

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
Thesis/Dissertation Sheet**

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Title: The Decorative in Twentieth Century Art: A Story of Decline and Resurgence.

Abstract:

This thesis tracks the complex relationship between visual art and the decorative in the Twentieth Century. In doing so, it makes a claim for the ongoing interest and viability of decorative practices within visual art, in the wake of their marginalisation within Modernist art and theory.

The study is divided into three main sections. First, it demonstrates and questions the exclusion of the decorative within the central currents of modernism. Second, it examines the resurgence of the decorative in postmodern art and theory. This section is based on case studies of a number of postmodern artists whose work gained notice in the 1980s, and which evidences a sustained engagement with a decorative or ornamental aesthetic. The artists include Rosemarie Trockel, Lucas Samaras, Philip Taaffe, and several artists from the Pattern and Decoration Painting Movement of the 1970s. The final component of the study investigates the function and significance of the decorative in the work of a selection of Australian and international contemporary artists. The art of Louise Paramor, Simon Periton and Do-Ho Suh is examined in detail. In addition, the significance of the late work of Henri Matisse is analysed for its relevance to contemporary art practice that employs decorative procedures. The thesis put forward is that an historical reversal has occurred in recent decades, where the decorative has once again become a significant force in experimental visual art.

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**THE DECORATIVE IN TWENTIETH CENTURY
ART: A STORY OF DECLINE AND RESURGENCE**

PAMELA GAUNT

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Art Theory

Postgraduate Board, University of New South Wales

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ORIGINALITY STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at UNSW or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at UNSW or elsewhere, is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Signed ...Pamela Gaunt.....

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