history many new styles of art have been originally born and developed by different cultures and famous artists. From Renaissance to Impressionism, Fauvism to Cubism and even the “primitive” pictures of our distant ancestors the style of art has changed. The difference in the art styles is often very obvious but the more we move into the modern era the more art has evolved and conjoined with each other. But have all the styles of art been discovered and named or are modern day artists still creating pieces that are self-inspired? Self-Inspiration is defined as inspired by ones self. The self-inspiration is drawn from the experiences and emotional happenings in the artist’s life and this creates a painting are often similar to a listed ‘style’ but with a unique and modern flair which twists this style beyond its usual boundaries. In this article I will discuss the difference between two inspired art pieces and two art pieces that have an underlying self inspiration.

“Calm at Five Hills,” by Ralph Wilson is naturally a realism painting. Realism is an art style that was popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Realists paint ordinary objects, people and scenes as they appear in real life. The artist makes no attempt to dramatize the scene and only paints it as it truly is.

Calm at Five Hills is as the style depicts painted as real as possible. Everything is in perspective with detail critical. This piece has a real balance between the real dunes and the reflection in the water below. The bank line is along the halfway mark of the painting and helps to balance the picture into two perfectly painted sections.

Wilson is believed to have gained a lot of his inspiration from Arthur Boyd and the way in which he also balances his pictures with a line of reflection. Wilson wanted to portray the way the reflection of the landscape creates an air of contemplation and how it gives us a feeling of timelessness.

Art pieces that are self inspired need not mean they are a completely new style. It could also mean that the piece has inspiration from the painter’s life and/or emotions themselves.

“Between Us” by James Guppy is an interesting piece in the way it gives us a message about the people present in the painting. James Guppy considers himself a realist painter however he also incorporates collage and mixed media items. James Guppy paints many pictures that “indicate the chaos, mystery and silence at the heart of human relationships.”<sup>1</sup> “Between Us” is an excellent example of the way messages are portrayed through paintings. The message of this painting is that “there is no ease between partners anymore.”<sup>2</sup> The painting is a diptych of two canvases with a black and red painting of a horse featuring in the background of both canvases (the rear end on the left panel and the front end on the right). In the left hand panel a man is standing looking into the right hand panel at what appears to be his wife. His wife is sitting on a chair smoking a cigarette

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<sup>1</sup> Images 2, Contemporary Australian Art, Nevill Drury; Page 67, James Guppy, Artists Comment

<sup>2</sup> Images 2, Contemporary Australian Art, Nevill Drury; Page 67, James Guppy, Artists Comment

completely ignoring her husband. A small dog is painted half on one canvas and half on the other as if he is trapped between the pair. It appears that the man is in conflict with his wife through the way he stands in a stern manner and the he looks at his wife in a disapproving manner.

Inspiration can also come from styles as far back as the primitive works of early humans and also from aboriginal culture. “Beast in the Garden” by Karen Papacek is a triptych set up where each canvas is a separate painting. However each individual canvas is similar in the use of earthy colours and simplistic primitive style painting. The painting is difficult to interpret as its meaning appears different to some people. Papeck’s reason for painting this style of picture is to “invite the viewer to contemplate universal beliefs within the context of personal experience.”<sup>1</sup> Even though this painting contains a message as the painting in the previous paragraph “Between Us” does it is not considered Self-Inspired as the message in this painting is as it says more ‘universal’. A universal message means that the message is designed to be relevant to everyone worldwide and does not actually come from the painters own experiences and/or emotional incidents.

“Yellow Lilies” by Lin Onus is a beautiful piece that is a “natural convergence of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal techniques.”<sup>2</sup> The picture is one whole scene however it is split diagonally 13 times leaving a gap between each style. This gap is filled with the Aboriginal style version of that section of the lily painting. This dividing of the two styles depicts how Onus is between two styles and two societies. The scene of the lilies displays his connection with the land and its beauty. Onus painted the picture to depict how he felt trapped in a society that labeled him as someone who only paints using the traditional Aboriginal dot and line. Even though the message in the painting was drawn from Onus’ self-inspiration it contains a similarity to the feelings of other Aboriginals towards being segregated from the ways of the white society. This painting allows us to see society how Onus sees it...split apart.

I believe there are no more completely unique art styles to create however the idea of self inspiration is drawn from a message. Messages may however be evident in inspired paintings yet it is the nature of the message that labels the painting. A message that is drawn from the artist’s own experiences and/or emotions is self-inspired but messages from inspiration paintings are drawn from happenings to someone else say a war or child abuse in Africa. It does not matter as to whether the painting is inspired or self-inspired as the appeal of a painting is depicted by every brush stroke on the canvas.

#### Images 2, Contemporary Australian Art, Nevill Drury

- \* The World of Nature; Plate 5, “Calm At Five Hills” by Ralph Wilson
- \* Figures and Portraits; Plate 59, “Between Us” by James Guppy
- \* Figures and Portraits; Plate 74, “Beast in the Garden” by Karen Papacek
- \* Contemporary Aboriginal Paintings; Plate 283, “Yellow Lilies” by Lin Onus

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<sup>1</sup> Images 2, Contemporary Australian Art, Nevill Drury; Page 72, Karen Papecek

<sup>2</sup> Images 2, Contemporary Australian Art, Nevill Drury; Page 288, Lin Onus