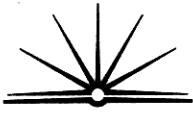


Q9

It is true that art reflects the values of a particular time and place. This is because values are embodied in various cultures, and art is both a product of culture while reinforcing, influencing and in effect, creating culture. The reflection of various cultural values is evident in the works of Albert Tucker, Jackson Pollock and Yasumasa Munimura.

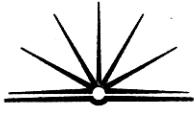
Tucker (1914-1999) was part of a group of <sup>Australian</sup> artists in the 1930s and 40s who were known as the "Angry Penguins" - the name of the magazine they contributed to. Tucker was, primarily, a social commentator rather than some of his more political contemporaries, reflecting in his artworks his values at the time; that societal standards had fallen resulting in moral corruption and decay. Tucker believed that society was being poisoned by lust and



The Great Depression  
greed as a result of World War Two, which  
had combined to form a situation of poverty  
and immorality.

These values are evident in his famous  
series, "Night Images" (1943). One painting  
of this series - "Victory Girls", portrays the  
confronting image of two men and women in  
a dark alleyway, the women encompassed  
tightly in the men's arms. The closed,  
cramped composition creates a sense of danger  
and a heavy, threatening atmosphere.

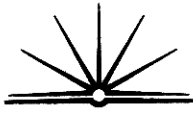
Enlarged hands are symbolic of the lust,  
dominance and greed of the groping men, and  
their predatory nature. Pig-like noses also  
portray this greed and foulness, while their <sup>American</sup> uniforms are erotic symbols of the times -  
American soldiers meant money and a good  
time. The girls' <sup>exposed</sup> breasts represent the absence  
of moral standards, their ribs the poverty  
of the times, and ~~exaggerated~~ exaggerated eyelashes



represent their naivety.

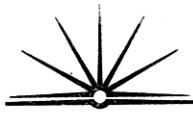
The red, crescent shapes of their lips, however, are the epitome of Tucker's use of symbolism, representing lust and moral decay. Tucker became obsessed with this symbol, and it appears in almost all the paintings of this series. For example, in painting number 11 of the series, a tram looms out of the darkness towards two disjointed women's torsos, illuminated by the garish light of a streetlamp. On these torsos are the red crescent shapes, and issues of violence, rape and the vulnerability of women are evident.

Tucker reflected the values of society in a way that was shocking and confronting to his audience, as he believed that he needed to be explicit in order to change societal attitudes and eroded values. This is achieved with his exaggeration of physical



features, as described in "Victory Girls", a childlike crudeness of style with thick, bold brushstrokes that enhanced the conceptual ugliness of his painting, and the front-on perspective that created an "in-your-face" quality to his works. Audiences at the time were certainly shocked and challenged - many reacted with anger and hostile criticism. As Tucker states, "We were totally rejected.... We were weirdos and utterly useless socially" (interview, 1998). However, he believed that art could influence social values through the explicit reflection of them, and continued to "present [himself] to the incessant waves of shock of the new world."

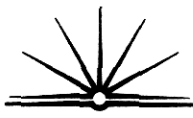
Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) was an American Abstract Expressionist who viewed his culture and its values as restrictive and inhibiting. Thus, he attempted to crush



social conventions through his practice in and resulting artworks.

Pollock's ~~style~~ abstract of painting was a self-developed style called "Action Painting". Influenced by the large scale Mexican Murals and practice of the Indian Sand Painters of the West, Pollock would stretch out a large canvas on the floor and apply paint "using sticks, trowels and knives". He guided paint using vigour and movement rather than the conventional brush, thus deliberately shattering artistic conventions is an attempt to shatter social conventions.

The end result was a tangle of seemingly haphazard lines and splashes, such as those seen in the famous painting, "Blue Poles" (1952), which is differentiated through regular blue intervals ~~and~~ of splashes along the canvas. Pollock, however, states



that "I can control the paint, there is no accident, just as there is no beginning and no end." His audience is left to interpret the meaning of the artworks for themselves, rather than using the traditional method of decoding the artist's intended message through a series of signs and symbols.

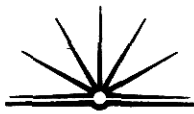
Thus, Pollock's artworks reflected what he saw to be <sup>the</sup> rigid rules of conformity at the time. It also reflected the age of rebellion in America and its search for a new identity. As art critic, Clement Greenberg states, "~~The paintings~~ reflect ~~the situation~~" with their imposing scale and visual impact, the paintings reflected the vibrancy and vitality of the times; big Cadillacs, jazz music and the actor, James Dean."

Yasumasa Morimura (1951 - ), born in Osaka, Japan and trained in photography, is a post-modern artist who raises issues of



consumer culture, globalisation/merging cultures and gender roles through his artworks. His artworks are an attempt to challenge, mock and question society and art, thus reflecting such contemporary values.

Monimura's primary technique is appropriation. This is evident in his artwork, "Blinded by the Light" (1991) - an appropriation of Pieter Bruegel's "Parable of the Blind" (1568). Based on the biblical story of the blind leading the blind to their death, Monimura depicts a more modern form of blindness - money, commodities (a fox skin) & consumerism (shopping bags) all lead the figures in his artwork to their death. Through appropriation, Monimura also challenges art history, and art conventions such as the notion of originality and preciousness. His use of non-traditional materials and techniques (computer scanning and photomontage technology) create a kitsch-like quality to his



work, thus eroding the distinction between "high" and "low" art.

By challenging societal values, particularly those of consumerism, Morimura also reflects the contemporary trend towards the challenging and questioning of traditions and conventions. His artwork not only reflects <sup>contemporary</sup> ~~the~~ social values, ~~of~~ but influences and creates them as his audiences are affected by his artworks.

As seen in the artworks of Tucker, Pollock and Morimura, all from different times and places, art plays a strong role in reflecting social values.