

# Keys to the collection— Faces

## Juan Ford

“...the work does not merely use the photograph: it travels beyond it, and back to a painting...”

—Juan Ford, 2004.

Juan Ford was born in Melbourne in 1973. He has received numerous awards and prizes, held solo and group exhibitions, received notable portrait commissions, and is represented in major public collections.

He was awarded a Master of Arts (Fine Art) by research in 2001 and a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) in 1998, both from RMIT University, Melbourne. He was a lecturer at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, between, 2006–2007.

In 2004 Juan was awarded the Geelong Gallery's Fletcher Jones Contemporary art prize, and in 2014 he was a finalist in the Archibald National Portrait Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales. Juan continues to exhibit both in Australia and internationally, in 2015 at the National Portrait Gallery (Canberra), and Galerie du Monde at Art Stage (Singapore).



### Painting, phrenology (Abstraction)—

This work of art tells us little about the sitter, Lane Cormick, who is a fellow artist. The expression is deliberately bland and unemotional, as is the choice of a profile. These features limit the interaction between the gaze of the sitter and the viewer. This is a clever way to visually represent the title of the artwork—*Painting, phrenology (abstraction)*. Phrenology is a pseudo-science: a belief, popular in the 19th century but now discredited, that the study of the shape and protuberances of the skull reveals a person's character and mental capacity. So, on one level, this painting is about lost meaning. The original photograph is lost by the process of transferring it to a canvas and then it is remade. The realistic painting style is almost like a photograph but Ford likes to go beyond this. This painting is also about our heads being the vessels that carry our stories.

**Geelong  
Gallery**

Victorian Curriculum level 7 to VCE  
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Juan Ford  
*Painting, phrenology  
(Abstraction) (detail) 2004*  
oil on canvas  
Collection: Geelong Gallery  
Fletcher Jones Contemporary  
Art Prize, 2004

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### Juan Ford

Australian, born 1973

*Painting, phrenology  
(Abstraction) 2004*  
oil on canvas  
183.0 x 198.0 cm  
Collection: Geelong Gallery  
Fletcher Jones Contemporary  
Art Prize, 2004

#### Question

How and why does the artist use the process by which he makes his art to create an image which is more than a photograph? Refer to the quote at the beginning of this sheet.

#### Research

Research and define the word 'abstraction'. The subject of this work of art appears lost in thought. Explain how the word 'abstraction' applies to this photo-realistic image and discuss how the reference to 'abstraction' in the title might relate to the way the sitter is portrayed.

#### Activity

Take a photo of yourself using a digital camera and upload it onto the computer and into Photoshop. Consider whether you use a profile or full frontal portrait. Manipulate the image to portray the feeling you want, thinking about colour, tone, texture, lighting, scale etc. From a printout, transfer this image to cartridge paper using your observational drawing skills. Add colour using a medium of your choice. Remember to focus on the feelings you want to communicate. Give it a title and write an artist's statement to explain your artwork. If you complete this task to the format of 42 x 42cm, you can enter it into the Gallery's *Who's who portrait prize*.

For further details about this significant annual student exhibition, visit [geelonggallery.org.au](http://geelonggallery.org.au).