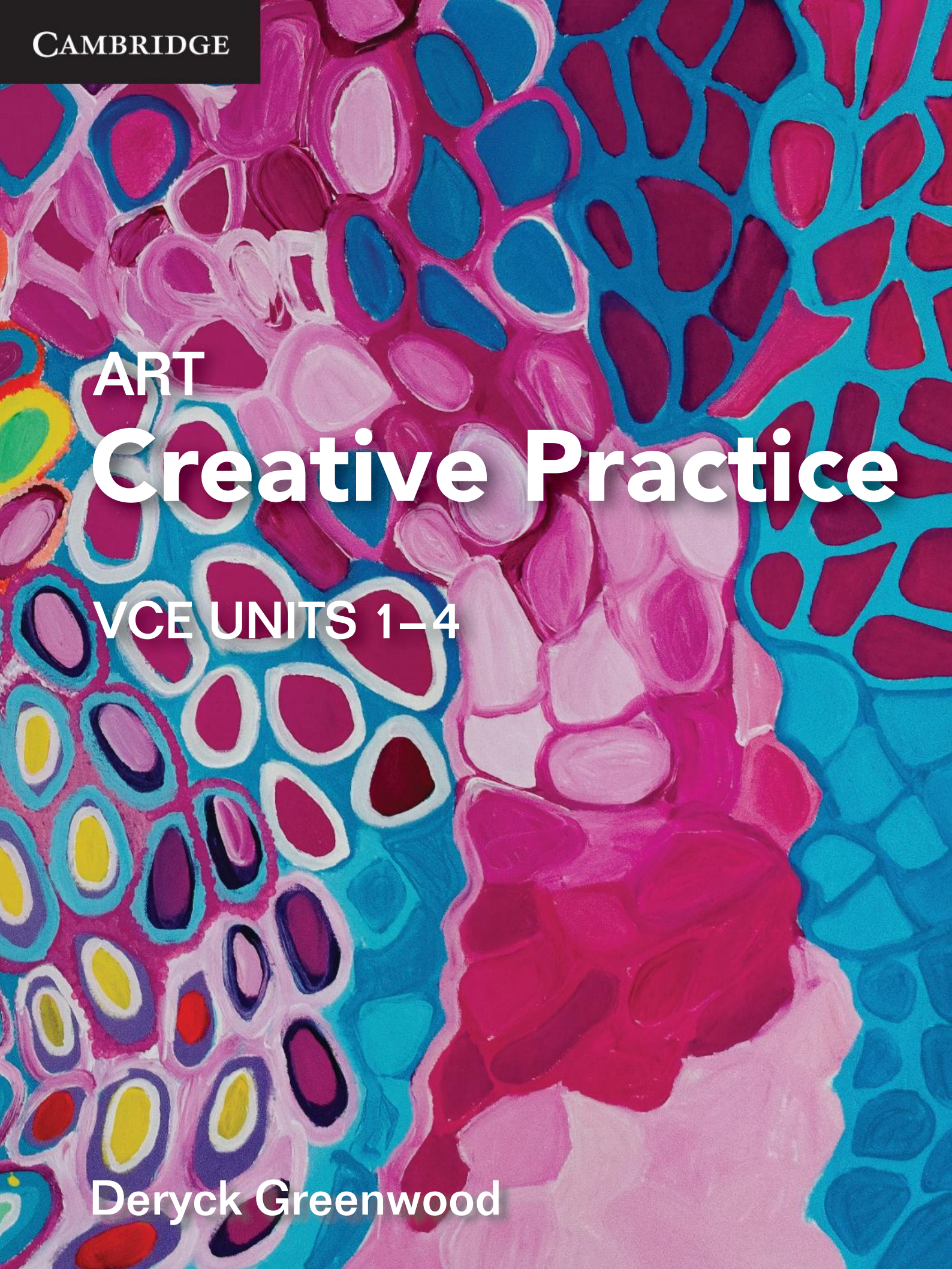




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ART Creative Practice

VCE UNITS 1–4

Deryck Greenwood



CAMBRIDGE

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Deryck Greenwood

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Please be aware that this publication may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are now deceased. Several variations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms and spellings may also appear; no disrespect is intended. Please note that the terms 'Indigenous Australians' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' may be used interchangeably in this publication.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Cambridge University Press & Assessment is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

About the cover

Amanda Gabori is the youngest daughter of one of the leading contemporary Australian artists, Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori. A detail of Amanda's artwork, *My Country*, is depicted on the cover of this book.

Amanda Gabori says: 'Mainbase is my Country is from my Father. This is where Nyinyilki, a freshwater spring in the south-east of Bentinck Island, and is where our Father is from. This is now the Mainbase.'

'I was born in the township of Gununa on Mornington Island at the old hospital which is now the Council Office. I am one of 10 children. I went to school here on Mornington Island and then went to Atherton State School to complete years 11 and 12. I have 4 children and 2 grandchildren. I started painting when I was just sitting at home and wanted to go up and join my Mum, Sally Gabori, painting as she was really enjoying it. I paint my Country on Bentinck Island and Dibirdibi which is my language name and the totem given to me by my Father.'



Amanda Gabori, *My Country*, 2018, Acrylic on canvas, 90 × 150 cm. © Amanda Jane Gabori/Copyright Agency, 2022

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, cultures and history

Where to start

The VCE Art Study Design recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have ‘diverse cultures, social structures, cultural traditions, languages and dialects.’ This brief introduction is here to encourage you to investigate Australia’s First peoples’ significant contribution to visual art.

Worldviews of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are highly integrated. Each aspect of culture, history and society connects with all other aspects. Each community also has its own unique system of knowing, being and doing, based on tens of thousands of years of sharing culture and engaging with Country.

In order to understand any system, Indigenous or otherwise, time and effort are needed to appreciate it. Though time is limited in this course, it is wrong to generalise the Indigenous culture of Australia, or even Victoria. Instead, the limited coverage in this resource should be taken as examples.

Both teachers and students should read up on and engage with their local Indigenous community, to hear the perspectives of local First Nations artists, and to appreciate the strength and resilience of Australia’s First Nations peoples. To find out whose Country you are on – for example, Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Djadjawurrung – you can use your preferred search engine to find land councils or local government authorities to find their acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the land. You can also search for a map of Indigenous Australia and try to locate where you live or go to school.

Terms

Language is important when discussing Indigenous issues, especially given the deliberately offensive use of language in Australia's history where it was used to oppress and control.

Here is a starting guide.

Term	Definition	Explanation
indigenous	(with a lowercase 'i') occurring naturally in a particular place	This is an adjective.
Indigenous	(with a capital 'I') relating to people who originate in a particular place	Respectful usage in reference to people requires the capital 'I'.
First Australians, First peoples or First Nations peoples	Indigenous people of Australia	These terms have become more common in recent years, with 'Indigenous' as the adjective. 'Peoples' should always be in the plural form to reflect the diverse cultures and identities.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	the Australian Indigenous population; this term includes Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people, and people who have both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.	While this is still used in official circles and is in the name or title of many organisations and documents, it is tending to be replaced by 'First Australians' and similar terms, especially in everyday use. This is partly because the abbreviation 'ATSI' is considered disrespectful by Indigenous people, who regard it as lazy not to use a full title. The abbreviation should not be used to refer to people. 'Peoples' should always be in the plural form to reflect the diverse cultures and identities.
Aboriginal	an Aboriginal person is someone who is of Aboriginal descent, identifies as being Aboriginal and is accepted as such by the Aboriginal community with which they originally identified	One of the reasons that 'First Nations' and allied forms have become more common is that the term 'Aboriginal' was sometimes used disrespectfully, and still is in some circles.

It is also important to remember that English is not the traditional language of Australia. Where possible, the traditional Aboriginal language for important terms should be used, according to the person's country, though the English translation can also be given.

Ethics

There have been controversies within the art community involving dishonest use of artwork by First Nations artists. One example involves the jailing of the chief executive of an Aboriginal corporation on Mornington Island, Queensland, who had kept the profits from sales of artwork instead of distributing them to the artist and art centre. The artworks included those by Amanda Gabori, whose artwork is on this book cover, and her mother, Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori.

It is always important to consult with the artist, family or representative of the artist when exhibiting artwork, even more so with First Nations artists' artwork. The artworks displayed in this book and on the cover have all gone through rigorous permissions checks, which means that the proper channels have been used to obtain permission from the artist or owner of the copyright to the artwork, such as estates in the case of deceased artists.

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About the author

Deryck Greenwood is the Head of Visual Arts at Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School and has worked in secondary education for the past 33 years. Deryck began his teaching career in South Africa, where he taught at a specialist state arts school for 11 years. Since moving to Australia, Deryck has worked within the independent school system. He has taught VCE Art, Studio Arts and VCD, and currently teaches Art Creative Practice. Deryck has worked for the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority in various capacities, including as State Reviewer for Art and Art Creative Practice, examination writer and assessor, art reviewer and as a member of the study design review panel responsible for writing Art Creative Practice. Deryck has presented a number of workshops on folio development and examination preparation for VCE students and teachers, was co-author of the VCE Art publication *Art-iculate* and wrote the Course Outline and Assessment Criteria for Monash College's Diploma of Art and Design Studies.

I would like to acknowledge my wife Vivienne and sons Tim and Aidan for their support while I researched and wrote this book, and for putting up with me being MIA for large periods of time. I would also like to acknowledge the recommendations made by Tahlia Jolly to ensure that the text addressed the needs of students and teachers and to the fantastic panel ably led by Kathryn Hendy-Ekers, who were responsible for creating this exciting new study design. Finally, thank you to my wonderful students, both past and present, who were so willing to share their writing and artworks to make this textbook possible and provide future students with such valuable examples.

I dedicate this publication to the teachers who will be facilitating the introduction of Art Creative Practice to the next generation of students, and to you the students who have chosen to pursue their art practice through this subject. I hope that this book will provide you with the resources to navigate the study and develop your creative practice.

Using this resource

Congratulations on choosing *Art: Creative Practice*. This book has been closely aligned to the VCE Art Creative Practice Study Design (2023–2027) Units 1–4, and is designed for use by year 11 and 12 students.

Book structure

Chapter 1 introduces terminology, the Interpretive Lenses, and an overview of the Creative Practice.

Units 1–4 are covered in the subsequent chapters, with dedicated case studies of former VCE students.

The **glossary** is divided into an **art terminology** section which defines terms in relation to how they are applied to art concepts throughout the textbook, and an additional section on **exam terminology** to familiarise students with how the exam can assess key knowledge.

Learning activities explore chapter outcomes, develop skills, build knowledge and understanding, and encourage creativity.

Chapter tips assist both students and teachers to consider how to approach a topic, and what conversations can be had as a class to further understanding.

Scan **QR codes** with your phone or tablet camera to watch videos outlining each chapter.

Numbered chapter headings allow easy navigation between the textbook and the interactive version.

Digital resources

This series uses the interactive Elevate platform hosted by Cambridge GO.

In the Interactive Textbook version of this book students will find the following key resources:

- Multiple-choice **quizzes** (digital questions to summarise each chapter)
- **Videos** outlining each chapter
- Downloadable versions of all **activities** in the textbook
- A PDF downloadable version of the student textbook
- Curated **internet links** to explore artworks from the text in further detail.

Guide to icons: the Interpretive Lenses

The application of the Interpretive Lenses provides students with a framework to understand the meanings and messages of artworks, and the relationship that exists between the artist, the artwork and the audience. The Interpretive Lenses also assist the student to understand the ideas and meanings represented in the artwork, and the context in which the artwork is made and viewed.



Structural Lens

The Structural Lens informs the analysis and interpretation of an artwork through the artist's use of visual language. Students consider the use of the structural elements of an artwork, and the context in which artists work and in which the artworks are presented. The Structural Framework is used to analyse the style, symbolism and structural elements of an artwork and how they contribute to the meanings and messages conveyed.



Personal Lens

The Personal Framework is used to interpret how an artist's experiences, feelings, thinking and personal philosophy can be reflected in an artwork. It can also be used to gain awareness of the effect of the viewer's cultural background and experience on the interpretation of the artwork.



Cultural Lens

The Cultural Framework is used to identify the influences on an artwork of the time, place and cultural and political settings in, and purpose for, which it was made. These influences may include historical, political, social, socio-economic, artistic, technological, environmental and religious contexts as well as aspects of ethnicity and gender.

Chapter 1

Characteristics and terminology



Art is a fundamental part of everyday life and can be seen as the collective memory of society, as it reflects the experiences of time and place. Art also contributes to society by changing opinions and instilling values. It is a **visual language** and a powerful means through which to communicate personal experiences, cultural values, beliefs, ideas and viewpoints on experiences and **issues** in contemporary society.

Throughout your study of VCE Art Creative Practice, you will be investigating the role of art in the world by studying contemporary and historical artists from diverse cultures. Through researching artists and artworks, you will be able to articulate the meanings and messages of artworks and how these relate to the audience. You will use the knowledge you gain through the study of other artists to assist your own **artistic practice**.

The study of VCE Art Creative Practice involves the development of skills in research, **analysis** and **art criticism** to interpret and debate the ideas and issues raised in artworks. It fosters inquiry and provides you with the ability to develop your own personal ideas. You will undertake a visual investigation that will draw upon the expression of your personal ideas, influenced by your social, cultural, emotional and physical experiences. You will respond to the artworks you research through the exploration of and experimentation with various art forms, materials, techniques and processes to develop your own artworks.

This first chapter will provide you with the tools and information that will assist you as you work through Units 1–4.

1.1 Pedagogy

Inquiry through art practice

It is useful for you to understand the way VCE Art Creative Practice is taught. This subject uses an **inquiry learning model** that develops critical and creative thinking skills and individual responses through the **Creative Practice**, which is the process that you will apply to art making and responding through Units 1–4 of this study. The study incorporates three approaches to inquiry learning:

experiential learning, inquiry learning and **project-based learning**. The model uses the threads of **Making** and **Responding** that mirror the practice of artists in different cultures and periods of time.

visual language combines the art elements and art principles with materials, techniques and processes to communicate meaning and personal, cultural and contemporary ideas to an audience. This combination can result in the creation of styles, symbols and imagery.

issue an important topic or problem for debate or discussion that affects people's experiences and background; can be related to the economic, philosophical, social or cultural context of artworks, the artist or the audience

artistic practice refers to the ways in which an artist goes about their work, going beyond the physical activities of making art and including influences, ideas and materials as well as tools and skills; includes use of the art process: critical, creative and reflective thinking, visual language and the analysis and interpretation of artworks using the Interpretive Lenses

analysis the separation of the parts of a subject for individual study, to find out their nature, function and meaning. To analyse an artwork, the audience breaks the artwork into simple elements to interpret the ideas and meanings expressed. The fundamentals of art analysis include studying the art elements and art principles, techniques, style, symbols and metaphors included in the artwork. Students use critical analysis to refine their own artistic exploration.

art criticism the analysis, evaluation, interpretation and judgement of works of art; can vary in degrees of positive as well as negative remarks, and critical methods vary considerably in their approaches to considering the forms, content and contexts of works of art

Creative Practice the process used by students for the conceptualisation, development and making of artworks; includes research and exploration, experimentation and development, refinement and resolution as well as reflection and evaluation. These aspects are interrelated and iterative; they do not operate in a set sequence that privileges one or another over the others.

experiential learning learning through concrete experiences in Making and Responding; students test the validity of their ideas and exploration, reflect on their experience and respond to that reflection to guide their art making

inquiry learning learning that requires students to solve problems through questions that have more than one possible resolution; emphasises the process of exploration and experimentation, where the end result is unknown. Develops students' critical and creative thinking, moving beyond gaining knowledge of facts to developing an understanding and critical awareness of their thinking and learning.

project-based learning learning based in the construction of knowledge with multiple perspectives where students drive their own learning through inquiry; requires problem-solving, decision-making, investigation and reflection in response to a specific task while allowing for student choice

Making students learn about and use knowledge, skills, techniques, processes, materials and technologies to make visual artworks that allow them to explore their experiences and to express their ideas and intentions

Responding students explore, analyse and interpret their own artworks and the artworks of others. Students discuss and evaluate artworks and the practices used to create them.



Video 1.1

You will learn in the role of both audience and artist, and gain an understanding and appreciation of the role of visual art in past and present traditions and cultures, as well as the contributions made by contemporary visual artists to our society and how you can contribute through your own art making. The inquiry model encourages curiosity and imagination. You will need to learn how to find new and creative solutions when faced with a problem in a range of **contexts** and then apply these solutions to your art practice. This learnt ability, to think in different ways, be able to adapt to different situations, and apply knowledge and skills to produce creative and expressive responses to ideas and experiences, will enable you to be better prepared to contribute effectively to society not only in art, but in all areas of your life.

Making and Responding together form the practice of an artist, which provides you with knowledge, understanding and skills as both artist and the audience. As you begin to make art, you should consider how the audience might respond to the developing artworks and develop your visual language to effectively communicate your intention through your artwork. As you respond to artworks that you study, you must draw on the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired through your own experiences in making artworks, and apply this to your analysis and understanding of the artwork being studied. Both Making and Responding involve you developing creative and critical understandings of the intentions to communicate meaning and how the audience analyses, interprets and evaluates artworks.

Making

Through 'making' you will learn the knowledge, skills, techniques, processes, materials and technologies used in art practice. Making involves expressing your personal ideas, experiences and intended meanings in different **art forms** and art styles by developing a personal visual language.

Responding

Through 'responding' you will explore, analyse, evaluate, reflect upon and interpret the artworks of others. You will discuss the artworks and the practices used to create them. You will develop

an understanding of visual language and how artists express ideas and communicate meaning by studying the work of others, and discussing and evaluating these artworks using the

Interpretive Lenses.

You will also apply this knowledge to your own making. The exploration, analysis, evaluation of and reflection on your own artworks will, in turn, allow you to respond to this as you develop your visual language, critical and technical skills. Over Units 1–4 you will consider the presentation of artworks in different contexts and develop an understanding of the values and belief systems of the artists and cultures in which the artworks are created. When responding to this you will use the information gathered to interpret artworks and will also apply this knowledge to guide the presentation of your own ideas and artworks.

Critical and creative thinking

Critical and creative thinking involves thinking broadly and using skills and characteristics such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation. This allows you to develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the processes you can use whenever you encounter problems, unfamiliar information and new ideas. Consider how you think and what strategies increase your motivation for, and management of, your learning. You will become more confident and self-sufficient when solving problems and finding solutions to achieve your intentions.

context location and time where the artwork is made, presented or viewed; the economic, philosophical, social or cultural influences on the practices of the artist, their intentions and their expression of ideas, values and beliefs in their artworks or on the audience

art form an established form of artistic expression, which can include, but is not limited to, painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, film, video, ceramics, sound, photography, performance, textiles, fashion, digital artworks, interdisciplinary practices, installations and street art

Interpretive Lenses there are three interpretive lenses: structural, personal and cultural. They have been created by the VCAA to provide students with a framework that can be used to understand the meanings and messages of artworks, and the relationship that exists between the artist, the artwork, the audience and the world.

To develop critical thinking, you should interpret, analyse, evaluate, explain, reason, compare, question, appraise and test.

To develop creative thinking, you should generate and apply new ideas in specific contexts, look at existing situations in a new way, identify alternative explanations, and make new links that arrive at solutions. Creative thinking combines different parts to form something original, sifting through options and refining ideas to discover new possibilities. It requires students to explore and learn through trial and error during both making and responding.

Experiential learning

This is learning through actual experiences in making and responding. Guided by your teacher, you will examine artists in different cultures, and historical periods, and use the knowledge gained to develop your own visual language and art practice. You will explore ideas through the Creative Practice, trialling how **art elements, art principles**, materials, techniques and processes can communicate meaning. You will need to test the validity of your experiments, followed by reflection on the experience before you continue to apply what you discover to your art making. This approach will be the basis of Unit 1.

Inquiry-based learning

Inquiry-based learning is central to VCE Art Creative Practice. It requires you to solve problems through questions that have more than one possible resolution, and emphasises the process of investigation when making and responding. For example, if you want to paint a landscape in oils, the problem of representing the different textures found in the scene might present itself. This raises the question of which technique to use and which method of applying the paint would be most appropriate. To resolve these questions, you could experiment with a range of different painting techniques and tools to determine which will achieve the effect you would like. This is an active process of exploration and experimentation where the end result is unknown.

Inquiry learning is intended to develop your critical and creative thinking and contributes to your ability to participate in thinking practices that develop visual language and an understanding of the creative process. It encourages you to move beyond merely gaining knowledge of facts to developing an understanding and critical awareness of how you think and learn. Inquiry learning encourages you to take responsibility for your own learning. Achieving self-confidence and independence is important when growing as an artist. Developing a willingness to take risks with your art making and learning as much from things that go wrong as the successes you have throughout the process are vital to a successful art practice and are central to Units 2–4.

Project-based learning

Project-based learning is the foundation of Outcome 1 in Unit 3. When applying project-based learning, you will drive your own learning through inquiry. It requires problem solving, decision-making, investigation and reflection in response to a specific task that is presented to you, while allowing you choices throughout the process. This form of learning allows you to work at your own pace and according to your personal interests and strengths, within the parameters of the outcome.

You will apply critical thinking skills to analyse complex problems, investigate questions for which there are no clear-cut answers, and evaluate different points of view and sources of information before drawing appropriate conclusions based on evidence and reasoning.

You will develop creativity and innovation skills, generating and refining solutions to a task based on bringing a range of ideas and approaches together, to present your original artwork based on what you have learnt.

art elements the building blocks used by artists to create a work of art; include colour, form, line, shape, texture, tone, light, sound and time

art principles how an artist organises or uses the elements within a work of art; include emphasis (focal point), movement, rhythm, unity, variety, space, repetition (including pattern), balance, contrast, proportion and scale

1.2 Structure of VCE Art Creative Practice

This study is made up of four units:

- Unit 1: Interpreting artworks and exploring the Creative Practice
- Unit 2: Interpreting artworks and developing the Creative Practice
- Unit 3: Investigation, ideas, artworks and the Creative Practice
- Unit 4: Interpreting, resolving and presenting artworks and the Creative Practice.

1.3 The Creative Practice

Central to art making and responding in Units 1–4 of the subject Art Creative Practice is the process that is to be used by you for the conceptualisation, development and making of artworks. This process is called the Creative Practice. It includes research and exploration, experimentation and development,

refinement and resolution as well as reflection and evaluation. These aspects are interrelated and do not operate in a set sequence that privileges one or another over the others. The process is iterative, which means that it can be repeated as often as required. Aspects of the process can be explored independently, and aspects can be revisited and repeated as often as is required throughout the process from conceptualisation to presentation.

The Creative Practice components do not have to be used in a specific order. You can begin with any aspect that is appropriate to what you wish to do and you should interact with combinations of the components in a dynamic and creative experience. Each aspect of the four components can also be used independently. For example, you might develop an idea, refine your technique without resolving the artwork. After reflecting on what you have done you may need to research the technique further and develop your idea and skill. Once this has been done you would evaluate your process, make further refinements and then

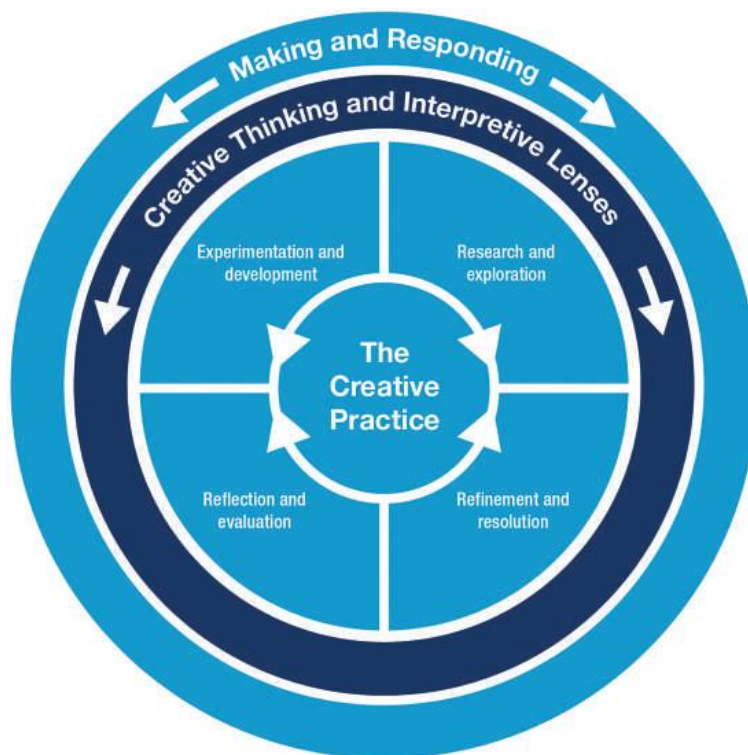


Figure 1.1 The Creative Practice. Adapted from the VCE Art Creative Practice Study Design (2023–2027) © VCAA; reproduced by permission.

resolve your artwork. Some students may choose to begin their process with research, while you might experiment with your selected materials and after reflecting on what you have produced, decide on the direction you want to take.

The VCAA has created a diagram that visually represents the Creative Practice (Figure 1.1). In this diagram you can see how the four components that make up the process you will use in Units 1–4 are interrelated and iterative. They are, in turn, surrounded by Making and Responding, which together form your art practice; as well as Creative Thinking and the Interpretive Lenses. This indicates that you are expected to make use of creative thinking while applying all components of the Creative Practice. You will also apply the Interpretive Lenses as you use aspects of the Creative Practice in order to understand the meanings and messages of artworks, created by other artists and to guide your conceptualisation, development and resolution of your own artworks.

Documentation of the Creative Practice

Documenting your Creative Practice is important as this allows you to communicate your thinking and working to the assessor and audience. It also provides you with the opportunity to clarify your intentions and record your thoughts and process so that you can revisit these at any time.

The documentation should include annotated visual records that can be presented in any form appropriate to your practice. You may use manual or digital means to document all aspects of your learning experience in both making and responding. If you are drawing, painting or sculpting, you can have a sketchbook open and annotate as you go, whereas if you are manipulating images in Photoshop or using another digital program, it may be easier to take screenshots and type your annotation as you are working on the computer. If you are using a tablet to explore an idea, you could handwrite your annotation directly onto the page using the stylus. The important thing is that you record your process as it occurs, in ‘real time’, rather than retrospectively.

This documentation is a record of your process and creative thinking. Some outcomes will require your documentation to include the application of the Interpretive Lenses. The documentation will also act as evidence when you present a **critique**.

The format in which you present your documentation is again your choice, but should be able to be navigated easily by the assessor and clearly reflect your Creative Practice. Your documentation should show the process you went through and be presented in a chronological order rather than curated. Some artists, such as Frida Kahlo (Figure 1.2), Leonardo da Vinci (Figure 1.3) and Janice Lowry (Figure 1.4), have left us with visual diaries that documented their thinking and working, giving us an insight into the artist’s practice.



critique a report that examines a person’s work or ideas and provides a judgement. A critique is a discursive collaborative environment that is organised to engage, explore, express, present and evaluate artworks and to understand, reflect on and improve awareness of the characteristics of art making.

Figure 1.2 Frida Kahlo’s diary, © Banco de Mexico Rivera Kahlo Museums Trust/ARS/Copyright Agency 2022. Photo © Japhotos/Alamy

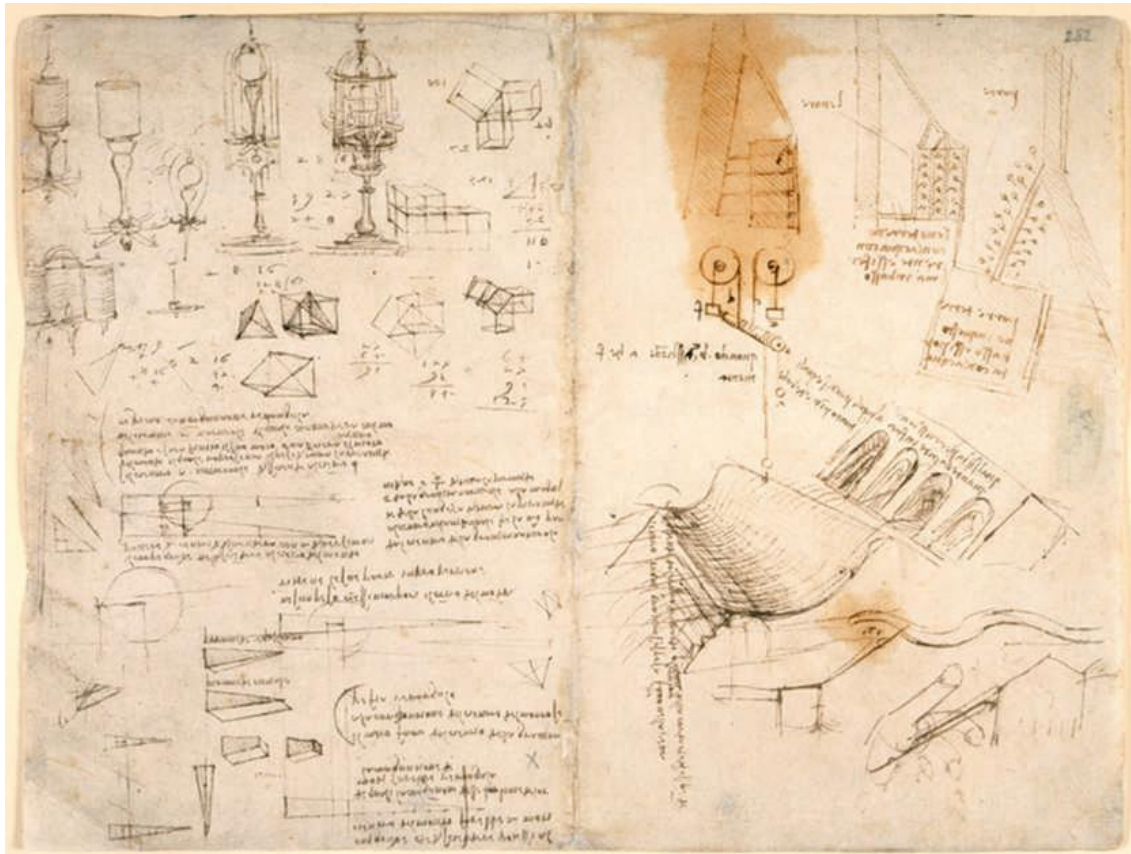


Figure 1.3 Leonardo da Vinci's *Codex Arundel*



Figure 1.4 Excerpt from Janice Lowry's diary

Components of the Creative Practice

In order to correctly make use of the Creative Practice, it may help to fully understand each component and what you are required to do as you apply each aspect of the process.

Research and exploration

Research is the discovery of new knowledge or information and/or the use of existing knowledge in new and creative ways through synthesis and analysis. This can take place in both theoretical and practical applications. Research is often considered to be an academic process, but while it is important to read up on the characteristics of art materials and how to make use of certain techniques, artists often find that researching these through a practical **exploration** is most useful. Exploration is an activity where we search for answers and finding out about something through doing, trialling and questioning. This is very much part of inquiry learning.

In this component of the Creative Practice you are expected to cover a number of dot points:

- Researching and exploring ideas based on observations, experiences and personal interest

While you may research and explore ideas by making **observations** of other artists through reading or watching videos that outline certain ideas you may be interested in exploring through your art, these observations can also be made through interaction with others in your class by discussing and verbally exploring ideas. You may find it helpful to **brainstorm** ideas on your own or with your class. The ideas you come up with in discussion or a brainstorm session will be informed by knowledge as well as personal observations and experiences in life. The act of brainstorming allows you to come up with a lot of ideas very quickly, without evaluating them or limiting a free flow of thought by analysing the ideas or considering the difficulties they may present. Once you have established a list, you are then able to explore these ideas through careful consideration.

Your life **experiences** will be a source of ideas for your art. The knowledge you gain from doing, seeing or feeling things will provide you with

the ideas that you could explore or that you are passionate about and wish to **express** through personal visual language. Ideas can also come from the experience of creating, by making art. As American photorealist painter Chuck Close said, 'All the best ideas come out of the process: they come out of the work itself.'

If you are stuck for ideas, do not put off starting or continuing with your process. Make art and ideas will often reveal themselves from what you create.

- Researching and exploring materials, techniques and processes in art forms to respond to personal, cultural and social influences and ideas

While the first form of research may be the study of materials and techniques in art forms through reading, tutorials or demonstrations, knowledge can also be gained through practical exploration. The physical experience of mixing colour and applying paint can be seen as both research and exploration, because knowledge is gained through doing. Once you have ideas, you start to explore how you can visually represent these ideas by trialling and questioning the characteristics of materials; to establish what is possible and what should be avoided. Exploring the techniques by applying the materials allows you to develop knowledge and skill and to find new and creative ways of using your selected material to represent your idea. This is the act of making and responding that encapsulates the Creative Practice.

- Researching and examining personal, cultural, historical and social influences that inform the exploration and development of artworks

This dot point refers to the study and consideration of cultural factors and the impact of personal experiences on the creation of artworks. These cultural influences include both high and popular cultural forms that artists, including yourself, are exposed to through life. Delving into the origins and impact of these can provide inspiration for

research detailed study of a subject, especially to discover new information or reach a new understanding

exploration the activity of searching and finding out about something

brainstorm to suggest many ideas for a future activity very quickly before considering some of them more carefully

ideas and imagery that can inform the exploration and development of artworks.

- Exploring, analysing and interpreting influences and ideas in artworks using the Interpretive Lenses

The inner band encircling the Creative Practice diagram shows the importance of applying the Interpretive Lenses in order to understand the meanings and messages of artworks created by other artists, and to guide your conceptualisation and exploration of your own art making. Responding to ideas expressed in the artwork of others or the ideas you are exploring through each of the three Interpretive Lenses will provide you with a framework on which to build.

- Exploring, analysing and evaluating how artists use visual language to communicate personal, cultural and social influences, ideas, beliefs and values

The consideration of how artists use visual language to express ideas, beliefs and values is important to develop your own visual language. Studying and analysing the way in which images, symbols, the elements and principles of art, materials, techniques, processes and art forms have been used by artists to communicate their ideas will give you a better understanding of how you can do the same. It is important to reflect as you trial ideas and get feedback from classmates and your teacher to determine how effective your visual language is in conveying your intention.

Experimentation and development

Experimentation is the process of trying out different ideas, and seeing what can be achieved with various materials, techniques and processes in order to make an informed decision about how you can achieve your intention with your art. This is about trialling, making mistakes, having success and learning. Allowing yourself to make mistakes means you are growing as an artist.

A lot of it's experimental, spontaneous. It's about knocking about in the studio and bumping into things.

Richard Prince

Development is the process of growing or changing. It is the process of creating something new, about exploring ideas in different ways, finding alternative ways to express an idea or representing that idea differently. Development is about selecting ideas, visual elements, compositions and techniques from an initial exploration and using them in new ways to improve the outcome. In order to develop, it is important that you do not become too attached to your first idea. This is not about achieving perfection, but rather discovering alternatives so that you constantly improve and make informed decisions.

In this component of the Creative Practice you are expected to cover a number of dot points:

- Experimenting with materials, techniques and processes to develop artworks

Developing your understanding of the characteristics of a selected material and then trying different techniques to apply this material will allow you to find different options to resolve your intention. You can trial various materials and techniques separately but may find it helpful to trial a few different techniques on one development study, as this is easier for you to compare and select the most appropriate one. This can be done by splitting it into sections and applying different materials in each section. Experimenting with materials, techniques and processes allows you to continue developing skills in the application of each. The repetitive act of working in a particular material or art form is not enough to develop skill, but requires both personal reflection on what you have learnt, as well as feedback from your teacher to which you then respond and continue to develop.

- Experimenting with personal ideas and responses

Experimenting with ideas that you are interested in and preferably that you have a personal connection to or experience with will make the experience

experimentation the process of trying methods, activities, etc. to discover the effect they have

development the process of growing or changing and becoming more advanced or the process of creating something new

more real to you. These can be ideas that relate to positive experiences or issues that concern you. You can also consider and respond to a prompt presented by your teacher or an idea that was explored by another artist.

- Experimenting with the influences of ideas, values and beliefs to develop artworks

Your art making can come from considering ideas presented by other artists in their work, or ideas, values and beliefs expressed by those around you such as your family, instilled in you by your religion or part of your cultural heritage. Do you agree with these, or disagree with them? You can also challenge the ideas, values and beliefs that are promoted by society. This could include issues such as equality, identity and the environment.

- Developing ideas in artworks through experimentation and exploration

Once you have your initial idea and you have researched it to see what else you could include, you need to develop the idea through experimentation and exploration. This experimentation could involve creative thinking and brainstorming options to push the idea further, but you should also experiment with imagery, composition and with the materials and techniques. Experimenting with imagery might mean researching related imagery, sketching ideas or photographing a range of images that you have considered as reference.

Creating a **visual brainstorm** is often useful to figure out what you might do with the idea. This allows you to do quick **thumbnail sketches** without worrying about the quality or skill involved. They are merely a visual representation of your idea and do not have to be done from reference. The idea is to develop a range of different approaches to your idea and seeing how effectively they communicate your idea. As the idea becomes more concrete you can trial different compositions and viewpoints as a way of exploring your visual language. In order to develop ideas you need to do more than think and research; you need to make, respond to what you create and then explore further. The aim is to consider options and alternatives.

- Developing knowledge of art elements and art principles through experimentation and exploration to create visual language

The development stage should involve exploring and experimenting with several art elements and principles to decide which will help you achieve the visual result you are looking for. You can explore the elements and principles independently to develop your knowledge of each or you can apply them to the image that you are considering using so that the impact of each different element or principle on your image can be seen immediately. It is important to learn how different combinations will produce different effects. It is particularly important to consider the impact of these on your visual language by experimenting with them in your selected art form.

- Developing points of view and interpretations of the meanings and messages of artworks in different contexts using the Interpretive Lenses

Applying the Interpretive Lenses will help you to focus on the communicative value of the art elements and principles, symbols, art materials and techniques. They also help you to consider how your feelings, life experiences, cultural influences and social issues can assist you to develop ideas. The consideration of these can provide a focus for your art making and help you to develop a personal visual language.

- Developing artworks in response to the research and exploration of and experimentation with visual language

Developing your artwork requires you to look at previous and ongoing research, exploration of ideas and experimentation with elements and principles, materials and techniques and reflective

visual brainstorm a technique of solving specific problems, amassing information, stimulating creative thinking and developing new ideas by unrestrained and spontaneous drawing

thumbnail sketch small, rough sketches that eliminate the unimportant elements and details from the composition. They are not fully rendered sketches and are useful for exploring multiple ideas quickly, or to try out different configurations.

experimentation of visual language. This relies on the iterative nature of making and responding.

- Documenting the influences of ideas, values and beliefs and the application of materials, techniques and processes to develop artworks

Documenting your Creative Practice is important because this allows you to communicate your thinking: where your ideas came from, where you see them going and how you intend to explore these through your art making. Documenting and annotating your art making allows you to critique your application of materials, techniques and processes, and develop them further.

Reflection and evaluation

Reflection is giving aspects of your Creative Practice serious consideration and careful, critical thought. It can include a written record of your process describing what you have done and, more importantly, why you did it. It can identify some of the challenges you faced and how you overcame them.

Evaluation is judging the quality and value of aspects of your Creative Practice. It is an opportunity to critically consider and reflect on your ideas and all aspects of your art practice in order to continue to learn and improve your art making.

Once you have reflected and evaluated your work, it is important to respond to this and continue your process. In this component of the Creative Practice you are expected to cover a number of dot points:

- Analysing and evaluating artworks using the appropriate Interpretive Lenses

The Interpretive Lenses are an important part of the Creative Practice and will provide a focus for ideas and your art making. They will help you to develop a personal visual language. It is important in this component of the Creative Practice to **analyse** and evaluate your works using the lenses. This will allow you to examine them in detail to discover better ways of conveying meaning or to discuss the intended interpretations you are wanting to convey and how they have been

influenced by structural, personal or cultural factors. Analysis breaks your exploration and visual language down into components or essential features that you are then able to evaluate.

- Reflecting, analysing and evaluating using critique and feedback

In this aspect of the Creative Practice you document or record your consideration and judgement of your trials, then respond to this with further exploration and development before repeating the process. This documentation becomes the evidence that you can present during your critique, either as a formal assessed critique or ongoing dialogue with your teacher or others around you. To make the most of any feedback you receive, it will benefit you to reflect on any comments or suggestions made and then to respond to these as you further develop and refine your artwork. The decisions you make in response to any feedback should be documented.

- Analysing and evaluating the application of materials, techniques and processes to resolve ideas in artworks using the Interpretive Lenses

Certain outcomes require you to use your understanding of the appropriate lenses to give a detailed examination of how your application of materials, techniques and processes affects the clear communication of your ideas and adds breadth to your **body of work**.

- Critically analysing and evaluating how the symbolic values and beliefs of people, places and objects are assigned by artists and viewers or audiences

It is important to consider the value of symbols and how they can convey meaning.

reflect to seriously consider and employ careful, critical thought

evaluate to judge the quality and value of something

analyse to examine in detail in order to discover meaning, to break down into components or essential features

body of work consists of personal responses by the student in exploring the Creative Practice, which should lead to a collection of artworks related to each other through ideas, subject matter, style, art form or materials and techniques; each one being as important as the others

Sometimes these might be personal to you as the artist, but the audience will also bring their life experiences, cultural awareness and a knowledge of symbols to the interpretation of artworks. An awareness of this can assist you in guiding the audience understanding by including specific symbols.

- Analysing and evaluating how visual language can communicate ideas and meaning in artworks

Visual language is the central means of communicating ideas in art. It is therefore vital that you constantly consider your use of images, symbols, the elements and principles of art, materials, techniques, processes and art forms, and judge whether they are successfully communicating your ideas. Sometimes it is possible to make these judgements yourself, but because art is intended for an audience, it is useful to seek feedback on your visual language from secondary sources, such as friends, family, classmates and your teacher.

Refinement and resolution

Refinement is the improvement of an idea or how you will represent this idea. It does not involve radical changes, but small changes which improve the idea or artwork in some way. After your initial development you should select an idea for your final artwork and begin refining it. This might be done by including some detail in the foreground of a scene to add more depth and distance to your artwork or by making changes to the composition. You might tweak the positioning of something within the format to make the composition more balanced, or to create more tension, as appropriate to your idea. You might replace one object with another for symbolic value or change the colour or tone to alter the mood of the artwork. You could change the angle from which you view an object slightly, as this might alter the way the audience sees and understands the image.

Resolution is the act of solving a problem that you are presented with by your teacher, or a problem that you have set yourself, such as an idea that you want to address through your art making. You will sometimes resolve problems you are faced with, such as establishing an effective

visual language or how to use a particular material, technique or process effectively through trialling and experimentation. A final artwork will also be seen as the resolution of an initial idea and all aspects of the Creative Practice leading up to this point.

In this component of the Creative Practice you are expected to cover a number of dot points:

- Resolving ideas and visual language in artworks

To successfully achieve your intention, you must solve the problem of visually or aurally communicating your idea to the audience. After exploring, experimenting and developing your ideas and how best to convey these, you need to make informed decisions about your visual language through critical evaluation. You need to make a final choice about which idea or ideas you wish to convey and which elements and principles of art, images, symbols, materials, techniques, processes and art forms will be best to communicate these.

- Resolving points of view and interpretations of the meanings and messages of artworks, using critical judgement and the Interpretive Lenses

When creating a work of art in response to the idea or issue you have chosen to address, it is important to clearly establish your opinion in order to affect the opinion held by the audience. The visual language you use will affect how the audience reacts and this can be strengthened by your application of the Interpretive Lenses. These can provide you with a framework to understand the relationship that exists between the world, artwork and audience and therefore have a more effective impact on them.

- Realising and refining artworks through the selection and manipulation of materials, techniques and processes

This requires you to critically evaluate your manipulation of materials, techniques and processes to determine the best options to realise your intentions before refining your artworks.

refinement a small change or the process that improves something

resolution the act of solving or ending a problem or difficulty

The need to compare options emphasises the importance of having breadth in your body of work. Exploring multiple ideas, approaches, materials and techniques provides you with this. Realising your intention is the result of progressive development and refinement rather than just producing a finished artwork based on an idea, which would be one way of representing the idea rather than a resolution that comes from a process.

It is important to explore different media and surfaces for your artworks. The surface on which you work can also add to the meaning of your art. Imagine you are interested in Thai culture and are creating a body of work using photography. You have taken a range of black-and-white analogue photographs showing both ruined and functioning Thai temples, which you present as mounted gelatin silver prints. One of the things you have noticed about the preserved temples is the presence of gold on many of the surfaces. How could this fact be introduced into your black-and-white prints? You could, for example, scan your negatives and produce inkjet prints on gold metallic paper. The white in the photographs would be replaced with gold, introducing this important aspect of the subject into your final artwork.

The ruined temples that you explored in photography may work very successfully as mounted gelatin silver prints, but could you present these in a more creative way that reflects the quality of these crumbling three-dimensional architectural structures? One of the things that may have caught your attention as you explored the ruins were the blocks of stone that were used to construct the temples. The textures that you captured in your photographs were important to you. How could you incorporate the tactile and three-dimensional qualities of the temples into your photographs?

A solution could involve both the surface on which you work and the medium with which you work. You could create blocks of plaster of Paris with a textured surface that references the textures of the temples' stone blocks. Copy your final gelatin silver print onto Lazertran, and apply the Lazertran photograph to the surface of the plaster of Paris block using purified turpentine. The photograph will adhere to the block, following the rough surface you have created. The light areas

of the image will be replaced with the colours, tones and textures you have created in your block. These blocks with photographs embedded in them could be placed randomly on the ground like fallen blocks of stone or used to construct a three-dimensional structure.

- Refining the use of visual language to communicate ideas and meaning in artworks

Throughout the exploration, experimentation and development of your artwork you have trialled different ways of communicating visually. You have reflected on what you have done, and evaluated the effectiveness of the way in which you communicated your ideas. This might have been through critical evaluation or in response to feedback from the audience, whether that was your teacher, friends or family. Based on what you have learnt from this, you need to make choices as to which aspects of your visual language are effective and which are not. You will then make small changes to your visual language in order to improve the artwork and how it communicates your intention.

- Refining technical skill in the use of materials, techniques and processes in art forms to communicate ideas and meaning in artworks

Similarly, you have explored and experimented with materials, techniques and processes, and you have developed your skill in the application of these. After going through the process and reflecting on your critical evaluation and the feedback you received from your teacher and peers, you can continue to make improvements to the way you work to fine-tune your skill and improve your artwork.

- Considering the presentation and display of artworks in different contexts to communicate ideas and meaning

Presentation refers to the way we show our artwork to the audience. The context in which we view an artwork can affect how we react to it and the meaning and messages we get from it, so presentation is an important part of effectively communicating our intention. In postmodern

presentation the act of showing something, or the way in which something is shown

art, the installation has become an important art form. Projecting a video onto a screen will have a different effect to a video and sound installation where the viewer might become immersed in the artwork. If you are in any doubt as to the importance of how a work is displayed, imagine a mobile by the artist Alexander Calder (such as Figure 1.5), presented lying 'lifeless' on a stone block. Always consider how you want your artwork viewed.



Figure 1.5 Installation photograph, *Alexander Calder: Radical Inventor*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 2019 © 2022 Calder Foundation, New York/Copyright Agency, Australia Photograph by Brooke Holm

The way we show our artwork can challenge, shape and influence audience perspectives. Some of the ways in which this can be achieved are addressed below.

The location

Where the artwork is placed can affect how the audience interprets the artwork. If Melbourne street artist Cel Out's paste-up *Children in Detention* (Figure 1.6) was viewed framed in a commercial gallery that sold prints from animated

films, we might see it purely as an example of the artwork produced for *The Simpsons*. If it were seen at the NGV, we might consider it to be a comment about the place of comics and animation in art, or even referencing the work of pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. Seen in the context intended by the artist, however, it takes on another meaning. Cel Out pasted their work on a wall in Melbourne's Hardware Lane. Viewed by the audience in this location at a time when the refugee crisis in Australia and the government's policy of placing adults and children into detention camps such as Manus Island was front-page news, the work took on a meaning that related directly to this public debate.



Figure 1.6 Cel Out, *Children in Detention*, 2015, paste-up, Melbourne

Activity 1.1

Choose an artwork and place it into three different locations using manual or digital collage, to create a different meaning for the audience. Conduct a survey and see the range of interpretations people offer for each. Are there common interpretations linked to a specific location?

How the artwork is presented in the location

An artwork can be suspended in space, hung on the wall, placed on the floor or presented on a **plinth**. Two-dimensional artworks are traditionally framed and hung on the wall, but how would the meaning be affected by placing it on the floor, or pegged to a washing line in the exhibition space? Three-dimensional artworks have traditionally been presented on plinths to separate them from other artworks, as a way of providing protection from damage, to raise them to a comfortable height for the audience or to be placed at an optimal height so they can be viewed as intended by the artist. Placing a work on the floor might change how we interpret the work, because looking down on something places it in a position of vulnerability or signifies the audience's power or ownership over the object depicted.

Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) was the first sculptor to carve his own plinths on which to present his sculptures. These not only raised the works off the floor, brought them closer to the viewer and isolated the sculpture from the environment, but they also began to play a conceptual role. In his sculpture *Beginning of the World* (Figure 1.7), he placed the marble



Figure 1.7 Constantin Brancusi
Beginning of the World, c. 1920
Marble, nickel silver, and stone, 30 × 20 × 20 in. (76.2 × 50.8 × 50.8 cm)
Dallas Museum of Art, Foundation for the Arts Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clark
1977.51.A-C.FA © Constantin Brancusi. ADAGP/Copyright Agency, 2022

sculpture on a bronze disc which was placed on a marble cube, which in turn was placed on a marble cross. The form of the plinth could have symbolic relevance. The combination of circle and cross could suggest the gender symbol or pictogram used to represent female (the source of life), while the cross can be seen as a symbol of Christ's physical death and the spiritual rebirth of Christians. Brancusi would often repeat the forms of the sculpture in the plinth, creating a greater unity between the two parts. In other works, such as *King of Kings* (c. 1938), it is not possible to tell what is sculpture and what is plinth – if, in fact, there is even a plinth.

plinth a base that supports a statue, or a tall structure, such as a column, on which something rests

Activity 1.2

Present your artwork in three different ways in the intended location. Conduct a survey asking the audience to comment on what meaning is conveyed for them by each of the different placements and if each introduces a different feeling or meaning. Are there common interpretations linked to a specific placement?

The way the artwork is presented can also suggest symbolic meaning. If you are representing a series of beautifully detailed and delicate drawings of everyday objects that you consider to be precious, you could place them in a bound album or a series of small boxes. This could convey that the objects (and the drawings) are worth preserving like cultural artefacts in a museum. If you have an engraving of an insect, pinning the print onto a display board can reference the way collectors pin butterflies onto a display board. Pinning up a drawing of a person may have negative connotations, for the same reason. Presenting multiple copies of an object or image will reference pop art and the ideas of consumerism and mass production.

Activity 1.3

Consider how you could present one of your own artworks in a way that would symbolically enhance the meaning of the work.

The materials you use to present the artwork may suggest meaning. Many of Brancusi's works were highly polished bronze or marble pieces that he placed on roughly carved stone or wooden pedestals. This contrast accentuated the finish of the sculptures, making them appear more mystical, with the solid earthbound mass of the base. In other works, such as *Beginning of the World*, he introduced a highly reflective bronze disc on which the marble sculpture was placed. The reflective surface beneath the sculpture repeated the form of the egg-shaped sculpture as though it was capable of reproducing, pointing to the renewed cycle of life. The polished surface of the disc also reflected the surrounding environment, making everything around it – including the audience – a part of the work.

In her artwork *Perceptions 2021* (monster clay, perspex and wood), Year 12 student Zoe Cornel considered the materials used to create and present her artwork. She explains her intention:

Exploring ideas of beauty and destruction, I used the human figure to link directly to beauty as a changing and evolving concept where destruction can look very different to what we believe it does. I cast four copies of a figure I modelled in monster clay then strategically changed each to reflect how society looks down on certain physical traits and holds others up as the ideal. The original figure was more voluptuous and natural, the second figure was altered to be slim and reflect the ideal of feminine beauty and the expectations that are placed on women by society. Cutting away at the figure and changing it to meet society's standards was a comment on the extremes people go to be acceptable, by resorting to



Figure 1.8 Zoe Cornel, *Perceptions 2021*, monster clay, perspex and wood

plastic surgery. The third figure appears to have been born with a stump or having had one arm amputated, while the fourth figure shows evidence of a mastectomy.

I arranged the four figures in a pyramidal composition with the 'perfect' body on the top, supported by the other three. A pyramid formation is often linked to power where the people with the most power reside at the top and 'lesser' people are at the bottom. Placing the figures that are considered less, due to their physical appearance not meeting society's norms, highlights how unjust these views are and positions the audience to question the morality of society. The reusable quality to monster clay adds a unique meaning, as the figures become more transitory suggesting these trends are temporary and ever shifting. This demonstrates that 'ideals' can go in and out of fashion.

I have also placed the three lower figures on a wood base and the 'perfect' figure on a clear perspex disc. This symbolises that the figure on top that society admires is unrealistic and fake. The synthetic plastic links to the common practice of plastic surgery that people use to achieve this figure. The natural wooden base, on the other hand, has qualities of authenticity and beauty that are to be found in the real bodies below.

Activity 1.4

- 1 Find artworks that have used a material or a surface that adds to the meaning of the artwork.
- 2 Consider how you could use a material or surface to present one of your artworks on that would symbolically enhance the meaning of the work.

Activity 1.5

- 1 Find five artworks that have been presented in a way that adds to the meaning and messages that the artists wish to convey in their work. Note the differences between how each has been presented. Could the presentation of one be applied to any of the others to add to its meaning?
- 2 Select any artwork that you believe explores a concept. Consider how you could present it differently to how the artist has, in a way that would symbolically enhance the meaning of the work.

Didactic information and empirical data

As part of the presentation of the artwork, curators of an exhibition may choose to include **didactic information** alongside the artwork. Didactic texts are interpretive or educational texts related to an exhibition, usually written by exhibition curators, and are displayed on panels on exhibition gallery walls or as part of art object labels. These texts provide background information about the artist related to the work and often guide the audience's understanding and interpretation of the work. They will often include information about personal beliefs or life experiences of the artist, or the social and cultural context at the time of the work's creation. There are also labels that include the **empirical data** relevant to individual artworks. This information is identifying text and may include the name of the artist who created the artwork, the title, date of creation, dimensions, materials used and the owner of the work and can be used by you in applying the lenses to the interpretation of the work.

1.4 Interpretive Lenses

The Interpretive Lenses are an intrinsic part of the Creative Practice. The lenses provide you with a structure that you can apply to the interpretation of the meanings and messages conveyed to the audience through artworks. The lenses highlight the relationship that exists between the artist, artwork and audience. The Interpretive Lenses also help you to understand the context in which the artwork is made and viewed and how this affects your interpretation.

There are three Interpretive Lenses that are embedded in the inquiry practices of VCE Art Creative Practice Units 1–4. These are the Structural, Personal and Cultural Lenses. You will select the most relevant aspects of each of the Interpretive Lenses to consider when exploring and discussing the practices of specific artists and

didactic information text that is intended to teach

empirical data objective evidence; not influenced by opinion or bias

interpreting individual artworks. You will also apply the Interpretive Lenses to document, annotate and evaluate your own Creative Practice in order to explain the messages and meaning you are trying to convey through your visual language.

Through the study of historical and **contemporary artists** from a variety of cultures, you will develop an understanding of each Interpretive Lens and how to apply it. You will use different lenses to understand and appreciate how artists incorporate a range of influences and layers of meaning into their practice, and the relationship the artist and artwork has with an audience and society in general. Not only will this assist you in interpreting their work but also help you to develop your visual language and communicate your intention effectively. The lenses provide alternative ways of analysing, interpreting and evaluating your own artworks and the artworks of others. It is recommended that you visit artworks in art galleries and museums, or in public spaces, to see and experience the artworks in context. You will consider how the contemporary context in which the artworks were made and in which they are viewed informs the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of artworks.

The three Interpretive Lenses will be discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 4 when Area of Study 1 of Units 1 and 2 is unpacked.

1.5 Critique

The critique is an opportunity for you to reflect upon and communicate your use of the Creative Practice to others. It is a reciprocal conversation or discussion about your body of work or part thereof and your practice. This can be delivered using different methods at different stages of the Creative Practice. It is helpful to conduct a critique while you are actively engaged in exploring, experimenting, developing, refining, resolving or presenting artworks and after this has taken place. The critique focuses on aspects of your Creative Practice at the point it occurs. The critique allows you to reflect upon and evaluate the evolution of your body of work, collect and respond to feedback from both your teacher and other students.

The art making is sometimes paused for a critique, so that both you and your teacher can reflect on your use of the Creative Practice to this point. You will be able to consider what is successful, what can be improved, and how the feedback you receive can help you. The discussion that takes place during the critique aims to guide and support you to move forward and think about new possibilities. An important part of the critique is to guide you to build on the learning that has taken place to this point.

During a critique, you may focus on your use of the Creative Practice or some of its aspects. If multiple students are present in the critique, you will also be able to observe the work of others, learn from them and provide feedback to them that will assist their art-making process. You can observe different ways to approach the Creative Practice and consider possibilities outside your usual habits. A key aim of the critique is to help you identify and evaluate the decisions you have made or are making during the application of the Creative Practice.

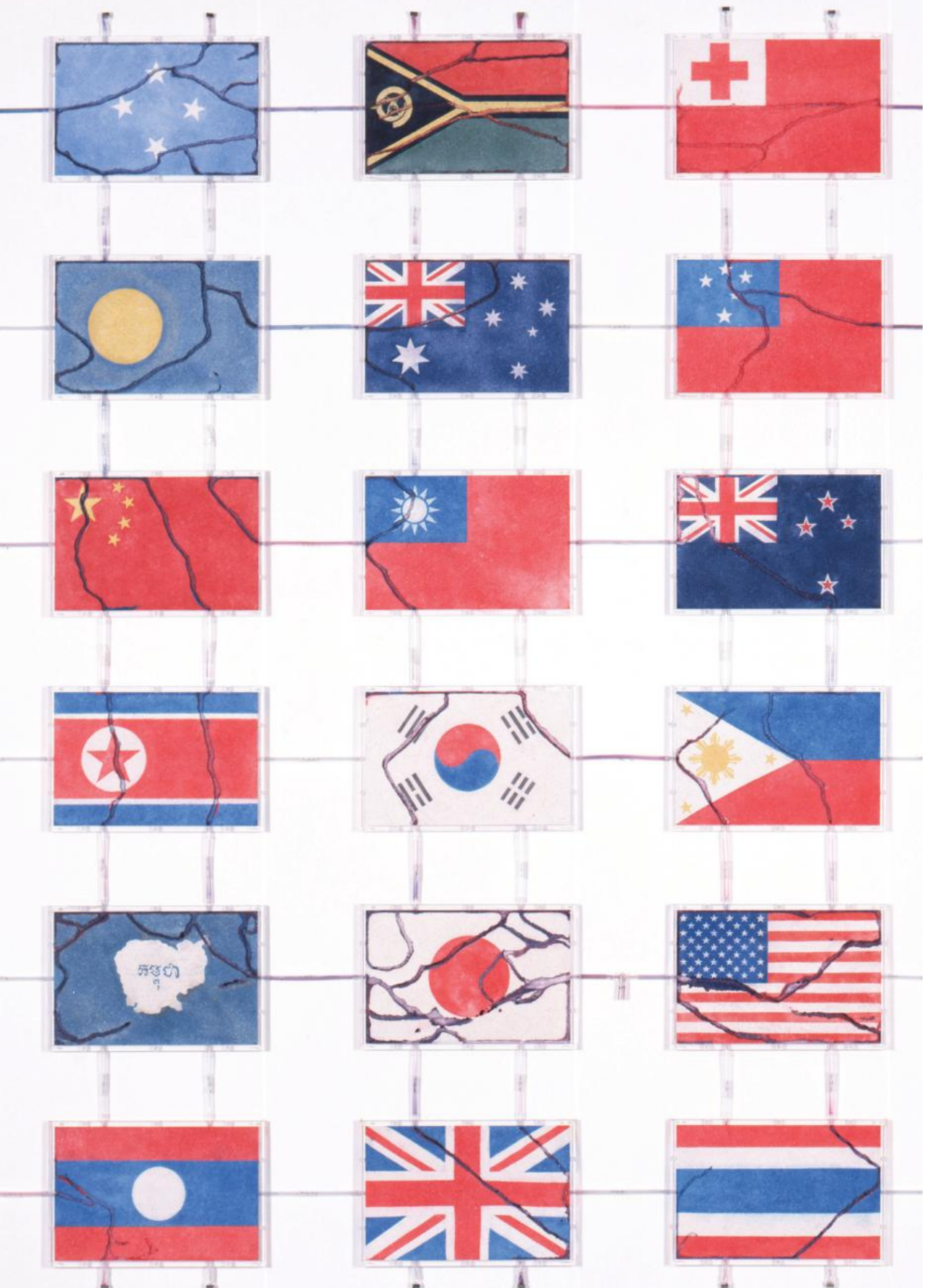
The critique allows both you and your teacher to understand your art-making process. To discuss the effects of your decisions, evaluate your choice and application of materials, techniques and processes. You will be able to reflect on your visual language, how you could better achieve your intention and determine possible ways forward. If the critique takes place at the end of the Outcome, as it does in Unit 3, you can use this process to determine how your artwork could have been made differently or how you could have applied aspects of the Creative Practice differently in order to achieve a more effective resolution to your intention. The learning achieved through this discussion, feedback and reflection can then be applied to your next and future applications of the Creative Practice.

The critique will also give you an opportunity to practise your art terminology and develop a vocabulary that can be applied to your written assessment. You will be required to apply the Interpretive Lenses to the discussion of your Creative Practice, which again gives you an opportunity to apply your understanding in a safe and supportive environment through which you will receive valuable feedback that can be used to develop your practice.

contemporary artists for the purposes of this study, contemporary artists are defined as those who have produced art in the twenty-first century or since 2000; contemporary art mirrors contemporary culture and society

UNIT 1

Interpreting artworks and exploring the Creative Practice



Chapter 2

Area of Study 1 Artists, artworks and audiences



OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit, you should be able to discuss the practice of three artists and apply the Structural and Personal Lenses to analyse and interpret one artwork by each artist.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- the use of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- the use of personal opinions and points of view about artworks
- the ways artists use visual language to communicate ideas and meaning in their artworks
- terminology used in discussion of artists and their artworks.

KEY SKILLS

- analyse and discuss the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- apply relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- formulate and justify personal opinions with reference to artworks and related sources
- analyse and discuss how artists use visual language to communicate ideas and meaning in their artworks
- use appropriate art terminology and references to a range of sources in the discussion of artists and their artworks.

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2.1 Artists, artworks and audiences

Art is part of our lives and can be a record of beauty, scenes or objects that capture our interest, an individual or an event. Art allows us to record our experiences, communicate our thoughts, ideas or beliefs and even challenge the audience's perceptions. One of the aims of this study design is to get you to study artworks, then respond to what you see in order to interpret the artworks and identify the messages and meanings they convey.

What does it mean to interpret art and why is this important? A work of art is interpreted when meaning is applied to it. Meaning refers to interpretations that we construct about a work of art to make it understandable to us and to others. All artworks can be interpreted and can be shown to have meaning. The purpose of interpreting an artwork is to give us a better understanding of the artwork and therefore allow us to engage more with the artwork beyond a cursory glance. To interpret a painting or installation is to make the work more meaningful for ourselves.

The aim, however, is not to obtain the single, right interpretation. There are different methods that can be applied to interpreting artworks and in this study design we use three Interpretive Lenses. These lenses provide you with a structure that you can apply to the interpretation of the

meanings and messages conveyed to the audience through artworks. The lenses highlight the relationship that exists between the artist, artwork and audience, and also help you to understand the context in which the artwork is made and viewed and how this affects your interpretation.

2.2 Interpreting art

To interpret a work of art is to make sense of it, to see it as representing, expressing or symbolising something. An artwork may be about something, record a tradition, represent a culture or belief, or it may be made in response to something. Your task as audience is to gain insight into the work and interpret the messages and meaning the artwork contains. Many factors will provide clues to assist you in this. The Interpretive Lenses are intended to assist you with this and provide a structure or scaffold that will help you with your interpretation.

When going to an exhibition, visitors tend to only spend a few seconds in front of any one work. If you are going to interpret the work, you will need to spend a little more time than that. First, you need to really look at the work in front of you. What do you see? You must examine its surface appearance, its physical and visual properties.



Video 2.1

Chapter tip 2.1

Before discussing the Interpretive Lenses, look at an artwork provided by your teacher. Try to explain what is going on in the artwork. As you make statements about the work, try to explain what you see in the artwork that makes you say this. You may each come up with individual and sometimes contradictory statements, but each is substantiated with evidence you identify in the artwork. This process ensures that you have first interpreted the artwork and, second, identified that there can be multiple, substantiated interpretations of the same work.

This subject is unique because there is no right or wrong answer. Irrespective of your interpretation, you are correct, because that is the meaning that the work has for you. Even if you are the only person to interpret the work in that way, it is still valid.

Identify the art form, what materials have been used, and what it looks like. Is it refined and detailed, or loose and expressive? Is it **figurative**, **abstracted** or **abstract**? The decisions the artist made about the materials, style and approach will help you to decipher the meaning of the work. It is useful to describe what you have identified, before then considering what you see. When looking at artworks, we understand what we see as symbols, and we begin to interpret what is in front of us. Applying each of the lenses will provide different clues that we can consider. This could be the symbolic use of colour, a personally significant subject, or a cultural reference.

All artists manipulate the structural qualities of their artworks by controlling the manner in which they apply the elements and principles of art, or how they use the materials, techniques and processes that they have selected. Their work also reflects a certain style which may be influenced by personal or cultural experiences, values and beliefs.

This study design encourages inquiry to help you to interpret artworks. It is not enough just to describe what an artwork looks like. It is important that you try to understand how the appearance of the artwork communicates a message from the artist, or to determine what the work means for you.

2.3 An introduction to the Interpretive Lenses

During this unit you will examine how artists express and represent ideas, and communicate meaning in artworks, by examining artists in different societies, cultures and historical periods. You will develop your own interpretation and viewpoints about the meanings and messages of artworks by applying the Interpretive Lenses.

What exactly are the lenses?

This is a term created by the VCAA for this study design, and while you can apply it to the discussion of any artist's work, artists do not use the Interpretive Lenses when they work. The lenses

are tools that assist you to analyse and interpret the meaning of artworks.

A lens is an optical device: something that you look through. A lens can focus light to form an image and it allows you to see with clarity. An Interpretive Lens can therefore be seen as something that focuses information that we have about an artist, artwork, the audience or the world that they exist in. This information allows you to form an interpretation or opinion about the artwork and its meaning.

Lenses are used as visual aids in glasses to correct defects of vision. An Interpretive Lens is used to clarify what we see and helps us to make sense of the messages in artworks and establish meaning. Each lens will provide us with different things to look for in the artwork to aid our interpretation. The different lenses also allow us to focus on particular aspects of the artwork. The lenses provide a point of reference or context in which to consider the artwork. When applying the lenses to the interpretation of art, it is important to use correct terminology. The glossary at the end of this book will provide you with a list of terms to build a good vocabulary of art terminology.

In order to apply the lenses to interpret an artwork, you need to select the most relevant aspects of each lens, then raise certain questions linked to the lens to be considered. There are three lenses and in Unit 1 Area of Study 1 you will be introduced to the Structural and the Personal Lenses. You will learn to apply these two lenses through the research and analysis of at least three artists who have been inspired by ideas relating to personal identity, their practice and artworks. The artists may be selected by your teacher, or your teacher may allow you to research artists of your choice. The artists must, however, come from a range of societies and cultures, including at least one Australian artist. At least one of the artists must be considered a historical artist who

figurative representing objects from the observed world in such a way that they can easily be recognised

abstracted simplified from reality and lacking in the details that make the work clearly recognisable; can retain elements of its figurative origin

abstract not representing outward appearances; having no recognisable subject. Note: this is different from 'abstracted', where the artist simplifies the subject but it remains figurative.

has worked prior to 2000 and at least one of the selected artists must be a contemporary artist. The artworks you study by the contemporary artist must have been produced since 2000.

You will be required to use the lenses to analyse at least one artwork by each artist to interpret meanings and messages conveyed by these artworks. This should help you discover how the lenses can enhance your understanding of artworks. You should consider how you connect to artworks and how the presentation of artworks can challenge, shape and influence your perspective as the audience. You must learn how to use evidence from artworks and a range of sources as clues to guide your interpretation. This evidence must also be used to support your personal interpretation and to substantiate your personal opinions about the artworks. You will explore the practices of these three selected artists to examine and compare historical and contemporary practices.

NOTE: The mention of any aspect of a lens, such as an art element for the Structural Lens, does not indicate that you are applying the lens. The lenses are used to interpret artworks and, therefore, in order to apply the lens you must actually state what message or meaning is conveyed through the consideration of this aspect of the lens you have selected. It is helpful to remember that when you are interpreting an artwork you must select an appropriate lens to do so, explicitly mention the appropriate lens and use aspects of this lens to substantiate your interpretation.

2.4 Structural Lens

This lens helps you to analyse how the structural aspects of the artworks, the style that the artist has worked in and any **symbolism** they have used contribute to meaning. Structural aspects can be considered when applying the other two lenses, but the focus in these instances takes into consideration how the structural aspects relate to personal or cultural perspectives.

When applying this lens, you must look at how the artist has manipulated art elements and principles, used materials, techniques, style and imagery to present the audience with a message.

What physical qualities draw your eyes to the focal point and how does this suggest particular meaning? What mood is created? How has the artist achieved this? Does the style of the work, the marks made, or the colour or tone used generate certain emotional responses from you? Has the artist used particular symbols that convey particular meaning for you? To provide a convincing interpretation, you must refer to visual evidence from the artwork to support your opinions about the messages and meaning. You must discuss the visual language of the work.

Structural aspects

What does it mean to consider the structural aspects of the artwork? These are the things that are used to make the artwork and how that artist has gone about this. This includes the art elements and principles evident in the artwork, the materials, techniques, processes and art forms that have been used to create the artwork.

The art elements

When applying the Structural Lens to an artwork you need to look at how the art elements and principles have been applied. Ask yourself how the use of the elements and principles have added meaning to the artwork.

There are nine art elements, including six traditional and three modern elements. The traditional elements include line, shape, colour, tone, texture and form. Historically, no artwork was able to be created without at least one of these elements. Artists have found other elements that can be used to create art with advances in technology. The modern elements include sound, light and time. There are 11 art principles, and these include emphasis (focal point), movement, rhythm, unity, variety, space, repetition (including pattern), balance, contrast, proportion and scale.

Using the art elements and art principles to analyse the meanings and messages of the artwork is a bit like baking a cake: the elements are

symbolism representing something abstract, an idea or concept with something concrete, visible or tangible

the ingredients and the principles are the recipe, or the way the elements can be put together in an artwork. The combination of the art elements and art principles in an artwork is also called the **composition**, or the arrangement of the objects in the **format**.

An artist may choose certain art elements and combine them with the principles to express their ideas. This lens focuses on how the artwork is structured. When discussing the elements of art and their impact on your interpretation of the artwork, you need to consider the qualities of the element and their function within the context of the artwork. It is important, however, not to only describe the quality of the element but what ideas are generated in the artwork by the way the artist used the element or principle.

Line

Line can be described as thick or thin, straight or curved, heavy or light, active or static, aggressive or passive, sensual or mechanical. In an artwork, line has the ability to indicate direction, define boundaries, imply volume and suggest emotion and movement. The direction or movement of lines can lead your eye through an artwork, guiding your interaction with the work or leading your eye to the focal point. The direction of the line (for example, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, spiral or curved) can also suggest the character of an artwork or create a feeling within the audience.



A horizontal line suggests rest, the position of your body in bed. A vertical line suggests something static, such as a soldier standing at attention; but it can also imply upward or downward movement. If an artist uses both vertical and horizontal lines this suggests absolute balance. The crossed lines are reminiscent of a balancing scale and when the beam is horizontal on the vertical support the scale is balanced. Keeping with that analogy, when the beam is on a diagonal it is unbalanced. Diagonal lines also imply movement, which might bring to mind a slide in a children's playground. Diagonal lines that move in different directions and cross over might suggest conflict

or confusion. A line that has a downward curve is soft or passive, but it also reminds you of the shape of a sad mouth. In contrast, a line that has an upward curve reminds you of a smile and therefore suggests happiness, so an artwork filled with upward curving lines might be uplifting. A spiralling line suggests travel that could move up or down, but also tends to have negative connotations such as a whirlpool sucking you in or a destructive tornado.

Rhythmic or repeated line can link across the surface of an artwork, visually unifying the work. Line can, however, depending on its location in the artwork, divide or unbalance the composition.

When discussing line, you can also refer to **outline**, which is a line that defines the edge of shapes and spaces. Outline usually will create flatness in an artwork. A silhouette is a completely enclosed outline of a single object that is devoid of any reference of form and is therefore **two-dimensional**. **Contour lines**, on the other hand, move over, inside and around the object. These lines define the object's **three-dimensional** form. They show the outlines and internal shapes. A contour line implies volume.

You can also refer to the spatial quality of line. This refers to the spatial effects that can be created by types of line. For example, light lines recede and thicker dark lines advance. Line can be used to create tone or shading by crosshatching.

Some elements can be implied. An **implied line** is line that is not physically evident in a work of art, but can be visualised by the audience. For example, a person pointing at an object creates an implied line between the tip of the finger and the object. An implied line is established by the direction a person in an artwork is looking. This is referred to as the line of sight and can draw the audience's eye in the same direction, guiding your

composition the arrangement of the objects and the way the art elements are structured to achieve the principles in the format

format the work area (shape) of a two-dimensional work of art, such as the canvas, wall (mural), paper (drawing or graphic)

two-dimensional flat with two dimensions: height and width

three-dimensional has three dimensions: height, width and depth

interaction with the artwork. Implied line can serve as an underlying organisational structure in a work of art, as can be seen in Marc Chagall's *I and the Village* (1911) (Figure 2.3).

Example of analysing the use of line in an artwork

If you analyse the use of the art element line in Figure 2.1, you might say:

The flowing curving lines created by the jet trails suggest free movement across the

sky and draw my eye across the work. This contrasts with the static scene emphasised by the vertical poles and the horizontal line of the horizon. This combination of line suggests to me that Adams is commenting on the advances in technology in the early 1950s, with the speed that can be attained by the jets that are only evident from the trails left behind. These advances are emphasised when contrasted with the earthbound and slow-moving trains evidenced by the gentle curving tracks.

Activity 2.1

Consider the use of line in the **gelatin silver print** by Ansel Adams, *Rails and Jet Trails*, Roseville, California. What ideas and feelings are generated by the quality of line in this artwork? What meaning might this add to the work? Find alternative responses to those suggested in the example above.



gelatin silver print black-and-white photographs produced in the darkroom using paper coated with an emulsion of light-sensitive silver salts in gelatin

Figure 2.1 *Rails and Jet Trails*, Roseville, California 1953 (negative); 1976–1979 (print)
Ansel Adams, American, 1902–1984. Gelatin silver print
Image and sheet: 13 3/8 × 9 3/4 inches (34 × 6 3/16 × 14 inches (15.7 × 35.5 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Hauslohner, 1976
Accession Number: 1976-213-36
Philadelphia Museum of Art: 1976-213-36
© The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust

Activity 2.2



Figure 2.2 *Starry Crown*, 1987

John Thomas Biggers

Acrylic and mixed media on Masonite, 60 1/8 × 48 1/8 in. (1 m 52.72 cm × 122.24 cm)

Dallas Museum of Art, Museum League Purchase Fund, 1989.13

Image courtesy Dallas Museum of Art

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Shape, form and space

Shape, form and space are closely related. We live in a world of space, filled with objects that have shape or form. Some shapes, like stop signs, are recognisable at a distance, before we can read the words on them.

Shape is a flat two-dimensional area (having height and width) defined by an outline, an area of tone or colour, or by the boundaries of a three-dimensional object. A shape contrasts continuously with what is behind or around it and stands out against it. A shape can be seen as a true shape or an implied shape. Both can be seen in Marc Chagall's *I and the Village* (Figure 2.3).

There are two categories of shapes, geometric and organic. **Geometric shapes** can be described

using mathematical formulas; for example, a square, circle or triangle. These are precise, regular and generally used for uniformity, decoration or similar. **Organic shapes** are irregular and uneven shapes, which often occur in nature. They are generally of living things. Also called **free-form shapes**, they are more informal than geometric shapes.

Forms and shapes are related. The side of a cube is a square and the end of a cylinder is a circle. Form, however, is different to shape, in

geometric shapes shapes that are precise and regular, and can be described using mathematical formulas

organic shapes irregular and uneven shapes that occur in nature



Figure 2.3 Marc Chagall, *I and the Village*, 1911, oil on canvas, 75.6 × 59.6 in. (192.1 cm × 151.4 cm)

Consider the use of shape in the two paintings.

- 1 What ideas or feelings are generated by the types of shapes and how they have been used in this artwork?
- 2 What meaning might this add to the work?

that forms are objects that have or appear to have three dimensions. Like shapes, they have height and width, but forms also have depth. They are also referred to as a **mass** – they have the physical bulk of a solid body of material and appear to have weight. When a mass or form encloses space, it is referred to as **volume**. The exterior of a building is perceived to be a mass in space, the interior is experienced as volume.

Mass is often a major element in sculpture and architecture. A mass can be compact (closed), as in many Egyptian sculptures, which indicates permanence. These forms do not openly interact with the space around them. A more linear form tends to suggest a temporary existence. An open form, one that breaks into space, interacts with its surrounding space. **Voids** in a mass can

also establish a dynamic interaction with space. An object is perceived in relation to the space it occupies, and the character of that interaction carries some of the work's meaning.

Like shapes, forms may be geometric or organic. Geometric forms are generally used for construction and organisation while organic forms are irregular and uneven, like pebbles and branches and bones, and are linked to nature, growth, individuality and change. British sculptor Henry Moore wrote: 'Rounded forms convey an idea of fruitfulness, maturity, probably because of the earth, woman's breasts, and most fruits are rounded, and these shapes are important because they have this background in our habits of perception.'



Activity 2.3



Figure 2.4 *Sennefer*, 18th Dynasty, Egypt, granodiorite, 90 × 38 × 54 cm, held in British Museum



Figure 2.5 Alberto Giacometti, *Man Pointing*, 1947, bronze, 1780 × 950 × 520 mm, held in Tate Modern

Compare the way the artists have used the element of form in their sculptures. What meaning is suggested in each?

In two-dimensional artworks, such as paintings and drawings, mass or form is implied. An illusion of form is achieved in a two-dimensional artwork by means of contour line, directional lines or modelling (the use of tonal variation). The use of tone to create form/mass is achieved through light and dark (**chiaroscuro**). Subtle gradations of tone (light and shade) reveal the form without sharp outlines that flatten form. The direction of light will affect the volume of the implied form. Light coming from behind or in front of an object tends to flatten it while the form and mass are enhanced by light from the side and slightly above and slightly to the front. Colour can also be used to

create an illusion of solidity and three-dimensional form by using spatial colour, i.e. **modulation**.

Colour

Colour can provide a range of different meanings when interpreting a work of art. There are three properties of colour: hue, value and saturation.

chiaroscuro Italian for 'light-dark'; refers to the contrast of light and dark to make forms look three-dimensional

modulation moving from vibrant warm hues to cool hues to describe the transition from light to shade; using colour rather than tone to imply form in painting

colour the aspect of any object that may be described in terms of hue, value and saturation

Activity 2.4

Explore the subtleties of tone by trialling the technique of three-tone drawing. By working with a black-and-white medium such as conté on a mid-toned paper, you can heighten the contrasts of the light and dark in the subject itself.

Hue refers to the name of the pure colour on the colour wheel, such as 'red'. **Value** is the lightness or darkness of the colour. When discussing the lightness or darkness of colour, it is better to use the term 'value' so that you do not confuse it with the element of tone, which might cause your discussion to go off track. **Saturation** (or intensity) refers to the brightness or dullness of a hue. A hue is at its brightest when it is in its most pure state. When colour values in a work jump quickly from very **high key** to very **low key** (intensity), a feeling of excitement and movement is created. When the values are all closer together the image seems much calmer. Artists often use colour to move the viewer's eye through a composition by distributing it at different points in the image.

When discussing colour, it is beneficial to use terms such as 'objective', 'subjective', 'arbitrary' and 'spatial'.

Objective colour is descriptive colour, also referred to as local colour. It is the colour of the object, sometimes called optical colour, or the colour we see. Objective colour is the natural colour of the object as it is normally perceived, such as a red flower, green grass and blue sky.

Subjective colour, on the other hand, refers to the emotive or symbolic properties of colour, e.g. red stands for anger/passion. When artists use colour to express feelings, they usually ignore the local colour of objects. They choose colour arbitrarily, that is by personal preference.

Arbitrary colour refers to colour used for its own sake, independent of subject matter. Sometimes artists will use subjective colour for compositional rather than symbolic purposes. This could be to balance an artwork or draw attention to the focal point. It may even be to introduce a sense that the artwork represents a world separate from our physical world with its blue sky and green grass.



Figure 2.6 Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Milk Jug and Fruit*, c. 1900, oil on canvas

Spatial colour is used to describe how artists use colour to create an illusion of depth in a two-dimensional work. Warm/bright colours advance, they create the illusion of coming forward. Cold/dull colours tend to recede, moving back into space. Colour can also be used to enhance form, by means of spatial colour. This is called modulation and was used successfully by Cézanne. This is particularly evident in the way he used colour to describe the form of fruit in *Still Life with Milk Jug and Fruit* (c. 1900).

Colour groupings or **colour schemes** describes the overall selection of colours in an artwork. Some colour schemes used in art are analogous, complementary and monochromatic. A colour scheme can create an emotional response from the audience and therefore suggest meaning.

hue refers to both a colour and a shade of a colour; the attribute of colours that permits them to be classed as red, yellow, green, blue, etc.

value the degree of lightness or darkness in a colour

saturation the intensity of a colour

high key composed mainly of light tones

low key composed mainly of dark tones

objective colour the actual colour of an object, observed colour; also known as local colour

subjective colour a colour chosen for personal reasons or selected by the artist for its symbolic value

arbitrary colour colours in an artwork that have no basis in the realistic appearance of the object depicted

spatial colour the use of advancing and receding colour to create the illusion of depth on a two-dimensional picture plane

colour scheme a combination of colours chosen for a particular reason

Analogous colours, for example, are colours that are next to each other on the colour wheel. They have a close relationship with each other. An analogous colour scheme can be either warm or cool. Either way, their similarity establishes colour harmony. Claude Monet's later paintings are a good example of this. He used mostly blues and greens. Rather than hue contrast, Monet relied on value and saturation contrast in his paintings. As is evident in Monet's *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge* (Figure 2.7), an analogous colour scheme results in a harmonious, relaxing image.



