

ART HANDBOOK

To be used in conjunction with the Curriculum Exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery





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The purpose of this art handbook is to guide school learners through their Visual Arts syllabus in conjunction with the *Curriculum Exhibition* hosted by the Johannesburg Art Gallery. By using this art handbook, you will equip yourself with the knowledge to analyse and unpack any artwork. The intention is to develop critical art analysis skills and inspire a new generation of future artists.

The *Curriculum Exhibition* provides a connection to the artists and themes covered in the current Visual Arts syllabus. Learners are encouraged to view artworks from prominent African artists that they may recognise from their Visual Arts textbook. These artists explore a range of themes such as issues of land, migration, segregation, the affects of apartheid and an era of constitutional democracy on society. Learners will also be able to view contemporary artworks that speak to socio-political art and gender issues.

Through a series of dialogues with art facilitators and teachers, the Johannesburg Art Gallery set out to define what the learner's needs for art education are and how to bridge the gaps in the schooling system. The current Visual Arts syllabus was used as a focal point to find out what students, particularly high school learners, are immersed in during their academic year. By exhibiting artworks that can be found in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) textbook, a connection is created that allows the learner to see an artwork in real life in the hope that it will encourage a better understanding of the artwork.

The Curriculum Exhibition was documented and digitised via a virtual 3-dimensional exhibition. To view the Curriculum Exhibition online, please visit www.JAGvirtual.com

For further information regarding the *Curriculum Exhibition* you can call the Johannesburg Art Gallery telephone on **011 725 3130** or email your queries to the Johannesburg Art Gallery's Education Officer, Colin Groenewald, via **coling@joburg.org.za**

HOW TO ANALYSE AND UNDERSTAND AN ARTWORK

Use these pointers as a guide the next time you want to unpack an artwork.

- Look out for labels alongside the artwork. Take a closer look and see if there are any details that help you understand the work better. This will also give you an idea of when the work was created and help you understand its history.
- Give a description of what you see in the artwork. Try to separate any personal opinions about the artwork and focus solely on what you see in front of you. Where are your eyes drawn to first? What or who is the main subject of the work? Try to imagine you are describing the artwork to someone who has never seen the work before. Practice writing down your descriptions.
- Look at the technique(s) used in the artwork. The technique refers to how an artist employs the technical skill of art making. The technique is not the medium of the artwork. Take a look at how the paint is applied. Is it flat, textured or applied on thick? Pay attention to the era the artwork was created in because it will inform you of what techniques were implemented.
- What style is depicted in the artwork? Is it recognisable and if so, where do you recognise it from? The style will determine how an artwork is categorised into which movement in art history. Can you see people (figurative) or is it unrecognisable (abstract)? Are there strong geometric lines like the cubists? Is it surreal like a dream? Over time, an artist develops a style which the public will recognise.
- Do you notice any linework? Are the lines pointing in the direction of a focal point? Are the lines straight or curved? How do the lines work together or against each other?
- Are there any shapes within the artwork? Do the shapes look natural (organic) or man-made (geometric)? Focus on the form the shapes take. Is it 2-dimensional (flat) or 3-dimensional (sculptural)?

- What sense of space does this create? Look at the physical space of a 3D sculpture compared to the illusion of space created from perspective in a 2D artwork.
- Take note if the artwork has texture. How do you think the artwork would feel if you were allowed to touch it? Will it be smooth or rough? Does the medium of the artwork emphasise its texture? Does the artwork have a physical texture (tactile texture) or is the artist skilled in producing an implied texture? Is there a repetition of a pattern present in the work of art?
- The way the lightness and darkness exists in the work speaks to the tone of the artwork. The array of tonal values gives contrast which can lead your eye to a focal point. How does the amount of lightness and darkness make you feel (atmosphere)?
- Colour plays an important role in understanding an artwork. Is there one shade of a colour (monochromatic) or lots of different colours? Does the artist use darker shades or lighter tints of colours? Colours can convey different emotions so it is good to recognise how the use of colour makes you feel.
- The composition talks to the layout of the artwork as a whole. Notice where your eye is drawn to first. The artist has planned the artwork to draw you into viewing the work. Are there more than one focal points (triangular or square composition)? Does the composition balance the artwork in a symmetrical (equal) or asymmetrical (unequal) way?
- Lastly, the context plays an important role in understanding the meaning behind a work of art, the history of why it was created in the way that it was and assists in interpreting the message the artist is attempting to convey.

