

**JEMIMA
WYMAN
DEEP
SURFACE**

EDUCATION KIT

MEET THE ARTIST

Jemima Wyman is a Palawa woman with paternal ancestry from Tebrakunna and Poredareme, and maternal ancestry from England. Wyman was born in Gadigal/Sydney, in 1977 and grew up in Queensland in Tolga, and the Isaac and Mackay regions and now lives and works in Los Angeles. Wyman's practice focuses on the visual resistance used in global protest.

Jemima has been exhibiting in Australia and internationally since 1996. Recent solo exhibitions include COLA 2025 at Los Angeles Municipal (2025), Sullivan + Strumpf, Australia (2024,2023,2021, 2019) and Commonwealth and Council, LA (2022, 2018). The artist was awarded the Wangaratta Contemporary Textile Award (2025) and the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs Master Artist Grant (2024). She has exhibited in group exhibitions at Frieze No. 9 Cork Street, London and ArtCenter College of Design, Los Angeles. Wyman's work is held in collections, including the Whitney Museum of Contemporary Art New York, National Gallery of Australia, QUT Galleries and Museums and the 21st Century Museum of Art, Japan.

[WATCH
THE VIDEO](#)



MEET THE WORK: ART AS KNOWLEDGE



CAMOUFLAGE

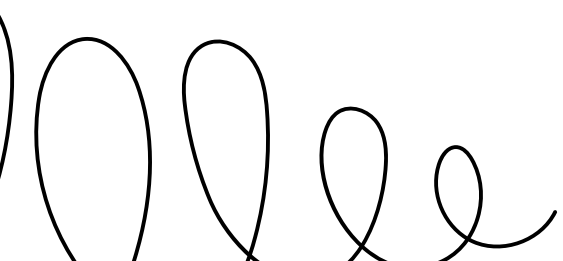


In *Combat 06* (2008), Jemima Wyman uses bold colours and patterns to confuse our sense of depth and make the image feel like it's moving. The figures are painted in bright greens and blues, similar to the patterned camouflage, known as Disruptive Pattern Material or DPM as utilised in military uniforms to help soldiers blend in. Wyman adds stripes and chequerboard patterns in these cool colours, which flatten the figures even more.

Behind them, a zig-zag background of black, grey, red and white lines creates a strong contrast. These colours and patterns clash and vibrate against each other, making the picture seem to swell or shift—just like the optical tricks used by 1960s Op Art artists such as Bridget Riley.

Wyman was inspired by the Zapatistas, an Indigenous liberation movement in Mexico who use masks and patterned clothing to protect their identities while showing unity. Their shared patterns reject hierarchy and express ideas of equality and collective power—similar to how a herd of zebras blends together for protection from predators.

The image of Zapatista women that *Combat 06* directly references was taken by journalist and photographer, Tim Russo who has been covering Latin America for 20 years. Twenty years ago, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation started a rebellion in response to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement and to fight for the rights of Indigenous Mexicans. In the state of Chiapas and throughout Mexico, traditional gender and sexual norms have long held sway, making the Zapatistas a progressive force in terms of women's rights. Women have become increasingly involved in the Zapatista movement, taking on roles such as officers and spokespeople.



CREATING AND MAKING

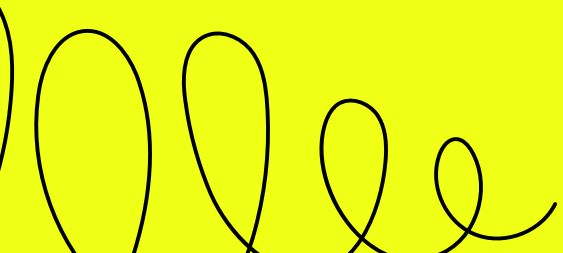
- Draw a rectangle.
- Using a ruler, draw vertical lines inside the rectangle roughly one centimetre apart.
- Next draw geometric shapes such as triangles or circles on top of these lines.
- Colour in your Op Art piece using two contrasting colours: colour the first vertical bar one colour – however any shapes that fall inside that bar should not be coloured in yet. Colour in the bars using alternating colours, leaving the inside of the shapes white. Finally, colour in the bars that fall inside the outlines of the shapes but use the contrasting colour to the bar that falls outside the shapes.
- Share your work with a friend.



EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

Examine the work of Op artist [Bridget Riley](#) whose art utilises shape, colour and pattern to create interesting optical illusions. Her pictures appear to warp, swell and move!

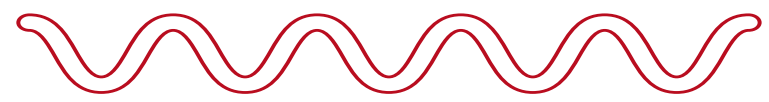
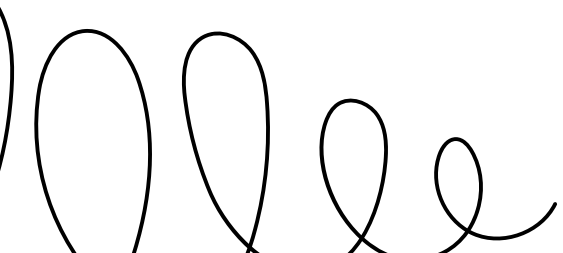
Check out Sir Peter Blake's 2015 design for [Everybody Razzle Dazzle](#) transforming a ferry through bold pattern in monochrome and colour. Unlike other forms of camouflage, dazzle camouflage works not by concealing but by baffling the eye, making it difficult to estimate a target's range, speed and direction. In 1917 British artist Norman Wilkinson conceived this idea to protect the British fleet from German attack. It was thought that by painting the war ships in bold shapes and contrasting colours, this would instead confuse the enemy rather than conceal the ship. These ships were called Dazzle Ships.



RESEARCHING

In her *Aggregate icon* series, Jemima Wyman takes images of protesters and transforms them into large, circular collages that look like colourful, patterned mandalas. She cuts out small details—like masked faces, patterned fabrics and smoke—and flips, mirrors and repeats them to create tiny scenes that act like “florets” within the larger design. These repeated pieces build up into an intricate pattern where the individual protestor seems to disappear into the group, showing how visual unity can help express collective strength.

In *Aggregate icon (Rosetta RBW)*, repeated images converge to the centre and an arrangement of images resembling the middle of a rose. These repeated images include a black woman with a red bandana covering the lower part of her face, a figure dressed head to toe in black with a black and white bandana, white ski goggles, their arms outstretched with a tennis racquet in their left hand, five white plumes of smoke, alternating heads wearing keffiyeh in black and white and red and white and in the centre lengths of white diaphanous fabric curving to accentuate the budlike centre of the rose shape itself. At the very centre point is a collage of overlapping arms and hands.



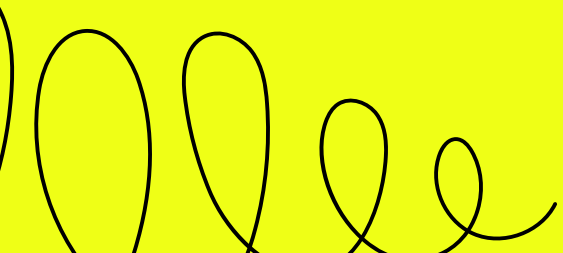


The images in *Aggregate icon (Rosetta RBW)* come from Wyman’s ongoing MAS-archive, which documents the clothing, patterns and masks worn by protestors around the world. The artwork was shown in *Counterpowers* at Sullivan+Strumpf in 2017, where Wyman focused on key protest patterns—such as keffiyeh, dazzle camouflage and paisley—using a bold palette of red, black and white.

