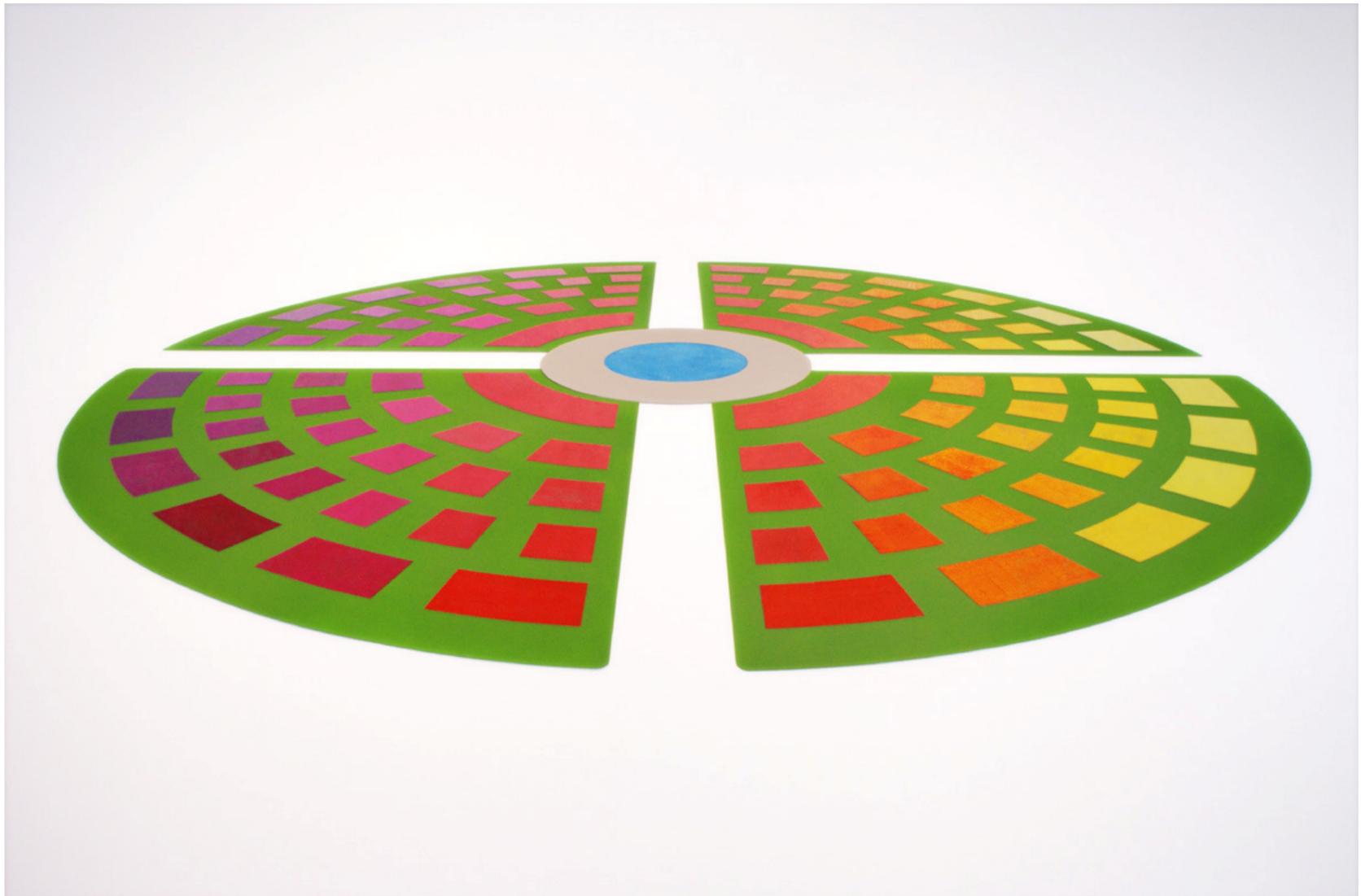


# Colour / Field

---



**Image credit:** Elizabeth Thomson, *Lady North Star Parterre*, 2010, Image courtesy of the artist and Mark Hutchins Gallery

- ◆ Civic Square, 101 Wakefield Street,  
PO Box 2199, Wellington 6011, New Zealand
- ◆ Telephone: +64 4 801 3021
- ◆ Email: [citygallery@wmt.org.nz](mailto:citygallery@wmt.org.nz)
- ◆ Website: [www.citygallery.org.nz](http://www.citygallery.org.nz)



City Gallery Wellington is managed by the Wellington Museums Trust with major funding support from the Wellington City Council.



City Gallery Wellington's Education service is supported by the Ministry of Education's LEOTC fund.

# Colour / Field

## Curriculum links

**Visual Art:** Understanding the Arts in Context, Developing Practical Knowledge, Developing Ideas, Communicating and Interpreting  
**English:** Listening, Viewing, Speaking, and Presenting  
**Science:** Living World

## About the exhibition

Gardens and art have a long and intertwined history as places of visual and sensual exploration, as spaces which can be entered physically or imaginatively. Gardens are a vital part of many people's lives, offering employment and opportunity for local communities as well as a source of relaxation and leisure.

Tending gardens and collecting art are two functions of the Wellington City Council. Both are concerned with the cultural and social well being of city dwellers. The Botanic Garden provides a natural space in the heart of the city, a retreat from densely-packed urban streets. The Council's City Art collection offers another form of sanctuary—one found in the creative endeavours of Wellington's artists.