Figure 2.7 Claude Monet, *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*, 1897–99, oil on canvas, 90.5 × 89.7 cm (35 5/8 × 35 5/16 in.)

Complementary colours are opposite each other on the colour wheel. When placed next to each other, a very strong contrast and vibrant effect is achieved because they intensify each other. This can become jarring and uncomfortable to look at if not carefully balanced. Mixing complementary colours has the opposite effect: it dulls the hue. Almost equal amounts mixed together results in neutral greys. The impressionists used this effectively in shadows and to darken colours without using black. Vincent van Gogh is an example of an artist who uses the complementary colour scheme effectively. In *Paris Sunflowers* (1887) (Figure 2.8), he used a dull background of blue to complement the warm orange of the flowers and make them stand out.

A **monochromatic** colour scheme utilises just one colour with varying levels of saturation and value. Picasso uses a monochromatic colour



Figure 2.8 Vincent van Gogh, *Paris Sunflowers*, 1887, oil on canvas, 92.1 × 73 cm (36.3 × 29 in.)

scheme in *The Tragedy* (1903) (Figure 2.9), an example from his 'blue period'. The entire painting is done almost exclusively in shades of blue, although there is a hint of warmer colour in the boy's cloak and the figures' skin tones, offering a little variation.



Figure 2.9 Pablo Picasso
Spanish, 1881 – 1973
The Tragedy 1903
oil on wood
overall: 105.3 × 69 cm (41 7/16 × 27 3/16 in.) framed: 127 × 90.8 × 8.9 cm (50 × 35 3/4 × 3 1/2 in.) Chester Dale Collection
National Gallery of Art, Washington 1963.10.196
© Succession Picasso / Copyright Agency 2022

analogous colours three hues, which are positioned next to each other on the colour wheel

complementary colours two colours that are on opposite sides of the colour wheel

monochromatic only using variations of one colour; mono = one and chrome = colour

In oil painting, many artists start with a monochromatic layer then build colour on top. This way, the value structure can be established without having to worry about multiple colours.

Many students mistake 'monochromatic' for meaning black-and-white. That is not the case at all. Monochromatic simply means one colour (mono = one and chrome = colour). Black and white are not colours and are referred to as **achromatic** (without colour).



*Because colours have an emotional effect, an analogous or monochromatic colour scheme can quickly establish a mood. A generally cool colour scheme suggests sadness, while a warm colour scheme suggests joy. This is referred to as using **emotive** colours. Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian-born painter and member of the German Expressionist group The Blue Rider (Der Blaue Reiter) from 1911 to 1914 and teacher in the Bauhaus from 1922 to 1933. He believed that a painting of a woman in a white dress would create a completely different emotional reaction to the very same painting with the woman dressed in red. (This gave rise to abstraction, where colour was used for emotive reasons with no objective or descriptive function). Dark values can be used to create a sense of foreboding or danger, while light values can create a sense of hope. This is because we apply symbolic meaning to colour.*



Symbolic colour is evident in the world around us; for example, red often represents danger. Stop signs are red with white writing and a red traffic light tells us to stop until it is safe to proceed. Artists often use colour for its symbolic value. For instance, in Western culture white symbolises purity, blue symbolises peace and red symbolises danger. In North India, flat areas of colour are used to suggest certain moods. Red is anger and blue represents sexual passion. In Edvard Munch's The Dance of Life (1899) (Figure 2.10), we can find a great deal of symbolism, but symbolic colour is clearly evident in the three women in the foreground. Here, Munch expresses passion and love in the red of the central woman's dress; white symbolises youth, life, and innocence. In contrast, the woman on the right is clothed in black to express loneliness, sorrow and death.



Figure 2.10 Edvard Munch, *The Dance of Life*, 1899, oil on canvas, 125 × 191 cm

Some artists, such as the German Expressionist Franz Marc (Figure 2.67), develop their own personal scheme for the symbolic meaning of colour.

To Marc, blue represented the masculine, robust and spiritual. Yellow conveyed comfort and represented the feminine; gentle, serene and sensual. Red was brutal and heavy. To him it represented matter (in his paintings he used it for the land).



Activity 2.5

Change the colour of an existing image by adjusting the hue in a photo editing app such as Photoshop. See if you can change the mood or feeling that the image communicates. You could use your own photograph or an artwork by someone else that has a specific colour scheme.

Tone

Tone is the value of lightness or darkness in an artwork. It is used to suggest form or create mood. The tonal values of an artwork can be adjusted to alter its expressive character.

- achromatic** lacking hue/colour, such as white, grey or black;
a = without and chrome = hue/colour
- emotive** arousing feeling or emotion
- tone** the relative lightness or darkness of a colour or the range of lightness and darkness from white through various greys to black

Sometimes people refer to tone as shade. Many tones are found in the world around us. Clouds, for example, are typically white or grey, but never a solid shade. An object that has a solid colour will have tones when we look at it because the tones are created by the way light falls on the object. The shadows and highlights give it form. Clouds appear lighter on top where they are exposed to sunlight, whereas they appear darker underneath, giving us an indication of their size and shape. Tone can also be used to create a sense of depth and distance.

A full range of tones adds visual interest to an artwork and the distribution of these tones can create a rhythm or pattern within a composition. Without the contrast between blacks and whites

with various grey tones in between, the image can appear dull. When working in colour it is important to remember that every colour comes in a variety of tones, although this is not always obvious to our eyes. A blue next to a red may appear darker, but they may actually have the same value. To see the tonal values of colours, we need to take away the hue, leaving us with only grey tones.

Pieter Claesz constructed a counterchange of dark and light tones in his *Still Life* (Figure 2.11). The glass on the left is dark against a light background, while the breakfast roll on the right is light against a dark background. This is created by the gradation of tones in the background and is an artistic device that artists use to increase the dramatic impact of a subject.

Activity 2.6

It is useful to take away the hue when working in colour in a painting, so that you can see the grey tones. This will help you check that you have a range of tones to create visual interest and to add volume to your subject. Viewing your artwork through a piece of red cellophane will provide you with a monochromatic view so that you can see where you need more contrast. You can also do this with a digital image in a photo editing app by desaturating the image. Try desaturating Monet's *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge* and see the range of tones he has used in this analogous painting.

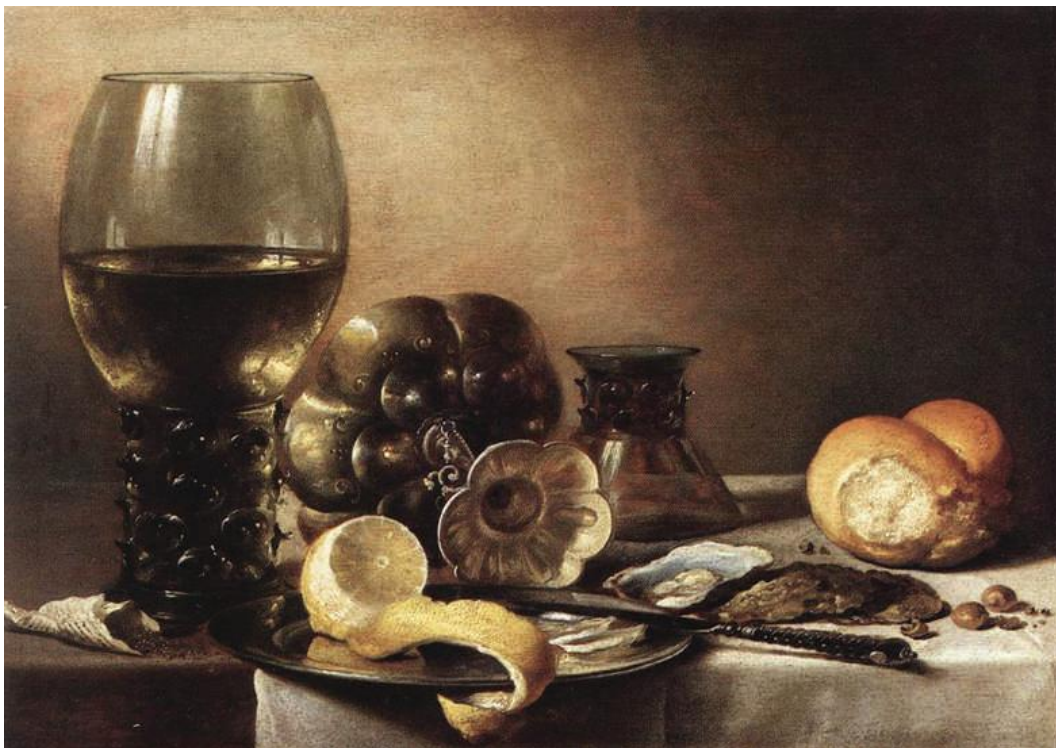


Figure 2.11 Pieter Claesz, *Still Life*, 1633, oil on oak panel

An artwork may have an overall tone which is referred to as the **global tone**, setting the mood. An image that has a light global tone would suggest a light-hearted, happy scene, while an image that has a dark global tone may appear gloomy and sad. **Local tone** can also convey meaning in an artwork. A dark stormy scene may have a dark global tone, but if the artist adds light in the area, this localised light tone can suggest hope in an image of doom.

Texture

Texture reflects the sense of touch. It is the surface or tactile quality of an object; something we sense by applying touch to different surfaces. Texture is one of the fundamental elements of three-dimensional art and relates to the materials selected and the processes used in creating the sculpture, such as casting, welding, carving, polishing or tapping. **Natural textures** are the ones already existent, while **artificial texture** is achieved through different manipulations of materials.

Texture can also be the visual effect produced. We imagine what it would feel like: is it rough or smooth, hard or soft? Tactile texture is physical and can be referred to as actual texture, while a visual texture is implied. It is an optical illusion of texture that can be created in a two-dimensional artwork by means of mark-making, tonal contrast and the manipulation of materials. This can be seen in the work of hyperrealist artists, such as Audrey Flack, who painted *Chanel* 1974 (refer to the digital textbook to view

a copy of this work.) You can also observe the artist's ability to suggest different surface texture in *Still Life with Figs and Bread* (Figure 2.12), where Meléndez shows the difference between the fruit, bread, knife and the wood grain in the cask. These artists create texture on their paintings in such a way as to completely trick the eye.



Figure 2.12 Luis Meléndez, *Still Life with Figs and Bread*, c. 1770, oil on canvas, Patrons' Permanent Fund, 2000.6.1

global tone the overall tone of an artwork

local tone tone used in a particular area within an artwork

texture the quality of something that can be decided by touch; the degree to which something is rough or smooth, or soft or hard

natural texture actual textures that already exist and are tactile or can be felt

artificial texture texture that does not actually exist but is implied through the artist's use of art materials and other elements of art

While texture adds visual interest to a work of art, it is an element that has equal significance in producing meaning along with line, colour, shape or any other element. *A smooth texture can be reassuring or sensual, while a rough texture can create a sense of discomfort. A jagged texture can be threatening while a soft texture can be comforting.*

A natural texture is often found in the works of Henry Moore, such as *Recumbent Figure*, 1939 (access the digital textbook to view a copy of this work). Moore created *Recumbent Figure* by carving the stone by hand, using traditional carving techniques and a range of chisels, hammers and files (Figure 2.13). A mallet and claw tool were used to refine the shape before it was finished with fine files. While some claw marks remain visible on the underside of the figure's arms as evidence of the artist's hand, Moore believed in 'truth to materials' and the assertion of the 'stoniness of the stone'. He tried to ensure that the natural texture of the material dominated. In the sculpture you can see the texture of the Green Hornton stone and even the remnants of fossilised shells and pebbles in the surface. These serve to

reinforce the idea that the sculpture is part of a cycle of natural energy. According to Henry Moore, 'Pebbles show nature's way of working stone. Some of the pebbles I pick up have holes right through them ... A piece of stone can have a hole through it and not be weakened – if the hole is of a studied size, shape and direction. On the principle of the arch, it can remain just as strong. The first hole made through a piece of stone is a revelation. The hole connects one side to another, making it immediately more three-dimensional. A hole can have as much shape-meaning as a solid mass.'

As a sculptural element, a hole within a sculpture could bring the back of the work to the front exaggerating its essentially three-dimensional quality. It allows the sculpture to be a **free-standing** form perceived as existing in space, rather than as an object intended to be viewed from a single angle like a **relief sculpture**.

free-standing sculpture standing free of support or attachment to a background and can be viewed from all angles

relief sculpture any three-dimensional work that projects from, but belongs to, the wall or other type of background surface on which it is carved



Figure 2.13 English artist and sculptor Henry Moore (1898–1986) surrounded by his works, circa 1965. (Photo by Tony Evans/Getty Images)

Sound, light and time

Analysing contemporary artworks using the Structural Lens can be challenging, as the artists often present their ideas through non-traditional art forms using new technologies and media. Contemporary art elements of sound, light and time will often be integral to the artwork.



Everything we see is made visible through light. Light has been represented in art since artists attempted to create an illusion of form with an interplay of light and dark. In early Christian mosaics and paintings, gold paint and gold leaf were used to highlight holy symbols and halos. The light reflecting off these surfaces made the holy figures or symbols stand out and was symbolic of the holy light of God. Baroque artists introduced extreme chiaroscuro in their paintings. Caravaggio (1571–1610) is known for including one light source in his paintings and manipulating the way that it creates light and shadows on his subject matter. He used light to create a sense of volume and mass in the figures, making them appear solid, and to create drama in the scene. The French Impressionism, on the other hand, explored light as the subject matter of their paintings. They explored how light described form, altered form and colour, and how light also dissolved form.

Light affects our perception of objects and can have an impact on our interpretation of art. The direction of light for instance can affect the way the audience interprets a sculpture. When the artist Daniel Chester French approached his sculpture of Lincoln to do a few finishing touches after it was placed into the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, he was horrified with what he found.



The sculpture was illuminated by sunlight radiating through the translucent marble ceiling, and between the columns at the entrance. The light reflected off the polished white marble floor, and lit from below the face looked flat, pale and frightened. The problem was eventually corrected by placing concealed spotlights above the statue allowing the audience to see the sculpture as it was intended by the artist. The lighting brought

out all of the strength and power in Lincoln's face, all the tenderness and understanding. We are now faced with a portrait of an intense, powerful, focused and wise leader.

Light can also be a medium of expression. It can be used as an element to create artworks, sculptures or installations. Light art can be an interaction of light within an architectural space. The first object-based light sculpture was the *Light-Space Modulator*, by Hungarian artist Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (Figure 2.14). In this work the artist combined a physical object with light and used it to show the relationship between light and object.

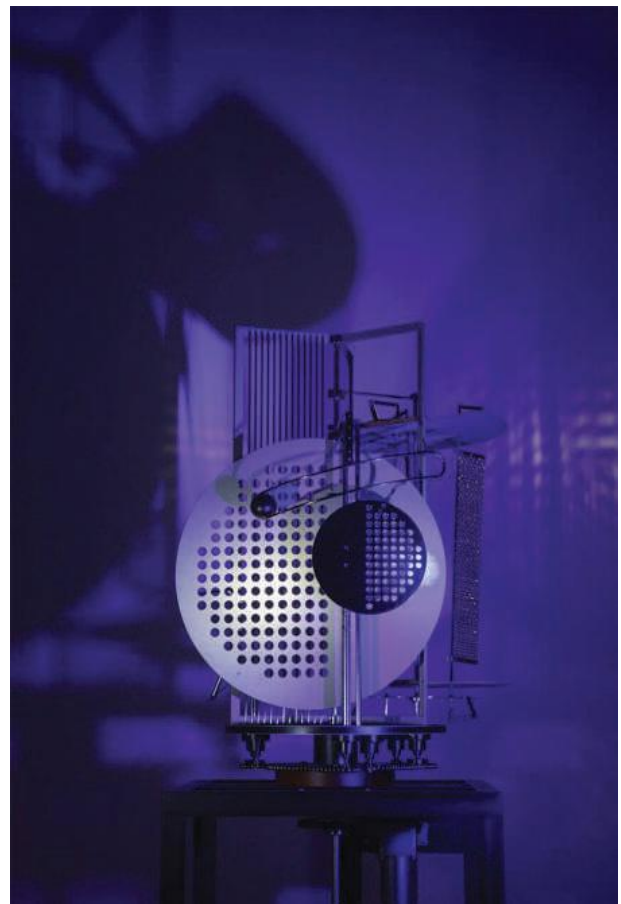


Figure 2.14 Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Light-Space Modulator*, 1922–30

light the brightness that comes from the sun, fire, etc. and from electrical devices, and that allows things to be seen

Baroque art style or movement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where artists used strong contrasts, emotion, movement, exaggeration and theatrical effects

French Impressionism style of painting originating in France during the 1870s, characterised by a focus on the immediate visual impression of a scene and by the use of small brush strokes of colour to suggest reflected light

The sculpture is made up of metal objects fixed to a spinning metal stand and illuminated by small colourful lights. The artist's intention was to show the movement of light itself. This introduced the term 'light art'.

Dan Flavin was an American minimalist artist famous for creating sculptural objects and installations from commercially available fluorescent light fixtures. Keith Sonnier is another artist whose work developed in parallel to the minimalist generation of the 1960s. He was also part of the Process Art Movement, where the end product (the artwork itself) was not always the principal focus, but rather the process of creating it. This includes the gathering, collating and arranging actions and procedures of making art. In 1968 Sonnier began working in neon, manipulating



Figure 2.15 Dan Flavin, *Gold and red fluorescent lights*, © Dan Flavin. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022



Figure 2.16 Keith Sonnier, *Keith Sonnier: Until Today*, installation at Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY © Keith Sonnier. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

Activity 2.7

- 1 How is light used in Keith Sonnier's installation?
- 2 What impact does light have on the message the artist is trying to convey?
- 3 Is time used as an element of the artwork?
- 4 Does it contribute to the meaning of the artwork?

the tubes and drawing in space with light and colour. Light diffusion enabled his work to interact on the architectural planes in the space.

Closely associated with using light as an art form is the use of light technology to project images. This allows the use of light on large canvases such as architectural façades or to fill

architectural spaces. Miguel Chevalier collaborated with several people to create an immersive projection, *Dear World ... Yours, Cambridge*, in King's College Chapel, Cambridge, first viewed 17 October 2015. Technical projections were by Voxels Productions, software by Cyrille Henry and Antoine Villeret and the film by Claude Mossessian. This film can be viewed by accessing the interactive textbook. Chevalier has been creating sound and light installations since the 1980s and has worked alongside developing technologies to change the way we see art.

Although time is invisible, artists have been able to represent the passage of time through images or symbols. In many philosophies and religions, it is taught that time is cyclical. This representation of time can be seen in artworks, such as the chariot wheels of the Sun Temple (Surya Deul) at Konark in India, built by King Narsimha I of the Ganga dynasty during the mid-thirteenth century (Figure 2.17).



Figure 2.17 Wheel, thirteenth century, Surya Deul, Konark, India

The life cycle is symbolised in French Post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin's painting *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897) (Figure 2.18). He represented birth, youth, adulthood, old age and rebirth.

The symbols of spiritual death (or sin) can be seen in the presence of the young woman picking a piece of fruit, and physical death is represented by the old woman in a foetal position, symbolising burial and rebirth.



Figure 2.18 Paul Gauguin, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* 1897, oil on canvas, 139 × 375 cm

Western tradition teaches time as linear, or moving forward. This is often represented in paintings by the **narrative**, where the key moments in a story or passage of time are

depicted in a single image. This was particularly popular in the depiction of biblical stories, such as Massaccio's **fresco** of the *Tribute Money* (Figure 2.19).



Figure 2.19 Massaccio, *Tribute Money*, 1425, fresco, 247 × 597 cm

narrative a story

fresco a painting on wet plaster on a wall or ceiling

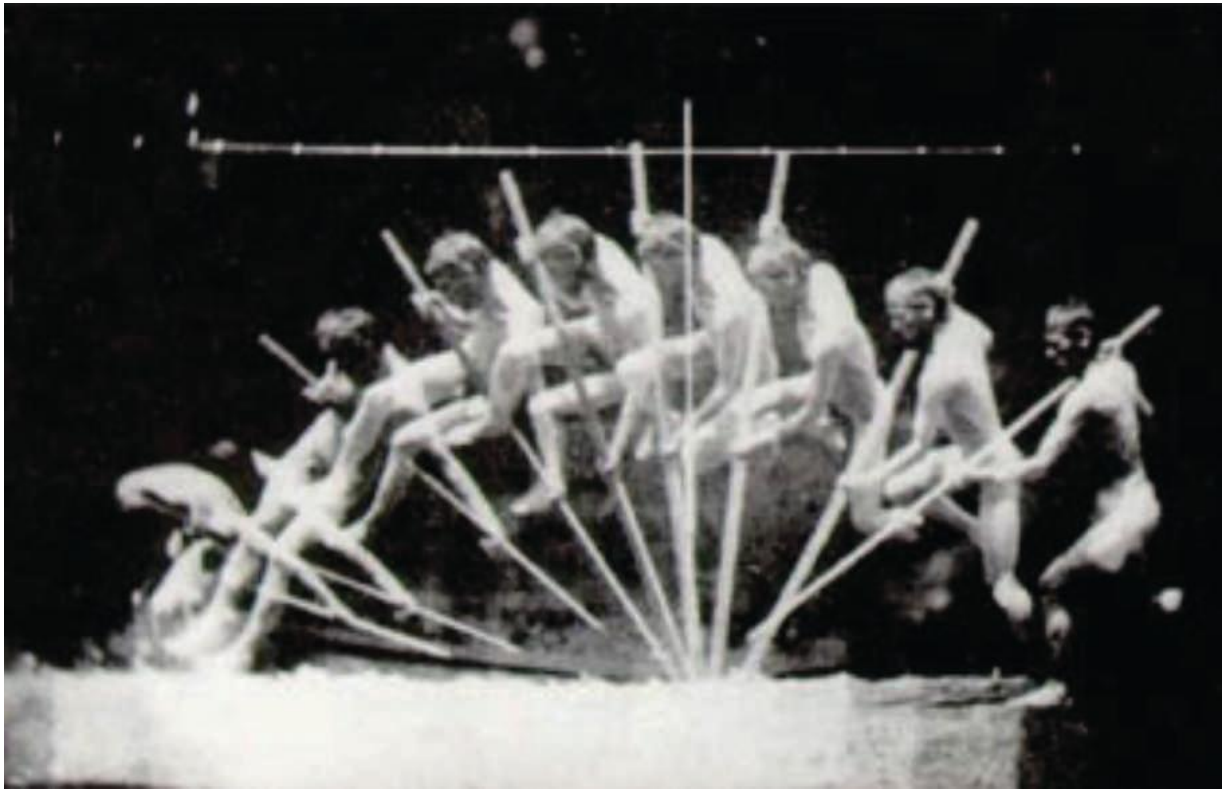


Figure 2.20 Thomas Eakins, *Pole Vault*, 1885

The representation of the passing of time can also be achieved by capturing sequential movement. This is evident in photography, where long exposure or multiple exposure photographs have been created. Thomas Eakins photographed a man pole vaulting in 1884 using a camera designed to produce stop-action stills. He used a single camera to produce a series of exposures superimposed on one negative. The final artwork was *Pole Vault*, seen in Figure 2.20.

Photography allows us to capture a specific moment in time. Harold Edgerton's *Milk Drop Coronet*, 1957, captured the crown of milk, frozen in time, using high-speed photography. Other art forms, such as sculptures, paintings and drawings, also achieve this moment in time by representing a specific moment in a narrative or action.

Artists have also introduced actual movement to their artworks, or aspects that require the audience to observe the work over a period of time to gain the full experience of the artwork. Time and the art principle movement are important in art forms such as film, performance art and kinetic sculpture. In film we experience the passing of time both visually and physically over the period of our involvement with the work. Movement, whether live action or animation, is seen in film and

Activity 2.8

Look at *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, by Marcel Duchamp. How has the artist adapted the ideas captured by Thomas Eakins and combined them with other contemporary explorations in painting at the time?

performance art, while actual movement is also achieved in **kinetic** sculpture, such as Alexander Calder's **mobiles**, which rely on air movement to create motion in the suspended sheets of metal. The principle of movement can only be observed in these artworks when viewed for a period of time.

Asia Pacific Ant Farm (Figure 2.21) consists of a series of interconnecting plastic boxes filled

kinetic relating to, or resulting from, movement

mobile a type of sculpture created using components that are suspended in the air and move in response to external influences, such as air currents or a motor



Figure 2.21 Yukinori Yanagi, *Asia Pacific Ant Farm* 1994, 1994, ants, colored sand, plastic box, plastic tube and plastic pipe, ©YANAGI STUDIO



Figure 2.22 Yukinori Yanagi, *America*, 1994, ants, colored sand, plastic box, plastic tube and plastic pipe, © YANAGI STUDIO

with coloured sand representing world flags. Ants were released into each flag in the system. Over the course of *time* the ants carried food and sand between the flags, eventually resulting in the disintegration of each flag, and the intermixing of colours within each flag.

Activity 2.9

Discuss the use of the element of time in Yukinori Yanagi's *World Flag Ant Farm* (1990). What ideas, messages and meaning are generated by this work after time has passed and the artwork has reached its intended state?

Sound can be made electronically or naturally and might be recorded and reproduced. It can be heard as noise, words or music and is usually found in contemporary art, such as videos and installations. While it cannot be seen, sound is very emotive and resonates with the audience. **Sound art** is a form of contemporary art that uses sound as both an element (what the artwork is made from) and its subject (what the artwork is about) for creative expression. Sometimes it is experienced live through performance and at other times it is recorded and played back over a sound system. In sound art, anything that makes noise can be part of an artwork. While sound art is more of an audio experience than a visual one, visual elements can coexist with sound. Even though it is not visual, it is a creative expression that communicates the artist's intention and can therefore be considered when developing visual language.



Sound art dates back to the early twentieth century with Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo, who built noise machines between 1913 and 1930. His machines replicated the clatter of the industrial age and the boom of warfare. In his manifesto, *The Art of Noises* (1913), Russolo argues that the human ear has grown attuned to the rhythms, noises, and beats of urban,

industrial soundscapes. He argued that cities that were on the increase since the Industrial Revolution, were musical and required composers to create new noises matching their energy, which is what he was doing with his noise machines. Dada and Surrealist artists also experimented with the use of sound in their art. In his composition *Erratum Musical*, Marcel Duchamp featured three voices singing notes pulled from a hat, a seemingly arbitrary act. This linked to other arbitrary approaches to art making that they were experimenting with, including automatic drawing and creating compositions that were unplanned and relied on chance.

The introduction of digital technology has revolutionised sound art. Artists can now create visual images in response to sounds or produce interactive displays for the audience to control through pressure pads, sensors and voice activation.

Edwin van der Heide's *Impulse #6* (2000) is a sound installation, where the sound material is electronically generated and spatialised using custom **wave field synthesis software**. This installation can be viewed by accessing the interactive textbook.

The artist Caty Olive, in collaboration with Laurent Friquet, combines all three modern art elements in the work *Light Show 1 – Phantasie of Dirt*. She uses an oscillating string of light, the movements of which are combined with corresponding sounds. The element of time allows the audience to experience the changes of light and sound. This installation can be viewed by accessing the interactive textbook.

sound art a form of contemporary art that uses sound as an element (what it is made out of) and as its subject (what it is about), for creative expression

wave field synthesis software a system that uses specifically designed loudspeakers to provide listeners with an immersive sonic experience; the technology allows sound to appear to emanate from any desired area of the space, and then move through the area in spatial pathways or patterns within and outside the formation of the loudspeakers

Activity 2.10

Consider the following questions when interpreting contemporary works that use sound.

- 1 Does the sound have an impact on the atmosphere of the location where the artwork is presented?
- 2 How does the sound work with the visual aspects of the work, if there are any? (Note that some artworks like Edwin van der Heide's *Impulse #6* are only sound-based.)

Art principles

Art elements are organised individually or in combination to create art principles. While the principles will be discussed individually, you will see that they overlap.

Emphasis

When artists apply the art elements to make a part or parts of the composition stand out, **emphasis** is achieved. This helps to create a **focal point**, the most important part of the artwork because it is the part that the audience's eye returns to. This is usually because that is what the artist wants to

draw the audience's attention to. Artists can draw the audience's attention by using implied or actual line to focus the eye on a location in an artwork. Contrast in colour, tone and shape can also achieve emphasis. Some works have a single focal point, some provide a clear ordering of emphasis, and others have multiple focal points.

Balance

Balance refers to how the elements relate to each other within the composition and how they are used to achieve visual stability in artworks, so that one side does not appear heavier than the other. Balance can make a composition dynamic and lively or restful and calm. People have a natural desire to seek balance and equilibrium. A balanced work, in which distribution of visual weight is even, gives the viewer feelings of comfort and stability. In contrast, a work that is unbalanced seems unstable and creates visual tension, making the audience uneasy. Sometimes an artist might intentionally create an unbalanced work to cause discomfort in the audience.



emphasis placing importance on or drawing attention to something

focal point the thing that the audience looks at first or that holds their interest

balance a state where things are of equal (actual or visual) weight or force

There are different types of balance, including **symmetrical**, **asymmetrical** and **radial balance**. A sense of balance comes from a combination of the elements, such as line, shape, colour and tone, and how they are arranged in the format. The balance of physical objects is achieved through the distribution of their weight. If it is not balanced, the object will fall over. In two-dimensional art the distribution of weight is not physical but visual. We also refer the visual weight in three-dimensional artworks like free-standing sculptures, even though, as in the kinetic mobiles of Alexander Calder, they may also have physical balance. Visual balance is achieved through the placement of elements such as shape, colour and tone in the format.

Symmetrical balance can be established if you draw an imaginary line through the centre

of the artwork. If both parts are equal regarding the horizontal, vertical or diagonal axis, the work has symmetrical balance. This can be left to right balance or vertical balance. Symmetrical balance is also sometimes referred to as formal balance. Symmetrical balance gives a sense of order, rationality and permanence.

Activity 2.11

Comment on the application of the elements of art used by the Japanese artist Hiroshige in his print *Man on Horseback Crossing a Bridge* (Figure 2.23) and explain how he used these to achieve asymmetrical balance.



Figure 2.23 Utagawa Hiroshige, *Man on Horseback Crossing a Bridge*, 1835–37, from the series *The Sixty-nine Stations of the Kiso Kaidō*, woodblock colour print, 21 × 35 cm

symmetrical (or formal) balance where elements are mirrored on opposite sides of a visual axis; this creates a stable and formal composition

asymmetrical (or informal) balance where balance is achieved by elements either side of a visual axis achieving equal visual weight despite their variation in colour, scale and number; a large object can be balanced by a number of smaller objects or a single large area of subdued colour can be balanced by a small area of bright colour, creating a dynamic informal composition

radial balance balance based on a circle with its design focused upon or extending from its centre

Approximate symmetry refers to two halves that are almost identical, but vary slightly from one another. This can be seen in Leonardo da Vinci's mural painting *The Last Supper*, where the disciples are arranged in groups of three on both sides of Jesus in the composition.

Asymmetrical balance gives the artists greater **expressive and imaginative freedom**. Elements with contrasting visual counterparts – smaller and larger, or lighter and darker – can be used to achieve asymmetrical balance as the opposites balance each other out. Due to the variety that asymmetrical balance gives rise to, it is also called **informal balance**. The easiest way to understand this type of balance is to imagine an apple and an orange that weigh the same, but they are different in colour, shape and tone. There is a balance present between these different elements despite differences of forms and motifs. A large dull shape can be balanced by two smaller more intensely coloured shapes. This was used effectively by Piet Mondrian in his many *Compositions in Red, Yellow and Blue* (for example, Figure 2.68), where he simplified his paintings to squares and rectangles using black, white and the three primary colours in search for a universal balance and harmony.

In **radial symmetry** the elements are arranged equally around a central point, as in the spokes of a wheel or the ripples made in a pond where a stone is dropped. Radial symmetry has a strong focal point. This is often seen in nature, as in the seeds of a dandelion, or in jellyfish. In art it is used in sacred geometry, such as mandalas.

The principle of balance is sometimes used as the primary vehicle of expression by contemporary artists. Matt Calderwood is an example of an artist who uses balance not just as a constructive principle of his work, but as an active function of his sculptural art (Figure 2.24). Calderwood uses everyday, unassuming objects and places these **ready-mades** together, manipulating the balance to create sculptures. He carefully selects the objects and considers how each interacts with its neighbour. He is concerned with the co-dependent relationship that exists between the objects. Each part of the sculpture is dependent on the others, and any slight change could destroy the balance, causing the sculpture to collapse.

Activity 2.12

What meaning would you associate with Calderwood's use of the principle of balance in his sculpture *Untitled 1*? You can also consider whether the objects that he uses add to the meaning that you believe he is conveying.

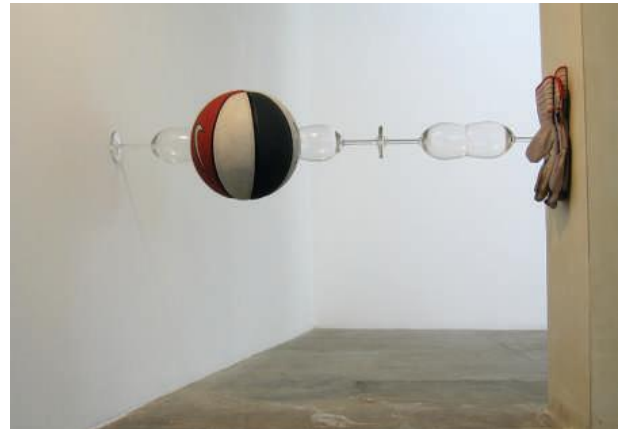


Figure 2.24 Matt Calderwood – *Untitled 1*, 2016, Precarious Balance, CoCA Toi Moroki, Christchurch, NZ, 2016

Contrast

Contrast is the juxtaposition of difference. The arrangement of contrasting parts, such as light and dark, opposite hues of the colour wheel, smooth and rough texture, and size, is used to create visual interest or drama in a work of art. It can create the movement and rhythm of an artwork, an illusion of depth, or create emphasis in a particular area. Contrast is an effective way of catching the

approximate symmetry symmetry where elements on either side of a compositional axis are similar in size and shape and number but are not mirror images of one another

expressive and imaginative freedom the freedom of the artist, not just to represent the external world, but to express their inner state and give visual representation to their thoughts

radial symmetry visual elements are arranged equally around a central point in the composition

ready-made a manufactured found object modified by an artist and presented as an artwork in a different context from that originally intended

contrast when two different art elements or principles are used in the same work specifically to create emphasis and visual interest; for example, the use of changing scale, or contrasting tone or colours, such as blue and yellow

audience's eye. Our eyes are drawn to things that are different because they stand out. Contrast can be used to guide the audience through interesting elements in the artwork and highlight what you want them to see first.



*The bold contrasts between light and dark are not only used to create form, but can be employed to distinguish the main figures from the background, creating depth in the artwork. Establishing darkness also helps to build certain narratives through symbolism associated with the dark and contrasting light. Contrast can suggest conflict, which can be spiritual, physical or emotional. This is used effectively by William Blake in his *The Angel Michael Binding Satan* (Figure 2.25). Everything in the world exists in duality. There is life and death, good and bad, light and dark, big and small, happy and sad, square and round, hard and soft. Contrast allows the artist to explore that duality in their work.*

Duality teaches us that every aspect of life is created from a balanced interaction of opposite and competing forces. Yet these forces are not just opposites; they are complementary. They do not cancel out each other, they merely balance each other like the dual wings of a bird.

Scott Trettenero, author of *Master the Mystery of Human Nature*, 2015

Movement

Movement can be actual (kinetic) or implied (visual). Movement can be suggested by motion blur or implied using specific elements such as line and recurring figures or motifs and elements. As already discussed, lines can be either static or dynamic. Dynamic lines, such as diagonals, zig-zags or sweeping curves, imply movement. Line can be used to track the path of movement that something is taking through a picture. Visual movement depends on other elements and principles of art. To create movement through visual rhythm, an artwork must have an element that repeats. If this element repeats evenly, then it feels mechanical, organised and regular. If the element varies in size and spacing, then the rhythm becomes irregular and feels natural.



Figure 2.25 William Blake, *The Angel Michael Binding Satan* ('He Cast him into the Bottomless Pit, and Shut him up'), 1805, watercolour, black ink and graphite on off-white woven paper, 35.9 × 32.5 cm

Implied movement is the visual suggestion of movement and can be achieved in many ways. Some artists, such as the Italian Futurists (1909–1920s), were fascinated by movement, speed and power. They were captivated by the motion created by transport such as trains or motorcycles, as well as the related movement of athletes and other forms of machinery. The painter Giacomo Balla was influenced by multiple exposure photography. He suggested movement through **rhythmic repetition** of shape and line, which can be seen in his *Dynamism of a dog on a leash* (Figure 2.26). Marcel Duchamp achieved a similar effect with his *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* (1912), where he used the juxtaposition of shapes. His sequential placement of references to the figure on a diagonal created the idea of a single rhythmic progression. In the mid-twentieth century, artists such as Victor Vasarely developed Op Art (optical art), and created movement through repetition of shape and line and **high key** contrast of colour or tone.

movement an artwork can demonstrate actual kinetic movement or the artist can rely on other elements and principles of art to create visual movement or an impression of action

rhythmic repetition the recurrence of a particular line, pattern, shape, or other visual elements



Figure 2.26 Giacomo Balla, *Dynamism of a dog on a leash*, 1912, oil on canvas

By changing the balance and pose of a person, the artist can convey a static standing figure or suggest the movement of a person walking or running. The dynamics of a pose created by lines of movement can achieve a variety of qualities, from the subtle weight shift evident in Michelangelo's *David* (1501–1504), or the gentle rhythmic movement of the bronze *Dancing Krishna*, India (1300) (Figure 2.27).

Activity 2.13

Discuss the different ways in which Fragonard has created implied movement in his painting *The Swing* (Figure 2.28).



Figure 2.27 *Dancing Krishna*, 1300, India, bronze



Figure 2.28 Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing*, 1767, oil on canvas

The **visual path** your eyes follow when looking at an artwork is another form of movement. This movement is created by a rhythmic repetition of motifs or art elements that lead the eye in a visual path. It creates visual order because it directs the eye and determines the way it moves over the artwork. Our eyes move from one repeated element to the next. The amount of space between each repetition sets the tempo or speed at which our eyes move around the composition and therefore the energy that is suggested by the artwork.

Throughout the twentieth century, artists have incorporated movement into their works in different ways. Jackson Pollock placed his canvas on the ground and dripped paint onto it, moving around the piece as he layered the paint. His movements were reflected in the lines of paint on the canvas. Kinetic drawings, as seen in the work of Heather Hansen (Figure 2.29), are an extension of this. These works are a combination of visual art and dance that result from the direct contact of the artist's moving body and drawing material with the paper. Hansen uses charcoal and her body movements to create the artworks. The finished artworks show evidence of movement in their

sweeping lines that reflect the action of the artist, but actual movement also exists in this form of performance art that is recorded through video and photography. Hansen explains, 'In this series, I am searching for ways to download my movement directly onto paper, emptying gestures from one form to another and creating something new in the process.'

A video of this artwork can be viewed by accessing the interactive textbook.



Figure 2.29 *Emptied Gestures* by Heather Hansen, 2013, Photo Credit Bryan Tarnowski

The principle of movement is sometimes used as the primary vehicle of expression by artists. These artists use actual movement or kinetic movement in their art. They may use motors to produce motion or structure the work so that it is responsive to the natural movement of air currents. Alexander Calder's experimentation with mobiles during the early twentieth century, is one of the earliest examples of kinetic sculpture. Initially he explored motion with motorised or hand-cranked mechanisms, but later works relied only on air for movement.

Arc of Petals (part of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy, seen in Figure 2.30) is an example of a mobile by Alexander Calder. The piece is centred on lengths of wire with multiple sheet metal elements extending off from them. The way this piece moves randomly with the breeze invites chance and variation into the audience's encounter with it.

visual path when certain areas throughout an artwork are connected by some manner of visual emphasis that leads the eye of the audience in a particular direction



STRUCTURAL

The movement of the piece through the breeze and air currents juxtaposes the presumed heaviness of the materials and the lightness of the breeze. He is exploring the movement and vitality of natural forces rather than of the mechanised, ordered world that many other artists explore.



Figure 2.30 Alexander Calder, *Arc of Petals*, 1941, painted and unpainted sheet aluminium, iron wire and copper rivets, 240 × 220 × 90 cm
© 2022 Calder Foundation, New York/Copyright Agency, Australia

Anthony Howe creates suspended and free-standing kinetic sculptures that produce motion by harnessing the wind. The sculptures are constructed using polished stainless steel, allowing sunlight to reflect as they move. Some of his works, such as *Mums the Word* (Figure 2.31), stand as much as 5.2 metres high. The heavy metal pieces rotate smoothly in harmonious, circular movements that produce mesmerising patterns. The effortless and smooth movement of these shiny sculptures suggests a lightness that contradicts their physical weight.



Figure 2.31 Anthony Howe, *Mums the Word*, 206" High × 92" Wide × 60" Deep, 475 lbs

Rhythm

Rhythm is closely related to movement. It describes the movement or flow in, over, around or of an artwork. It is how the elements are organised within an artwork. Rhythm is created by the repetition of elements in a work of art that results in a pattern. The repetition creates a visual tempo or beat. The rhythm may be regular, alternating, random, or may be a progressive rhythm, that occurs with the gradual increase or decrease in the size, colour or some other qualities of repeated elements. The tempo of the rhythm can be fast or slow

rhythm the movement within a piece of art achieved through repetition, that helps the eye travel through the work to a point of focus; can vary in its speed



STRUCTURAL

and results in a feeling that the work evokes in the audience. Rhythm can create a mood and an emotional response. It can make you feel relaxed, calm, on edge or energised. The repetitive rhythm of Anthony Howe's kinetic sculptures is mesmerising, peaceful and calming, while Jackson Pollock's paintings present a bold rhythm that produces an almost chaotic feeling. Gino Severini creates energy with the repetition of shape and colour in *Dynamic Hieroglyphic of the Bal Tabarin*.



Figure 2.32 Gino Severini, *Dynamic Hieroglyphic of the Bal Tabarin*, 1912, oil on canvas with sequins, 161.6 × 156.2 cm

Rhythm is used in a similar way in both art and music; both consist of patterns that are intended to move the viewer or listener through the composition. An artist who explored this link between music and painting was Wassily Kandinsky, who experienced a neurological phenomenon called synaesthesia, in which one stimulus triggers another in a different sense. In his case, Kandinsky literally saw colours when he heard music, and heard music when he painted. He believed that when an artist used colours, they were effectively playing different musical notes, establishing particular rhythms that would resonate with the audience. This led him to move from figurative to abstract painting, and he is considered to have painted the first abstract, or nonrepresentational, painting in the early twentieth century.

Colour is a means of exerting a direct influence upon the soul. Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano with its many strings. The artist is the hand that purposely sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key. Thus it is clear that the harmony of colours can only be based upon the principle of purposefully touching the human soul.

Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1910

Activity 2.14

Discuss the use of rhythm in *The Broadway Boogie Woogie* by Piet Mondrian (1942–43) (Figure 2.33). What type of rhythm is achieved and how does this make you feel?

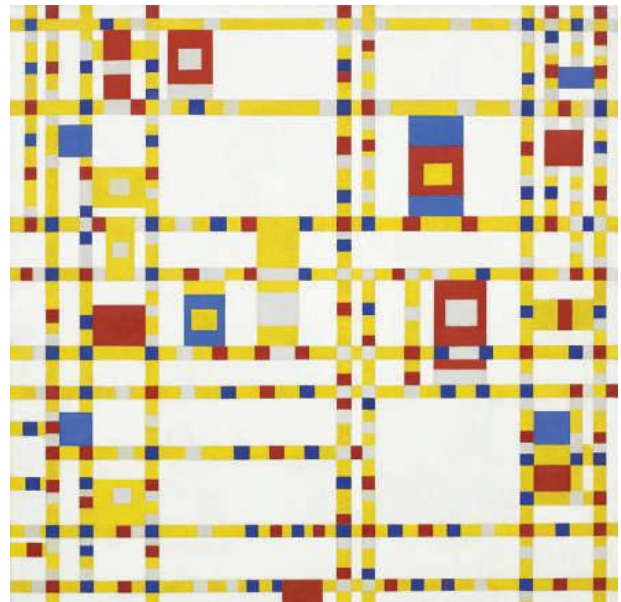


Figure 2.33 Piet Mondrian, *The Broadway Boogie Woogie*, 1942–43, oil paint, 127 × 127 cm

Space

Space refers to both the space around objects and the space within objects. Shapes and forms exist in space. It is the emptiness or area between, around, above, below or within objects. You can

space the distances or areas around, between and within components of an artwork

refer to the **surface composition**. Is it crowded or empty? How does this make you feel? All objects take up space. The elements of art, line, shape, form and colour are used within space and create an illusion of space. Space can be flat (two-dimensional) or three-dimensional.

When a shape appears on a picture plane it simultaneously occupies space and creates a space in the background area. The shapes or objects themselves are referred to as **positive space** while the background or spaces around them are referred to as the **negative space**. An artist must consider both positive and negative space and treat them with equal importance. The difference between the two is not always clear, and artists such as MC Escher (Figure 2.34) sometimes play on the interaction between the positive and negative spaces, creating visual interest and ambiguity.

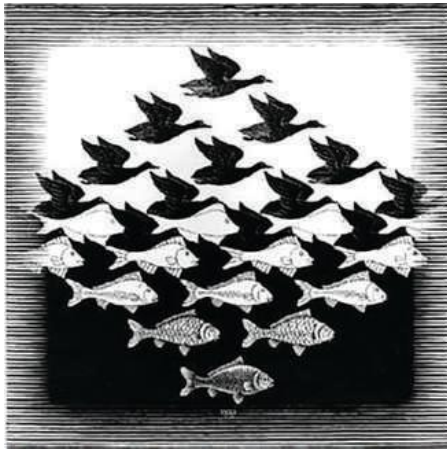


Figure 2.34 MC Escher, *Sky and Water I*, 1938, woodcut on laid Japan paper, 43.8 × 43.8 cm, © Mauritis C Escher. Stichting Pictoright / Copyright Agency 2022

When interpreting a work of art, we should consider the interaction between positive and negative space. An object is perceived in relation to the space it occupies, and the character of that interaction carries some of the work's meaning. The size and shape of the negative space can affect the way you interpret positive space. Large negative space around a form or shape may express loneliness, while little negative space can create a claustrophobic mood.

Three-dimensional artworks, such as free-standing sculptures, occupy **actual space**. You can walk around them, look through, over and under them. Architects are especially concerned with the qualities of space. They explore, shape and enclose space. With three-dimensional objects and spaces such as sculpture and architecture, you have to move around to get the full experience of the work. With a two-dimensional work, such as a drawing, painting or photograph, you see the space of the surface all at once. A relief sculpture, like a drawing, is intended to be viewed from the front only, but it still occupies a limited amount of space because it has some depth.

In a drawing, painting or photograph, the actual space of the surface is defined by its edges. This surface has height and width but no depth. The two-dimensional flat surface of the material (for example, a canvas) on which the artist works is called the **picture plane**, and the flat space of this surface is referred to as **pictorial space**, which exists across the surface of the work. Early paintings, such as those of the Egyptians, show little or no depth. They portrayed objects from their most identifiable angle. In Western tradition, artists have sought for ways to create an illusion of depth on the picture plane.

In order to portray the roundness of three-dimensional objects on a flat two-dimensional surface, artists use different means to create an illusion of depth and form on a two-dimensional surface. The illusion of space exists into the surface of the work and can be limited or endless. This is achieved by **overlapping**. An object partly

surface composition the space of the picture plane – how objects are arranged within the space of the format and the space that exists between these objects; also refers to the space around the objects and the space into the image (real or illusion)

positive space the subject or areas of interest in an artwork

negative space the background or the area that surrounds the subject of the work

actual space space that exists in the physical world and is not implied, virtual or imagined

picture plane the surface of the artwork

pictorial space the space on the picture plane or surface of the artwork

overlapping covering something partly by going over its edge, or covering part of the same space

covered by another indicates that one is behind the other. **Scale** can determine where an object is in relation to other objects in space. Large objects appear to be closer and small objects appear to be further away. **Vertical placement** also allows the audience to understand whether one object is closer or further away than another. The higher up the base of an object is on the format, the further away it is perceived to be from the viewer. This may result in overlapping and be combined with scale change. Objects that are at eye level appear to be furthest away. The inclusion of foreground, middle ground and background add to the amount of depth created when using each of these.

Perspective generally refers to point of view, while in visual arts it is used when referring to **linear perspective**. This is a mathematical system discovered by the Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi in the early 1400s, used to depict the way objects in space appear to the eye. The system uses vanishing points and lines to show distance and depth. Because objects appear to get smaller as they move further away from us, parallel lines appear to converge as they move away from you, eventually meeting at a **vanishing point** on the horizon line. This horizon line also represents the eye level of the artist and the audience. The objects in the picture fit in between these parallel lines giving the illusion that they get smaller as they move away from the viewer.

Atmospheric or aerial perspective is a non-linear means of giving an illusion of depth. Artists produce depth by changing colour, tone or value, and detail. This imitates the effect of atmosphere (moisture and dust) on objects at different distances. Warm or bright colours advance while cool or dull colours recede. An intense blue will look closer than a dull red. Contrast between light and dark is reduced as objects recede, so an object that is closer should have greater contrast in tones than an object in the distance whose shadows will appear lighter. Objects that are closer have more detail and those that are further away lose detail and content appears less defined.

While illusionistic space portrays objects from a single viewpoint, in **cubistic space** artists depict objects from multiple viewpoints simultaneously on the picture surface. This is called **simultaneity**. Cubistic space exists across and into the picture

plane, resulting in ambiguous space that is often difficult to understand.

Ambiguous space is space that appears simultaneously (flat) across and (illusionistic) into the picture plane. It is often the result of making use of some illusionistic devices like linear perspective and denying others like atmospheric perspective. A picture that has objects diminishing in size as they recede, but where the colour in the background is as warm and bright as the colour in the foreground, results in ambiguous space. This was something that Cézanne experimented with in his painting of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (Figure 2.35). All-over abstract paintings with no clear illusion of space such as Jackson Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, while at first may appear two-dimensional, can still create a sense of depth due to the overlapping of poured paint (Figure 2.36). This can also be considered an example of ambiguous space. Ancient Egyptians used **aspective** perspective, which is a system in which each element is shown regarding its importance and characteristics. This also results in ambiguous space.

scale the overall physical size of an artwork or objects in the artwork in relation to another object or the audience

vertical placement the higher the base of an object on the ground is positioned on the picture plane, the further away it is

linear perspective the illusion of spatial depth created by parallel lines that appear to converge as they move towards the horizon

vanishing point the point in linear perspective where receding parallel lines meet on the horizon

atmospheric or aerial perspective the use of atmospheric haze to enhance the illusion of depth; distance appears to be cooler and less intense, have less contrast and be less defined

cubistic space promotes the flatness of the picture plane while acknowledging the three-dimensional form of the subject by showing multiple viewpoints simultaneously

simultaneity the Cubist characteristic where the artist represented multiple views of the same objects simultaneously in a single artwork, maintaining both the truth of a three-dimensional object represented and the two-dimensional picture plane on which it was painted

ambiguous space space that is expressed or can be perceived in more than one possible way, sometimes intentionally

aspective when one or more aspect or view of the subject is shown in a unified whole (sometimes referred to as twisted perspective); the Egyptians portrayed what they knew about the subject rather than what they saw from a single perspective

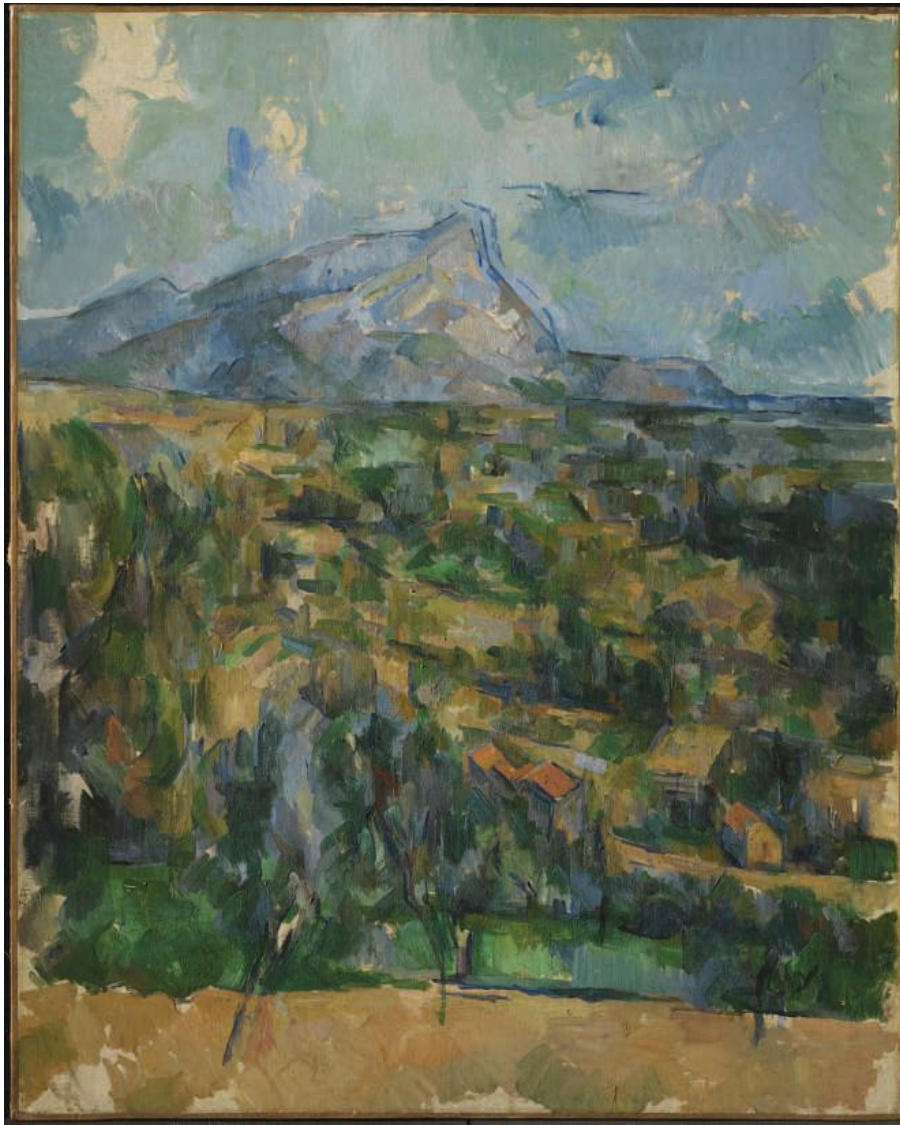


Figure 2.35 Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1904, oil on canvas, 27.5 × 92 cm

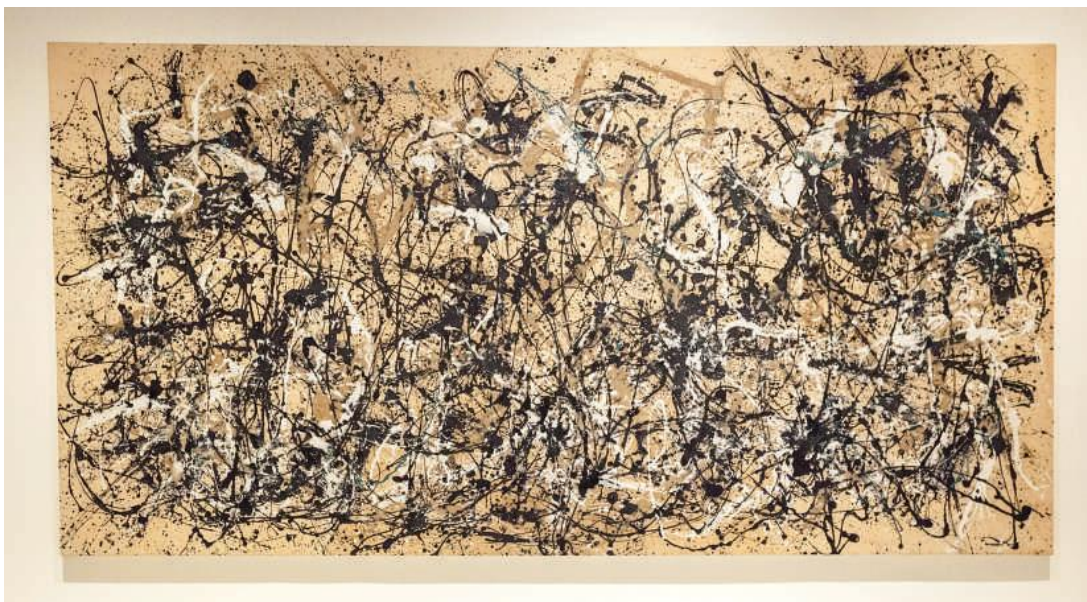


Figure 2.36 Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950, enamel on canvas, 266.7 × 525.8 cm
© Pollock-Krasner Foundation, ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

Activity 2.15

Discuss the use of the principle of space in Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962) (Figure 2.37). Take care to observe carefully and consider all the ways in which space can be discussed.



Figure 2.37 Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962, synthetic polymer paint on thirty-two canvases, © Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

Repetition

Repetition is achieved with a regularly recurring element or image. Repetition of certain elements in a work of art will result in a sense of unity and consistency. Repetition can also create a sense of rhythm or movement in a work and is covered in detail in the discussion of these principles. Repetition can result in a pattern. While repetition focuses on the same object being repeated, **patterns** are sequences made from different components which are repeated in the same way throughout the artwork.

The use of imagery is not allowed in Islamic spiritual art; instead, pattern is used to convey spiritual principles. This can be seen in the detail of a wall from the Alhambra in Spain (Figure 2.38). MC Escher often used repetition to create patterns.

repetition where elements of an artwork occur more than once, often to create unity in a work; can be repeated shapes, colours, arrangements or even sounds in multimedia works

pattern any regularly repeated arrangement of a motif



Figure 2.38 Detail from a wall in the Alhambra, Spain

Activity 2.16

What meaning is suggested by the use of repetition in Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962)?

Unity and variety

Unity refers to the similar or uniform use of an element that holds the composition together. Unity creates cohesion and can create a sense of balance in an artwork. To achieve unity, a pleasing combination of elements is not just the repetition of the same element. Unity is about separate parts working well together. Harmony is usually achieved because similar elements are used, and a sense of calmness is created. An artwork that uses **tessellations**, such as those by MC Escher (Figure 2.39), shows how repetition can unify a composition. While Escher introduces some variety of colour, he maintains unity. If each shape was a different texture and colour, however, this would reduce or break down the unity in the work. Unity requires a level of sameness.



Figure 2.39 MC Escher, *Study of Regular Division of the Plane with Reptiles*, 1939, pencil, india ink and watercolour drawing, © Maurits C Escher. Stichting Pictoright/Copyright Agency, 2022

unity the similar or uniform use of an element to create cohesion and a sense of balance.

tessellation the process of fitting shapes together in a pattern with no spaces in between, or an arrangement of shapes that has been made in this way

Unity and variety are both required to achieve an artwork that will appeal visually to the audience. An achromatic work will exhibit some measure of unity, given the lack of colour. If this work is oversimplified, however, and lacks variety of tone, it will be flat and boring. Some variety is still required to create visual interest and emphasis.

Variety is the use of diverse elements to create a visually dynamic composition. Variety can be used to create slight differences, such as the thickness of the lines in a drawing or tonal contrast in an **intaglio** print. Performing repetitive tasks often leads to boredom. The same can be said about a work of art that lacks variety; it becomes visually boring. Variety is a means of adding interest to art. It is achieved through juxtaposition and contrast, such as when different visual elements are placed next to one another. As discussed earlier, this can result in emphasis as it draws the audience's attention to a specific area in a composition. Too much harmony is boring, while too much variety is aimless and confusing.

The essence of the beautiful is unity in variety.

William Somerset Maugham



Variety is the use of different elements throughout a work of art, whereas unity is a feeling that all the parts of a work fit together well. A work in which the artist introduces a lot of variety can also have unity. The Womb World Mandala (Figure 2.40) is an example of this. There is some variety of colour in the background while the individual figures are represented in a common colour range. The many figures can be taken as individuals when studied one at a time. When considered at a distance they all become one, in an expression of unity, linking the image to a single goal that they are attempting to attain.

variety created by using a different element in a repetitive pattern (e.g. a square in a composition of circles)

Intaglio a method of printing using a surface with lines cut into it

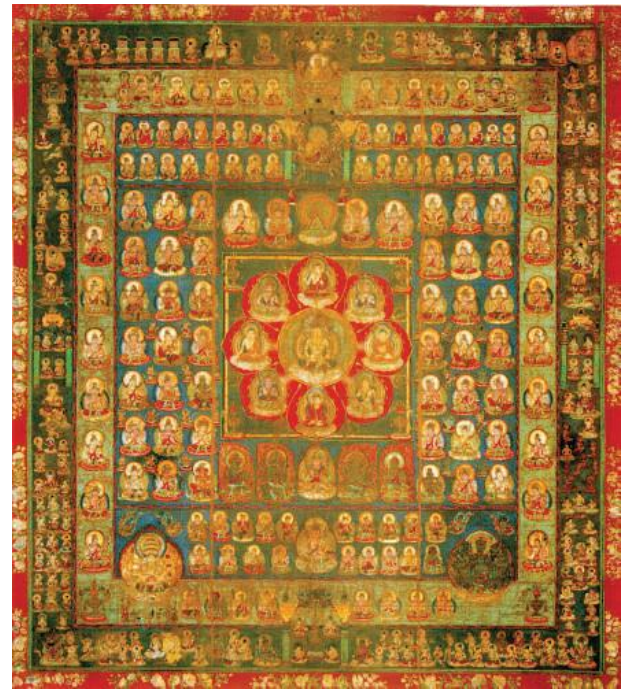


Figure 2.40 *Garbhadhatu (Taizokai) Mandala (Womb World)*, mandala of Innate Reason and Original Enlightenment, late 9th century, Heian period (Tantric Buddhism), Japan, colours on silk

Scale

Scale may refer to the artwork or elements within the artwork. When referring to the dimensions of an artwork you should refer to its size or dimensions, not its scale, unless you are comparing the scale of the artwork in relation to the viewer. Scale refers to the relative size of one object compared to another. Usually we relate the scale of something as it relates to our body, or as it relates to the size of a known object. A very large painting with the dimensions of 2 m × 3 m may be large in scale when compared to our size.

An artist might alter the scale of something in their artwork when they need to emphasise it.

A disproportionate scale can also be used to make the audience feel uncomfortable. René Magritte used this effectively in his painting *Personal Values* (Figure 2.41), to evoke the strangeness and ambiguity in reality. He creates a sense of disorientation and incongruity. The normal becomes strange as he creates a paradoxical 'surreal' world.





Figure 2.41 René Magritte, *Les valeurs personnelles* (Personal Values), 1952 oil on canvas; 31 1/2 × 39 3/8 in. (80.01 × 100.01 cm)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, purchase through a gift of Phyllis C. Wattis
© Rene Magritte. ADAGP/Copyright Agency, 2022

Commenting on the painting, Magritte said: 'In my picture, the comb (and other objects as well) has specifically lost its social character, it has become an object of useless luxury, which may leave the spectator (audience) feeling helpless or even make him ill. Well this is the proof of the effectiveness of the picture.'

Claes Oldenburg (1929–2022) began introducing scale into his work during the early 1960s. His *Floor Cake* (Figure 2.42) is an example of how he took a mundane object and represented it on a colossal scale. He used this to challenge the boundaries of high art with absurdity and suggested that the subjects of sculptures could be inspired from everyday American life. This appealed to people outside the artworld who could recognise the objects and enjoyed the humour of the scale. Oldenburg stated, 'My art is made for human beings, and it's important that people enjoy the experience of seeing it.'

Oldenburg eventually utilised open spaces to exhibit his increasingly larger sculptures, as can be seen in *Shuttlecocks* (Figure 2.43). By enlarging ordinary objects to enormous proportions, Oldenburg makes the audience feel smaller, a contrast to the way in which art is typically viewed, where the work is often smaller than the viewer.



Figure 2.42 Claes Oldenburg, *Floor Cake*, 1962, © Claes Oldenburg. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022



Figure 2.43 Claes Oldenburg, *Shuttlecocks*, 1994, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, aluminium and fibre-reinforced plastic, painted with polyurethane enamel, each 5.5 m high × 4.6 m, with a crown diameter of 1.2 m, © Claes Oldenburg. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

The miniature scenes of New York lack people, giving the audience nothing beyond themselves to compare for size, emphasising the small ratio of the art. These works also resemble a memento mori, with the lack of people emphasised by all the evidence of prior habitation, in the form of rubbish, graffiti and general wear from use. Wolfson creates intimate scenes that require the audience to observe carefully. The small scale makes these works precious and by association, the environment depicted, making it a memorial to human existence. While we might feel uncomfortable or even fearful and avoid the scene in the real world, the small scale of the work makes it safe for us to engage with and give it our full attention.



In contrast to Oldenburg, Alan Wolfson creates dioramas of large spaces in shrunken proportions.

memento mori an object serving as a reminder of death and mortality

I'm providing you with clues to a narrative, telling a story with minute details ... The real impact of my work is not in how small everything is but in the stories these small things tell.

Alan Wolfson



Figure 2.44 Alan Wolfson
"Wall St. Subway Platform"
7 × 6 × 5½ inches
2008 Mixed Media

Proportion

If you have two spheres of a different size, they would be different in scale when compared to each other. They would, however, share the same proportions as the height of each is equal to the width and depth. **Proportion** is the relationship of elements in an artwork to the whole and to one another. The *whole* can be a single object like a suitcase or the entire artwork as in a photograph of a railway station.

Proportion includes concepts such as the **golden ratio**, also known as the golden section or the divine proportion, which is defined through precise mathematical equation. The golden ratio is sometimes called the 'divine proportion' because it is often found in the natural world. The ancient Greeks considered proportions in nature to be the cornerstone of ideal beauty and that these proportions can be applied to man-made works. They believed this was the way to present beauty in art, music and design. In the past the relationship between proportion and beauty or aesthetics was emphasised in art. Being visually pleasing

is less important in contemporary art where meaning has gained importance.

In realistic art, proportion is critical to achieve convincing work. The art becomes more abstract or strange when the proportions are not accurate. Disproportionate art makes the audience uncomfortable, but when used effectively, it can highlight the message an artist is trying to convey. Hannah Höch's Dada-style photomontage is a good example of this (Figure 2.45).



Figure 2.45 Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*, 1919, collage, 114 × 90 cm

Höch took images and text from the mass media and arranged them into photomontages to critique the failings of the German Weimar Government. In *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*, she includes a mixture of modernism, with machinery and technology of the period and images of women taken from a popular newspaper to highlight gender issues.

golden ratio the equation in which a line divided into two parts, where the longer part (a) divided by the smaller part (b) is equal to the sum of (a) + (b) divided by (a)

proportion the relationship of elements in an artwork to the whole and to one another.



When discussing proportion, you do not only look at the relationship of one part of the artwork to another in terms of size, you can also comment on how much of one element has been used in relation to another. For example, there might be less warm colour used in a painting than cool colours, making the artwork predominantly

cool. This can add to the feeling you get from the artwork, or it might make the warm colour jump out because of the contrast. This variety might create emphasis on a particular area of the painting to achieve a focal point. Once again, this shows the overlap that exists between the principles of art.

Activity 2.17

Using a range of artworks from different periods of time and different cultures, discuss the use of the art elements and principles by applying the Structural Lens.

Write a description of the artwork and then consider the following:

- 1 How has the artist applied the art elements and principles in the creation of this artwork, and what effect does it have on the work?
- 2 How do the art elements and principles contribute to the meaning and messages of the work?

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 provide you with additional questions that you can ask when you are using a specific art element or art principle to provide some insight into the messages and meaning in an artwork.

Table 2.1 Art elements and analysis questions

Art element description	Analysis questions
Line – The path left by a moving point. Lines can be represented physically in an artwork or can be implied between two points in space.	Describe the types of line used in the work. What is the character of the line? What mood does the line create? How does line assist in forming the composition of the work?
Colour – The colour wheel consists of primary, secondary and tertiary colours. <i>Secondary colours</i> are achieved by mixing the three primary colours and <i>tertiary colours</i> are achieved by mixing the secondary and primary colours together. Colours opposite each other on the colour wheel are called <i>complementary</i>. The colours of the colour wheel are called <i>hues</i>. When you lighten or darken the colour you change its <i>value</i>. When you brighten or reduce the brightness of the colour you change its <i>intensity</i>.	Are the colours objective, subjective, bright, warm, dull, cool, contrasting, dramatic, natural, harmonious or complementary colours? What effect does the use of colour have on the mood of the image? Does the colour have any effect on the composition of the image? Does the use of colour have any symbolic meaning?
Tone – The degree of lightness or darkness of aspects of an artwork.	How has tone been used? Is it highly contrasted? Are a variety of tones used? Is limited tone used? Are the tones high key or low key? How does the use of tone contribute to the mood of the image?

Texture – The surface quality of an artwork. It is how things feel, or look as if they may feel, when touched. In an artwork, texture can be 'real', created by brushstrokes or the surface quality of materials, or 'implied', meaning it is simulated.

Can I identify the different surface qualities of the shapes in the image?
How has the artist created texture in the work?
Does the texture contribute to the composition or meaning of the image?

Shape – A two-dimensional area that can be drawn or cut. Shapes can be organic or geometric.

Are the shapes in the image geometric or organic?
How are the shapes that are created defined?
What techniques has the artist used to create the shapes? For example, are they painted? How does the sculptor create the shapes in the work? How are the shapes formed in a photograph?
Do the shapes contribute to the composition of the work?
What feelings are generated in the viewer by the shapes that have been used?

Form – An element of art that is three-dimensional. It occupies and encloses space or volume. An artwork can have actual form or an artist can create an illusion of form

How has the artist created the appearance of form in the work? Is it by using particular brushstrokes?
Has the artist used light and surface qualities to suggest form?
Has the artist used particular materials, processes or art forms to create form?
How does the artwork relate to and interact with the space it occupies or encloses?

Sound – Can be heard as noise, words or music and is generally used to create atmosphere or meaning in a time-based artwork. It can be natural, mechanical or manipulated.

What is the function of sound in this artwork?
Has sound influenced the mood of the work? In what way?
How does sound make the viewer feel?

Light – In 2D art, light is an illusion created by tone or contrast. It can also refer to the way an artwork is lit in an exhibition space. Light can be an integral, although **ephemeral**, element of a time-based artwork. It can involve interplay between object and shadow. An artwork can be created by using light as a material.

How has light been created or used by the artist?
Are shadows or reflections an important part of the way in which light has been used?
How does light affect the viewer's reaction to the artwork?
Does the use of light have symbolic meaning?

Time – Refers to the duration of the period in which things happen. Time can be represented in an artwork. Some cultures view time as a linear path, while others view it as a circle. It is an element in a number of art forms that require the passage of time, such as performance, installation and **new media**, including online art, video and computer games. These works are sometimes referred to as **four-dimensional**.

Is time represented in the artwork or is time an actual element of the work?
Is it essential to view the artwork in its entirety? Does experiencing only part of it affect the understanding of the work as intended by the artist?
Is a digital device necessary to experience the artwork in time? Does the intervention of a device affect the immediacy of the experience?

ephemeral lasting for a very short time; an artwork that is temporary and lasts at the site for a short period of time

new media refers to interdisciplinary works using recently developed electronic media and recent developments in software and related hardware devices

four-dimensional adds time to the traditional dimensions of height, width and depth

Table 2.2 Art principles and analysis questions

Art principle description	Analysis questions
Emphasis – Draws a viewer's attention to certain parts of a composition. A focal point is a specific spot where attention is directed.	What elements have been used to create emphasis or a focal point in the artwork? Describe the contrast of elements that have been used to create emphasis or a focal point in the artwork.
Focal point – The main area of interest in an artwork. The artist will arrange or use certain elements to draw the attention of the viewer to an area of the artwork. Artists can create focal points by using certain techniques, including the contrast within a particular element, and the size and placement of certain elements and by using lines and rhythm to draw our attention to something.	Where have certain elements been placed to create the focal point in the artwork? What impact does the focal point have on the work? Does it add to our understanding of the meaning? What effect is created if there is no obvious focal point?
Balance – Affects the composition of an artwork and the combinations of the different elements in the work. Balance can be termed symmetrical or asymmetrical balance.	How does the contrast of elements in the work create balance - for example, are some shapes larger than others, as though they appear heavier? How is the space in the artwork arranged? Does the placement of objects on the picture plane create a sense of balance? Does the artwork have a formal or dynamic balance? What feeling does this generate?
Movement – In both 2D and 3D artworks, a sense of motion can be implied by combining art elements (such as diagonal lines or repeated shapes) to create the illusion of action or to cause the viewer's eye to move over the work. In works such as performance and installation art, movement can be actual and physical.	Does the artwork have actual or implied movement, or is it static in appearance? What elements used by the artist suggest movement in the artwork? How important is the movement to an overall understanding of the aim of the artist in the artwork?
Unity – Achieved in an artwork when all the elements work together to create a strong sense of connection in the artwork. The elements may all be used in a similar way, thus creating unity. Harmony within elements, such as the use of harmonious colours in a work, can also create a sense of unity.	Which elements have been repeated to create unity in the artwork? Are the shapes the same size and placed in a pattern to create unity? Or are they different sizes, thus creating variety? What meaning is achieved by the unity?
Variety – Often when elements are repeated, there will be an aspect that is different to create variety. Generally, the contrast of a particular element will create variety.	Has the artist used contrast with the elements to create variety in the artwork?
Contrast – In an artwork, contrast refers to the use of opposing elements to create interest. This can be in colour, tone, line or any other element. Contrast is used often in conjunction with other art principles. Contrast can create a focal point in an artwork and is often used in conjunction with other art principles.	Which elements have been contrasted in the artwork? Why has the artist used these elements to contrast? How has the artist used contrast with the elements? Is it size, shape or colour? Does the artist create a focal point with the use of contrast? Does the use of contrast add any meaning to the artwork?

harmony elements are harmonious if they are similar, such as colours (e.g. warm colours)

Rhythm – The <i>repetition</i> of elements in an artwork creates a sense of rhythm. The repetition of art elements creates a pattern and encourages the viewer's eye to move around the artwork.	What rhythm do you see in the artwork? Which elements have been repeated to create this rhythm? Is the rhythm constant or varied?
Repetition – This involves copying and repeating an art element over and over. This may create pattern, or suggest movement or rhythm. Pattern can be used as a decorative element in an artwork. When elements are the same size and type and placed in a particular pattern, they are said to be unified through repetition.	What art elements have been repeated? Is this repetition regular or irregular? Is the use of pattern symbolic or decorative? Does the repetition suggest movement or rhythm? Does the repetition of colour or shape create harmony or unity?
Scale – The size of the object. This can be the relative size of one thing compared with another: it may be smaller, larger or the same size. Scale can be the size of various parts of an artwork in relation to each other or the size of the artwork in relation to the viewer.	What is the comparative scale of the objects in the artwork? Is there a symbolic meaning in the relative scale of these objects? Does the scale of the work result in something that is intimidating or intimate? Does the scale suggest depth?
Proportion – This refers to the comparative relationship of scale between components within an artwork. It can be the relationship of one part of an object or shape to the other parts – that is, the proportion of the height to the width of the shape.	Does the proportion of a particular part of the artwork in relation to the other parts have an effect on you? Do the proportions create balance and harmony?
Space – In a 2D artwork, the space of the picture plane is flat. This is pictorial space. Some artists create an illusion on this flat plane that creates the effect of distance. It includes background, foreground and middle ground. The illusion of space can be achieved through overlapping, vertical position, change of scale, intensity of colour, level of detail, linear perspective or aerial perspective. In a 3D artwork, the work occupies, encapsulates and interacts with space. The space between, around, above or below objects is called negative space. Often, artists creating installation works are creating the artwork in a pre-existing space.	Has the artist used pictorial space or have they created an illusion of depth? How has the artist created depth or space in the composition? Have they used lines, the placement of objects, perspective or any other element to create space? How has the artist considered the interaction of their artwork with other works, and the space in which it has been placed? How important is the negative space to an appreciation of the 3D artwork?
Composition – This is an arrangement or combination of the art elements and art principles in an artwork. When an artist arranges the art elements in an artwork, they create the artwork in a space referred to as surface composition. In a two-dimensional artwork, an artist will often explore pictorial space. This is often the case with abstract works and works involving patterning. Note that the term 'abstract' is different from 'abstracted', when the artist simplifies the subject but it remains figurative.	What does the artist emphasise visually? What first attracts the viewer's attention? How does the artist emphasise this feature or these features visually? Is there an underlying rhythm, pattern or geometric structure to the composition? Does the composition seem unified? Do the elements appear integrated or separate and distinct from each other? How does the artist achieve this unity? What is the viewer's position in relation to the work? Is the composition large or small in scale? Is it horizontal or vertical in orientation? How do these characteristics affect the viewer's perception of this work? Is the composition figurative or abstract? How has the artist achieved an emotion or idea by the way the visual elements have been structured? What are the ideas suggested? How are the visual elements arranged to achieve this?

Other methods of interpretation

When applying the Structural Lens it is important to also consider what **materials**, **techniques**, **processes** and art forms have been used and how these assist in your interpretation of the artworks.

Materials

Materials are the things an artist uses to make a work of art. In this study, materials encompass mediums like paint, inks, dry media, timber, stone, clay, glass and bronze. The earliest artworks were created with whatever the artists could find. They used readily available materials such as mud, clay, twigs, straw, minerals and plants. Some were used directly, and others required a slight alteration, such as grinding and mixing minerals with water or melted animal fat to apply to cave walls. The materials the early artists used not only present us with the images they left behind but also some insight into the world and people at the time.

Materials, however, are not only a means to creating an image or object. The materials that an artist uses to make a work of art influence both its form and content. Throughout the process, every material brings something unique and affects the finished work. Materials can influence not only the process, but also how the audience perceives it. The materials used might make the artwork more or less important to the audience, or more or less valuable. A sculpture made of clay and one carved from stone at the same time and in the same place will suggest to the audience that the subject in stone was of greater importance to the artist. The artist would have considered the longevity of a work modelled in clay verses one carved in stone. Stone would cost more, the sculpture would take longer to create and require specific skills, therefore the work in stone and what it represented is perceived as more important. In the same way, a work using a precious material, such as gold, would be considered to possess even greater personal and cultural value.



The materials used can bring a variety of associations that are not inherent in the essential form of the artwork. For example, a sculpture of a sleeping figure might create a relaxed representation of rest, regeneration

Activity 2.18

Discuss the differences between materials that are intrinsically precious, and those that are made more valuable by the processes or creative ideas in works of art, by considering specific examples.

or suggest the release of the subconscious mind. The same sculpture created in ice might suggest the issue of global warming and concern about people who deny this issue or are choosing to ignore it. The threat of global warming might be directly on display if the sculpture is left to melt. If other materials such as a perspex vitrine and refrigeration unit are used to house and preserve the sculpture these additional materials might introduce new ideas into the same sculpture.

Claes Oldenburg made a radical contribution to the history of sculpture by rethinking not only its forms, and subject matter, but also its materials, introducing the world to **soft sculptures** in the early 1960s. His exhibition in 1962 at the Green Gallery in New York, *The Store*, showcased his soft sculptures created with the help of his wife at the time Patty Mucha, who hand stitched these fabric sculptures. The pliable material used in works such as *Floor Burger*, *Floor Cake* and *Floor Cone* was a groundbreaking innovation in sculptural history, challenging the historical expectation of firm and rigid artworks.

Like other Pop artists, Oldenburg chose banal products of consumer life as his subjects. He focused on food and objects with close human associations, such as toilets, typewriters, light

materials what an artwork is actually made of (e.g. charcoal, video or plaster); not to be confused with 'technique' (how the materials are used)

technique the manner in which the artist applies materials to the artwork

process a series of actions that the artist takes to achieve a result

soft sculptures a type of sculpture made from materials that are supple and not rigid

switches, drum kits and electric fans, which comment on the dominance of fast food and mass culture in America at the time. Oldenburg brings together the Surrealists' absurdist disregard for scale and functionality with a Pop art interest in consumerism. His oversized objects were hand-sewn using canvas or vinyl and then stuffed with a cotton-like fibre called **kapok**. These materials were entirely foreign to the traditional concept of sculpture because they were soft rather than hard, as one expects sculpture to be. By transitioning his sculptures from hard to soft, Oldenburg presents an object that is otherwise structured to sink into a limp object that only loosely holds its original, realistic form. Unlike rigid structures, soft sculpture is completely vulnerable to the force of gravity. Oldenburg refers to gravity as his 'favourite form creator', due to its role in determining the sculpture's final form. He also prefers to work in a large scale because, 'on a large scale, gravity most wins out completely'. The reliance on gravity to determine the final form in which his work is viewed is also a reliance on chance. Because gravity causes the soft form to settle into a final composition, the work is relatively uncomposed. Giving up total control over composition is something Oldenburg shares with the automatic art making of the Dadaists, Surrealists and Jackson Pollock. The beauty of the soft sculpture is that if it is part of a travelling exhibition it will settle in a slightly different position in its new location.



This use of vinyl and kapok and the relating shift in form due to gravity and possibly contact with the gallery staff or even the audience, clearly disrupts the functionality of these common objects. This challenges the audience's perceptions and can be very unsettling for them, as they would expect to be able to use these objects. Another artist who produces soft sculpture is Ann Sutton (b 1935).

Billy Al Bengston embodies through his work the Californian cool aesthetic as a surfer and motorcycle-racer. His interest in motorcycle and car culture led him to use materials that are not traditional for painting artworks, using enamel and lacquer on aluminium. In keeping with automotive artwork he used a spray gun to create *Man from Monterey* (1969) (access the interactive textbook to view a copy of this work). His fascination with shimmering reflections that resulted from spraying lacquer in this work was inspired by his interest in surfing and the way sunlight bounces off the surface of the water. The other aspect that results from his interest in the automotive culture was his use of a hammer to alter the metal surface of the painting, much like a panel beater. In *Man from Monterey*, you can see in the reflective surface that the metal has been distressed with hammer blows. The materials used by Bengston bring a variety of associations that are not necessarily inherent in the abstract imagery of his artworks.

Activity 2.19

- 1 Trial working with different materials to create an artwork and consider how these affect your visual language.
- 2 Select an artwork in this chapter and describe the materials that the artist has used. Explain the meaning you believe the artwork is conveying due to the image and materials used to create the artwork. Try not to consider any other aspects of the Structural Lens in your interpretation.

Technique

In addition to the materials used by artists, you can also consider the way these materials have been used to create an artwork and how this affects your interpretation of the work. The way they use the materials is the technique. An artist will use different techniques in painting, photography, print making, sculpture, three-dimensional works, performance works and installations.

If we consider the techniques Laura Cherry has used to create this coloured pencil drawing in Figure 2.46, we can interpret the meaning of the work. Given that the artwork is a portrait, it would not be far-fetched to state that the artist is creating a study of the model and giving us some insight into their personality or state of mind.