Wyman believes that what protestors wear can act like a “communal covering,” helping people stay anonymous while showing solidarity and resisting surveillance. She connects this idea to philosopher Hannah Arendt’s concept of “going visiting,” by imagining the world from someone else’s point of view. Wyman sees her own artistic process—researching, selecting, cutting and arranging images—as a tangible way to do this. By looking closely at hundreds of protest images, noticing patterns and differences, and assembling them into new forms, she expands her understanding of collective action and shared experience.

Source Material: MAS-Archive

- Wyman has compiled a digital archive of protest images since 2008, called the MAS-archive (Masks, Aposematism, and Signage).
- It includes thousands of photographs from global demonstrations—covering movements like Arab Spring, Occupy, Pussy Riot, Zapatistas, and more.



CREATE YOUR OWN ARTWORK

by sampling existing material on the Internet

In her 2012 Art Forum article, [Digital Divide](#) art critic Claire Bishop argues that the infinite availability of resources on the internet has accelerated the use of *selection* as a key artmaking tool for contemporary artists.

Taking selection or sampling as a single method for artistic production, use the internet as an inexhaustible image archive for your own research-based art project.

Investigate the work of the following artists:

Sherrie Levine, Christian Marclay, [Mishka Henner](#), Soda_Jerk, Doug Rickard, David Noonan.

Reflect on how these artists, along with Jemima Wyman's archive of protest imagery, inform the diverse ways artists respond to visual stimulus, generating constructed, interpretive and imaginative forms of knowledge through their creative processes.





“I am specific, but my method is very rudimentary. The majority of the time I use tape, which gives me a level of freedom that I need in my work, because I can pull bits up or reposition them. With some of these, I have to shift things around throughout the process quite a bit, and also look at the work both laid flat on a surface and up vertically on a wall so I can get a better sense of perspective and gravitation. Then, in most cases I would make sure to flatten all the various elements. Sometimes, I intentionally leave a bit of lift on the edges. I am very conscious of this aspect in my work.”

- JEMIMA WYMAN



REFLECTING



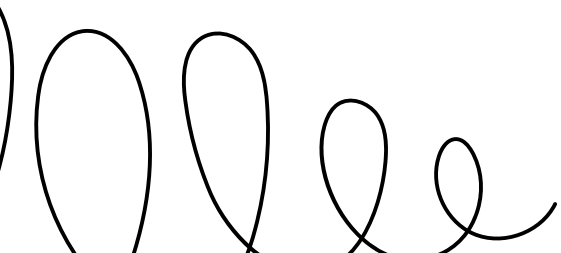
Consider this reflective commentary by the artist on her approach to collage making.

Consider your own investigation into techniques and processes when art making.

In the centre of this work, a large orange and brown moth rests with its wings outstretched, displaying distinctive circular markings on its upper and lower wings, patterns often used by insects as a deterrent to predators. Above the moth, hand-cut photographs mirror one another along a central axis that runs the full length of the work. This line of symmetry, familiar in nature and most recognisable in butterfly wings, establishes a visual equilibrium. From this central parting, the images on the left reflect those on the right, as if transferred across the divide, creating a sense of precision and balance reminiscent of the patterned symmetries found in Victorian wallpaper design. Organic forms cluster together in the work with stacked orange and brown fungi, toadstool mushrooms, snakes, butterflies, birds, orange dahlias, sunflowers, and yellow cornflowers all competing for space amongst a cast of characters that includes masked protestors, performers in face paint, jesters, women draped in translucent black shrouds, another woman covered in leopard-print body paint, and banners bearing slogans such as *Happy May Day*, *Wash Ur Hands*, and *The Thugs Have Been Arrested!*, among others.

The palette—restricted to black, yellow, and orange—echoes aposematism, the ‘warning’ colouration found in nature used to signal toxicity or danger to predators. Alternating bands of yellow and black, or orange and black, function as alerts to threat; these striking combinations recur throughout the *Flourish* series and as a motif Wyman consistently returns to. In this work, Wyman juxtaposes the protestors’ use of aposematic colouration with similar strategies found in the natural world, positioning these visual cues as both a defence mechanism and a means of shifting focus from the individual to the collective.