In this third City Gallery exhibition featuring the Wellington City Council Art Collection, students will explore art works with a botanical theme, unlocking the symbolism of flowers with a focus on colour.

## Focus work: *Lady North Star Parterre*

Elizabeth Thomson's *Lady North Star Parterre* was partly inspired by the Lady Norwood Rose Gardens at the Wellington Botanic Gardens. The Rose Garden was opened in 1953, as part of the Botanic Garden's slow transformation from a site of science—where introduced plants and animals could be acclimatised and assessed for economic potential before being sent through the country—to a place of recreation and leisure.

Based on formal European models, the Rose Garden's geometric design has paths from all four sides converging on an open central space. The garden is divided into quadrants, and holds 110 formal flower beds showcasing different varieties of roses.

Rather than putting a sculpture in the garden, Thomson has remade the garden as a sculpture. Thomson uproots the garden from the earth and plants it on a large wall, as though it is floating in space. This is a garden to be experienced from afar, constructed from aerial photographs of the site which were drawn by hand and then computer modelled. *Lady North Star Parterre* combines the formal shape of the rose garden with the Northern Pole star. Thomson's choice of colours for the flowerbeds echo true rose colours and the traditional artist's colour wheel.

## About the Artist

Wellington based artist Elizabeth Thomson was born in Titirangi (translation from Māori meaning the 'fringe of heaven'), an area that is part of Waitakere, Auckland in 1955. Since graduating from Auckland University's Elam School of Fine Arts in the late 1980s, Thomson has maintained an interest in the meeting between art and various strands of natural science. She is fascinated with the formal qualities and imaginative potential she finds in nature, paying particular attention to plants, insects and molecular structures and has established her reputation with wall-mounted installations of bronze insects, moths and leaves.

## Key terms

**Parterre** is a formal garden construction consisting of planting beds, edged in stone or tightly clipped hedging and gravel paths arranged to form a usually symmetrical pattern.

A **hue** is the common name for a colour or tint. **Saturation** is the strength or purity of a colour.

**Complimentary or contrasting colours** are when two hues are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel. A primary colour is complimentary to a secondary colour. Complimentary colours accentuate each other in juxtaposition and neutralise each when they are mixed together.

A **colour wheel** is an arrangement of colours based on the sequence of hues in the visible spectrum, arranged as the spokes of a wheel.

## Discussion

1. Look at Elizabeth Thomson's *Lady North Star Parterre*—what does it remind you of?
2. How do you think the artist has made this work?
3. How would you describe this work? Is it a painting, a drawing, sculpture or something else?
4. What do the colours in this artwork remind you of?
5. How would you describe the mood or feeling of the artwork?
6. Do you like this artwork? What does it remind you of?

## Pre/post-visit activities

**Visit a local garden.** Observe how the garden has been arranged then draw a plan of how you think it has been designed. Next time you are in town or at the park, observe how green spaces have been landscaped, the types of plants used and imagine why they have been used.

**A secret garden.** Gardens can sometimes be arranged by landscape designers. If you could plan a secret garden, what would it look like? Would it be an edible garden or floral? Would you include any water features or sculptural work? Create a drawing or 3D model using card, plasticine etc. Look at [www.gardendesign.com](http://www.gardendesign.com) for ideas in contemporary garden design.

**The 'Father of Wellington.'** A historical photograph of John Plimmer sitting in front of a painted backdrop with a garden scene is featured in *Colour / Field*. Find out more about John Plimmer by visiting Plimmers Ark and [www.inconstant.wellington.net.nz](http://www.inconstant.wellington.net.nz)

**Create a miniature parterre garden using craft materials.** Look at examples of traditional parterre such as the Palace of Versailles in Paris or Kensington Gardens in London to generate ideas. Learn more about the Wellington Botanic Garden by visiting [www.friendswb.org.nz](http://www.friendswb.org.nz)

**Painting with highly saturated colours.** Look at your own garden and identify the main colours to create a painting that uses a colour palette similar to Allen Maddox's *Flower Piece* and Pat Hanly's *Ginko Garden*.

**Elizabeth Thomson's *Lady North Star Parterre* is made up of thousands of glass beads.** These types of beads are created through lampworking. Discover the art of lampwork beads by visiting the New Zealand Glass Bead Artists website: [www.nzgba.org.nz](http://www.nzgba.org.nz)

**Botanical gardens and science.** Over time, the purpose of botanical gardens has changed from sites of science into public pleasure grounds. To protect the world's plant biodiversity, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway houses millions of seeds from around the world deep in the Arctic permafrost. Discover more about this fascinating project at [www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/.../svalbard-global-seed-vault](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/.../svalbard-global-seed-vault)

## Other artists in the exhibition

**Doris Lusk** (1916-90) was a leading New Zealand regionalist / modernist landscape painter, particularly during the postwar period when New Zealand artists were grappling with issues of national identity. Lusk's signature theme was the artificial structure in the landscape. She also painted portraits.

**Pat Hanly** (1932-2004) was a New Zealand painter. A year after leaving art school in 1956 he travelled widely through Europe. He returned to New Zealand in 1962, settling in Auckland. His return was marked by paintings that tried to come to terms with the very different Pacific environment, but showed the influence of Picasso, Bacon and the British Pop art movement.

**Allen Maddox** (1948-2000) was a New Zealand abstract expressionist painter who experimented with paint, ink, crayon and pastel, his paintings combine playful or aggressive movement and vibrant colours with a reoccurring structural element, the cross.