Refer back to these terms and questions to unpack the following artworks.

GERARD SEKOTO



Yellow Houses: A Street in Sophiatown, 1940, Oil on board, 50,8 x 74,5 cm Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery



Beyond the Gate, c.1940, Oil on Board, $30,5 \times 40,3 \text{ cm}$ Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

Jan Gerard Sekoto was born in 1913 in Botshabelo near Middelburg in the then-Transvaal. He decided to pursue a career in art and moved to Sophiatown in Johannesburg in 1938. In 1940, he painted the iconic Yellow Houses: A Street in Sophiatown. Sophiatown was the epitome of township existence and a major source of inspiration for Sekoto's social realistic expressions. Sekoto spent some time in Senegal in which his experience had a direct influence on his body of work. In 1947, Sekoto went into voluntary exile in Paris due to the harsh realities that people of colour endured during apartheid. Sekoto died in 1993 in Paris.

Gerard Sekoto was one of the first black artists to receive professional recognition in South Africa and is considered to be the father figure of contemporary black art. His emotive use of colour and truthful local scenes of everyday life depicted the harsh socio-political and economic realities in South Africa. His work was termed as social realism because of its realistic depiction of contemporary life, as a means of social or political comment.

Yellow Houses: A Street in Sophiatown holds specific importance to the Johannesburg Art Gallery because, in 1940, it was the first painting by a black South African artist to be bought for the Johannesburg Art Gallery collection marking a shift towards an inclusive Pan-African museum collection.

What do the vivid colours in Sekoto's work make you feel? Why was Sekoto's work called social realism?

HELEN SEBIDI

Mmakgabo Mmapula Mmankgato Helen Sebidi was born in 1943 in the village of Marapyane (near Skilpadfontein) in the vicinity of Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria. Sebidi inherited her indigenous knowledge and artistic principles from her grandmother such as her technique of layering thick colourful paint similar to making hut walls with mud and cow dung. Sebidi works predominantly in pastel, acrylic and oil paint and has developed a distinctive style by making use of vibrant juxtaposed colour on rough surfaces depicting abstract figures in distorted perspectives as well as animals and dream-like images used to communicate spiritual messages from the ancestral realm. Her work can be seen as



 $\it Modern \ Marriage, 1988-89$, Oil on Canvas, 183,7 x 267,2 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

abstract expressionism, often employing pointillism as well as cubism by fragmenting and merging different faces and bodies together as one.

Sebidi's creative language is part self-taught and part western training. Sebidi was mentored by John Koenakeefe Mohl who encouraged her to channel her artistic abilities and assisted her with understanding Western illusions. Mohl also introduced her to using oil paint as a medium of choice and worked onto Masonite as a support structure.

Sebidi's narrative artworks refer to the nature of story-telling which she was exposed to while growing up in a community that appreciated visual and verbal expression, music and dance. Loss of tradition and a need to reconnect with the ancestors plays a vital role in understanding the meaning behind her work. In most of her work, she depicts the human experience, with a focus on the lives of black people, particularly black women, and their experiences during apartheid. Sebidi's work expresses the conflict between the past and present, rural and urban life as well as societal structures between men and women.

Take a look at the multitude of colours present in Sebidi's work. What does each colour remind you of? How many people and how many animals can you identify?

WILLIE BESTER



Willie Bester was born in Montagu, Western Cape in 1956. He believes that art is an instrument for social change, and the representation of oppression can awaken a political responsibility within the viewer. Through his work, he expresses his anger at the violent, dehumanising apartheid system of racial classification.

In his work 1948, he uses different materials and techniques that communicate the 'texture' of the township. The title, 1948, refers to the year in which the National Party was voted into power in South Africa, marking the start of the apartheid era. A bible is bound in barbed wire and is surrounded by images of state violence. The bench is a cruel reminder of 'whites only' signage found during an era of segregation under the apartheid regime. Willie Bester's art is art of both protest and resistance and exposes the human condition decades after the country's democracy.

He uses found objects and reimagines them into another context. The objects often hold symbolic value. This technique of repurposing found objects into something new, similar to a collage on paper, is called assemblage.