How has Wyman challenged, reinforced or manipulated ideas, beliefs and meaning through her making here? Discuss.



MASKS



Jemima Wyman uses different kinds of masks throughout her artwork. In her early photography, video and performance pieces, masks helped her change how the body looked, play with ideas of identity, and shift the relationship between the viewer and the performer. This is seen in *Minnie does LA to NY* (2004), a series of tourist-style photos taken during a road trip across the United States, in which she wears a Mickey Mouse mask. The mask draws attention but also hides her identity, creating a balance between being seen and staying private.

By the late 2000s, Wyman became interested in how people use camouflage and masks in political protests—both to blend in with a crowd and to stand out. In 2011, she noticed that many different activist groups were wearing stylised Guy Fawkes masks. She collected hundreds of images of these masked protesters and used them to create detailed collages, such as *Visual resistance* (2012).

Balaclavas and Guy Fawkes masks also appear in her multi-headed patchwork poncho *Thronging bluff face* (2014), which the artist originally wore during a public performance in Southern California. Moving from left to right, the poncho features a Guy Fawkes mask attached to a bright pink balaclava and marked with black and green pen; a central Scream or Ghostface mask with black spray paint; and another side-facing Guy Fawkes mask sprayed in colours and attached to a rainbow and red knitted balaclava. The masks are connected to a large patchwork quilt made from materials such as camouflage prints, paisley bandanas, keffiyeh patterns, rainbow tie-dye peace signs, and red-and-white stripes.

The artwork can be viewed from all sides, encouraging viewers to walk around it and notice how each element connects. Wyman explains that people wear masks in protests not only to protect themselves but also to form a sense of unity. Wyman notes the lure of the masked protesters as follows:

A mask is magic, especially when it multiplies to become a communal architecture and social camouflage in a world of networked surveillance.

MAKE YOUR OWN PROTEST ART CARD

Pick Your Message: think about what matters most to you. This can be local or global — think small or big! Examples:

- Art classes in schools
- Protecting the environment
- World peace
- Girl power
- Happiness and positivity

Your message should be short, bold, and powerful — something that fits on the card. Examples:

- “Save Our Reefs!”
- “Art for All”
- “Girls to the Front!”
- “Everyone Matters!”

Design Your Card

- Grab some blank cardboard.
- Lightly sketch your words in pencil.
- Use thick felt-tip pens to make your message bright and eye-catching.
- Add colours, patterns, or small symbols to match your theme
- Add your protest to the Wall
- Once your card is ready, add it to a dedicated wall to display in class or add it your digital class collaboration space.

👂 Listen to the *Jemima Wyman: Deep Surface* [playlist](#) while making.

👁️ Masks like those incorporated by Wyman in *Thronging bluff face* (2014) have fuelled her investigations into the use of patterns, masks and clothing as agents of resistance within the context of protest.

🔍 Explore how her subject matter challenges perceptions and the status quo and presents alternative futures.



DISTRESS PATTERNS



The following motifs are used by Jemima in her *Distress patterns* and *Forewarnings* series: targets, crosses, peace signs, stars, eyes and more!

Pick a favourite body part and draw it as many times as you can on a single piece of card.

Before long, you will have created your very own wallpaper design!

Enjoy the meditative quality of this drawing activity.

Consider the patterns and use of repetition by Wyman.

Patterns may be found in the materials used, themes, subject matter and motifs that occur in her practice over time.

Key Themes Represented:

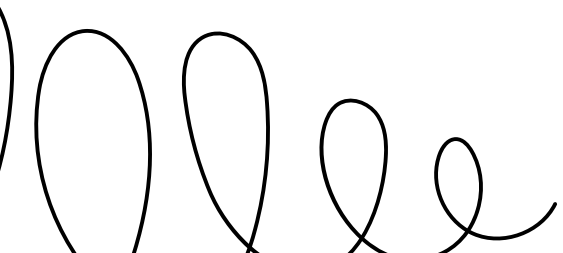
- **Camouflage & Masking** – as strategies for identity negotiation and resistance.
- **Patterns & Textiles** – visual motifs in her collages and installations.
- **Protest & Activism** – drawn from global demonstrations and her MAS-archive.
- **Collective Identity** – exploring how groups use visual codes for solidarity.
- **Social Justice & Feminist Art** – underlying political and cultural commentary.
- **Performance & Participatory Art** – interactive and immersive practices.
- **Colour Psychology** – symbolic use of colours like yellow and black in protest.

