

Can art cross cultural boundaries? That was not intended to be theme of this exhibition. On its first presentation, in Australia, we thought about the construction of image and idea in the mind's eye. For art to facilitate this it needed to be, and is, of a type where interpretation and observation plays a part. And, therefore, one cannot know whether each in the audience sees the same work (this always applies, but here that ambiguity is the fulcrum of the exhibition). Because of our common biology I assumed that this would not have cultural roots. After all, genetics has shown us that variation between individuals is greater than variation between populations. Race plays no part, or so it seemed.

But the small variations that are racially consistent (colour of skin, height, morphology), are a response to local conditions and are therefore at our surface. Essentially, our insides are the same. Here we have the wonderful, albeit inadvertent, opportunity to present an exhibition that seeks to understand our response to sensory input in two vastly different climates. Hobart the first location, has a variable, often cloudy, cool and humid climate. Sharjah is dry desert. It is raining while I write this. It is unlikely to be raining while you read it.

If evolution causes us to respond, at the surface, to new climates, then surely another response, although concealed, would be the sensory interpretation of light? Light varies across environments, and evolution will respond to those variations. Do the denizens of Sharjah and Hobart construct their own, discrete, internal models of the works presented to them in 'I look to you and I see nothing'. Even the chosen title suggests perspective differences.

I might well be a product of my very different environment, not just culturally, but also by biological design, at least so far as my response to impinging light is concerned. You, as a member of the audience in Sharjah, are statistically likely to be a desert dweller, and have an evolutionary history of desert dwellers. We both call a colour 'blue', and when we point at blue we point at the same colour. But our internal configurations, the colour of our thought, might well be different, and with good reason.

It may well be that, at least at some superficial level, we are looking at the same thing, the same work of art, and seeing a different thing. And yet we can be sure it is art, a cultural artefact, that exposes a reality of small differences between each of us, and each of our cultures.

Our cultures, and our viewpoints, are shades of blue. And whether or not it is the same to each of us, most of us find blue beautiful.

David Walsh