Take a closer look at 1948 and write down what you see. What textures do you notice? Can you see the rhythm and repetition in the artwork?

NORMAN CATHERINE

Norman Catherine was born in East London in 1949. He uses satire and dark humour to speak about the complex histories of South Africa and the brutalised society from the results of oppression. Often using animals, or rather beasts, his work personifies the foundation of the South African experience.

Intensive Care is a grim look into the sickness of the apartheid state, depicting a caricature of a man bound to a hospital bed surrounded by barbed wire. A circular saw cutting towards the patient in the bed gives an immediate feeling of danger. The harsh etchings in black and white linework also adds a feeling of unease. Take note of the mark-making used to create the work - do you think this adds to the atmosphere?

In the work *In Sheep's Clothing*, a muzzled wolf is dressed in a suit and tie with bright and brash colours that are



In Sheep's Clothing (Front and Back), 1998/99, Oil on fibreglass, metal, 245 x 118 x 20 cm Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

painted in a cartoon style that illustrates the artist's dark humour and nightmarish forms. The wolf has a stark and powerfully iconic quality, its larger-than-life scale, exaggerated and distorted gestures and slashed side is both humorous and strangely unsettling. The title informs us that the character appears harmless but inside he has evil intentions (like a wolf in sheep's clothing). This is emphasised by the large saw behind his back which you do not see at first glance.

Can you elaborate more on the texture of the clothing as well as the different materials used in the work? What do you think is implied that the wolf is wearing a muzzle over his mouth?

JOHN MUAFANGEJO

John Ndavasia Muafangejo (1943 - 1987) was born at Etunda lo Nghadi within the Kuanyama tribe North of the Namibian border in Angola. It is important to note that during colonial rule when borders were drawn up in an arbitrary fashion, the northern border of what is today Namibia divided the Kuanyama tribe.¹ Muafangejo trained at the Evangelical Lutheran Church Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift in Natal from 1967 to 1969. Art centres such as Rorke's Drift, Polly Street and Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) were established because of the need to provide black artists with training that was not made available in the Bantu Education system.



Untitled (descriptive title: Men are Working in Town), 1981, Linocut, 59,5 x 41,9 cm Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

Muafangejo preferred the linocut medium for his bold delineation and repeating rhythms. His work always retains looseness and a quality of free-form movement and is almost exclusively autobiographical relating closely to his own life. *In The Battle for Rorke's Drift* (1981), Muafangejo re-examines aspects of the political history of South Africa. This battle followed that of Isandhlwana and was the result of two Zulu amabutho (regiments), whose men were disappointed that they were not being involved in the former battle, crossing into Natal and attacking the border post.²

Muafangejo's decorative linocuts blend his reminiscences of past events and traditional lifestyle with Christian iconography and topical socio-political comment. His social-political comments are not expressed in realistic images but rather in descriptive storyboards. He was also the first black South African artist to have a solo exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1987.



The Battle of Rorke's Drift (descriptive title), 1981, Linocut, 60,8 x 85,9 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

What makes John Muafangejo's work recognizable? Can you differentiate which men have been wounded in The Battle for Rorke's Drift?

¹Cole, C (1993) John N Muafangejo 1943 - 1987 A perspective on his Lino-cuts with special reference to the University of Bophuthatswana Print Collection [Masters in Fine Art, Rhodes University] Accessed online at https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/145055104.pdf on 30 April 2021

² Werth, A & Harmsen, F, *Our art 4 ons kuns (1993:192)* Pretoria: Foundation for Education, Science and Technology – with the financial assistance of the Foundation for the Creative Arts

DAVID KOLOANE



Mgodoyi Series 1, 1993, Lithograph, 67 x 86 cm Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery



Brazier and Dog, 2007-8, Mixed Media on Paper, 87,5 x 200 cm Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

David Nthubu Koloane (1938 – 2019) was born in the township of Alexandra, Johannesburg and received his art training at the Bill Ainslie Studios, which late became the Johannesburg Art Foundation, in Johannesburg from 1974 - 77 which led him to establish the Thupelo Art Workshop Project in 1985. His immense passion for the arts saw him become the head of Fine Arts at the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) arts school in Johannesburg from 1982 – 83 and thereafter the curator of FUBA arts school from 1986 - 1988. He saw the need for artist studios specifically for black artists and was instrumental in co-founding The Bag Factory (formerly the Fordsburg Artist Studios) in 1991.³

Koloane's highly expressive mark-making explores questions about political injustices and human rights violations. His frantic cityscapes manage to capture the busy inner city street life, traffic jams, migration of pedestrians and refugees. His work can be seen to reflect the socio-political landscape of South Africa both past and present, created by the apartheid system. He believes that the human figure has become the icon of creative expression.

South Africa held its first democratic election in 1994 and Koloane's *Mgodoyi* series follows his thoughts around the peaceful handover of power at the turn of democracy. The term Mgodoyi is an offensive Zulu term for a man that behaves like a mongrel. In many of his works, you will see a symbol of a dog which can be read as an aggressive symbol. The dog also becomes a metaphor for how black people were treated during the apartheid period

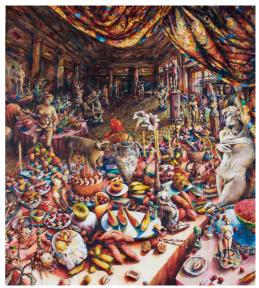
Describe the emotions behind David Koloane's expressive mark-making? What does Koloane's mark-making make you think of? What feeling does the colour of his work invoke?

³ David Koloane biography in Burnett, R (1995) Persons and Pictures: *The Modernist Eye in Africa (exhibition catalogue)* Johannesburg: Newtown Galleries

PENNY SIOPIS

Penelope Ann Siopis was born in 1953 in Vryburg in the Northern Cape. Her work contains an incredible sense of depth by layering various materials such as wet paint, glue ink and oil that often feels like it spills off of the canvas. Often her use of medium can be quite unpredictable in how the finished artwork will turn out.

It is important to note that Penny Siopis painted *Melancholia* in 1986, at the height of civil unrest in South Africa. *Melancholia* is a comment on the excesses of historic and contemporary colonialism. The work reveals a slow urgency to the scene with hourglasses, shadows and different light sources from the windows. Symbols of time are also referenced with the birthday cake, candles, flowers and food which is waiting to be eaten but by whom? Tables are full of food that threaten to buckle under the burden of luxury. This can be seen as a metaphor for society's values. Siopis also includes many art historical references such



Melancholia, 1986, Oil on Canvas, 197,5 x 175,5 cm Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

as Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia*, Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, and Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* as well as references to traditional 17th century Dutch still life paintings. The artist herself can be found looking back at you through a mirror within the painting, asking the question about representation. Who is viewing the artwork – the artist herself or you as the viewer?

The colours in *Melancholia* are extremely vibrant and the paint is layered on particularly thick in the bottom left corner via an impasto technique. Contrast is emphasised in the thickness of the paint and in the warm and cold colours of the painting. Colour modulation has been used to artificially create contrast and shading to make the bright colours stand out. In this work, different levels of engagement are encouraged and almost every object carries a symbolic meaning that can be decoded.

Given the context of the artwork and when it was created, what do you think each object symbolises? Can you find the artist in the painting?

MARY SIBANDE



l Put a Spell on Me, 2009, Digital print on cotton rag matte paper, 104.5 × 69.5 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery



They Don't Make Them Like They Used To, 2008, Digital print on cotton rag matte paper, 104.5 × 69.5 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art *Gallery*

Mary Sibande was born in 1982 in Barberton in Mpumalanga. Her work challenges the notions of oppression and explores the construction of identity in a post-colonial South African context.

Her body of work revolves around Sophie, an alter ego made in her likeness, that communicates a different perspective of the role of the domestic worker, one of the largest professions in South Africa. It is through Sophie that Mary Sibande can voice the challenges and stereotypes associated with the role of the domestic worker. Sophie's dress is important in giving meaning to the entire body of work. The blue colour of the fabric references royalty along with the Victorian-era style of the clothes. Mary Sibande's costumes also refer to religious regalia worn by certain African churches. The blue of the dress could also speak to the clothing a domestic worker would wear (or blue collar worker). This dress references the colonial past and along with it, the history of apartheid.

In her work *They Don't Make Them Like They Used To*, we see Sophie knitting a superhero outfit, possibly for herself? The work poses the question about enforced gender dynamics and the stereotypical idea of men being the saviour. Who is it that needs saving? Does Sophie knit the superhero cape for all the unsung heroes (women or domestic workers) who often work for everyone?