COLOUR

Observe Wyman's use of colour, investigating the significance of the colour blue in her new series of works for COLA 25 at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and in the artwork *Rise and fall and rise...2025* included from this recent exhibition in *Jemima Wyman: Deep Surface*.

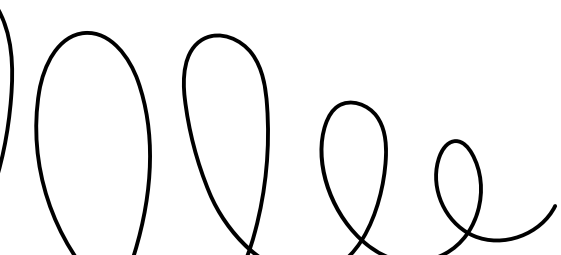
Each of the fabric drops in *Rise and fall and rise...* (2025) references the colours, patterns and symbols used to depict water in various ecological protests and demonstrations since 2011.

Examine how Wyman has used symbols and the colour blue to communicate her message here. Discuss.



“The *Haze...* series weaves images of smoke together to form nebulous landscapes (or smokescapes) that mimic the abstract shapes found in camouflage textiles. Activists, police and military use smoke as a tactical weapon in confrontations. I document these uses in the multi-page titles listing each piece of cut smoke with: the protest, the location, and the date. The result is an incomplete document of global unrest for a moment already passed. Ephemeral, and sometimes noxious, the particles caught in the air of these collages also contain rage. Smoke is a siren, a signal of past, current and future distress.”

- JEMIMA WYMAN



SMOKE



Haze 27 is part of a series of collages first shown in Wyman's solo exhibition, *Fume* in 2021 at Sullivan+Strumpf in Gadigal/Sydney featuring plumes of smoke from flares, fires or deterrents present during protest.

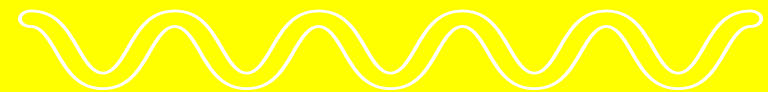
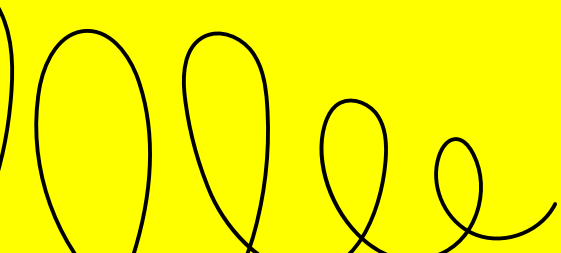
These works use cut-out images of smoke from protests—coming from grenades, tear-gas canisters, flares, fireworks, fires and other sources. The smoke is created by both protesters and police and comes from many different demonstrations with different causes. The fragments of smoke are arranged into tightly packed compositions in colours like grey, red, amber, blue, violet and green. Here some smoke plumes look thick and solid, while others seem to pulsate with shifting energy. By mixing these fragments together, Wyman makes it hard to tell which way is up or who the smoke is meant to warn, protect or threaten.

Wyman's collage titles typically function to document each photograph used in the work, detailing the cause, location and date of each protest depicted. When presented in their full form, these titles offer deeper insight into Wyman's work and underscore her archiving process.