Figure 2.46 Year 12 student Laura Cherry, *Untitled*, 2011, coloured pencil on burnt sienna cover paper, 20 × 30 cm



Given the expression on the model's face, we can assume that they are not particularly happy and therefore we can seek further clues in the techniques applied to determine what we believe the artist is saying with this drawing.



Cherry chose to use coloured pencil on a warm toned paper. This technique establishes an overall warmth to the drawing and the colour of the paper comes through the gaps left with the mark-making and to a lesser extent filters

through the slightly translucent material used to draw with. The layering technique that Cherry uses is refined, resulting in a smooth surface showing a realistic and detailed representation of a friend. The smoothness and delicate surface created by this technique reflects the sensitive nature of the model, while the expression reflects her slightly downcast mood in the moment. The layering of pencil suggests that the girl is multilayered and is more than the mood depicted. The coloured paper symbolises the positive environment that she is in and the support around her is filtering into her through the loose cross hatching of the drawing technique in the body. This is echoed with the colour coming into her cheeks and the overall warmth resulting from the technique of working on coloured paper, which introduces hope that the mood will lift.

Chuck Close used the technique of etching, which requires the use of acid to eat into a metal plate that is then inked and printed on paper. The technique used by Close involves using an acid resisting ground on the metal plate. The acid etches the plate where the ground is removed. This suggests that the subject of the artwork, Georgia, and the person she has become, is a product of the external experiences she has been exposed to and protected from. The longer the plate is exposed to the acid, the deeper the bite and the darker the tone, which represents the fact that the more exposure to an experience (whether positive or negative), the greater the impact this would have had on who Georgia is becoming. The technique used by Close to remove the ground and expose the plate was to press his fingertip onto the soft ground, thereby removing the protective layer and leaving behind the swirls of his fingerprints. These personal identifiers are evident when observing the print from close range and suggest that Close had 'a hand' in making Georgia the person she is. The influence of Close on Georgia is made clearer when it is revealed that the work is a portrait of his daughter.



Although she uses various techniques and materials, the main element in Turkish artist Gözde Ilkin's works is stitching (visit the interactive textbook to view this artwork). She uses materials and technique as a form of commentary.

Her use of acrylic paint and her delicate embroidery technique to draw detail into the work transforms used textiles, sourced from Turkish homes, into political statements. Ilkin's manipulation of textiles adds another layer of meaning into it.



Figure 2.47 Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950, enamel on canvas, 266.7 × 525.8 cm © Pollock-Krasner Foundation, ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022



Textile production was formerly considered a feminine craft and a lesser medium for expression, until feminist artists in the 1960s and 1970s reintroduced it as a way of addressing gender issues in their art. Ilkin approaches textile with an awareness of its importance, both historically and culturally, in the artworld and builds on this to embroider her stories. She pursues themes such as alienation, social and political relationships, power issues, gender attitudes and feminine identity.

NOTE: While cultural aspects are mentioned, the focus here is on the materials being used, and is therefore appropriate to the Structural Lens.

Activity 2.20

What meaning do Gözde Ilkin's materials and techniques suggest to you?

Process

Process is another consideration when applying the Structural Lens. It is important to understand the difference between process and technique as students often confuse them. Technique is the way of doing an activity that requires skill, such as using cross-hatching to draw, glazing to paint or modelling to create a sculpture in clay. Process is the way in which an artist goes about this. It is a series of actions an artist takes in order to create a work of art.

Jackson Pollock used the technique of pouring paint rather than applying it with a brush. The result of this technique can be seen in *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, earlier in this chapter. The important thing for Pollock however was not the finished painting, which he never had a clear vision of at the start of his process, but rather the process itself. Creating the painting was a result of a performance with the canvas. He poured, splattered and dripped paint as he moved around and over the canvas, splashing paint all over its surface as if it was all

some kind of a ritual. While these paintings are visually stunning, what was most important to the artist was the process. The idea that the art is in the creative journey rather than the final product is a philosophy that is not unique to Pollock. It can be traced back to Indigenous rites and ceremonies, such as the sand paintings of the Native American, Navajo and Australian Aboriginal people. Buddhist monks also spend weeks working on a single mandala, only to destroy it soon after it is done. For them it is not about the end product, but the spiritual journey of its creation.



The Buddhists believe that the mandala holds powers of enlightenment, healing and purification. While some monks create the mandala by pouring coloured sand from conically shaped metal funnels onto a predetermined pattern that has been drawn up with chalk, other monks chant and pray,

calling upon the deities that exist within the design. They believe that this releases the positive healing energies from the mandala to those who are watching the process and into the surrounding environment. After the mandala has been created, which can take weeks depending on the size and complexity of the design, the monks ask for the deities' healing blessings during a ceremony. While these monks chant, others destroy the mandala as a reminder of the impermanence of life. Once the monks have collected up all the coloured sand, it is thrown into a river, allowing the flowing water to distribute the healing and purifying power of the mandala into the world.

NOTE: While cultural aspects are discussed, the focus here is on the process, and is therefore appropriate to the Structural Lens.



Figure 2.48 Buddhist sand mandala



Figure 2.49 Intricate Tibetan sand paintings dismantled after completion

Art form

The final structural aspect that you should consider when applying the Structural Lens is the art form. An art form is an activity or piece of artistic work that can be regarded as a medium of artistic expression. It can be a two-dimensional art form such as print making, collage or photography; a three-dimensional art form including ceramics and construction, or even four-dimensional art forms that make use of time.

The form the artwork takes can have a direct impact on the audience and how they interpret the messages and meanings. A drawing or painting hanging on the wall might draw one person in and cause them to study the work, interpreting each detail they discover, while someone else might feel separated from these two-dimensional works. A photograph has long been a record of reality and the audience might take the image at face value, but with the advances in technology and digital photography they may question the reality of what they are faced with, which can raise questions when they interpret the work.

Land art

Andy Goldsworthy is a British artist who collaborates with nature, working with whatever comes to hand in the time and place of his creation. He uses sticks, leaves, rocks, snow, reeds, thorns and the passage of time to create **site-specific installations**. Goldsworthy crafts



Figure 2.50 *Oak Room* by Andy Goldsworthy at the Chateau la Coste near Aix-en-Provence in Provence, France. © Andy Goldsworthy. ARS/ Copyright Agency, 2022

site-specific installation created for a specific site; an artwork that relates to various aesthetic qualities of the site or environment for which it is created

his installations out of local materials with the full knowledge that his works are **ephemeral**. He says, 'It's not about art. It's just about life and the need to understand that a lot of things in life do not last.'

Goldsworthy takes these materials and reworks them into the environment he finds them in, then lets the natural conditions and weather take their course. Sometimes he places his creation into a creek and allows the current to carry it off. The act of placing it into the water and the passage of the form through the environment until it eventually breaks apart and reintegrates with the new environment it finds itself in is all part of the artwork. Goldsworthy's work is transient, much like nature with which and in which he creates his art.



Exploring land art as an art form causes the audience to immediately associate the environment with the messages conveyed. The clearly ephemeral nature of the work that is recorded with photography brings to mind the fragility of nature and our impact on the world. If Goldsworthy's construction was placed on a pedestal in a gallery the focus would be on the materials and the art form of sculpture or installation and may create a different response in the audience than his intended art form of a site-specific installation.

Looking, touching, materials, place and form are all inseparable from the resulting work. It is difficult to say where one stops and another begins. The energy and space around a material are as important as the energy and space within. The weather – rain, sun, snow, hail, mist, calm – is that external space made visible. When I touch a rock, I am touching and working the space around it. It is not independent of its surroundings, and the way it sits tells how it came to be there. **Andy Goldsworthy**

Installations

Another art form that has become popular among contemporary artists are installations. Installation is a term used to describe large, mixed-media constructions, often designed to be displayed in a specific place or period of time. An installation can fill a whole room that the audience then walks

through, allowing full immersion in the work. Some might be walked around and considered, while others require the audience's participation. The main difference between installation art and traditional art forms is that it is an experience. The way the audience interacts and engages with the artwork is a vital part of the work. This involvement can have an impact on your interpretation of the work.

Lateral Office, an architecture firm based in Toronto, was commissioned by the Harbourfront Centre to address the theme of 'personal space.' In response they created an installation, *Clearing* (Figure 2.51), a room-sized interactive space with over 4000 vertical cables attached to a suspended grid of perforated metal on the ceiling and floor. As people entered the space, they were given serrated acrylic discs to gather, arrange and clip the black elastomeric cables. This allowed the audience to interact with the work and manipulate the density and arrangement of the space. The possible configurations were infinite and changed constantly.

While this installation was intended to address the idea of personal space, due to the interactive nature of the work and the fact that you could enter the space, other meanings might be considered. You may see the work as a representation of the personal obstacles and difficulties you are experiencing in life, the struggle you go through in different social interactions, the control we have over our circumstances and even the impact that we have on our immediate surroundings and the world at large. The latter may raise issues of our carbon footprint, leaving nature as we found it or the power of nature (the cables) to return to their natural (vertical) form when we (the clips) are removed from the equation.

The texture, tension and flexibility of the cables as you moved through the space would create an emotional and intellectual response as you interacted with the work. These interpretations may be very different to those you might consider when faced with a photograph of the installation without any evidence of interaction from the audience.

land art an art movement that emerged in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in which landscape and the work of art are inextricably linked





Figure 2.51 Project Team: Lateral Office Mason White, Lola Sheppard, Joseph Yau, *Clearing*, 2008, Harbourfront Gallery, Toronto, Ontario, interactive installation

Style

The **style** of the artwork is the end result, or objective, to what the artist does with materials and techniques, process and art form. The style in which an artist works can be identified by certain characteristics. Style is the formal and expressive quality of a completed artwork. The qualities, imagery or concept of the artwork may relate to

other artworks made during the same stylistic period of time. When a group of artists work in a common style, they are often said to belong to a particular **art movement**. Style can be used to communicate the political, religious and social value of an artwork.

Activity 2.21

The Spanish court painter Diego Velázquez painted *Las Meninas* (Figure 2.52), which depicts the Spanish royal family, focusing on the young Spanish princess and her entourage, in 1656–57. The historical context of the work suggests that the painting represents the Baroque style.

- 1 What stylistic characteristics are evident in the artwork that support this theory?
- 2 How does the Baroque style of Velázquez differ from that of the Italian Caravaggio or the Flemish Rubens?



Figure 2.52 Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656–57, oil on canvas, 318 × 276 cm

style the formal and expressive quality of an artwork; can be used to communicate the political, religious and social value of an artwork

art movement describes a common style used by a group of artists

Activity 2.22

- 1 Write a definition of the following art movements or styles using the glossary in this book or other resources: Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, abstract and Pop Art.
- 2 Find an example of an artwork created in each style. Write a series of points explaining why the artwork reflects a particular style or art movement.

If a painting makes use of emotive subject matter and uses the elements and principles of art in a subjective way in order to heighten the emotional impact of the work, you would consider the work to be expressionistic.



This is evident in Edvard Munch's The Scream, which shows his expressionist use of the elements of art. Based on a personal experience, the strong linear perspective of the bridge emphasises the gap to his two friends as they leave him, isolated and filled with melancholy. The jarring colour combinations including, as Munch put it, 'the blood red sky', fill the audience with trepidation. This is further enhanced by the swirling lines as nature appears to melt. The distortion in the landscape is echoed in the warped, skull-shaped head, elongated hands, wide eyes, flaring nostrils and open mouth that personifies the scream Munch 'felt tear through nature'. His technique of applying the paint in the long sweeping brush strokes dragged across the board emphasises the anxiety he is depicting.

Some artists, such as Munch, lead the move to a new style, while other artists and stylistic movements reflect a previous style. An artwork that represents beauty in an idealised manner and makes use of a balanced and formal composition would be considered classical in style. This is



Figure 2.53 Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, 1893, oil, tempera and pastel on cardboard, 73.5 × 91 cm

reflected in the names given to art movements like the Renaissance and Neo-Classicism, which both revisit the approaches and ideals associated with the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome. 'Renaissance' means 'rebirth' of classicism while 'Neo' means 'new', as in 'New Classicism'. Contemporary art is highly eclectic and tends to reference a range of styles depending on the artist's interests and intentions.

Activity 2.23

Choose a contemporary artwork that references a style from the past. You could consider the Chapman brothers, Cindy Sherman or Ron Mueck. Write a series of points that explain what characteristics of the style are recognisable and outline why the artist may have chosen to work in this particular style. Explain how the style may help to convey the meaning of the artwork. Consider the subject matter, how the subject has been presented, the techniques and the ways in which the artist has used the elements and principles of art.

Sometimes an artist will reference a specific style because the style raises particular ideas and meanings. It brings with it a history that people associate with the style. The artist can therefore add meaning to their work simply through an association the viewer has with the style. Style, however, does not only relate to an art movement. You can also identify the general style of an artwork such as: abstract, figurative, expressive or stylised.

Symbolism

When applying the Structural Lens to the interpretation of art, you must consider the structural aspects of the artwork, the style of the artwork and, finally, any symbolism or metaphor the artist uses that contributes to the meaning of the work.

What physical aspects (visual qualities, technique or style) or presentation suggest symbolic meaning?



Artists often make use of images, their medium, technique or the elements and principles of art to convey meaning to the

viewer through symbolism. If an artist created two sculptures of a seated figure, one from concrete and the other from ice, each would convey a different meaning purely by means of the materials used. While concrete suggests permanence, ice represents impermanence and could symbolise our mortality and the fragility of human life.

In Renaissance paintings, the Virgin Mary is often depicted holding or, as in Leonardo da Vinci's The Annunciation (Figure 2.54), being presented with a lily. The white lily is an image that symbolises both the purity of the virgin and also death, referencing the prophecy that her child would die for our sins. The elements of art are also often used to symbolise ideas. Colour is a particularly powerful symbol but can mean different things to different people. The colour red, for example, can symbolise love, lust, danger or power. The symbolic meaning of colour is usually clarified by the context in which it is used.



Activity 2.24

Consider three artworks from this chapter that reflect or are examples of an art style. Identify the style used in each then answer each of the following questions:

- 1 Does the work appear representational or non-representational?
- 2 Is it expressionistic, abstract or figurative?
- 3 How does the style of the artwork represent the period of time in which the artist was living?
- 4 Are there any stylistic characteristics evident that suggest the work belongs to a particular art movement?
- 5 What techniques has the artist used to achieve a certain style?
- 6 Have the elements and principles of art been used to achieve a style?
- 7 Does the style of the work place it within a historical or cultural context or does it reflect the artist's personal style?
- 8 Finally, in response to the information gathered in answering these questions, explain how the stylistic qualities affect your understanding of the work's meaning.



Figure 2.54 Leonardo da Vinci, *The Annunciation*, 1472–75, Uffizi, Florence, oil and tempera on panel, 98 × 217 cm

Artists and artworks display symbols in different ways. This is often a reflection of the time, place and culture in which the artwork has been created. The artist might use art elements and principles in a specific way or the subject matter of the work can represent an idea. Some artists deliberately include visual symbols in their work to direct the viewer towards some idea about the meaning behind the artwork. The artist may choose a particular art form or style to convey their ideas or use techniques in a certain way. *The Arnolfini Portrait* by Jan van Eyck (Figure 2.55), showing Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife, includes a significant use of symbolism.



The wooden clogs may be a reference to the quote in the book of Exodus in the Christian Bible: 'Put off the shoes from thy feet ...', signalling the sacred nature of marriage and that the couple are in the words of the Christian marriage ceremony, being 'married in the sight of God'. This is also partially confirmed by the single candle burning in the chandelier that symbolises the presence of Christ, the light of the world. The single candle can also be seen as a symbol of the 'one body' of the husband and wife. Fertility is referenced by the wooden carving on the chair, visible beneath the chandelier. The carving represents St Margaret, the patron saint of childbirth, promoting the idea of having a healthy family. A dog appears at the couple's feet, a symbolic reference to



Figure 2.55 Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak panel, 82.2 × 60 cm

loyalty and faithfulness. Finally, three oranges can be seen on the table behind the groom. In Bruges, where the painting was created, oranges were considered symbols of love and marriage, and doctors recommended carrying oranges to ward off the plague.

As can be seen in this example, symbolism is not always obvious, and is often specific to the culture and time period of the artist. You may have been very surprised by many if not all of the symbols mentioned in reference to *The Arnolfini Portrait*. The meaning of a symbol is not inherent in the symbol itself, but is culturally learned. If you are not part of a culture, you may not see

meaning in something that is very significant to the culture in which the artwork was created. You may have a different understanding of a symbol than the intended cultural meaning, but that is still acceptable, because applying the lenses to the interpretation of meaning in artworks is a way of you determining what the artwork means for you.

Activity 2.25

What symbols can you find in *The Arnolfini Portrait* (Figure 2.55)? Does the signature of the artist inscribed on the wall above the round mirror have any symbolic meaning?

Activity 2.26

Consider two artworks from this chapter that were created in different times and cultures. Identify the symbolism used in each by considering the following questions:

- 1 What art elements and principles has the artist used as symbols? Describe what these are and explain the ideas they represent.
- 2 How has the composition of the artwork been arranged to provide symbolic meaning?
- 3 What images or objects in the artwork are symbolic?
- 4 Does the artist's choice of materials or art form suggest any symbolic meaning?
- 5 Are the techniques the artist has used symbolic? Describe how the artist has used the techniques to suggest a particular idea.
- 6 Is the style of the artwork symbolic? Does it convey a particular idea of the time and cultural context in which it was produced?

Conclusion

When applying the Structural Lens you must consider three aspects of this lens:

- 1 How do the structural aspects of the artwork convey messages and meaning?
- 2 How does the style of the artwork convey meaning?
- 3 How does the artist achieve their intention and convey meaning with the use of symbolism?

When applying this lens to your interpretation, you should consider the following questions:

- How has the artist applied the art elements and the art principles and what effect has this had on the artwork?

- How do the art elements and art principles contribute to the meanings and messages of the artwork?
- What materials, techniques and processes have been used? How is the interpretation of the artwork affected by the choices the artist has made regarding these?
- Are contemporary materials, processes and art forms used in the creation and presentation of the artwork? How is the interpretation of the artwork shaped by the artist's use of these?
- What is the distinctive style of the artwork and how does it contribute to the meaning of the artwork? Does the artwork relate to other artworks in a similar style or from the same philosophical, ideological, social, historical or cultural context?

- Does the context of where and how the artwork is presented contain or suggest symbolic meaning?
- Does the context of where the artwork is presented communicate the beliefs of the artist, audience, culture, time or place in which it was made and viewed? Does this shape your interpretation in any way?

2.5 Personal Lens

The Personal Lens can be used to interpret how an artist's personal feelings, thinking and life circumstances can be exhibited in an artwork. When using this lens, you are required to look at the personal ideas that the artist is exhibiting in the work, and what symbolic elements or techniques they may have used in the work that are relevant to their personal ideas. If you do not know the artist and do not know what their life circumstances, ideas and beliefs are you can state, *'The artist may be conveying ...'*

The artist

Understanding the input of the artist is as important as interpreting the surface. The Personal Lens encourages you to consider the personal style, approach and **iconography** of the artist. When applying this lens, you need to consider the artist's life experiences and beliefs and how these influenced or are evident in their work. An artist may create a mood that reflects their frame of mind at the time of creating the artwork. I was very aware when exploring the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam the first time, how clearly this was evident in his work, which was exhibited in chronological order.

Art imitates the objects and events of ordinary life.

Plato

Activity 2.27

Choose five paintings by Van Gogh and consider how the structural aspects of his paintings suggest his frame of mind. Once you have done this, research each work and find what Van Gogh stated about the works at the time of their creation. Compare your observations and interpretations with the artist's documented state of mind at the time of painting each. Does your knowledge of the artist's circumstances, feelings and state of mind alter your interpretation or substantiate it?

JR and Marco

The act of artistic creation is inseparable from the real world. It reflects the artist's world and therefore things that interest them or are part of their social identity. For example, religion and politics will often feature in the work of artists. After a week of travelling around the Middle East in 2005, two street artists, JR and Marco, concluded that the people of Israel and Palestine have many similarities, despite endlessly fighting each other. The artists realised that the people only saw their differences, and so they aimed to help them realise their similarities. In 2007 they organised the largest illegal photography exhibition ever, with their project *Face2Face*. Monumental portraits of Jews and Palestinians with similar facial expressions were pasted up onto the barrier wall between Israel and Palestine in the conflict zones in Gaza, to emphasise the similarities between the two opposing groups of people. The only difference between them is their religion, which is not the focus of the photographs.

iconography the use of images and symbols to represent ideas or the particular images and symbols used in this way by a religious or political group



Figure 2.56 JR and Marco, *28 Millimeters, Face2Face*, 2007, installation, photo courtesy of the artist

For further information on this artwork, search 'JR and Marco 28 Millimetres Face2Face (2007)' on your preferred search engine.

Rachel Whiteread

British contemporary artist Rachel Whiteread focuses on the physical world around us and the objects and spaces we use and interact with. She was influenced by memories of hiding inside a large cupboard as a child and recalls how comforting this was. The memories of being cocooned inside this object began a fascination with the inside of various objects and spaces. She wanted to somehow make memories solid and mummify the air in a room. This thinking led her to create casts of the interior space of a number of objects and environments including *House* (Figure 2.57).

Appearing as a photographic negative, *House* forces the viewer into a discomfiting position. By turning the house inside out, the viewer is faced with the conflicting feeling of being both inside and outside, something that can be both disorientating and comforting. *House* also challenges the viewer's perception of what is considered 'home', including the standard elements of a home, but cast in a brutalist concrete structure. This massive concrete form becomes a monument to the space that we



Figure 2.57 Rachel Whiteread, *House*, 1993, © Rachel Whiteread. DACS/ Copyright Agency, 2022

are all familiar with and often take for granted. Her casts of the house can also be seen as a tomb or mausoleum, containing the ghosts of previous inhabitants.

When attempting to interpret a work of art, a good way to deal with it is to resort to the creator's intention. Knowing the artist's intentions when producing their art can significantly help the audience to understand the artist's meaning. Some artists are quite open and detailed in how they produce their art, particularly what meaning it holds for them, or the message they are trying to communicate with the audience. You may check what the artist says about their work in an interview, letter, journal or autobiography.

Year 11 student Annika Sultana wrote two interpretations of Whiteread's *House*. The first was written without any prior knowledge of the artist or her intention and is presented later in this chapter (pages 86 and 87). The second interpretation applies the Personal Lens after having completed some research of Whiteread.



'House' by Rachel Whiteread physically conveys the private internal experiences kept within one's home. In her casting, the artist has captured the internal elements of the house, whilst still maintaining the exterior. Through this distorted perception of the structure of the house, the viewer is placed both inside and outside simultaneously upon observation. This house, now void of any utility, retains history and memory within its concrete structure. Much like a fossil, through preservation of a point in time, one can envision the house in its reality, acknowledging those who lived within the building. Here, Whiteread solidifies the memories and existence of those within the house, bringing life to the concrete structure. The cold and dull exterior created by the concrete, works to create a structure removed of the elements contributing to the warmth and familiarity we recognise in a home. This creates a disorienting house, free from the intricacies of a home that resemble domestic habitation, communicating the absence of memory and life rather than the presence. In doing so, Whiteread enables the viewers to disregard these small intimate details of the interior of a home, exposing the spaces within a house that are often overlooked.

Chuck Close

Life circumstances are related to the experiences of the artist and are considered in terms of how these experiences are reflected in their work and express messages and meaning intentionally or as interpreted by you the audience. Chuck Close is an artist who creates works that directly reflect his life circumstances. Close graduated from Yale University in 1964 at a time when the dominant influence in art was abstract expressionism, but he chose to take his art in the opposite direction and paint photorealist portraits.

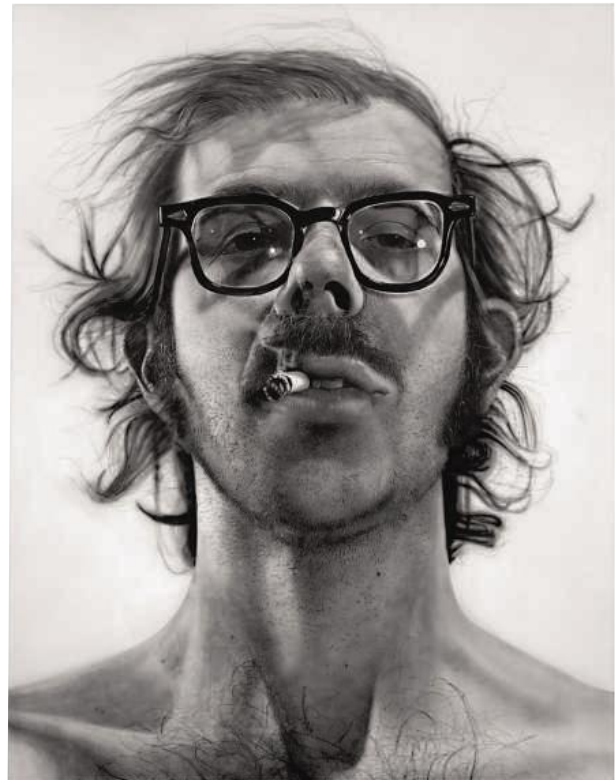


Figure 2.58 Chuck Close, *Big Self-Portrait*, 1967–1968, acrylic on canvas, 273.1 × 212.1 cm, Photograph courtesy Pace Gallery Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Art Center Acquisition Fund, 1969

Although he worked as a figurative painter like the Minimalists he had studied, Close sought to gain control of his work by subjecting it to a system. He did this by working with a grid. This also allowed him to achieve an all-over composition like Pollock, where each part of the canvas was equal to all other parts. The all-over effect was achieved through gridding up the reference photograph and then transferring the same grid on a larger scale to the canvas. When starting to paint he would focus only on one grid at a time. Because

of the large scale of the paintings (more than 2 metres in height), each square was meaningless and he could not decipher what the details represented, so he could not subconsciously emphasise any particular areas. He commented that while painting his *Big Self-Portrait*, he was unaware that he had been painting smoke until stepping away from the canvas. He painted the textures as he saw them, replicating the smooth surface of the photographic print he used as reference. Choosing to work from photographs gives Close's work a detached coolness in relation to its subject matter. The paintings are a very objective rendering of the faces and are the diametric opposite of the subjective style of Abstract Expressionism. This was emphasised further in his early achromatic paintings, which lacked any emotive use of colour.

Close said, 'I wanted to make pieces in which each square inch was physically exactly the same ... I wanted a stupid, inarticulate, uninteresting mark, that in and of itself could not be more interesting than the last mark or more beautiful than the next ...'

The painting process he used also resisted any spontaneity, which is the very opposite of abstract expressionism. To achieve a photo-like surface that lacked emotion and individuality, he initially threw out his bristle brushes and adopted the airbrush. This allowed him to eliminate expressive marks and achieve an even quality resembling the smooth, impersonal surface of a photographic print. Once finished, his portraits were giant copies of the photographs and showed every detail, every wrinkle and flaw of the original. There was no censoring by the artist.

When looking at the resulting paintings and understanding Close's process, we also gain some insight into the artist's life experiences before studying art at Yale. As a child he was diagnosed with profound dyslexia and while he can read, he cannot remember anything he reads. He has an excellent memory for anything he hears, however, so in school he studied for tests by entering what he called his '**sensory deprivation tank**'.

I filled the bathtub to the brim with hot water. A board across the bathtub held my book. I would shine a spotlight on it. The rest of the bathroom was dark. Sitting in the hot water, I would read each page of the book five times out loud so I could hear it. If I stayed up half the night in the tub till my skin was wrinkled as a raisin, I could learn it. The next morning I could spit back just enough information to get by on the test.

Chuck Close

Like reading, when Close painted a face he was overwhelmed by the whole. The only way he could deal with the information overload was to focus on a small section at a time, as he did with the torch in his bath: '... by breaking the image down into small units, I make each decision into a bite-size decision ... The system liberates and allows for intuition. And eventually I have a painting.'

The second life experience that affected his decision to paint his family and friends was that Chuck Close had to contend with prosopagnosia, more commonly known as face blindness. He can see the parts of a person's face, such as the nose or eyes, perfectly well, but he cannot put the parts together into a pattern that leaves an impression on his memory. He could not remember a person he met a day after the meeting. Close discovered in kindergarten that he could not recognise faces when he realised that he could not recognise anyone in his class by the end of the year. He cannot even remember a face if the person he is talking to turns their head slightly, as then he sees a completely different face. Once he changes the face into a two-dimensional object however, he can commit it to memory, because he has a photographic memory for things that are two-dimensional. This is a major reason for his choice of subject matter, because painting people close to him, who are his preferred subjects, allows him to commit the face to memory.

Activity 2.28

- 1 The grid that Close used as part of his process was similar to the screen that makes tonal variations possible in photomechanical printing. He also explored colour by reproducing the colour separation process of commercial printing. Research the process Close used to produce *Mark*, 1978–79.
- 2 On 7 December 1988, Close experienced something that had a major impact on his work. Research what occurred and how this changed the painting technique he used and how aspects of his early abstract painting style resurfaced.

Identity

Another aspect of life circumstances that can be considered is our identity. Who we see ourselves as, or who we are perceived to be or expected to be, by others. Identity, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is: 'who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others'.

Identity can be considered in a range of different ways. It can be our physicality. Our fingerprints, our DNA, our facial features, hair colour and hair type, our body shape. Sometimes we modify our appearance as we seek to 'find ourselves', by changing our hair, clothing or even resorting to surgery to alter our bodies. This physical identity can be a result of our ethnic identity relating to our past ancestry. Many people gain a sense of positive self-esteem from their identity groups, which furthers a sense of community and belonging. This collective identity may include gender, religion, politics or cultural identity. Gender was considered a clear indication of identity in the past, but today we understand that gender and sexuality are not binary, and exist on a spectrum.

Identity is not just physical. It includes our memories, experiences, relationships and values; the things that create our sense of self. These build up our sense of who we are and can change as we experience new things or become aware of characteristics previously suppressed. Identity can be fluid. We often ask ourselves, 'Who am I?' and 'Who do I want to be?' Some aspects of identity are placed on us through birth, upbringing and influences developed through our relationships with other people; while other aspects of identity are the result of choices we make.

Identity can also refer to a circumstance in which we find ourselves, such as being an

immigrant or a refugee. These situations can cause an identity crisis as we try to hold on to our past identity while trying to assimilate and form a new social identity in our desire to belong.

The identity placed on artists or how artists identify themselves can affect the way they express themselves or can become the idea or issue that they wish to convey, highlight, comment on or question.

Throughout history the representation of physical identity is evident in portraiture. An early example of this can be found in *Profile Portrait of a Lady*, by an unknown artist (see Figure 2.59). This artwork can be interpreted by applying the Personal Lens even if you do not know who the artist is by considering the general circumstances of an artist at the time and place where the artwork was created. The portrait was painted in the latter stages of the fifteenth century in Europe, showing the sitter's rich detailed clothing and hairstyle. This is typical of the time and place in which it was created. The portrait aims to emphasise the woman's physical beauty, while also identifying her social status. The painting was possibly done as a wedding portrait, which was also typical of the time. The purpose of these wedding portraits was to show them to prospective suitors in remote locations at a time when photographs and internet dating were not an option. Given the purpose of the portrait, it can be assumed that, much like on dating websites today, the image would probably be idealised to show the sitter in the best possible light, while still showing a recognisable representation. She is poised, graceful and demure, characteristics expected in this time and appealing to the male suitor.



Figure 2.59 Unknown artist, *Profile Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1465–75, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, tempera and oil on poplar panel, 38 × 25 cm

Frida Kahlo

Artists often explore the physical identity of themselves or others through portraiture. Self-portraits can be a way for artists to explore both their physical appearance and their psychological identity. Frida Kahlo is an artist who created a large number of self-portraits exploring both these aspects of identity. Many of them reflect her mixed cultural heritage from her Spanish and Indigenous Mexican mother and her German Jewish father, as can be seen in *The Two Fridas*. Kahlo expresses her cultural identity through the clothing she wears in each and the way she has styled her hair. The artist shows two sides of her personality painted shortly after her divorce from Diego Rivera. One shows her in the traditional



Figure 2.60 Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939, © Banco de México Rivera Kahlo Museums Trust/ARS. Copyright Agency, 2022

Tehuana costume favoured by her husband, while the second shows her as an independent woman dressed in modern clothes of the day.

Gillian Wearing

Gillian Wearing, an English contemporary artist, produces self-portraits like Kahlo did. She is interested in documentary portraiture and sometimes represents herself in the identity of family members.

I was interested in the idea of being genetically connected to someone but being very different. There is something of me, literally, in all those people – we are connected, but we are each very different.

Gillian Wearing

Self Portrait as My Uncle Bryan Gregory (2003) is part of the photographic series *Album*, that consists of seven autobiographical photographs in which the artist reconstructed old family snapshots. To do this she photographs herself wearing a silicone mask that she has made of the relative. The process also involves the use of costumes, makeup, props and lighting, and collaborating with a team, including experts from Madame Tussauds who cast, sculpt, paint and even apply hair to the masks.

Activity 2.29

Research the works of Frida Kahlo and describe how she expresses her identity in different ways at different times, depending on her life circumstances.

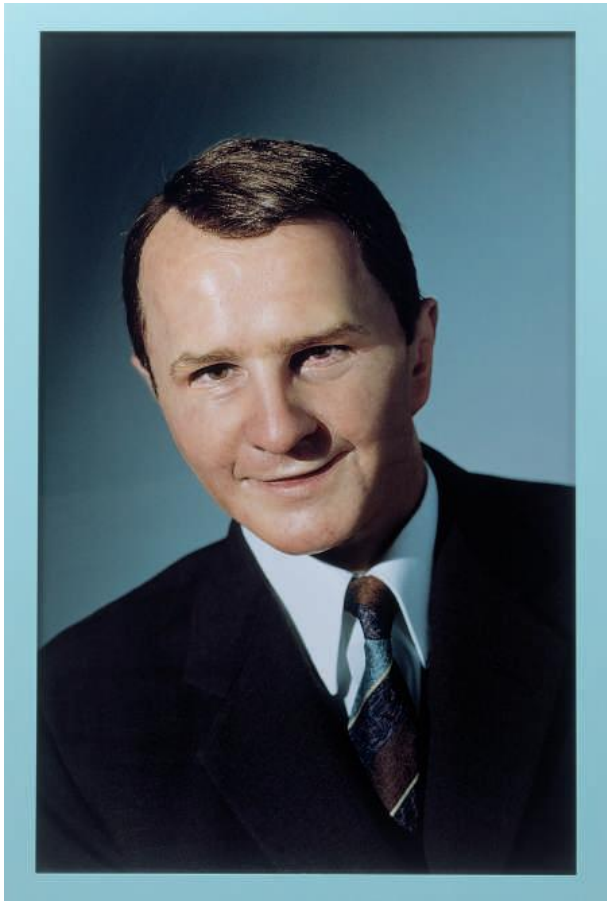


Figure 2.61 Gillian Wearing
Self Portrait as My Uncle Bryan Gregory, 2003
 framed digital c-type print 124 × 82.5 cm
 © Gillian Wearing, courtesy Maureen Paley,
 London, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York and Regen Projects, Los Angeles

Dani Marti

Sometimes artists communicate identity in terms of personality, interests and character traits rather than physical appearance. Dani Marti's work is mounted on the wall like a traditional portrait, but it is made up of multitudes of melted plastic objects in different colours including bowls, orange juicers and other plastic domestic appliances. The title *It's All About Peter* (Figure 2.62) is important, as it clearly tells us who the work is about. The title and the way the work is presented suggest that the artist wants us to think of it in the tradition of portraiture. Although we do not know who he is, this abstract 'portrait' suggests a little about Peter. The everyday plastic objects that make up this work are perhaps things owned by him. If this is the case, then they give us some insight into Peter, such as the colours of the things he chooses to surround himself with. Is it suggesting that he is a colourful and complex person?

Ah Xian

As outlined by the Queensland Art Gallery, the human form has remained a central subject in Ah Xian's work throughout all his experimentation. He explores identity, history and human interaction. Cast from life in a lengthy process, each figure



Figure 2.62 Dani Marti, *It's All About Peter*, 2009, BREENSPACE, Sydney. Photo: Jamie North.

in *Metaphysica* is subtly different in patina and expression. At first they appear anonymous or generic, but on closer inspection each conveys its own life and personality. Life-cast from female models, their subtlety and individuality are revealed by slight differences in posture, age or the hint of a smile. But these are not only representations of the model's physical identity, a natural fact of the process but also delve into their beliefs, interests and possibly character. Each bust is clearly differentiated by the presence of the items resting on top of the heads. These objects were purchased

by the artist from Beijing antique and craft markets or from roadside stalls, and range from deities and temples to animals and lamps. The artist describes them as 'auspicious symbolic objects which reflect what people believe, love, appreciate and enjoy'. Each object holds importance for the artist. He believes the top of the head is the site where 'our wishes, imaginations, and spiritual souls linger ... The skull is like a skylight to link our emotions and souls with the imaginative possibilities of the spirit'. These items imply aspects that lie beyond the physical bodies we inhabit.



Figure 2.63a 2010.019 Ah Xian, China/Australia b.1960, *Metaphysica: Immortal on deer* 2007, Bronze and brass, 65 × 43.7 × 23 cm, Gift of the artist through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation 2010. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, © Ah Xian, Photograph: N Harth, QAGOMA



Figure 2.63b 2009.181 Ah Xian, China/Australia b.1960, *Metaphysica: Red Fish* 2007, Bronze, brass and oil paint, 60.5 × 43.7 × 22.7 cm, Purchased 2009 with funds from Tim Fairfax AM through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation, Collection: Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, © Ah Xian, Photograph: N Harth, QAGOMA

Raja Ravi Varma

In *Portrait of Maharaja Serfoji II of Tanjore* by Raja Ravi Varma (Figure 2.64), it is possible to determine the cultural identity of the sitter by his features, dress, ornamentation and in this case, the style of the painting. While it is understood that he achieved a good likeness of India's greatest scholarship of Tanjore, Varma also portrayed his character. Serfoji sits with calm confidence, looking at the viewer with perception, strength, and a regal bearing. His cultural identity is evident from his Shaivite markings on his forehead. His royal robes of red silk are richly worked with decorative flower

heads and bordered with green silk in the style of the time and place the portrait was painted. He wears the Tanjore royal jewels and his turban is similarly decorated with a jewelled sarpech, a turban ornament that was worn by significant Hindu, Sikh and Muslim princes, clearly identifying his stature. Varma painted the portrait in oils on board, and in keeping with the early Tanjore style of painting, Serfoji's robes and turban have been embellished with precious gemstones. This style of painting was introduced in the sixteenth century. The stones reflect light, giving an aura of divinity to the person in the painting.



Figure 2.64 Raja Ravi Varma, *Portrait of Maharaja Serfoji II of Tanjore*, c. 1878, 105 × 75 cm



Figure 2.66 Kelly Reemtsen, *Slice of Life*, 2016

Kelly Reemtsen

Many artists use their work to question issues related to identity or to raise awareness of **gender issues** and the roles placed on individuals by society due to how society identifies them.



Figure 2.65 Kelly Reemtsen, *Green Chainsaw Study*, 2013, pastel

Kelly Reemtsen's works show women in variously coloured dresses of similar style, holding household power tools, such as chainsaws and axes. In each the tool is held in a way that implies the woman is comfortable with the object in her hand. The woman in each of the paintings is anonymous with her head cropped off, so rather than being portraits of a person, the images are seen as portraits of women in general. The focus is on the images of the dress, sometimes heels, and the tool. The colourful impasto paintings are Reemtsen's medium for commenting on modern femininity. As a woman, Reemtsen showcases that having feminine identification does not mean fitting a stereotype. In this series she is questioning what makes the modern woman and the expectations on gender that society places on us.



Activity 2.30

- 1 What sort of image would you create to express your identity? Working in your visual diary, brainstorm different ways that you could represent who you are. List terms that you associate with and are part of who you are. These may be physical traits, beliefs, cultural identity or interests. Make a page of drawings that draw on these terms and visually represent your identity. Consider how you can represent this figuratively or abstractly. Consider the value of symbolism.
- 2 Choose a person with a particular identity. This could be you or someone who represents your social identity or identity group. You could choose someone from a group that is not your own but that you would like to comment on. Brainstorm ideas of what societal expectations are placed on this person or group that you would like to question. What objects could you juxtapose with them to highlight the issues that concern you? You do not have to create a traditional portrait. You could create a work that relies on symbolic representation rather than a figurative one.

Personal symbolism

As discussed in the section on the Structural Lens, artists and artworks display symbols in different ways. While the use of symbolism is often a reflection of the time, place and culture in which the artwork has been created, the artist may also use personal symbolism that only becomes clear to us once we have the information to decipher their code.

Franz Marc, for instance, applies meaning to colour that is not generally used by everyone. To him, blue represents the masculine, robust and spiritual, while yellow conveys comfort and represents the feminine, gentle, serene and sensual. For Marc, the third of the primary colours, red, symbolises the brutal. It is heavy and represents matter. He uses it for the land in his paintings.

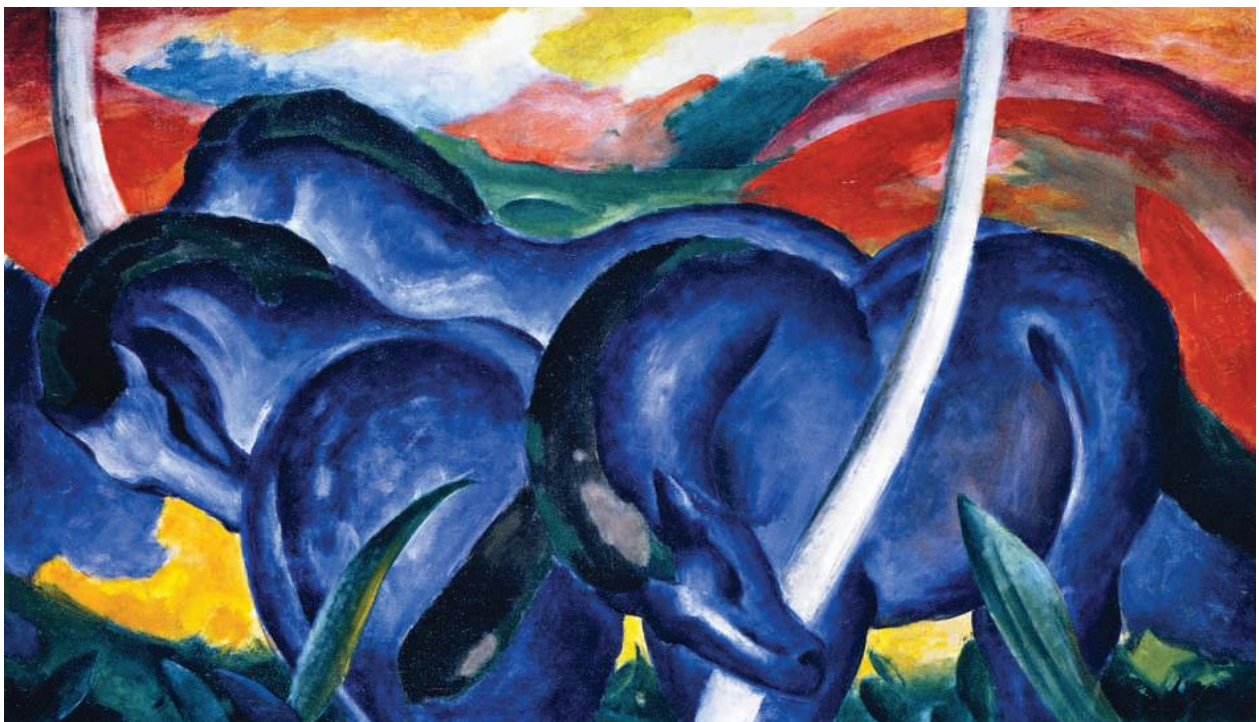


Figure 2.67 Franz Marc, *The Large Blue Horses*, 1911, oil on canvas

Symbolism can also be connected to a philosophy or belief held by the artist. The Dutch De Stijl painter, Piet Mondrian, for example, only used the three primary colours, along with black and white, in his mature style. The three colours represented specific meaning for Mondrian and came from his interest in the **Neo-Platonic** philosophy of Schoenmaekers. Mondrian explored the ideas expressed in this philosophy in his abstract paintings from 1921 until his death in 1944.



Figure 2.68 Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*, 1930

The two fundamental complete contraries which shape our earth are: the horizontal line of power, that is the course of the earth around the sun, and the vertical, profoundly spatial movement of rays that originate in the centre of the sun. The three principle colours are essentially, yellow, blue and red. They are the only colours existing. Yellow is the movement of the ray, blue is the firmament, it is line, horizontality. Red is the mating of yellow and blue. Yellow radiates, blue recedes and red floats.

Schoenmaekers, *The New Image of the World*

Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois's work is often autobiographical as can be seen in installations such as *Cell (Glass Spheres and Hands)*. This work relies heavily on personal symbolism and is used to refer to her childhood relationships and experiences. Her physical identity is included in the form of a pair of clasped hands cast in plaster.



Figure 2.69 Louise Bourgeois, *Cell (Glass Spheres and Hands)*, 1990–93, glass, iron, wood, linoleum, canvas, marble, © The Easton Foundation. VAGA at ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022.

My childhood has never lost its mystery, and it has never lost its drama. All my work of the last 50 years, all my subjects have found their inspiration in my childhood.

Louise Bourgeois

Following are a few interpretations of this work by Year 11 students applying the Personal Lens. Margo Joseph writes:

Applying the personal framework to artist Louise Bourgeois's artwork 'Cell (Glass Spheres and Hands)', I believe that she is reflecting



Neo-Platonic a philosophical system that originated in the third century, founded by Plotinus and was based chiefly on Platonic doctrine and Oriental mysticism, with later influences from Christianity; it holds that all existence consists of emanations from the One, with whom the soul may be reunited

on past aspects of her life. In this work Bourgeois represents her family through the use of glass spheres. The use of inanimate, impenetrable and simple conveys the artist's view of her family as distant and unable to communicate and convey emotion. As the delicate glass spheres are eternally closed off from one another, and are isolated from the rest of the group, Bourgeois is able to link this artwork to her real family, and the feelings her memories evoke. Bourgeois expresses her personal feelings of anxiety, isolation and emotional intensity through the use of the cell surrounding the work's central glass spheres and hands. The cell itself shares a dual meaning, representing her view as herself and a family being a single unit of life, but also sharing her view of constraint and containment felt by family pressures. Inside the cell, past the abstract glass spheres, Bourgeois represents herself through her hands cast in plaster. Like other fragments of anatomy that appear consistently in her work, the hands are an important focus on her emotion, and feeling of hopelessness. Hands, being our way of touch and action, the way Bourgeois has isolated her hands in the centre table, surrounded by her closed off family, convey her despondency and feeling of isolation.

Abby English writes:



By applying the Personal Lens, it can be determined that Louise Bourgeois has used different art elements to describe her story. The installation is a small space created using wire and cold grey tone. Because we associate wire and cages with jails and confinement, the installation is symbolic of a prison. There is no access or exit suggesting that there is no way of escaping this confinement. The chairs the artist used are like the ones we see in a household and the placement of the chairs around a table suggest that Louise's life involved multiple people in her home. The clear glass balls represent people because they are placed on the seat. Some of the spheres are larger than others further suggesting this is

her family, as families consist of different aged members. We associate the larger spheres with the older members and the smaller spheres with younger members. Placed in this cage suggests that they had a negative impact on her life, an influence she could not escape. Because she has created this piece later in her life, it suggests that it has stuck with her for a very long time and will stick with her forever.

The audience

It is important to remember, however, that it is not only the artist's intention that we should consider, but our response to the artwork as the audience and how that affects our interpretation. To interpret is to make meaningful connections between what we see and experience in a work of art and what else we have seen and experienced in our lives.

This lens also encourages you to consider how artworks may be perceived differently according to the experiences and background of the audience. While artists make comments in their work, you also take an active role in the conversation by interpreting the message. How you do this can be influenced by your beliefs, experiences and the prior knowledge of life that you bring to the artwork.

The American philosopher of science and education, Israel Scheffler, wrote in *In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions*: 'Understanding a text is a matter of gauging what it means and not what the author meant ... Once the text is produced, it is objectified, released, given birth, assuming its own career beyond the maker's control. To understand it is to see its structure, its organization, its references, its various interpretations and not, in particular, its historical and developmental origins.'

The same holds true of art. Once an artwork is created, all the intended meaning placed on it by the artist is released to the audience, who can then apply their own meaning to the work. The way you interpret an artwork is influenced by who you are and the experiences and background that you bring with you. Your age, gender, cultural background and interests all shape how you perceive the visual language of the work.

Henri Matisse, an early twentieth-century French artist, acknowledged that the interpretation of an artwork resides with the audience when he said, 'A painter doesn't see everything that he puts into his painting. It is other people who find these treasures in it, one by one, and the richer a painting is in surprises of this sort, in treasures, the greater its author.'

When analysing an artwork using the Personal Lens, the cultural background and experiences of the audience can also be used to interpret the artwork. We must consider how we relate to the artwork and what meaning we place on it. We all bring different backgrounds and experiences to the viewing and interpretation of artworks. While this can provide additional ideas that can be applied to the interpretation it is very valuable when faced with the interpretation of an unseen artwork. Without any prior knowledge of the artist or artwork, you can consider your experiences and beliefs and what ideas these bring to mind when interpreting the artwork.

VCE student Bronte Billings raises some similar ideas to Margo Joseph's earlier interpretation of Bourgeois's *Cell*, but also considers the second aspect of the Personal Lens by introducing her experiences as the audience and how this adds to her interpretation.



Many of Bourgeois' artworks conveyed a representation of her most traumatic, personal memories. In terms of the personal framework, Bourgeois has conveyed a sense of entrapment. The title, The Cell, conveys this idea of the forceful confinement and isolation Bourgeois felt at home. Whilst the piece represents her complicated family life, Bourgeois has used symbolism to convey the relationships she had within her family. The circular, hollow glass balls are a metaphor for the lack of communication and relationship Bourgeois established with her father and her father's mistress. They are circular, formless and may represent this inhuman, inanimate presence her father and his mistress had in her life. They may be hollow to represent the nothingness she sees within them, only their shallow appearances, and the empty words and love they may have offered.

Trapped in The Cell Bourgeois calls home, two hands reach out across the table towards the four spheres. These hands have been noted to represent anxiety, emotional intensity, and isolation. Bourgeois has used these hands to represent her presence within the family. She is human, unlike the glass balls, and has complex emotions. Her hands stand out against the spheres, potentially representing this abnormal, 'odd-one-out' place she had in her family growing up. It almost seems as though she is pleading, potentially begging for an ounce of attention, empathy, acknowledgement, but these hollow figures sit and watch, apathetic and detached.

For me, this piece conveys a sense of despair and utter exhaustion. In terms of the personal framework, the caged, rough edges of the room create a sense of hostility and entrapment. Growing up there is little freedom, and the environment of your family home is final. Bourgeois' wired room portrays this permanence and entrapment felt in a toxic home environment. The hands extending forward pleading out to the glass spheres is symbolic of being unheard, ignored, forgotten. Being the youngest child in my family, feeling this sense of being left behind and divided from the rest resonates with me. There is an element of loneliness that comes with being the youngest, much said being ignored or disregarded due to the natural differences in maturity between myself and my siblings. Everybody else grows up before you, experiences life before you, so there is a slight element of abandonment and feeling like an outsider. At the table, the hands are speaking of their desires, but the glass, hollow balls are caught in the adult world, unable to empathise with the youthful, full hands.

Year 11 student Annika Sultana wrote this interpretation of Whiteread's *House* without any prior knowledge of the artist. This is evidence of how you can apply the Personal Lens from the perspective of your experiences and beliefs without knowledge of the artist or their intention.



By applying the Personal Lens, House by Rachel Whiteread can be interpreted to symbolise one's memories and childhood. In creating an internal cast of a Victorian terrace house, the artist archives a building that was to be destroyed. In doing so, the solidity of this structure, being made in concrete, brings a new life to the house that no longer exists, but that had a long history. This concept reminds me of my own association of childhood experiences with the house I grew up in. That is, despite the impermanence and everchanging nature of the buildings in which we live, the memories that we have of them will always continue to exist in our minds. The empty surroundings, further suggest that what once was there is now gone. By highlighting the interior of the home, attention is drawn to the idea of what constitutes the inside of a home, this including the occupants and their experiences. Through peeling away the exterior, the intimacy of our homes is revealed, reflecting upon the memories, secrets, and experiences, kept within the concrete structures our lives are most lived in.

Conclusion

When applying the Personal Lens you must consider two aspects:

- 1 How does the artwork reflect the artist's interests, experiences and thinking?
- 2 How can your personal experiences influence the interpretation of meaning and messages in an artwork?

When applying this lens to your interpretation, you should consider the following questions:

- What evidence can I find in the artwork that reflects aspects of the artist's life and experiences?
- How is the artwork linked to people, places and experiences of personal significance to the artist?
- Are the artist's personal feelings, aspirations, beliefs, ethical ideas, desires, preoccupations, or memories represented in the artworks?
- Has the artist considered or referenced any twenty-first century art ideas and issues in the artwork? How are these ideas and issues represented?

- Has the artist used a specific practice in creating the artwork that may reflect their personal philosophy and ideas?
- Has the artist collaborated with others in the creation or presentation of the artwork? Does this affect your interpretation of the artwork?
- Has the artist included any personal objects or symbols in the artwork that may reflect their personal philosophy and ideas?
- Has the artist depicted an image that relates to their personal feelings, thinking, aspirations, beliefs, desires or preoccupations, or to memories, dreams or a personal world of fantasy?
- Are the ideas expressed in the artwork a reflection of the gender of the artist?
- How do your personal experience and background, as the audience, affect your interpretation of the artwork?
- Are there any current art ideas and issues important to you evident in the artwork?
- Does the artwork encourage collaboration or participation of the audience and if so, does this affect your interpretation of the artwork?

Activity 2.31

Investigate the works of one of the following artists: Frida Kahlo, Artemisia Gentileschi, Edvard Munch, Vincent van Gogh, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Kelly Reemtsen or Gordon Bennett. Discuss an example of an artwork by each artist using a personal interpretation.

2.6 The Art Practice

In this area of study you are introduced to **three artists**, their practice and artworks. The first part of this chapter has covered the analysis and interpretation of messages and meaning using the Structural and Personal Lenses. The final part of this area of study is the research and study of the practice of these three artists. The artist's

practice can suggest meaning as you interpret their work. This will also allow you to examine both historical and contemporary practices so that you can develop an understanding of different ways of working and making art. This will provide you with options when using the Creative Practice in your own art making.

As has already been touched on in the discussion of individual artists and their work, there is no single way for an artist to go about their art making. For example, Chuck Close used a photograph as his point of departure. He was very interested in the modern reflex camera, which can capture things that the naked eye cannot see. The camera can be adjusted to focus on areas to such an extent that they are almost magnified while others remain out of focus. The human eye automatically focuses what it looks at and because Close translates photographic information into paint information, we are forced to contemplate the face as we can never experience it with the naked eye. He chooses to paint on a very large scale so that the monumental size of his work forces the viewer to focus on one area at a time. In his paintings the blurred areas do not come into focus, and they are too large to be ignored. Close committed himself to the long, time-consuming task of transferring the image and all its information onto the canvas by means of a grid.

But while the grid was a central part of his process, Close explored different ways of using it in his practice. This included filling the grid with pointillist coloured dots, blobs of papier-mâché and even with his own fingerprints inked on a stamp pad. In the later years the grid was filled with

multicoloured lozenge shapes created with paint brushes. Each square of the grid became a unique tiny abstract painting.

Andy Goldsworthy has a very different practice. As mentioned in the section on the Structural Lens, he creates site-specific installations in collaboration with nature, using materials found on site. He carefully considers the intrinsic qualities of the materials and reworks them before returning them to the environment. This allows him to explore change, the unknown and impermanence.

Another part of his practice is photographing or videoing his process, which, due to the ephemeral nature of his work, is the only way he has a record of his collaboration with nature and can share his work with the audience. He captures the early stages of creating them, the completed artwork, and eventually the change that occurs as the natural elements interact with his work. His photographic and video records show that not every attempt is successful but that is part of his practice, trialling, failing, learning and developing as an artist.

Goldsworthy sums up his practice: 'Movement, change, light, growth and decay are the lifeblood of nature, the energies that I try to tap through my work. I need the shock of touch, the resistance of place, materials and weather, the earth as my source. Nature is in a state of change and that change is the key to understanding. I want my art to be sensitive and alert to changes in material, season and weather. Each work grows, stays, decays. Process and decay are implicit. Transience in my work reflects what I find in nature.'

Chapter 3

Areas of Study 2 and 3



In Unit 1 Areas of Study 2 and 3 you will explore ideas using the Creative Practice through experiential learning. Both of these are explained in detail in Chapter 3. In Area of Study 1 you explored the connection of the artist, their practice and artworks to the audience and how these each affected your engagement with and interpretation of the artworks. In AOS2 and AOS3 you will apply that learning to your own art making and responding as you explore the Creative Practice.

You will focus on the making of art and use what you learnt about how artists express and represent ideas, and communicate meaning in artworks, to develop your own visual language. You will document and reflect on the Creative Practice and apply the Structural and Personal Lenses to reflection on your own ideas and art making.

Through the Creative Practice you will explore areas of personal interest that lead to the development of a series of visual responses. You must use a range of materials, techniques, processes and art forms to create

a body of experimental work in response to research and personal observation through the application of the Creative Practice. You must consider the practice of artists and the process they use to create artworks as you become familiar with research and exploration, experimentation and development, refinement and resolution and the reflection and evaluation of your own ideas and art making. You should consider the examples of the artists' practices mentioned in Chapter 2 as well as those introduced to you in this chapter.

NOTE: Areas of Study 2 and 3 are not sequential but run largely concurrently. AOS2 is the making while AOS3 is documenting and responding to this work. As these two areas of study take place at the same time and in response to each other, they will be combined in this chapter. There will, however, be an indication as to which outcome is addressed by the work being discussed. This will be indicated by an AOS2 or AOS3.

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit, you should be able to use the Creative Practice to develop visual responses from the exploration of your personal interests and ideas.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- methods used to experiment with and explore materials, techniques and processes using the Creative Practice
- exploration of the practices of artists to develop personal visual responses
- the use of visual language to communicate ideas of personal interest
- inherent properties of materials and their use in a range of art forms
- the use of materials, techniques and art forms to make personal visual responses
- ways the relationships between the artist, the artwork and the audience communicate meaning in artworks
- the use of the Structural and Personal Lenses to interpret meaning in visual responses.

KEY SKILLS

- experiment and explore materials, techniques and processes using the Creative Practice
- investigate the practices of artists to develop personal visual responses
- use visual language to communicate ideas of personal interest
- explore and experiment with materials, techniques and processes in a range of art forms to make personal visual responses
- explore the relationships between the artist, artwork and the audience to communicate meaning in artworks
- apply the Structural and Personal Lenses to interpret meaning in visual responses.

THE CREATIVE PRACTICE

In this area of study, you will be introduced to the Creative Practice through experiential

learning activities guided by the teacher. You will explore and experiment with at least three art forms through a series of tasks over the semester to create visual responses to ideas and develop your visual language. You will be able to develop skills using materials, techniques and processes as you explore different art forms and areas of personal interest. You will investigate the practices of selected artists as inspiration for the development of your personal visual responses as you familiarise yourself with the Creative Practice.

APPROACHING AOS 2

There is no one right way to make art, and this textbook is not meant to be prescriptive. It is, rather, an interpretation of the study design for VCE Art Creative Practice. This book offers a suggested approach to explore your art while meeting the requirements of the study design. This chapter will suggest ways in which you can interpret the requirements of the study as you develop a body of work.

To create one's own world takes courage.

Georgia O'Keeffe

This unit is based on experiential learning, which essentially means learning through actual experiences in making and responding. You will explore ideas through the Creative Practice, trialling how art elements, art principles, materials, techniques and processes can communicate meaning. You will need to test the validity of your experiments, followed by reflection on the experience in Outcome 3, before you continue to apply what you discover to your art making. This means that you will trial, consider whether your trial is effective in achieving your intention, reflecting on this and deciding what to do next. If the trial is successful, you can expand on this; if it is not successful, it is not a major problem.

You reflect on why, what can possibly be done to improve, correct or develop it further, and then the trial continues. This is a learning process, and failure is just another way of learning. This should, therefore, give you the courage to immerse yourself in the process.

Unit 1 is a guided exploration of techniques, materials, processes and art forms. You will produce visual creative responses to tasks set by your teacher or of personal interests. Your teacher may set specific tasks to direct and facilitate your investigation and experimentation or provide you with choices. The way in which you go about addressing these tasks should reflect your interests.

The important thing in Unit 1 is to explore different ways of working. The three art forms you explore may be determined by your school due to the facilities available, but if you have access to multiple art forms, consider working to your strengths but also challenging yourself to explore art forms you have never worked with. The art forms you use can be two-, three- or four-dimensional. As you explore a material or an art form you should trial various techniques and approaches to broaden the experience.

OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit, you should be able to document and evaluate the Creative Practice used to make personal visual responses.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- methods used to document and evaluate relevant aspects of the Creative Practice
- research, exploration, reflection and evaluation using written and visual documentation
- approaches to making and presenting visual responses that communicate ideas of personal interest
- the use of critical and reflective thinking throughout the Creative Practice

- methods used to reflect on and evaluate visual language
- methods used to evaluate the use of materials, techniques and processes in personal visual responses
- the use of the Structural and Personal Lenses in annotations to analyse and reflect upon visual responses.

KEY SKILLS

- document and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice, using written and visual documentation
- analyse and reflect upon ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses
- use and document critical and reflective thinking throughout the Creative Practice
- apply critical and reflective thinking to document the Creative Practice
- document and evaluate the development of visual language
- document and evaluate the materials, techniques and processes used to make personal visual responses
- apply the Structural and Personal Lenses in annotations to analyse and reflect upon visual responses.

DOCUMENTING AND REFLECTING ON THE CREATIVE PRACTICE

In this Area of Study, you must provide annotated documentation of your experiences in Making and Responding. You are required to reflect on your application of aspects of the Creative Practice completed in Outcome 2. Evaluation and documentation are integral components of the Creative Practice and this will be assessed as part of Outcome 3. You will document your visual responses to the ideas you have explored, your trials and experimentation with materials and techniques, showing evidence of creative and critical thinking.

APPROACHING AOS 3

You are the artist and must reflect on your Making and Responding (see Chapter 1) and evaluate your use of visual language to communicate your ideas using written annotation. This will help you to communicate with the audience and explain your ideas and intention. You are required to use the language of the Structural and Personal Lenses

to critically analyse and evaluate your personal explorations and visual responses. This will help to consolidate your learning and benefit you by developing and refining your application of the lenses. The documenting and reflecting on the Creative Practice can take any appropriate form but most students will find that using a sketchbook to collect and annotate their work is the most efficient way of doing this. The annotation can be recorded in any way that is appropriate to you and your work.

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3.1 Exploring Areas of Study 2 and 3

Chapter tip 3.1

You may be concerned that by being compelled to include breadth with the introduction of three art forms, you will not have time to experiment in any depth. It is important, however, to remember that there is no expectation to produce finished artworks but rather to produce visual responses. One approach that your teacher may consider is to spend term one exploring different ways of using the three selected art forms in a range of visual responses. You can then be given the opportunity to select one of the three art forms to explore in depth during term two.

A body of experimental work



Video 3.1

You will start to use the Creative Practice, unpacked further in this chapter, to produce a body of experimental work. You will use this to create visual responses as you develop a visual language to explore issues and ideas of personal interest. You are required to complete several art tasks this semester, which will assist your exploration of issues and ideas of personal interest as you develop a visual language through the application of the Creative Practice. Informed by the theory component completed in Area of Study 1, you will be guided through the Creative Practice. You will use this to develop a range of visual responses to set tasks through the exploration of techniques, materials, processes and art forms (AOS2), providing documented evidence that you reflect on and evaluate using annotations and the Structural and Personal Frameworks (AOS3).

Where to start

There can be a number of starting points, but usually you will start with a concept provided by the teacher, to which you will then respond. You could begin by researching the concept, brainstorming what it means to you, start to explore a selected art form or material and see what ideas this brings to mind, or collect images as stimulus for your ideas. All of these are valuable at some stage of the process, but you need to determine the order in which they happen for you.

Your teacher may give you a concept such as 'A Sense of My World' to explore. This should not limit your options but instead act as a stimulus for your free exploration through art making. The point is not to have a set idea of what you are going to produce right away, but allow yourself to arrive at an idea through exploration and trialling. You should explore various interpretations of

what you consider to be a sense of your world. Come up with a range of ideas and possible visual interpretations that explore who you are.

Brainstorming ideas and writing down the first thing that comes to mind is an effective way to document some ideas. You may find creating a mind map of your ideas is helpful for this because you can write down all your ideas without thinking of how you might represent the idea visually. There should not be any evaluation taking place at this stage. Just let the ideas flow. The other aspect of a mind map that is helpful is that each idea you write down can lead to another and another, filling your page with options.

In addition to a mind map, it is useful to include visual brainstorming because this allows you to begin considering how you could possibly visually represent some of your ideas you have already placed in your mind map.

VCE student Bronte Billings initially made use of a mind map that included a few small images that came to mind as she was brainstorming (Figure 3.2). She continued to expand on this with annotated sketches that consolidated her thinking. These are very quick sketches that she was able to develop further as slightly more refined thumbnail sketches (Figure 3.3).

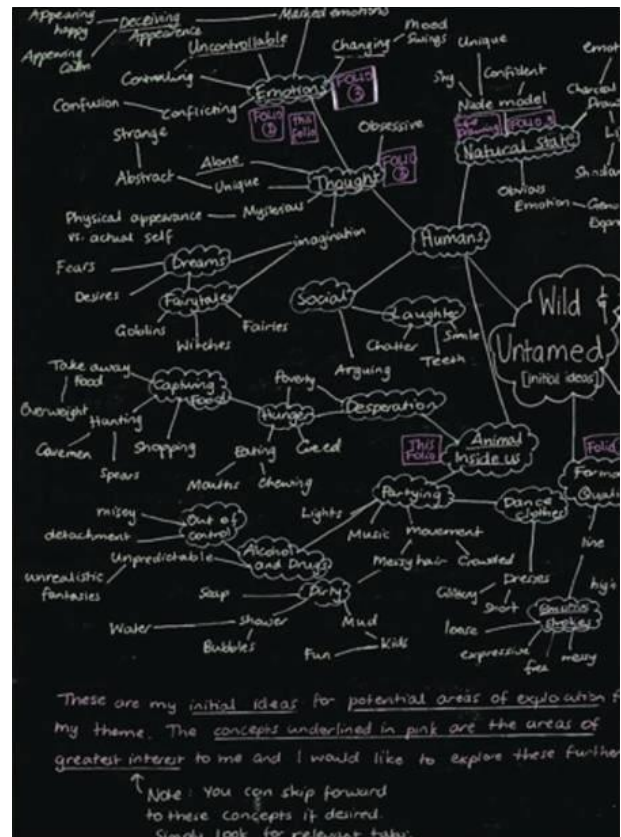


Figure 3.1 An example of a mind map

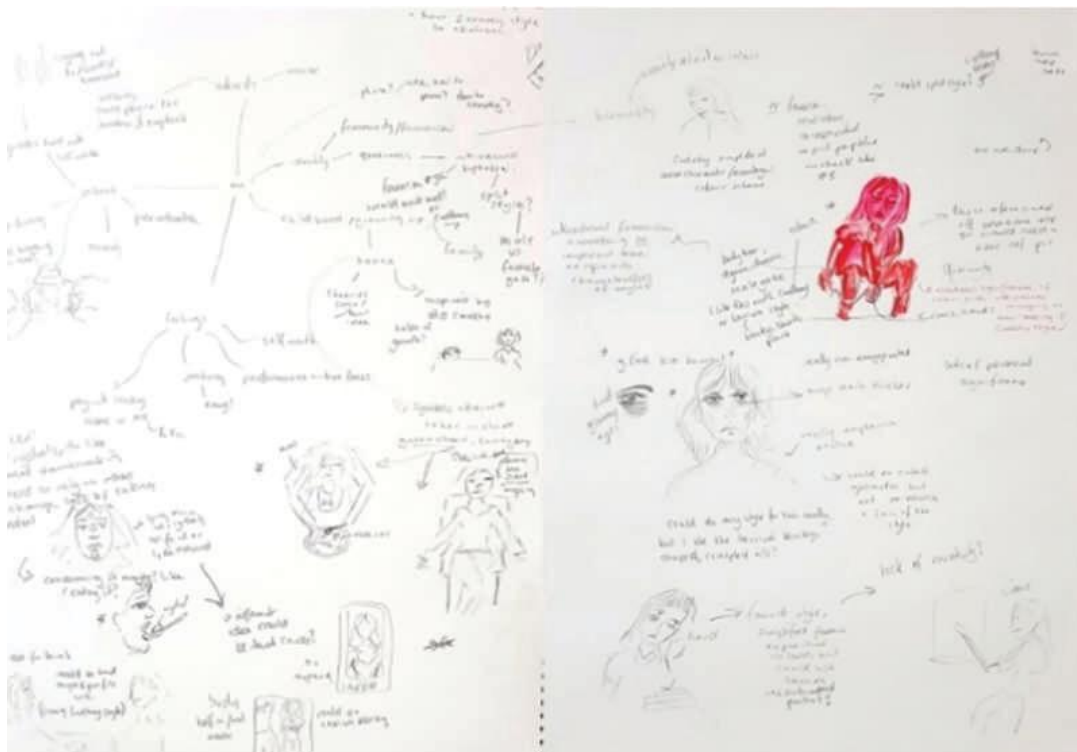


Figure 3.2 Bronte Billings, mind map with visual brainstorm



Figure 3.3 Bronte Billings, thumbnail sketches

Once you have an initial idea of what a sense of your world is, you can collect images relating to the idea/s you wish to explore. These can be found, or made from direct observation or imagination using drawing, painting or photography. Remember that your artwork does not have to be an obvious reflection of the central idea. This is a personal reflection, and the audience could therefore find it quite obscure. Part of documenting and reflecting on your work will be discussing your visual language and the meaning you are trying to communicate, so that you can inform the audience about the ideas you are dealing with. Be creative with your ideas and think outside the box.

Activity 3.1

Create a mind map based on the idea of 'A Sense of My World'. Highlight the ideas you are most interested in exploring.

What can you do with the concept?

'A Sense of My World' could be interpreted as those things that best reflect your world and, by extension, who you are. As discussed in the section on the Personal Interpretive Lens in Chapter 2, there are many different approaches that can be taken to represent your identity. An obvious interpretation of who you are is your physical appearance. This could be shown by means of a self-portrait. Self-portraiture has always been a popular subject

matter for artists to explore their art form, such as the work of Rembrandt (Figure 3.4). His self-portraits allow us to study his experimentation with the medium, and to follow the changes in his technique and style of painting over the years. They also provide us with the opportunity to observe the changes to his physical appearance as he ages.



Figure 3.4 Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, *Self Portrait*, 1630, 49 × 39 cm



Figure 3.5 Vincent van Gogh, *Self-portrait*, 1889, National Gallery of Norway, Oslo, oil on canvas, 55.5 × 45 cm



The representation of your physical appearance can, however, be coloured by your personal circumstances. Van Gogh is a good example of an artist whose paintings speak as much about his mental condition as his physical state.



He achieved this through the effective application of the elements and principles of art in his self-portraits (Figure 3.5). His works, when viewed in chronological order, allow us to observe similar physical changes as Rembrandt's, but also represent a clear picture of his emotional state of mind at any given time.

The following examples are from two VCE students who explored self-portraiture in response to 'A Sense of My World'. Each established their own visual language. Anita Golin (Figure 3.6) was inspired by the one of her favourite artists, Amedeo Modigliani, and chose to reflect this personal interest in the style of her portrait. Anita used this to produce a painting of her physical identity in a simplified style that reflects her characteristically withdrawn nature and rather introspective personality.

Annika Sultana took a more traditional approach in her realistic oil on wood panel paintings (Figures 3.7–3.9). She also explored the physical changes that have occurred over time, showing three distinct phases of her development.

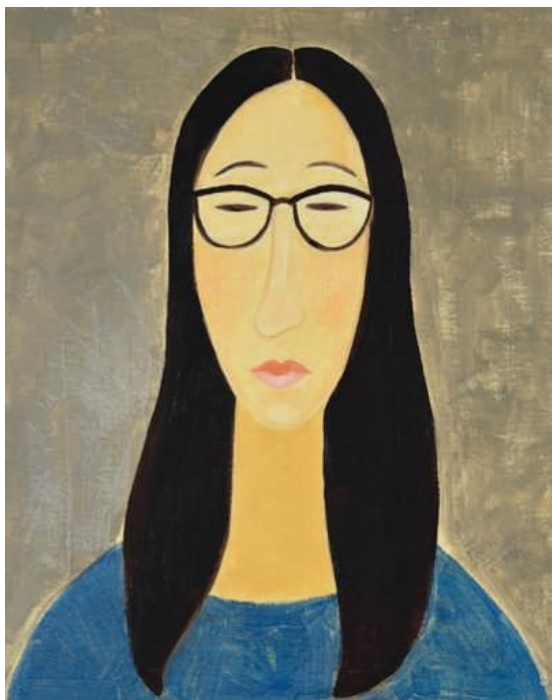


Figure 3.6 Anita Golin, *Self Portrait, in the style of Modigliani*, oil on canvas



Figure 3.7 Annika Sultana, *Self-Portrait as a Baby*, oil on wood panel



Figure 3.8 Annika Sultana, *Self-Portrait as a Child*, oil on wood panel



Figure 3.9 Annika Sultana, *Self-Portrait as young Teenager*, oil on wood panel

The Australian photographer and sculptor Anne Ferran explored the technique of **photograms** in her series *Flock* (1999), where she used period clothing to create delicate, melancholic portraits of the past. In 2001, she created photograms of christening robes that suggest someone who is no longer there (Figure 3.10). The absence of the body and the ghost-like appearance of the photograms hint at death and the tragedy of loss. These become portraits of children who are no longer with us.

Ferran said:

I am interested in clothing, because there is that very strong association with human presence and absence. There is a space where the body would be rendered in the photogram.

You are not only represented by your physical body. When exploring who you are, you could consider things such as your beliefs, interests, fears and the things that are important to you. Aristotle said: 'The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.'

The word 'sense' could be read as a feeling for or an understanding of your world. You could create an image or images that will give the viewer a sense of your world: things, people or issues that are important to you, such as your friends and



Figure 3.10 Anne Ferran, *Untitled (christening gown)*, 2001, silver gelatin photogram, 127 × 90 cm, unique print © Anna Ferran/Copyright Agency, 2022

family, or a cause you support. A simple still-life of objects could become a self-portrait, in that the objects have symbolic or personal meaning to you. They represent who you are and what you like.

The super realist still-life airbrush paintings of Audrey Flack (see digital textbook) are examples of self-portraits using items of importance to the artist.



photogram image created in the darkroom without the use of a camera; objects are placed onto photographic paper and then exposed to light; the silhouette of the object appears on the paper; objects that combine interesting positive and negative shapes as well as those that have areas of transparency are often used

Figure 3.11 Edwaert Collier, *A vanitas still life*, 1662, oil on canvas, 65.3/8 × 54 in. (166.1 × 137.2 cm.)



Collier's painting (Figure 3.11) is filled with examples of personal belongings that show something of the artist and his societal beliefs at the time of painting. The inclusion of a small engraving of his self-portrait doubles both as the artist's signature and confirmation that the still life is a form of self-portrait.

Activity 3.2

Keep a visual journal for a period of time in which you collect written and visual information about your experiences, conversations and responsibilities. At the end of this period, reflect upon the information you have collected and use this to generate ideas about a sense of your world.

When exploring 'A Sense of My World', you could look at what is meant by 'sense'. This could refer to the senses that you use to explore your world, such as sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste.

Sight

You could explore images of things you like to look at in your world, such as a beautiful seascape. You could deal with the concept of sight or the way we see. Humans need light in order to see, so you could explore the way in which what we see is altered by the light that falls on it. This is something Monet explored in his series of paintings of Rouen Cathedral (Figures 3.12–3.16). The way we see things can also be affected by our perception or point of view of something.



Figure 3.12 Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral. Façade (Morning)*, 1893, Folkwang Museum, Germany, oil on canvas



Figure 3.13 Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral. Façade (Sunset)*, 1893, Musée Marmottan, Paris, oil on canvas, 100 × 65 cm



Figure 3.14 Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral. Façade*, 1893, Pola Museum of Art, Japan, oil on canvas



Figure 3.15 Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral, Façade and Tour d'Albane*, 1893, Museum Beyelaer, Switzerland



Figure 3.16 Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral*, 1893, Musée d'Osay, Paris, 107 × 73 cm, oil on canvas

Smell

We all enjoy certain smells, so you may consider a painting of a bowl of flowers. Alternatively, you could take photographs or draw pictures of a factory as commentary on pollution in your world and smells you do not enjoy. A VCE student who came from China created a mixed media installation in which she presented a painting of her home town accompanied by a hotplate that she used to boil a pot of water containing the spices she and her family used in cooking. The aroma of these cooking spices along with the physical representation of her home immersed the audience in her memories and nostalgia.



Figure 3.17 Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, National Gallery, London, oil on oak panel, 82 × 59.5 cm



Figure 3.18 Rosalie Gascoigne, *Grassfest*, 1999, weathered painted wood on composition board, 106.5 × 101 cm, Queensland University of Technology Art Collection, Brisbane, purchased 1999 © Rosalie Gascoigne/Copyright Agency, 2022

Touch

Texture fills our world, and artists have often explored texture in their artworks through the skilful application of their medium. Jan van Eyck was able to create the illusion of various textures in oil paint (Figure 3.17). You could experiment with the qualities of actual textured materials and surfaces like Rosalie Gascoigne has done (Figure 3.18). Touch and sight are closely linked when we think about Braille. You could consider an artwork intended to be touched, to be inclusive for people whose vision is impaired, or a work that comments on the sense of sight.

Hearing

A work incorporating sound can provide the opportunity for a four-dimensional work of art, such as an installation using video or a PowerPoint presentation. You could use sounds that you enjoy or dislike, depending on the impact you wish to make on the viewer. Some sounds are tranquil and leave us feeling calm, while others fill us with a feeling of dread. A visual representation of this could take the form of a painting of a gentle stream, or you may present a performance that uses sound and images aimed to disturb. You may enjoy a particular type of music or musical instrument that can be the subject of your exploration. You may simply choose to depict a person listening. What the person is listening to may be evident or subject to the audience's interpretation, leaving the audience to imagine the sound. You could create an abstract painting in response to a particular piece of music as VCE student Emma Murphy did in her painting *Abstract Composition #3*, inspired by the song 'Machine Gun' by Slowdive (Figure 3.19).

After listening to the song a few times, Emma explored a range of materials to determine which would give her the most effective representation of the song and her emotional response to it. After deciding on her colour palette, Emma painted while she listened, responding to the sound and lyrics at that moment.



Figure 3.19 Emma Murphy, *Abstract Composition #3*, 2021, alcohol ink on polymer paper, 20 × 50 cm

Emma annotated her painting using both the Structural and Personal Lenses:



In terms of the Structural Lens, I chose alcohol ink because of the textures that are created when working wet into wet and the colours dissolve into each other. This expresses the fuzzy sound waves unique to this song. The painting is made up of various circular shapes that amalgamate together at various points. These shapes represent the bursts of different sounds that occur progressively throughout the song. The scale of the shapes indicate intensity and relevance. The way the shapes connect and merge shows how the sounds connect and support each other. I tried to connect these with the essence of the song's movement and rhythm. The rectangular shape of the polymer paper is also intentional as it pushes the audience into viewing the painting from left to right, typical of our culture. This allows the audience to follow my process of creating the work from left to right as I listened to the song. The largest clump of shapes on the right indicates the climax of the song where the most sounds come together and enhance each other, represented by how the inks used in each shape bleed their colours into one another creating the colours, shapes and textures unique to

this area of the artwork. Most of the colours in this work are warm reds, oranges, yellows and underlying greys, this was intended to express the murky mix of negative emotions explored in the lyrics, that touch on depression, anguish and desire. The focal point, the large yellow organic shape in the centre, is one of the only shapes in the artwork that shows no connection to any other shapes and contrasts with the others. This literally embodies the lyric 'son of yellow' like the shape stands out and is sung more clearly than the other lyrics.

In terms of the Personal Lens, the choice of colours symbolise fire and charcoal, which I used to connect to the crackling of a campfire. The visuals these two things create in my mind are similar to the sounds and emotions expressed by the song. I interpreted the song to embody a person's life falling apart, and so used a fire to symbolise the burning up of this person's life. This links to the very real issue of mental health that I am acutely aware of. The largest proportion of colour used is grey, representing the charcoal of a fire which is the burnt and killed parts of what once was a living organism. This expresses how this person's will to live is nearly all burnt out already and they are singing their dying song.



Activity 3.3

Abstract response to music: select two pieces of contrasting music. Paint while listening to each piece of music and try to visually represent your response to the music through:

- 1 Colour choice and tonal range (planned). You can determine this while listening to the music before starting your painting. Think about the emotive quality of colour and

colour combinations. Are the colours you choose happy, gentle or aggressive? Is the mood of the music gentle and therefore requires limited tonal variation?

- 2 Paint application and texture (spontaneous). This will be affected by the tempo, rhythm and beat of the music and how your arm moves as you paint while listening to the music.

While painting, consider what you have learnt in Area of Study 1 regarding the use of structural qualities in a composition. Use these to create emphasis and draw attention to focal areas, add visual interest, achieve balance and harmony or conflict and disquiet in your painting.

- 3 Document your Creative Practice (AOS3): Document any trials of techniques or colour combinations that you completed prior to painting in your sketchbook. Evaluate these trials using annotated comments and respond to your observations by doing further trials (AOS3) to develop your technique and visual language.

- 4 (AOS3) Applying the Structural and Personal Lenses, comment in your sketchbook alongside the painting or photograph of the painting, what response you had when listening to the music and evaluate if you believe your visual language successfully communicates this.

Taste

When depicting taste, our thoughts generally turn to food: things we like the taste of, or foods we avoid. Images of food have often been found in art, from early Roman murals (Figure 3.20) to works in oil paint by Penny Siopis (Figure 3.21) who depicted tables weighed down with food. However, Siopis' paintings do not deal only with eating. The overabundance of food in her work comments on waste, decay and **vanitas**. Your exploration of taste may even deal with personal taste or aesthetic taste and the concept of **kitsch**.



Figure 3.20 Unknown Roman artist, *Still Life with Peaches*, c. 1 CE, found at Herculaneum, 34 × 35 cm, shown in Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples

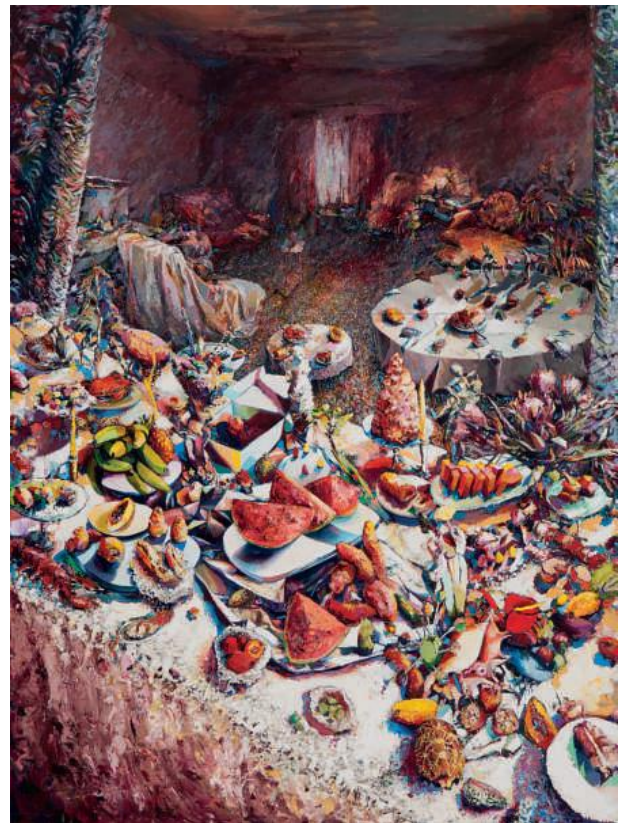


Figure 3.21 Penny Siopis, *Still Life with Watermelon and Other Things*, 1985, Rembrandt van Rijn Museum, South Africa, oil on canvas, 242.2 × 180.5 cm

vanitas Latin for 'emptiness'; refers to the transience of things of the world and the inevitability of death; in seventeenth-century still-life paintings, vanitas was signified by images of spoiling food, the overturned glass, the burning candle, worms and the obvious inclusion of the skull

kitsch refers to 'vulgar' art, or art with no artistic merit such as commercial ornaments, tourist souvenirs; the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as works of art or decorative objects that are ugly, silly or worthless

3.2 Creative Practice: Research, exploration and experimentation

Once you have established your area of interest or ideas and you have explored possible interpretations and approaches to these ideas, it is important to establish ways that you can use to visually communicate your ideas. You need to generate a range of visual interpretations of these ideas or collect relevant images relating to the idea/s you wish to pursue.

One approach you may find helpful is to generate a range of visual representations through drawing. At this stage it is unnecessary to spend a lot of time doing detailed drawings. It is more useful to

create a series of thumbnail sketches that you can use to quickly put down your ideas. The quality of drawings is not assessed, but rather the exploration of ideas. These small drawings allow you to present potential ways in which you might explore your ideas. Another possible approach is to use a digital camera or your phone to begin recording images that represent the ideas you would like to explore. The drawings and photographs are part of AOS2 while your response to these, where you reflect on the visual representation with critical annotations, is assessed in AOS3.



Figure 3.22 Bronte Billings, Thumbnail sketches

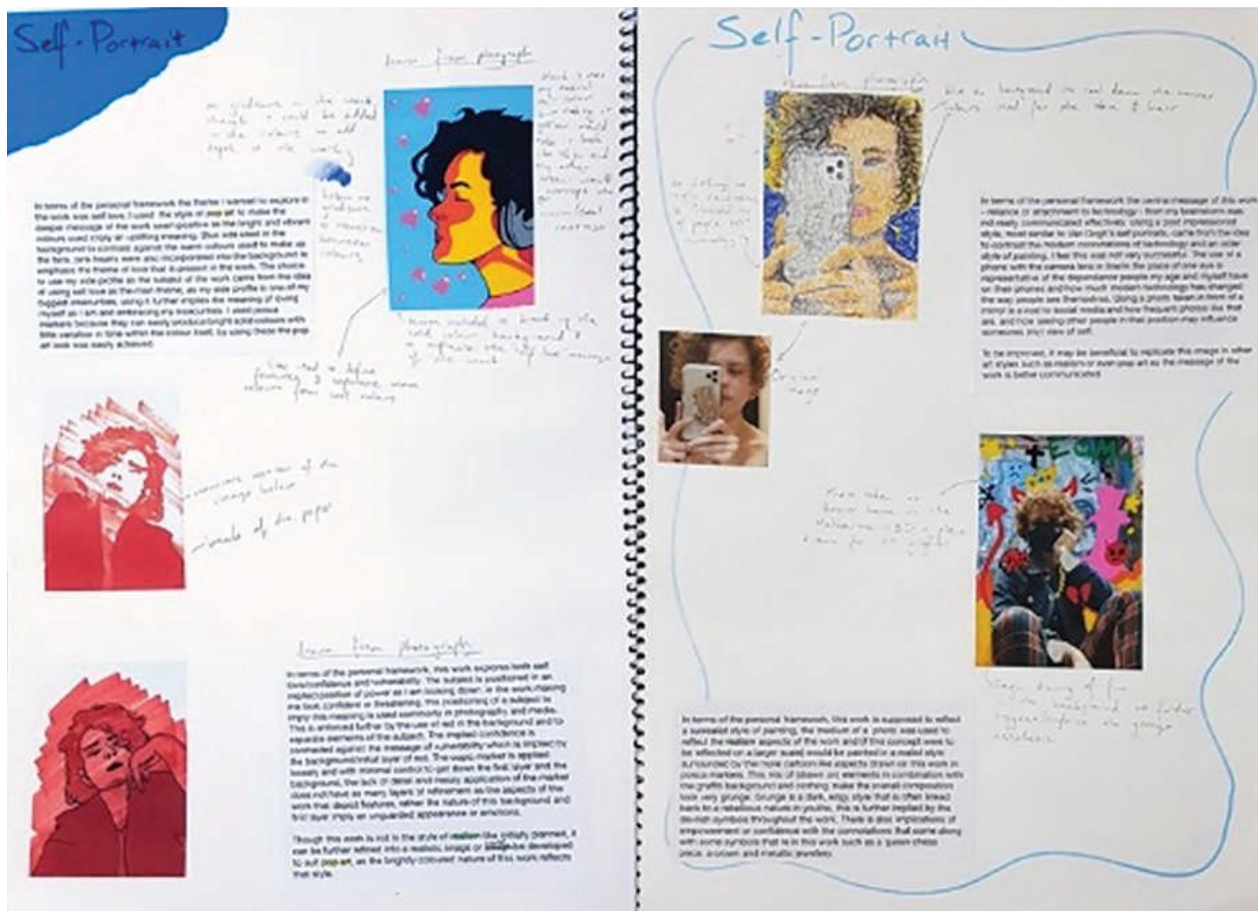


Figure 3.23 Emma Tripp, Thumbnail exploration

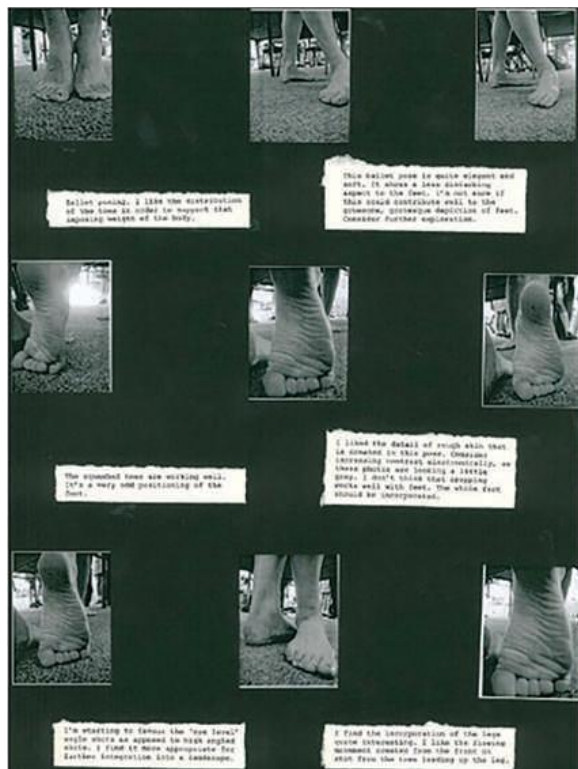


Figure 3.24 Diana Mejia-Correa, Thumbnail digital photographs

VCE students Bronte Billings, Emma Tripp and Diana Mejia-Correa tried these approaches. Bronte used thumbnail sketches to explore options for self-portraits, visually representing different aspects of her character and memories of her past that have had an impact on her identity (Figure 3.22). Diana, on the other hand, used thumbnail digital photographs to explore ideas she developed about an aspect of seeing (Figure 3.24). These photographs can be submitted as a contact sheet showing a series of photographs exploring a concept or area of interest.

Emma used a combination of thumbnail sketches, computer-generated images and thumbnail photographs to explore options for self-portraits, visually representing different aspects of her personality and interests that related to her identity. These also allowed her to begin exploring a range of materials and techniques on a small scale.

Using the ideas you have generated through brainstorming or mind mapping, and by creating

thumbnail sketches and photographs as a starting point, you should begin to develop a folio of creative visual responses that presents your own understanding of the concept. Ideally, this should be done using a variety of materials, techniques and processes.

To develop a knowledge of the qualities and characteristics of selected materials and art forms and how they may be used to present concepts and images, you have to experiment with them and note, with annotations, the effects achieved by certain techniques and approaches. With this knowledge, you can begin to make art.

Activity 3.4

Use thumbnail sketches or a digital camera to record 10 images that provide a visual interpretation of the concepts you would like to explore. Produce a range of ideas to interpret these. Think of more than just the obvious. Do not limit your choices because you are not sure how you will be able to resolve your ideas. Your teacher will be able to assist you with possible solutions and others will come to you as you begin to trial media and methods. Often solutions can present themselves by chance.

Sometimes you may find it difficult to think of ways that you could create images that explore your ideas visually. When this occurs, students often panic and then avoid their art. Rather than procrastinating through fear or uncertainty when faced with a blank page, my recommendation is to play with your materials. You might find it helpful to explore your selected materials using

a range of techniques. Begin exploring marks, creating textures, layering your medium and experimenting with different surfaces. This will help you to become familiar with the materials and techniques, the inherent qualities of your selected materials and how the elements and principles that you use in their application start to establish a visual language. This process can help you to generate possible ways to represent your ideas or concepts. This is an opportunity to explore your materials, techniques and the elements, and also the principles of art, without being restricted by a visual image. This exploration and experimentation can be done through mark-making or applied to any image even if the image does not initially relate directly to your idea. Making is the important thing as it then puts something concrete in front of you (AOS2) that you can respond to (AOS2 and AOS3).

Sometimes art is just about having fun, trying different things and seeing where your medium takes you. As the American painter and photographer Richard Prince said, 'A lot of it [art] is experimental, spontaneous. It's about knocking about in the studio and bumping into things.' The important thing is to realise when you bump into something useful for your art so that you can use it.

Colour was a major consideration for VCE student Jess Maguire, who had chosen to explore painting. Initially Jess did not know what imagery she wanted to use so she started with a general exploration of colour and texture. Figures 3.25 and 3.26 show how Jess made use of different methods to explore the different aspects of colour as a stimulus for her paintings. This included researching the symbolism and psychology of colour, annotating her personal response to colour and finding evidence of her selected colours in artworks and the world around her (AOS3). She also used paint to explore colour, texture and begin to become familiar with her material (AOS2).



Figure 3.25 Examples of Jess Maguire's exploration of blue

Jess wrote:

Red symbolises revolution; it is the colour of fire and passion. Red implies evil and disaster. For Christians red symbolises the blood of Christ. Psychology – Exposure to red causes temporary, but measurable reactions in the body. Blood pressure increases, breathing and pulse rate quicken, you begin to sweat and your brain waves are stimulated. Red and green are complementary colours. A little green used on a predominantly red area gives the work 'life' or 'zing'.

Jess combined researching the meaning conveyed by colour and the psychological response from the audience when faced with a particular colour or colour combination (AOS3). The research also involved a practical application of her selected material (paint) (AOS2) that Jess was then able to respond to through annotation, where she evaluated and responded by noting the potential this has for her exploration of ideas (AOS3). The ideas that come to mind through this process may result in her thinking of visual representations that she could now explore using thumbnail sketches (AOS2). This type of exploration, and the observations you make regarding your discoveries, will provide you with the tools to develop an effective visual language (see Chapter 1 for definition). Jess Maguire also explored

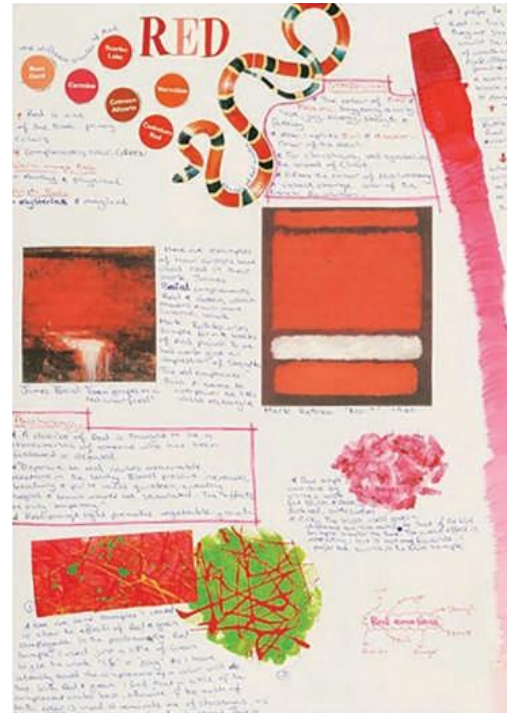


Figure 3.26 Examples of Jess Maguire's exploration of red

a range of techniques and media to create textures. She wrote:

I find it extremely difficult to resist touching a highly textured surface. I gain more information when I use another one of my senses. Textures can evoke different moods and could combine with my colour to enhance mood.

This is a more spontaneous, abstract approach that could result in possible techniques, surface qualities, colours and textures you could then use to enhance a figurative or abstract approach to your concept.



Figure 3.27 Examples of Jess Maguire's sponge texture



STRUCTURAL



STRUCTURAL

Activity 3.5

Select one of the ideas you are most interested in exploring for 'A Sense of My World' and explore this through research, observation and experimentation with materials and techniques.

Consider how the elements and principles of art, the qualities associated with particular materials and the effect of various techniques can suggest meaning with reference to this idea.

Be creative in your use of visual language. The meaning may be obvious or it might require you to explain the symbolism using written annotation. Apply the Structural and Personal Lenses as appropriate to the annotation of your exploration.

3.3 Creative Practice: Development of ideas, concepts, style and visual language

Once you have a few ideas of how you would like to explore 'A Sense of My World' and you have considered what approach you might take with your exploration, you need to develop an understanding of your materials and art form. You need to discover the qualities and characteristics of your selected materials and art forms, and how they may best be used to present your ideas through your art. In Area of Study 2 you are required to develop a visual language as a means of achieving a particular intention. You should consider how the elements and principles of art, materials, techniques, processes, art form and style can all be used to convey your intention.

You will be able to explore the expressive and symbolic application of the materials, techniques and approaches to art making. South African artist Penny Siopis chose to work with very thick

impasto oil paints in her early works because when the paint dries, the top layer of paint forms a skin and, as the paint below continues to dry and contract, the top layer wrinkles. The effect is similar to that of the wrinkled skin of an elderly person. This conscious use and application of a material, knowing how it will behave, adds to the meaning of her paintings such as *Still Life with Watermelon and Other Things*, 1985, that explore age and decay using food as the subject matter (see Figure 3.21).

In *Green Coca-Cola Bottles*, 1962 (Figure 3.28), Andy Warhol presents repeated rows of Coke bottles, similar to a display on the supermarket shelves. He is not only commenting on the consumer product, but also on the way the product is presented and sold. By using repetition, he is commenting on American society, mass production and consumerism.



As you explore different art forms, you should be aware of what meanings are associated with these. Artists have often used particular art forms for an artwork because of the meaning that these art forms can give to the work. Andy Warhol, for example, produced *Marilyn Monroe* (Figure 3.29) using the silkscreen process. He made this artwork just after Monroe's death, to comment on how this tragic event was sensationalised by the media of the day.

Marilyn Monroe's face is represented with no emotion and little symbolism. Warhol initially created an image of a single face using publicity photographs, rather than portrait photographs of the person behind the public image. This made Monroe into an icon rather than a person.

Figure 3.28 Andy Warhol, *Green Coca-Cola Bottles*, 1962, synthetic polymer, silkscreen ink and graphite on canvas, 209.2 × 144.8 cm, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Purchased with funds from the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Photography by Geoffrey Clements, © Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022



Figure 3.29 Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe*, 1962, oil, acrylic and enamel on canvas, © Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

Instead of stopping with the single portrait, Warhol also chose to exploit the idea of duplication that is characteristic of silkscreen printing, and continuing with the ideas he explored in *Green Coca-Cola Bottles* (from the same year), he created an image made up of multiple prints of Monroe's face. All forms of advertising or packaging are endlessly reproduced on high-speed printing presses, and the printing process and repetition transformed her into a mass-produced consumer item; a product of our society rather than a person. Warhol chose to use a studio publicity headshot rather than a family portrait to emphasise that Marilyn Monroe was a product of the studio rather than an individual. The multiple images also reflected the way the media endlessly splashed her photographs all over their pages to generate sales, making her a commodity. Warhol used silkscreen to depersonalise the image further, by eliminating any personal mark that may have been left by himself if he had painted it instead.

With this in mind, approach your exploration of art with an open mind and an awareness of how

the subject matter, materials, techniques and style can provide you with an effective visual language to communicate with the viewer.

VCE Art student Emily Livy was inspired by the style of Pop Art, in particular Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962, featuring synthetic polymer paint on 32 (50.8 × 40.6 cm) canvases. Although *Campbell's Soup Cans* resembles the mass-produced, printed advertisements by which Warhol was inspired, this work was hand-painted.



Figure 3.30 VCE student Emily Livy, *Illustrator*, inkjet print, 42 × 60 cm

Activity 3.6

If you are unsure about how to proceed with the exploration of your materials, techniques, processes and art forms, it may help to turn to an artist for inspiration. Select an artist whose style, technique or treatment of their subject matter you admire. Use one of their artworks as the basis for your own exploration of a particular art form, but do not plagiarise their image. Use the style of the selected artist, and trial their technique and use of the medium to develop your own visual solution. Observe how the artist uses selected combinations of formal elements, the way they compose the image and how they use their technique to express themselves.

Emily chose to create her work (Figure 3.30) using *Illustrator*, and printed her final artwork using an inkjet printer. Like Warhol's silkscreen prints, this allowed Emily to deny her personal mark on the work. The digital process represents the machine-made, mass-produced items on the supermarket shelf that she depicts in her artwork. Like Warhol, in this work Emily mimics the repetition and uniformity of advertising by carefully reproducing the same image across the artwork. She has only changed the label on the front of each bottle, distinguishing them by their variety.

Like Warhol, who said he drank Campbell's soup for lunch every day for 20 years, spices were a part of Emily's everyday experience when she helped her mother to prepare the family meal. Using the ideas you have generated through your brainstorm or mind map, photographs, thumbnail sketches and exploration of materials and techniques as a starting point, you should begin to develop a collection of creative visual responses that presents your world and who you are. Create a series of visual responses to your ideas exploring your selected art form broadly with a variety of materials, techniques and processes. In Unit 1 you are not required to create finished artworks, although this may be a natural result of your application of the Creative Practice. Rather than focusing on one finished artwork, you should document the broad exploration of your ideas and art form/s. This exploration will allow you to trial different techniques and get to know your materials.

Activity 3.7

Annotate why you have used particular materials, techniques and processes to represent your chosen subject matter. Apply the Structural and Personal Lenses (as appropriate) to explain how these have added to the meaning of your artwork.

Activity 3.8

Find 10 examples of artworks. Apply the Structural Lens to write a brief explanation next to each image about how you feel that the media, techniques and approaches to art making and the selected art forms have added to the meaning of the work. (Do not use any of the examples already mentioned.)

3.4 Creative Practice: Approaches to trialling materials, techniques, processes and art forms

Making art is not only creating your oil painting on canvas, constructing your installation or printing your silkscreen: it is the process of arriving at that point through experimenting and trialling your ideas, materials, techniques and processes. You must use this opportunity to explore at least three art forms. If the art forms you can use at school are restricted, then try to explore a range of materials in each of these. For example, if you are painting, trial watercolours, inks, acrylic, gouache, oils and mixed media. Try using these on different surfaces, combined with different media and applying them using different techniques. If working in the darkroom, consider photograms,

double exposures and **hand-coloured gelatin silver prints**. It is important to hand-colour subtly by patiently layering transparent layers of colour into the light areas of the print. The more you can experiment with your materials, the more options you will have to choose from so that you can determine what would be the best option for a desired result.

double exposure can be used to create a complex image that combines elements from more than one negative or repeats aspects from the same negative in one print

hand-coloured gelatin silver print black-and-white print coloured using watercolour paints or drawing inks



Figure 3.31 Example of a photogram: Ruth Maddison, *Self-portrait*, 2002, gelatin silver photogram, 47.8 × 57.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of Mem Kirby, Fellow, 2002 © Ruth Maddison



Figure 3.32 Example of a hand-coloured silver gelatin print, by Andrew Sanderson

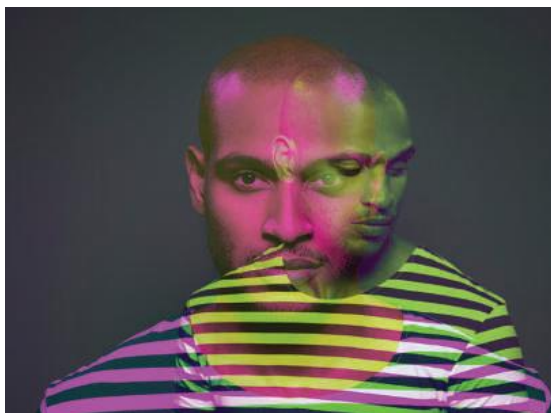


Figure 3.33 Example of a double exposure print

Activity 3.9

Select a particular art form you are interested in exploring. Find at least 10 different combinations of materials and techniques that you can apply to your selected art form. Also explore a range of surfaces onto which you can apply your chosen material if appropriate.

The object of art is not to reproduce reality, but to create a reality of the same intensity.

Alberto Giacometti

You could approach Unit 1 by exploring your ideas visually, focusing on a particular art element or principle. All artists rely on the elements and principles of art to create art and without them a visual image could not exist. Many artists emphasise one or more of these to draw attention to an area of their work or to alter the mood or add symbolic value to a scene. Other artists, like Wassily Kandinsky (Figure 3.34) rely only on the elements and principles to convey their ideas with no reference to the world around them. Kandinsky was concerned with the spiritual rather than the external vision, and he created art that relied completely on the elements and principles of art with no imagery relating to the physical world around him. As discussed in Chapter 2, he produced the first non-objective, abstract paintings, that relied on the relationship between colour, line, shape, tone and texture to create an abstract image of spiritual conflict.



Figure 3.34 Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition IV*, 1911, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein–Westfalen, Germany, oil on canvas, 159.5 × 250.5 cm

Two VCE Art students, Juliette Wood and Imogen Craddock, each explored abstract painting in different ways. Juliette created a structured composition (Figure 3.35) that relied on shape and colour, combined with contrast, emphasis and balance, to create a successful geometric abstract composition. Imogen, on the other hand, relied on line, texture, contrast and expressive paint application to represent her spontaneous abstract painting (Figure 3.36).



Figure 3.35 Juliette Wood, *Geometric Abstraction*, oil on canvas, 20 × 15 cm



Figure 3.36 Imogen Craddock, *Abstract Expressionist*, oil on canvas, 30 × 42 cm

Activity 3.10

With reference to the list of art elements and principles in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 in Chapter 2, consider how effectively you have used them in your experimentation and exploration that you have completed so far to convey meaning. How effective are they in establishing a visual language?

Activity 3.11

With reference to the list of art elements and principles in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 in Chapter 2, apply selected elements or principles to:

- draw attention to a particular focal point through emphasis
- achieve a balanced composition, a dynamic composition and a composition that leaves the viewer feeling uncomfortable
- achieve a particular mood or a range of different moods using the same image
- convey a message (Structural Lens).

Activity 3.12

- 1 Choose an artwork you admire that relates to the concept you are exploring and annotate it. What is it about the artwork that you like? How is the idea that the artist wishes to convey represented or expressed in the work?
- 2 Reinterpret this artwork in a personal way using the same media, techniques and style. You could use a similar composition, but the subject matter must be your own. Work from life or your own photographic reference if required.

How you manipulate and combine the various elements of art, and the relationships you establish between these, will determine how effective your visual language is, irrespective of whether your art is objective or non-objective.

Amelia Peart used a fineliner to create a continuous line drawing of a portrait (Figure 3.37). Joyce Chung explored the ability of line to describe shape, form and detail in a pencil contour line drawing of a crumpled piece of paper (Figure 3.38). She considered the quality of line and varied the pressure on the pencil to place emphasis on certain areas of the drawing and to manipulate the spatial quality of line to emphasise the three-dimensional form of the paper. Another student, Elise Webb, explored the beauty of continuous line drawing. In this example she used armature wire to create the drawing with florist wire to hold the structure of the



Figure 3.37 Amelia Peart, fineliner on paper

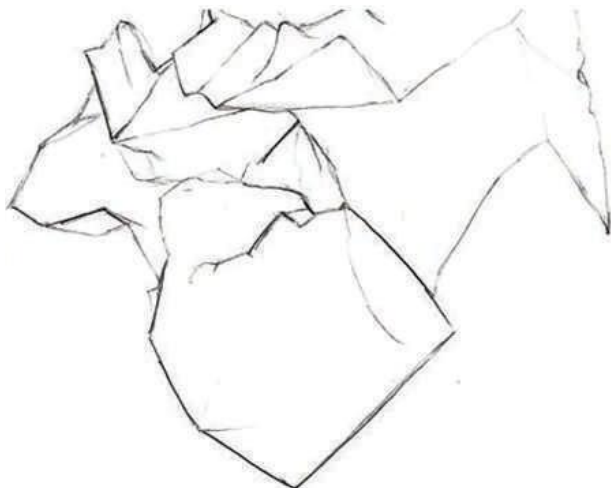


Figure 3.38 Joyce Chung, pencil on paper

drawing (Figure 3.39). The wire portrait presents a free-standing drawing that can be viewed from different angles. The student also incorporated a contemporary element (light) to project the shadow of her wire drawing onto the surface behind the work, introducing another way of seeing the artwork.

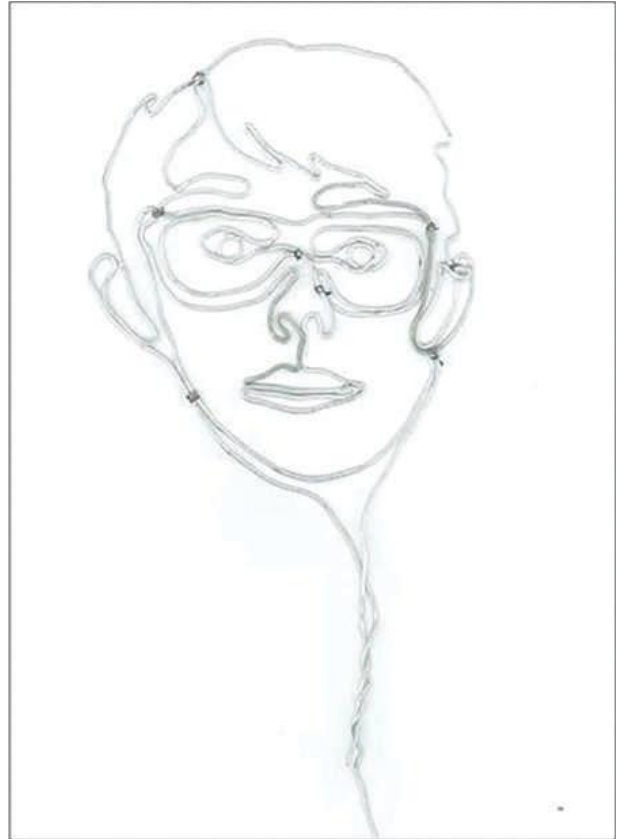


Figure 3.39 Elise Webb, armature wire and florist wire

Shape is an element that was explored by VCE student Amy Tye, who created a three-colour riso print, which is an alternative to silkscreen (Figure 3.40). The same results can be achieved with photographic silkscreen or by creating three individual hand-cut stencils.



Figure 3.40 Amy Tye, riso print

When using the elements and principles of art in your work, consider whether they are:

- achieving the mood or atmosphere you want to convey
- drawing the viewer's eye to the focal point and holding the viewer's attention

- creating the desired feeling of peace, discomfort or even fear in the viewer
- enhancing the message you want to convey in the artwork.

3.5 Examples of applying the Creative Practice

Making art, or applying the Creative Practice, is a process. As discussed in Chapter 1, it is used by you for the conceptualisation, development and making of artworks. It includes **research and exploration, experimentation and development, refinement and resolution, and reflection and evaluation.**

VCE student Emily Whinfield's process began with a chance encounter and then developed through an open-ended approach that allowed her to explore ideas without a clear end product in mind. She often arrived at these

ideas in response to other trials and exploration of materials.

Emily came across a burnt-out car on the edge of a cliff. It appeared that someone had tried to destroy any latent evidence in the car before pushing it over the edge into the ocean. The scene inspired a narrative of crime and conflict, and she took several photographs of the scene (Figure 3.41), trying to capture the violent act of destruction as well as the destroyed car in conflict with the natural environment in which it was found.



Figure 3.41 Emily Whinfield, digital photograph



Figure 3.42 Emily Whinfield, digital photograph of burnt and smashed toy car

Inspired by the scene, Emily decided to trial art forms other than photography as a means of resolving her ideas, turning to the manipulation of the ready-made and drawing. Using a non-traditional art form – the ready-made – Emily destroyed a toy car with a hammer before dousing it with flammable liquid and setting it alight, creating her own burnt-out wreck. She used photography to record the ephemeral artwork of the burning toy and the end results of the process (Figure 3.42). Although the flames did not appear as dramatic as she had hoped, the potential of macro photographs of the burnt-out car in various environments provided her with other avenues of exploration, including the presentation of a series of destroyed toy cars or photographs of these.

Emily did several observational drawings of the destroyed toy and experimented with these. She 'destroyed' the drawing of the toy by scrunching up the paper to add to the violence and conflict represented in the image. Using another contemporary process, she then photocopied the result (Figure 3.43). The dark tones of the photocopy created a visual link between the folds and creases in the paper, the black lines of the drawing and the black burn marks in the car.

Emily also attempted to add to the sense of destruction by burning the drawings (Figure 3.44). Although she was not happy with the result, the



Figure 3.43 Emily Whinfield, photocopy of a scrunched fineliner drawing

burnt edges and colour changes reminded her of the rusted parts of the original abandoned car she had photographed, and she began to explore the possibility of including rusted metal in her artwork.



Figure 3.44 Emily Whinfield, burnt drawings

This exploration of materials, techniques and art forms allowed the student to experiment with different ways of visually representing her ideas and provided her with options that led her to find a visual solution (Figure 3.45).

Every artist has their own way of approaching their process. Some will plan each step of the way while others will work directly, developing an artwork as they go – ‘knocking about in the studio and bumping into things.’ The latter approach was evident in the ‘splatter paintings’ of Jackson Pollock, who worked directly on the canvas without any preconceived ideas beyond his process: ‘When I am in my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. It is only after a sort of “get acquainted” period that I see what I have been about.’ Yet, even for Pollock, there was a development and refinement of the work: ‘I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through.’

His paintings were built up and developed over time as he poured and dripped his paint from a



Figure 3.45 Emily Whinfield, *It's Not a Game*, laser print on paper (polyptych)



Figure 3.46 Jackson Pollock, *Lavender Mist*, 1950, oil, enamel and aluminium on canvas, 220 × 290 cm. © Pollock-Krasner Foundation, ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

can. Instead of using brushes, he manipulated the paint with sticks, trowels or knives. Yet despite the way they appear to many viewers, his paintings were not totally accidental. The pouring of paint from the tin was not random. Pollock said, 'When I am painting I have a general notion as to what I am about. I can control the flow of paint: there is no accident. When I lose control, the result is a mess.'

To maintain control over the paint, Pollock placed a stick into the tin and allowed the paint to run down the stick, directing it onto the canvas. He controlled the amount of paint that poured down the stick by the angle at which he tipped the can. In these seemingly random accidental paintings, there was still an element of control, a development, a process.

Refinement can be seen in his work with the final touches of paint or the final drop that achieved what he wanted at that point in time. However, refinement of composition can also be seen in his process. Pollock introduced a style called 'all-over

painting', evident in *Lavender Mist* (Figure 3.46), which used oil, enamel and aluminium on a canvas measuring 2.20 × 2.97 metres. This style avoids any identifiable parts or points of emphasis within the whole canvas, hence abandoning the traditional idea of composition in terms of relations among parts. The paintings seem to have no beginning or end. They extend to the limits of the canvas and even beyond. The painting became **holistic**, an environment that encompasses the viewer. The design of Pollock's paintings had no relation to the shape or size of the canvas; in fact, once the painting was completed, Pollock would often select a piece of the canvas that he considered successful, then cut it out and stretch it. This was another way of refining the composition. Selection is made and the desired composition achieved.

holistic the idea that all the properties of a given system (e.g. physical) cannot be determined or explained by its component parts alone; painting with no particular focal point and no natural boundaries – also called all-over painting



Figure 3.47 Claude Monet, *The Water Lilies - The Clouds*, between 1914 and 1926, Musée de l'Orangerie, oil on canvas

This concept of the holistic unstructured picture space was not entirely new. Monet's late *Water Lily* series, for example, used all-over modulations of the picture surface with no particular focal point and no natural boundaries (Figure 3.47).

In order to develop knowledge of the qualities and characteristics of selected materials and art forms, you will need to experiment broadly, just as Pollock did. By using different materials and experimenting with different techniques and applications of your selected material, you will begin to establish an understanding of how they may be used to present your ideas effectively.

Figures 3.48 and 3.49 show VCE student Phoebe Garrett's documentation of her trialling of different materials. At this point Phoebe has decided that she wants to create a book of images that relate to her idea and has begun to experiment with a range of materials she is considering using. She is trying to work out how she will resolve her final artwork. The exploration of materials and techniques goes through various stages, allowing her to see how each material reacts on the surfaces she wants to use in her final artwork, and which techniques and combinations will provide her with the effect she is seeking. She begins to establish her visual language as she communicates ideas through her experiences, images and objects.



Figure 3.48 Phoebe Garrett develops a knowledge of the qualities and characteristics of selected materials



Figure 3.50 Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of Medusa*, 1818–19, Musée du Louvre, Paris, oil on canvas, 491 × 716 cm

Romanticism can be seen as a rejection of the idealisation, order, calm, balance and harmony of late eighteenth-century Neo-Classicism, and a reaction against eighteenth-century rationalism. Romanticist painters like Géricault emphasised the personal, the individual, the subjective, the emotional, the imaginative, the irrational and the spontaneous.

In order to achieve the most effective artwork possible, Géricault immersed himself in the subject. You will find that it is much easier to create a more meaningful and effective image if you work from your own experience, irrespective of whether the image is factual or imagined. Work with what you know – deal with an issue about which you are passionate. Géricault was not part of the incident, so he had to do the next best thing: he **researched** it extensively.

Romanticism a style of art, music and literature popular in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, distinguished by a new interest in human psychology, expression of personal feeling and interest in the natural world

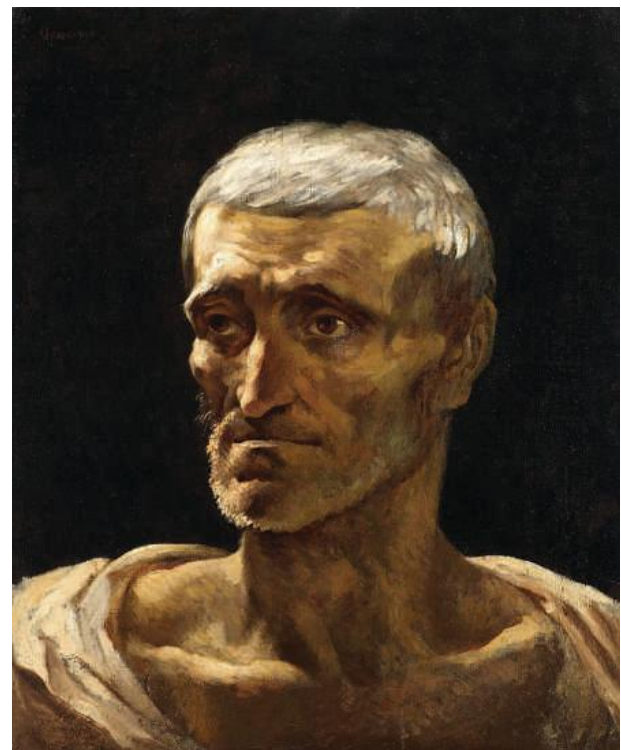


Figure 3.51 Théodore Géricault, *Head of Shipwrecked Man*, study for *The Raft of Medusa*, 1817–19

The artist read every account of the incident that he could find, both to stimulate his imagination and to add authenticity to his work. He spoke to survivors and even had a full-scale model built of the raft from which the survivors were rescued. He then observed how it sat in the water and how it moved on the waves.

He completed studies, both drawn and painted, of survivors in hospital and bodies of the dead in the mortuary in order to **explore** his technique and use of colour in order to accurately represent the event. He observed the effect of exposure on bodies and studied the difference in the colouring between the survivors and the dead sailors. He drew from life, placing his models into the poses as he **developed** his ability to tell the stories he was considering.



Figure 3.52 Théodore Géricault, *Heads of Guillotined Men*, 1817–20



Figure 3.53 Théodore Géricault, *Anatomical Pieces*, Musée Fabre, France, 1818–19, oil on canvas

One of the big decisions that Géricault had to make was which part of the narrative he was going to illustrate in his painting. He **experimented** with a range of options as he sought to **develop** the most powerful composition that would convey the drama of the event. He made drawings of a number of the stages of the shipwreck, from when the ship ran aground to the construction of makeshift rafts and the eventual rescue of the survivors. He **refined** his composition and tried alternative approaches. He **explored** a range of options and **reflected** on how effective each was in showing the trauma experienced by the people on the raft. He showed the survivors being rescued by rowing boats, the survivors calling a boat as it sails close by. He **evaluated** each idea before **resolving** the composition and settling on what he considered the point of most impact: the survivors have just spotted a ship on the horizon and are desperately trying to attract its attention. The emotional response of the viewer is heightened by the uncertainty of the rescue.

Géricault **experimented** with drawing and painted sketches to determine what would best **resolve** his intention for the piece. Often you have a vague idea of what you intend to convey, but need to **explore** a range of options as Géricault did. Drawing is a good way to clarify what is going to work best. You may also wish to explore your ideas with a digital camera. You could photograph various environments and set up different scenarios that you can photograph from different viewpoints.

Géricault also used drawing to explore a range of compositional options once he finalised his idea for the painting. Why bother with planning your composition? You know what you want to paint, draw or photograph, so why waste time? Planning your composition allows you to find the most effective representation of the idea.

Planning also allows you to achieve the balance you desire, to work out how to draw the audience's eyes towards the areas of importance – the focal point – and how to hold their attention in your work. The balance and harmony of the work, or the dynamic movement of the composition, will all affect the effective representation of your intention. Planning on a small scale is helpful because you can easily make changes in minimal time, whereas changing your composition when you discover



Figure 3.54 Théodore Géricault, *Study for The Raft of Medusa*, 1818

problems in the final work can be difficult and very time-consuming. This does not prevent you from altering your composition or image once you have begun the final work, though – many works do evolve during the working process.

Compositional planning can also be done on the computer using a program such as Photoshop, or even by using a photocopier to make multiple copies and vary the scale of the images, which you can then cut and paste.

It is worth looking at the different ways in which Géricault adds to the drama of the scene, as it is important to consider how you can portray your idea most effectively through your artwork. The subject matter, body language and expression, as well as the formal quality of colour, tone, line and so on, all add impact to your composition.

To explore options and refine his ideas, Géricault produced a number of preparatory paintings using watercolour, coloured ink and even large-scale oil paintings. It is useful to explore your ideas for an artwork in a range of media, to establish what medium would most effectively achieve your intention.



Figure 3.55 Théodore Géricault, *Sketch of the survivors being rescued by rowing boats*, 1817–18, ink on paper, 35 × 41 cm



Figure 3.56 Théodore Géricault, ink sketch of the survivors calling to a boat as it sails close by, 1817–18, ink on paper, 24 × 33 cm



Figure 3.57 Théodore Géricault, *Preparatory Work for The Raft of Medusa*, 1817–18, ink on paper, 41 × 55 cm



Figure 3.58 Théodore Géricault, *Preparatory Work for The Raft of Medusa in Oil Paint*, 1817–18, oil on canvas, 38 × 46 cm

Géricault also used drawing to study details of his final work to resolve problems such as expression, decay, texture, perspective and **foreshortening**. This approach is very valuable when not working directly from an object or scene. If creating a composite image, you must make sure that you maintain a common viewpoint and light source. Digital photographs are very useful as reference if you choose not to work from life as Géricault did.

VCE student Nicky Purser's approach to the Creative Practice was similar to that of Géricault. She wanted to create a portrait of her grandfather, who was a very important part of her world. After trialling various materials and images, she finally chose to attempt a refined pencil drawing of her grandfather seated on his porch. Once she had established her composition and had the required reference, it was important to refine her application of the material and her drawing technique. Through experimentation, she established the grades of pencils that would achieve the tones she wanted and the type of

paper that would provide the correct texture for the drawing style she intended using. Purser also identified potential problems she may have when drawing areas of her subject matter.

She attempted a full-scale trial of a section of her portrait (Figure 3.59), dealing with problems such as wrinkles, creases in the skin, fine hair and her grandfather's glasses (AOS2). She was able to evaluate the sketch and consider what was successful and what needed to be resolved further (AOS3). Nicky was also able to consider if the approach she was taking successfully resolved her intention, applying the lenses to her annotations. She wrote:

Pencil is a traditional material used by artists of my grandfather's generation and is therefore an appropriate one to use to depict him. The refined shading technique represents the

foreshortening shortening or distorting objects to create an illusion of depth and to make them look like they are coming towards the audience



soft and gentle nature of my grandfather and achieves a fragility that is associated with someone of his age. People of advanced age are said to have paper-thin skin so the surface that I am drawing on directly links to my subject matter.

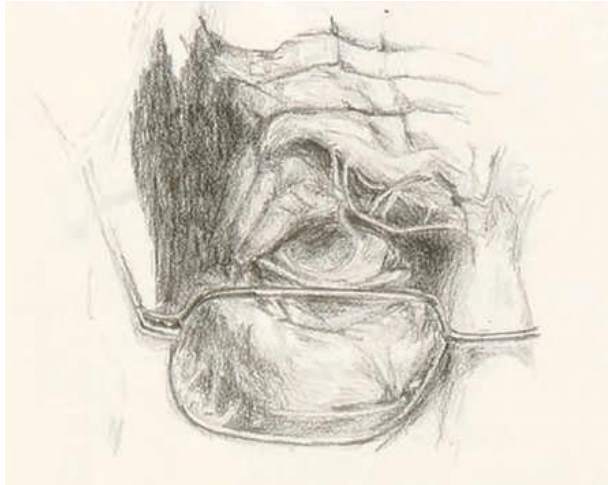


Figure 3.59 Nicky Purser, pencil drawing (detailed trial)

In response to her critical annotations, Nicky responded by addressing concerns she had with the technique and composition with additional trials (AOS2). After resolving how she would deal with the identified difficulties in her drawing, Nicky was confident enough to begin her final artwork (Figure 3.60). Her work benefited from the refinement of idea, composition, techniques and skill as she resolved her intended artwork.

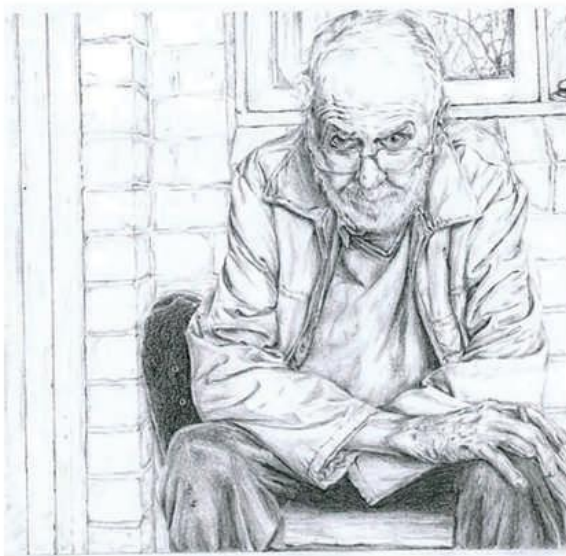


Figure 3.60 Nicky Purser, resolved pencil drawing of her grandfather

During the Creative Practice, you will begin to **refine** your use of materials, techniques and processes in your selected art form as well as your ideas. The **development** and **refinement** of your skills will enable you to provide visual strength to your artworks. In order to do this, you will need to experiment with your materials and techniques to find the most effective way of presenting your ideas. Continued trialling is important, but you do not have to redo your entire image multiple times in different ways. You can select a part of the image to trial a particular technique before using different parts, or even different images, to explore further techniques.

Nicky Purser had also taken several photographs of children playing on the beach (Figure 3.61), and knew she wanted to use them as part of her body of work. After completing her first artwork (Figure 3.60), she began drawing, using the photographs as reference. She then decided that she wanted to attempt an oil painting of them and began trialling different techniques to apply her paint, working with oil on paper. She then began to refine her technique and style using different images before selecting an image and moving to canvas. None of the trials are completed paintings, but show a progressive development and refinement of technique, style and skill.

NOTE: *It is important to remember that if you wish to photograph anybody as part of your art practice, you seek permission. This is particularly important when photographing children. In this instance, you need to obtain permission from their parents and include this in the documentation of your work.*

Nicky documented this part of her exploration using photographs of her subject, drawings and paintings on different surfaces all accompanied by critical annotation. It is important to communicate what you are learning. Merely documenting the visual evidence shows that you have achieved a particular outcome or developed a skill, but does not explicitly demonstrate understanding of or insight into the decisions you make. By writing about what you are doing, why you are doing it and what you have learnt from this process, you will provide a clear indication of your understanding and decision-making process. Providing written critical annotation is a very important part of the Creative Practice (AOS3).

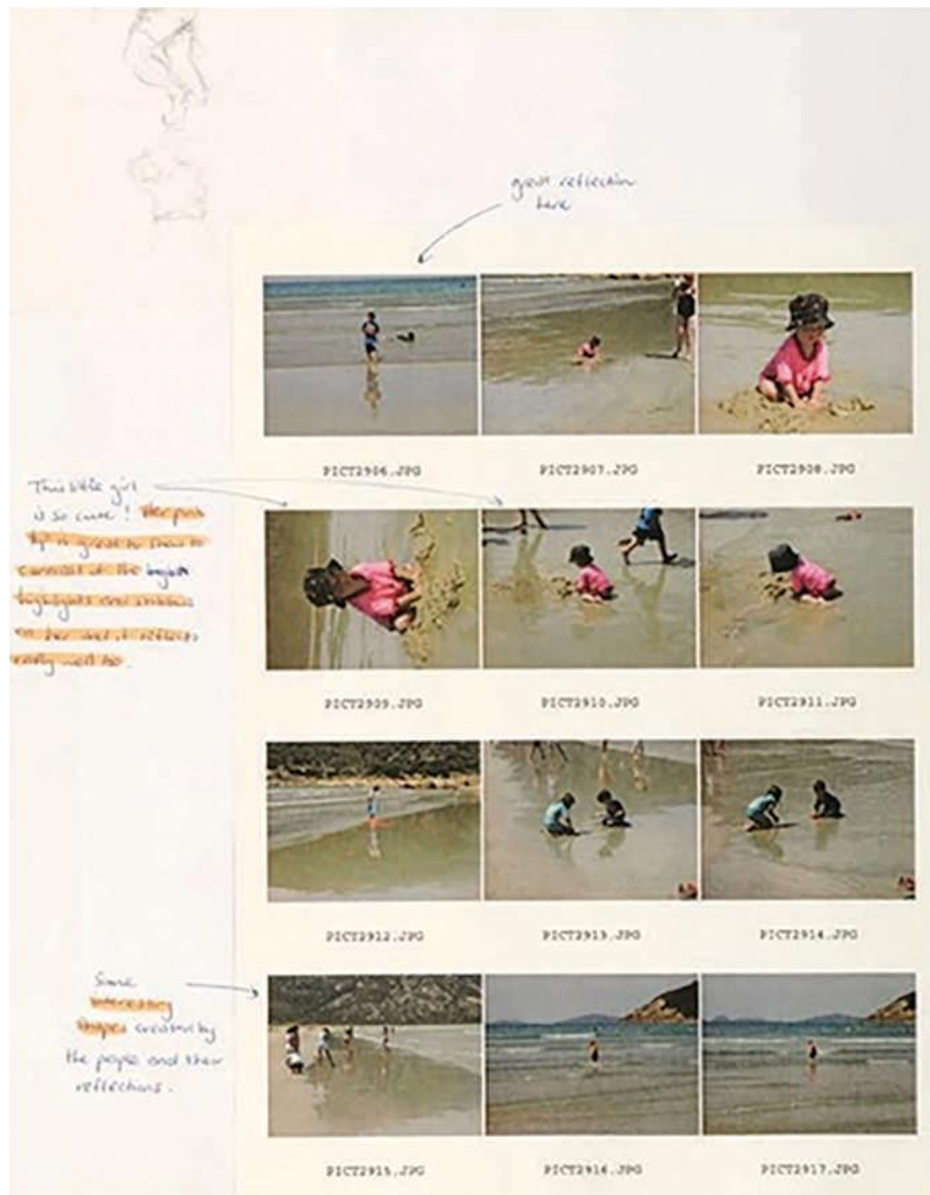


Figure 3.61 Nicky Purser's thumbnail photos

These annotations allow you to apply the tools you have been provided with in AOS1 to communicate your thinking and evaluate your visual language. They will help you practise your writing and interpretive skills and use correct art terminology, which will benefit you in your written assessment tasks. They will also enable you to better evaluate your own work, to make informed decisions about the directions in which you take your concepts and images.

Nicky Purser provides a good example of how she documented her body of work. These are an example of her critical annotations that show evidence of her reflection on her work and the development of her technique and skill rather

than the discussion of meaning, and therefore do not include her application of either of the Interpretive Lenses.

This little girl's pink top is great to show contrast of the highlights and shadows on her and results in interesting reflections [Figure 3.62]. Pen is easier to sketch in because it flows across the page more easily and I am not tempted to rub lines out. It is stronger too. I am getting better, this is more detailed than the other one and my line is more confident. With so much detail, I think it gets too static though. Maybe it will have more movement with less detail.



Figure 3.62 Nicky Purser's biro sketch

I've simplified this one a lot more, sticking to the main lines that define the form, for example the half circle on the elbow and the shadow line on the leg simply but effectively portray the form [Figure 3.63]. This sketch would be a good starting point for a painting.



Figure 3.63 Nicky Purser's biro contour sketch

I've decided to try painting some of my pictures of kids on the beach in oils, using the contour line sketches as a guide. I thought it would be interesting to try using a palette knife because the texture you can get is really good ... My trial is quite terrible. I found it hard to apply the paint in the right places. Adding extra colours as highlights in the sand really didn't work. It is not easy to be accurate with a palette knife.

I used a contour line drawing to start my oil painting [Figure 3.64] as it gives a clear and simple indication of form, tones and highlights. I used a very small brush to achieve the detail and am pleased with the result. I did not have any white paint so had to use Naples Yellow instead. Although the highlights in the photo look white, I think the warmth of the yellow works well. I used Payne's Grey for the shadows because I find black deadens the colours. The last thing I want when studying the light on a figure and the life it gives it, is to have dead shadows.



Figure 3.64 Nicky Purser's oil experiments

Overall, I think my next oil sketch [Figure 3.65] turned out fairly well, but there are some things I need to work on. The shadow from the hat needs to darken at the edges to make the figure rounder; it tends to flatten the form. The highlights in the top need more tonal variation as they flatten the image a little.

The skin tone is good, but I shouldn't use so much Payne's Grey in the shadows because it makes it look dirty – rather use brown. The Payne's Grey works well for the pink though.

In the previous sketch my brush marks were very tight and detailed, which worked well but was a bit tedious. So I've decided to try painting this little girl using a broader and less detailed approach [Figure 3.66] ... I've done it and it was so much quicker than my last one! I forced myself to use a bigger brush so that I couldn't go into too much detail. I worked faster, making sure I had the essential highlights and shadows.



Figure 3.65 Nicky Purser's oil sketch on paper



Figure 3.66 Nicky Purser's oil sketch on paper

Looking at the approach taken by Elisa Bongetti, another VCE Art student, may help you to understand different aspects of the Creative Practice. She **experimented** with her material and **explored** her techniques, images and compositions to **develop** and **refine** her skill and visual language in order to find the best way to **resolve** her intentions. Throughout the process she **reflected** on her trials and **evaluated** the success or otherwise of these.

Elisa's intention was to capture the physical representation of her friend, developing her technique to achieve a realistic portrait in oils (Figure 3.67). She also chose to use the element of colour to reflect the personality of her model.



Figure 3.67 Incomplete trial in oils on oil paper by Elisa Bongetti, with evidence of colour mixing

Elisa wrote:

Too tight – I need to loosen up my brushstrokes to get some life in the painted surface.

Palette – autumn colours. I used warm hues to highlight and cool hues to recede areas.

Shadows were kept fairly warm most of the time. The warm palette is important as it reflects Erin's warm and friendly personality.

This painting is incomplete because it began to get too controlled and realistic. That is not the style I want to achieve. It shows the layers and techniques I used.

NOTE: Not all annotations apply the lenses. This only occurs when meaning is discussed. The other annotations are critical evaluations that occur on reflection of the trials she has produced.



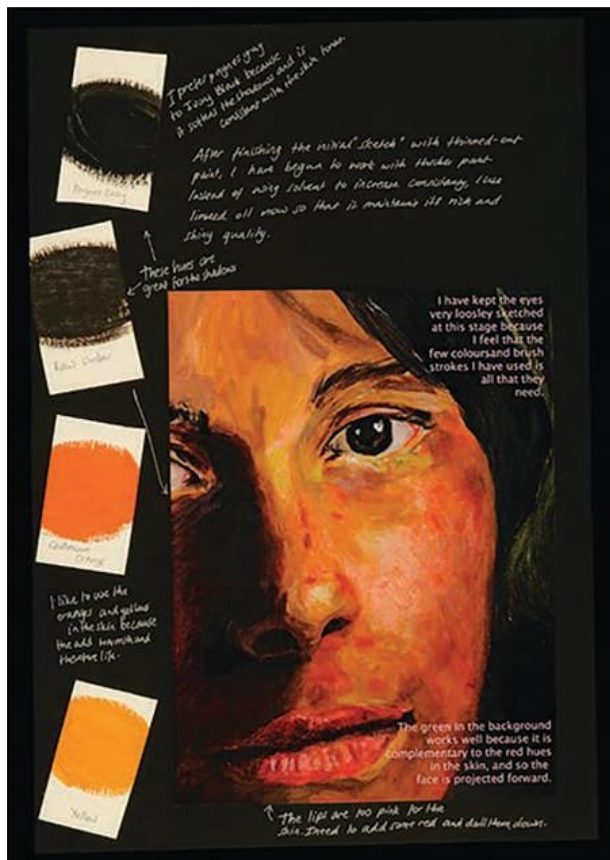


Figure 3.68 Detail of portrait with colour swatches and annotation

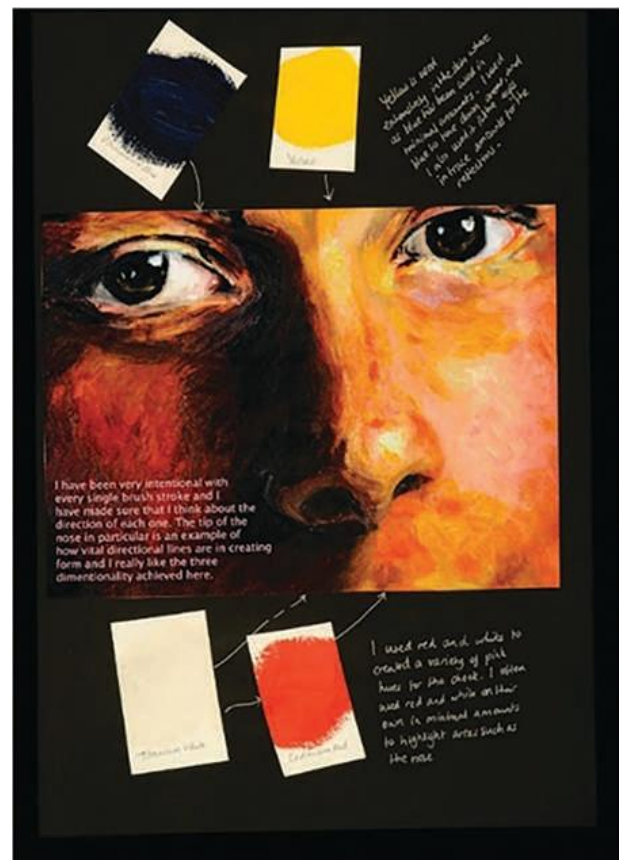


Figure 3.69 Detail of portrait with colour swatches and annotation

A second attempt of a portrait on canvas allowed Elisa to develop more of a free style of painting as her confidence grew (Figures 3.68 and 3.69). She resolved her technique and palette in a series of portraits in oil on canvas, including *Portrait of Erin* (Figure 3.70).



Figure 3.70 Elisa Bongetti, *Portrait of Erin*

There are many different ways to resolve ideas. A single idea can take many directions through an individual's application of the Creative

Practice. There are even different ways of exploring the representation of a single art principle. For example, a group of VCE art students was given the task of representing movement. They each presented alternative approaches and produced various resolutions of their ideas. Julia Triantafillou explored the use of contour line drawing and the juxtaposition of imagery to produce sequential movement (Figure 3.71). Emily Whinfield chose to represent movement through the use of a gestural sweeping mark of colour combined with a repeated image to indicate a passage of time (Figure 3.72).

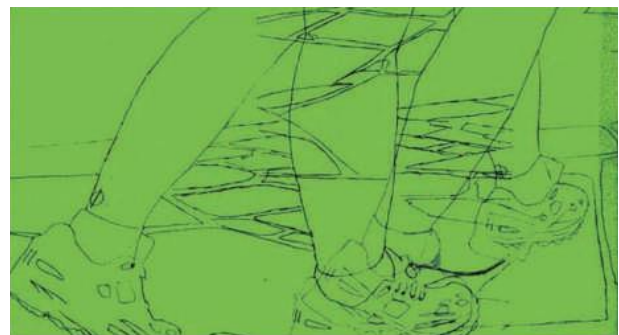


Figure 3.71 Julia Triantafillou, *Movement*, fineliner on paper, layered photocopy on transparency



Figure 3.72 Emily Whinfield, *Movement*, riso print on paper

Bethany Cherry wanted to express the power and grace of a horse in movement. She explored a range of options before resolving her idea. She used the pose of the horse, the elements of art and her technique to enhance the suggestion of movement. Initially she looked at the pose of the horse, concentrating on the shape of its silhouette (Figure 3.73): Bethany noted: 'The pose suggested movement but the flat shape was static and needed detail and directional lines to enhance the movement.'

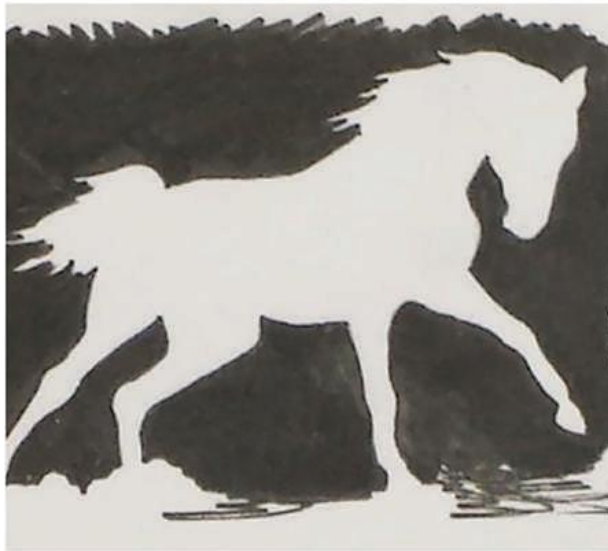


Figure 3.73 Bethany Cherry, *Movement trial*, ink

She then tried scraperboard, but as she said, 'the directional lines of the cross-hatching clashed and distracted from the movement of the horse' (Figure 3.74).

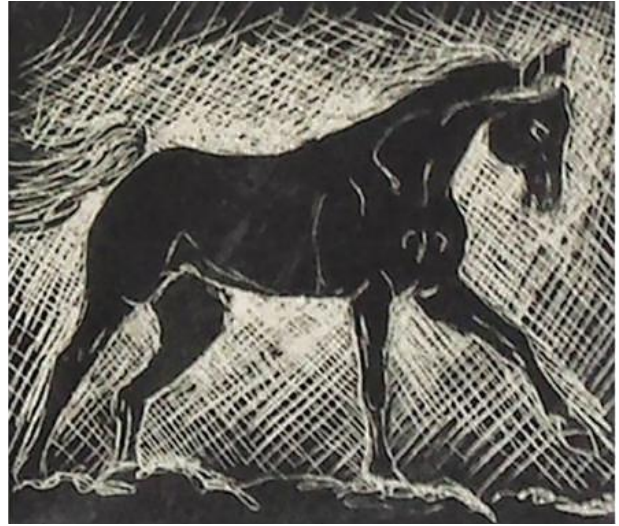


Figure 3.74 'The directional lines of the cross-hatching clashed and distracted from the movement of the horse'.

After trialling coloured pencils (Figure 3.75) she noted that, 'the pencil lines create energetic movement.'

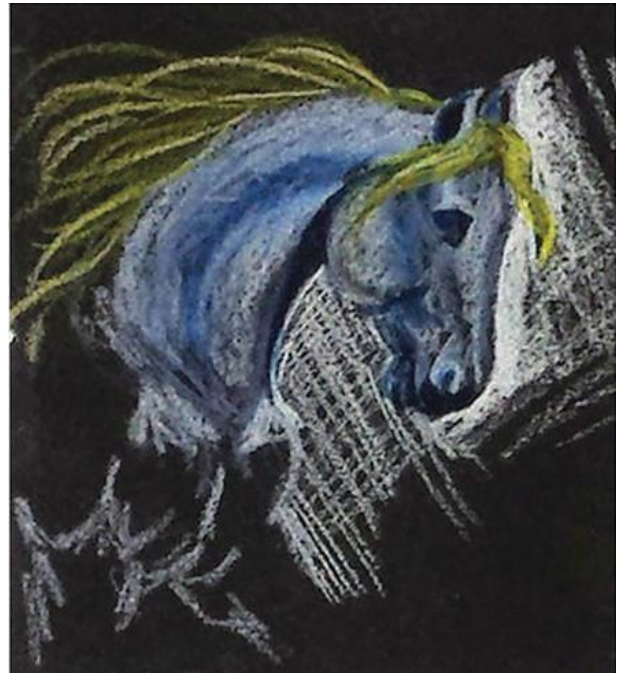


Figure 3.75 The pencil lines create energetic movement.

She also noted that 'the pen and ink lines create movement' (Figure 3.76) and identified that 'the introduction of brushmarks enhanced this further.'



Figure 3.76 Bethany Cherry, *Movement*, trial pen and ink wash on paper

Exploring watercolour (Figure 3.77), Bethany observed that 'the medium can lack control and the quick application and freedom of the medium reflects movement.'



Figure 3.77 Bethany Cherry, *Movement*, watercolour on paper

In order to resolve her idea of movement, Bethany combined many of the ideas explored to produce a horse with rippling muscles kicking up sand as it runs (Figure 3.78). She wrote:

The flowing movement of the brushmarks are gentle, capturing the grace of the horse's movement. The freedom of the movement is enhanced by the uncontrolled movement of the watercolour across the page as the pigment



Figure 3.78 Bethany Cherry, *Movement*, watercolour on paper

flows into the water that I added to the paper. The most intense blue is used in the flowing mane and tail that draws attention to the forward momentum of the horse. The repetition of both controlled and spontaneous brushmarks layered over each other adds to the idea of movement.

Just as Bethany was aware of how the natural fluidity of the watercolour could enhance her depiction of movement, it is also important to consider the issues that you have encountered while working in a specific medium. How has this improved your understanding of that art form? For example, you may have applied a **glaze** over an area of thick oil paint and discovered that the glaze cracked after a while. This happened because oil paint contracts when it dries. The thin glaze dried quickly and contracted, while the thick paint, although touch-dry because of the skin that had formed on the top, continued to contract as it dried. This caused the already-dry glaze to separate and crack. As you refine your technique, you may annotate this and indicate that you should avoid working 'lean over fat'. On the other hand, you may see potential in using this chance occurrence for its symbolic value. The cracking glaze could represent age, drought or something similar. As Scott Adams said, 'Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.' You may want to use this discovery to add meaning to your work. 'Mistakes' can help refine the direction of your work and help you resolve your idea.

glaze a translucent layer of oil paint that can be either thick or thin; a glaze medium can be mixed with the paint or diluted with a mixture of 50 per cent linseed oil and 50 per cent turpentine

3.6 Using the Structural and Personal Lenses to support reflective annotation

You must apply the knowledge you gained about the Structural and Personal Lenses in Outcome 1 of your study to provide reflective annotation about your own art making. As part of this unit, you must begin to annotate and evaluate your own work. You are required to analyse and discuss the meanings and messages in your artwork, and to assess how effectively you have developed and used your own visual language. This will allow you to critically evaluate your work and make informed decisions about the path that your own exploration will take. It assists you to clarify your thought process and communicates your art practice thinking and working to anybody looking at the documentation of your body of work.

Structural Lens

When applying the Structural Lens to the analysis of your work, you will look at how you have used the traditional art elements – line, shape, colour, tone, texture and form – as well as the contemporary art elements – sound, light and time. You will also discuss how you have applied these to achieve emphasis (focal point), balance, movement, unity, variety, contrast, rhythm, repetition, scale, proportion and space within the composition. In analysing these, you will have to consider how they conveyed your intended messages.

You should use this analysis to determine what is effective and what is not, so that you can plan your approach. VCE student Elisa Bongetti was exploring light and its effect on the meaning of her portrait photographs. She discovered through experimentation that ‘natural light creates a more uplifting and less dramatic mood than studio lighting’. As light is an element of art that conveys a particular meaning when used in her artwork, Elisa discussed this in terms of the Structural Framework. She applied this understanding to a photoshoot where she used her grandmother as

the model (Figure 3.79) and placed her in natural light. She analysed a photograph she took of her grandmother and wrote:

I like the composition of this photograph because of the way it frames her and creates an intimate atmosphere. There are colours in the background, which harmonise with the hues of her skin and the colours of her shirt. I like this relaxing effect because it facilitates her joyful expression and the uplifting mood of the image.

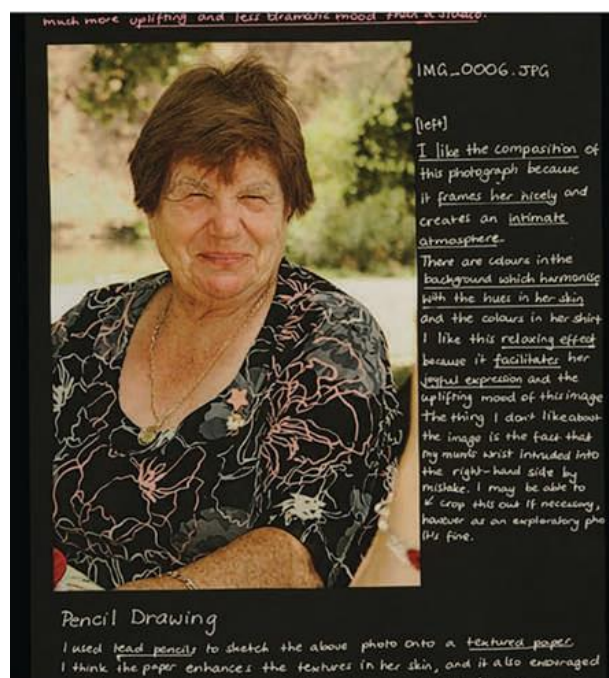


Figure 3.79 An example of Elisa Bongetti's annotation of the elements and principles in her photograph of her grandmother

When using the Structural Lens, you must analyse the structural qualities in your artworks and document your creative and technical processes. You must reflect on your own art making and examine how you have used art elements and principles, and symbolism, to develop your style and visual language.

Establish an awareness of the elements and principles of art in your own exploration.



Many students intuitively employ these elements and principles effectively in their own work without realising it. This is usually because they subconsciously recall what they have been taught in the past, or observed or studied in theory when looking at other artists' work. It is important, however, that you become aware of what applications or combinations of the elements and principles work, what to avoid and how they can affect the meaning of your work. You should use the elements and principles to develop a visual language and as a means to convey symbolic meaning in your work.

It is important to become comfortable applying the Structural Lens to analyse your artworks. Consider how the art elements and principles, as well as your use of the materials, techniques and processes, affect the meaning of your own artworks, as well as the work of other artists you have researched. In order to do this, you will need to document your ideas, processes and the resulting practical applications of your techniques and materials.

Jess Maguire reflected on her exploration of textures, colour combinations and different techniques to apply her paint. She documented this in her sketchbook by sticking her trials in or taking photographs of trials that were either too big or bulky to stick in. She then reflected on and critically evaluated her trials. She used this process to consider how she would proceed, what was working and what she needed to develop further (Figure 3.80). She said:

I created this sample using acrylic paints. I began by layering warm and cool red for the background. I added a little purple to achieve more depth. I then used the back of the brush to scratch into the paint revealing different tones of red. I then applied red and green from a squeeze bottle in the same direction I made the scratch marks.

The scratch marks are defined, short sharp motions. I was trying to achieve the emotion of anger. When I asked friends and family what they felt when they looked at it, I got reactions such as passion, anger, death, confusion, and Christmas. One observed that the green is too bright and 'lifted'



Figure 3.80 Example of Jess Maguire's manipulation of art elements and principles to produce creative responses

the mood of the work. If I am to still use complementary colours, I will have to use a darker green next time.

I think I have achieved depth quite well in this sample [Figure 3.81]. I layered cool blue and warm blue with purple in the background and scratched into it. I then dribbled red and gold paint on top.



Figure 3.81 Example of Jess Maguire's splatter trial



STRUCTURAL

Personal Lens

You will use the Personal Lens to explain to the audience (including your teacher) who will assess your work how your experiences, feelings and personal philosophy are reflected in your artwork.

Construct your response around the central concept or narrative, if you have depicted one. Explain what the artwork is about and discuss how you have conveyed these ideas visually in the artworks. The application of the Personal Lens does not only apply to the subject matter, but also to the application of the structural elements and your use of materials, techniques and processes. Some of the things you should consider discussing in your annotation are:

- How does my art making reflect the Personal Lens?
- What specific aspects of my art making, use of the materials, techniques and processes reflect my personality, thinking, values and who I am?
- What symbols, if any, have I used to explore my identity, beliefs or experiences?
- What specific aspects of my art practice, the way I work and how my artworks are conceptualised, created and presented reflect my thinking and what I am trying to achieve?

You will need to explain:

- what you have done and what decisions you have made about the subject matter, materials, technique, process or art form
- the symbolism you have chosen to use, as well as the elements and principles you have used in creating your art
- how this affects the meaning of the work
- why you believe this is true in terms of the Personal Interpretive Lens.

While exploring her grandfather as the subject matter of her body of work, Nicky Purser took a number of photographs of him, many of which captured a feeling of contemplation as he reflected

on his past. Nicky explored these digital images as photographs, but also began using some as reference for drawing. When she saw an example of a charcoal-drawn portrait on a page of text by the artist and filmmaker William Kentridge, Nicky thought that the interaction between text and imagery, coupled with the contrast between the structured black writing and the loose organic black line of the charcoal drawing, established visual interest. She thought that this was an approach she would like to use. Using a torn page of text, she did a quick contour line sketch of her grandfather with a texta (Figure 3.82).



Figure 3.82 Nicky Purser's marker drawing on paper with text

She was happy with the result, but she wanted the surface to have a greater personal or symbolic link to her subject matter. Realising that the text was not only a visual texture but could be read and thus add further meaning

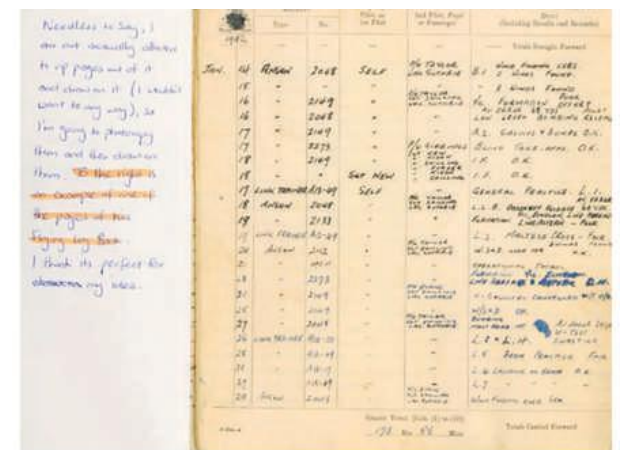


Figure 3.83 The old flight logbook belonging to Nicky Purser's grandfather

to her artwork, she sought text that would link directly with her grandfather. This research revealed his logbook from when he flew planes in World War II.

Nicky wrote:



I needed a book with old pages ... I found my Granddad's old flying logbook when he flew Catalinas in World War II. This was perfect, not only because it is old and has text, but because my Granddad wrote in it. It is a part of his past, a record of his experiences and therefore perfect for conveying the ideas I am trying to relate with my grandfather contemplating his past and what brought him to this point in his life.

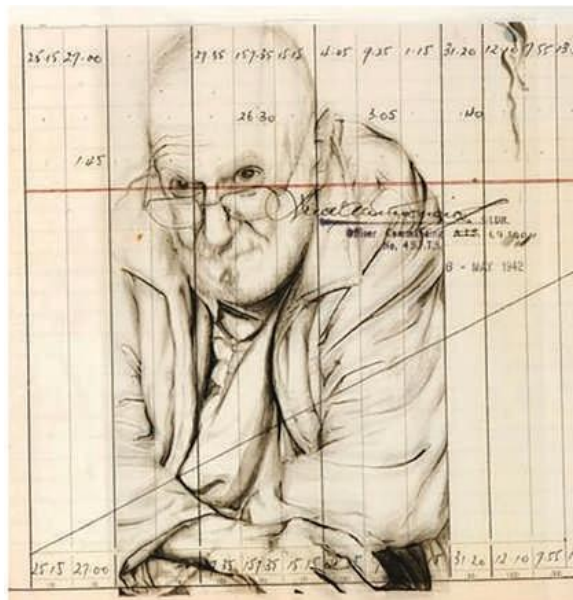


Figure 3.84 Nicky Purser's ink drawing of her grandfather on a photocopy of the flight log

Bronte Billings explored her identity as an oil on canvas portrait. She applied the Personal Lens to explain her intention:



I have attempted to convey the experiences of my childhood and how they have shaped my identity. The central narrative references my childhood, a large part of which was spent at my nanna's house, who has recently passed away. We had a complicated relationship. She suffered from intense binge-eating-disorder and was incredibly obese. She used to overfeed me when I stayed with her, resulting in a complicated relationship that I still have with my body. Every

morning she would pour me a large bowl of Cheerios, make me toast, cut up fruit and gave me biscuits, until I was completely stuffed. She saw food as safety and love and wanted me to feel this fullness too. Rather than make me feel good I cried because I was gaining weight and becoming chubby. I am now rebuilding the relationship I have with food and learning that food is fuel. I have represented myself as I am physically now, but impacted by my history with my nanna in my youth. The bright yellow t-shirt symbolises youthful joy and happiness, while the rainbow colours in the background bring to mind children's art. My pink hair links to my girlhood dream but my expression shows that even as a child I was still hurt watching my nanna being consumed by her eating disorder. The colourful cheerios in the bowl are cold and depressing and link to the negative memories. An out-of-frame hand holds the spoon as I am force-fed. Despite the melancholy narrative the bright colours and warmth in my face displays the positive aspects of my personality. Despite the impact my nanna had on me, I am content, strong and learning to love myself. I am disassembling the corrupt view of food she instilled in me by her, hinted at by the warm pink growing in the bowl.



Figure 3.85 Bronte Billings, *Self Portrait*, oil on canvas, 30 x 42 cm

Activity 3.13

Write a brief analysis of one of your artworks. Apply the Structural and Personal Lenses to a discussion of the meanings and messages in your artwork. Evaluate how effectively the visual language you have developed is used in your artwork.

Art terminology for documentation and annotation of the Creative Practice in your visual diary

Continue to develop your use of art terminology as you document and annotate your work and that of the artists who have inspired you this semester. The glossary at the back of this book will provide you with a very useful list to work with. The annotation will assist you to formalise your understanding and help you to continue to develop a visual language to present your ideas effectively.

The annotation will help you to reflect on your research, experimentation, observations and attempts to visually represent a concept or idea. The analysis of your own work will enable you to determine how successful your decisions are regarding subject matter, symbolism, techniques and the use of the elements and principles of art. You must make use of real-time annotation, rather than annotating after the fact. By writing down your thoughts as they occur to you, you are less likely to forget them.

Analysing your work as you create it allows you to make informed decisions. Documenting your thoughts and your approach to developing your body of work will help the audience to understand what you are trying to achieve and will assist your teacher in assessing your work and your understanding of the Creative Practice. It will provide evidence of your understanding to the person assessing your work. It is important that the person viewing your work can read your reflections and evaluations in the context of viewing your body of work. It is best to place your critical annotations next to or on the work you are referencing.

The terminology that you use to document your Creative Practice should reflect the terminology that is used in art theory. Make use of the terminology appropriate to the relevant Interpretive Lenses. As with the written responses in theory, you should substantiate your statements. This will demonstrate insight and understanding.



Figure 3.86 Margo Joseph, *Self Portrait*, oil on canvas, 60 × 42 cm

Another VCE student, Margo Joseph, also explored her identity by means of a self-portrait. She provides an indication of how the Interpretive Lenses can be applied to your artworks. She wrote:

Looking closer at the portrait you can see droplets of water on my face. Water has been represented through the use of bright white/yellow paint. This choice of colour highlights the drop on the face, and gives the illusion the water droplets are catching light. This gives the painting realism, and reinforces the importance of water in this self-portrait. Other highlights in the face also use a white/cream colour, giving the face a 'wet' look, and helping to complement the highlights in the water and pearls. Choice of bright colour helps create form in the face by bringing forward the highlights of the composition, while tying together the



theme of water by presenting droplets and giving the face a 'wet' look.

Considering this painting through the Personal Lens, it aims to reflect my connection to water. Water has always been an integral part of my life and is included as a visual element in my portrait. Water, through swimming and artistic swimming, has given me friends and experiences, while filling me with passion, providing me strength and skill. Each of these has shaped me growing up and has made me the person I am today. Through the incorporation of water, I am correlating water to my own sense of self through the way I believe it has impacted on my life and personality. I also ask the questions, what am I, who am I without water? Without the experiences it has given me, without the friends I've made along the way, and without the qualities I've gained?

In the final composition I wear pearls. My name Margo is primarily a female name of French origin. Margo/Margot is a derivative of the name Margaret, which means 'a pearl'. This meaning is something I've always felt special to have for a number of reasons. First, simple pearls are the beautiful jewels of the sea hidden behind a dull exterior of a clam. This relates

clearly to the theme of water, but also to the general concept of humans, how often what's inside is more beautiful than what can ever be shown on the outside, it just takes the right person to find it. I also feel a strong family connection to pearls as both my Mother and Amah have always adorned pearls.

Applying the Structural Lens, the artwork has been composed to display water on myself as well as to convert the work's overarching theme of water. The selected composition image uses empty, vacant space to surround the audience, and in such, enclose the figure in a 'sea' of white, mimicking the immersion in water. To accompany this concept, texture has been created through the fluid brush strokes achieved by adding linseed oil to my paint, increasing the liquidity of the oil paint. This also helps to convey the notion of flowing and fluid water. The two hands to either side of her face, reinforce the notion of encasement, and inner self-reliance. Water is symbolic in the painting to represent self, as shown by the droplet and the illusion of immersion in water. Additionally, water is often associated with life, hence giving the meaning of self and identity.



Activity 3.14

Write short annotations documenting how you explored an art form, material, medium or technique. Think about:

- how you did things – the process
- why you did things – evaluate the success of what you did and comment on where you will go from here; show your thinking.

Activity 3.15

Apply the Structural and Personal Frameworks to explain the ideas you were trying to express and discuss how the refinement and choice of materials had an impact on this.

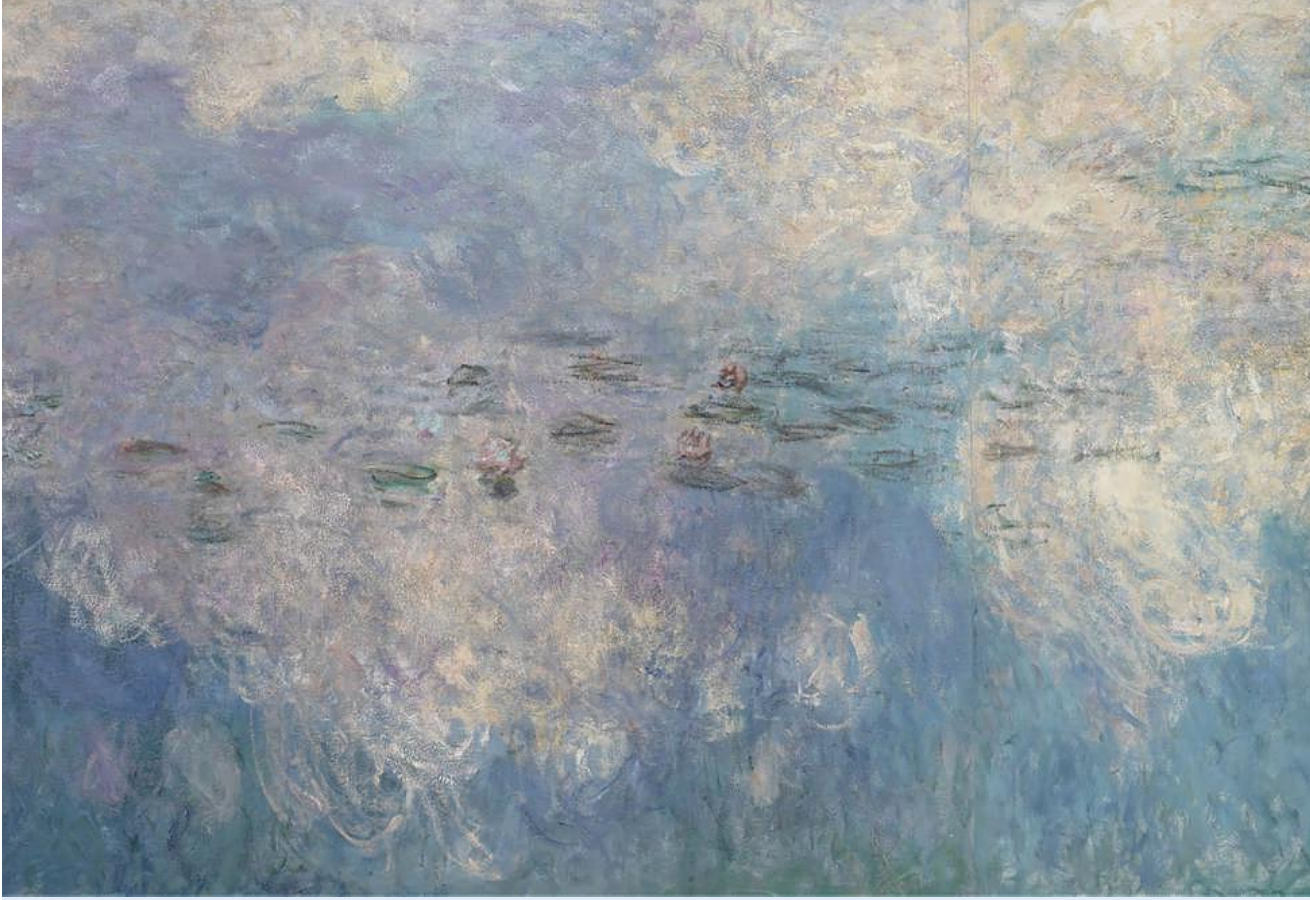
UNIT 2

Interpreting artworks and developing the Creative Practice



Chapter 4

Area of Study 1 The artist, society and culture



OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit you should be able to analyse and compare the practices of artists and artworks from different cultures and times, using the Cultural Lens and other appropriate lenses.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the role and purpose of art in different cultural contexts and times
- the use of relevant aspects of the Cultural Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- the use, as appropriate, of relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- the diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting artworks
- methods of making and presenting artworks in different historical and contemporary cultural contexts
- how artworks reflect the beliefs, values and traditions of different cultures
- the different ways that artists collaborate to make artworks
- the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures

- referencing to support the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of artworks
- art terminology used in the analysis, evaluation and comparison of artworks, and the practices of artists.

KEY SKILLS

- apply the Cultural Lens to analyse and interpret artworks from different cultures and times
- apply, as appropriate, relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- compare artworks from different cultural and historical contexts
- analyse the diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting artworks
- analyse methods of making and presenting artworks in historical and contemporary cultural contexts
- analyse how artworks can reflect the beliefs, values and traditions of different cultures
- investigate the different ways that artists collaborate to make artworks

- evaluate and compare the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- use references to artworks to support analysis, evaluation and interpretation
- use appropriate art terminology to analyse, evaluate and compare the practices of artists and artworks.

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4.1 The artist, society and culture

In Unit 1 you saw how art could be interpreted as a reflection of the artist's beliefs, feelings and experiences. In this unit of work you will consider cultural rather than personal identity. Unit 2 focuses on the ways in which art and culture are intertwined. You will consider how the practice and artworks reflect the cultural environment of the artist.

Artworks can acknowledge specific events, ideas or beliefs, commemorate people, institutions and social movements. They can reinforce the intentions of a social, cultural or community group, or they can challenge social or cultural attitudes and assumptions. Throughout this unit you will examine the importance of the social and cultural context of artworks. You will need to consider the different roles that art has played and currently plays in society, and you will need to investigate how artworks can be created as forms of expression for specific social and cultural contexts.

You are required to study at least three artists, their practice and artworks and apply the Interpretive Lenses to analyse and interpret the messages and meaning that are conveyed through the artworks. While you must consider both the Structural and Personal Lenses when appropriate, the focus in this unit is the Cultural Lens. You must gain an understanding of the Cultural Lens and develop your ability to apply this lens to the interpretation of artworks. You will use the lenses to examine artworks from different periods of time and from different cultures. In the study of the selected artists you will explore the different ways that artists interpret and communicate social and personal issues in artworks.

In addition to the study of selected artworks, you will also research historical and contemporary artworks to explore diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting artworks. This will provide you with inspiration for your own artwork in Areas of Study 2 and 3 and will allow you to consider the impact of the artists' practice on the messages and meaning conveyed in their artworks.



Video 4.1

4.2 Interpreting art

In this area of study you must focus on the ways in which art reflects and communicates the values, beliefs and traditions of the societies in which it was created. When analysing the artworks, you must consider whether the works reflect or challenge these values, beliefs and traditions. When applying the Cultural Lens you must consider the structural aspects of the artwork and how these may reflect the society or culture in which the artwork was created or that it references.

You will apply the Cultural Lens to study the practices of at least three artists from different cultures and times. Students may focus their research on a selected theme(s) to compare artists, their practices and artworks. Students must apply the Cultural Lens, and other lenses as appropriate, in their analysis and interpretation of one artwork by each of the artists.

The **three artists** you study must include between them:

- a First Nations Australian artist
- an artist who collaborates with other artists, technicians or with the audience as part of their practice

- an artist from a historical period of time who has used traditional art form(s), materials, and techniques
- a contemporary artist whose practice is influenced by contemporary ideas, materials, techniques, processes or approaches.

One artist may cover more than one of the required dot points.

Art, society and culture

Art is a reflection of the society or culture in which and for which it is created. The subject matter, the materials and the way art is presented can be influenced by the time and place in which it is created. The beliefs and traditions that are important to the culture to which the artist belongs can guide the artist's practice, or may be challenged by the artist through their art. It is useful, therefore, to consider the beliefs and traditions surrounding the creation of an artwork when interpreting the messages and meanings it conveys.

When applying the Cultural Lens to interpret an artwork it is important to consider the influences of the time, place and the society in which an artwork has been produced. This includes the cultural, historical, political, religious and social setting in which it was made, as well as the purpose for which it was made. Where and how the artwork

is presented is an important consideration when interpreting art. These factors are referred to as the context of the artwork.

When considering the following three equestrian sculptures from different times, it is possible to arrive at three different interpretations when taking into account the context of the artworks. Because these are all public sculptures, they all play a common role: they were intended to encourage unity, focus on areas of common agreement within the community for which the statue was created, or reflect social identity.

Public art is work produced by artists for a public space, as opposed to a setting such as a museum. Public artworks are most successful when based on shared meanings between the artist and the community. They may exist as landmarks, monuments, architectural embellishments, cultural symbols and independent creative expression.

Heroic public art

The Arch of Constantine (Figure 4.1) is an example of heroic public art that was created as a monument and celebration of the military victory of the Emperor Constantine over his political rival Maxentius in 312 CE. This is an example of how art can be an expression of political thought. It both glorifies Constantine and inspires awe and patriotism through the grandeur of its scale.



Figure 4.1 *The Arch of Constantine*, 312 CE, Rome

The three equestrian sculptures presented here (Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4) were all created as public art in a specific time and place when there was limited cultural diversity, so they would have appealed to or been understood by most of the

population. They would each have represented the community, or the beliefs and interests of the community, in which they are displayed. All three sculptures are grounded in shared experiences that contribute towards a sense of community.



Figure 4.2 *Marcus Aurelius*, c. 175 CE, Rome, bronze, 3.5 m



Figure 4.3 Paul Dubois, *Joan of Arc*, 1922, bronze (original plaster 1889), Washington DC



Figure 4.4 George Frederic Watts, *Physical Energy*, 1907, Kensington Gardens, London

If you take into account that the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius depicts the Emperor of Rome during his rule (161–180CE), it would suggest that the work is intended for the purpose of



honouring the emperor and recognising his accomplishments. With our knowledge of the emperors of ancient Rome, you would expect to see him in full military dress with sword in hand, represented as a conqueror. While he did defeat a number of opposing nations in battle, Marcus Aurelius reigned during a period of relative peace and stability for the Roman Empire and is also known as a philosopher, hence the lack of weapons. This knowledge gives us a little more understanding of the message that the sculpture is intended to convey.

The emperor extends his hand in a gesture of ad locutio, which was a posture and gesture that indicated the person was someone with authority who was delivering a speech. It was a gesture used by emperors when addressing their troops.



Some commentaries suggest that the emperor's hand is outstretched in an act of clemency offered to a defeated enemy and that a conquered enemy, such as a small figure of a bound barbarian chieftain, was originally part of the sculpture cowering in front of the horse. As seen in its current context, placed in a public square without any other figures, it can also be seen as a representation of the emperor before his people, the people of Rome and us the audience. He is raising his hand in salute as he addresses us. The palm-down position of the hand hovering over the heads of onlookers is one of benefactor and protector rather than aggressive conqueror; a bringer of peace. The elevated position of the sculpture and the effortless control he exerts over the powerful war horse results in an overall feeling of power and grandeur as the audience looks up in admiration.

Activity 4.1

Using the same consideration as outlined in the discussion of *Marcus Aurelius*, c. 175 CE, apply the Cultural Lens to your interpretation of *Joan of Arc* by Paul Dubois (Figure 4.3).

Physical Energy by George Frederic Watts is a monumental equestrian sculpture begun in the early 1880s and developed up until his death on 1 July 1904. The original plaster sculpture was later cast in bronze. Watts said, 'A symbol of that restless physical impulse to seek the still unachieved in the domain of material things.'

While Physical Energy was created as a memorial to Cecil Rhodes, a financier and statesman central to the expansion of the British Empire in Southern Africa, the sculpture does not represent him directly, but is an allegory. Rather than being a representation of a specific horse and rider, the sculpture embodies the dynamic force of ambition. Begun at the end of the nineteenth century, the artwork encourages us to move forward and embrace progress at a time when many people feared where industrialisation and change were taking society. The rider scans the horizon looking towards the future, seeking new conquests, challenges, discoveries and innovation.



Public art as social critique

Heroic public art might have been appropriate when a common visual language existed in society, but it has become less appropriate in our multicultural societies where there are greater differences in social, political and religious values. Artistic practices since the postmodern era have witnessed a transformation in public art, where it often takes on the role of social critique. The artist's function has evolved from one who marks events of social and historical significance to that of artist as activist, also encouraging community participation and intellectual engagement. Rather than celebrating, public art now often causes us to question.

This newly created concave volume has a silent amplitude which magnifies your awareness of yourself and the sculptural field of the space.

allegory a story, play, poem, picture or other work in which the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas that relate to morals or politics

Time and movement became really crucial to how I deal with what I deal with, not only sight and boundary but how one walks through a piece and what one feels and registers in terms of one's own body in relation to another body. **Richard Serra**

While artists often work in isolation and make works according to a personal aesthetic to express themselves and ideas important to them, the case of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, 1981 (created for the Federal Plaza in New York, Figure 4.5) suggests that public art is not the avenue for this. This work failed in its effort to impose the artist's aesthetics on the public. The public disliked the work and strongly objected to the fact that the arc was commissioned with public funds. People denounced Serra's sculpture as an ugly rusted metal wall and argued that it disrupted the flow of the plaza because people had to walk around it. The artist responded that this was the point:

The viewer becomes aware of himself and of his movement through the plaza. As he moves, the sculpture changes. Contraction and expansion of the sculpture result from the viewer's movement. Step by step, the perception not only of the sculpture but of the entire environment changes.

In a matter of months, 1300 employees in the area signed a petition to remove the work. The court ruled in favour of the sculpture's removal in 1989. This is one example that highlighted the importance of considering the competing interests of the artist, the community and the state when creating public art.

Public art reflecting creative impulse

If we consider the role and purpose of art, irrespective of whether it is in the public space, institutionalised or in a private space, at its most fundamental and personal level, art reflects the creative impulse of the artist. This might be to create something beautiful, reflect on the world around the artist, communicate feelings, as personal therapy or to convey a message.

I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions – tragedy, ecstasy, doom ... the fact that lots of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I communicate those basic human emotions ...

Mark Rothko, American Colour Field painter and Abstract Expressionist, 1957



Figure 4.5 Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, 1981–1989, Federal Plaza, New York, Corten steel, 36 m × 3.6 m

When recording their world, an artist will implicitly or explicitly depict or reflect on an aspect of their culture. This might be evident through the subject matter, style or symbolism. While it may not be the intention to do so, when interpreting an artwork using the Cultural Lens you would consider any links to culture and how this might suggest meaning for you.



After experiencing the horror, violence and anxiety of World War II, Rothko rejected representational imagery in favour of abstract painting. This may have been his way of clearing his mind of the visions he must have been plagued by. The experience of war and the focus on the collective rather than the individual that this brings may also have led artists like Rothko and Pollock to seek alternative and individual forms of expression, breaking away from figurative art that was part of a society that took the world to war. His large rectangular canvases with their layered colour fields that appeared to float on the painting's surface became his visual language. A spiritual man who suffered from depression, Rothko offered up meditative paintings in which the audience could immerse themselves. These paintings can be seen as an escape from the trauma of living in the middle of the twentieth century.



Figure 4.6 A woman views Mark Rothko's *Brown and Black in Reds*, 1957, oil on canvas, 231.1 × 152.4 cm (91 × 60 in.) © Mark Rothko. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. **Mark Rothko, 1957**

While these works evoke strong feelings in the audience, Rothko chose not to explain their meaning and ensured that the titles offered no clue. He believed the painting and not the artist should dictate the visual and emotional experience that the audience experienced.

Painting is not about an experience. It is an experience. **Mark Rothko, 1959**

Art reflecting daily life

Art can reflect and record life as it was at the time of its creation. It can record daily activities at the time and place, highlight and question social conditions, celebrate or question its traditions and reflect on the attitudes of the people. Many artists use their art to show the world as they see it. These scenes from daily life are referred to as **genre**. These artworks can be varied and represent general life as seen in the works of Johannes (Jan) Vermeer (Figures 4.7 and 4.8), or represent rites of passage such as weddings (Figures 4.10 and 4.11) or funerals (Figures 4.12–4.14).

Jan Vermeer

The seventeenth-century Dutch painter Jan Vermeer is famous for his genre paintings that depict scenes from everyday life of ordinary people in work or recreation. As is typical of genre, his scenes are depicted in a realistic manner filled with details that provide a clear window into the life and times of the artist. He provides us with intimate scenes from daily life at the time, filled with carefully observed types, activities, costumes, settings, interests and discoveries.

*Not only does Vermeer's painting *The Milkmaid* take us into the kitchen of a Dutch home of the time and provide us with a glimpse of this mundane activity that formed part of a typical day, but it is an indication of larger cultural*

genre depicts the realistic representation of everyday life; genres are also various categories of subject matter





Figure 4.7 Johannes Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*, c. 1660, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, oil on canvas, 45.5 × 41 cm

changes in society at that time. Vermeer's paintings also give us insight into societal changes after 1517, as the northern European countries began to shift from Catholicism to the Protestant faith. Instead of insisting on expensive decorations for their churches and large public displays of faith, the Protestants rejected frescoes and encouraged a move to small-scale easel painting. Church commissions declined and the financial power of the middle class grew, so artists started turning to new patrons who were only interested in decorating their homes with small-scale paintings that they could relate to.

Despite the fact that Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* (Figure 4.8) represents a domestic scene of a woman holding a balance scale at her table with jewellery open for inspection,

sometimes artworks representing genre scenes are more than this. *Woman Holding a Balance* is considered to be an example of one of Vermeer's allegorical paintings.

Activity 4.2

What symbolism can you find in the painting that relates to messages that Vermeer might be trying to convey about how we should conduct our lives?

Research the painting and discover some of the symbols used by Vermeer that would have been understood by people of his day.

Julie Blackmon

Imagery representing genre scenes is not limited to historical artworks. It can also be found in the works of contemporary artists such as Julie Blackmon, who is inspired by the seventeenth-century Northern European domestic paintings. She carefully constructs tableaux that feature members of her own family and people in her community, which she records as photographs. Her work focuses on the everyday and are both comical and serene. They contain elements of popular media, consumer culture and social satire and serve as a record, albeit a choreographed one, of her Middle American cultural experience.

These images are both fictional and autobiographical and explore the fantastic elements of our everyday lives, both imagined and real.

Julie Blackmon



Figure 4.8 Johannes Vermeer, *Woman Holding a Balance*, c. 1664, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, oil on canvas, 42.5 × 38 cm



*Her photograph shows us a typical scene in a suburban Middle American home in 2015, but hints at being more than a record of a contemporary scene. Blackmon reflects on a pre-internet life, possibly her own. At a time when children are fixated with electronics and online games, the children in her narratives get bored and spend their time using their imaginations. Her works generate nostalgia for days of innocence, healthy outdoor play and imagination so often lacking in the experience of young children today. Access the interactive textbook to view Blackmon's *Laying Out*.*

Shaun Gladwell

Shaun Gladwell's synchronised videos for *Broken Dance – Beatboxed* (Figure 4.9) is a **collaborative** work that reflects culture and a particular social identity. It showcases contemporary urban dance and music forms while reflecting on the interests

and activities of young people in the twenty-first century. This work is discussed again in Chapter 5 on Unit 2 AOS 2 and 3 as a possible inspiration for collaborative art making.

To view an interview with Shaun Gladwell about his artwork, search 'Shaun Gladwell talks about Broken Dance (Beatboxed)' on your preferred search engine.

Two VCE students responded to Gladwell's artwork by applying the Cultural Lens. Margo Joseph wrote:

When applying the Cultural Lens to the interpretation of Shaun Gladwell's Broken Dance (Beatboxed), I believe that he is reflecting his views on urban art, and its evolvment in an increasingly technology focused and commercialised society. Through his artwork, Gladwell aims to create an experience for the audience by surrounding them with video and sound in a darkened space. This immerses the audience in the artwork.

By simultaneously projecting the beatboxer's performance and the dancer who 'freestyles' in response to the sounds in a graffiti-marked environment, the two are shown to work together in sync. The installation connects performances that occurred at different times and locations. The vocal percussions of the beatboxers were recorded first, and following, the dancers interpreted the beats in real time. From this method of recording, and through the synching of the two videos, Gladwell creates a fascinating experience where both work in partnership, as a vocal percussion from the beatboxer is catalyst for a domino effect reaction in the dancer on the opposing side of the room.

collaborative involving two or more people working together for a special purpose





Figure 4.9 Shaun Gladwell, *Broken Dance – Beatboxed*, 2012, dual-channel HD video 16:9 colour stereo. 01:25:41 min loop, installation Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Considering when the work was created, the call and response style of performance art parallels digital communication of the time: texting, calls, radio and even how urban artists were adapting and reacting in an increasingly prescribed and confining society.

When created in 2012, there was a growing prominence in technology, phones, music, television, movies, all sorts of medias were evolving, and with this cultural shift was the evolution of communication. Gladwell here has an intriguing response to this evolvement.

The contexts for the performances are also significant. The dancers are featured in underground and secluded spaces of London, often considered 'Lops' by city planners (left over in planning). These spaces are covered in graffiti, emulating the idea of sub-cultural activity and hip-hop culture, but also providing an engaging and interesting space where the performers can use their bodies to respond and transform it. On the other hand, the vocalists are placed in a materialistic and professional space, again playing into the evolving prescribed expectations of society. This also provides contrast between the two art performances. The dancer performs freely in

their own urban space, whereas the beatboxer is confined into a professional and commercial space, signifying how sub-cultural art can become 'mainstreamed', commodified due to the relentless forces of consumerism.

Coco Bacon wrote:

The video includes beatboxing and breakdancing to illustrate the current and emerging trends in his modern society. To further this concept, Shaun Gladwell films the dancers against a graffiti wall in an alleyway in London. He uses film to capture the contemporary trends amongst this new generation. Technology and digital art during the 2000s were becoming increasingly more prominent and used in everyday activities. Gladwell acknowledges how crucial technology is to artworks now and in the future. The video is presented in an art gallery to create the juxtaposition between traditional and contemporary art and also emphasises the importance of recognising dance, music and street art as important art forms.

street art artwork that is created in a public space, typically without official permission



Rites of passage

Weddings are an important rite of passage and the way they are represented in art can present the audience with a snapshot of the life and times of the artist as in Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding* (Figure 4.10), which accurately portrays the customs, costumes and food at a sixteenth-century peasant wedding. Alternatively, the artist can comment on this rite of passage within

a particular culture as Gözde Ilkin does in *Get Married, Be Happy* (Figure 4.11).

Her installation piece comments on the ways in which female identity is lost in marriage within the patriarchal system of her culture. Relying on the element of time, the woman is slowly emptied and the man gets filled in.



Figure 4.10 Pieter Bruegel, *Peasant Wedding*, 1568, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, oil on wood, 124 × 164 cm



Figure 4.11 Gözde Ilkin, *Get Married, Be Happy*, cotton and stitch on pillow cases, 2007, 63 × 84 × 25 cm

Three artworks, including El Greco's *Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, Courbet's *A Burial at Ornans* and Domenico de Clario's art installation, each represent the funerary 'rites of passage' at different times.

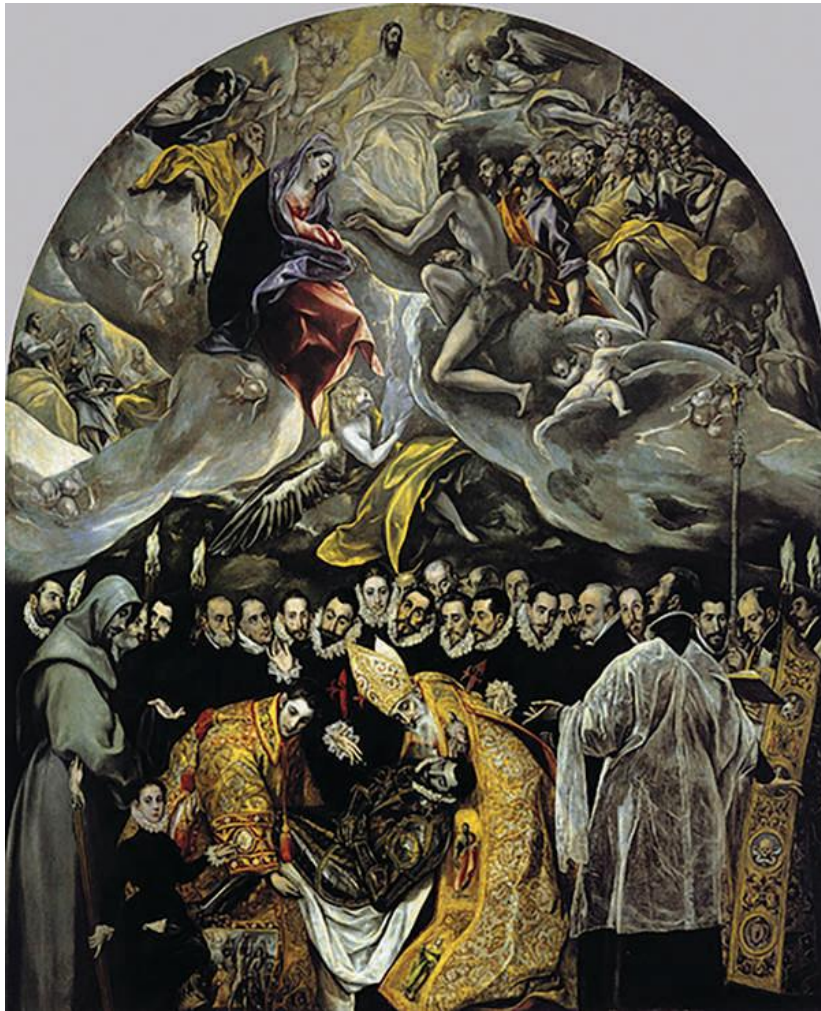


Figure 4.12 El Greco, *Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, 1586–88, Santo Tomé, Toledo, Spain, oil on canvas, 480 × 360 cm



Figure 4.13 Gustave Courbet, *A Burial at Ornans*, 1849, oil on canvas, 3.1 × 6.6 m



Figure 4.14 Possessions, including cars and a trailer, at the burial site as part of Domenico de Clario's art installation, 2016.
(ABC Mildura - Swan Hill: Lauren Henry), © Domenico de Clario/Copyright Agency, 2022

Activity 4.3

How does the social, political, cultural, artistic and/or religious context in which an artwork was made contribute to its meaning?

- 1 Apply the Cultural Lens to interpret each of these three artworks (Figures 4.12–4.14).
- 2 Research each artist and artwork. Are there additional factors relating to the Cultural Lens that might add to your interpretation?

Art as commemoration

Art has often been used by the victors to commemorate battles or significant people and historical events, such as Tom Roberts' *The Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Figure 4.15).



This work can be considered in terms of the Cultural Lens, as it reflects the sentiment of the day. Positive emotions are expressed by the grandeur of the location and event illuminated by the warm glow of God's light blessing the occasion. Alternatively, it can also be discussed in terms of the inequality present in the depiction, highlighting the patriarchal society of the day and the disregard for the traditional

owners of our land. This shows how the lens can be applied in the context of the artist and audience at the time of its creation or in the contemporary context of the audience viewing the work today.

Art used to influence opinion

As shown in Figure 4.1 *The Arch of Constantine*, art can be a powerful expression of political thought, supporting and celebrating the person or group who commissions the work. Governments and rulers sometimes use art as a visual means to present **propaganda** to support their political

propaganda the spreading of a doctrine that reflects the views or interests of a particular group



Figure 4.15 Tom Roberts, *The Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia by H.R.H. The Duke of Cornwall and York (later H.M. King George VI), May 9, 1901, 1903*, Parliament House Art Collection, Australia, oil on canvas, 304.5 × 509.2 cm

purpose. Art is a powerful tool to influence opinion and behaviour, and achieve a particular agenda. This is also often used by people in opposition to the incumbent power of the day as a spark to revolution.

In modern times, graffiti has been a powerful tool of opposition and often explodes during periods of social unrest. It played an important role in communicating dissent during Egypt's revolution in 2011. In Paris in May 1968 during the student protests and general strike, slogans such as 'Boredom is counterrevolutionary' and 'Read less, live more' were stencilled across the city.

Prior to this, stencils played an important role during the German invasion of Russia in World War II, where three leading artists established the TASS studio, to produce posters through the government-sponsored TASS News Agency (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union). Following the 1917 Russian Revolution, ROSTA (the acronym for the Russian Telegraph Agency) began producing political posters. Especially in the early 1920s, some key TASS artists got their start working in these studios and brought that experience to ROSTA. At first ROSTA posters were painted by hand, but to reproduce copies on a large scale,



Figure 4.16 Nikolai Fedorovich Denisovskiy, *Our One-Thousandth Blow*, 5 June, 1944, colour lithographic print, 160.1 × 123.1 cm

artists used stencilling as a more efficient means of mass production.



Figure 4.17 Vladimir Maiakovsky, propaganda against the counter-revolution, 1920, ROSTA Window no. 337 (detail), Russia

Art is not only a vehicle for political change but can be used to raise awareness of the imbalance in society.

In Third Class Carriage (Figure 4.18) the French Realist Daumier chronicled the impact of industrialisation on the socio-economic and cultural conditions of modern urban life in mid-nineteenth-century Paris. The painting is an accurate depiction of the working class at the time and shows the hardship and quiet fortitude of third-class railway travellers, capturing the weariness of the poor and their lives.



Art challenging the viewer

Art (as a voice of dissent) is often used as satire to challenge the status quo or comment on a current issue in society. This is evident in *Children in Detention* by street artist Cel Out (Figure 4.19).

Activity 4.4

Research the use of stencil art as propaganda or dissent and explain why this method was preferred. Do street artists use stencil art differently today?



Figure 4.18 Honoré Daumier, *Third Class Carriage*, 1864, Metropolitan Museum of Art, oil on canvas, 65.4 × 90.2 cm



Figure 4.19 Cel Out, *Children in Detention*, 2015 paste-up, Melbourne

Children in Detention references popular culture by using Bart Simpson, while at the same time addresses a topical issue, both in Australia and globally.

This work was pasted up in a Melbourne laneway, which is a non-traditional exhibition space accessible to passers-by and demonstrates the

important role that art plays in challenging issues and values in society.

Cel Out's approach to presenting his work reflects the changing interface between artist and audience. He speaks through the contemporary art form of street art. It is raw and very much of its time in technique and approach. There is no longer a need to visit a gallery to see art. It is now on the street or on your personal device via the internet and social media.

On a grand scale, Picasso's *Guernica* (Figure 4.20), created to be part of the Spanish Pavilion at the International Exposition in Paris in 1937, expressed the artist's horror and disgust at an act of brutality during the Spanish Civil War. It was painted in response to the aerial bombardment of the Basque town of Guernica by the Germans, who were supporting the Franco Government against the Republican resistance. An estimated 1600 people (mostly women and children) were killed and nearly 900 were injured. Picasso had seen the dramatic photographs published in periodicals at the time and was inspired to produce this plea against the barbarity and terror of war.



Figure 4.20 Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, oil on canvas, 349 × 777 cm © Succession Picasso / Copyright Agency 2022



Figure 4.21 Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of Horatii*, 1784, Louvre, Paris, oil on canvas, 330 × 425 cm

Picasso's painting became an icon of the antiwar movement and reflects the impact that art can have on a society. This contrasts strongly with the glorification of war and the heroism represented by David's *Oath of Horatii* (Figure 4.21)

Mona Hatoum presents a more contemporary comment on war in her *Nature morte aux grenades* (Access the interactive textbook to view this artwork). Born in Beirut to a Palestinian family in 1952, Hatoum often tackles socio-political issues in her work, such as memory, domesticity, separation, displacement, borders, detention, torture, war and violence. This piece is not a literal representation of her topic, but rather engages the audience intellectually. This is a hallmark of Hatoum's artistic style.



Figure 4.22 Henri Matisse, *Nature Morte aux Grenades*, 1947, 12 × 16 inches

I find it more exciting when a work reverberates with several meanings and paradoxes and contradictions. Explaining it as meaning this or that inevitably turns it into something fixed rather than something in a state of flux.

Mona Hatoum



Ideas of threat and warfare are referred to in the sculpture and are very much part of our world, with conflict under way across the globe when the sculpture was created in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Hatoum is culturally aware of art of the past and refers to it in her practice. This artwork is named after a still-life painting of pomegranates and other fruit on a table by Henri Matisse, (Figure 4.22) which in turn refers to an earlier traditional nineteenth-century still life by French painter Antoine Gadan. Hatoum plays with the double meaning of grenade, which is French for both 'pomegranate' and 'grenade'.

Hatoum often uses the idea of displacement, turning familiar, everyday objects into something unusual and different. In this artwork she presents a collection of bright candy-coloured crystal blown into the shape of hand grenades, displayed on a steel and rubber trolley. *The materials used set up a further contradiction between the beauty and fragility of the glass and the subtext of danger and destruction due to the imagery. The steel table resembles a surgical or embalming table, hinting at violence and death, while the glass objects in vibrantly vivid shades call to mind toys and the glorification of weapons in popular culture. This could represent the very real issue of child soldiers, but also brings to mind the impact of war on the innocents. Weapons become glossy ornaments, almost Christmas decorations or lollies, suggesting that they are harmless. The fragility of the glass grenades, however, also references the fragility of the human body when faced with the destructive force of a grenade and the fragile conditions of people forced into exile, like Hatoum herself, who was separated from her home by the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90).*

NOTE: This information could have been presented with the focus on Hatoum's experience using the Personal Lens.



Spiritual art

In many cultures art supports religious and spiritual beliefs and has done so since prehistoric times. The *Venus of Willendorf* (Figure 4.23) was discovered in Willendorf, Austria, and depicts a female nude. It is believed to be one of the world's oldest known works of art. The exaggerated proportions, emphasised anatomical features and lack of individual facial features led scholars to associate the artwork with sexual reproduction and fertility and therefore classify it as a fertility statue, or 'Venus figurine'. Fertility was important in many early cultures and it is thought that the statue may have been used in ceremonies. Some African cultures have fertility fetishes (a sculpture believed to connect with a spirit or possess magical powers) that young women carry with them to encourage fertility.



Figure 4.23 *Venus of Willendorf*, 30 000–25 000 BCE, limestone with red ochre, 11 cm



Figure 4.24 Jan van Eyck, *The Madonna of the Chancellor Rolin*, 1435, Musee du Louvre, Paris, oil on panel, 66 × 62 cm

Art has frequently been used to depict religious figures and narratives. At times these works speak of the power and piety of the patron, especially when they are depicted in the artwork such as van Eyck's *The Madonna of the Chancellor Rolin* (Figure 4.24).

Art has been created as a focus of prayer and meditation, and even to provide a space for ceremony, worship and devotion such as the great

Gothic cathedrals of Europe, the Buddhist temple Angkor Wat in Cambodia (Figure 4.25), and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, which was built by the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian as a Christian cathedral between 532 and 537 CE and later altered, becoming a mosque in 1453.

The way art communicates religious and spiritual values may change over time because symbols can carry meaning that is often specific to the artist's culture. People who are not part of a culture may see no meaning at all in something that is very significant to a culture or may have a different understanding of a symbol than the intended cultural meaning.

A good example of a symbol with different cultural meanings is a swastika. Seeing a swastika in an artwork will have different meanings to people from different cultures. Many people will identify it with the evils of Nazi Germany and associate it with hatred and racial bias. The swastika was, however, used at least 5000 years before Adolf Hitler employed the clockwise version of the symbol on the Nazi flag to represent 'Aryan identity' and German nationalist pride. The motif (a hooked cross) was most likely first used in Neolithic Eurasia, perhaps to represent the movement of the sun through the sky. The swastika is a sacred symbol in Hinduism,



Figure 4.25 Angkor Wat, built in the early twelfth century, Cambodia



Figure 4.26 The Rock church of Lalibela, 12th century, Ethiopia

Buddhism and Jainism, and is often found on temples. The word *swastika* itself comes from the Sanskrit *svastika*, which means 'good fortune' or 'well-being'.

Many of the symbols used by Leonardo da Vinci in his *Virgin of the Rocks* (Figure 4.27) would hold little meaning to us today, but were quickly understood by Catholics in Italy at the time that the work was painted. This work contains several cultural symbolic references.

- The rocks and caves represented sanctuary – something often related to the Virgin Mary.
- The palm leaves, which can be seen behind the head of John the Baptist (with the cross), are a symbol of Mary and a symbol of the victory of Jesus over earthly temptations.
- Often the scallop shell was depicted along with Mary and is linked to the idea that Mary's fertility is as miraculous as the creation of pearls, which were believed to grow from a drop of purest dew – in this painting the shell is not present, but pearls surround the brooch that holds Mary's cloak together.
- Mary can be identified by her blue garments, the expensive pigment usually reserved for the depiction of the Virgin.
- The halos represent the holy light of God and therefore identify the people as holy.
- The angel is identified by their wings and therefore does not require a halo.

Art is a powerful tool and artists have often used it to challenge society's values and to highlight issues in order to inspire change. Nagpur-based artist Shweta Bhattad uses her art to draw attention to the issue of women's education and safety for young girls in India.



Figure 4.27 Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, 1483–1486

In her untitled performance piece (access the interactive textbook to view this installation), Bhattad comments on the deplorable conditions of the Indian farmers, and the constant near-death struggles they face on a day-to-day basis when crop cycles suffer and they go into debt. Unreliable rain, insufficient irrigation water, high rates of interest on loans, and rising inflation have all contributed to thousands of farmers ending their lives in desperation in the Indian state of Maharashtra alone. To draw attention to this, she dressed in white and was buried 2 feet underground for three hours (do not try this at home). While in the coffin, she continuously wrote the word 'Vishwaas' (faith), believing that if people came together and collectively decided to take action, change could be achieved, and the plight of farmers could be improved.



4.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, cultures and history

When studying and writing about Australian First Nations art, you should consider the appropriate language to use. It is also important not to generalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures of Australia and to be mindful of the diverse cultures, social structures, cultural traditions, languages and dialects of Australia's First Peoples.

Where to start

The VCE Art Creative Practice Study Design recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have 'diverse cultures, social structures, cultural traditions, languages and dialects.' This brief introduction is here to encourage you to investigate Australia's First Peoples' significant contribution to visual art.

Worldviews of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are highly integrated. Each aspect of culture, history and society connects with all other aspects. Each community also has its own unique system of knowing, being and doing, based

on tens of thousands of years of sharing culture and engaging with Country.

In order to understand any system, Indigenous or otherwise, time and effort is needed to appreciate it. Though time is limited in this course, it is wrong to generalise the First Nations' cultures of Australia, or even Victoria. Instead, the limited coverage in this resource should be taken as examples.

Both teachers and students should read up on and engage with their local Indigenous community, to hear the perspectives of local First Nations artists, and to appreciate the strength and resilience of Australia's First Nations peoples. To find out whose Country you are on (for example, Wurundjeri, Bunurong or Djabawurrung), you can use your preferred search engine to find land councils or local government authorities to find their acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians of the land. You can also search for a map of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations in Australia and try to locate where you live or go to school.

Terms

Language is important when discussing Indigenous issues, especially given the deliberately offensive use of language in Australia's history where it was used to oppress and control.

Here is a starting guide.

Term	Definition	Explanation
indigenous	(with a lowercase 'i') occurring naturally in a particular place	This is an adjective.
Indigenous	(with a capital 'I') relating to people who originate in a particular place	Respectful usage in reference to people requires the capital 'I'.
First Australians, First peoples or First Nations peoples	Indigenous people of Australia	These terms have become more common in recent years, with 'Indigenous' as the adjective. 'Peoples' should always be in the plural form to reflect the diverse cultures and identities.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	the Australian Indigenous population; this term includes Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islander people, and people who have both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.	While this is still used in official circles and is in the name or title of many organisations and documents, it is tending to be replaced by 'First Australians' and similar terms, especially in everyday use. This is partly because the abbreviation 'ATSI' is considered disrespectful by Indigenous people, who regard it as lazy not to use a full title. The abbreviation should not be used to refer to people. 'Peoples' should always be in the plural form to reflect the diverse cultures and identities.
Aboriginal	an Aboriginal person is someone who is of Aboriginal descent, identifies as being Aboriginal and is accepted as such by the Aboriginal community with whom they originally identified	One of the reasons that 'First Nations' and allied forms have become more common is that the term 'Aboriginal' was sometimes used disrespectfully, and still is in some circles.

It is also important to remember that English is not the traditional language of Australia. Where possible, the traditional Aboriginal language for important terms should be used, according to the person's country, though the English translation can also be given.

Ethics

There have been controversies within the art community involving dishonest use of artwork by First Nations artists. One example involves

the jailing of the chief executive of an Aboriginal corporation on Mornington Island, Queensland, who had kept the profits from sales of artwork instead of distributing them to the artist and art centre. The artworks included those by Amanda Gabori, whose artwork is on this book cover, and her mother, Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori.

It is always important to consult with the artist, family or representative of the artist when exhibiting artwork, even more so with First Nations artists' artwork. The artworks displayed in this book and on the cover have all gone through rigorous permissions checks, which means that the proper

channels have been used to obtain permission from the artist or owner of the copyright to the artwork, such as estates in the case of deceased artists.

4.4 Artists challenging culture

Brook Andrew

Brook Andrew is an Australian-born artist of Wiradjuri and Scottish ancestry who uses his art to challenge values and highlight issues in order to inspire change. As a child he wondered why popular Australian culture seemed uninterested in representing his Aboriginal heritage. Forgotten histories and culture is something that he chooses to explore through his art, using a multidisciplinary practice that includes photography, printmaking, painting and installation. He revisits the past and offers alternatives to dominant Western colonial readings of the world that he learnt at school.

The act of making art is a type of moveable social justice system; a system that condenses and clarifies questions about morality, nationhood, personal expression, beliefs, etc ... Brook Andrew

In *Sexy and Dangerous* (access the interactive textbook to view this artwork), Andrew appropriated an image of an Aboriginal warrior, a Djabugay man from North Queensland taken at the start of the twentieth century by Kerry & Co. These photographs on glass plate negatives were reproduced as an early version of postcards to document the 'exotic' inhabitants of Australia for

the tourist trade. Unnamed and only identified as a tribal chief in the original photograph, the man is removed from any sense of location or context because the studio scene has been cropped out in the background.

Andrew presents more than a memorial to the Indigenous people of our country in this artwork. It is a comment on the way they are seen and represented. It is a comment of our shared past and present.

Andrew explores the politics of power and the way Aboriginal culture was made invisible when he was growing up. He explores how this culture has been affected by constructed lies and fabricated history.

While the sepia original was intended to be held in the hand, Andrew's reworked image is designed to hang from the ceiling so the audience must confront the man rather than control him in the palm of their hand. The addition of colour brings the man to life and increased scale gives him his physical presence and adds to his power. The position of the work hung at eye level elevates him to our level, physically and symbolically. We are encouraged to engage with him rather than see him as an exotic curiosity.

Andrew also over-paints his body markings, beaded necklet and armbands so that they seem to cut through his torso and sever his head. While the original cultural markings would have served to identify his rank and intimidate his enemies, the aggressive segmenting of his body reminds the audience of a history of brutality inflicted upon First Nations Australians in this country. The physical separation also reinforces this man's displacement from Country, which, while removed in the original, is further emphasised and erased by Andrew who painted out the background entirely. The warrior occupies no clearly defined place and like the Wiradjuri people, he is removed from his connection to the land. The white markings extend into the background, almost as if he is being erased.

Activity 4.5

Andrew has included the addition of the two texts to the chest of the man: 'Sexy and dangerous' has been written in English, while the Mandarin text translates as 'female cunning'. While at first glance they might suggest tribal tattoos, they are flat and have clearly been added to the surface of the image, rather than his chest where they would follow the contours of his body. What meaning does the addition of the text to the artwork suggest for you?

Activity 4.6

Apply the Cultural Lens to interpret *Down by the Lake with Liz and Phil* by artist Greg Taylor (access the interactive textbook to view this artwork). To provide further context consider the location on the artwork and what was happening in Australia at the time. What statement do you think the artist is making?

Ah Xian

Artists often look inward and deal with personal struggles they are having in relation to culture. One such artist is Chinese-born Australian, Ah Xian. His *China China* series, 1999 (Figure 4.28), is the result of a decade-long philosophical journey in which the artist tried to reconcile his own cultural background with the artistic language and values of the West where he was now living.

The work depicts Chinese and non-Chinese men and women, many of whom included Ah Xian's friends and family, as models. The moulds were taken to Jingdezhen, where he had these works cast.

Ah Xian uses traditional porcelain designs, originally used on vessels made for the Chinese court during the Ming (1364–1643) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, to decorate the busts. The intricate designs fill the surface and contrast the expressionless faces. Ah Xian uses Western art practice and traditional Chinese materials to communicate his personal experience of cultural crossing.



Figure 4.28a (Left) Title: China, China-Bust 54
Date of Work: 1999. Made in Jingdezhen. Jiangxi Province. China.
Medium: porcelain in overglaze polychrome enamel with palace-pink backgrounded four deities and floral scroll design.
Dimensions: 40 × 38 × 20 cm
Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Canada.



Figure 4.28b (Right) Title: China, China-Bust 73
Date of Work: 2002. Made in Jingdezhen. Jiangxi Province. China.
Medium: porcelain in matt-silver finish carved relief with flower and butterfly design.
Dimensions: 40h × 39.5 w × 22d cm
Collection and courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4.29 Paige Bradley, *Expansion*, photographed in New Mexico

Paige Bradley

When applying the Cultural Lens to the interpretation of art, you can make reference to cultural links that the artist may not have had knowledge of. The interpretation is your own and you can draw on anything that informs your understanding of the message and meaning conveyed by the artwork.

When looking at Paige Bradley's *Expansion* (Figure 4.29), the cracks in the sculpture suggest damage. When the artwork is seen with the light radiating from these cracks (see the version in the digital textbook) it may bring to mind the Japanese method for repairing broken ceramics called **kintsugi**.



Figure 4.30 *Kintsugi* bowl

Activity 4.7

- 1 Apply the Cultural Lens to interpret Paige Bradley's *Expansion*.
- 2 What meaning is suggested to you when you consider the work with reference to the *kintsugi* technique?

kintsugi a Japanese method for repairing broken ceramics with a special lacquer mixed with gold; the philosophy behind the technique is to recognise the history of the object and to visibly incorporate the repair into the new piece instead of disguising it

4.5 Examples of students applying the Cultural Lens

Year 11 students were presented with an artwork by Lin Onus (Figure 4.31). They were asked to apply the Cultural Lens to the interpretation of the painting.



Figure 4.31 Lin Onus, *Michael and I are Just Slipping Down to the Pub for a Minute*, 1992, gouache on illustration board, 50 × 38 cm, © Lin Onus Estate/Copyright Agency, 2022



Figure 4.32 Katsushika Hokusai, *The Great Wave at Kanagawa* (from a Series of Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji), 1830–1831, woodblock print on paper

Emma Murphy wrote:

Onus appropriates the famous Katsushika Hokusai's work 'The Great Wave at Kanagawa' 1830–1831, which expressed the cultural uncertainty in Japan at the time due to beginnings of international trade with Western powers. Japan was being exposed to European goods causing an overwhelming convergence of Japanese and European culture, this affected Hokusai in the way he incorporates European pigments and Western styles into the work, he symbolised this movement as the great wave. The use of this imagery may convey Onus' own experience with clashes of culture, as his mother was Scottish and his father Aboriginal. He uses Australian native animal, the dingo, painted with an Indigenous line pattern in the traditional rarrk technique to symbolise Aboriginal culture, while the sting ray represents introduced cultures to Australian lands. Onus uses the imagery of the Australian dingo surfing the great wave on the back of the stingray to connect the work specifically to Australian history and express his political values on how different cultures can interact and reconcile.

Mietta Kerger wrote:

Lin Onus was an activist for Indigenous Australians and his artwork was just one avenue for political and cultural expression. The artist had a Scottish mother and fellow activist Aboriginal father. Having experienced racism first-hand in Australia (being expelled at 14yo on racist grounds), it is no surprise that much of Onus' art centered around strong political and social conscience and the reconciliation of the two cultures sculpting his identity. 'Michael and I are just slipping down to the pub for a minute' is the first piece in Onus' series 'The adventures of X & Ray' with repeating subject figures, dingo and stingray, that present a blend between Aboriginal and Western art.

Painted in 1992 in an Australia that was becoming more multicultural but still lacked an openness to Aboriginal culture and art. Here Onus urges the audience to understand both the need for harmony between Aboriginal and



Western culture, and for white Australians to recognise stolen history and appropriation. To the first purpose, we can identify Aboriginal art elements such as decorative traditional 'rarrk' dot painting and heavy incorporation of earth colours. Whilst Western realism art techniques have been used to compose the subject figures, as well as the Western style medium Gouache. The beautiful and seamless integration of two commonly segregated art styles mimics the desirable Australian social climate in which Aboriginal & Western cultures can overlap and peacefully co-exist.

Onus' messages are wrapped in a humorous narrative about two Australian wildlife animals surfing to create that bridge and bring an optimism, assumedly about the future of political and cultural change in Australia. The apparent beauty of multiculturalism in the art challenges Australian audiences to picture, want, and work towards such beauty in their real society. As to the second purpose, Onus expects the audience to experience this work with prior art world knowledge, considering the inclusion of Hokusai's highly renowned 'The Great Wave off Kanagawa'. This distinct appropriation echoes the paradoxes in Australia's history of stolen Aboriginal land, identity, people, rights, etc. In a way, taking two wildlife symbols of one culture and placing them surfing on top another culture's now meaningless symbol of power, threat and strength, mirrors Australia's history of Europeans stripping Aboriginal life (people, culture, land) of any meaning. Whilst Onus does show urgent willingness to embrace art from other cultures, this second purpose emphasises the complexity of reconciliation.

Changes and events in Australian history, such as Kevin Rudd's 'Apology' speech in 2008, have begun building a less resistant and more reflective, celebratory audience attitude towards this artwork. Although more contemporary values around multiculturalism and diversity in Australia have progressed since 1992, this artwork serves as a reminder to continually and actively work towards reconciliation – though at surface level the art or situation may appear harmonious, ideal and

politically reformed, appropriation is still in its foundations.

As a Chinese-Australian adoptee, I deeply resonate with Lin Onus' battle and desire to merge two identities and thus cultures. The artistic and aesthetic unification of two Australian and one Asian culture/art style(s) empowers me to find beauty and happiness in being multicultural, and feeling stuck or lost between two cultural identities.

Conclusion

When applying the Cultural Lens you must consider the influences of the time, place and the society in which an artwork has been produced.

This includes:

- the cultural, historical, political, religious and social setting in which it was made
- the purpose for which it was made
- where and how the artwork is presented.

When applying this lens to your interpretation, you should consider the following questions:

- What evidence can I find in the artwork that reflects aspects of the artist's culture?
- How is the artwork linked to the cultural, historical, political, religious and social settings in which the artist worked?
- Has the artist used a specific practice in creating the artwork that may reflect the time and place in which they worked?
- Has the artist collaborated with others in the creation or presentation of the artwork? Does this affect your interpretation of the artwork?
- Has the artist included any cultural objects or symbols in the artwork that may suggest a message?
- Has the artist depicted an image that relates to their culture or challenges an aspect of culture?
- Are the ideas expressed in the artwork a reflection of a particular culture?
- How does your cultural background and social identity affect your interpretation of the artwork?
- Does the artwork encourage collaboration or participation of the audience and if so, does this affect your interpretation of the artwork?

Chapter 5

Areas of Study 2 and 3



In Unit 2, you will explore the way historical and contemporary cultural contexts, ideas and approaches have influenced artworks and the practices of the artists who created these works. You will also explore collaborative practices in art making and develop visual responses from your investigation. You will use aspects of the Creative Practice to explore diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting collaborative artworks in response to cultural contexts and ideas.

Like in Unit 1, the Unit 2 Areas of Study 2 and 3 are not sequential but run concurrently. AOS 2 focuses on making, while in AOS 3 you will document, record and respond to this work. As in Unit 1, these two areas of study will be combined in this chapter.

Area of Study 2

Exploring collaborative Creative Practice

In this area of study, you will continue to develop your application of the Creative Practice as you explore collaborative practices to make and present artworks. Collaborative practice can include a range of approaches. It can involve working with other students to create a collective artwork, working with practising artists and specialists or creating artworks that involve or collaborate with the audience through interaction and participation. This chapter will provide examples of different approaches to collaboration in art-making practice.

You will continue to experiment with visual language to find the most effective way to express ideas of personal interest related to culture. You can use the artists and artworks studied in Area of Study 1, or research other artists and their practices as inspiration, and as a starting point for your own experimentation with techniques, materials, processes and art forms, as you resolve at least one finished artwork. You must consider the context and presentation of your artwork, and how it should be viewed by the audience.

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit, you should be able to use the Creative Practice to explore social and cultural ideas or issues, to make and present at least one finished artwork using collaborative approaches.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the use of the Creative Practice to explore social and cultural ideas or issues
- the use of the Creative Practice to make and present at least one finished artwork
- collaborative approaches in artistic practices from different periods of time and cultures
- the use of the visual language to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest in visual responses

- the use of the Cultural Lens and other appropriate interpretive lenses to inform the Creative Practice
- the use of traditional and contemporary materials, techniques and processes in art forms to communicate ideas and meaning.

KEY SKILLS

- explore social and cultural ideas or issues using the Creative Practice
- make and present at least one finished artwork using the Creative Practice
- reflect on the collaborative practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures throughout the Creative Practice
- explore collaborative approaches to make and present artworks
- develop visual language to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest in visual responses
- use the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, throughout the Creative Practice
- explore and experiment with traditional and contemporary materials, techniques and processes in art forms to communicate ideas and meaning.

In this area, you will build on your knowledge and skills from Unit 1 and Unit 2 AOS 1, to document your application of the Creative Practice. You must develop and evaluate effective visual language in communicating your intention. It would be useful to apply the Cultural Lens, and other Interpretive Lenses where appropriate, to annotate your application of aspects of the Creative Practice. This will consolidate your understanding of the lenses and help you to apply them more effectively to the interpretation of artworks. It will also provide you with greater scope in the exploration of your own ideas, and provide a structure that you can use to annotate your intentions, analyse your visual language and better communicate the ideas you wish to convey. You must explore and reflect upon the relationship between the artist, artwork

and audience by researching the practices of artists and how they present their artworks. The study and personal exploration of collaborative practices is central to this unit of work. In Area of Study 3 you must document this, responding to the practice of others through your own art making, critically annotate your exploration of ideas and collaborative practices and respond to these findings by developing and refining your application of the Creative Practice.

As part of Unit 2 you will be required to conduct a critique on aspects of your Creative Practice, before refining and resolving your artwork. You must document and respond to the feedback you will receive during the critique in order to resolve your artwork. The critique can be conducted in a range of different ways, some of which will be introduced in this chapter. In this area of study, you must reflect upon and evaluate the use of collaboration in your art making and discuss how cultural ideas and issues are represented in your artworks.

OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit you should be able to critically reflect on and evaluate your collaborative approach to and application of the Creative Practice, to create visual responses that express the ideas and interest you have explored, as related to cultural context.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the use of the Creative Practice to develop and make visual responses that communicate personal ideas related to social and cultural contexts
- collaboration using the Creative Practice
- the use of the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, to support reflective annotations

- methods used to document and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice
- ways to effectively communicate cultural and social meaning in artworks
- methods used to critique the use of the Creative Practice
- ways to reflect on and use feedback from a critique to refine and resolve artworks
- art terminology used in a critique and in documentation of the use of the Creative Practice.

KEY SKILLS

- critically reflect on the use of the Creative Practice to develop and make visual responses that communicate personal ideas related to social and cultural contexts
- identify, document and reflect on collaboration using the Creative Practice
- apply the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, to support reflective annotations
- evaluate the use of the Creative Practice using visual and written documentation
- explore ideas related to social and cultural contexts through the use of the Creative Practice
- document and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice to develop and make visual responses
- document and evaluate how visual responses effectively communicate social and cultural meaning
- present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice
- reflect on and use feedback from a critique to resolve artworks
- use art terminology to document, annotate and present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice.

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5.1 The collaborative Creative Practice

Collaboration with other artists

I like to take a subject and deprive it of its function completely. **Claes Oldenburg**



Video 5.1

Collaboration is not just handing the task over to someone else to do. It includes discussion, sharing of ideas and responding to the person you are collaborating with. Taking a photograph and sending it off to be printed is not collaboration. When creating his 'soft sculptures', such as *Soft Toilet* (Figure 5.1), Claes Oldenburg collaborated with his first wife, artist Patty Mucha. According to artforum.com, first he makes a model of the object he wishes to reproduce, then he makes a pattern with stencils, which is transferred to the material to be used. The stencilled shapes were cut out and sewn together (usually by Oldenburg's wife) and stuffed by Oldenburg. While providing the technical skill required, Mucha would also have had an understanding of materials (fabric and stuffing) and what would be best suited to achieve Oldenburg's intention.

Oldenburg's modelling is the opposite of conventional modelling through building up clay or wax on an armature or cutting away from a solid block. Because the 'modelling' is done from the inside, the outside surface is uniform and continuous, and lacks marks of touch. Oldenburg describes choosing the 'kind of stuffing and how much and where it will gather – fat or lean' as the crucial moment in the work. This choice would have required collaboration, as the choice was not just dependent on what would fill the form best but what would behave in the way Oldenburg wanted it to. The fabric they selected also had an impact on the final artwork and would have been arrived at through discussion and trialling. Stiffened canvas sculptures tended to stay put as placed to a greater degree than vinyl sculptures, which tended to shift. This affected the degree of control he had, and he could use the fabric that provided the outcome he desired.



Figure 5.1 Claes Oldenburg, *Soft Toilet*, 1966, wood, vinyl, kapok, wire, plexiglass on metal stand, 56.7 × 132.1 × 70.2 cm © Claes Oldenburg. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

Activity 5.1

Oldenburg also collaborated with his second wife and fellow artist, Coosje van Bruggen. Research the way they collaborated on a range of projects.

Gillian Wearing is known for her exploration of human relationships and social behaviour. In her photographic series *Album*, she looks at the ambiguity of being connected to someone at the most basic, genetic level and yet at the same time being a very different individual.

Album consists of seven autobiographical photographs in which the artist reconstructed old family snapshots, altering herself into various family members (see Chapter 2). In this way she blurred the line between reality and fiction.

Wearing recreated her grandfather, mother, father, uncle and brother as young adults or adolescents. To depict her family convincingly, she collaborated with experts from Madame Tussauds to make the masks. She worked with a sculptor, painter, wigmaker, props people, and lighting technicians. Wearing began the process of creating a mask by making a detailed clay model that transformed a two-dimensional photograph into a three-dimensional portrait, which was then cast to produce a silicone mask.

In *Self Portrait as My Sister Jane Wearing* (Figure 5.2), Wearing wears a mask of her sister, with a wig and even a dress her sister wore in the 1980s. By putting a version of someone else's face on hers, she is 'taking on their physical identity while still being herself beneath the disguise'. The

only bits of Wearing that can be seen are her eyes and teeth.

A cast was made of her face with a similar expression to the one she wanted the 'sitter' to have – in this case, her sister's enigmatic smile. The expression had to be one she could hold for six hours while the mask was made. The sculpture of the family member was then modelled over this cast and then used to make the silicone mask.

Gjon Mili, a young Albanian-American photographer, was sent on assignment by *Life* magazine in New York City to photograph Pablo Picasso in 1949. Mili was given only 15 minutes, but after introducing an idea for a collaborative artwork, Picasso agreed to five more sessions. Access the interactive textbook to read the *Life* article and view the results of this collaboration.

Activity 5.2

In these two examples, collaboration involves using someone who has technical skill and a knowledge of materials that the artist does not possess to complete an aspect of the work. Research Australian artist Patricia Piccinini and discover the collaborative approach that she takes to produce one of her works.



Figure 5.2 Gillian Wearing
Self Portrait as My Sister Jane Wearing, 2003
framed digital c-type print 141 × 116 cm
© Gillian Wearing, courtesy Maureen Paley, London,
Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York and Regen Projects,
Los Angeles

According to the Google Arts & Culture article 'When Picasso put down his brushes and painted with light instead', Mili had shown Picasso his experimentations with light and movement (like his photographs of ice-skater Carol Lynne with lights attached to her skates). Picasso and Mili then tried out something similar, with Picasso drawing in the air with a small electric bulb in a dark room. Picasso created ephemeral artworks in the air, which Mili preserved on film using a long exposure. Interestingly, the word photography comes from the Greek words *phōs*, meaning 'light', and *graphé*, meaning 'drawing', together meaning 'drawing with light'. This is an example of two artists that work in different art forms coming together to produce a collaborative series of artworks.



Figure 5.3 A light painting performance near the ruins of Tralleis, an ancient city in Turkey.

Several other photographers have created light paintings, including LAPP-PRO and Susan Sims-Hilbrand. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 depict examples of light paintings.

Activity 5.3

Research Gjon Mili's photographs of the skater, Carol Lynne, that he showed to Picasso before their collaboration.



Figure 5.4 Steel wool photography at the bank of river Ravi during 29th Photowalk organised by NIKON PAKISTAN in Lahore.

Collaboration with the audience

Since the early 1970s, Marina Abramović has explored the complex relationship between artist and audience, through **performance art** that challenges both herself and, in many instances, the audience, who become participants, emotionally, intellectually and physically. Marina says:

'I understood that ... I could make art with everything ... and the most important [thing] is the concept,' she relates. 'And this was the beginning of my performance art. And the first time I put my body in front of [an] audience, I understood: this is my media.'

In 2010 at MoMA, Abramović engaged in an extended performance called *The Artist Is Present* (Figure 5.5). Seated silently at a wooden table across from an empty chair that had been set up in the gallery space, she waited as people took turns sitting in the chair and locking eyes with her.



Figure 5.5 Marina Abramović, *The Artist Is Present*, 2010, performance,
© Marina Abramović. VG Bild Kunst/Copyright Agency, 2022

The work sought to explore how our perception of time could be altered by stretching the length of a performance beyond expectations and through this foster a deeper engagement in the experience. This engagement was primarily between the artist and audience participator but also extended to the broader audience who observed this interaction. Over the course of nearly three months, for eight hours a day, approximately 1000 strangers sat in the chair, many of whom were moved to tears. 'Nobody could imagine ... this enormous need of humans to actually have contact,' Abramović stated.

In this example, the artist does not create a collaborative artwork for the audience to engage with, but rather collaborates with the audience to create the work in the first place.

Activity 5.4

Watch *MAI: Terra Comunal – Method* by searching 'Marina Abramovic + MAI: Terra Comunal – Method' on your preferred search engine for another example of an artwork (performance) in which Abramović collaborates with the audience.

Class collaboration

A class of Year 11 students were asked to create a collaborative work in response to the concept of *Covid Culture* that commented on COVID-19 and their experience of the impact this had on themselves and society. The students approached this in different ways. Some chose to rely on collaboration with the audience, while others collaborated with each other, working towards a common goal and a single artwork.

The students who were inspired by Abramović to collaborate with the audience chose to approach

performance art art that consists of a person or group performing something and that does not exist apart from when it is being performed, unless recorded in film, video or through photography

this differently to the way that she had done. They created artworks that were presented to the audience in a finished state which then required the audience to physically engage with the works to fully resolve them.

Margo Joseph's artwork focused on identity and portraying the critical and/or prominent people of the COVID-19 pandemic. She presented four medical facial masks, each representing a specific identity that was affected by the pandemic. Her intention was to collaborate with the audience, who would be able to put the masks on over their existing mask and observe themselves in a mirror that was part of the installation. This would allow the audience to put themselves in the shoes of the identity that was portrayed by each mask and reflect on their experiences. This was intended to encourage empathy with others and look outward, in contrast to the self-isolation and concern with self that resulted from the pandemic.

Two students, Coco Bacon and Emma Tripp, collaborated together to produce an artwork that would require collaboration. To do this, they brainstormed ideas and decided to create a board game. Both students researched and discussed ideas using mind maps and visual brainstorming. Emma created the characters for each player based on research and sketches done by both herself and Coco, while Coco focused on creating the game board and in-game cards. While the artwork conveyed meaning through the subject matter and visual language used by the students, their preference was for it to be interactive. The added collaboration from the audience would increase their engagement and enhance the meaning of the work.

Coco and Emma wrote the following interpretation of their work:

In terms of the cultural analytical lens, our artwork reflects the impact of COVID-19 and the continuous experiences all Australians are enduring. The government's response to the pandemic has created panic amongst communities causing conflict and divide between how each state and the whole of the country should handle the outbreaks, as well as who should be put in charge and make the important decisions. This led to political polarisation, as states and political figures

worked independently or in competition with one another. Each wanting to 'win' at this unpredictable game. The politicians' and governments' behaviour and attitude towards coronavirus formed a new culture which we wanted to explore through a board game. We chose to base our board game off the classic family game, 'Monopoly'. During lockdown, families played board games to replace their normal activities that were cancelled. By using a board game, we are illustrating this new norm or pastime for families.

The artwork explores the roles of political figures and their response to the recurring outbreak in Australia. The important political figures are represented as the players in the games to symbolise the competitiveness between the political parties and governments. Each player is given a different amount of money to start off with. The person who plays with the Scott Morrison token/character gets to play with the six-sided dice and begins with more money, whilst the person who plays as the general public (people with masks) only has a two-faced coin and starts with less money. This is to demonstrate the hierarchy of power in COVID times as the general public are powerless and compliant to the rules and regulations, not having a say in the handling of the pandemic. The board game allows the players to buy back 'freedoms' or things that they weren't allowed to do during the pandemic. This illustrates the new societal norms. Activities we took for granted like going over to a friend's house, going to the movies or traveling overseas we have now learnt to live with in moderation.

The COVID card (based off the chance cards in Monopoly) represents fate and the large role it plays in the uncertainty of the pandemic. These cards are on topics which further link to events or new behaviours which rooted from the pandemic. The cards are both positive and negative as they can benefit a player (rewarding them with money or moving around the board), or they can disrupt (losing money, going backwards, going to quarantine). This signifies the unpredictability of COVID and that you never know what the future will look like.



In the same task, Bronte Billings and Emma Murphy focused on the popular method of communication for many people while physically isolated: Zoom. They decided to create a collaborative piece requiring them to simultaneously work on a single painting. After discussion, brainstorming and planning together they settled on an image to paint. Emma and Bronte simultaneously sketched out the composition and then began the collaborative painting on opposite areas of the canvas. One painted the area of the figure that would typically be visible on Zoom, such as the head, neck and upper body, while the other simultaneously worked on the background and area of the figure not normally seen on the screen during a Zoom meeting (Figure 5.10). Since the two students worked independently and had their own style, the process enhanced the feeling of separation and showed how the image we portray online is not a true reflection of our state of mind.

Cultural collaboration

Zhou Xiaoping, a Chinese-Australian artist, has created a unique artistic style by incorporating his training in traditional Chinese classic painting with elements of Western and Aboriginal Australian art. He has developed a new visual language through his cross-cultural paintings. He has observed and experienced Aboriginal life for more than 30 years after becoming captivated by Aboriginal rock paintings during his first trip to Australia in 1988. Zhou has collaborated with a number of Aboriginal Australian artists in this time, including Jimmy Pike and Johnny Bulunbulun.

When Zhou met Bulunbulun, the Ganalbingu artist from Central Arnhem Land was working with traditional bark painting using four natural pigments consisting of yellow and red ochre, white gesso and black charcoal. As he observed Bulunbulun grinding up the colours on the slab, it reminded Zhou of the ink sticks and ink stones used in Chinese calligraphy and painting. Zhou was struck by other parallels with traditional Chinese art, such as the sheet of bark unique to the Arnhem bush, which reminded him of the

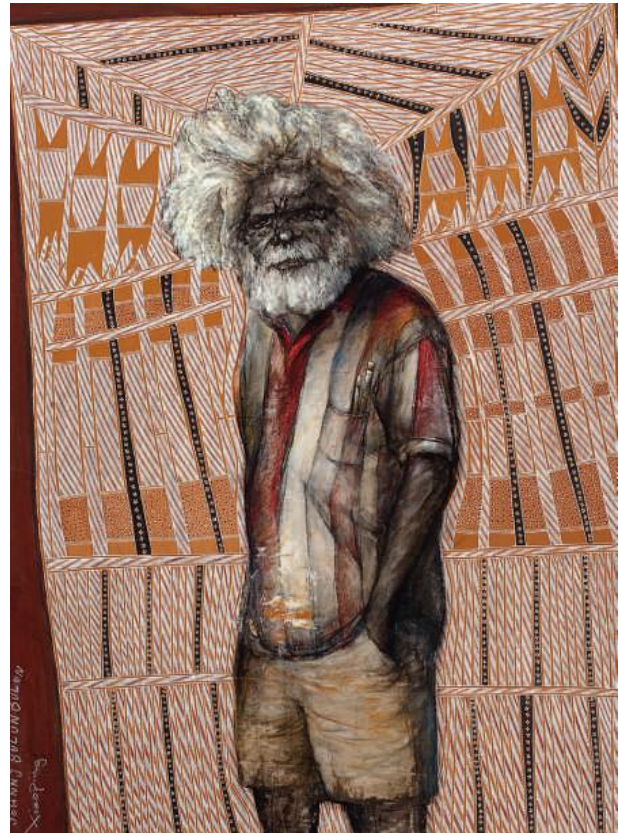


Figure 5.6 Johnny Bulunbulun and Zhou Xiaoping, *Portrait of Johnny Bulunbulun*, 2007, synthetic polymer and ochre on canvas (200 × 147 cm).

Copyright the artist. Courtesy Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, Melbourne.

© Johnny Bulun Bulun and Zhou Xiaoping/Copyright Agency, 2022

Chinese Xuan paper important in his culture. The friendship and collaboration between the two resulted in a number of artworks, including a portrait of Bulunbulun (Figure 5.6) that is a mixture of conventional Western portraiture (drawn and painted by Zhou) and Aboriginal self-portraiture (clan designs executed in Bulunbulun's trademark *rarrk* cross-hatching in the Yirritja style).

Activity 5.5

Research the painting *From Art to Life* (2009) (Figure 5.7) and explore how the artists have collaborated. Apply the Cultural and other appropriate Lenses to the interpretation of the work.



Figure 5.7 Johnny Bulunbulun and Zhou Xiaoping, *From Art to Life*, 2009, ink, synthetic polymer and ochre on rice paper on canvas (170 × 285 cm). Copyright the artist. Courtesy Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, Melbourne. © Johnny Bulun Bulun and Zhou Xiaoping/Copyright Agency, 2022

Collaboration with outside experts

Shaun Gladwell's synchronised videos for *Broken Dance – Beatboxed* (Figure 5.8), discussed in detail in Chapter 4 on Unit 2 AOS 1, is a collaborative work that reflects culture and a particular social identity. It showcases contemporary urban dance and music forms while reflecting on the interests and activities of young people in the twenty-first century.

The way Gladwell chose to approach his artwork provides some insight into possible ways that you might collaborate with other people to

create an artwork. You might get a group of people together, either within your class or including outside collaborators, who are interested in working together on a task inspired by Gladwell's *Broken Dance – Beatboxed*. This group could include someone interested in filmmaking, video and sound editing, another who is a musician, and a dancer. Each of these people can work together to apply their specific skills to create a video work. This might be presented on a single film or more than one, showing the response of one to the other as in Gladwell's work. This could extend to include someone interested in costume



Figure 5.8 Stills from synchronised videos of Shaun Gladwell's *Broken Dance – Beatboxed*

design. If the costume designer creates a design for the dancer, they would need to collaborate with the person who writes the narrative for the dance to get a sense of character and the vision of the writer. The costume designer would have to collaborate with the dancer to determine the requirements for fabric and design that would ensure the costume was appropriate to the movement of the dancer. The dancer would also collaborate with the musician, either in a discussion of intention or, as with Gladwell's piece, in response to the music. The dancer and filmmaker would collaborate to select a space suitable for filming and dancing.

Some collaboration would take place before the process begins to determine steps to be taken, and then again during the creation of the work between various people. The final artwork would be a result of this backwards and forwards sharing of ideas, responding to each other and what each person creates. The musician may compose and play a piece of music in response to the initial narrative or idea, but they may change this after seeing the costume. They may also change aspects of the music to reflect the movement of the dancer if inspired by a particular dance move that conjures certain rhythms or suggests a specific tempo or even a sound.

Activity 5.6

After completing your collaborative process, reflect on how you went about doing it and the resulting artwork. Did you enjoy the process? What are the pros and cons of collaboration with one or more person to produce an artwork? You could apply a PMI to the task to determine what was positive, what was negative (minus) and what was interesting and could be revisited in a slightly different way moving forward.

5.2 Critique

An important part of Unit 2 Making and Responding is the inclusion of a critique. The purpose of a critique has been discussed in detail in Chapter 1, and is a powerful tool to develop higher-order thinking skills, interact with other students about your work and theirs, and improve each other with authentic feedback.

The critique should follow a number of steps and should include the following.

- *Reflecting* – You should think about your intention, visual language and how this is conveyed in your exploration and experimentation, as well as in the final presentation of the idea as a work of art. Reflect on what is successful, what is not, and why.
- *Verbalising* – You must put your reflections into words to describe your application of the Creative Practice or aspects of it. Explain what you are trying to achieve and evaluate how successful you have been at different stages of the process.
- *Looking forward* – Through discussion during the critique, or reflecting on the feedback you receive, use the suggestions to guide you moving forward. This might help you to develop or refine your ideas, application of materials, skill and the imagery you use. If the critique is done after presenting a finished artwork, the information you receive can assist you to move forward with the next part of your body of work.
- *Responding* – You must respond to your personal reflection and the feedback you received from those involved in the critique. Your response can take place during the critique to request clarification or to clarify something you verbalised. Further response will also be required after the critique, where you must take on board the feedback you received, or respond to things you identified in your reflection. Responding to these will allow you to push your ideas, experimentation and visual language further to achieve the best outcome. If you have resolved the work and are not able to make

changes to it at this point, you can apply what you learnt through the critique to your next or future task, or to continue with your body of work. An important aspect of the critique is to help you envision new possibilities in your application of the Creative Practice.

Critiques do not have a rigid format or single purpose. They can be structured in many ways and can occur at different points in the Creative Practice. The critiques can be used to achieve different outcomes. You should start looking at your work critically, make effective decisions and gather information and suggestions from others to help you achieve your intention.

In a critique, you and your teacher (supported by feedback from other students) can look back at what you have done on the current piece-in-progress, or a work you have recently completed. The purpose is to understand and evaluate aspects of your application of the Creative Practice or a finished artwork. Taking what you learn through this process, you can look forward and begin to envision possibilities for how to proceed or how

you can approach the next task differently. It helps you to build on the learning that has taken place to this point.

Collaboration on critiques

A critique can be very social. It is an opportunity for you to share your work with others and get constructive feedback from them. The fear of showing people your work is usually due to fear of judgement. The emphasis here is on constructive feedback, not judgement. You must be constructive when contributing to the discussion of a classmate's work. Do not just find fault but suggest solutions and identify things that are successful and that can be built on further. If you are presenting your work, it is important to find value in the feedback and see this as an opportunity to learn from your teacher and classmates. Do not take the criticism personally, but rather as a learning opportunity. Often you will have already identified a number of areas you want to work on and can get suggestions of ways in which you can do this, but it is also valuable to have a different perspective. We all see things slightly differently and therefore input from a variety of sources gives us more options. Critiques can encourage you to push beyond just looking at the work 'as is' and help you to develop the habit of envisioning new possibilities of what it could become.

The benefit of a critique is that it involves an explicit shift from individual work to group work. The class, or groups within the class, come together as a community to discuss each other's work. Rather than working in isolation and trying to find solutions on your own, you can share knowledge and help each other. Presenting your work to others gives you a better understanding of how an audience responds to or interacts with your work. It reveals how effective your visual language is in communicating your intention. You will also gain insight into your own art-making by verbalising thoughts about your work and hearing how others talk about their work.

Activity 5.7

Provide feedback in a critique using the PMI technique.

- (P)** Provide a positive comment about something that is successful, effective or skilfully executed.
- (M)** Identify something that is not working or is poorly executed. Touch on something the person could do to improve the artwork.
- (I)** Point out something interesting. This should be something that could be taken further or provides the potential for a different approach. This could be an accidental occurrence or an intended one.

Identifying decisions

In a critique, your artworks and application of the Creative Practice are not seen as static objects to be evaluated, but rather as a record of your making and responding. A key aim of the critique is to identify the decisions you made during your process and to analyse them. This allows both you and your teacher to understand how you worked

and to identify the impact of the decisions you made regarding techniques, materials, processes, art forms, symbolism, imagery and presentation. The process of the critique allows you to consider how the work could have been made differently, or how it would have turned out if you had made different decisions. This will provide you with more options moving forward.

Chapter tip 5.1

Many students are concerned about giving constructive feedback to their classmates in the event that they hurt their feelings. Often they are happy to provide positive feedback but not negative feedback. Applying de Bono's Thinking Hats can help with this. If you put on the 'black hat' when commenting on the work, at some point in the critique you will be more comfortable identifying weaknesses or questioning decisions. The student whose work is being discussed also knows that everyone is required to identify a problem and offer a solution, and is therefore less likely to take it personally. By using de Bono's Thinking Hats, you can structure the feedback and ensure that you consider various types of feedback. The hats help to provide an instinctive and emotional reaction to the work, identifying successful or positive aspects in the process or artwork that can be built on, point out improvements that can be made or suggest an alternative direction for the artist.

Chapter tip 5.2

You may find that artworks can be difficult to analyse and unpack. While you can often tell whether or not you like an artwork, it is important to learn to understand and notice how different aspects of a work contribute to its general effect. Critiques allow you to learn how to notice details and patterns in artworks, how to understand what the works communicate and why. You can learn how to verbalise what you see and how to evaluate the effectiveness of works. A key aim of critiques is to help you explain what you see, think and feel about the work and the application of the Creative Practice. You can use the critique to help see not only different characteristics of your work and identify areas that you need to develop and refine, but also strengths on which you can build. It may be useful to use the Creative Practice of a past student as an example prior to conducting your first critique.

Responding to feedback

During the collaborative task *Covid Culture*, mentioned earlier in this chapter, the students were required to conduct a critique when they had begun working on their final artwork. On page 179 there are two images (Figures 5.9 and 5.10) showing the painting by Bronte Billings and Emma Murphy in progress.

Emma and Bronte explained how they responded to the feedback they received during their critique:

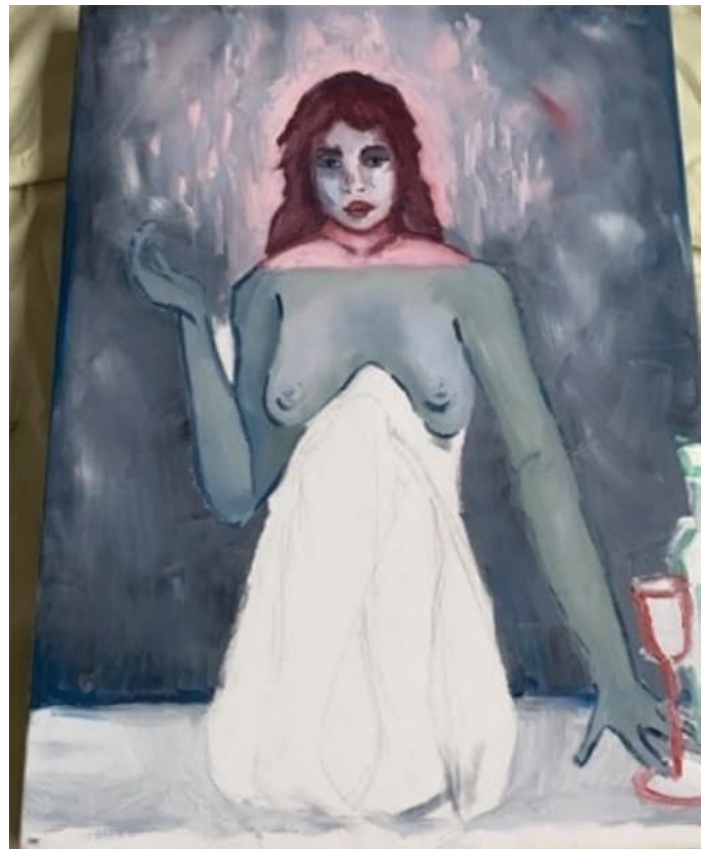
The feedback we received during class time was mostly directed to further defining the contrast between the two perceptions of the woman. What they presented on screen during a Zoom meeting and their actual state of mind. The colour contrast between the two views was quite minimal, and the woman's background of the Zoom rectangle was the same grey hues of the larger background. Mia's advice allowed for us to develop a more definitive and clear-cut contrast in our composition, allowing the symbolism to clearly prevail, as the defined Zoom background of pink juxtaposes the gloominess of the grey background ...

The image on the left [Figure 5.9] shows our painting at the time of the critique, and shows the need for contrast in defining the two separate areas. The image on the right [Figure 5.10] shows the changes made after receiving feedback.

While they have responded to the comments made during the critique, the students continued to make and respond as they refined their work, which is recorded in their critical annotation.

While the painting now contrasts the two views, it does not show a difference between the flat 2D screen view and the 3D reality of the person off screen. We need to develop a greater definition between the two areas.

Critiques will take place at a point in the process determined by the teacher and can take many forms. Your teacher can choose to structure them to suit the needs of individual students and to address goals for your class as a whole. If you are uncomfortable with how the critique is to be presented, it would be worthwhile discussing this with your teacher to determine if there was an option that you would be more comfortable with.



Figures 5.9 and 5.10 Bronte Billings and Emma Murphy,
Framed, 2021, oil on canvas

Chapter tip 5.3

The critique can be done in person as a small or large group. Individual students can take turns to present their work to the whole class or the class might be broken up into small groups. In this format you present, for a predetermined length of time, the required work to the group based on your personal *reflection*, *verbalising* what you are trying to achieve, what you have done and why. Each member of the group, including the teacher, will then offer feedback to you based on notes they have made during the presentation.

There may be some overlap, but while critiquing another student's work, you are encouraged to add a different perspective, *looking forward*, even if you comment on the same point made by another student. The presenting student should take notes on the feedback so that they can *respond* to it *moving forward*. Receiving verbal feedback provides the presenter with an opportunity to seek clarification on comments or suggestions the teacher or their classmates make.

If you struggle with face-to-face critique, another option is to set your work up and present a written reflection for others to view. The respondents can then provide feedback on sticky notes.

Your teacher might give you the opportunity to present your work in a video format or a recording of a PowerPoint presentation. Your classmates can view this individually at home or in class as a group and provide verbal or written feedback.

You could also post your work and reflections to a forum or discussion board, such as the school intranet or Google Classroom. Other students can then comment on your work and provide feedback on the same forum. This would also allow you to seek clarification via the forum.

Self/peer assessment is also a useful form of feedback. Everyone, including the presenting student, can use a teacher-created rubric to assess the presentation in whatever form it takes. At the end they have to leave at least one positive and one constructive comment.

UNIT 3

Investigation, ideas, artworks and the Creative Practice



Chapter 6

Area of Study 1 Investigation and presentation



In this unit you will use inquiry and project-based learning (see Chapter 1) as starting points to develop a body of work. You are required to explore ideas and experiment with materials, techniques and processes using the Creative Practice building on the knowledge and skills that you developed through Units 1 and 2.

At the start of Unit 3 you must research the practice of an artist of your choosing. This will be the starting point to develop a finished artwork. The finished artwork that you produce in Area of Study 1 will contribute to the body of work that you develop over Units 3 and 4.

In Unit 3, the Interpretive Lenses are used in Making and Responding throughout your application of the Creative Practice. You apply the Interpretive Lenses to researched artworks and in the reflective analysis and evaluation of your use of the Creative Practice.

The research and documentation of your application of the Creative Practice, including the presentation of a finished artwork is the start of your body of work for Units 3 and 4. It provides you with an opportunity to build on the skills you have developed to this point, starting with a foundation provided by the selected artwork. This will help students who have not completed Units 1 and 2 to find their feet and gain an understanding of the Creative Practice.

OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit, you should be able to respond to research that examines one artwork and the practice of a historical or contemporary artist, to inform the development of your personal ideas and application of the Creative Practice.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- ideas and related issues explored by artists in their artworks
- the use of selected materials, techniques, processes and art forms throughout the Creative Practice
- the way visual language is used to communicate ideas or issues
- the use of materials, techniques, and processes in art forms to develop effective visual language
- the selection of appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- methods used to document, reflect upon and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice to develop and refine artworks
- methods used to present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice and finished artworks.

KEY SKILLS

- research and analyse the ideas explored by artists in their artworks
- research and analyse issues related to the artwork or practice of the artist
- use selected materials, techniques, processes and art forms throughout the Creative Practice
- develop and critically evaluate visual language to communicate ideas or issues
- explore and document the use of materials, techniques and processes to develop effective visual language
- select and apply the appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- explore, document, reflect on and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice to develop and refine an artwork, using appropriate written and visual material
- apply appropriate methods to present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice and the finished artworks.

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6.1 Research and exploration

Research

In this area of study, you are required to research one artwork from the body of work of any artist of your choosing. You can select a contemporary or historical artist and research one of their artworks

as inspiration for your own practice. You must identify the ideas explored by the artist and their personal response as it is presented in a finished artwork. You should also study any issues that arise from the artwork, the ideas being expressed or the practice of the artist.



Video 6.1

Exploration

In response to this research, you must explore your own ideas through the Creative Practice. You must use the original artwork as a departure point for your investigation, but should avoid appropriations of the original artwork. The idea is not for you to take a photograph or do a painting of yourself posed like the Mona Lisa in a modern context. You should create an artwork that deals with similar ideas, or is created as a comment on how the

artwork was created, ideas that the artist tried to convey, or the ideas that it brings to mind when viewed in a contemporary context.

The selected artwork is intended to stimulate your ideas and art making and should not be seen as limiting you in any way. You can respond to the stimulus in any way and are not even required to use the same art form as the researched artist. The way in which you explore the ideas you select can take on any process appropriate to your practice. This can follow a range of different approaches as discussed in Chapter 3 Unit 1 Areas of Study 2 and 3. You should experiment with various materials and techniques as you develop your visual language and skill, before refining this to create a finished artwork.

6.2 Resolution, presentation and critique

Resolution

Once you have explored your idea, developed possible ways of representing this in your selected art form/s and have refined these to the point that you have decided on a final artwork, you must resolve your process. At the beginning of this task you presented yourself with a problem, an idea that you want to address through your art making. You must now resolve your initial idea and all aspects of the Creative Practice leading up to a finished artwork.

Presentation

You must consider the way you want to show your artwork to the audience, to best achieve your intention. You must trial different ways of presenting your artwork so that you can challenge, shape and influence audience perspectives.

Activity 6.1

Research images such as *The Raft of Medusa* or paintings by J.M.W. Turner that represent people in conflict situations. Explore ways in which you could use similar compositions to represent the trauma and anguish experienced by refugees struggling to escape conflict and how they find themselves faced with a different conflict as they attempt to get into Australia and Europe. Try reimagining these traditional paintings using a contemporary approach or imagery to represent an issue important to you.

Documentation

You are required to document your research, ongoing exploration and experimentation, as well as the further development and refinement of your ideas and technical skills. You must explicitly apply the appropriate Interpretive Lenses using art terminology, to reflect on personal ideas and your development of a personal visual language throughout the Creative Practice to the presentation of at least one finished artwork. This documentation will be presented as evidence of your exploration in a critique at the end of the process.

Critique

You are required to present a critique in a format that you and your teacher agree on. This will allow you to reflect on and evaluate your process throughout the Creative Practice, including the presentation of their finished artwork(s). You must use all appropriate Interpretive Lenses to discuss how you responded to your research, the idea you chose to focus on and how you explored and experimented with materials, techniques, processes and art forms to establish your visual language.

You should show how you have refined your skills and visual language throughout the process to the resolution and presentation of at least one finished

artwork. You must demonstrate how the idea you have chosen to explore relates to your research and how you have responded to your stimulus.

What next?

You must consider and reflect on the feedback you receive from the critique and consider how you can expand upon your ideas, techniques, materials, processes or art forms as you continue to develop your body of work in Area of Study 2.

6.3 VCE student examples

Student 1: Margo Joseph

VCE student Margo Joseph chose to respond to a work that she saw at the NGV Triennial by Carnovsky titled *Extinctions*, 2020 (Figure 6.1).

As detailed on the NGV website, Carnovsky is a design/artist duo comprised of Francesco Rugi and Silvia Quintanilla, who created this immersive wallpaper installation that references the International Union of Conservation of Nature Red List. The list includes insects and animals categorised into seven risk levels, from extinct to those that are of least concern. A selection



Figure 6.1 Carnovsky, Milan (design studio), Francesco Rugi and Silvia Quintanilla (designers), *Extinctions*, 2020, digital print on self-adhesive polyester fabric, 276.0 × 7424.0 cm (overall). Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. (Proposed acquisition with funds donated by Anne Ross, 2020 © Carnovsky)

of insects and animals were rendered on the wallpaper in either red, green or blue ink based on their threat level presenting an overlapping technicolour representation, in the style of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century specimen illustrations. Using alternating red, green, blue and white light projected onto the installation, different coloured species are concealed and revealed depending on the colour of the light shining on the wall, implying that even the creatures not currently under threat are not completely safe.

Margo stated that the work highlighted the importance of human interaction to preserve some species. She decided that she wanted to focus on local environmental issues, specifically the state of Australian reefs. She felt that time was an important element in the audience's interaction with Carnovsky's work and wanted to explore how our reefs are changing over time.

Margo used pages from her visual diary as evidence during her critiques. She included her research of Carnovsky's *Extinctions* and the coral decay and bleaching in Australia's reefs due to the increasing threat of climate change; and also documented her thinking and trialling in creating her response (Figures 6.2–6.5).

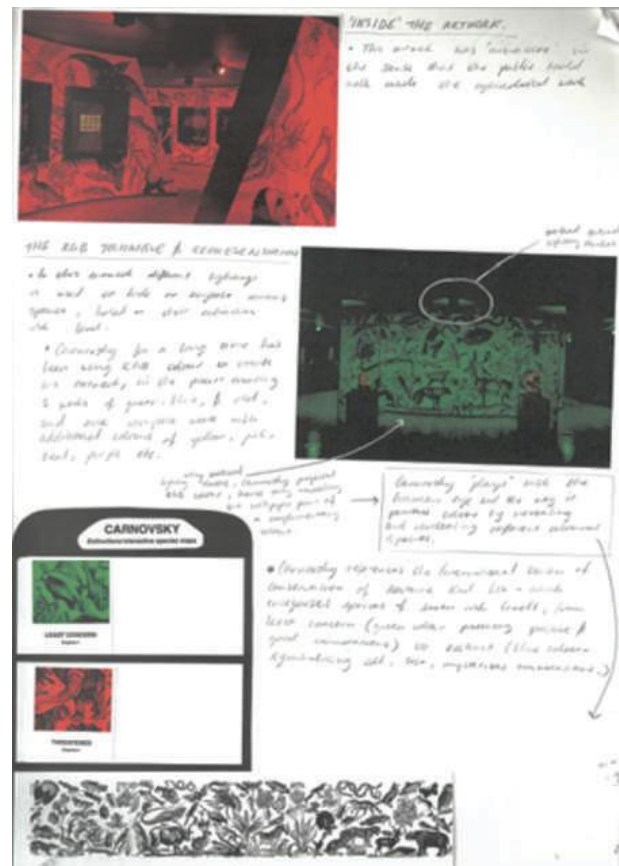


Figure 6.2 Research of *Extinctions*

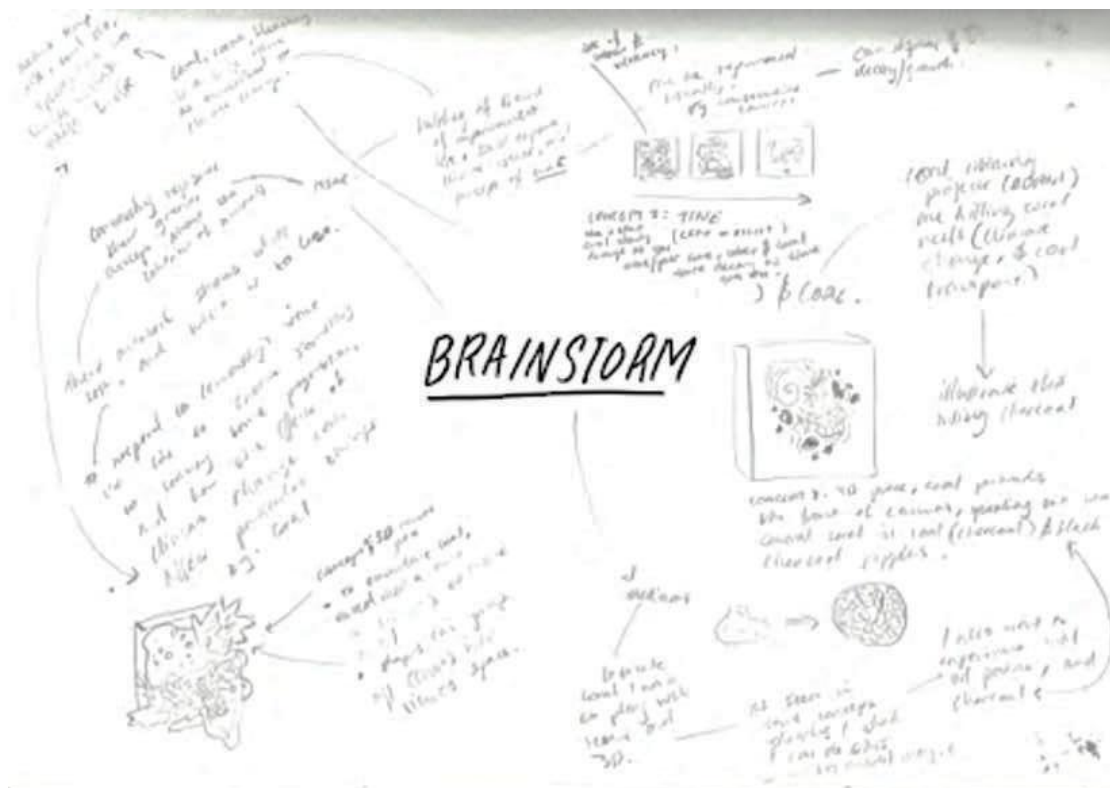


Figure 6.3 Mind map using written and visual brainstorming

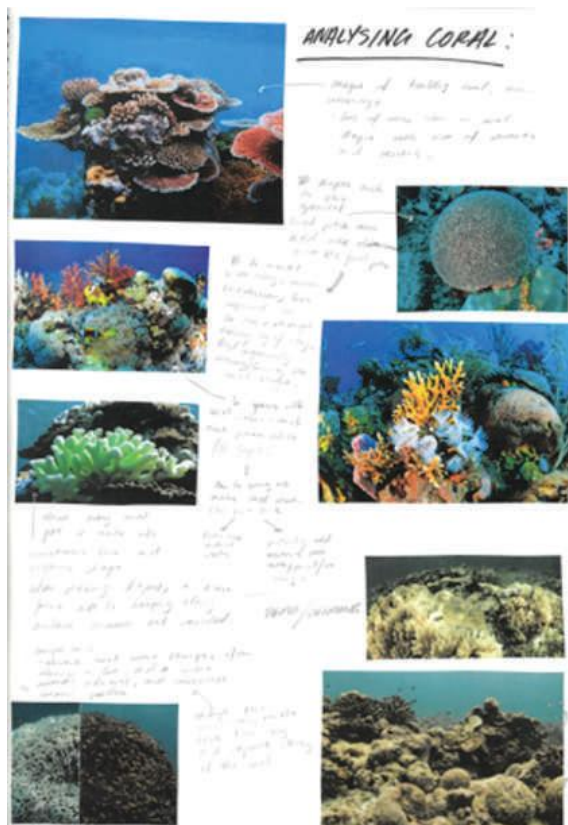


Figure 6.4 Researching imagery relating to the idea

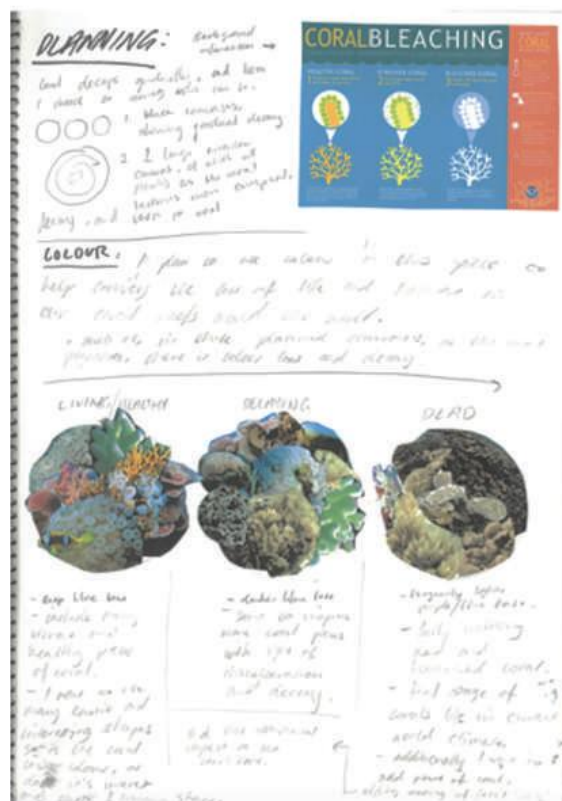


Figure 6.5 Planning approach and researching imagery

Margo also documented her trialling and her process in creating her response (Figures 6.6–6.9).

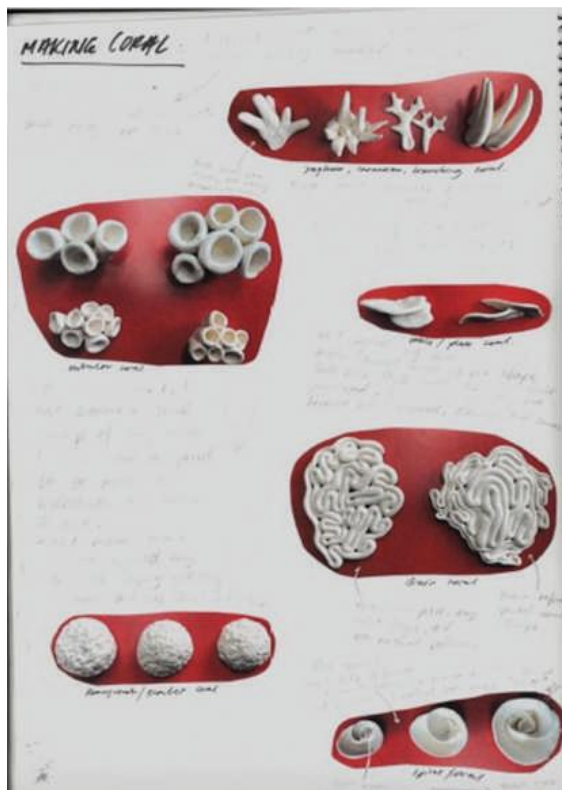


Figure 6.6 Evaluation of trialling different forms in selected material

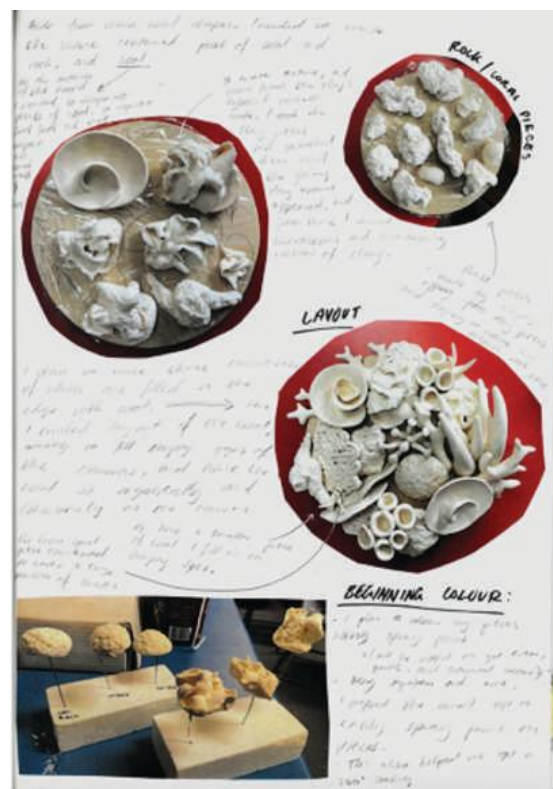


Figure 6.7 Annotating experimentation with materials and techniques

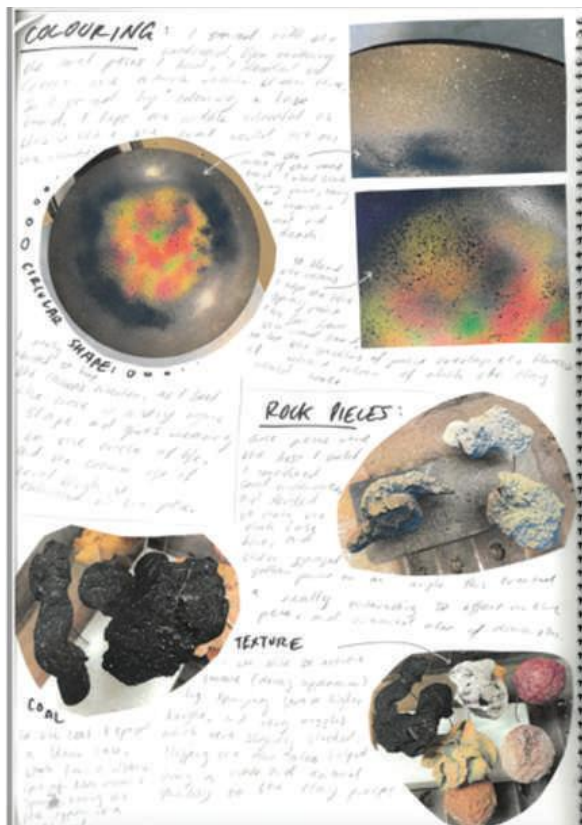


Figure 6.8 Evaluation of trialling techniques and colour combinations

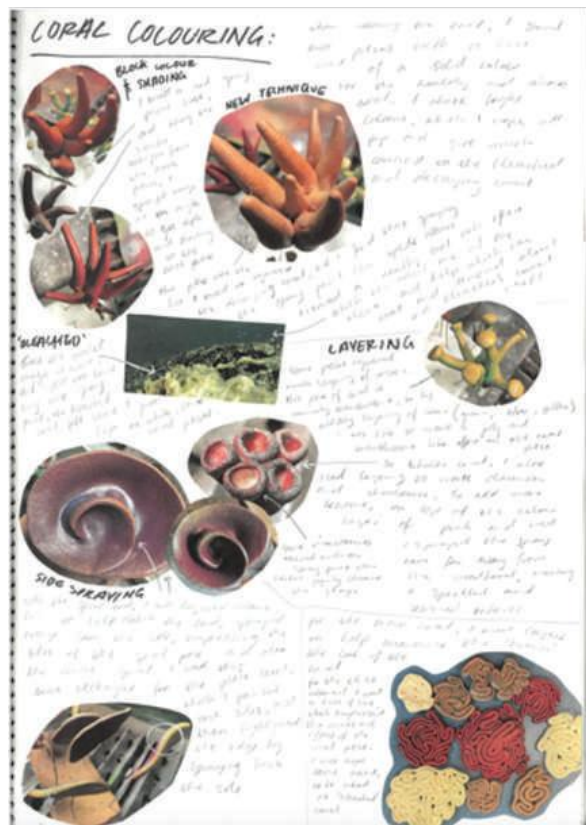


Figure 6.9 Critical annotation and reflection of techniques explored

Margo finally documented the refinement of her techniques, representation of her ideas and presentation of her concept (Figures 6.10 and 6.11).



Figure 6.10 Considering presentation options

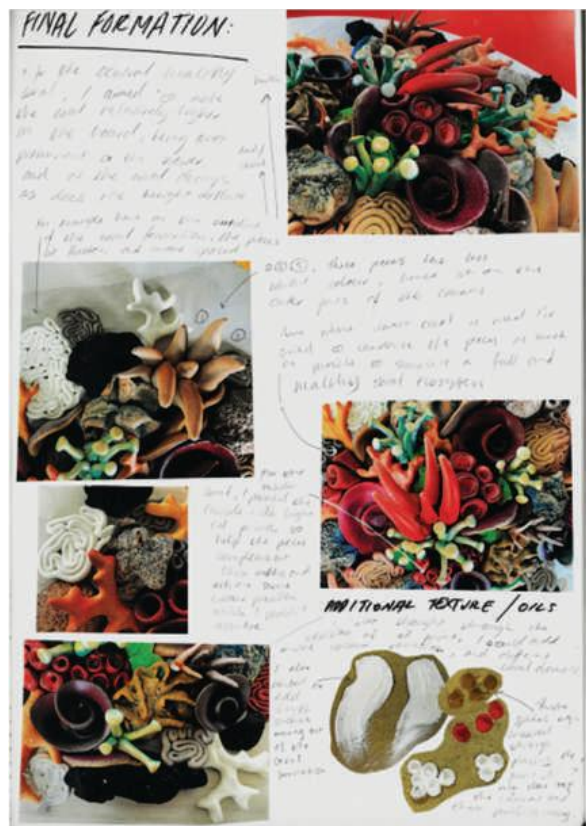


Figure 6.11 Critical annotations and reflection on artwork

As part of the information presented in her critique, Margo wrote:

This artwork [Figure 6.12] was created in response to Carnovsky's 2020 artwork. The same idea of time and the progression of decay in nature explored in *Extinctions* can be seen through my artwork. Moving out from the focal point you can see that the coral pieces begin to decay (lose quality, colouration, and their smooth, uniform texture), until the outermost pieces are plain white clay representing the bleached coral. As you move outwards you can also observe the addition of coal pieces, this addition adds meaning and resonance as it is referring to fossil fuels, and their impact on coral reefs, and the overall issue of climate change.

The materials, colours and techniques used to produce this artwork has contributed to its overarching significance in relation to the worsening rates of coral decay and bleaching due to the increasing threat of climate change. To create the artwork, model magic clay was used in order to keep the coral pieces light and to easily mount them onto the wood panel. Creating a three-dimensional piece meant that the artwork protrudes into the space of the audience,

realistically depicting a bunch of coral in a reef, thereby raising the issue, which the general Australian population seems to be unaware of, due to insufficient reporting in the media and the lack of momentum on climate policies.

Colour was added to the coral pieces through the use of spray paint, which helped achieve vibrant and saturated colour, helping to emphasise the most healthy and vibrant coral pieces. When representing decaying coral, I used the spray paint can upside down, resulting in larger droplets and 'hairs' of paint hitting the coral pieces, disrupting the smooth coral colouration featured on the most healthy pieces. The artwork was created on a circular panel, commenting on the circular nature of life, and the continuous cycle of coral decay and discolouration which will occur in coming years.

Activity 6.2

Brainstorm, using a mind map and thumbnail sketches, different ways in which note you could represent climate change.



Figure 6.12 Margo Joseph, *Our Reefs*, 2021, model magic clay and spray paint on a wood panel, 40 × 40 cm

Student 2: Bethany Cherry

Another VCE student, Bethany Cherry, was inspired by Picasso's *Guernica* (Figure 4.20) and produced a personal image that was relevant to her and dealt with issues that she considered important. She studied Picasso's *Guernica*, and also looked at other artists who were inspired by this work, before trialling her idea (Figure 6.13).



Figure 6.13 Bethany Cherry, *Guernica* trial

Bethany wrote:



Inspired by Picasso's Guernica, I wanted to create an overwhelming piece of work, both physically and mentally. Picasso's painting is a great piece of protest art. While it represented conflict in a specific event, it continued to resonate with the audience decades later and was used to protest wars that were taking place long after it was completed. I also wanted to

represent conflict but rather than focusing on war, I turned to more contemporary issues and other examples of conflict within our society. I wanted to portray these in a new way to challenge and stretch the imagination of my audience, while at the same time I wanted to reference Picasso's painting and the ideas it communicated.

After numerous trials and exploration with materials, techniques and symbols, Bethany produced *The Bigger Picture* (Figure 6.14).

While Guernica focused on one catastrophic scene, I wanted to emphasise the sheer number of catastrophic issues with which our society is riddled. I focused on issues like mental health, gender inequality, suicide, war, human waste and the abuse of human power, all of which are issues that reflect the state of modern society. Taking a common issue like gender inequality, I developed the idea of how women are just 'accessories' to men, there for show and always in the shadow of their counterparts. I literally portrayed a woman as part of a man's clothing, hanging off him just for show. Her expression and the dark shape on the side of her face suggest a link to domestic violence, supported by the crying, largely ignored child standing below the man.



Figure 6.14 Bethany Cherry, *The Bigger Picture*, 2016: Top Arts 2017, compressed charcoal (pencil form), 27.8 × 51 cm



I chose to work in charcoal, which I felt was appropriate to my negative issues, as it is a natural material that has been burnt and destroyed for human use. I felt that one of the more serious issues recognised within our society is one we can't physically see: mental health. I took an idea that modern society has clearly recognised this to be a problem, and made it confronting and, most of all, tangible and visible. I created personified human emotions that weigh many heads down. I gave them a slightly humanoid appearance to deepen their connection to the audience. As mental health is often overlooked by society because you cannot see it, I decided to draw these little emotions in a line, leading into the foreground of the work, confronting the audience.

In this surrealist work, I intertwined and twisted issues and scenes. By turning the shadow of an emotion into a city landscape, or an eye into an iconic symbol, I hoped to show my audience that in our society today, everything is connected, everything matters and we have to recognise every issue, big and small.

Working in black and white, Picasso linked his work to the journalistic photographs he saw that reported on the tragedy at the time. Similarly, Cherry chose to produce an achromatic drawing, referencing the work of an artist she admires. The lack of colour in both works adds emotional impact through the harsh contrast within the images. Scale is also important and is a major difference between the two works.



While Picasso's is monumental in size, stating that the horror of this incident should not be ignored, Cherry's is small. Perhaps she is saying that you have to look beyond the obvious at 'the big picture', to determine what is happening in our world. Time is of the essence; although it is represented by a tiny clock almost lost among the other symbols, it is still central to the picture.

Activity 6.3

Brainstorm different ways in which you could explore the impact of war or armed conflict in an artwork, using a mind map and thumbnail sketches.

Student 3: Bronte Billings

In a third student example, VCE student Bronte Billings chose to comment on Romina Bassu's painting *Interval* (Figure 6.15). In *Intervallo*, a faceless woman (a symbol for women?) lies on her bed, seemingly crushed by expectations, mental illness or something that is happening in her life. Her little pink feather slippers introduce some joy and hope but are they merely a false hope or do they in fact draw attention to her ornamental role?



Figure 6.15 Romina Bassu, *Intervallo* (*Interval*), 2017, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 80 cm

Bronte wrote:

Bassu's plain walls, clothes and face emphasise the male desire for a plain woman who lacks the ability to self-advocate or to be bold and overpowering. Pastel colours are used, emphasising the soft, delicate femininity that men long for. Her face is painted out reducing her to a body for consumption and her pose is one of submission, ready to be used and discarded. The audience has an elevated viewpoint, emphasising our dominance over the woman.



The woman in the painting caters to a very specific body type that society considers the beauty standard. She is thin and has smooth skin, wide hips and long hair. These are things that cater to the male gaze. Her pink slippers not only emphasise her femininity but as they are footwear only to be worn indoors, locks her into this domestic context that the woman is confined to.

Bronte chose to focus her exploration on 'the male gaze' and the impact that this has on women, including the hypersexualisation of women. She linked this to the ideas expressed in the work of her favourite author, Katherine Mansfield, in Mansfield's short story *Prelude*.

Bronte comments:



PERSONAL

... one of Mansfield's characters, Beryl, is not being true to herself when she plays the part of a hyper-feminine woman. She is not herself when she tries to be the most desirable version of herself. Mansfield explores the impact that the 'male gaze' has on women's identity when it becomes internalized and corrupt. Bassu manipulates her character to cater to the male gaze much like Beryl does in Mansfield's book.

Bronte explored various ways of representing her ideas about women and the male gaze through drawing and photography. She looked at expression, body language and pose, dress and masks that women wear to alter or hide themselves or that are placed on them by men. Choosing to use herself as the model, she explored the model of femininity expressed in the mindless, submissive, 'perfect' housewife of the 1950s. She looked at images and packaging for sewing patterns from the 1950s. She borrowed the poses from that era to comment on the abusive propaganda for a world built around the demands of dominant male culture and the consumer society.

Bronte took a series of selfies to find the best reference for her intended painting. She wore an old dress of her mother's and performed in front of her phone, which played the part of the man. She stated that she

... faked a laugh, leaning forward and awkwardly positioned my body as weightless and dainty. My whole persona diminishing to become an artificial woman.

My final artwork was created in response to Romina Bassu's artwork, Intervallo. Her delicate, gorgeous artwork comes from a series of pieces under the title of the 'male gaze', a phenomenon studied by modern feminists in film and other forms of consumable media. The male gaze is essentially the perspective of a typical heterosexual cisgender man embodied in the audience, or intended audience, characterised by a tendency to objectify and sexualise women. Whilst simple in such a definition, the male gaze manifests in such complex ways of everyday life, inspiring toxic masculinity, relationship issues, internalised male gaze in AFAB/women, and various other problems within society. Bassu's artwork revolves primarily around the objectification of women for a male audience, and the stereotypical idealised man within sexual relationships.

The model in the artwork is petite, dainty, and positioned in such a way to be conquered and consumed. Other works from Bassu explore the male gaze in other scenarios, like in the workplace, or with male friends. Her works feature women who are excessively euphoric, uncomfortable and unnatural, essentially performing to an audience.

As part of the information presented in her critique, and supported by pages from her visual diary, Bronte wrote:

My final piece is centralised around a subversion of the male gaze within modern society. The various elements of my art piece work together to illustrate the various ways that the male gaze has manifested and integrated into modern society, despite its out-of-date narrative.



CULTURAL



STRUCTURAL



CULTURAL



Figure 6.16 Bronte Billings, *The Male Gaze*, oil on wood panel, 30 × 40 cm



The woman in the painting is positioned in a highly artificial manner, her body angled forward, arms daintily hovering in the air, a forced smile plastered on her face as she awkwardly stands in an unnatural and uncomfortable stance. Women are often marketed everywhere as the same blueprint idealised model, a female audience subconsciously forced to cater to the idea that a beautiful woman is someone euphoric, joyful, content, but still delicate and poised.



As the girl leans forward laughing, she is essentially performing to the audience, striving to cater to the male gaze. The specific use of a blue-and-white colour scheme resembles similarly to a vintage black-and-white photo. Through stripping the woman from any objective colour, the woman echoes elements from the 50s, in which black-and-white film was the standard. This alludes to the out-of-date

ideologies present in today's culture; the misogynistic views from decades ago still prevalent today. The use of a blueish grey tone develops a deeper meaning, inspiring a melancholy element to the woman's euphoric figure. It is contradictory for the woman to be physically overjoyed, yet represented in such a solemn colour scheme. This embodies the fabricated happiness of women in humanity. Too often women are forced to plaster on a smile, and to suppress their complaints. The gloomy colours contradict the flippant physical pose.

While challenging the ways in which the male gaze demands internal changes within women, my artwork additionally criticises the ways in which women are externally viewed and objectified at the hands of a male audience.

This is particularly conveyed through the red highlights upon the woman's dress, outlining her breast, pelvic area, and her hips. The use of this contrasting colour helps to create points of emphasis. The viewer's eyes are attracted instantly to the red highlights upon her body. Despite being fully clothed in a long dress, the viewer's eyes are drawn towards her physical assets, embodying the behaviour of male oppressors. Her clothes are simply viewed as a barrier between the viewer and her nude body, which the red lines transcend. This emphasises the extreme objectification women endure in society, their bodies constantly analysed and objectified, even when fully clothed. The use of red also symbolises ideas of sex, lust and attraction, furthering the idea of objectification and sexualisation of the woman's body. These thin lines draw attention to the areas which receive the most unwanted attention. The plain white background shows that everything surrounding the woman, her personality, interests and achievements are irrelevant. Her body becomes the most significant aspect of her identity.



Activity 6.4

Select three artworks that interest you in terms of the ideas that they convey, rather than the art form, techniques or style the artist worked in.

- 1 Apply selected lenses to the interpretation of each artwork.
- 2 List the ideas explored by the artist or suggested to you by your interpretation of the work.
- 3 Use written and visual brainstorming to come up with a range of ways that you could express some of these ideas.
- 4 Brainstorm art forms, other than the one used by the artist in the original artwork that has inspired you, and consider how these art forms lend themselves to presenting the idea/s that you would like to focus on.

6.4 Artist example: Luciano Garbati

Research

The Argentine-Italian artist Luciano Garbati was inspired by the Italian Renaissance sculpture *Perseus with the Head of Medusa* by Benvenuto Cellini (Figure 6.17), which can be found in the Piazza Della Signoria in Florence, Italy.

This Renaissance sculpture represents a scene from ancient Greek mythology. Perseus lifts the decapitated head of Medusa, a hideous woman-faced Gorgon, whose hair was living snakes. Anyone who looked directly at Medusa was turned to stone. Perseus stands naked except for a sash and winged sandals, triumphant on top of the headless body of Medusa.

Most people do not, however, realise that Medusa was a maiden of the temple of Athena who was raped by Poseidon. Athena, furious that her temple was sullied by this, transformed Medusa into a snake-haired Gorgon whose gaze turned any onlooker to stone. Medusa is blamed and punished for the crime of which she was the victim. She is cast away as a monster and is eventually hunted down and beheaded.

When considered from a contemporary context, Medusa can be identified with victim-blaming that is suffered by rape survivors. Garbati posed the question, 'How can a triumph be possible if you are defeating a victim?'



Figure 6.17 Benvenuto Cellini, *Perseus with the Head of Medusa*, 1545–1554, bronze

Resolution

Garbati responded with his sculpture, *Medusa with the Head of Perseus* (Figure 6.18), which reimagines the Cellini sculpture and offers a twist on the mythology. Here, Medusa displays Perseus's severed head.

Garbati transformed the body of classical sculpture into contemporary politics of the body. He is clearly inspired by the original work, but also wanted to comment on the issues around the myth and the sculpture in the wake of the #MeToo movement. He addresses the victim-blaming that was highlighted in the original by showing the victim taking action, although this is not directed at the perpetrator of the rape. Medusa is portrayed in the moment of empowered self-defence. Garbati wanted to humanise the woman behind the myth, and to question her identity as a monster. He posted a photograph of his original sculpture to social media in 2018 and the re-imagined Medusa

went viral, becoming a symbol of resistance and inspiring thousands of women to reach out and share their own stories.

Presentation

Working in partnership with NYC Parks, the sculpture was installed from 13 October 2020 to 31 August 2021 in the park facing the New York County Criminal Court. While the original by Cellini was surrounded by marble sculptures of men, such as Michaelangelo's David, as though they were the victims turned to stone, Garbati's sculpture is outside the court where Harvey Weinstein stood trial. Weinstein's conviction for rape in March 2021 was celebrated as a triumph for the #MeToo movement. Garbati wrote, 'The place chosen is not accidental, since there they judge cases for crimes related to violence against women.'



Figure 6.18 Luciano Garbati, *Medusa with the Head of Perseus*, Collect Pond Park, New York City. Photo courtesy of MWTH Project and Art in the Parks.

Chapter 7

Area of Study 2 Personal investigation using the Creative Practice



In this Area of Study you will continue to use project-based learning to develop a body of work, exploring ideas and experimenting with materials, techniques and processes using the Creative Practice. You will document your art making and use reflective and critical annotation to analyse and evaluate how you have used aspects of the Creative Practice as you use critical and creative thinking skills to explore and develop ideas, and experiment with materials, techniques and processes.

PERSONAL INVESTIGATION USING THE CREATIVE PRACTICE

In Area of Study 2, you must continue to develop a body of work through Inquiry learning. There is no one way to create a body of work (see Chapter 7 for possible approaches). Regardless of how you choose to approach your folio, the process remains consistent: you must use the Creative Practice to develop your own visual responses inspired by personal ideas and experiences. The focus in this area of study is on research, exploration, experimentation and development. You must document, critically analyse and evaluate your responses and art making using art terminology. You are required to apply appropriate Interpretive Lenses to annotate your art making throughout the Creative Practice.

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit, you should be able to explore ideas using aspects of the Creative Practice.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the use of selected materials, techniques, processes and art forms throughout the Creative Practice
- the use of the Creative Practice to explore and experiment with ideas, materials, techniques and processes
- characteristics of visual language that communicates personal ideas
- the use of the Creative Practice to develop ideas, materials, techniques and processes
- the selection of the appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- methods used to document the use of the Creative Practice
- the use of art terminology in analysis, reflection and evaluation.

KEY SKILLS

- use selected materials, techniques, processes and art forms throughout the Creative Practice
- apply, document and critically reflect on the use of the Creative Practice to develop personal responses
- explore and develop visual language that communicates personal ideas
- manipulate and apply materials, techniques and processes in selected art forms to develop personal responses
- select and apply the appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- document and annotate, using visual material and written material, to critically reflect on and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice
- apply art terminology in analysis and critically reflective and evaluative annotations.

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7.1 A personal investigation using the Creative Practice

For Unit 3 AOS1 and Unit 4 AOS1 and AOS2, you are required to develop a body of work on which you must work progressively to explore personal ideas. How you approach this body of work is up to you, but this is an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills you developed during Units 1 and 2, and Unit 3 AOS1. You must respond to the feedback you received during your Unit 3

AOS1 critique and apply appropriate technical skills to develop a body of work that will be completed at the end of Unit 4. At least one more artwork must be developed during the remainder of Unit 3 and refined, resolved and presented in Unit 4.

In this study, you should use the Creative Practice to develop your art practice to support a conceptual and practical application and understanding of materials, techniques and processes as you explore personal ideas. At first, it may appear prescriptive to expect all students to develop a conceptual folio. What if you are not interested in **conceptual art** and prefer to develop works of art for their intrinsic beauty and the pleasure they bring to the viewer? It is important to realise that conceptual does not refer to conceptual art, but rather art that is concerned with concepts or develops from concepts and ideas. You could therefore explore ideas of beauty throughout your body of work. Where conceptual art may see the concept as being more important than the skill of the artist or what the resolved artwork looks like, a conceptual and practical investigation that explores personal ideas and concepts can show evidence of your developing skill.

In this Area of Study, you are required to develop your own art responses inspired by ideas and observations. You should develop your visual language as you investigate and experiment with materials, techniques and processes using an art form or art forms of your choice. You may work in any medium or art form, or a range of media, but whatever you choose, make artworks that best reflect your skills and abilities – work to your strengths and interests. Having said that, do not only take the safe route. Challenge yourself and push the boundaries of your art making.

While it is assessed at the end of Unit 3, Outcome 2 is not to be viewed in isolation. It is connected to Unit 4 Outcomes 1 and 2 where the

body of work is refined and the finished artworks are presented. Outcome 2 can be a continuation of your exploration from AOS1 or can respond to the feedback you received at the end of that area of study.

Before you begin, think broadly about ideas that you may want to explore, and consider what you would like to achieve. Compile a range of thoughts and ideas that you can refer to as you continue to establish a body of work. By the conclusion of this area of study, you should have used aspects of the Creative Practice to investigate, explore, experiment and develop your ideas, materials, techniques, processes and skills and have a clear direction that you wish to pursue in Unit 4. You must document and annotate your work, which can be used as evidence in your critique at the start of Unit 4.

NOTE: If you have not completed Units 1 and 2, it is essential that you read the chapters covering Characteristics and Terminology as well as Units 1 and 2. Much of this chapter has been written in a way that takes knowledge of Units 1 and 2 for granted.

How do you start Outcome 2?

You can start this second part of your body of work in different ways.

- If you enjoyed responding to the artwork you selected in AOS1 and feel that you would like to continue with this, you can.
- There may be alternative approaches you want to take to investigate the idea you explored in AOS1 that will allow a whole new direction.
- You might have more ideas that you would like to explore in response to the artwork that can take you on a different track.
- You may have enjoyed using an artwork as a starting point. You could select a different artwork by the same artist or a different artist and respond to the ideas expressed by the artist or conveyed by the artwork.

conceptual art art in which the creative thought, concept and process are considered to be more important than the product



Video 7.1

- Alternatively, you may be inspired by the practices of other artists, and want to explore materials, techniques, processes and art forms inspired by them, to find a way of exploring ideas of personal interest for you.
- You can also settle on an idea that you are interested in and use the Creative Practice to progressively explore and develop the idea, through the investigation and experimentation with materials, techniques and processes. This exploration can be done in an art form or a range of art forms of your choice.

Whatever approach you take, you are required to document your process and the development of your personal visual language. You must critically analyse and evaluate your responses and art making throughout aspects of the Creative Practice, using art terminology in your reflection. Your responses and art making should be informed by the Interpretive Lenses. You are required to explicitly apply the lenses to the annotation of the Creative Practice in this area of study.

Activity 7.1

List the things that you would like to achieve in your folio. List any ideas or issues that interest you. Which of these is most important to you?

Selecting an idea

When selecting an idea, choose something that you are passionate about: events, issues or experiences that are important to you. Choose an idea in which you will be able to fully immerse yourself for the remainder of the year. You are not limited to one idea but can explore various ideas or aspects of your chosen idea.

Ideas can be both broad and definitive, developed by you through personal research and thinking and in response to experiences and your art making. Do not feel trapped by an idea – through creative thinking and the use of a mind map you can take any idea in an endless range of directions. You may be quite focused and direct in your interpretation, but you can also be fluid.

If I create from the heart, nearly everything works; if from the head, almost nothing. **Marc Chagall**

Activity 7.2

Decide what the focus will be. Are you aiming to:

- visually interpret ideas or issues
- explore a particular subject matter that appeals to you
- work in a style or approach to making art; or
- work in a specific medium or art form?

Activity 7.3

You should complete the following work after the completion of your Unit 3 AOS1 critique, in order to start AOS2.

- 1 Decide on your starting point. Are you continuing to explore the idea from AOS1 or will you explore a new idea in your body of work?
- 2 Consider the feedback you received in your critique. What suggestions were made that could guide you in moving forward?
- 3 Research artworks and images that relate to your chosen idea, interests, materials, approaches, and so on.
- 4 Create a mind map or brainstorm to explore your selected idea and to provide options moving forward.
- 5 Begin creating a visual brainstorm (for example, using drawing, painting, collage, and so on) to create visual interpretations of your ideas.
- 6 You can take photographs that will act as stimulus for further exploration or as reference from which to work. If you are working with digital photographs, ensure you take photos at a high resolution in case you want to use these as final artworks later.

Application of the Interpretive Lenses to support reflection

It is important that you engage in critical analysis, evaluation and reflection throughout your use of the Creative Practice or aspects of this process. As part of your assessment, you are expected to select appropriate Interpretive Lenses to provide you with the tools with which to reflect on your ideas, exploration, experimentation and development of materials, techniques, processes, visual language and skill throughout this stage of your body of work. As part of your use of the Creative Practice, you are required to document and evaluate the progressive development and refinement of work using appropriate written and visual material.

You are required to apply the language of selected and explicitly identified Interpretive Lenses to support reflective annotation of your art making. Although you are required to make use of more than one lens, you are not required to apply all Interpretive Lenses to your art making. More importantly, you are required to select the appropriate Interpretive Lenses that are relevant to your work. It would be logical to make use of the Structural Lens, as this links all the lenses and any other lens that is relevant to your art making.

An important thing to remember when using the Interpretive Lenses in your annotation is that they must be used explicitly: you must identify which lens you are using and when you are using it. If you use the Interpretive Lenses without identifying them, there is no evidence that you understand how to apply them, or the difference between each lens. To identify the lenses, it is suggested that you use the lens either as a heading before you start writing or in the opening sentence of your annotation. This allows you to establish which lens you are applying in your own mind before annotating, and therefore use the language of that lens and highlight the factors that are associated with that lens.

Some students identify the lenses retrospectively by writing the name of the lens next to the paragraph they have already written or by using a colour code. These approaches, while acceptable, are dangerous and I discourage my students from using them.

You can place a colour key or legend identifying each of the lenses at the beginning of your body of work, then place a corresponding colour dot or icon next to the paragraph you are writing, as we have done in this text using icons, or even highlight the annotation in that colour. The problem that some students have with these options is that they incorrectly label the lenses because they do it when they have finished their folio, and often at the last minute. They scan for words that relate to the framework and place the dot next to the paragraph. Remember that the Interpretive Lenses are used for interpreting meaning, so if you place a dot next to a passage where you are speaking about the use of colour to achieve balance in a composition, you have not shown a correct understanding of the Structural Lens. If, however, you go on to say that the balance this achieves adds to the meaning of the work, you are then applying the lens to interpret the message.

The colour key is useful, however, if you use a heading or embed the identification into the opening sentence. You can use it to draw the assessor's attention to the use of particular lenses. When marking your folio, it is not possible for the assessor to read every annotation, so it is helpful to draw their attention to the important ones. This is also useful to highlight explanations of important decisions that you do not want the assessor to overlook.

Introducing your concept

Although not an expectation of the study design, it is worth introducing your concept at the beginning of your body of work, as it helps to explain the idea you are focusing on, why you have selected this idea and how you intend to explore it. If you write this introduction using the Interpretive Lenses, it will allow you to set the tone of your annotations, immediately identify your understanding of the lenses and clarify your thoughts. This introduction does not have to be only at the start of your body of work; it can also be written at the start of each new idea or direction and can be titled in any way. Some students who use this might call it an

Introduction, or *My idea*, or *My intention*. Some may even title it, *What I am focusing on in this body of work* or *What I am focusing on at this point in my body of work*.

An example of this can be seen in the introduction written by VCE student Bronte Billings:

My idea: Issues plaguing modern teenagers

Generation Z (1995–2012) are the first generation to grow up with the introduction of modern technology such as smart phones and tablets, these devices becoming an integral part of everyday life. The current society that teenagers are growing up in is like none other before. Whilst history repeats itself, seen in the repetition of global pandemics and wars, there has been no other time in which teenagers have been forced to experience their coming of age in their own bedrooms, morphing into one with their phones and laptops. With the introduction of such innovative technology, a new wave of media consumption develops. Never before have the struggles and issues of the political world been so readily accessible to young adults. Social media is flooded with depressing statistics and crushing stories and ‘fake news’ that distorts the way young people view the world and their future. Generation Z teenagers have been forced to develop in a climate dense with pessimism; we face the anxiety of COVID-19, the pandemic stealing our most significant years; we face the consequences of modern technology, social media distorting our own identities and self-perceptions, and most significantly, young adults face the weight of politics upon our future, positioned to feel responsible for the selfish actions of the generations before us.

Personal: Being a 17-year-old, I feel deeply connected to all the issues I want to explore in my folio. I have felt the effects of the pandemic on my mental health, the isolation and online learning tainting my mental and social wellbeing. One of my biggest anxieties as a young person is the lingering fate of the world in the hands of climate change. Young people are so often taught to reduce-reuse-recycle, the guilt of climate change placed on the individual. We are lectured that the

world is going to die in 30 years if no change is made, yet we have no power at all in the political world. Most teenagers have accepted that the world is going to be uninhabitable, or dead in the next few decades, completely distorting the way we perceive our self-worth and motivation to live.

Cultural: Responding to the world around us with the changing values and developments in technology adds to the difficulties the youth of today face. From a parental view, teens seem naïve to their addictions to social media and their phones, as if they don’t understand the consequences. Teenagers are, however, fully aware of the consequences, but have become so attached as we grew up alongside technology. There will be a minor focus on the impacts of COVID-19 on teen youth through their developmental years, emphasising the current ideas of isolation and a loss of social experiences – essentially the ‘coming of age’ narrative dismantled.

Youth culture has undergone a complete shift for the new generation. The introduction of technology has completely altered youth culture, teenagers living their lives out online, our minds continually warped by the strange addictiveness of social media. Body positivity becomes so limited, yet deemed as empowering and uplifting, minimised to dismissive, performative empowerment. Youth culture has transformed from Gen-X or the Boomers, teenagers nowadays turning to drugs and substances to numb the boringness of quarantine or crushing anxieties of school and the future. Drugs have become an integral part of the lives of many teenagers, addictions becoming more common and minimised within society, as teenagers actively abuse substances at parties, with their friends, or within their own rooms every few nights. We live in a modern world, and regardless of how insignificant technology may be rendered by our parents, the consequences of social media, growing up with access to the internet at a young age, teenagers in this decade are enduring an epidemic of self-hate, drugs and suffocating anxiety.



Inspiration to create

Before beginning your exploration, you may also choose to read the work of writers and critics who have explored similar ideas to those you wish to focus on. It may help to collect images that relate to the ideas you have chosen to explore. You can photograph or draw objects that represent the idea and collect images of artworks related to your chosen idea from a range of sources such as books, magazines, exhibitions or the internet. When including the work of artists who inspire you, it is important to reference these correctly. Providing the source of the image as 'Google images' is not enough. You should identify the artist and provide as much empirical information as you can. You must also acknowledge the publication or the URL where you found the work.

Found stimuli are not limited to imagery; they can also include textures, objects and surfaces on

which to work, or they can be things of interest for future exploration or items that could be included in your artworks. You may find a piece of driftwood that provides you with a visually interesting object to use in a drawing or for symbolic value. It may represent something discarded or discovered. The driftwood could even evolve into an environment for a surreal painting. The form and construction of a feather may be explored for its pattern, be used as a tool for painting, be embedded into an artwork as a symbol of flight or used to add texture to an artwork. A piece of textured paper could be drawn on, used to construct or inspire you to experiment with your own paper-making.

Phoebe Garrett, a VCE Art student, was inspired by fossils of an ammonite and a nautilus shell. She explored the forms and patterns through drawing. The pattern and spiral reminded her of fingerprints, which she then explored as pure pattern (Figure 7.1).

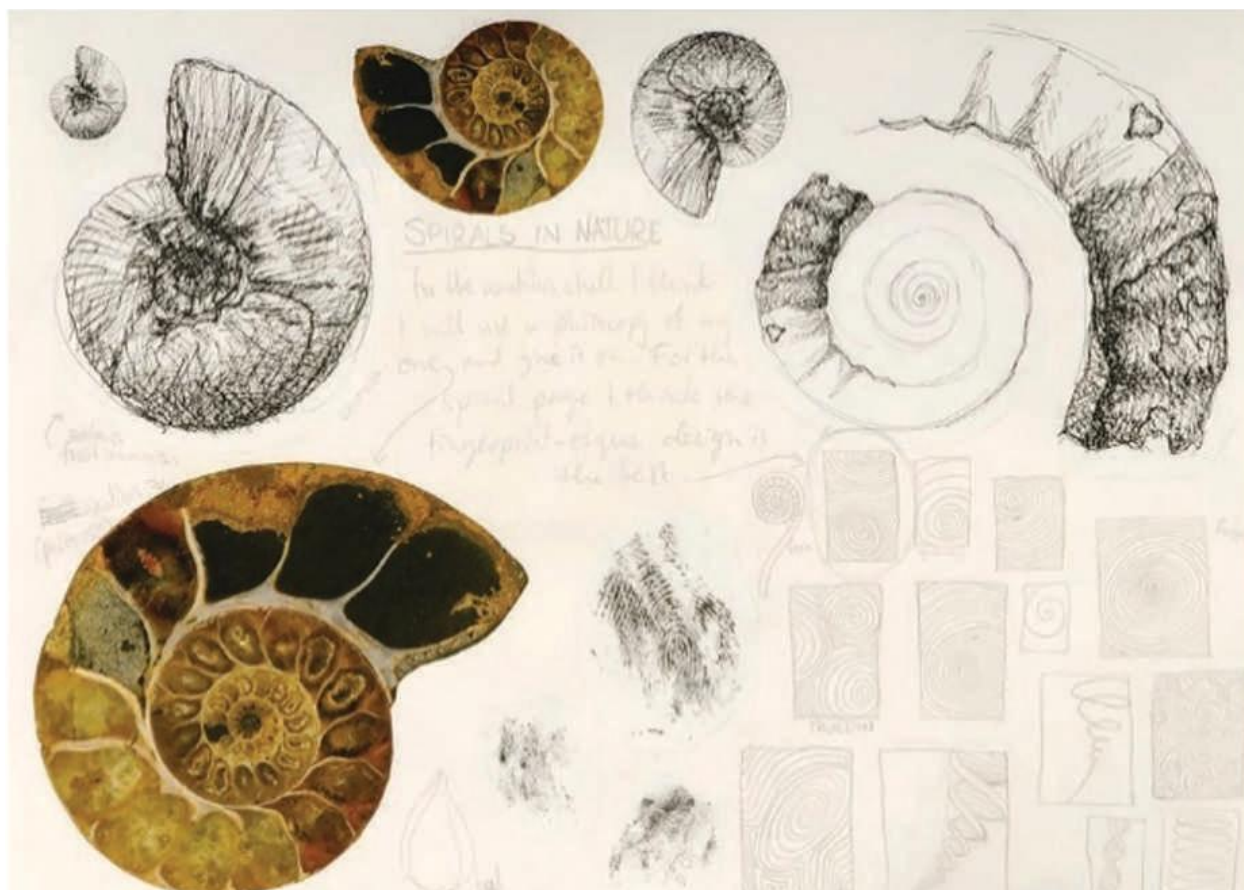


Figure 7.1 Phoebe Garrett exploring the potential identified in found stimuli

Avoid plagiarism

Although there are many reasons why you should look at other people's art, it is important that you use their work as inspiration, not to copy from. Direct copies are valuable exercises, but you should be moving beyond this and beginning to create your own unique artworks. Many great artists have learnt by observing the work of their predecessors, and even sitting in galleries and making direct copies of paintings. This, however, is simply an exercise in learning about composition, colour mixing or developing technique. These works were tools for learning and were not presented as original artworks. Copying someone's artwork in your folio as part of your exploration can have value, but copying their work for your final is plagiarism – nothing short of stealing.

This is not limited to copying works of fine art. Many students find inspiration in books and magazines, and some copy directly from these photographs. Remember that the photographs are the property of the photographer or the publisher that bought them, so copying these is still considered plagiarism. Besides that, it is important that you develop your own images. Your art should be the culmination of your creative exploration.

Sometimes students include elements from other people's work in their own because it is difficult to source their own reference. If you want to draw a picture of an astronaut pushing a penny-farthing bicycle through the Australian outback, it may mean that some of the imagery will be difficult for you to find without access to a space suit or a museum with old bicycles. It is acceptable to produce this drawing by combining references from books with your own photograph, or direct study of the landscape. You are combining a number of sources into your own composition. It is always preferable that you take your own reference photographs or work from life, but sometimes this is not possible.

When combining several images into one picture (whether the images are sourced or your own), it is important to consider that if you are producing an image portraying natural space with a logical and realistic interaction of the objects within

the environment, you must ensure that all the parts work together. That includes making sure that the scale of items from different sources works in terms of perspective. If the environment is lit with natural light, you will have to ensure that all parts of the picture have a common light source. The other difficulty when creating a composite image is to make sure that everything in the image is seen from the same viewpoint.

Creating images based on comic styles is often popular. Some students are inspired by their interest in *manga*, and it is often difficult to tell from their folios what is copied and what images are the students' own *manga*-inspired works. To clarify this, you should show evidence of your original source material, such as photographs of friends, landscapes and various environments. Using these, apply the techniques and characteristics of *manga* and create your own characters and scenes.

It is important that, whatever your approach, you acknowledge your source material and show evidence of how you have developed the image. Remember that it is not just the image that you must consider in terms of copyright. If you are working with video or creating an installation that makes use of music, you must take care to use your own music compositions or source a soundtrack using copyright-free music. You may want to investigate the Royalty Free Music website for suitable music you could use in your video or installation. You may also wish to check with your school's resource centre. Some schools subscribe to a Screenrights licence that gives their students access to images, text and music.

Some students will use **appropriation** to create an artwork. When referencing another artwork, it is important to remember that the emphasis in your folio is on your artwork. It is appropriate to reference existing artworks, but the assessors want to see your skill, creativity and ideas.

manga a style of Japanese comic books and graphic novels; aimed at adults as well as children

appropriation using an object or image, usually without permission, and placing it in a new context that changes its meaning

Activity 7.4

- 1 Research 10 artists who inspire you with their subject matter, style, use of a particular medium, technique or approach to creating art.
- 2 If you have decided to explore a specific art form, the artists do not have to use the same art form. If you want to paint, you may be inspired by the emotion achieved by a sculptor through the body language and expression they have used. For example, you may be inspired by the techniques employed by Dali to produce his surreal paintings and want to recreate these using digital photography and Photoshop.
- 3 Identify and describe what interests you about the works you have selected and what ideas they have generated for your folio. Have they used symbolism that you think you may be able to use to communicate your ideas to the viewers? Have you been inspired to attempt something new?
- 4 Identify how the artist has been able to convey meaning in their work and how you could use this in the exploration of your own ideas and concepts.

Document your research

It is very useful to research artists and artworks that you consider to be relevant to the ideas you have chosen to explore. Document examples of these and annotate with information about specific details regarding subject matter, techniques, materials, art elements and principles. Study how artists have approached and presented similar ideas, and how they have manipulated the elements and principles of art in their work. Look at the subject matter they have selected and the techniques applied to achieve the resolved works

they have presented. Use appropriate Interpretive Lenses to discuss the meaning of the works and identify how the artist has been able to convey this meaning in their work. This will help you to find solutions to your own ideas. It is also very useful to research techniques that you would like to attempt, learning from other artists' explorations.

A study of other artists' work can be an effective way to clarify your thoughts about a concept or inspire you to use a particular medium or subject matter. It is important, however, to ensure that you do not copy the artist who inspires you, but rather reinterpret their approach in a personal way.



Figure 7.2 Salvador Dalí, *Sleep*, 1937, oil on canvas © Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí. VEGAP/Copyright Agency, 2022



Figure 7.3 Diana Mejia-Correa, *Aspects of Seeing*, inkjet print

VCE student Diana Mejia-Correa was inspired by the Surrealists and based her exploration on imagery that reflected this style. Figure 7.3 shows how she created a personal interpretation on aspects of seeing, using digital photography and Photoshop. She said:

I was interested to see that a number of Dali's paintings dealt with sleep issues and the Freudian theme of the world of dreams. The Surrealists believed that the freedom of the subconscious within sleep could be tapped into and used to inspire their art. Dali's *Sleep* of 1937 [Figure 7.2] attempted to duplicate the dream world onto the canvas. Crutches are a familiar motif in Dali's works and here the head is supported by a series of wooden crutches, as are the mouth, nose and also eyes, suggesting that the head might collapse if they were removed. Whether to tap into the subconscious mind through dreams, or by placing themselves into a trance state by depriving themselves of sleep, sleep was important to the Surrealists. I too find many of my ideas in dreams or when I lay awake at night unable to sleep.

The inkjet print allowed me to reinterpret this traditional style using contemporary media, processes, techniques and art forms. While wanting to reference Dali through the style and imagery, I also wanted to make this work personal. Rather than using the wooden crutches, I looked for something in my life that held me up and without which I would collapse. Art is my crutch and I represented this by supporting the feet with pencils, my preferred tool of expression.

I have often imagined the monster of sleep as a heavy, giant head with a tapering body held up by the crutches of reality. When the crutches break we have the sensation of falling.

Salvador Dali, *The secret life of Salvador Dali*

Starting your body of work

Once you have decided on the ideas you want to explore, it is important that you begin to explore a range of materials, techniques, processes and possibly even art forms if you have not decided which to use. You will document all aspects of the Creative Practice and reflect on your art making. You must examine how you have used art elements and principles, materials, techniques and art forms to develop a visual language. Using the Interpretive Lenses you will reflect on how your experiences, feelings and thoughts are evident in your trials and how they add to your visual language.

I am convinced that abstract form, imagery, colour, texture, and material convey meaning equal to or greater than words.

Katherine McCoy, American graphic designer and educator in art and design

Student 1: Catherine Stirling

After deciding that she would focus on her personal battle with anorexia and the impact this disease had on her life, VCE student Catherine Stirling started her exploration with extensive mind maps (Figure 7.4) to brainstorm the aspects of her illness on which she wanted to focus.



Figure 7.4 Mind map brainstorming ideas for exploration

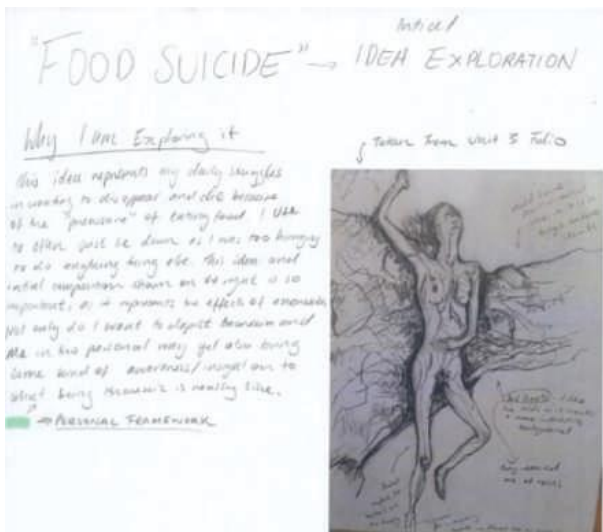


Figure 7.5 Annotated sketch to explore ideas



Figure 7.6 Annotated sketches brainstorming ways to represent and communicate ideas

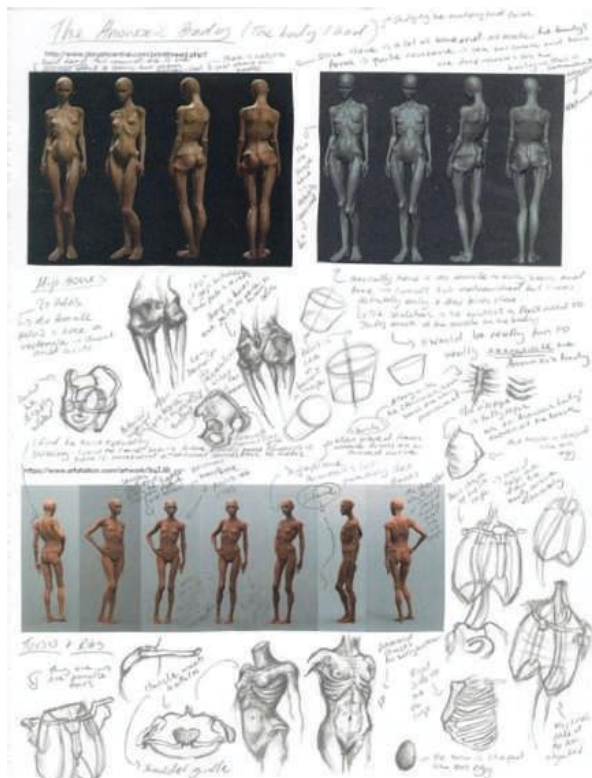


Figure 7.7 Small studies with annotations indicating influences and directions based on researched images

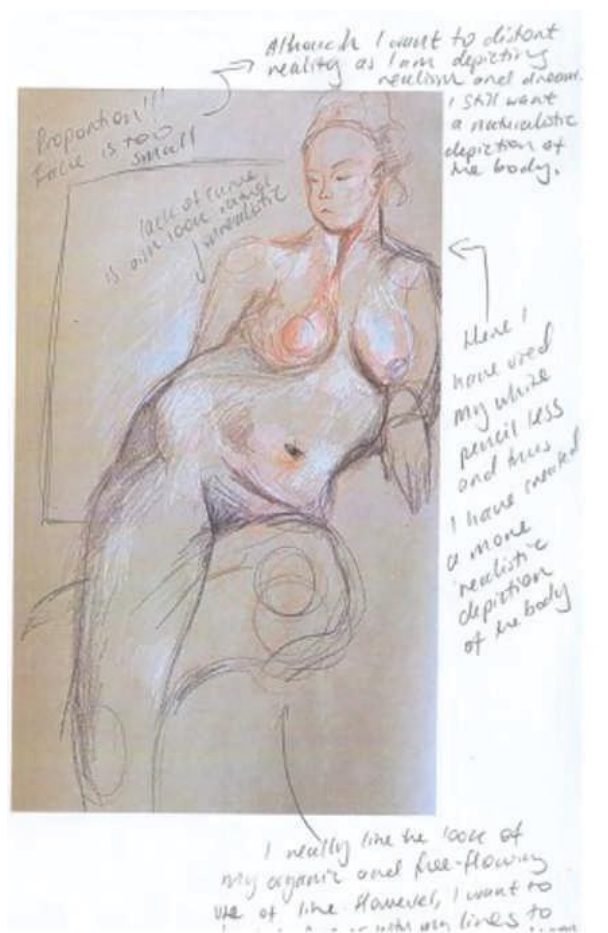


Figure 7.8 Catherine Stirling, life drawing

Catherine decided early in her process that she would take a figurative approach to best represent the physical changes that resulted from the disease. Because she was in a process of recovery, her personal physiology did not fully reflect the extreme changes that had occurred a few years before so she researched representations of anorexia-ravished bodies. She clearly acknowledged these sourced images, identifying where she found them. Using these as reference she began to draw different parts of the female anatomy to develop her understanding of her subject and to develop her skill.

Catherine identified the need to gain a better understanding of human anatomy. She made use of life drawing lessons in class (Figure 7.8), and supported her learning by researching life drawing workshops online (Figure 7.9).

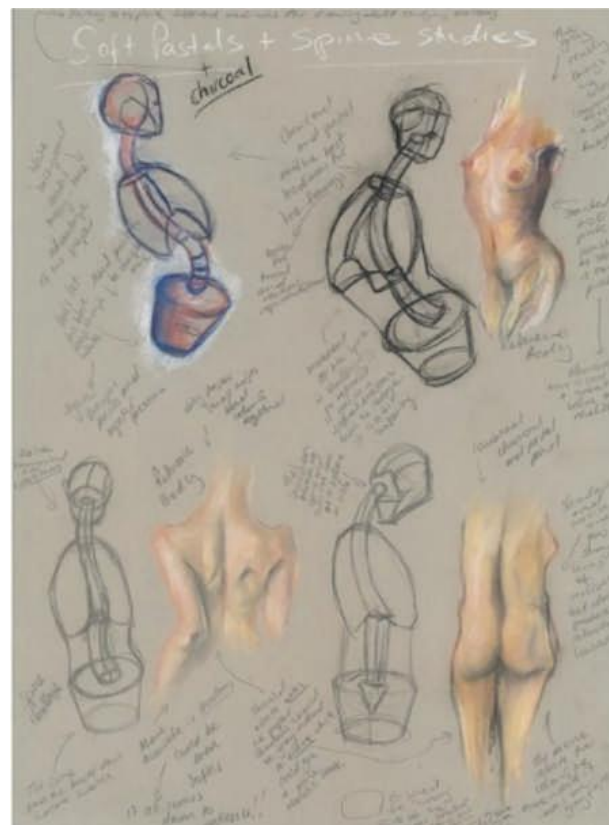


Figure 7.9 Catherine Stirling, exercises from online life drawing workshop



Figure 7.10 Catherine Stirling experiments with mixed media combining pencil and paint.

Catherine continued to document and critically reflect on the use of the Creative Practice to develop personal responses as she began to investigate her selected art forms (drawing and painting) to develop her skill, and to find the best way of representing her response to personal experiences, memories and the messages she wanted to convey. Catherine started to explore different materials and experiment with ways to use them. She manipulated her materials and trialled various techniques and processes to develop her visual language.

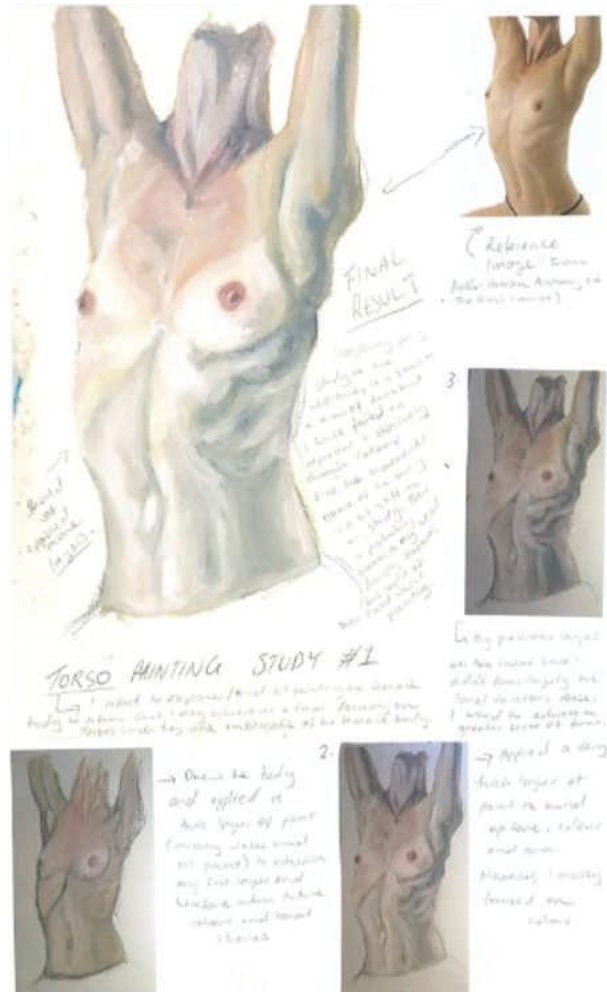


Figure 7.11 Catherine Stirling explores oil paint using a sourced image as reference..

Catherine documented her research, exploration, experimentation and development throughout her process (Figures 7.12 and 7.15) and provided critical annotation using the **Interpretive Lenses** (Figures 7.16 and 7.17) to discuss her personal art responses and ideas throughout her use of the Creative Practice.

Catherine's trials resulted in a development of her skill (Figure 7.18). Her study of anatomy, looking at both the skeleton and the flesh, allowed Catherine to gain a better understanding of the changes that came over her body as the

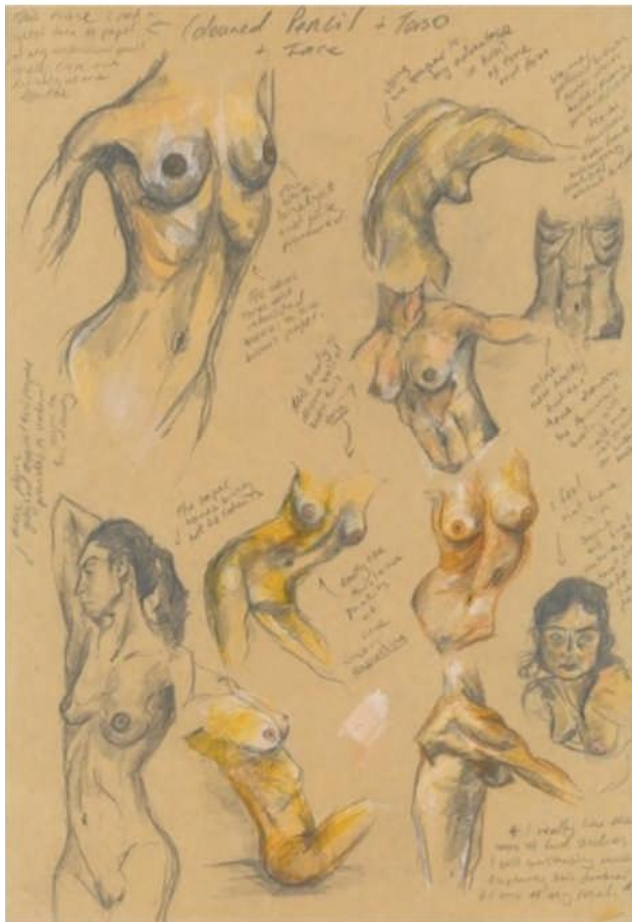


Figure 7.12 Catherine Stirling explores grey lead and coloured pencil.



EXPLORING POLYMER PAPER → TRIAL 2

Figure 7.14 Catherine Stirling explores pencil and oil paint on polymer paper.

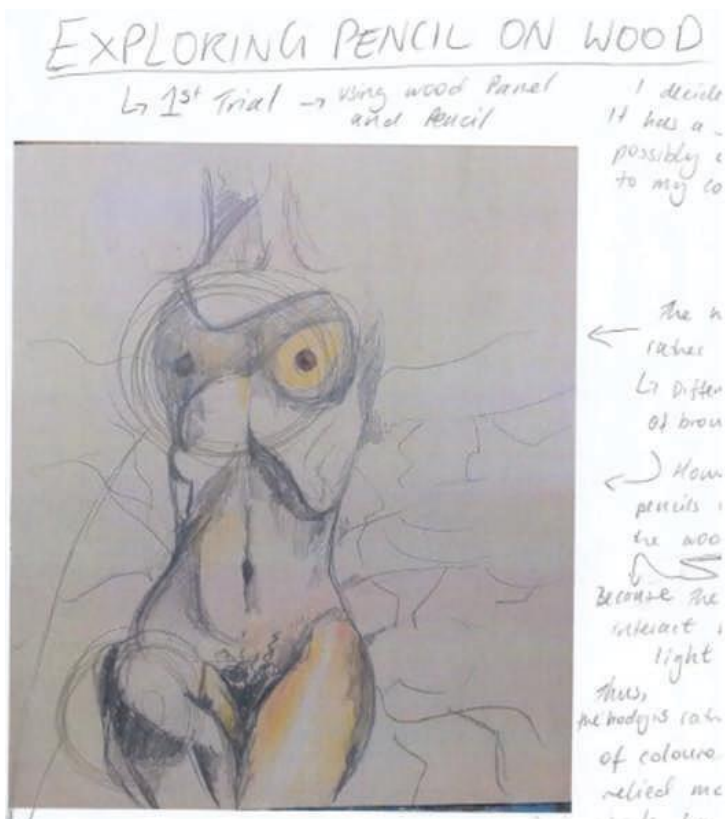


Figure 7.13 Catherine Stirling explores pencil on wood.



Figure 7.15 Catherine Stirling experiments with geometric simplification of the figure.

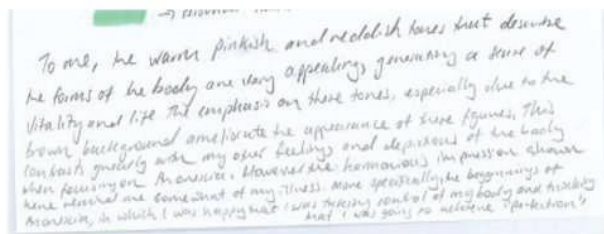


Figure 7.16 Catherine Stirling uses the Personal Lens.

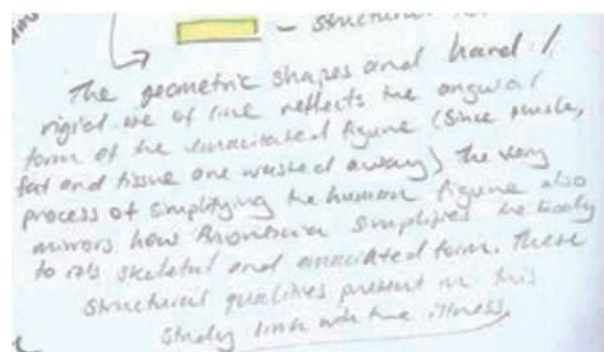


Figure 7.17 Catherine Stirling uses the Personal Lens.



Figure 7.18 Catherine Stirling, pencil study of the female body and the skeleton

disease took hold and how the exterior view was determined by the interior forms of the skeleton (Figures 7.19 and 7.20).

Once she had developed her understanding of the human form and skill in representing it, Catherine began to explore ways that she could convey the messages she wanted to share with the audience. Because of the personal nature of what she was dealing with, Catherine wanted to use herself as the subject of her artworks, so she used photography to capture herself in various poses as reference to draw and paint from. Some of these images were based on early visual brainstorming she had done, while others depicted new directions she was considering. Having explored her ideas and experimented with materials, techniques, processes and art forms, Catherine was well placed to conduct her critique before continuing to refine, resolve and present her completed body of work in Unit 4.



Figure 7.19 Catherine Stirling, pencil study of how the skeleton informs the form of the body in the absence of fat

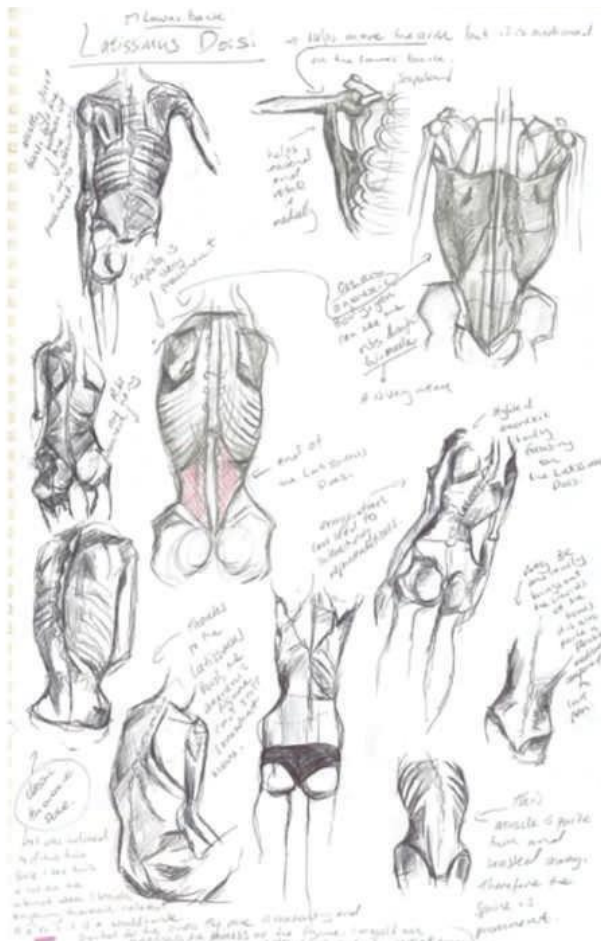


Figure 7.20 Catherine Stirling, pencil study of the female body affected by anorexia

Activity 7.5

Before doing a photoshoot in which you are addressing a particular idea, write an introduction to the idea/s that you want to explore, explicitly using the appropriate lenses. Explain the intention of the photoshoot and what you are hoping to achieve.

After the photoshoot, create contact sheets of all the images and record how successful the shoot was in achieving your intention. Evaluate the photographs and how effective they are in conveying the intended meaning. If they are effective and technically successful, outline how you will proceed. If not, explain what you need to do in order to achieve your goal and what you need to do when retaking the photographs.



Figure 7.21 Catherine Stirling, annotated photoshoot

7.2 An experimentation with art elements and art principles, materials, techniques, processes and art forms

If you are exploring a range of media and art forms, it is helpful to decide on a material that you feel would be suitable for the depiction of one of your ideas. Experiment with this material in terms of its capabilities and limitations. Many of these experiments will help you decide how best to resolve your idea. Some of these experiments may even become minor completed works.

All exploration of materials and ideas is valuable, and should be kept as part of your body of work. Even experiments that are not successful for your current idea could generate ideas for further exploration. You could also refer back to this experiment at a later stage as a resolution to a different idea.

Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely.

Auguste Rodin

You should continue with ongoing personal experimentation, exploration, analysis, evaluation and reflection evaluation as you progressively develop your ideas and skill. Your annotation should be done in real time, not after completing your practical work. As you complete an experiment, analyse the result in terms of the effect created by this use of the material or technique, what you have learnt and how you can use it, or what you should avoid doing. You should also note whether the meaning you want to present is achieved through a particular technique or combination of techniques or processes.

Experimentation – exploration – development

Student 2: Mia Babatsekos

Another VCE student, Mia Babatsekos, took a similar approach to Catherine. Once she decided to explore Perceptions and First Impressions, she researched a number of artists who she felt conveyed these ideas in their work. One of the



Figure 7.22 Loribelle Spirovski, *Homme 159*, 2019, oil and acrylic on linen, 122 × 92 cm

artists she researched was Loribelle Spirovski (Figure 7.22). Mia noted that Spirovski's paintings 'were like first impressions, glancing at someone and noticing particular features like their eyes or crazy hair'.

Spirovski's paintings led Mia to expand her research to continuous line drawing (Figure 7.23) as a possible approach to explore her ideas. She had explored this technique in Unit 1 and was drawn to the immediacy of the approach and the way a single thread was able to reveal the subject as it grew across the page or canvas.

Mia began to use continuous line for portrait studies (Figure 7.24), stating that, 'focusing attention on the portrait to accurately use continuous line was a way of getting to know the subject'. She documented and critically reflected on the use of the Creative Practice to develop personal responses.

Mia soon moved on to painting (Figure 7.25) as her preferred art form and began to apply what she had discovered to new materials.

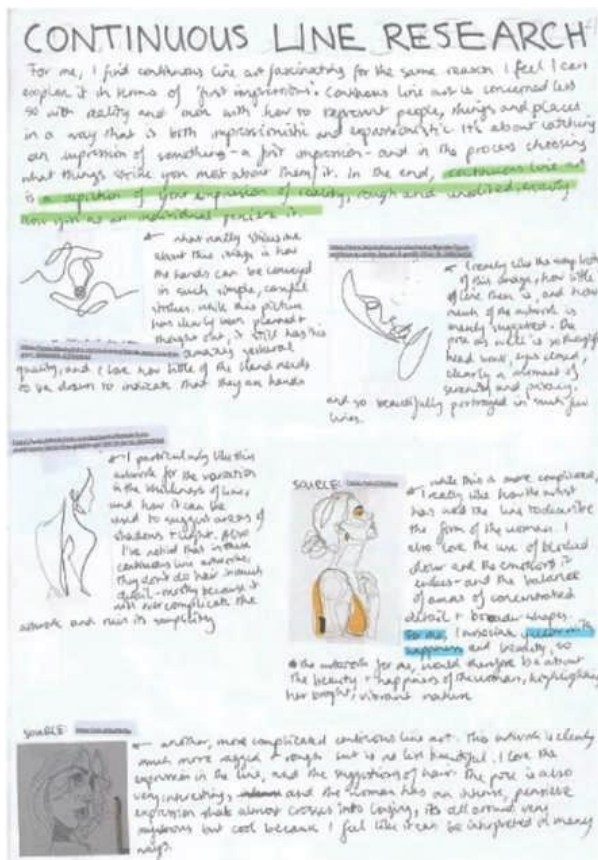


Figure 7.23 Researching selected technique



Figure 7.25 Trial of materials and technique

Mia continued to use portrait paintings to explore different ways of representing *first impressions*, highlighting the characteristics she first noticed in each. She clearly acknowledged images she sourced from the internet as reference and stated where she found them.

During her exploration, Mia experimented with a range of materials, including acrylics, gouache and oil paints, as she tried to determine which would be most effective to create portraits that were made up of some modelled features and continuous line. After determining that she had more control of her line when using gouache, Mia also began to explore contrasting coloured backgrounds (Figure 7.26), to determine whether this affected the audience's perception of the portrait and the person depicted. She also trialled combining the white contour lines with coloured lines of different weight, as well as using oil paint for details in features like the

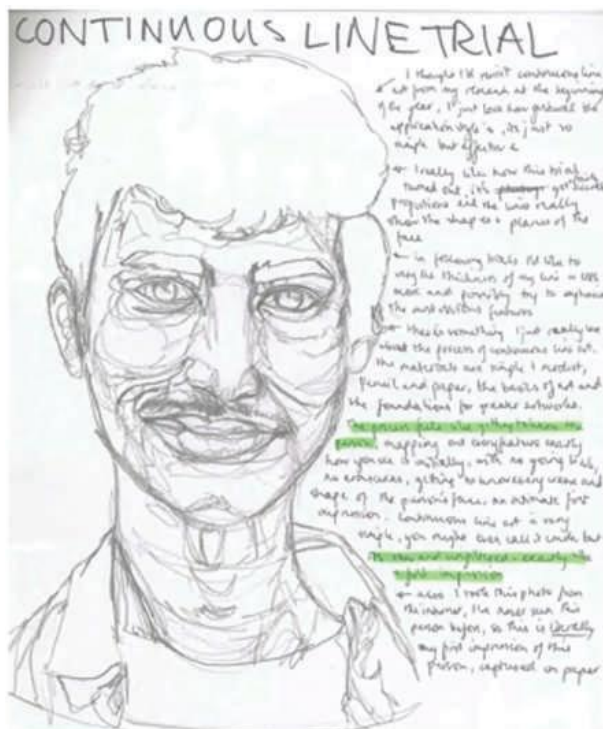


Figure 7.24 Critical annotation reflecting on trial of technique



Figure 7.26 Developing visual language

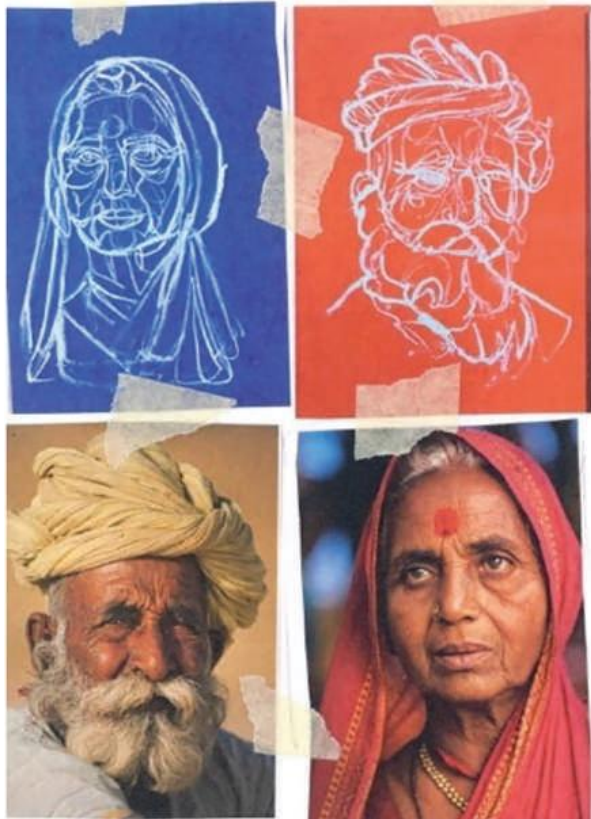


Figure 7.27 Trialling materials and techniques

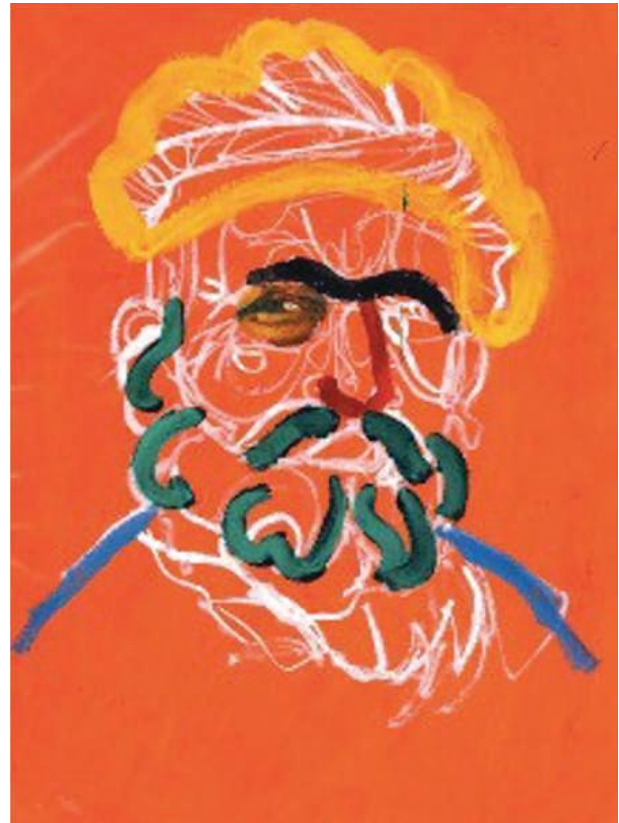


Figure 7.28 Trialling line weights and detail styles

eyes (Figure 7.28). This provided different layers of information that the audience could access to form an opinion of the model.

As Mia continued to work on the ideas she was exploring and the materials and processes she was experimenting with, she decided to increase the scale of her work (Figure 7.29).

Mia continued to document and critically reflect on the use of the Creative Practice to develop personal responses as she explored and developed her visual language to effectively communicate personal ideas. Her critical annotation communicates her decisions.

I want to start by increasing the scale of these portraits ... a large canvas will call attention to the layers found in the face that reveal the character ... the scale commands the attention of the viewer forcing them to spend time decoding the face rather than writing it off at first glance. There is more to people than what's on the surface ...



Figure 7.29 Trialling increased scale of artwork

Mia continued to develop both her technique and skill (Figures 7.30 and 7.31), while also experimenting further with different materials. She was not happy with the line quality she achieved with gouache, so trialled Poska markers (Figures 7.32). Happy with the variation and quality of line she could achieve with this new material, she trialled different coloured markers on a coloured ground to see how she could get lines to advance and recede, controlling what information the audience could see at first glance and what they might see when engaging with the work for a little longer (Figure 7.33). Mia then applied all that she had discovered to a trial combining the different materials, using Poska marker and oil paint on coloured canvas primed with acrylic paint (Figure 7.34). Having explored her ideas and experimented with materials, techniques, processes and art forms, Mia was now well placed to conduct her critique before continuing to refine, resolve and present her completed body of work in Unit 4.

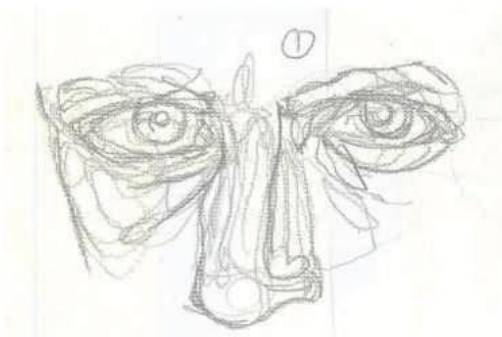


Figure 7.30 Pencil contour line drawing



Figure 7.31 Detailed study of an eye, oil paint on paper



Figure 7.32 Trialling Poska colours on primed canvas

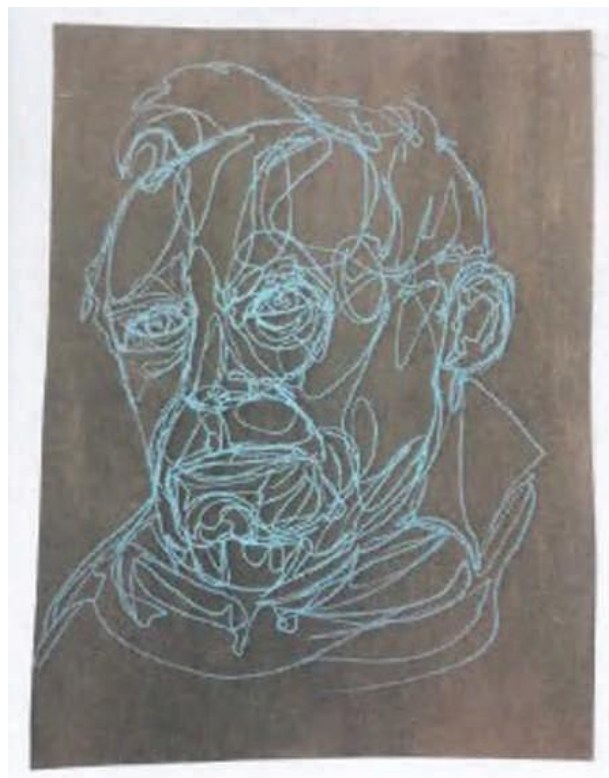


Figure 7.33 Poska marker on coloured canvas primed with acrylic paint

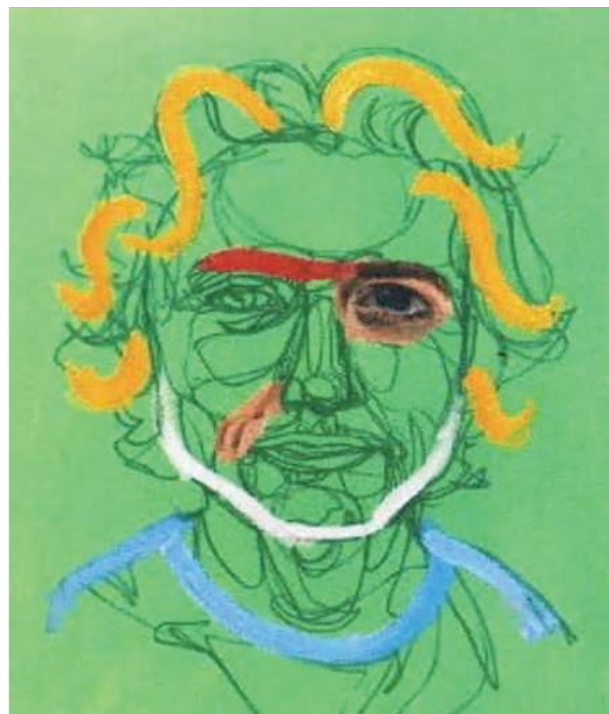


Figure 7.34 Poska marker and oil paint on coloured canvas primed with acrylic paint

7.3 Submission and assessment of Unit 3 AOS1 and AOS2

While your body of work completed by the end of Unit 3 is not formally assessed until the end of Unit 4, you will need to submit the work to your teacher at a date determined by them. Your teacher will authenticate your work and acknowledge that you have met the outcomes for both Unit 3 AOS1 and AOS2 before you continue with your body of work in Unit 4.

Authentication

According to the VCAA's requirements, it is important to acknowledge the sources of materials and information used to support the development of ideas, including materials identified for inspiration and further development. This includes documentation of any appropriated imagery, with information detailing how your work has evolved from the source imagery. Your teacher is required to complete an Authentication Record Form that

provides a record of their monitoring your work in progress for authentication purposes. Your teachers must ensure that all source and reference material, all appropriate imagery used in the final artwork, all use of non-school resources and any external assistance are acknowledged on the authentication form.

Working outside of class time

As with your other subjects, a comprehensive body of work requires additional work outside of class time. It is vital that you record ideas as they come to you, wherever you are, and then discuss these with your teacher. Your teacher can advise you on how you can approach your ideas and what materials, techniques or art forms will be appropriate, and can also help you to develop the required skills.

UNIT 4

Interpreting, resolving and presenting artworks and Creative Practice



Chapter 8

Areas of Study 1 and 2



In Unit 4 you will continue to develop your application of the Creative Practice through project-based and inquiry learning. You will continue to develop, refine, resolve and present your body of work. You must use the Interpretive Lenses to inform your use of the Creative Practice.

You must continue to build on the ideas you started to explore in Unit 3 and present a critique of all aspects of the Creative Practice that you have completed by the end of Unit 3. The critique in Area of Study 1 must take place before the resolution and presentation of your body of work and must inform how you refine, resolve and present your body of work. You must reflect on the feedback you received from your critique in order to further refine and resolve your work and demonstrate an effective use

of the Creative Practice to realise your personal ideas.

You will present your body of work to an audience accompanied by annotated documentation of your use of the Creative Practice.

Areas of Study 1 and 2 are completed concurrently and assessed at the end of Unit 4. The documentation of the Creative Practice is continued throughout Unit 4, including during the refinement, resolution and presentation of your body of work.

OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit you should be able to document your use of the Creative Practice and present a critique to inform the refinement and resolution of a body of work.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- methods used to evaluate and document the refinement and resolution of personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice
- methods used to evaluate and document the refinement of materials, techniques and processes in selected art forms throughout the Creative Practice
- methods used to evaluate and document the refinement and resolution of visual language in personal responses
- the selection of the appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- methods used to present and critique the use of the Creative Practice
- feedback and reflection used to refine and resolve a body of work
- art terminology used in critical reflection.
- evaluate and document the use of the Creative Practice to refine materials, techniques and processes in selected art forms to resolve a body of work
- document the refinement and effective resolution of visual language to communicate ideas in personal responses
- select and apply the appropriate Interpretive Lenses to document the use of the Creative Practice
- present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice
- use feedback and reflection to resolve a body of work
- document, annotate and evaluate the refinement and resolution of the body of work, using appropriate written and visual material
- apply art terminology in critically reflective annotations throughout the Creative Practice.

KEY SKILLS

- evaluate and document the refinement and resolution of personal responses throughout the Creative Practice

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit you should be able to use the Creative Practice to resolve and present a body of work.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the use of materials, techniques and processes in selected art forms throughout the Creative Practice
- the use of the Creative Practice to resolve ideas in a body of work
- the refinement of skill using materials and techniques in selected art forms to resolve ideas in a body of work
- methods to refine and resolve visual language to communicate personal ideas in a body of work

- the use of the appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- the ways the presentation and context of a body of work can effectively communicate ideas and meaning to a viewer or audience.

KEY SKILLS

- refine and resolve the use of materials, techniques and processes in selected art forms using the Creative Practice
- resolve ideas in a body of work using the Creative Practice
- refine the use of materials and techniques in selected art forms to resolve ideas in a body of work

- refine and resolve visual language to communicate personal ideas in a body of work
- select and apply the appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- present a body of work in a specific context to communicate ideas and meaning to a viewer or audience
- evaluate how the presentation and context of a body of work effectively communicates ideas and meaning to a viewer or audience.

AREA OF STUDY 1 DOCUMENTATION AND CRITIQUE OF THE CREATIVE PRACTICE

In this Area of Study, you will continue to use the Creative Practice to develop, refine and resolve the ideas you developed in Unit 3.

Without play, there would be no Picasso. Without play, there is no experimentation. Experimentation is the quest for answers.

Paul Rand, US graphic designer

Adapted from the VCE Art Creative Practice Study Design (2023–2027) © VCAA; reproduced by permission.

NOTE: this chapter contains artwork and discussions on potentially triggering topics, including mental health and eating disorders. Please advise your teacher if you prefer not to engage with these topics.

8.1 Presentation of a critique



Video 8.1

Unit 4 starts with the presentation of a critique in which you evaluate, reflect upon and present evidence of your use of the Creative Practice to this point. You must evaluate how you explored and experimented with materials, techniques, processes and your selected art form(s) in Unit 3 AOS2. You must show how you establish your visual language in personal visual responses to your ideas, inspiration and experiences throughout your body of work to date. Using points of discussion in response to your presentation in the critique, you must identify and classify emerging ideas in your artworks. These may be ideas that you raised in reflection or ideas raised by other participants of the critique. You should consider and reflect on the feedback you receive, which will focus on how effectively you are communicating your ideas and how you can continue to refine and resolve your body of work. This is an opportunity to receive feedback

from the audience regarding how you are communicating with them, so that you can refine and resolve your work to achieve your intentions.

After the critique, and when you have had time to reflect on the feedback received, you must continue to use the Creative Practice to refine, resolve and present your body of work. You must continue to document the refinement of your visual language through the continued investigation and experimentation of materials, techniques, processes in your chosen art form. Using art terminology, you must provide critical annotations that you use to analyse and evaluate your work. You must document the ongoing development and refinement of the application of the materials, techniques and art form you select. The documentation should demonstrate your progressive refinement and resolution of your body of work.

8.2 Documenting your use of the Creative Practice

During Unit 4, you are required to apply the Interpretive Lenses to document your use of the Creative Practice. While you do not have to make use of all three lenses, you should explicitly apply the lenses that are appropriate to your body of work.

In Unit 4, you will continue to progressively develop and refine the body of work begun in Unit 3. While it is expected that you will present a body of work, you are required to submit at least one finished artwork that resolves your exploration and achieves your intention. You must continue to use appropriate Interpretive Lenses to support and guide the reflection and documentation of your art making.

You are required to document and analyse your use of the Creative Practice throughout the creation of your body of work. To document does not only mean to write, but also to record. Recording can be visual and/or written. As a visual subject, the most important means of conveying information is through the presentation of images. These could be drawings, paintings, prints, photographs, screenshots or **maquettes**. Every sketch and trial, no matter how unsuccessful and disappointing, is an important record of your process. Along with successful experimentation with materials, techniques and processes, these allow the assessors to understand how you progressively developed and refined your body of work from concept to your final resolution and presentation. Images on their own are open to interpretation by the audience. In order to clearly communicate what you are trying to achieve and justify your decisions, it is important to combine visual documentation with written annotations that reflect on your ideas, making and responding.

Documenting your use of the Creative Practice will assist the audience to understand what you are trying to achieve through your body of work. The annotation will also provide evidence of your understanding to the person assessing your work.

It is important that the audience can read your critical reflections in the context of viewing the work. It is best to annotate your observations next to the work or photographs of the work that cannot fit into your visual diary. If you are presenting work outside a sketchbook or similar format, you can annotate on the back of the work.

All records of your process must be done in 'real time', not after the fact. If done after you have completed the artwork, the annotations would not be relevant to your practice. The documentation is not only for the benefit of the assessor or the audience, to give them insight into your use of the Creative Practice. It is also important for you to record your process so that you can reflect on your work and respond to this reflection and evaluation as you progress with your making.

Writing down your ideas makes them more visible and concrete and ensures that you do not forget them. By writing them down, you can revisit earlier ideas when you need a new direction in your folio. If you are painting and have explored a range of techniques, you could revisit some that you had earlier rejected for a particular painting if you thought they had potential for a new idea. Annotation also provides you with the means to evaluate your exploration and finished works. Remember that you will not be around to explain your ideas and decisions when your folio is assessed, so you need to provide the assessor with all the information they require to navigate your body of work and how you used the Creative Practice.

VCE student Bethany Cherry investigated a number of approaches to portraiture in Unit 3. She trialled different images and viewpoints and

maquette a model for a larger sculpture, created to visualise how it might look and work out what approaches and materials would be the most appropriate

[illegible]

Documenting digital artworks

1. Often, digital artworks appear to be a quick resolution. This is due to the ease with which you can appropriate images, use filters or access preloaded effects from the software's library. It is therefore important to show evidence of how you have created your images and your control of the tools and process. Your artwork may require many trials and combinations of images and effects, subtle variations of colour and careful manipulations of tone. It is important that the process is made clear to the audience. The easiest way to do this is to use annotated screenshots showing important stages in your process. This will remove any doubt about the authenticity of your work. Avoid pages and pages of screenshots. Your documentation should demonstrate how you arrived at the final draft and show that it was a result of your own work.

2. This documentation also serves as a record or backup to which you can refer if you lose an image or if your file becomes corrupted. The documentation can be written, typed or visual. It will provide you with the necessary information to reproduce the image if need be. It is a lot quicker to reproduce the same image if you have annotated the steps and solutions to certain problems than it would be if you were trying to work from memory. This scenario emphasises the importance of you annotating as you go. 'Real-time' annotation is vital, as you will often forget certain steps in your process and the details that are so important to achieving your objective.

Documenting manual processes

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the darkroom only to have a classmate spill paint on it. How do you easily reproduce this if you have not recorded the height of the enlarger and aperture you selected, the filter you have used or the amount of time for which you have exposed your paper?

Activity 8.1

Use a digital camera to document, and written annotations to record, your artistic practice.

Self-reflection

Self-reflection should occur regularly throughout the Creative Practice. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the focus of my work?
- What is my intention and how can I best express that?
- Did the feedback from my critique indicate that my visual language was effective?
- What materials, techniques and processes could I use?
- What do I need to do to resolve my work?

Answering these questions will help you to develop an effective body of work and assist the assessor and the audience to gain greater insight into your intention.

Visual and written annotation can explain:

- how you are interpreting your ideas
- how you are making use of the techniques, materials and processes to create a visual language
- how you are manipulating the art elements and principles to emphasise the messages and meaning in your artwork/s
- your reason for making decisions and choices in your use of the Creative Practice
- the symbolism you have used
- the style in which you have chosen to work.

Annotate each image with information that includes details about how the ideas can be explored and further developed.

On completion of your body of work, or when resolving an individual artwork, it is important to reflect on the process and the work you are presenting. You should evaluate your visual language and how effective you have been in communicating your idea. In this annotation you should also explain the decisions you have made with regard to the presentation of your artwork and the context in which the audience engages with your work. Using art terminology, you should make observations about your work and apply appropriate Interpretive Lenses to the discussion of the messages and meaning of your artwork.

In this critical annotation, you should explain what you were trying to achieve and how you have used the art form/s, materials and techniques to achieve this. Explain how effective your application of the structural qualities was and any symbolism that you employed to visually represent your idea/s.

Alexia Shaw reflected on her final artwork (Figure 8.2) using the Cultural Lens to explain her intention.



Figure 8.2 Alexia Shaw, *Untitled*, oil and paper on canvas, 41 × 51 cm



It's no secret that male artists have received greater recognition throughout history than their female counterparts, and even our contemporary art scene often perpetuates gender disparity (in 2018, around 25 per cent of exhibited works at the National Gallery of Australia were by women). This depiction of a historical woman in a traditional medium alludes to these disadvantages, the subject's gaze confronting the viewer's own ignorance regarding the artistic accomplishments of female artists. The woman is obscured by a variety of famous artworks by male painters, implying that female work has been ignored in favour of male art for centuries.

Activity 8.2

Select an artwork that you have created to represent a concept or reflect on an issue. Use art terminology to evaluate the degree to which you feel you succeeded in conveying your idea or concept. Explain what you were striving to achieve. Evaluate your use of the elements and principles of art, symbolism, materials, techniques, processes and art forms.

Annotation

Annotation can provide you with a means of working through a problem. Many students find that it helps them to talk through an idea or to discuss something challenging. Annotation is an opportunity for you to have a conversation with yourself without someone thinking you are crazy – especially when you answer back with a solution to the problem. This annotation will also provide the audience with an idea of what you are thinking and why you made the decisions you did.

Furthermore, it will guide them through your process of creating a body of work. A question many students ask is, 'How much written annotation do I need?' The study design does not specify a minimum or maximum word count,

so instead you should ask yourself, 'How much written annotation do I need to document my practice, to help me to develop a body of work and to clearly communicate with the audience and my assessors?' Some students find it helps them to write a lot. This, however, is not a requirement. You do not have to write an essay or even paragraphs of text – often a sentence will be sufficient. If there is something that you believe is important for the viewer to read, then highlight the key details in the body of work. You can do this with a highlighter, underlining the text or drawing a coloured box around the relevant text.

All your trials – whether they are small sketches, large trials with oil on canvas or a contact sheet of digital prints – present to the viewer a picture of what you are trying to achieve in your body of work. By including unsuccessful trials, you are able to evaluate them and explain what you will do to improve your practice. By resolving the issues that you identify, you show a development of your skill and your practice. This annotation is separate from the application of the Interpretive Lenses, which explain the meaning and messages contained in your work. Documenting your use of the Creative Practice allows you to evaluate and reflect on the development, refinement, resolution and presentation of your body of work and the visual language that you have established.

Documenting your response to feedback

In response to the feedback she received from her critique, VCE student Nicky Purser continued to develop and refine two areas that she had explored in Unit 3 as part of Area of Study 1. She used her life drawings and the watercolour paintings by Charles Reid that had inspired her in Unit 3. She chose to use Reid's style and techniques when painting with watercolours, to rework life drawings that she had completed in class (Figures 8.3 and 8.5). She annotated her early trials:

As suggested in the feedback I received from my critique I reworked some of my life drawings as small watercolour studies. I copied a charcoal sketch I did in life drawing ... working quickly;

the contour line sketch took about 30 seconds and the watercolour about two minutes. The skin tone is much too yellow ... I like the red on the knee, it reminds me of the spots of colour Reid uses ... I need more colour variation.



Figure 8.3 Nicky Purser, Charcoal 1



Figure 8.5 Nicky Purser, Charcoal of Reclining Figure

Continuing with this exploration (Figures 8.4 and 8.6), Nicky decided to use tubes of watercolour paint, rather than the discs she had been using, to see whether she could achieve the colours and

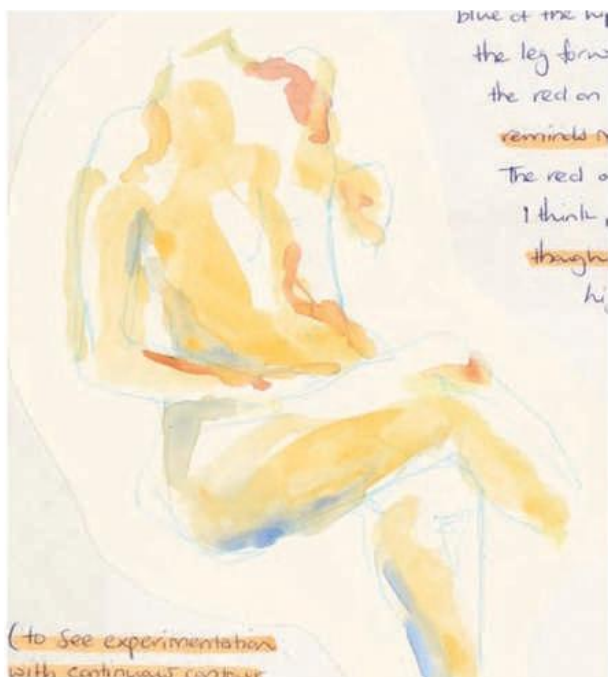


Figure 8.4 Nicky Purser, Watercolour



Figure 8.6 Nicky Purser, Watercolour of Reclining Figure

effects she was looking for. She evaluated her decisions and experimentation in the annotations:

I like the tube paints better because the colour is more intense ... I took a little longer on the contour line sketch and painting, but again tried to work quickly. I used a spray bottle with water to keep the paint from drying ... I like the speckled effect and the way it softens the mid tones and makes the shadows stand out.

After further refinement, Nicky produced a 10-minute gestural life drawing of a model in class (Figure 8.7). This was included in the documentation of her body of work for Area of Study 1. Using this drawing as reference, Nicky responded to the drawing, her research and experimentation from Area of Study 1 to resolve



Figure 8.7 Nicky Purser, *Charcoal of Standing Nude*



Figure 8.8 Nicky Purser, *Watercolour of Standing Nude (Final)*

a finished work for Area of Study 2. While there is clear evidence of Reid's influence on her, she explored his technique in a personal way and had made it very much her own (Figure 8.8).

As you explore, develop and refine your ideas, materials, techniques and processes, you must use annotations to explain your journey and assist the audience to navigate your body of work. At times this will have a logical sequence that is easily followed by the viewer, while at other times you may revisit earlier ideas or your folio may take a different direction. An important function of the written annotation is to identify links to earlier ideas and trials, and show how these relate to your current point in the Creative Practice.

8.3 Use the Interpretive Lenses to support reflective annotation of your body of work

You must use the Interpretive Lenses to discuss your development and further experimentation in response to your observations and feedback received from your critique. You must continue to use them during the refinement of ideas, visual language and skill, and to reflect on the resolution and presentation of your finished artworks.

Points to consider when applying the Structural Lens

When using the Structural Lens, you must analyse the structural qualities in your artworks and document your creative and technical processes. You must reflect on your own art making and examine how you have used art elements, art principles and symbolism to develop your style and visual language. You should establish an awareness of the elements and principles of art in your own exploration.

Many students intuitively employ these elements and principles effectively in their own work without realising it. This is usually because they subconsciously recall what they have been taught in the past, or observed or studied in theory when looking at other artists' work. It is important, however, that you become aware of what applications or combinations of the elements and principles are effective, what to avoid and how these combinations can affect the meaning of your work. You should use the elements and principles to develop a visual language.

You must also consider how your use of the materials, techniques and processes affects the meaning of your own artworks. In order to do this, you will need to document your ideas, processes and the resulting practical applications of your techniques and materials.

VCE student Erika Grosek wrote:



This self-portrait explores liminal identities and existing between two societal groups. There is a particular emphasis on always feeling like the outsider and not knowing oneself well enough to completely identify with any one culture or age group.



Figure 8.9 Erika Grosek *Untitled*, 2020, oil and embroidery on canvas, 122 × 90 cm

The use of flat shapes to create the figure and the ground creates an overall image that does not depict the figure clearly, as if this is the figure's own view of their identity. The colour palette is warm and suggests my easygoing and warm nature, but this is on the surface. The smooth surface of the blended oil paint is interrupted with a barely visible texture hinting that what you see is not the entire story of my identity. Words revealing my character and thoughts regarding my identity have been repeatedly embroidered into three of the shapes in the work. I used thread similar in colour to the shape it has been embroidered on. This camouflages the revealing text into the background. While the text physically represents my thoughts regarding their identity, they are unclear and hidden. This is symbolic of people being uncertain as to my identity, but also my own uncertainty as I hold back, not wanting to commit.



Figure 8.10 Erika Grosek, *Untitled* (Detail), 2020, oil and embroidery on canvas

Activity 8.3

Choose five artworks. Explain how the art elements and principles; use of the materials, techniques and processes; creation of symbols; and the style in which the artist works affect the meaning of the artworks you have selected.

Activity 8.4

Reflect on how you have used art elements and principles to construct your visual language.

Points to consider when applying the Personal Lens

When using the Personal Lens, you should consider your upbringing, personal experiences or the beliefs and values that you hold. Did you decide to explore your selected idea because of something you have personally experienced? Are you trying to challenge

the audience's values or make them aware of a particular belief? Has your gender affected the way you are choosing to represent the idea? Are you trying to appeal to a specific gender or create awareness of gender issues? Is your visual language reflecting the way you see the world when viewed through a personal lens? You could discuss how you were influenced by this lens. You may also wish to consider the impact of your work on the audience and how their experiences, identity, beliefs and values will affect the way they respond to your body of work. What personal symbols have you used? Explain how they enhance the message.

In his folio, VCE Art student Tim Greenwood chose to explore depression, an important issue in society that touches every one of us (Figure 8.11). It is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and an estimated 45 per cent of people in Australia will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. If we do not suffer depression personally, it is likely that someone in our family does. Yet many people still do not understand this illness.

Tim wrote:

I chose to explore depression through my art in order to gain a better insight into the disease that my mother suffers with. I want to heighten people's awareness of



Figure 8.11 Tim Greenwood, *Portrait of Depression*, chalk pastel on paper

this debilitating illness while at the same time understand what she is going through and how better to support her. While not suffering depression myself, it does have an impact on my daily life, as my mother's state of mind affects how she behaves and how I have to behave around her.

In my critique I presented my exploration of this idea and my experimentation with photography, painted plaster masks, digital imagery and chalk pastel. The feedback I received convinced me to further refine my use of chalk pastel and to also consider presenting the idea as a triptych to show three stages of depression, rather than a single artwork.



I have tried to represent the downward spiral of depression, but more specifically, the many masks worn to hide sad, hopeless, helpless and often empty feelings. My mother has tried to shield my brother and I from the full impact of the disease when we were younger, by constantly putting on masks to hide her true state of mind. Even in her darkest moments she has been there for us, supporting us when she was the one desperate for support, caring for us when she was in torment, smiling and joking when she felt empty. She never let the mask slip and this is my way of saying – it's ok, I am here for you too.

The face I chose as reference is obviously not my mother, who does not like photographs taken of her as she has a poor self-image, typical of people suffering depression. I am not representing my mother personally but rather referencing the illness and how it affects people like my mother.



I have used personal symbolism like the feather, birds and colour to communicate some of the ideas related to depression. The man's smiling face is a façade. It is his mask that hides the illness consuming him and represents the first stage. A deep sadness lies undetected due to the fact that, like most people who suffer depression,

he is wearing a mask to hide the illness from those around him, or to conceal his pain. This is something I realised recently that my mother had been doing to keep her depression from my brother and me. In retrospect, I recall clues to my mother's depression and the feather he holds hints at the depression within him.

In the second stage the man is ripping away at the mask, revealing the darkness of his torment and his deep black abyss that has become too hard to hide. As the mask tears away the flaking pieces turn into birds that replace the feather in the first panel.

In the third artwork and final stage, his mask is almost completely removed. The colour in his face and in the background is gone and these areas are now achromatic, representing the darkness that has engulfed his entire mind, body and soul.

The crazed birds in the third artwork fly in all directions. Their erratic placement in the format suggesting chaos and illustrate how depression usually clouds, darkens and warps your mind and thoughts. The technique I used to layer the pastel and build up the images is an ironic reversal of how the man is removing the layers that he has built up to hide behind.



Points to consider when applying the Cultural Lens

When using the Cultural Lens, you should consider the influences of the cultural context in which you worked. Was the purpose of your art affected by your own or any other culture? You could discuss how you were influenced by past or present cultural issues, any political, social or religious implications, or aspects of ethnicity and gender. You may also wish to consider the impact of your work on the audience and how their cultural background and experiences will affect the way they respond to your body of work. What cultural symbols have you used? Explain how they enhance the message.



Figure 8.12 Georgia Pinney Gvozdic, *You Make Me Sick*, fineliner and watercolour on paper

What cultural issues have you dealt with in your folio? Have you made any specific references to a specific culture or cultural events or festivals? How have you represented these? This representation could be an obvious reference through subject matter or a more subtle reference made through the application of symbolism.

In what ways do your works reflect present cultural factors? They could relate to tensions between two cultures in the media currently, or you might use graffiti and stencil art to explore an issue that interests you from the perspective of 'youth culture' or 'street culture'.

Was it your intention to influence the emotions of the viewer? If so, how have you attempted to do this? Do you believe you were successful in this? Do your artworks contain messages? If so, what are they?

In Figure 8.12, VCE Art student Georgia Pinney Gvozdic was exploring the concept of 'The Human Body and Culture'. She focused on the physical representation of the human body, while also considering the way the female body was viewed in Western culture. She wrote:

You Make Me Sick explores the female body, its anatomical functions and our culture's perception of these factors. The red splotted watercolour is applied in violent brush movements to represent menstruation, as the piece comments on our society's shaming of women and their bodies, including their natural bodily functions. Periods are seen as disgusting, gross and even 'impure' across multiple cultures, despite them being not only completely natural and unavoidable, but even a defining event of womanhood. Yet still women's bodies are restricted to conforming to the male gaze (represented through the black harsh pen line), rather than being allowed diverse subjective expression. Our culture's commentary on women (portrayed in black text) is what contains and shadows the free and fluid raw element of the female body, represented by the flowing blue watercolour strokes, which appear hidden, alienated and shamed behind the overlapping sharp line of patriarchy.



8.4 Art terminology for documentation and annotation of your work

You should continue to develop your use of art terminology as you document and annotate your work and that of the artists who have inspired you this semester. The annotation will assist you to formalise your understanding and help you to continue to refine your personal visual language and to present your ideas effectively. The terminology that you use to document your work and your use of the Creative Practice should reflect the terminology that is used in art theory. Make use of the terminology appropriate to the relevant Interpretive Lenses. As with the written responses in theory, you should substantiate your statements. This will demonstrate insight and understanding.

Experimenting with different approaches to represent her idea of 'first perceptions', VCE student Mia Babatsikos trialled her continuous line drawings on different coloured grounds (Figure 8.14). Her annotations showed evidence of her use of art terminology when she wrote:

I tried using gouache oil paper that I had primed with acrylic. I chose blue because I was not trying to capture the objective colour, but rather wanted to use subjective colour that represented the initial feeling I got from the woman when I saw her for the first time. She seemed pensive and deep in thought which I associated with the colour blue. The white contrasts effectively with the blue and stands out.



Figure 8.13 Mia Babatsikos, reference image



Figure 8.14 Mia Babatsikos, response to sourced image

Presenting the documentation of your body of work

There is no prescribed method to present the documentation of your use of the Creative Practice. You should choose a method that is appropriate to your art practice. It is important, however, to show the process that you have followed rather than present a 'curated' presentation. It is important that you present your documentation in a way that will allow your teacher and others to easily navigate your body of work.

Many students choose to work in a sketchbook as a means to collect and document their exploration, while others choose to present their documentation in a digital format. No consideration should be given to pretty pages or spending money on expensive folders. This is a workbook and should be used as such. If you get paint on it while referring to something related to your painting, it does not matter. No borders, scrapbooking or fancy covers are needed, as the focus is on the content and the progressive development and refinement of your ideas and art making.

Students working in a sketchbook tend to present their work in chronological order from the point of origin to the point of submission. Although this provides an accurate record of your journey, if you explore more than one idea at the same time it can be very confusing for someone trying to follow your process. To assist with the viewer's navigation of their documentation, some students use colour tabs or numbers to guide them through the chronological development of one idea or area of exploration, before they then return to the point where the next idea starts. Others prefer to break the exploration up into multiple sketchbooks. In this instance they use one book for general idea generation then take a selected idea through to completion in a separate book. New ideas continue to be placed into the first book as they occur.



Some students work on loose paper or canvases. This allows for free exploration and development of ideas and experimentation with materials, techniques, processes and art forms. Once the work is completed, the pages are placed

in a presentation folder or bound in a book. Some students photograph works that cannot fit into their sketchbook to make it easy to annotate, but remember that you can annotate on the back of works that are presented outside your visual diary.

Activity 8.5

View the Top Arts exhibition and look through the folios on display. Note the different approaches that each student has taken when putting their body of work together. How do they help you, as the audience, to navigate their folio? How do they provide you with insight into their artistic practices?

*If you are not able to visit the exhibition in person, you can view the artworks, digital examples of folios and the folios that have been annotated by the State Reviewer on the NGV website.

RESOLUTION AND PRESENTATION OF A BODY OF WORK

In this Area of Study you must continue to use inquiry and project-based learning as the basis for your application of the Creative Practice. You will further develop and refine the body of work you began in Unit 3 and continue your ongoing exploration, and experimentation of personal responses. Using the feedback you receive from your critique, you must progressively refine and resolve your ideas, visual language and skill. You can explore your ideas in a number of art forms or a range of approaches using a single art form. When

resolving your work, you must also consider the presentation and context of your body of work and how your ideas and the meaning of the work are communicated to the audience.

It is important that you engage in creative and technical processes as you develop, refine, resolve and present your body of work. You can experiment with, explore and apply a range of materials, techniques and processes relevant to your ideas.

8.5 Resolving and refining your ideas

Your artwork should display technical skill and the most appropriate materials for what you want to achieve. It is important to progressively refine, improve and resolve ideas and skills as you produce your final artworks. You will need to explore solutions to demonstrate different interpretations of your ideas. You will need to

progressively resolve ideas, direction, materials, techniques, processes and your application of the art elements and principles. You should produce solutions that demonstrate considered and well-developed responses to each aspect of the Creative Practice.

Refinement of materials, techniques and technical processes to provide visual strength to artworks

Elisa Bongetti, a VCE Art student, was inspired by a visit to the Archibald Portrait Exhibition. The double portrait of Jack Thompson by Danelle Bergstrom (Figure 8.15) particularly appealed to her. The subject matter, colouring and loose style of painting inspired Elisa to explore portraiture in oils using a similar approach. Working from photographs she took of a friend, Elisa began trialling her medium and technique (Figure 8.16). Her intention was to capture the physical representation of her friend, developing her technique to achieve a realistic portrait in oils. She also chose to use the element of colour to reflect the personality of her model.



Figure 8.15 Danelle Bergstrom, *Take Two: Jack Thompson*, 2007, oil on linen (182 × 182 cm), photograph © Jenni Carter



Figure 8.16 Incomplete trial in oils on oil paper by Elisa Bongetti, with evidence of colour mixing

During Area of Study 1, Elisa wrote:

Too tight – I need to loosen up my brushstrokes to get some life in the painted surface.

Palette – autumn colours. I used warm hues to highlight and cool hues to recede areas.

Shadows were kept fairly warm most of the time. The warm palette is important as it reflects Erin's warm and friendly personality. This painting is incomplete because it began to get too controlled and realistic. That is not the style I want to achieve. It shows the layers and techniques I used.



Figure 8.17 Elisa Bongetti, *Portrait of Erin*

In Area of Study 2, Elisa continued to refine her understanding of her materials, colour palette and techniques. With increased confidence Elisa resolved her technique and skill, presenting a finished painting *Portrait of Erin* (Figure 8.17) that achieved her intention.

A resolution is not necessarily a finished work of art, but could be the resolution of an area of exploration. As you work through an idea, you may get to a point where you feel you cannot take it any further. You may not be happy with what you have achieved or where this line of exploration is taking you. This could be considered the completion of that avenue of thought, and is therefore a resolution. It is important to communicate the fact that you feel this line of exploration has been resolved. To do this, you should annotate why you have decided to change

direction. You can also comment on any ideas this exploration may have generated or any materials and techniques you may have discovered that you will continue to use. Give a clear indication through visual and written documentation of where you will go next.

Presenting your final artworks

If you would like to lay your work out in a specific way, you should make a layout map of how you would like your work to be displayed. This should include the order in which multiple works are to be hung if you are creating a series. There are no marks allocated to the presentation of your artworks in the assessment criteria, but it is still an important part of your art practice. The way you present your work is an important consideration, as was discussed in Chapter 1.

VCE student Sophie Santolin was working with digital photography during the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2021. The lack of access to the school's resources worried her because she was concerned about printing her final artworks, which were due for submission on her return to school. She considered this challenge and all the other ways in which the pandemic had affected our lives. Sophie arrived at a very creative solution to presenting her digital photographs, which also reflected her personal experience and those of society as a whole. Rather than print the photographs for display, Sophie exhibited a QR code for her exhibition.

Sophie wrote:



This is a series of works I created to demonstrate the process my mind went through during the early 2021 lockdowns. I chose to present these digital images through a QR code mimicking the check in mandate that was introduced in Victoria around that same time, forcing the viewers to check into the work if they wish to view it. The first work, titled Emotions, is a depiction of the multiple feelings I experienced during the announcements of lockdown and following press conferences, the different colours and sizes of the lines expressing a different feeling, with sudden

cut offs and collisions to show my mood swings and flowing, constant thoughts.

Mess shows the process of my thoughts and feelings in relation to the time I produced this work. With lots of controversial global issues being seen and discussed in the media to the pressure of my final days of high school approaching, this work expresses its effect on me. Each line of colour demonstrates this through the colour, brightness and strategic positioning.

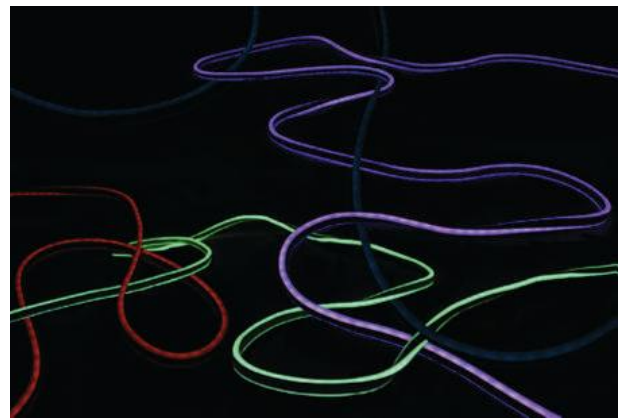


Figure 8.18 Sophie Santolin, *Mess*, digital photograph only viewed online after scanning a QR code

Conflict focuses on the basic neutral and negative events of my life, the pink represents what is going regularly, showing a smooth easily visible line. Contrasting to this the faded blue line curves in on itself, showing the less visible sadness and frustration that I've experienced through this year, and specifically around the time this work was produced.



Figure 8.19 Sophie Santolin, *Conflict*, digital photograph only viewed online after scanning a QR code



Figure 8.20 Charlotte Middleton, *Healing*, (Five glazed ceramic busts), slip cast, stoneware gloss white and gold lustre



Figure 8.21 Detail Bust 1



Figure 8.22 Detail Bust 5

Another VCE student, Charlotte Middleton, created a series of ceramic heads and gave careful consideration to how she would present this artwork to achieve her intention and communicate her preferred meaning.

Charlotte wrote:

My final artwork presents five clay busts of my own head and shoulder, that have been glazed using a glossy stoneware glaze. The first bust is cracked and broken, the face almost unrecognisable, broken off pieces lie around the head. The second bust is less broken showing that some of the pieces have been put back on the bust. The third is a fully formed bust that still has cracking all throughout. The last two busts have gold lustre progressively filling their cracks. By using a life cast and clay slip casting I was able to create a series of identical self-portraits that I could further manipulate by hand in order for them to depict the growth process.

The artwork presents the idea of personal growth progression and healing. Each bust in the series depicts the physical coming together after being broken. Because each bust is different, it shows that personal growth is a long process. While I have not used the kintsugi technique, I have referenced it through the use of gold lustre in the incised 'cracks'. The cracks are symbolic of the trials and experiences that make us who we are. Overcoming our difficulties builds our character. The cracks are not hidden when we mend ourselves. The gold lustre celebrates all that we have gone through to reach this point. It is a celebration of our resilience and adaptability. The gold in kintsugi acknowledges the history of the object, much like our history forms our identity. The challenges we have faced make us stronger than before. Even in the final sculpture where the majority of the cracks have been filled in with gold, there are still some not filled as resilience and becoming whole again is a process and can never really be completed.



In using the kintsugi technique I also hoped to further this idea of finding the beauty in the imperfect as this is essentially what the theory of the technique means as it portrays the Japanese idea of wabi sabi.

The artwork is presented in a way that creates an interaction with the audience with the semicircle of formation of busts looking at the audience as they walk further into the

piece. The process is depicted by following the circle around as the audience reads from left to right. They are spaced out on plinths of different heights allowing them to be regarded individually while realising that they are linked and part of a continuum. The varied heights also reflects the changes I have gone through as I have aged. The black top of the plinths establishes a contrast and helps to emphasise the white heads.

8.6 Examples of student work **Student 1: Mia Babatsikos**

The following examples of student work demonstrate the development, refinement, resolution and presentation of work that was started in Unit 3.

Mia Babatsikos responded to feedback that she received from her critique at the start of Unit 4 by continuing to develop and refine her skill, technique and visual language through a series of trials (Figures 8.23–8.27).



Figure 8.23



Figure 8.24

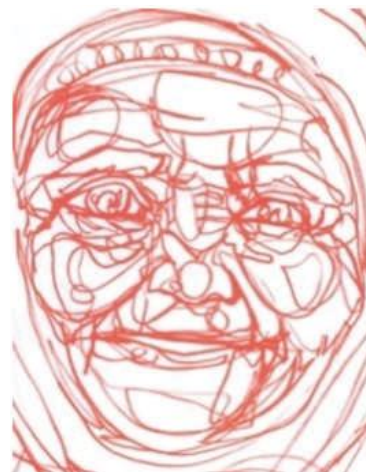


Figure 8.25



Figure 8.26



Figure 8.27

Figures 8.23–8.27 Trialling continuous line portraits



Figure 8.28



Figure 8.29



Figure 8.30



Figure 8.31



Figure 8.32

Figures 8.28–8.32 A series of trials refining painting technique, skill and visual language

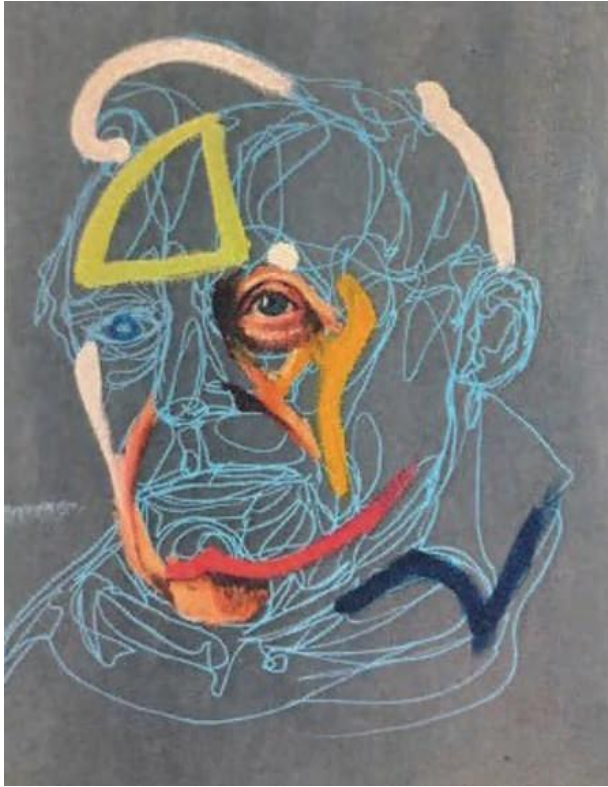


Figure 8.33 Mia Babatsikos, *Is this all you see in me?* acrylic, oil and POSCA marker on canvas, 61 × 45.5 cm

Applying what she learnt from her trials, Mia then produced a painting of a family member to resolve her idea.



... abstract oil lines try to contain the essence of this person, but they spill from the confines people put them in. It enforces the idea that people are more than their first impressions and physical appearance – their memory and history transcend the shapes and superficial ... I'm testing the boundaries of human perception, how people and faces can be broken down into a few simple lines and shapes, yet somehow can remain recognisable as people. It plays on the concepts of recognition and how our brain ... fills in gaps based on prejudice and what we expect to see ...

After completing this work, Mia realised that painting a portrait of someone she knew was not the best way of representing 'first impressions'. Knowing the person, being familiar with their personality and identifiers of the character would influence what she highlighted in her paintings.

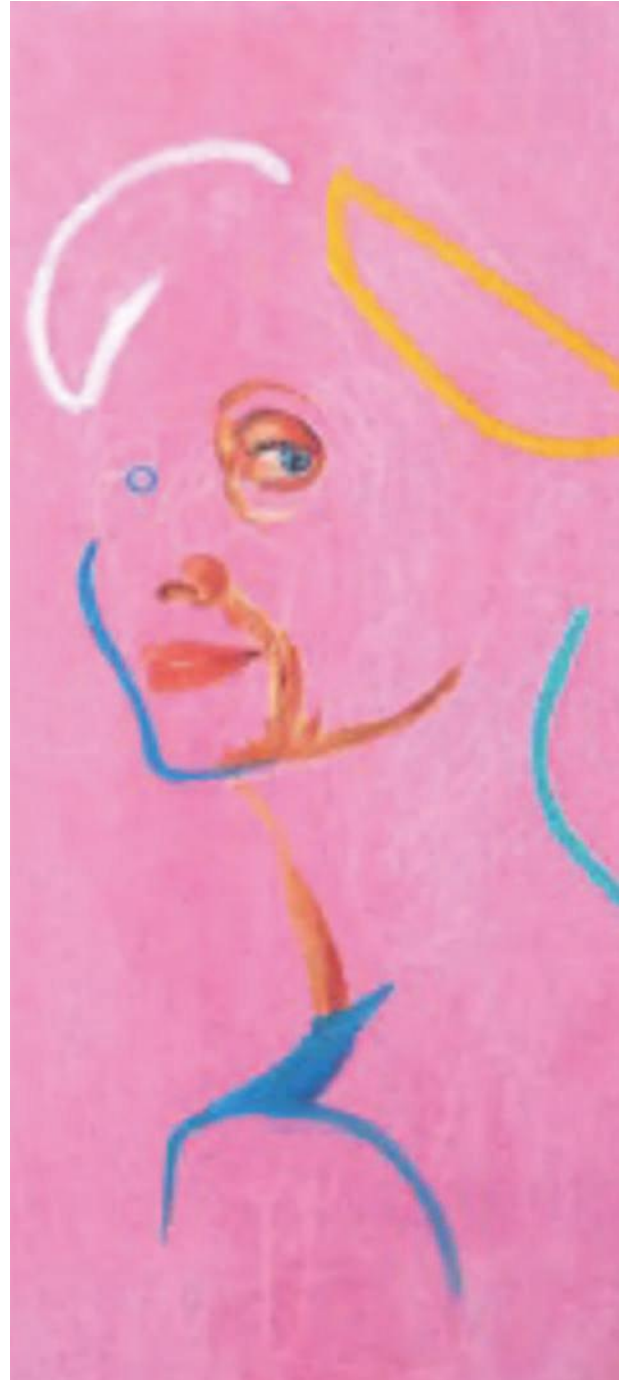


Figure 8.34 Mia Babatsikos, *Don't you just love the idea of me?* acrylic, oil and POSCA marker on canvas, 91 × 183 cm

She needed to use a face that she was seeing for the first time so that she could react instinctively and note the things she first observed about the person and the characteristics she placed on the individual from that first impression, without getting to know them. For this reason, Mia turned to the internet and selected images of people she had never seen before, wrote down her

'impressions' and then translated this information into visual form through painting. She carefully documented the sourced images, providing the URL and any information she found about the photographer.



When we first interact with others, we often make a snap judgement of who they are. This version of the person is enticing and convenient but often also static and superficial. I personally believe that these first impressions disrespect the person being observed, as first impressions dismiss all that the individual has been through and has led them to this moment. This concept is symbolised by the barely noticeable continuous line that is completely dominated by the eye-catching and vibrant oil paint, such that the viewer has to get close to the person and artwork in order to fully appreciate their nuances.



This artwork investigates the idea that every person you meet creates a different version of 'you' in their heads, whether they glanced at you across the street or you've known them since birth. Even you have imagined yourself differently at different stages in your life. This is illustrated by the multiple versions of one individual on the canvas, where the continuous line and oil paint are all slightly different perceptions of one person. The artwork therefore represents identity as a fluid concept, one that reconciles all the versions of you that exist in the minds of yourself and others.



The continuous line underneath, connecting all the portraits again symbolises a self-image, visually illustrating that it is the same person that is prompting these interpretations.



The continuity and fluidity of this line, as well as the multiple faces that are borne of it, also lends itself to a concept I personally believe in: that even in our heads we have multiple real versions of ourselves. We are not fixed individuals with one personality

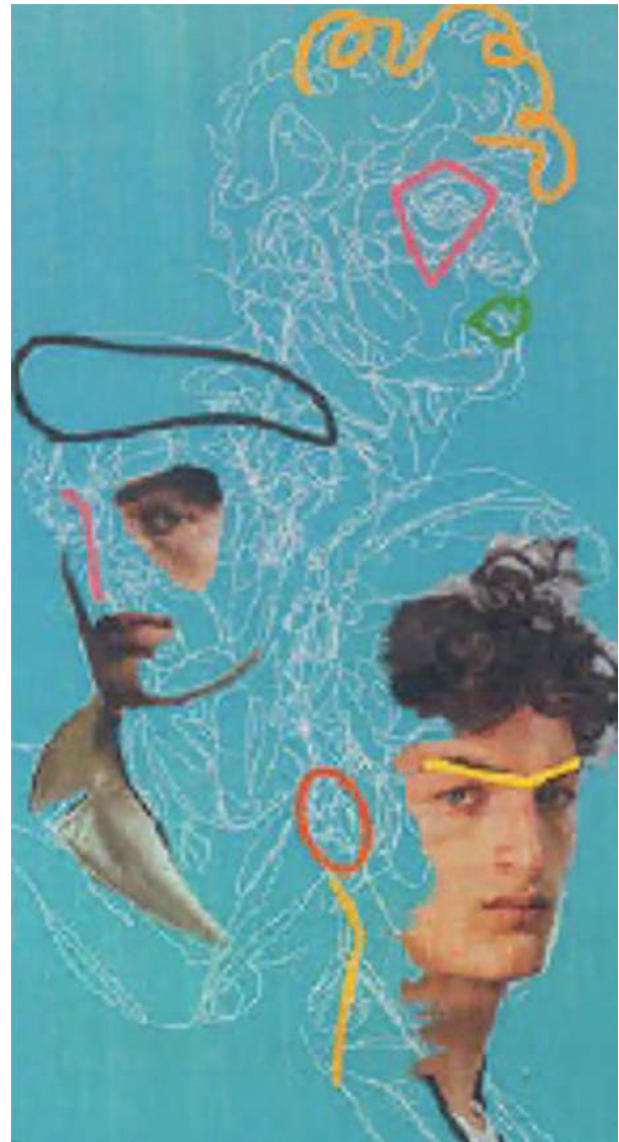


Figure 8.35 Mia Babatsikos, *Who am I if not someone to you?* acrylic, oil and POSCA marker on canvas, 91 × 183 cm

trait, one stereotype or one 'face'. We are individuals that are constantly changing and flowing, we scatter and again come together', visually across the canvas, and grow as people. Therefore, there are many versions of us out there, and even our own self-image is inconstant and unfixed. There aren't singular versions of us, because we are undefinable in our ever-changing nature. Is the one of you three years ago still truly you. I would argue, yes. You are simply an identity, one that is a culmination of all your growth and others' perceptions of you. You are every age and first impressions at once.

Both of these artworks [Figures 8.34 and 8.35] capture my thoughts and beliefs surrounding first impressions. I have noticed that we're generally taught to think of people as fixed and absolute beings. That people are the way they are and they won't change. In fact, often we don't want others to change, especially those close to us, as we find comfort in the person we perceive them to be. When they do change, or we learn more about them, it feels uncomfortable rethinking our perception and so we resist it. We place these restrictions and expectations on each other from the first time we meet, and then throughout our relationship, trying to rationalise the person they are becoming in terms of what we already think of them. We limit each other with our thoughts, and first impressions are one form of this. We meet someone and immediately make assumptions about who they are, restricting them just by imagining them in a certain way, and come surprised when they defy our expectations. First impressions are therefore confining and counterproductive. They disrespect people's capacity to change and they disrespect a person's fluidity and past in favour of recognising who they are now,

in a brief, seven-second impression biased by personal prejudices.

Student 2: Catherine Stirling

Catherine responded to feedback that she received from her critique at the start of Unit 4 by continuing to develop and refine her skill, imagery, composition and visual language through a series of annotated trials that provided insight into her ideas and intention supported by the application of the Interpretive Lenses.

Catherine continued to explore the idea that she presented in her critique using photographs she took of herself as reference. Using drawing, she developed different options of how best to represent the idea she wanted to communicate. Based on these ideas she manipulated the images using Photoshop to combine two photographs and establish a successful composition.

By drawing onto her reference photographs, Catherine began to manipulate her image to achieve a powerful visual language. She continued to develop and refine her conceptual directions, technique and skill throughout the art process. She manipulated and applied her selected materials, techniques and processes to resolve her visual language and present a finished artwork.



Figure 8.36



Figure 8.37



Figure 8.38

Figures 8.36–8.38 Catherine Stirling, Developing the idea for Artwork 1



Figure 8.39



Figure 8.40



Figure 8.41

Figures 8.39–8.41 Catherine Stirling, Refining the idea technique and visual language for Artwork 1



This self portrait of me and anorexia reveals my personal struggle at the height of my mental illness. During my darkest days I felt as though anorexia was preventing me from eating and living a normal and happy life. Anorexia was not only affecting me when I was awake, but also affecting my dreams. This composition represents a recurring dream I experienced and also represents my real-life battle in living with the illness that made eating excruciating.



Anorexia is represented as a tormentor, accentuated by the rough impasto strokes made with a palette knife. These marks create a harsh and menacing characterisation. The thick impasto paint protrudes from the canvas creating movement and adding emotion. The paint moves into the space of the audience, making anorexia a physical presence, much like it had in my life. This contrasts with the controlled brushwork and more natural representation of myself, showing how 'we' are two separate beings that exist in different realms. The expressionistic style that I used for the figure of anorexia is intended to make the audience feel uncomfortable and to reinforce that anorexia is a mental illness rather than a visible, physical entity.



Figure 8.42 Catherine Stirling, Artwork 1, oil on canvas

returning to some of the ideas she had explored in Unit 3.

Deciding to focus on drawing as she continued to establish a body of work, Catherine continued to explore the human figure from observation in Life Drawing classes and from her imagination. She explored a range of materials and techniques on different surfaces.

After completing her first artwork, Catherine continued to develop and refine her body of work,

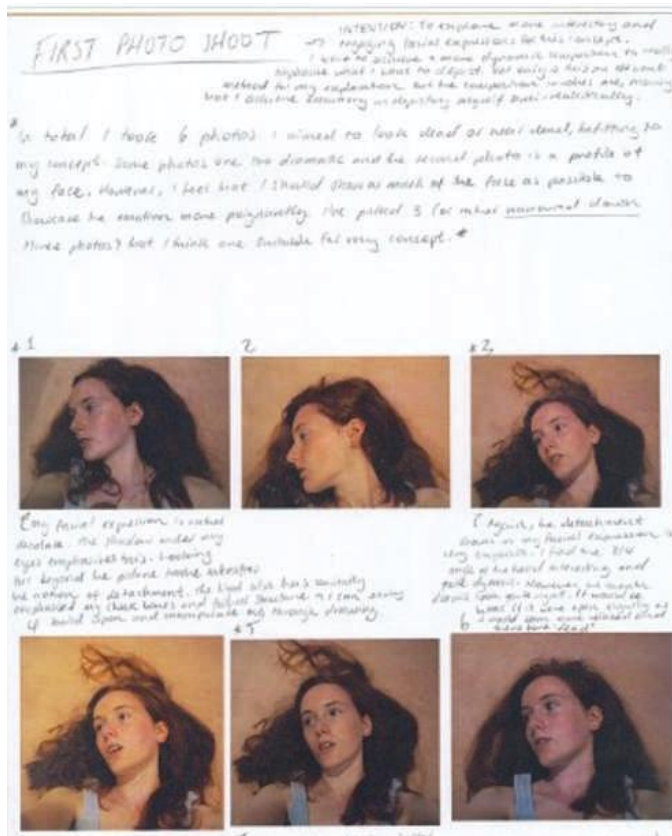


Figure 8.50

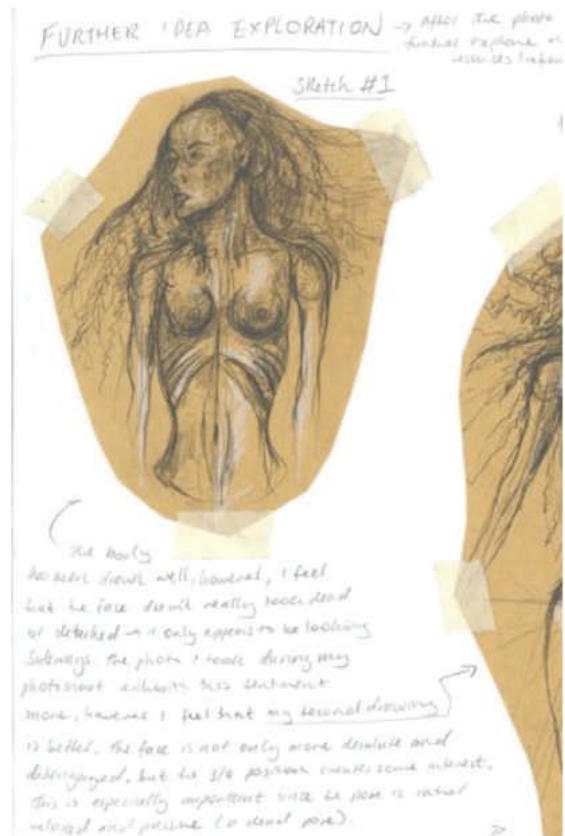


Figure 8.51

Figures 8.48–8.51 Catherine Stirling, pages from her body of work showing evidence of her development and refinement

Catherine continued to refine the ideas she wanted to explore using pencil drawings to develop different options (Figures 8.44–8.47). She then began to refine the ideas, working from her imagination (Figures 8.48–8.49) as well as from photographs she took of herself (Figure 8.50). She produced a range of drawings refining her image and skill (Figures 8.52–8.56), demonstrating consistent progression of her process as she used the Creative Practice. Her critical annotations document her reflection on the development, refinement and realisation of her ideas and provide evidence that she is using the Interpretive Lenses throughout her body of work.



Figure 8.52



Figure 8.53



Figure 8.54



Figure 8.55

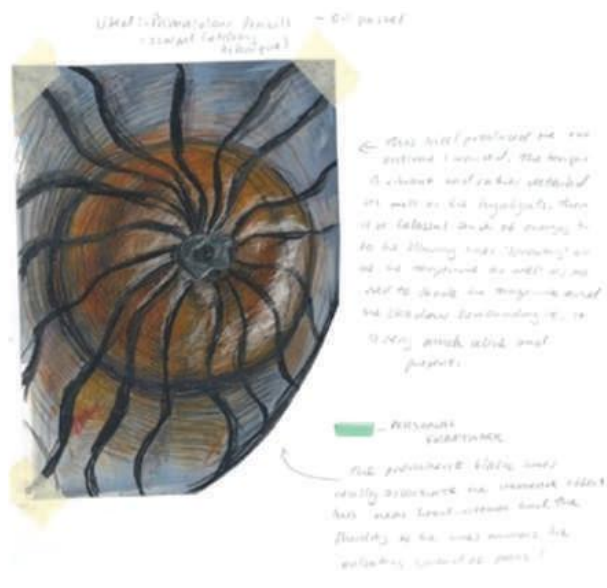


Figure 8.56

Figures 8.52–8.56 Catherine Stirling, pages from her body of work showing evidence of her refinement of technique and visual language

Catherine resolved her body of work with a further two finished artworks (Figures 8.57 and 8.58).

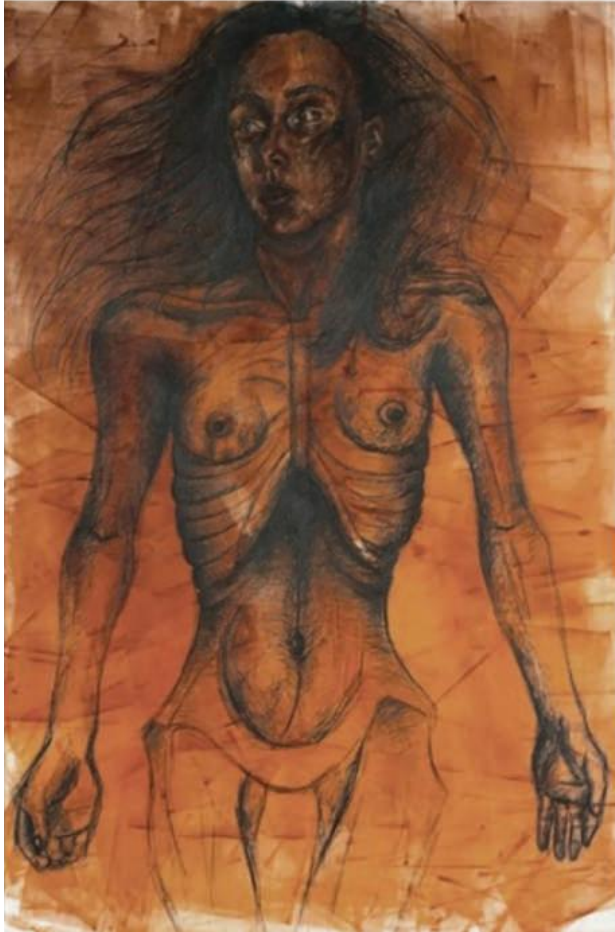


Figure 8.57 Catherine Stirling, Untitled I, Pencil and oil paint on polymer paper, 120 x 90 cm



Figure 8.58 Catherine Stirling, Untitled II, Pencil and oil paint on polymer paper, 120 x 80 cm

Catherine wrote on Untitled 1:



This idea represents my daily struggles in wanting to disappear and die because of the 'pressure' of eating food. I used to often just lie down as I was too hungry to do

anything else. This artwork is so important as it represents the effects of anorexia. Not only do I want to depict anorexia and me in a personal way yet also bring some kind of awareness/insight into what being anorexic is really like.

Chapter 9

Area of Study 3



In Unit 4 Area of Study 3 you will use the Interpretive Lenses studied in Units 1 and 2 to analyse and interpret the meaning and messages of artworks created by the artists you choose to study this year. You will also investigate their practice, and in particular, the practice they use to create the artworks you select to study in detail.

In this Area of Study, you must undertake research of two artists and their practices and two artworks by each artist. You will have to critically analyse and interpret the meanings and messages of the selected artworks using the Interpretive Lenses. It is important that you provide evidence from the artworks to support your interpretations and substantiate your point of view. As in other units, you are encouraged to use appropriate terminology. It may be helpful to establish a list of terms such as the one provided in the glossary at the back of this book; you will need to compare the meanings and messages

of artworks and consider similarities and differences evident in the works that you choose. One aspect to consider when comparing the artworks is the difference between historical and contemporary practices. Students generally find it helpful if the two artists deal with the same idea so that the difference in how they convey that idea, or contrasting messages relating to the idea can be explored.

When selecting artworks for study, it is important to remember that the Interpretive Lenses can be applied to the analysis and interpretation of all artworks but some are more appropriate to certain artworks than others. It is therefore helpful to select artworks that provide you with the best opportunity to apply all three lenses. You will need to draw on specific aspects of the lenses to support and provide depth to the analysis and interpretation of the four artworks you choose to study.

Area of Study 3

Comparison of artists, their practices and artworks

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO STUDY?

When selecting the artists and artworks for study, you must:

- research at least one historical artist, their practice and at least two artworks
- research at least one contemporary artist, their practice and at least two artworks
- compare the practices of the selected artists and the messages and meanings conveyed by their artworks
- apply all three interpretive lenses to analyse, and interpret the meaning and messages each artist communicated through their artworks
- source evidence to support your interpretation and point of view.

OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit you should be able to compare the practices of historical and contemporary artists and use the Interpretive Lenses to analyse and interpret the meanings and messages of selected artworks.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- practices of historical and contemporary artists
- meanings and messages of historical and contemporary artworks
- the use of evidence from artworks to support analysis and interpretation

- the use of the Structural, Personal and Cultural Lenses to analyse and interpret historical and contemporary artworks
- resources to support the research of selected artists and their artworks
- art terminology used in the discussion and comparison of the practices of artists and their artworks.

KEY SKILLS

- compare the practices of historical and contemporary artists
- analyse, interpret and compare meanings and messages of historical and contemporary artworks
- use a range of resources to compare the practices of historical and contemporary artists, and to analyse and interpret their artworks
- apply the Structural, Personal and Cultural Lenses to the analysis and interpretation of the meanings and messages of artworks
- substantiate the analysis and interpretation of artworks with evidence from the artworks and other sources
- use appropriate terminology and comparative language in the analysis, interpretation and comparison of the practices of artists and their artworks.

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9.1 Artists, their practices and artworks

In Unit 1, you became familiar with the Structural and Personal Lenses and how to apply them to the analysis and interpretation of artworks. In Unit 2 you added the Cultural Lens. In this unit you will build on the skills you developed and apply all three lenses to the interpretation of selected artworks. You will develop the skills learnt in Units 1 and 2 and consider different opinions and interpretations of artworks that you select for analysis.

***The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
One of their large lessons is that there are
many ways to see and interpret the world.***

**Elliot W. Eisner, Professor Emeritus
of Education, Stanford Graduate
School of Education**

If you did not complete Units 1 and 2 of Art Creative Practice, it is important that you work through the previous chapters that focus on the three Interpretive Lenses. While this can support your exploration of personal ideas in your application of the Creative Practice, it is essential for your understanding of the Interpretive Lenses and how to apply them to the interpretation of artworks you choose to study this year. Even if you have completed the earlier units of work, it is helpful to read through the relevant chapters as revision before beginning this Area of Study.



Figure 9.1 Goya, Plate 39 of *The Disasters of War*, c. 1810, etching, 15.24 × 21 cm

Selecting artworks for study

The artists and artworks that you choose to study can be a source of inspiration for your own art making and relate to the ideas you are exploring. The artists you select may use similar techniques to those you are exploring and provide solutions to challenges you are experiencing in your application of the Creative Practice. It is also important to consider the points of view of others about the artworks you select. You do not have to agree with generally accepted interpretations, or even the meaning intended by the artist, as long as you are able to justify your interpretation and provide evidence to support it.

When comparing artworks, you must consider all information available to you in the image, such as the subject matter, the style of the artwork and the use of the art elements and principles. These will all provide points of similarities and differences that you can focus on. Additional information provided by commentaries on the artwork and further research into the artist will add depth to your interpretation. The empirical data such as the title, date, size and materials is also important and is often ignored by students. This information can provide additional points of comparison. This is



Video 9.1



Figure 9.2 Jake and Dinos Chapman, *Great Deeds Against the Dead*, 1994, White Cube Gallery, London, mixed media, 277 × 244 × 152.5 cm, © Jake and Dinos Chapman. DACS/Copyright Agency, 2022

evident when comparing a historical work such as Goya's Plate 39 from his *Disasters of War* series (Figure 9.1) with the more recent life-size three-dimensional mixed media re-imagining of the work by the Chapman Brothers, *Great Deeds Against the Dead* (Figure 9.2).



Both Goya and the Chapman Brothers have created artworks that deal with conflict, but each has done so within the cultural context in which they lived and worked. Goya created an image based on his observation of the brutality of war. War, death and torture were real to him and had a direct effect on the people living in his society who experienced it first-hand. This image represents atrocity in war.

As Goya was working in a Catholic country that believed in the cultural importance of the beliefs and symbolism of Christianity, the image of a figure hanging from a tree may have resulted in the artwork being related to the crucifixion and martyrdom of the saints. This could have suggested ideas of sacrifice and people giving up their lives in the defence of Spain. The Chapmans, however, live in a modern, secular society where fictional images of violence are shown in film and television and the horror of real war is seen on the evening news. The Chapmans' re-imagining of Goya's work is typical of the appropriation that is part of art in today's society. But unlike the work created by Goya, the Chapmans' sculpture is in full technicolour, also typical of images in Western culture. Despite the obvious bright red of the blood that should make the image even more gruesome and confronting, we are instead reminded of fake blood, which was used, and how so many violent images we see are fake. This reduces the horror of the work.

Printmaking was originally selected as the art form to portray the images so that they could be reproduced and distributed in mass to the people of Spain and beyond as a memorial to those who had died in the recent Peninsular War. However, due to the radical nature of the images, they were not printed for wide distribution but kept private until 35 years after Goya's death. The stark achromatic image allowed the artist to expose the horrors inflicted on his people at the time. The small scale of the work makes it more intimate and requires the audience to inspect it close-up, making the image all the more confronting. In contrast, the large life-size scale of the Chapmans' reinterpretation and the fact that the audience can move around it should result in a greater engagement with the work, the realism of the piece filling the audience with horror. The use of materials, however, has the opposite effect. The work is cold and emotionless despite its life-size scale and gory detail. The shop mannequins that have been posed were lifeless to begin with and do not instil the same horror as Goya's corpses, which appear to have been drawn from human reference. The wigs add an almost comical element, while the mutilation is also diluted when you consider that the limbs and heads of the mannequins are removable and have not been hacked off. The mutilation of the genitals is less terrible when you consider that the mannequins did not have genitals to begin with. Exposure to shop mannequins in our daily life suggests that the sculpture is purely window dressing and not the real thing. Death in the Chapmans' representation has been sanitised, much like contemporary war.



Activity 9.1

Find four pairs of artists that would provide scope for comparison. Each pair must include an artist who worked before 2000 and one who has produced artworks since 2000. Document the similarities and differences between each pair. Consider their subject matter, the ideas that they represent and points that could be referred to for each of the three lenses.

This chapter presents a number of historical and contemporary artists, some of whom have been paired for comparison. The information supplied is just a starting point for your further research analysis and interpretation of the artists and their artworks. The interpretations supplied are either the author's own or examples of student work and should not be considered the only possible interpretation.

Portraits

Portraiture is a subject that can be traced back to ancient Egypt. Before photography was invented, painting, sculpture, or drawn portraits were the only way to record how a person looked and became important as a personal memento or a public celebration. Portraits have, however, been more than just a record. They have been used to depict the power, represent virtue or identify the qualities or emotions of the model. Generally portraits were idealised and flattering, although this changed in the twentieth century as the role of art changed.

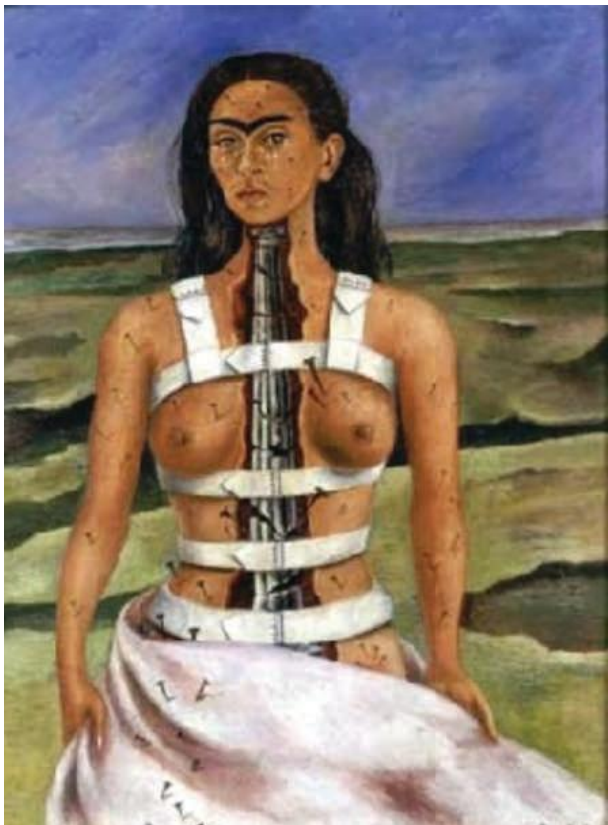


Figure 9.3 Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column*, 1944, oil on wood panel, 39.8 × 30.6 cm, © Banco de México Rivera Kahlo Museums Trust/ARS. Copyright Agency, 2022

Artists who used portraiture, including self-portraiture, as the vehicle for their expression and communication of personal ideas include Frida Kahlo, Chuck Close, Jenny Saville and Cindy Sherman. While the subject matter is similar, the ideas expressed and the artists' practices vary.

Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) was an early twentieth-century Mexican painter. Her father was German of Hungarian Jewish descent, and her mother was Spanish and Native American. Her father was an atheist and her mother Catholic, but politics became Kahlo's religion, as she became a devout communist. Her cultural heritage and a life of physical and emotional trauma had a strong influence on her art.

In 1925, Kahlo was travelling in a bus when it collided with a tramcar, resulting in serious injuries to her right leg and pelvis and spine. The accident also made it impossible for her to have children, and meant that she had a lifelong battle against pain. Kahlo said: 'I suffered two grave accidents



Figure 9.4 One of Frida Kahlo's metal corsets

in my life. One in which a streetcar knocked me down ... The other accident is Diego.' Kahlo married the famous Mexican muralist Deigo Rivera in 1929, which began a tumultuous relationship that included divorcing in 1939 and being remarried in 1940.

Kahlo's paintings focused on portraying her inner struggles. Initially these referenced her medical issues, but were soon substituted with her inability to have children and her troubled marriage to Rivera.

Kahlo's painting *The Broken Column* (Figure 9.3) provides you with the opportunity to consider a range of factors that can be discussed when interpreting her paintings.



This painting portrays Kahlo's preoccupation with her damaged body and the ongoing trauma that she was experiencing as a result of the bus accident. Her torso is ripped open, representing the physical and emotional damage caused by the accident. She has painted it as an ancient Greek Ionic column, appearing in the gaping chasm in her torso. The column is a supporting structure in architecture and is showing her damaged spine being incapable of fulfilling its purpose due to the injuries she sustained in the accident. She is nude from the waist up, totally exposed and vulnerable, reflecting the fragility of her state of mind. The straps of the corset hold her body together and are a direct comment on the numerous metal, leather and plaster orthopaedic corsets she was made to wear by doctors to support her damaged spine. She suffered unbearable pain and endured multiple surgeries, including eight on her spine, to correct the problems caused by the accident.



While the corset in Figure 9.3 is a direct reference to her having to wear corsets, the straps of the corset create a cage-like structure, suggesting that Kahlo is a prisoner of her situation. This could also be discussed in relation to her culture. During the Sabado de Gloria (Easter Saturday) celebrations, papier-mâché figures symbolising Judas Iscariot stuffed with fireworks are exploded in front of cheerful spectators. Traditionally these represented Judas, who betrayed Christ,

and it was a way of destroying the traitor to purify the soul of the spectators. Later this extended to include anybody who would harm the people, including corrupt politicians and criminals. The corset is reminiscent of the armature of these Judas figures and could be Kahlo attempting to banish all that is destroying her, physically and emotionally.

My paintings carry with them the message of pain.

Frida Kahlo

The background represents the Mexican landscape and the broken ground echoes the fissure in her chest and reflects her broken life, her pain and loneliness. The barren landscape can also be related to her inability to bring a child to term; Kahlo had a number of miscarriages, also due to damage caused to her body in the accident. This damage and pain of her miscarriages are evident in the ripped torso, while her suffering is further emphasised by the nails inserted into her body and the tears on her emotionless face.

The nails recall images of St Sebastian, pierced by arrows. The white cloth around her hips echoes Christ's shroud. Symbols of martyrdom like this are often found in Kahlo's work and are linked to the strong tradition of Catholicism in both Mexico and her own home, thanks to her mother who was a devout Catholic.

Another influence of Catholicism (not necessarily evident in this work) were the small oil paintings on tin called **retablos**. These paintings were used in home altars to honour their patron saint or give thanks for salvation and aid in a difficult situation the person found themselves in. These retablos decorated many Mexican households, including Kahlo's. She references these cultural works in paintings like *Self portrait on the borderline between Mexico and the United States* by the small scale of the painting and the use of tin as the painted surface.

Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird (Figure 9.5), includes personal symbolism and shows evidence of various cultural references to add symbolic meaning to her portrait.



PERSONAL



CULTURAL

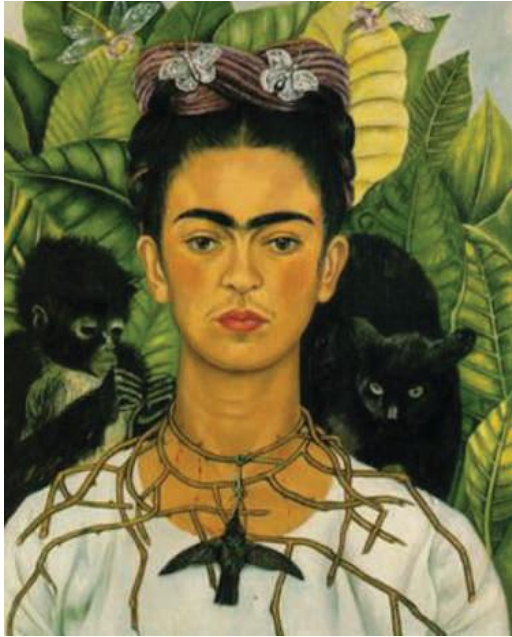


Figure 9.5 Frida Kahlo, *Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940, oil on canvas, 60 × 46 cm, © Banco de Mexico Rivera Kahlo Museums Trust/ARS/Copyright Agency 2022

Painted between her divorce from, and before her second marriage to, Rivera, every element in this painting gives clues to Kahlo's mental state.



Her direct, emotionless gaze seems to express the immediacy of her pain. She appears numb to the emotional pain brought on by her experiences and the physical pain of the thorn necklace digging into her flesh.

The background represents a suffocatingly dense jungle, symbolising all the issues she is dealing with, both emotionally and physically.



The thorns digging into her neck bring to mind Christ's crown of thorns. They are symbolic of the pain she still feels over her divorce from Diego in 1939 and may represent herself as a martyr and the enduring pain experienced following her failed marriage and miscarriages.



The monkey is one of her pets that she used as substitute children when it became clear that she would not be able to have any of her own. The fact that the monkey is pulling at the thorn necklace suggests that Kahlo is highlighting the pain that she feels, not being able to have children and the loss she experienced due to the miscarriages.

The second animal is a black cat that appears menacingly over her other shoulder.

Kahlo's identification with Indigenous Mexican culture influenced the symbolism evident in this painting. The hummingbird hanging from Kahlo's neck is considered a symbol of good luck in Mexican folklore, often associated with falling in love and could reference her relationships. The hummingbird pendant is also a symbol of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec soul carrier, the symbol of the sun, life and hope. The bird, however, appears dead and suggests that hope for Kahlo is dead.



Chuck Close

Charles Thomas Close (1940–2021), is known for his photorealist portraits, or as he called them, paintings of heads. While Close, like Kahlo, also produced several self-portraits (Figures 9.6 and 9.7), he focused mainly on portraits of his friends and family. From 1967 to 1989 Close painted massive photorealist portraits, enlarging the image using a grid system and painting one square at a time. Initially these were achromatic before he later returned to colour.

Activity 9.2

Research how Close uses the colour separation process of commercial printing in portraits such as *Mark* (Figure 9.8). Explore how you can use this technique in your own work. Can you apply layering in a different way? You could explore layering CMYK in Photoshop and adjust the transparency of the layers. Try printing a multicoloured linocut using multiple tiles. Consider printing from a single tile using the subtractive method, layering colours from light first to dark last. Print, draw or paint onto multiple transparent surfaces, such as glass or Perspex, or on a translucent surface like silk organza. Layer these to create a composite image.

According to the Ohio State University's Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy website, Close's huge portraits present the subject exactly as they are, without any attempt to capture or define the sitter's personality, which is the opposite of what most portrait painters attempt to do. In his work there is no attempt to flatter or cover up the flaws of the sitter's face or complexion. Every pore in the skin, every hair, every wrinkle is presented as visual information. Close presents the audience with a view of the human face that we never experience firsthand. He was interested in the way that the camera does not adjust its focus as the human eye does. By opening the aperture on his camera, it resulted in a limited depth of field and Close was able to capture areas of the face in extreme focus while other areas, like the tip of his nose in *Big Self-Portrait* (Figure 9.6), are painted out of focus. Close says that his main objective was to 'translate photographic information into paint information' and explains the monumental size of his work as a means of 'forcing the viewer to focus on one area at a time. In that way they are made aware of the blurred areas that are seen with peripheral vision. 'In my work, the blurred areas don't come into focus, and they are too large to be ignored.'



Figure 9.6 Chuck Close, *Big Self-Portrait*, 1967–1968, acrylic on canvas, 273.1 × 212.1 cm, Photograph courtesy Pace Gallery Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Art Center Acquisition Fund, 1969

Close painted directly from photographs from 1967 through to the end of his life: 'I am trying to make it very clear that I am making paintings from photographs and that this is not the way the human eye sees it. If I stare at this it's sharp, and if I stare at that it's sharp too. The eye is very flexible, but the camera is a one-eye view of the world.' Close's idea of the head rendered colossal and detailed enough to be confrontational for the audience, propelled portraiture into the twenty-first century.

Activity 9.3

The use of photographs in the painting process gives Close's work a sense of detachment. This objective representation of the faces of friends who are the main subject matter for Close is the opposite of the personal connection and emotive response that was central to Abstract Expressionism, the dominant art movement while Close was studying. Research Close further to determine why he did this. What is the relevance of 'process' when considering the work of Close and the Abstract Expressionists?

Like Kahlo, Close's art was directly influenced by his experiences and, in particular, his health. As discussed in Chapter 2 (pages 76 and 77), he was dyslexic and also suffered from prosopagnosia.

A third event had a profound influence on his art in the later period of his life. On 7 December 1988, Close suffered the collapse of a spinal artery that left him paralysed. After this he was confined to a motorised wheelchair, unable to move from the neck down. His biggest fear was that he would not be able to make art. In early 1989, he began a gruelling rehabilitation program. At first, he held a brush between his teeth, and later after regaining some movement in his upper arm, he used a hand splint that could hold a paint brush. This allowed him to pick up paint from his palette and make small squiggles on his canvas. Continuing to work

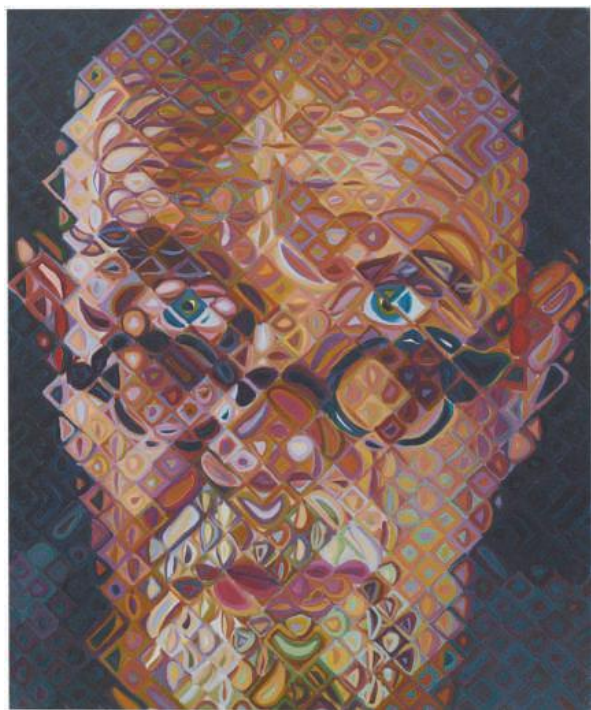


Figure 9.7 Chuck Close, *Self-Portrait II*, 2010, oil on canvas, 36" × 30" (91.4 cm × 76.2 cm). Photograph by Kerry Ryan McFate, courtesy Pace gallery

on his large canvases from photographic reference using the grid system, he painted small square abstract paintings. When viewed from a distance, the small abstract squiggles, circles, squares and blobs come together to form a striking portrait. In this next iteration of his technique, Close responds to one square in the photograph across four squares in the painting. This allows greater flexibility and the option to extend shapes across multiple squares.

To view an interview with Close in which he discusses the process he used in his recent works, access the interactive textbook.

Student sample: the Interpretive Lenses

The following is an example of VCE student Annika Sultana applying the Interpretive Lenses to discuss meaning and messages in a work by Chuck Close (Figure 9.8).



By applying the Structural Lens to the interpretation of Mark 1978/9, I believe Chuck Close is attempting to depict the many layers that contribute to the formation of one's personality. This is evident when you consider his method of using colour



Figure 9.8 Chuck Close, *Mark*, 1978–1979, Acrylic on gessoed canvas, 108 × 84 in. (274.3 × 213.4 cm), Photograph by Ellen Page Wilson, courtesy Pace Gallery

separation. Close layered colours: cyan, magenta, yellow and black in order to form a hyperrealistic portrait. This arduous process contributes to illustrating the building of an individual – that is, that one's experiences work to form their character, having many layers. Close's laborious and time-consuming process indicates that self-identity is a long-term continuous evolution, whereby the 'whole' is a result of the sum of its parts. Furthermore, the adoption of a hyperrealistic style, in which every imperfection, discolouration, pore and hair is visible, places emphasis on the qualities of the person, 'Mark'. As a result, viewers of the work are met with a startling real representation of the individual, almost as though they are met face-to-face. This is enhanced by the scale of the work. Through this, as one views the work, they are made to step back in order to see the entirety of the portrait; working to establish the idea that seeing the 'bigger picture' or whole of an individual requires the construction of a multitude of layers and smaller details.

The use of warm tones, whilst captivating the life-like flesh tone of the portrait, also institutes the feelings of familiarity and connection towards the portrait, drawing people closer. Close uses the plain white background to remove any

further distractions from the portrait itself, emphasising its role as the primary subject matter and simultaneously highlighting its meaning.



When applying the Personal Lens, we can see that the painting communicates Close's obsession with 'translat[ing] photographic information into paint information', touching on his own personal experiences with his disability, prosopagnosia. Having face blindness, Close struggled to recognise familiarity within a face and as a result, recognise who the person was. To persevere, Close found working with photographs enabled him to commit the image to memory, beginning to use photographs as references for his paintings. This raises the ideas of identity and memory, which due to his disability is fleeting.



Despite the hyperrealistic portrayal of the person – in which every discolouration, hair and imperfection is visible – the work feels impersonal, with the expressionless face portrayed on this massive scale. The portrait evokes feelings of distance and dissociation within the viewer. In this way, Close demonstrates his personal experiences upon looking at a person, feeling disconnected as he is unable to identify who the person is. Close's choice of subject matter, one of his best friends, Mark Greenwold, works to further emphasise the difficulties associated with his disabilities, depicting an individual who he has a personal connection with in an impersonal and unfamiliar manner. The feeling of being disconnected is enhanced by the lack of focal point within the work. That is, every part of the painting is as important as the other – from the hair, eyes, body and background – emphasis is not placed on one sole area.

NOTE: *This is a good example of a student referencing points that could be discussed with the Structural Lens, but because of the language, they become evidence for the Personal Lens.*

Despite Mark looking forward at the audience, he has a distant, almost glazed look. When applying the Cultural Lens, the overall eeriness and disconnect created by the expressionless face is reflective of the effects of staring intently at a screen, absorbing into the online reality that is so much part of our culture today. This is emphasised through the glasses worn by Mark, referencing the damage caused to eyesight by extended use of technology. The similarity in the manner that Close treats all the surfaces of the model in the same way to emulate the surface of the photograph also brings to mind the smooth screens that we use in our daily interaction, made worse by isolation, online meetings and classes due to COVID-19. The construction of the portrait through the use of a grid system is much like the pixels that construct technology: highlighting the way in which the integration of technology and society has increased and links to the trend in society to construct our identity through social media and reality television.



Cindy Sherman

Cindy Sherman (b. 1954) turned to photography towards the end of the 1970s in order to explore identity, especially female identity. She suggests that the way we perceive ourselves and others is influenced by the images that we encounter daily. Sherman stages photographs to resemble television and film stills, advertisements, artworks and society portraits. She turned the camera on herself as subject, although none of her works are intended as self-portraits. Sherman uses her body and face as a vehicle to bring hundreds of characters to life in photographs, as she plays the role of both artist and subject. Talking about her self-portraits, Sherman described how, as the youngest child and 'total latecomer' in her family, she often dressed up to occupy herself, wondering, 'If you don't like me this way, how about you like me this way? Or maybe you like this version of me.'

In most of her photographs, Sherman provides hints that they are staged. She often



Figure 9.9 © Cindy Sherman. A woman looks at *Untitled #603* by US artist Cindy Sherman, during the press visit of the 46th edition of the FIAC, Europe's biggest contemporary art fair, at the Grand Palais, on October 16, 2019 in Paris. Photo by ALAIN JOCARD / AFP via Getty Images.

wears exaggerated wigs and prosthetic body parts or creates an environment that is obviously put together. By drawing attention to the fact that her images are staged, she parodies her source images and the attitudes and values that they reflect and perpetuate within society. She acknowledges that photographs cannot necessarily be trusted and like other art forms, they are shaped by the person who makes them. All images can mislead, manipulate and express a particular point of view. This is rather topical in our world of social media and 'fake news'.

In 1989 while living in Rome, she began her *History Portrait* series, in which she recreated a range of art-historical styles and periods, including the Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo and Neoclassical. Sherman photographed herself parodying female stereotypes. In one she posed as the Virgin Mary with the baby Jesus, in another she took on the persona of the *Mona Lisa*. Her dress, posture and expression imitated the conventions of representing women in these paintings. By referencing the original paintings without literally copying them, Sherman encourages the audience to rethink their familiarity with the originals and question how the conventions applied to the

depiction of women in these paintings continue to govern the way we regard the representation of the 'Female' today.

In 2008, she produced her *Society Portraits* series. Each character is impeccably dressed in expensive clothes and stares out at the audience with a sense of superiority. Despite the poise, evident wealth and implied power each of the women in this series possesses, there is an element of tragedy and loss that cannot be overlooked. The woman depicted in *Untitled #603* (Figure 9.9), is Cindy Sherman, but as always, the photograph is not a self-portrait. In another of Sherman's works, *Untitled #465* (access the interactive textbook to view this artwork), Sherman has used clothing and cosmetics to remodel herself as a society grand dame, one whose world-weary gaze, pasty makeup, and superior yet hesitant pose and expression suggest that she knows her best days are behind her. The woman looks over her shoulder and out at the audience with disdain. Despite her opulent surroundings and coiffed hair, makeup and expensive jewellery, there is a sadness conveyed in the image through the discolouration in the white of her eyes, the red lower eyelids and tightness in her mouth. Is this sadness due to her

loss of youth, a veneer of fading wealth or a lack of relevance in a society she previously ruled?

Sherman's characters once again give rise to feelings of unease and painful self-recognition. According to Sherman, the women depicted in the series 'are trying to show the fruits of their efforts in life, but are not really comfortable with it.' While she again constructs the scene and the character, the artifice of these photographs is perhaps not as obvious as other series she has produced. Is this perhaps because the characters are seen by many as being false and playing a role in society that is, in itself, constructed?

Kehinde Wiley

Another artist who explores the traditional subject of portraiture in a new way is Kehinde Wiley, a New York-based artist. Wiley reinvents classic Renaissance-style portraits by replacing white aristocracy with modern-day people of colour. Wiley adopts the visual vocabulary of glorification, heroism and familiar iconography to give his contemporary 'urban' Black figures the same power that was long confined to only white subjects. His art raises issues surrounding racial identity and the widespread stereotypes associated with African Americans.

His portraits feature subjects posed like regal members of society, surrounded by colourful floral patterns that refer to the textiles and decorative motifs of their cultures. Wiley recently painted the former US president Barack Obama's official portrait (Figure 9.10) and surrounded him with carefully selected flora. Jasmine represents Hawaii (Obama's birthplace), African blue lilies signify his father's Kenyan heritage, and the chrysanthemum is the official flower of Chicago where Obama's family life and career began.

Applying the Interpretive Lenses to a painting by Wiley

VCE student Mietta Kerger writes:



In Wiley's Morpheus [access the interactive textbook to view this artwork] we notice the contrast between the figure and the environment he has been submerged in. The subject is a black male dressed in

the stereotypical attire associated with black rap artists and black youth. Wearing low-rise baggy jeans, a long chain, a snap back, tattooed arm (an appearance often associated with those from a low-income household), the model immediately brings to mind a rebellious character on the streets of a dangerous neighbourhood.

This character, and what the audience associates with the character, contrasts dramatically with the white-clothed bed, which immediately suggests ideas of purity and innocence. Even the position of the figure, elegantly draped across the bed creating a long diagonal, almost serpentine, line, is seductive in what may seem a more feminine manner with the hour-glass shape created at the waist and hip, the closeness of the legs at the thighs as opposed to, say, 'man-spreading'.

Engulfed in a background of bright, frivolous flowers that are also rising in the foreground, is another element we associate with femininity: gentleness, being delicate, and growth and blooming. This highlights that fluidity in gender and sexual identity is becoming normalised, or at least slowly being deemed more and more 'real' in society in a post-2000s world. We can assume the artist has experienced the need to advocate and challenge traditional norms on what masculinity and femininity means in today's world, blurring the line between binary genders. Same-sex marriage is becoming legal in areas of the United States, protests are becoming more common. The artwork also addresses the perception of Black men as something usually detached from femininity, perhaps even more masculine than other cultures. This artwork is yet another piece in the network of challenging issues of identity. The flowers are certainly poignant to me as a symbol of growth, discovery, a vital part of accepting your own and others' identities, and it is a representation of society in 2008 beginning to open up to ideas of identities that go against expectations of traditional cultures.





Figure 9.10 Visitors view the official portrait of former president Barack Obama by Kehinde Wiley at The Art Institute of Chicago on June 18, 2021 in Chicago, Illinois. (Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images). Artwork © Kehinde Wiley.

Different portraiture representations

Not all portraits and figure studies represent the facial features of the model. New York-based artist Daniel Arsham presents the audience with *Hidden Figures* (Figure 9.11). These sculptures, created for the 2020 Triennial, are comprised of human-scale figures drawn from two framed paintings in the National Gallery of Victoria's collection: Giambattista Tiepolo's *The Banquet of Cleopatra*, (1743–44), and Nicolas Régnier's *Hero and Leander*, (c. 1625–26). The figures are positioned in the same poses as the selected figures found in the original paintings, and covered in a white cloth. Like Arsham's previous bodies of work, they use the draped fabric to hide the figures and render them anonymous. In this instance, the sculptures are displayed alongside their original source paintings in the NGV's historical collection galleries and therefore the figures are identified by association due to their pose.

The works, unlike the original sources, are three-dimensional and when the audience inspects

them they discover that the 'cloth' is hollow and the figures are missing. The presentation of these works is very important as the context in which they are seen identifies the people covered by the sheet. If they were seen away from the paintings, they would be without any didactic information or prior knowledge, so the audience would be in the dark regarding their identity.



Figure 9.11 View of the group exhibition 'NGV Triennial 2020' at The National Gallery of Victoria Melbourne (Australia), 2020. Courtesy the artist and The National Gallery of Victoria.

Activity 9.4

What does the removal of the figures in Figure 9.11 suggest to you? Is this work dealing with a loss of identity? Is the artist commenting on the way society is covering up something? Is the white sheet used in this cover-up significant?

Activity 9.5

Consider covering someone or something with fabric and place it in different locations. Does any particular location add to the audience's ability to identify it? Does the context into which you place the work change the meaning conveyed?

Tim Noble and Sue Webster

Another artwork that represents a portrait with the use of seemingly random objects is Tim Noble and Sue Webster's *Isabella Blow* (Figure 9.12). In this case the artists have introduced the contemporary art element, light.



A spotlight transforms a seemingly vague collection of objects into a silhouette of a head in profile. The subject of this portrait was English magazine editor Isabella Blow (1958–2007). The artists were fascinated by Blow's medieval quality and chose to

depict her as though her head was on a stake. The sculpture includes 15 taxidermy animals, including birds (ravens), a rat and a snake. They used the particular species of rat that is connected with the Black Death, so the ravens and rat further emphasised the medieval period in history. The artists also added Blow's trademark lipstick and one of her iconic shoes to create a symbolic link to the subject. The profile seems to show Isabella Blow, wearing one of the extraordinary hats designed for her by milliner Philip Treacy.



Figure 9.12 Tim Noble and Sue Webster, *Isabella Blow*, 2002 © Tim Noble, & Sue Webster. DACS/Copyright Agency, 2022

Tracey Emin

Tracey Emin is another artist who presents the audience with a self-portrait, but in her case objects and text replace the representation of her physical identity. Emin's art is very personal, often autobiographical and confrontational, but also humorous. She draws on her own experiences and life events. In 1999, Emin revealed herself to the public in the Turner Prize exhibition at Tate Britain, when she presented a ready-made entitled *My Bed* (1998). The work, comprised of crumpled tissues, period-stained clothing, cigarettes, empty vodka bottles, a pregnancy test, lubricant and condoms, surrounded her bed; the detritus that remained in her room after a long, bedridden bender following a bad break-up. We are faced with a self-portrait that does not hide the messiness of depression and heartbreak.

Emin often works with fabric in the form of appliqués. She creates these works from fabric she has collected, often from family and friends, and those she saved from her childhood. For *I do not expect* (Figure 9.13), Emin has used an old pink blanket patchworked with multiple coloured and floral fabrics. The text is composed of fabric letters cut out and individually stitched to the blanket. While the work does not represent her physical



Figure 9.13 Tracey Emin, *I do not expect*, 2002, appliqué blanket, 264 cm × 185 cm, © Tracey Emin. DACS/Copyright Agency, 2022

identity, the text communicates her thinking at the point in her life when the work was created. Emin subverts the tradition of embroidering homilies with much darker ideas and in using a technique that has been considered a woman's craft, she raises the issue of gender expectations and limitations placed on gender by society.

9.2 Issues within society that are explored in artworks

Judy Chicago

Judy Chicago (b. 1939) is a feminist artist, known for her large collaborative art installations in which she explores the role of women in culture and history. Her installation artwork *The Dinner Party* (1974–79) is an important icon of 1970s feminist art and a milestone in twentieth-century art that she created in collaboration with 129 members of a creative and administrative team.



Figure 9.14 Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1974–79, ceramic, porcelain, textile, 1463 × 1463 cm. Brooklyn Museum; Gift of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation, 2002.10. © Judy Chicago. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

The Dinner Party represents a massive ceremonial banquet, with 39 place settings, each commemorating an important woman from history. Each table setting consisted of a table runner embroidered with each woman's name and symbols relating to their achievements. The ceramic plates were hand-painted by Chicago with a central motif based on butterfly and vulvar forms. The names of another 999 women are inscribed in gold on the white tile floor below the triangular table.

Chicago's intention was to create a work that would 'end the ongoing cycle of omission in which women were written out of the historical record'. The work brings to mind other artworks that are centred around tables, such as Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, Tiepolo's *The Banquet of Cleopatra* and *Freedom from Want* by Norman Rockwell (1943). Each of these celebrate an important event and add credence to this table that celebrates the women who are not present but have left their mark in history.

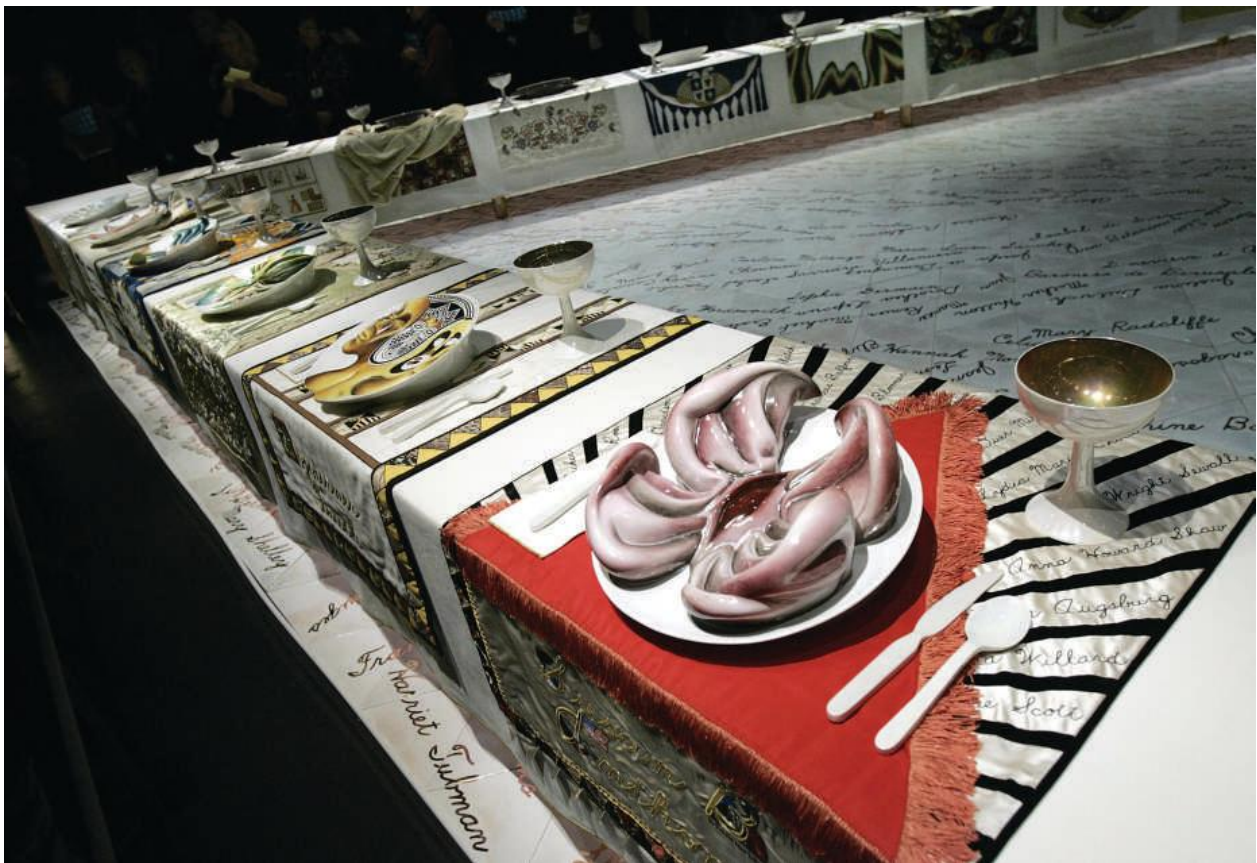


Figure 9.15 Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* (detail), 1974–79, © Judy Chicago. ARS/Copyright Agency, 2022

Activity 9.6

Chicago's intention was to create a work that would 'end the ongoing cycle of omission in which women were written out of the historical record'.

- 1 Consider *The Dinner Party*, by applying the Structural Lens. Does the composition of this installation add meaning to the work? Does the subject matter add meaning to the work in terms of the artist's intention?
- 2 Consider *The Dinner Party*, by applying the Cultural Lens. Does the context of when the work was created and when **you** as audience are viewing the work have an impact on the meaning of the work in terms of the artist's intention?

Activity 9.7

Compare the meaning conveyed in Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, Tiepolo's *The Banquet of Cleopatra*, Norman Rockwell's *Freedom from Want* and *The Dinner Party*. Consider the visual language used by each of the artists.

Jenny Saville

A part of Charles Saatchi's Young British Artists group, Jenny Saville made her name in art by using portraits, many of them self-portraits. These portraits showed flawed, obese naked human bodies in all their glory and flesh. Her paintings challenged society's perceptions of beauty and the expectations placed on women regarding body image, by representing the naked female form in a way that had not previously been seen in art (Figure 9.16). Rather than passing judgement on the women she paints, she is committed to fighting the objectification of women in paintings made by male artists.

While the following response by VCE student Ella Waldman provides a comparative analysis of two historical artists rather than a contemporary and a historical as required by the study, it does provide an example of comparative language, the use of art terminology and an effective application of the three lenses.

NOTE: *This analysis and the artworks selected also raise another important point. Some artists, such as Jenny Saville, cross over the timeline from historical to contemporary. It is therefore important that when selecting the artworks you will research and interpret, you must choose works produced by the artist after 2000.*

Egon Schiele's *Women With Legs Apart* (1914), gouache and pencil (30 × 40 cm), includes many similarities and differences to Jenny Saville's *Propped* (1992), oil painting on canvas (213 × 183 cm). Saville and Schiele both explore the nude female body in their artworks. Although they portray similar subject matter, the meanings behind their works are drastically different.



Figure 9.16 *Propped* by Jenny Saville is displayed at the press preview for Sotheby's Freize week exhibition of Contemporary art at Sotheby's on October 1, 2018 in London, England. Photo by Samir Hussein/Getty Images for Sotheby's. Artwork © Jenny Saville.

In terms of the Cultural Lens, Saville is interested in presenting women as they are, free from the male gaze and society's expectations. Schiele's works contrast this; in terms of the Personal Lens he aims to depict his female models as objects for his own sexual desire, which was supported by the patriarchal society in which he worked when considering the Cultural Lens. Saville's main subject matter is very large women, whereas Schiele often depicts his models as thin and bony. Each of these works can be seen as either conforming to or breaking cultural and societal standards. In *Propped* Saville can be seen to be attempting to break away from the societal pressure to conform to an ideal body type. In his work, Schiele presents the woman as thin and as a sexual object for men to enjoy which is the idea Saville is attempting to destroy.

In terms of the Personal Lens, Schiele portrays the model as skinny and angular to reflect his personal idea of female beauty. The painting also displays his own sexual



CULTURAL



PERSONAL

angst; convinced of the futility of life, he only finds meaning in sex. The artwork is a pure projection of his own sexual feeling towards women. In contrast to this, Saville aims to look for beauty where others don't find it in her depiction of the woman. Saville places her own face onto the body of the woman, despite being much smaller than her.



In terms of the Structural Framework, she has a great interest in flesh and tries to replicate the fleshiness with the way she applies her thick, creamy paint. She emphasises the fleshy, rounded forms with strong tonal values. This contrasts the angular and thin body in Schiele's work. He presents the woman in a vulnerable pose with her body on show for the male view. Rather than intimate, the nude appears tense and isolated against the neutral background. The red colouring draws attention to the breasts and lips, emphasising the sexual nature of the drawing, as does the dark hair, which draws the viewer's eyes to the focal point of the genital area. Schiele uses cropping in order to remove elements of the work he believes aren't important, cutting off the legs and the elbow of the woman to enhance the focus on the sexual areas of the body. Saville presents the woman in *Propped* in a very different way to Schiele. The painting is not sexual, despite the model being nude. Rather than presenting the woman as an object of male desire, she aims to visually create a female space and depict how women see each other and themselves, away from the male gaze.



Similarly to Schiele, Saville has cropped the painting, removing the top of the model's head. However, she has done this to emphasise the size of the woman rather than her sexual nature as Schiele does. Saville uses objective colour in order to depict the woman as true to how she is in real life, rather than to match societal standards of beauty. Schiele does the opposite of this

through his use of subjective colour to highlight the sexual parts of the female body which are there for his pleasure. Both artists use a neutral background to create feelings of isolation and to make the figure stand out without distraction. They both include shoes or socks on the feet of the model. Schiele's painting depicts the woman wearing thigh-high socks in order to emphasise her nakedness and draw the viewer's eyes to the genital area. Saville includes ballet slippers to contrast the large woman with the delicate shoes, showing that women don't need to be delicate to be beautiful like the patriarchal society expects them to be. Schiele drew from life and then added colour after his model left his studio, resulting in a subjective selection of colour. Saville, on the other hand, created her figures using a variety of photographic references and in the case of her self-portrait, with the aid of a mirror. This process of constructing the painting is symbolic of the way that the patriarchal society constructs the concept of the ideal woman.

Saville presents the woman to the audience with a transparent barrier separating them, with words scratched into it using the technique of sgraffito. The words read, 'If we continue to speak in this sameness ... we will fail each other again.' This is a quote from feminist author Luce Irigaray. Saville studied feminist literature at university and her personal interest in making people aware of the way women are treated and the expectations placed on them will only change when the conversation changes. The writing is presented to the woman in the painting rather than the audience as it is back to front. The painting is exhibited with a mirror opposite, allowing the audience to read the text and become part of the work when they are reflected in the mirror. The text prompts women to defy the standards placed on them by men in the past and today ...



This final paragraph is again an example of how the lenses overlap. The sgraffito could also have been discussed using the Structural or Cultural Lens, but the language used and the points that were emphasised place it in the context of the Personal Lens.

Kelly Reemtsen

Los Angeles-based painter Kelly Reemtsen's 2015 works focus on the subject matter of well-dressed women holding household tools traditionally reserved for men. This recurring image acts as a metaphor for the capable women who arm themselves with quick minds, talents, and determination to achieve success in today's world. Despite this, equality is yet to be achieved. The artist's use of thick brushstrokes and bright colours brings a boldness to her subjects as she pays homage to the strong females that continue to work hard and persevere in a male-dominated world.

VCE student Charlotte Pattison uses the Structural Lens to provide an interpretation of a painting by Kelly Reemtsen (Figure 9.17).



The painting *Miss Leading*, 2019, by Kelly Reemtsen, uses the elements of colour and line in various ways to create the principles of unity and contrast. *Miss Leading* shows a powerful woman holding a pink sledgehammer in the foreground, with tools that are outlined in the background. The artist used pink, a colour generally associated with girls, in the model's shoes, dress and in the handle of the sledgehammer she holds. This is a play on the expectations held by society and points to her femininity. This contrasts with the male or gender-neutral colours of blue, orange and green in the tools behind her. Reemtsen uses intense hues to show the confidence and determination of the woman. The colours show the battle between femininity and masculinity in society and because of the way the woman is dressed, in the corporate world. This is further emphasised through the outline of

the tools. The thick black line represents the tools which, according to Reemtsen, 'portray hard work' and become symbolic of careers that seem out of reach and prohibited to the model. The painting symbolises the breaking down of gender barriers as the model already possesses a tool – she has crossed the line, separating her from her goal. The use of colour and line creates contrast and represents the classing of genders and the breaking down of the glass ceiling.

In the following response, Charlotte Pattison provides a comparative analysis of a historical artist Artemisia Gentileschi (Figure 9.19) and the contemporary artist Kelly Reemtsen (Figures 9.17 and 9.18).



Figure 9.17 Kelly Reemtsen, *Miss Leading*, 2019, oil on panel, 152.4 × 203.2 cm



Figure 9.18 Kelly Reemtsen, *Choose Wisely*, 2019, oil on panel, 101.6 × 121.92 cm



Figure 9.19 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, c. 1612–1613, oil on canvas, 158.8 × 125.5 cm



In a time of complete male domination in society, Gentileschi questioned gender roles in her paintings, and the ideal of what a woman should be and how she should behave. Contemporary artist Kelly Reemtsen paints her women in a similar light. They are powerful, capable and aggressive, attributes generally associated with men. The artists both paint women in a way that many women can relate to and evokes an intense feeling when looking at the works. Judith Slaying Holofernes and Miss Leading present the idea that women are not at the mercy of men but are, in fact, equal.



In Judith Slaying Holofernes, the depiction of the women was striking for Gentileschi's time. Their aggressive faces, tense arms, the splatter of blood and their position above Holofernes show that women are not just placid and submissive and were often underestimated in their ability. Art critic Jonathan Jones wrote in an online article for the Australian version of the Guardian in 2016 that Gentileschi 'fought back against the male violence that dominated her world'. Her nuanced and striking depiction of women

evokes emotion and a sense of relatability for the women of her time, as the traditional portrayal of women was far from accurate. Gentileschi has responded to personal experiences of repression, injustice and rape into a ferocious biblical painting that becomes a rallying cry for oppressed women.

Similarly, Reemtsen explores the idea of the corporate world and the breaking of the glass ceiling. Like Gentileschi, Reemtsen's model holds a tool often attributed to men, clearly stating that women are capable of the same achievements as men. Reemtsen presents her women as headless. Instead of a traditional portrait the audience can picture themselves as the woman in the painting and this relatability evokes greater emotion in the audience. Another way she evokes emotion is by dismissing the notion that women must give up certain aspects of their lives to be successful. In a quote by Reemtsen, she claimed that, 'Women can look good and be hard working, they are not mutually exclusive.' Both Reemtsen and Gentileschi combat their society's views on women and evoke emotion through showing women for what they truly are and what they are capable of. The women in both these paintings are not submissive people.

The work of Gentileschi and Reemtsen can be interpreted in terms of women's liberation and rights and draw on personal experiences and beliefs. The issues that the two artists draw attention to in their works may vary, but they are both relevant to the position and role which women play in society. A second painting by Reemtsen, Choose Wisely (2019), shows a woman who must choose a tool from the wall. Reemtsen uses this to draw attention to the sacrifices and choices a woman must make in the workplace, and in so doing highlights gender inequality. Choosing between a family or a career, relationships and housework, women make sacrifices that men generally do not have to consider. By cropping off the head she not only allows the audience to place themselves in the women's shoes, but also shows that women are valued more for their bodies than their brains.



In Judith Slaying Holofernes, the titular character also makes a choice. Faced with the choice of standing back and watching as the men go into battle or slaying the commander of the enemy forces the night before the battle her people are sure to lose, Judith chooses action, resulting in the enemy fleeing the battlefield the next day. Gentileschi depicts her women taking control and possessing the power in the situation they are in. This highlights the feeling of powerlessness that Gentileschi must have felt during the court case after her rape where she received no justice. Judith represents female empowerment and challenges the way women were normally represented by male artists as angelic and whimsical. She dismisses this notion and portrays them as strong and powerful.

Activity 9.8

Research Artemisia Gentileschi and read the online article by Jonathan Jones (2016) from the *Guardian*, titled 'More savage than Caravaggio: the woman who took revenge in oil'.

Do you think that *Judith Slaying Holofernes* or any of Gentileschi's other paintings are a reflection of her personal experiences?

Activity 9.9

Consider how you can use your art to reflect on your experiences. Brainstorm a few important experiences in your life. These could be negative, positive or just memorable because they made an impression on you at the time. Extend on this by creating a mind map considering how you could visually represent some of these ideas.

9.3 Applying the Cultural Lens to artwork comparisons

VCE student Alexia Shaw offers an excellent example of how the Cultural Lens can be applied to the comparison of a historical and contemporary artwork, in her interpretation of *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (Figure 9.19) and *Miss Leading* (Figure 9.17).

In Gentileschi's Judith Slaying Holofernes and Reemtsen's Miss Leading, traditional stereotypes about femininity are challenged as both artists create progressive, non-conforming images of women, evoking feelings of uncertainty within the viewer regarding their own opinions. In her artwork, Gentileschi defies her contemporary society's attitudes towards women by directly contradicting many traditional feminine traits within her work. In the piece, Judith and her servant subvert feminine characteristics of delicacy and weakness as they willingly decapitate Holofernes without hesitation, rolling up their sleeves as they go about the work. This incredibly violent scene (emphasised by intense blood spurts) thus directly challenges values held towards women during Gentileschi's time, depicting women as the perpetrators of violence rather than the victims of it (which they most commonly are). Her artwork was radical at the time, reimagining women in a way that would evoke fear and confusion in her audience, instead of simply portraying them in a way that her society was accustomed to seeing.

Reemtsen similarly challenges her contemporary society's idea of women, critiquing the rejection of femininity that has occurred in recent years. By displaying her subject as powerful and competent, wielding a typically masculine object of a sledgehammer while also wearing a pink floral dress and high heels, Reemtsen reconciles masculinity and femininity, suggesting that women do not have to adopt a masculine energy in order to be strong. This reclaiming of femininity and transforming of the term to be associated



with strength and power is challenging to Reemtsen's society where women are still all too often treated as weak or inferior to men. Femininity is often cast aside by empowered women who want to succeed in more masculine environments. Her work was praised by critics such as Lee Devito from the MetroTimes, who admired how Reemtsen 'confronts the male gaze by simply depicting women in ways that are different than how they have traditionally'. Each artist thus chooses to present a more idealistic, possible world and situation for women, as opposed to portraying it the way it currently is in their time period.

Jess Johnson

Jess Johnson is a New Zealand-born artist whose artwork reflects ideologies of technology and flesh, both ancient and futuristic. While she has extended into installation, video, virtual reality and fashion, her fictional world is initially created by hand through her drawings. Before doing a new drawing, she chooses a piece of text from her notebooks, and this becomes the starting point for the work, as she responds to the structure of the text.

Johnson's drawings generally include bold colours, repetitive geometric shapes, humanoid figures, alien creatures and architectural structures. Because she works by hand, any mistakes that occur cannot be digitally erased, but instead are incorporated into the works. She has said, 'If I were able to digitally erase my mistakes, I wouldn't necessarily get that organic growth in the world. I like that it's a little out of my control and driven by something else.'

VCE student Mia Babatsikos applied the Personal Lens to interpret Jess Johnson's *Gamma World* (Figure 9.20).



PERSONAL

Jess Johnson is an artist who does not consciously seek to inject meaning in her artworks, instead describing her process as one she begins without much planning, creating strange, hypnotic realms through subconscious art she calls 'almost self-generating'. Johnson grew up in a small, isolated town in New Zealand, without internet, where she was

required to make her own fun and often found solace in the worlds of science-fiction and fantasy in books and video games. The visuals from these sources permeate Johnson's art, as seen in Gamma World (119.6 × 90.7 cm), where she uses a similar technology-inspired graphics in her patterns and the alien-like heads positioned on pedestals and pyramids. Johnson describes her artworks as mirroring this same 'complete escapism' she experienced in her childhood, creating worlds that she feels completely at home and peace in the world she's created, and it acts as a method of leaving the apocalyptic world she lives in behind. Nevertheless, Johnson's artwork GammaWorld is a reflection of the life she was living in 2013, at the time she created the artwork, where she was doing a placement in Japan, an experience she describes as 'surreal and isolating', where she worked in a cubicle space a few floors below her living area. The environment was very surreal and office like and disconnected from nature, Johnson saying she couldn't see 'any patch of green [...] it was all buildings [...] all grey'.

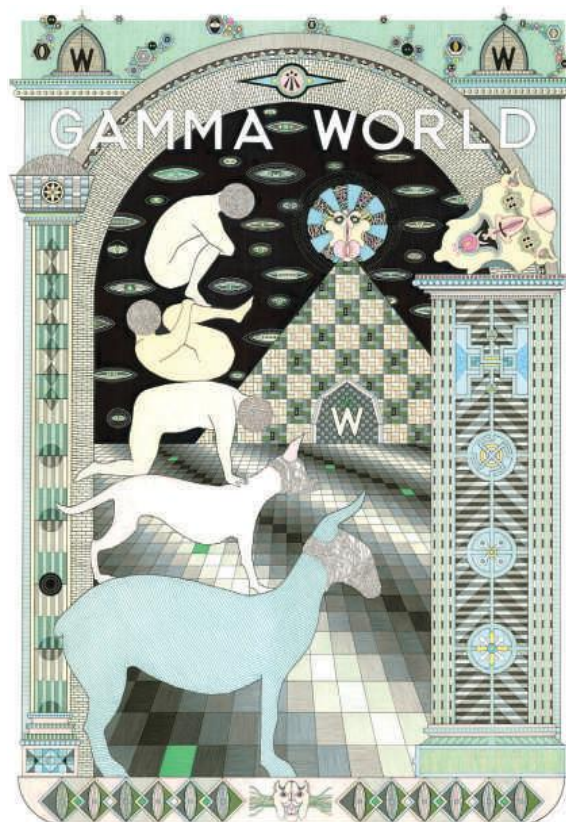


Figure 9.20 Jess Johnson, *Gamma World*, 2013, coloured fibre-tipped pens and metallic paint on paper, 119.6 × 90.7 cm (framed)

Gamma World mirrors this disconnect of nature, the artwork framed by a constructed archway, separating the people in the foreground from the wide-open environment beyond the archway, just as Johnson felt estranged and dislocated from nature. The muted green, blue and yellow colour palette is cool and is one that often is associated with the cold, lacking warmth and connection and building on Johnson's idea of her uncomfortable environment. The figures in the foreground therefore seem almost like self-portraits, curling over, taking up as little room as possible and entirely self-concerned, unable to see or connect with the world around them for the cords that cover their faces. Johnson's artwork Gamma World therefore reflects the aesthetics and interests of her childhood, creating bizarre and intricate landscapes laden with pattern and alien imagery, but the meaning of the work mirrors the trapped and unnatural environment Johnson found herself working in at the time of completion of this artwork.

Mia has described an aspect of the artist's childhood that relates directly to her artwork and provided evidence of this from the artwork. Mia described Johnson's emotional response to the environment and again linked it to the subject matter, use of colour and meaning evident in the artwork.

Giorgio de Chirico

Mia also provides an example of the comparison of Johnson's contemporary artwork with that of a historical artwork, *The Grand Metaphysician*, by Giorgio de Chirico.

De Chirico produced work that was termed 'Metaphysical Painting' by the French poet and critic, Guillaume Apollinaire. The works were unlike anything else being made in Europe at the time and had a powerful influence on the development of Surrealism. This was largely due to the fact that they presented dreamlike scenes that were at once disorienting and confounding, sinister and solitary.

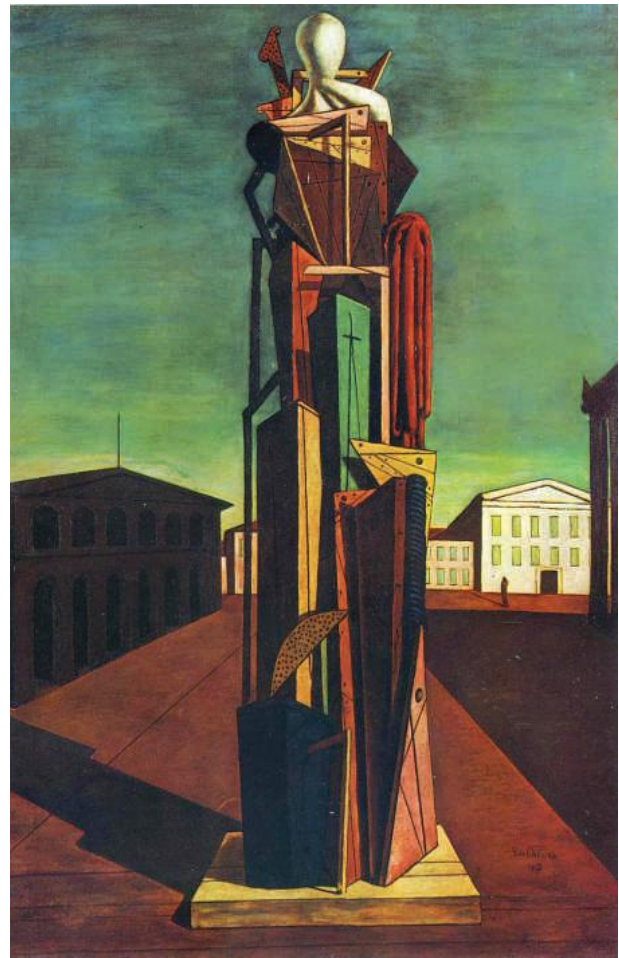


Figure 9.21 Giorgio de Chirico, *The Grand Metaphysician*, 1917, oil on canvas, 104.8 × 69.5 cm

Both de Chirico and Johnson explore victory and power in their respective artworks. Both artworks have a strong colour palette: The Grand Metaphysician painted in intense and saturated reds, brown, greens and yellows that draw the viewer's eye to the figure in the foreground, forcing them to consider it before moving on to the haunting, eerie green sky. These structural aspects, along with the deserted city square, evoke a feeling of unease and fear in the audience. The overload of crossing diagonal lines on the figure draw the eye in and emphasise it in comparison to the hard geometric shapes of the background. This contrasting use of line and shape along with the scale of the monolithic figure, spanning the height of the artwork and looming over the audience adds to this idea of unease, as if we are being dominated by the figure.



De Chirico's use of colour and strong emphasis on the figure in the foreground lends the meaning of the artwork to be about victory and power in the war: the figure with its expressionless and blank face placed on a small platform, becomes a monument to the fear of enemy countries felt by the public during World War I, constantly feeling unsettled and on the brink of the end of the world. This is emphasised by the uninhabited scene. Johnson's artwork also appears to be about victory and triumph and reflects de Chirico's use of colour palette to emphasise the figures in the foreground, her colour palette also reminiscent of a dystopian world in its cool and muted green, blues and yellows, colours often associated with the cold and fear. Her use of line to create intricate patterns of squares and alternating colour also gives the audience a sense of discombobulation and unease. The colour and contrast also attract the attention of the audience to the figures in the foreground, devoid of pattern and thus emphasised, and the organic contours of the bodies contrasting the rigid shapes of the architecture around them.

Johnson's artwork is also about power. This is expressed by the way her figures are hunched over, curling in on themselves as if trying to take up as little room as possible. The alien heads, on top of the pedestal and pyramid, appear elevated in their power. They are also ringed with a halo, the Christian symbol of divinity and power, looking down upon the cowering individuals in the foreground despite their size. Johnson and de Chirico's works therefore both play with themes of power, creating apocalyptic narratives in their use of unusual colour palettes, and strange worlds, using scale and line to emphasise the figures of power in the artworks and the cowering populace before them.

Brook Andrew

Brook Andrew is an Australian-born artist of Wiradjuri and Scottish ancestry who uses his art to challenge society values and to highlight issues in order to inspire change (see Chapter 4 Unit 2 AOS 1). He has continued to explore these ideas in his recent *Loop* series.



Figure 9.22 Brook Andrew, *Loop. A Model of how the world operates*, 2008, wall painting, animated neon, electrical components, Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with funds provided by the Coe and Mordant families, 2008, image courtesy the artist and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, © Brook Andrew/Copyright Agency, 2022

According to the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia website, his *Loop. A Model of how the world operates* (Figure 9.22), is part of an ongoing series of wall drawings. It is re-created each time it is shown, and so it responds to the size and condition of its environment, whether inside a museum or outside. Inspired by his Wiradjuri heritage, Andrew uses the black-and-white patterns traditionally carved into shields and trees (dendroglyphs). In *Loop* Andrew has placed slowly throbbing spirals of colour created with neon lights over these achromatic diagonals. By doing this he challenges our relationship to the inheritance of tradition in a society that has forgotten or ignores Aboriginal culture and traditions.

The immersive installation made up of large diagonal patterns and light creates a dazzling optical effect that references Op Art. This work is a coming together of Australian Aboriginal culture and art and that of Western European culture. The glowing neon also acts as a metaphor for our contemporary culture of consumption and reference advertising signage and the spectacle that mesmerises us and draws us into a consumer world far removed from Indigenous culture. What appears to be an abstract, hard-edge minimalist work of twentieth-century abstract art is grounded in traditional life and culture; the neon coils, glowing on and off, aim, as Andrew says, 'to hypnotise. The overall effect: Free will or submission?'

The work presents a push and pull between traditional ways and contemporary culture, looped together in an interaction that Andrew considers to be a model of how the world operates.

I like the idea of being hypnotised by a pattern, a pattern that can break the program of how we are supposed to behave and what we are supposed to be doing. For me, the pattern represents a matrix. It's covering the surface and coding this structure and the people who experience it. It can take you somewhere else and I hope that's what it does.

Brook Andrew

Activity 9.10

Consider the visual language used by Andrew in his recent abstract works. How does this compare with the visual language used by Brisbane-based photographer Michael Cook (access the interactive textbook to view this artwork), who presents an alternative view of the place that we, as Australians, know and inhabit?

Chapter 10

Assessment



The award of a satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether you have been able to demonstrate the outcomes specified by your teacher. A variety of learning activities and assessment tasks can be used to assess your ability to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in each of the outcomes. All assessments at Units 1 and 2 are school-based and you must work to the assessment rubrics provided by your teacher. For Units 3 and 4, the VCAA will provide a VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet.

OUTCOME 1

Suitable tasks to assess your ability to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills for Outcome 1 include:

- an extended written response
- short-answer responses supported by visual references

- an annotated visual report
- a presentation using digital technologies, such as an online presentation or interactive website
- an oral presentation.

Examples of exemplary student responses can be found in Chapters 2 and 4.

OUTCOMES 2 AND 3

You are required to produce a range of personal visual responses to a selection of set tasks, showing the exploration of ideas, materials and techniques in at least three art forms. You must document your use of the Creative Practice, including annotated personal visual responses to the set tasks.

Following are assessment sheets that could be used for Outcomes 2 and 3 of Units 1 and 2.

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UNIT 1

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 1 Outcome 2 1 Experimentation with and exploration of materials, techniques and processes using the Creative Practice.		Experimentation with materials, techniques and processes.	Experimentation with materials, techniques and processes to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with materials, techniques and processes to develop skills to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with materials, techniques and processes to develop and refine skills to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with materials, techniques and processes to develop and refine skills to make highly effective personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT • Exploration and investigation of selected art forms relevant to personal responses, ideas and concepts – manipulates materials, techniques and processes to strengthen visual language. • Experimentation with materials, techniques and processes throughout the Creative Practice. • Skilled in the use of materials, techniques and processes throughout the Creative Practice.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 1 Outcome 2 2 Experimentation with and exploration of at least three art forms to make personal visual responses.		Experimentation with at least one art form.	Experimentation with at least two art forms to explore visual responses.	Experimentation with at least two art forms to develop skills and to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with a range of art forms to develop skills and to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with a range of art forms to develop and refine skills and to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT – REFINEMENT • Experimentation with and investigation of a range of selected art forms to make personal visual responses concepts – manipulates materials techniques and processes to strengthen visual language. • Skilled in the use of selected art forms throughout the Creative Practice.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 1 Outcome 2 3 Use of visual language to communicate ideas relevant to the student's intentions.		Demonstrates the use of visual language in creating visual responses.	Uses visual language relevant to intentions in the art process.	Demonstrates links between their intention and visual responses using visual language throughout the Creative Practice.	Uses visual language effectively in a variety of visual responses to communicate intentions throughout the Creative Practice.	Uses visual language to clearly communicate their intentions in a variety of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice and discusses this in critical annotations.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Manipulation and application of materials, techniques and processes in visual language. - Considered use of the art elements and principles to develop visual language. - Links between student intentions and the development of visual responses. - Understanding of visual language through the experimentation with and development of materials, techniques and processes in the development of visual responses. - Explored how the relationships between the artist, the artwork, and the viewer or audience communicate meaning in artworks.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 1 Outcome 3 4 Analysis and reflection on visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.		Annotation of the visual responses are evident.	Annotations reflect on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses.	Annotations reflect on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses and analyse the use of materials, techniques and processes.	Annotations reflect critically on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses and analyse the use of materials, techniques and processes.	Comprehensive annotations reflect critically on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses and analyse the use of materials, techniques and processes.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Analysed and reflected upon ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses. - Documented critical and reflective thinking throughout the Creative Practice. - Documented and evaluated the materials, techniques and processes used to make personal visual responses.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 1 Outcome 3 5 Documentation and evaluation of the development of visual language.		Documents the use of visual language in creating visual responses.	Provides written and visual documentation of the development of visual language.	Documents and reflects on the development of visual language throughout the Creative Practice.	Documents and provides critical analysis and reflection on the development of visual language throughout the Creative Practice.	Documents and provides critical analysis and reflection on the use of visual language to clearly communicate their intentions in a variety of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Written and visual documentation of the development of visual language. - Considered use of the art elements and principles to develop visual language. - Reflection on visual language and the links between student intentions and the development of visual responses. - Analysis of the relationships between the artist, the artwork and the audience when developing visual language.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 1 Outcome 3 6 Use of Interpretive Lenses that reflects the exploration and development of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.		At least one Interpretive Lens is evident.	Describes decisions using the Structural and Personal Interpretive Lenses.	Analyses the effects of decisions made throughout the Creative Practice identifying and applying the Structural and Personal Interpretive Lenses. Annotations use art terminology.	Analyses and evaluates the visual responses developed throughout the Creative Practice using the Structural and Personal Interpretive Lenses explicitly to document decisions made. Annotations use art terminology to focus on the development of visual responses.	Relevant and explicit use of the Structural and Personal Interpretive Lenses and art terminology in annotations throughout the Creative Practice to analyse, interpret and evaluate ideas. The Interpretive Lenses are applied, and decisions are evaluated with an indication for further expansion and improvement.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Applies the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens in annotations to analyse and reflect upon visual responses. - Documentation and evaluation using the Structural and Personal Lenses in the exploration of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice. - Understanding of art terminology in documentation.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 1 Outcomes 2 and 3 7 Document and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice, using written and visual documentation.		Use of the Creative Practice to explore visual responses.	Exploration of the Creative Practice to explore visual responses.	Exploration and experimentation of the Creative Practice to explore visual responses.	Exploration and experimentation of the Creative Practice inspired by the practices of researched artists, to explore visual responses.	Exploration, experimentation and development of the Creative Practice inspired by the practices of researched artists, to explore visual responses.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	RESEARCH – EXPLORATION – EXPERIMENTATION • Research and investigation of artists' practices to develop personal visual responses. • Development of personal visual responses – inspired by the practices of researched artists. • Experimentation with art forms and media relevant to student intentions – responds to artistic inspiration or visually small studies with annotation indicating influences and student direction and approach from this influence.					

UNIT 2

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcome 2 1 Exploration and experimentation with traditional and contemporary materials, techniques and processes in art forms to communicate ideas and meaning.		Experimentation with materials, techniques, processes and art forms.	Experimentation with materials, techniques, processes and art forms to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with materials, techniques, processes and art forms to develop skills to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with materials, techniques, processes and art forms to develop and refine skills to make personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.	Experimentation with materials, techniques, processes and art forms to develop and refine skills to make highly effective personal visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT • Exploration and investigation of selected art forms relevant to personal ideas and meaning – manipulates materials, techniques and processes to strengthen visual language. • Experimentation with materials, techniques and processes throughout the Creative Practice. • Skilled in the use of materials, techniques and processes throughout the Creative Practice.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcome 2 2 Explore collaborative approaches to making and presenting artworks.		Exploring at least one collaborative approach to making artworks.	Exploring different collaborative approaches to making artworks.	Developing collaborative approach/es to making and presenting artworks throughout the Creative Practice.	Developing and refining collaborative approach/es to making and presenting artworks throughout the Creative Practice.	Developing and refining collaborative approach/es to skilfully making and effectively presenting artworks throughout the Creative Practice.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT – REFINEMENT - Experimentation and investigation of collaborative approaches to making artworks. - Exploring collaborative approaches to presenting artworks. - Skilled in the use of selected art forms throughout the art process.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcome 2 3 Use of visual language to communicate ideas relevant to the student's intentions.		Demonstrates the use of visual language in creating visual responses.	Uses visual language relevant to intentions in the art process.	Demonstrates links between their intention and visual responses using visual language throughout the Creative Practice.	Uses visual language effectively in a variety of visual responses to communicate intentions throughout the Creative Practice.	Uses visual language to clearly communicate their intentions in a variety of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice and discusses this in critical annotations.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Manipulation and application of materials, techniques and processes in visual language. - Considered use of the art elements and principles to develop visual language. - Links between student intentions and the development of visual responses. - Understanding of visual language through the experimentation and development materials, techniques and processes in the development of visual responses. - Explores how the relationships between the artist, the artwork, and the viewer or audience communicate meaning in artworks. - Uses visual language to effectively communicate cultural and social meaning in artworks.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcome 2 4 Make and present at least one finished collaborative artwork that reflects ideas and issues of social and cultural interest.		An artwork is presented.	Finished artwork demonstrates ideas and concepts related to ideas and issues of social and cultural interest.	Finished artwork/s resolve ideas and concepts related to ideas and issues of social and cultural interest. The artwork is the result of a collaborative process or collaborates with the audience in the way it is presented. There is evidence that feedback from a critique was used to refine and resolve the artwork/s.	The finished artwork/s demonstrate ideas and concepts related to ideas and issues of social and cultural interest. The artwork is the result of a collaborative process or collaborates with the audience in the way it is presented. The artwork demonstrates skills and the use of feedback from the critique to refine and resolve artworks. An understanding of the Creative Practice in the application of the selected art form.	The finished artwork/s clearly communicate ideas and concepts related to issues of social and cultural interest. The artwork is the result of a collaborative process or collaborates with the audience in the way it is presented. The artwork demonstrates the refined application of skills and an understanding of the Creative Practice in the application of the selected art form to resolve finished artwork/s based on feedback from the critique.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	RESOLUTION – REFINEMENT - Resolution of ideas and concepts in finished artwork/s. - Finished artwork/s demonstrate an understanding of the Creative Practice. - The finished artwork reflects the collaborative process of making and/or in the presentation. - Uses feedback from a critique to refine and resolve artworks.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcome 3 5 Analysis and reflection on visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.		Annotation of the visual responses are evident.	Annotations reflect on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses.	Annotations reflect on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses and analyse the use of materials, techniques and processes.	Annotations reflect critically on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses and analyse the use of materials, techniques and processes.	Comprehensive annotations reflect critically on ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses and analyse the use of materials, techniques and processes.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Analyses and reflects upon ideas of personal interest communicated in visual responses. - Documenting critical and reflective thinking throughout the Creative Practice. - Documenting and evaluating the materials, techniques and processes used to make personal visual responses.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcome 2 6 Develop visual language to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest in visual responses.		Documents the use of visual language in creating visual responses.	Provides written and visual documentation of the development of visual language.	Documents and reflects on the development of visual language to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest throughout the Creative Practice.	Documents and provides critical analysis and reflection on the development of visual language to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest throughout the Creative Practice.	Documents and provides critical analysis and reflection on the use of visual language to clearly communicate their intentions related to ideas and issues of social and cultural interest in a variety of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Written and visual documentation of the development of visual language. - Considered use of the art elements and principles to develop visual language. - Reflection on visual language and the links between student intentions to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest and the development of visual responses. - Analysis of the relationships between the artist, the artwork and the audience when developing visual language.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcome 3 7 Use of Interpretive Lenses that reflects the exploration and development of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice.		At least one Interpretive Lens is evident.	Describes decisions using the Cultural Interpretive Lens.	Analyses the effects of decisions made throughout the Creative Practice identifying and applying the Cultural and other appropriate Interpretive Lenses. Annotations use art terminology.	Analyses and evaluates the visual responses developed throughout the Creative Practice using the Cultural and other appropriate Interpretive Lenses explicitly to document decisions made. Annotations use art terminology to focus on the development of visual responses.	Relevant and explicit use of the Cultural and other appropriate Interpretive Lenses and art terminology in annotations throughout the Creative Practice to analyse, interpret and evaluate ideas. The Interpretive Lenses are applied, and decisions are evaluated with an indication for further expansion and improvement.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	EXPERIMENTATION – EXPLORATION – DEVELOPMENT - Documentation and evaluation using the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, in the exploration of visual responses throughout the Creative Practice. - Applies the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, to support reflective annotations on their visual responses. - Understanding of art terminology in documentation.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcomes 2 and 3 8 Document and critically reflect on the use of the collaborative practice to develop and make visual responses that communicate personal ideas related to social and cultural contexts.		Use of the Creative Practice to explore personal ideas related to social and cultural contexts.	Use of the Creative Practice to explore personal ideas related to social and cultural contexts using a collaborative practice.	Exploration and experimentation of the Creative Practice to develop personal ideas related to social and cultural contexts using a collaborative practice.	Exploration and experimentation of the Creative Practice inspired by the practices of researched artists and social and cultural contexts, to develop personal ideas using a collaborative practice.	Exploration, experimentation and development of the Creative Practice inspired by social and cultural contexts and the practices of researched artists, to develop and refine personal ideas using a collaborative practice to make or present the artwork.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	RESEARCH – EXPLORATION – EXPERIMENTATION – DEVELOPMENT – REFINEMENT • Explores social and cultural ideas or issues using the Creative Practice. • Development of personal ideas that explore social and cultural issues. • Experimentation with art forms and media relevant to student intentions – responds to artistic inspiration or visually small studies with annotation, indicating influences and student direction and approach from this influence. • Reflects on the collaborative practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures throughout the Creative Practice.					

VCE Art Creative Practice: School-Assessed Task Assessment Sheet

Assessment Criteria	Levels of Performance					
	Not shown	1–2 (very low)	3–4 (low)	5–6 (medium)	7–8 (high)	9–10 (very high)
Unit 2 Outcomes 2 and 3 9 Present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice.		Presentation of a critique with limited evidence of the use of the Creative Practice.	Presentation of a critique with evidence of the use of the Creative Practice.	A clearly presented critique with evidence of the use of the Creative Practice to produce a collaborative artwork.	An articulate presentation of documented evidence of the use of the Creative Practice to produce a collaborative artwork in a critique.	An articulate critique presenting clearly documented and considered evidence of the use of the Creative Practice to produce a collaborative artwork.
	0 ☐	1 ☐ 2 ☐	3 ☐ 4 ☐	5 ☐ 6 ☐	7 ☐ 8 ☐	9 ☐ 10 ☐
Evidence	RESEARCH – EXPLORATION – EXPERIMENTATION – DEVELOPMENT – REFINEMENT • Presents documented evidence of the use of the Creative Practice. • Explains personal ideas that explore social and cultural issues. • Critically evaluates the experimentation with materials, techniques, processes, art forms and visual language to explore personal ideas. • Demonstrates the collaborative practice with evidence or discusses how the audience might be required to collaborate with the artwork. • Reflects on the decisions made during the use of the Creative Practice in response to artistic inspiration and social or cultural issues.					

Glossary



Exam terminology

analyse dissect to ascertain and examine constituent parts and/or their relationships. Break down or examine in order to identify the essential elements, features, components or structures, determine the logic and reasonableness of information. Examine or consider something in order to explain and interpret it for the purpose of finding meaning or relationships and identifying patterns, similarities and differences.

apply use knowledge and understanding in response to a given situation or circumstance, carry out or use a procedure in a given or particular situation

appreciate recognise or make a judgement about the value or worth of something, understand fully

assess measure, determine, evaluate, estimate or make a judgement about the value, quality, outcomes, results, size, significance, nature or extent of something

comment express an opinion, observation or reaction in speech or writing, give a judgement based on a given statement or a result of a calculation

communicate convey knowledge and/or understanding to others, make known, transmit

compare display recognition of similarities and differences and recognise the significance of these similarities and differences

comprehend understand the meaning or nature of; mentally grasp

consider think deliberately or carefully about something, typically before making a decision, take something into account when making a judgement, view alternatively or scrutinise, reflect on

construct create or put together an argument by arranging ideas or items; display information in a diagrammatic or logical form; make, build

contrast display recognition of differences by deliberate juxtaposition of contrary elements; show how things are different or opposite; give an account of differences between two or more items or situations, referring to both or all of them throughout

create bring something into being or existence, produce or evolve from one's own thought or imagination, reorganise or put elements together into a new pattern or structure or to form a coherent or functional whole

critique review theory, practice or performance in a detailed, analytical and critical way

decide reach a resolution as a result of consideration, make a choice from a number of alternatives

define give the meaning of a word, phrase, concept or physical quality; state meaning and identify or describe qualities

demonstrate prove or make clear by argument, reasoning or evidence, illustrating with practical example

describe give an account, written or spoken, of the situation, event, pattern or process, or of the characteristics or features of something

design produce a plan, simulation, model or similar, planned, formed or conceived in the mind

develop elaborate, expand or enlarge in detail, add detail and fullness to, cause to become more complex or intricate

devise think out, plan, contrive, invent

discuss examine by argument, sift the considerations for and against, debate, talk or write about a topic, include a range of arguments, factors or hypotheses, consider taking into account different issues and ideas, points for and/or against, and supporting opinions or conclusions with evidence

distinguish recognise as distinct or different, note points of difference between, discriminate, discern, make clear a difference between two or more concepts or items

document support an assertion, claim or statement with evidence, decisive information, written references and citations

evaluate make an appraisal by weighing up or assessing strengths, implications and limitations, make judgements about ideas, works, solutions or methods in relation to selected criteria, examine and determine the merit, value or significance of something based on criteria

examine investigate, inspect or scrutinise, enquire or search into, consider or discuss an argument or concept in a way that encompasses the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue

experiment try out or test new ideas or methods, especially in order to discover or prove something, undertake or perform a scientific procedure to test a hypothesis, make a discovery or demonstrate a known fact

explain make an idea or situation plain or clear by describing it in more detail or revealing relevant facts, give an account of, provide additional information

explore look into both closely and broadly, scrutinise, enquire into or discuss something in detail

express convey, show or communicate ideas, views, opinions, feelings or emotions; convey or suggest a representation or depiction

identify distinguish, locate, recognise and name, establish or indicate who or what someone or something is, provide an answer from a number of possibilities, recognise and state a distinguishing factor or feature

implement put something into effect, such as a plan or proposal

interpret make clear or explicit, elucidate or understand in a particular way, bring out the meaning of; identify or draw meaning from or give meaning to, information presented in various forms, such as text, symbols or images

investigate carry out an examination or formal inquiry in order to establish or obtain facts and reach new conclusions; search, enquire into, interpret and draw conclusions about information

justify give reasons or evidence to support an answer, response or conclusion, show or prove how an argument, statement or conclusion is right or reasonable

make decisions select from available options, weigh up positives and negatives of each option and consider all the alternatives to arrive at a position

manipulate adapt or change to suit one's purpose

modify change the form or qualities of, make partial or minor changes to something

organise arrange, order, form all into a whole consisting of interdependent or coordinated parts

propose put forward a point of view, idea, argument or suggestion for consideration or action

realise create or make an artistic work, actualise, make real or concrete, give reality or substance to

recognise identify or recall particular features of information from knowledge; identify that an item, characteristic or quality exists; perceive as existing or true; be aware or acknowledge

reflect on think about deeply and carefully

resolve consolidate and communicate intent through a synthesis of ideas and application of media to express meaning

select choose in preference to another or others, pick out

structure give a pattern, organisation or arrangement to, construct or arrange according to a plan

test take measures to check the quality, performance or reliability of something

understand perceive what is meant by something; be familiar with, construct meaning from messages, including oral, written and visual communication

use operate or put into effect, apply knowledge or rules to put theory into practice

Art terminology

abstract not representing outward appearances; having no recognisable subject. Note: this is different from 'abstracted', where the artist simplifies the subject but it remains figurative.

abstracted simplified from reality and lacking in the details that make the work clearly recognisable; can retain elements of its figurative origin

achromatic lacking hue/colour, such as white, grey or black; a = without and chrome = hue/colour

actual space space that exists in the physical world and is not implied, virtual or imagined

allegory a story, play, poem, picture or other work in which the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas that relate to morals or politics

ambiguous space space that is expressed or can be perceived in more than one possible way, sometimes intentionally

analogous colours three hues, which are positioned next to each other on the colour wheel

analyse to examine in detail in order to discover meaning, to break down into components or essential features

analysis the separation of the parts of a subject for individual study, to find out their nature, function and meaning. To analyse an artwork, the audience breaks the artwork into simple elements to interpret the ideas and meanings expressed. The fundamentals of art analysis include studying the art elements and art principles, techniques, style, symbols and metaphors included in the artwork. Students use critical analysis to refine their own artistic exploration.

appropriation using an object or image, usually without permission, and placing it in a new context that changes its meaning

approximate symmetry symmetry where elements on either side of a compositional axis are similar in size and shape and number but are not mirror images of one another

arbitrary colour colours in an artwork that have no basis in the realistic appearance of the object depicted

art criticism the analysis, evaluation, interpretation and judgement of works of art; can vary in degrees of positive as well as negative remarks, and critical methods vary considerably in their approaches to considering the forms, content and contexts of works of art

art elements the building blocks used by artists to create a work of art; include colour, form, line, shape, texture, tone, light, sound and time

art form an established form of artistic expression, which can include, but is not limited to, painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, film, video, ceramics, sound, photography, performance, textiles, fashion, digital artworks, interdisciplinary practices, installations and street art

art principles how an artist organises or uses the elements within a work of art; include emphasis (focal point), movement, rhythm, unity, variety, space, repetition (including pattern), balance, contrast, proportion and scale

artificial texture texture that does not actually exist but is implied through the artist's use of art materials and other elements of art

artistic practice refers to the ways in which an artist goes about their work, going beyond the physical activities of making art and including influences, ideas and materials as well as tools and skills; includes use of the art process: critical, creative and reflective thinking, visual language and the analysis and interpretation of artworks using the Interpretive Lenses

aspective when one or more aspect or view of the subject is shown in a unified whole (sometimes referred to as twisted perspective); the Egyptians portrayed what they knew about the subject rather than what they saw from a single perspective

asymmetrical (or informal) balance where balance is achieved by elements either side of a visual axis achieving equal visual weight despite their variation in colour, scale and number; a large object can be balanced by a number of smaller objects or a single large area of subdued colour can be balanced by a small area of bright colour, creating a dynamic informal composition

atmospheric or aerial perspective the use of atmospheric haze to enhance the illusion of depth; distance appears to be cooler and less intense, have less contrast and be less defined

balance a state where things are of equal (actual or visual) weight or force

Baroque art style or movement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where artists used strong contrasts, emotion, movement, exaggeration and theatrical effects

body of work consists of personal responses by the student in exploring the Creative Practice, which should lead to a collection of artworks related to each other through ideas, subject matter, style, art form or materials and techniques; each one being as important as the others

brainstorm to suggest many ideas for a future activity very quickly before considering some of them more carefully

chiaroscuro Italian for 'light-dark'; refers to the contrast of light and dark to make forms look three-dimensional

collaborative involving two or more people working together for a special purpose

colour the aspect of any object that may be described in terms of hue, lightness and saturation

colour scheme a combination of colours chosen for a particular reason

complementary colours two colours that are on opposite sides of the colour wheel

composition the arrangement of the objects and the way the art elements are structured to achieve the principles in the format

conceptual art art in which the creative thought, concept and process are considered to be more important than the product

contemporary artists for the purposes of this study, contemporary artists are defined as those who have produced art in the twenty-first century or since 2000; contemporary art mirrors contemporary culture and society

context location and time where the artwork is made, presented or viewed; the economic, philosophical, social or cultural influences on the practices of the artist, their intentions and their expression of ideas, values and beliefs in their artworks or on the audience

contrast when two different art elements or principles are used in the same work specifically to create emphasis and visual interest; for example, the use of changing scale, or contrasting tone or colours, such as blue and yellow

Creative Practice the process used by students for the conceptualisation, development and making of artworks; includes research and exploration, experimentation and development, refinement and resolution as well as reflection and evaluation. These aspects are interrelated and iterative; they do not operate in a set sequence that privileges one or another over the others.

critique a report that examines a person's work or ideas and provides a judgement. A critique is a discursive collaborative environment that is organised to engage, explore, express, present and evaluate artworks and to understand, reflect on and improve awareness of the characteristics of art making.

cubistic space promotes the flatness of the picture plane while acknowledging the three-dimensional form of the subject by showing multiple viewpoints simultaneously

development the process of growing or changing and becoming more advanced or the process of creating something new

didactic information text that is intended to teach

double exposure can be used to create a complex image that combines elements from more than one negative or repeats aspects from the same negative in one print

emotive arousing feeling or emotion

emphasis placing importance on or drawing attention to something

empirical data objective evidence; not influenced by opinion or bias

ephemeral lasting for a very short time; an artwork that is temporary and lasts at the site for a short period of time

experiential learning learning through concrete experiences in Making and Responding; students test the validity of their ideas and exploration, reflect on their experience and respond to that reflection to guide their art making

experimentation the process of trying methods, activities, etc. to discover the effect they have

exploration the activity of searching and finding out about something

expressive and imaginative freedom the freedom of the artist, not just to represent the external world, but to express their inner state and give visual representation to their thoughts

figurative representing objects from the observed world in such a way that they can easily be recognised

focal point the thing that the audience looks at first or that holds their interest

foreshortening shortening or distorting objects to create an illusion of depth and to make them look like they are coming towards the audience

format the work area (shape) of a two-dimensional work of art, such as the canvas, wall (mural), paper (drawing or graphic)

four-dimensional adds time to the traditional dimensions of height, width and depth

free-standing sculpture standing free of support or attachment to a background and can be viewed from all angles

French Impressionists style of painting originating in France during the 1870s, characterised by a focus on the immediate visual impression of a scene and by the use of small brush strokes of colour to suggest reflected light

fresco a painting on wet plaster on a wall or ceiling

gelatin silver print black-and-white photographs produced in the darkroom using paper coated with an emulsion of light-sensitive silver salts in gelatin

genre depicts the realistic representation of everyday life; genres are also various categories of subject matter

geometric shapes shapes that are precise and regular, and can be described using mathematical formulas

glaze a translucent layer of oil paint that can be either thick or thin; a glaze medium can be mixed with the paint or diluted with a mixture of 50 per cent linseed oil and 50 per cent turpentine

global tone the overall tone of an artwork

golden ratio the equation in which a line divided into two parts, where the longer part (a) divided by the smaller part (b) is equal to the sum of (a) + (b) divided by (a)

hand-coloured gelatin silver print black-and-white print coloured using watercolour paints or drawing inks

harmony elements are harmonious if they are similar, such as colours (e.g. warm colours)

high key composed mainly of light tones

holistic the idea that all the properties of a given system (e.g. physical) cannot be determined or explained by its component parts alone; painting with no particular focal point and no natural boundaries – also called all-over painting

hue refers to both a colour and a shade of a colour; the attribute of colours that permits them to be classed as red, yellow, green, blue, etc.

iconography the use of images and symbols to represent ideas or the particular images and symbols used in this way by a religious or political group

inquiry learning learning that requires students to solve problems through questions that have more than one possible resolution; emphasises the process of exploration and experimentation, where the end result is unknown. Develops students' critical and creative thinking, moving beyond gaining knowledge of facts to developing an understanding and critical awareness of their thinking and learning.

Intaglio a method of printing using a surface with lines cut into it

Interpretive Lenses there are three interpretive lenses: structural, personal and cultural. They have been created by the VCAA to provide students with a framework that can be used to understand the meanings and messages of artworks, and the relationship that exists between the artist, the artwork, the audience and the world.

issue an important topic or problem for debate or discussion that affects people's experiences and background; can be related to the economic, philosophical, social or cultural context of artworks, the artist or the audience

kinetic relating to, or resulting from, movement

kintsugi a Japanese method for repairing broken ceramics with a special lacquer mixed with gold; the philosophy behind the technique is to recognise the history of the object and to visibly incorporate the repair into the new piece instead of disguising it

kitsch refers to 'vulgar' art, or art with no artistic merit such as commercial ornaments, tourist souvenirs; the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as works of art or decorative objects that are ugly, silly or worthless

land art an art movement that emerged in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in which landscape and the work of art are inextricably linked

light the brightness that comes from the sun, fire, etc. and from electrical devices, and that allows things to be seen

linear perspective the illusion of spatial depth created by parallel lines that appear to converge as they move towards the horizon

local tone tone used in a particular area within an artwork

low key composed mainly of dark tones

Making students learn about and use knowledge, skills, techniques, processes, materials and technologies to make visual artworks that allow them to explore their experiences and to express their ideas and intentions

manga a style of Japanese comic books and graphic novels; aimed at adults as well as children

maquette a model for a larger sculpture, created to visualise how it might look and work out what approaches and materials would be the most appropriate

materials what an artwork is actually made of (e.g. charcoal, video or plaster); not to be confused with 'technique' (how the materials are used)

memento mori an object serving as a reminder of death and mortality

mobile a type of sculpture created using components that are suspended in the air and move in response to external influences, such as air currents or a motor

modulation moving from vibrant warm hues to cool hues to describe the transition from light to shade; using colour rather than tone to imply form in painting

monochromatic only using variations of one colour; mono = one and chrome = colour

movement an artwork can demonstrate actual kinetic movement or the artist can rely on other elements and principles of art to create visual movement or an impression of action

narrative a story

natural texture actual textures that already exist and are tactile or can be felt

negative space the background or the area that surrounds the subject of the work

Neo-Platonic a philosophical system that originated in the third century, founded by Plotinus and was based chiefly on Platonic doctrine and Oriental mysticism, with later influences from Christianity; it holds that all existence consists of emanations from the One, with whom the soul may be reunited

new media refers to interdisciplinary works using recently developed electronic media and recent developments in software and related hardware devices

objective colour the actual colour of an object, observed colour; also known as local colour

organic shapes irregular and uneven shapes that occur in nature

overlapping covering something partly by going over its edge, or covering part of the same space

pattern any regularly repeated arrangement of a motif

performance art art that consists of a person or group performing something and that does not exist apart from when it is being performed, unless recorded in film, video or through photography

photogram image created in the darkroom without the use of a camera; objects are placed onto photographic paper and then exposed to light; the silhouette of the object appears on the paper; objects that combine interesting positive and negative shapes as well as those that have areas of transparency are often used

pictorial space the space on the picture plane or surface of the artwork

picture plane the surface of the artwork

plinth a base that supports a statue, or a tall structure, such as a column, on which something rests

positive space the subject or areas of interest in an artwork

presentation the act of showing something, or the way in which something is shown

process a series of actions that the artist takes to achieve a result

project-based learning learning based in the construction of knowledge with multiple perspectives where students drive their own learning through inquiry; requires problem-solving, decision-making, investigation and reflection in response to a specific task while allowing for student choice

propaganda the spreading of a doctrine that reflects the views of interests of a particular group

proportion the relationship of elements in an artwork to the whole and to one another

radial balance balance based on a circle with its design focused upon or extending from its centre

radial symmetry visual elements are arranged equally around a central point in the composition

ready-made a manufactured found object modified by an artist and presented as an artwork in a different context from that originally intended

refinement a small change or the process that improves something

relief sculpture any three-dimensional work that projects from, but belongs to, the wall or other type of background surface on which it is carved

repetition where elements of an artwork occur more than once, often to create unity in a work; can be repeated shapes, colours, arrangements or even sounds in multimedia works

research detailed study of a subject, especially to discover new information or reach a new understanding

resolution the act of solving or ending a problem or difficulty

Responding students explore, analyse and interpret their own artworks and the artworks of others. Students discuss and evaluate artworks and the practices used to create them.

rhythm the movement within a piece of art achieved through repetition, that helps the eye travel through the work to a point of focus; can vary in its speed

rhythmic repetition the recurrence of a particular line, pattern, shape, or other visual elements

Romanticism a style of art, music and literature, popular in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, distinguished by a new interest in human psychology, expression of personal feeling and interest in the natural world

saturation the intensity of a colour

scale the overall physical size of an artwork or objects in the artwork in relation to another object or the audience

simultaneity the Cubist characteristic where the artist represented multiple views of the same objects simultaneously in a single artwork, maintaining both the truth of a three-dimensional object represented and the two-dimensional picture plane on which it was painted

site-specific installation created for a specific site; an artwork that relates to various aesthetic qualities of the site or environment for which it is created

soft sculpture a type of sculpture made from materials that are supple and not rigid

sound art a form of contemporary art that uses sound as an element (what it is made out of) and as its subject (what it is about), for creative expression

space the distances or areas around, between and within components of an artwork

spatial colour the use of advancing and receding colour to create the illusion of depth on a two-dimensional picture plane

street art artwork that is created in a public space, typically without official permission

subjective colour a colour chosen for personal reasons or selected by the artist for its symbolic value

surface composition the space of the picture plane – how objects are arranged within the space of the format and the space that exists between these objects; also refers to the space around the objects and the space into the image (real or illusion)

symbolism representing something abstract, an idea or concept with something concrete, visible or tangible

symmetrical (or formal) balance where elements are mirrored on opposite sides of a visual axis; this creates a stable and formal composition

technique the manner in which the artist applies materials to the artwork

tessellation the process of fitting shapes together in a pattern with no spaces in between, or an arrangement of shapes that has been made in this way

texture the quality of something that can be decided by touch; the degree to which something is rough or smooth, or soft or hard

three-dimensional has three dimensions: height, width and depth

thumbnail sketch small, rough sketches that eliminate the unimportant elements and details from the composition. They are not fully rendered sketches and are useful for exploring multiple ideas quickly, or to try out different configurations.

tone the relative lightness or darkness of a colour or the range of lightness and darkness from white through various greys to black

two-dimensional flat with two dimensions: height and width

unity the similar or uniform use of an element to create cohesion and a sense of balance

value the degree of lightness or darkness in a colour

vanishing point the point in linear perspective where receding parallel lines meet on the horizon

vanitas Latin for 'emptiness'; refers to the transience of things of the world and the inevitability of death; in seventeenth-century still-life paintings, vanitas was signified by images of spoiling food, the overturned glass, the burning candle, worms and the obvious inclusion of the skull

variety created by using a different element in a repetitive pattern (e.g. a square in a composition of circles)

vertical placement the higher the base of an object on the ground is positioned on the picture plane, the further away it is

visual brainstorm a technique of solving specific problems, amassing information, stimulating creative thinking and developing new ideas by unrestrained and spontaneous drawing

visual language combines the art elements and art principles with materials, techniques and processes to communicate meaning and personal, cultural and contemporary ideas to an audience. This combination can result in the creation of styles, symbols and imagery.

visual path when certain areas throughout an artwork are connected by some manner of visual emphasis that leads the eye of the audience in a particular direction

wave field synthesis software a system that uses specifically designed loudspeakers to provide listeners with an immersive sonic experience; the technology allows sound to appear to emanate from any desired area of the space, and then move through the area in spatial pathways or patterns within and outside the formation of the loudspeakers

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