What do you think the titles of Mary Sibande's works mean? Can you identify the subject matter of her artworks?

NANDIPHA MNTAMBO





Balandzeli, 2004, Cowhide, resin and wax cord, 137 x 360 x 70 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

Praça de Touros III, 2008, Pigment print, 111 x 166 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery

Nandipha Mntambo was born in 1982 in Mbabane in Swaziland. Mntambo's work focuses on the human female body using natural organic materials. Further themes that are explored in her work include gender roles, body politics and identity.

In her work *Praça de Touros, III*, Nandipha Mntambo is dressed as a bullfighter (a matador) whose role is typically given to a man. Mntambo is subverting questions of masculinity and femininity and the stereotypes that are far too often associated with gender. Mntambo performs in a stadium where an audience would sit but the seats remain empty. By performing, she is creating a spectacle involving an audience, much like in most sports. However, there is no audience in this artwork as she is alone in the arena. Mntambo eliminates the relentless male gaze where men objectify women. The absence of an audience questions women's invisibility in society.

Similar to *Praça de Touros, III*, Nandipha Mntambo wears cow hide, a signature material used in her work, in another work titled *Balandzeli*. The use of cowhide can be seen to have significant meaning in the context of South Africa. The cow hide is treated to hold the shape of the feminine form. The work talks to the commodification of the female body in today's society.

What does the composition tell you about the work? Do you think there is significance to the colour red in this work? If yes, what do you think the colour red represents?

NICHOLAS HLOBO

Nicholas Hlobo was born in 1975 in Cape Town. Whilst his work uses various mediums such as paper and thread, his work has evolved towards larger scale sculptures that use inner tubing and other found materials. His works are always titled in his native tongue, isiXhosa, and include a proverb or idiom (by presenting a figurative non-literal meaning attached to a phrase). Drawing on his isiXhosa culture and heritage, and his life as a black person in postapartheid South Africa, Hlobo is concerned with gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity and anything people find embarrassing in society. He is particularly concerned with prejudice against homosexuality in black society, as well as sex education, HIV/AIDS and the blurring the division between masculine and feminine.

In his sculpture (and performance) *Igqirha Lendlela*, Hlobo explores the idea of freedom in South Africa. The title is taken from a Xhosa choral song, *Igqirha Lendlela*



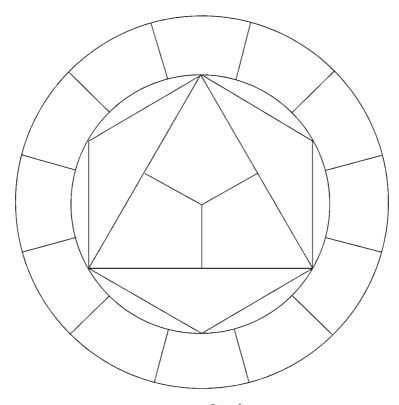
<code>Igqirha Lendlela, 2005, Leather jacket, rubber inner tube, ribbon, blouse, bust, 170 x 60 x 62 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery</code>

nguqongqothwane, which roughly translates to 'the dung beetle is the doctor of the road'. The artist is intrigued by the dung beetle's courage to roll dung backwards with its hind legs. This speaks to the intelligence of knowing where you came from. The song echoes this metaphor by saying those who are enlightened know the way forward.

On the back of the sculpture sits a big, unusual lump stitched together with inner tubing onto a jacket. The jacket includes both masculine elements (leather) and feminine traits (lace). The growth on the back of the jacket references the heavy baggage that we carry as South Africans. Despite all the hardships, we still find the strength to move forward.

Being a 3-dimensional sculpture, can you imagine walking around the artwork to see all sides of the artwork? What do you think Hlobo's use of materials represent?

ACTIVITY: BASIC COLOUR THEORY EXERCISE



Step one

In the centre triangle, paint the three primary colours (red, blue, & yellow)

Step two

Mix your primary colours together to get your secondary colours and paint the resulting colour in the hexagon just outside the first triangle.

(E.g. Blue + Yellow = ?, Yellow + Red = ?, Red + Blue = ?)

Step three

In the outer circle is where you will mix your tertiary colours. Paint your primary and secondary colours where each triangle touches the outer circle. In the empty gaps between, mix your corresponding primary and secondary colours together to get your tertiary colours.

The outer circle is your basic colour chart.

Additional exercise

Mix a little bit of white paint to change the tint of the colour, Similarly, Mix a little bit of black paint to change the shade of the colour.

Analogous colours remain together on half your colour wheel. Complementary colours sit opposite each other on the colour wheel.

ACTIVITY: POTATO PRINT

For this activity you will need these materials

- Paper or fabric
- Potatoes
- Acrylic paint or fabric paint
- Palette to mix paints on
- Craft knife
- Permanent marker



STEP ONE

Cut the potatoes in half, be careful with all sharp blades. Once halved, pat off the potatoes until they are dry. Use a permanent marker to draw interesting shapes. Be experimental in your pattern making.



STEP TWO

Using the craft knife, carefully carve away the parts of the potato that aren't marked to create a relief print. The raised surface will hold paint and the cut-away area won't. Think about which parts you want raised in order to hold the ink to create your pattern successfully.





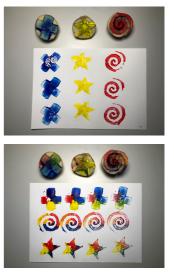
STEP THREE

Dip the potato face down into the paint and place it on your paper to create a stamp effect. Remember the first stamp can get messy depending on how much paint you use. Repeat the process to create a repetition of prints in any desired pattern you want.

Use different colour combinations to create different effects. Remember to experiment to find your style. You can use the finished paper to cover books or frame your artwork to hang in your room.



Trevor Coleman, Hot-dog-Jungle jazz, 1977, Acrylic on Canvas, 92 x 127,2 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery



ACTIVITY: CARDBOARD CHARACTER

For this activity you will need these materials

- Different colour cardboard or paper
- A pencil or a pen
- Glue stick
- Scissors





STEP ONE

Using your imagination, think about a character you want to bring to life. Using a pencil or pen, draw different elements of the character on different colours of cardboard. Think of each colour as a separate layer. Experiment with complementary or contrasting colours.



STEP TWO

Cut out each element with a pair of scissors.



STEP THREE

Paste each element of your character together using the glue stick until all your characters elements are placed together.

Let your imagination run wild, there are no limits. Try giving an emotion to your character to make it more expressive. You can also add markers or paint to bring your character to life.



Norman Catherine, *The Meeting (detail)*, 1988, Mixed Media: tin, paint, found objects, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery



ACTIVITY: ASSEMBLAGE

An assemblage in art is created by placing found objects together to create something entirely different.

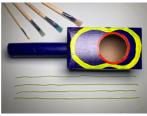
For this activity you will need these materials

- A cardboard box (e.g. a cereal box or a milk carton)
 - A cardboard cylinder (you can use the inside of a paper towels or the inside of toilet roll)
- Acrylic paint
- Paintbrushes
- Palette to mix paints on
- String or wool
 - Permanent marker or pencil
- Scissors
- 👌 Glue



STEP ONE

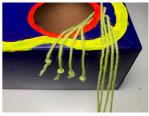
Trace a circle out of the side and the top of the cardboard box with your permanent marker and cut it out using your scissors. Using the glue, stick down the cardboard cylinder into the hole so it remains secure. Draw four holes below the large circle and four corresponding holes at the top of the cardboard cylinder and pierce them with a pencil (these will be used later for your guitar strings).



STEP TWO

Decorate the box with your paint. Use interesting patterns that embody your personality. Mix your paints to achieve multiple colours. Remember it is your work of art. Next, cut out four equal pieces of string.



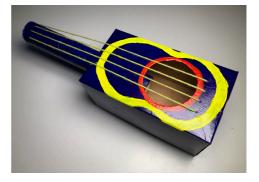


STEP THREE

Thread the strings, one by one, through the small holes you created in step one. Take your time and ask a friend for help if you need assistance. Tie a knot in the string so it doesn't come loose. Tie a second knot to secure it. Repeat the process with the top of the cardboard cylinder. You can use tape to secure it if you need.



Willie Bester, *Transition (detail)*, 1991, Collage; Paint, mixed objects, assemblage on board, 86 x 225 cm, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery



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Norman Catherine, The Meeting (detail), 1988, Mixed Media: tin, paint, found objects, Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery