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# Understanding Standards

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**Support pack for National course assessment**

**C805 77**

**Art and Design (Advanced Higher):  
Expressive Portfolio evidence**

**Identifier:** Shapes from the city

**This pack contains candidate evidence.  
It must be kept securely.**

This edition: October 2019

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**Please note:**

The materials in this pack were used as part of the (subject) Understanding Standards event in (September 2019).

# Overview

## Purpose

Understanding Standards packs are intended to provide teachers, lecturers and assessors with a clear understanding of the marks that have been awarded to specific examples of candidate evidence and the reasons why these have been awarded. They may be used in centres:

- ◆ to prepare for the assessment of the relevant course component
- ◆ as benchmarks to help assessors judge the evidence produced by their own candidates
- ◆ for training purposes

The commentary and candidate evidence should be read in conjunction with the relevant coursework assessment task and the marking instructions.

# Candidate evidence – contextual analysis

Further expressive portfolio evidence for this candidate can be found here:

<https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/ArtandDesign/AdvancedHigher/ExpressivePortfolio>

# **Advanced Higher Expressive: Contextual Analysis**



**Glendale by William Wray  
Abstraction in the City**

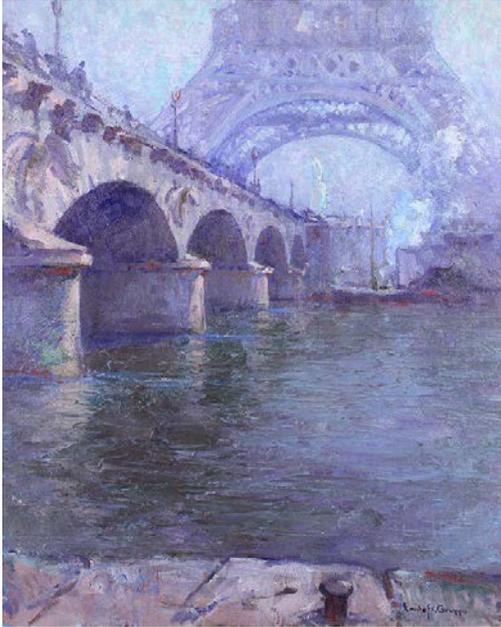


William Wray is a painter, animator and cartoonist who was born in 1956. He has been recognised for his regional landscape paintings based on buildings and structures in the state of California, where he grew up.

William Wray was heavily influenced by the art and architecture of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and has spent most of his life studying artists and paintings of that era. He has said of his urban landscape paintings 'I love the idea of capturing what's left of a bygone era; recording it before it's gone.'

This style can be seen in many of his paintings where he uses a lot of landscape, especially urban, and a very abstract style with occasionally bright colours creeping through between a dull or dark colour. He has been heavily influenced by the energy of abstract expressionism, which can be seen in the visible brush marks and the careless drips of paint left to trickle down the canvas and form part of the painting.

It is clear from his paintings that Wray was a big fan of the area in which he grew up. He regularly uses landscapes from the state of California and loves the architecture of buildings in that area. The buildings and structures in the state are quickly becoming redundant and abandoned which has obviously had a huge impact on Wray. He doesn't like seeing these buildings being left to rot and it can be very clear at times this message being shown to us. The use of dark and dull colours depicts this idea of rot, decay and redundancy excellently. Wray is very passionate about the things he paints, which is why they are executed so well.



A main influence for William Wray is, American painter Emile Gruppe, who worked in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is clear that Wray took some direct influence from Gruppe. The painting, River Seine Pont d'Iena and Eiffel Tower showcases the many influences Wray has taken from Gruppe. Both painters use a quick and snappy brushstroke in their paintings, with a large variety of different colours. This helps the paintings to be incredibly detailed where needed and allows other areas to be more abstract. Some areas of each painting have a slight distortion added to them; this perfectly shows the influence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century style used by William Wray as expressionism was extremely popular during this time.

River Seine Pont d'Iena and Eiffel Tower  
by Emile Gruppe

The more you investigate William Wray, the more you realise just how much he was influenced by the 1900s, the landscapes, the textures, styles all come into play in his paintings and it is truly wonderful how much he appreciates this century.



'The

Harbour at Hornfleur' (1940) Edward Seago

Another large influence was the English artist, Edward Seago. Seago is another landscape artist who uses a similar style to Wray, using quick brushstrokes and large amounts of colour. The main areas I have noticed with the influence of Seago on Wray is the way both paint buildings using a limited colour palette, which gives a hazy, serene look at feel.



I can also see a real similarity with the seascapes of JMW Turner. Turner's seascape colours and brushstrokes are similar to Wray's which suggests he was a direct influence on Wray.

Seascape with Storm Coming (1840) by JWM Turner



From Williamsburg Bridge (1928)  
by Edward Hopper

There also seems to be a similarity with the subject matter of Edward Hopper as both seem to use lonesome figures or buildings within their works.



From Ray's Kitchen Window, Near Union Square (2008) by Stuart Shils

Wray says that the contemporary American artists, Stuart Shils has also been a major influence on his work, and both seem to paint similar scenes using an abstracted style.



Glendale (2014) by William Wray

The colours used in Wray's painting Glendale piece are brilliant; the dark overcast colours for the background contrast excellently with the very bright shine on the front of the large building. This allows the building to stand out and is the first thing you see when you first see this painting. What could be a rather boring scene is instantly lightened up just by using a few more colours and this really caught my attention. The underlayer of orange is frequently present in Wray's work. Orange has strong connotations to sunshine and happiness, which makes a lot of sense as it helps stand out from the darker colours used in Wray's work. It also directly links to the use of the sunshine hitting the front of the building in this painting. The use of colour reminds me of Turner's work, in particular Westminster Sunset (1800).



Westminster Sunset (1800)  
by JWM Turner

There is an incredible amount of detail that can be seen in sections of the painting, contrasting with the loose application of paint in the background. Attention is clearly meant to be drawn to the areas where Wray has taken a more detailed approach and the more rapidly painted style used for the sky is much more vague. There is an unfinished, immediacy to the work which reminds me of the impressionist style of outdoor painting, trying to capture light changing and objects moving. The cars, even though they are not the focal point, are incredibly detailed and life like. This expertly displays the number of hours he put in and how dedicated Wray was to his work. Small amounts of pink can be seen in areas of the painting, which has connotations of love; this may be Wray trying to show his love and admiration for urban landscape, and art in general. As you can see from the brushstrokes and use of colour, it is obvious that Wray is trying to convey a message to us – maybe he is angry about the fact that a beautiful building like this with so much history, has been abandoned.

The background is where Wray really gets you involved with the painting; there isn't much detail so it is very hard to distinguish what it actually is. This allows Wray to get us thinking and keep our eyes fixated on the work, trying to work out and picture in our minds what these buildings could actually be. Perhaps they represent the ghosts of buildings past. There almost seems to be hidden paintings within paintings.

While Wray's work may not be the most detailed, the hidden meanings and backstory behind them drag you in and make you want to know and understand more of what is going on. Wray's consistency throughout his different artworks has to be appreciated, he sticks to the main fundamentals in his painting, even his earlier ones. His work is emotional and thought provoking, he really tries to get you to understand about his theme, which you may not see at first, but after looking through more of his pieces it becomes apparent. The use of a different and more vibrant colour as an underlayer is one of his greatest techniques and means you are always looking to see what else can be seen through the layers. His use of dark and dull colours, especially in buildings, has made apparent his thoughts about all the abandoned and unused buildings in his neighbourhood, but more widely around the world.

**Word count 1247**

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## Interviews

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