Due to space limitations, extended titles are not always included in publications or exhibitions. The following artwork series also have extended titles: Propaganda textiles, Aggregate icons, Friends collages (groupings of protesters according to masks), Flourish, Mass monuments, Haze, Plume, Billow, Cloud conscience, Distress patterns, Deepsurface, Coated shelter quarters, Glitch hides and Pattern ecologies.

Meticulous and labour-intensive, Wyman's documentation process speaks to her politically informed practice and her observations of her experience of living today.

Wyman is constantly developing, researching, reflecting and resolving her practice honing a visual strategy for bearing witness to the current moment, to imagine new political possibilities through the personal and collective experience.



NOTES FOR TEACHERS



This resource features material for Years 9 and 10 with a focus on the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 Visual Arts Learning area and the Cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Histories and Cultures. It is also suitable for Years 11 and 12 with a focus on the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority Visual Art 2025 v1.3 General Senior Syllabus. General capabilities: Literacy, Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability, Intercultural understanding, Ethical understanding.

Visual Arts – Years 9 and 10	Content descriptions
Exploring and Responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigate the ways that artists across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts develop personal expression in their visual arts practice to represent, communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.• Investigate the ways that First Nations Australian artists celebrate and challenge multiple perspectives of Australian identity through their artworks and visual arts practice.
Developing Practices and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiment with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to refine skills and develop personal expression.• Reflect on the way they and other visual artists respond to influences to inspire, develop and resolve choices they make in their own visual arts practice.
Creating and Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate critical feedback when planning, developing and refining their visual arts practice.• Select and manipulate visual conventions, visual arts processes and/or materials to create artworks that reflect personal expression, and represent and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.



FURTHER RESOURCES

QUT Art Museum is located at Queensland University of Technology, Gardens Point.

[Book your group visit](#)

[Jemima Wyman: Deep Surface monograph](#)

[Creative Inquiry: Visual Art for Queensland Senior Secondary Students](#)

[Jemima Wyman's website](#)

[Sullivan+Strumpf website](#)

IMAGE CAPTIONS

1. Jemima WYMAN *Haze 21* (detail) 2024, hand-cut digital photographs, 125 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Gadigal/Sydney and Naarm/Melbourne.
2. Jemima WYMAN *Declassified 94* 2024, hand-cut digital photographs, 36 x 41 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Gadigal/Sydney and Naarm/Melbourne.
3. Jemima Wyman headshot. Photo: Vamani Landon Millhouse. Courtesy of the artist.
4. Jemima WYMAN *Combat 06* 2008, poured acrylic on canvas, 168 h x 200 w cm. QUT Art Collection. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2024.
5. Jemima WYMAN *Aggregate icon (Rosetta RBW)* (detail) 2017, hand-cut digital photographs, 200 cm diameter. Private collection.
6. Jemima WYMAN *Flourish 9* (detail) 2020, hand-cut digital photographs on paper, 132 h x 101.5 w cm. Mackay Regional Council Art Collection. Purchased 2020.
7. Jemima WYMAN *Thronging bluff face* 2014, mixed media, 195 h x 160 w cm (approx.). Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Meanjin/Brisbane.
8. Jemima WYMAN *Distress patterns: 'National School Walkout' student protester advocating for stricter gun control laws on the anniversary of the Columbine High School massacre, Los Angeles, California, 20 April 2018 (Red and white target)* 2024, oil paint on digital photograph, 50.8 x 76.2 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Gadigal/Sydney and Naarm/Melbourne.
9. Jemima WYMAN *Rise and fall and rise...* 2025, acrylic paint on fabric, custom-printed fabric, wooden dowel and metal brackets 366 x 518 cm (dims variable). Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Tovaangar/Los Angeles.
10. Jemima WYMAN *Haze 27* 2024 hand-cut digital photographs, 104 h x 140 w cm. Private collection.




Galleries and Museums

QUT Art Museum
2 George Street, Meanjin/Brisbane
Tuesday–Friday 10am–4pm
Sunday 10am–2pm
artmuseum.qut.edu.au

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 QUT Galleries and Museums

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QUT acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugara, as the First Nations owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning.