



## Questions for Discussion

1. Find out about the history of Federation in Australia, which took place in 1901. Many of the concerns of the pre-federation colonial states look quite similar to subjects politicians discuss today. Look at how nineteenth-century newspapers wrote about the colonies, migration, trade and security. Find some current news stories that talk about these topics.
2. What are some of the historical events that coincide with dates for border changes in Nicholson's work? Construct a timeline that notes the events next to the countries where they took place.
3. What other histories might make good subject matter for a work like this? Think about historical events, and find out about the borders of the Aboriginal Nations in your area.

## Reference Points

This work is a layered commentary on global politics and Australian history. By highlighting the date of Australian Federation, the work is charged with the colonial narrative of Empire, convict history, dispossession and frontier wars.

At the same time, it sits at the intersection of conceptual text-based practice, and a particularly Australian perspective on art and the world. These ideas can be understood in relation to work by artists who have exhibited in previous Biennale of Sydney exhibitions, such as: Brook Andrew (2010), Gordon Bennett (1992/93, 2000, 2008), Janet Burchill (1990), Rosalie Gascoigne (1979, 1988, 1990, 2000), Jenny Holzer (1984, 1988, 1990), Glenn Ligon (1996) and Ben Vautier (1979, 1990).

## Practices and Processes

Nicholson's work is an example of conceptual art, and an instance of the ways artists use political references in their work. It is also technical feat, taking days to draw by hand onto the wall. It is important to remember that its visual presentation as text is crucial to our experience of the work, and contributes to its meaning.

### Timeline drawing

A timeline is a way of representing history by listing consecutive events alongside their date annotation. Construct a timeline of events in your area. Think about how you might draw this to indicate the passage of time.

### Text drawing

Many artists have worked with lists – for example, Richard Serra's lists of verbs, Eva Hesse's lists of nouns and adjectives, Lia Perjovschi's subjective versions of art history, and more recently Agatha Gothe-Snape's collab-

orative drawings created by listing every artist name remembered within a two-hour period. Others have taken everyday texts and transcribed them into art, such as Robert MacPherson and Fiona Banner. Collect some texts and turn them into a series of drawings. You could also take photographs or scan the original texts and manipulate them digitally.

### Information drawing

Choose a subject that is important to you and make a large-scale drawing that lists the facts you know in time or date order. Make sure your text is consistent in appearance and scale. Think about how much space your drawing needs and adjust your type size accordingly.

**Cultural frame:**  
society and politics

**Structural frame:**  
communication