



Learning Objectives

- to understand the value of visual arts learning;
- to recognise technical activities masquerading as visual arts;
- to develop skills to design an effective visual arts programme;
- to understand the components of a quality visual arts lesson;
- to expand the use of art appreciation strategies in the classroom; and
- to develop skills in using art language and vocabulary with children and their art.

When my daughter was about seven years old, she asked me one day what I did at work. I told her I worked at the college – that my job was to teach people how to draw. She stared back at me, incredulous, and said ‘You mean they forget?’ (Howard Ikemoto)

1 Introduction

At the heart of visual arts is self-expression—a central force within each of us to communicate the language of the imagination. According to art educator Elliot Eisner (2005), human creativity, the Arts in particular and the visual arts specifically promote the realisation of the potential that our students have for creative development. But as Ikemoto’s quote suggests, children begin with enthusiasm and confidence in their artistic capabilities but often this confidence is, sadly, socialised out of them.

In many primary schools in Australia and around the world, visual arts is construed as ‘marginally academic’ and as such, is often used as a service to more ‘academic’ subjects such as English, mathematics and science. Yet there is intrinsic

value in art-making since some things are learned best while being actively engaged in making sense of the experience. This kind of learning should not be demeaned by labelling it ‘a soft option.’ It should not be underestimated or understated since students learn what’s meaningful by what they do and how others respond to their efforts (Chapman 2005).

This chapter offers a number of strategies for preparing students for rich art-informed lives, using specific visual arts subject matter and art forms as authentic springboards to enhance student learning in an increasingly visual age.

- ▶ **Activity** *Before you continue reading this chapter, brainstorm any words or phrases that come to mind when you hear the term ‘visual arts’. What do you notice about the major themes in your response? Are there surprises in your choices?*

2 What Is Visual Arts?

Like any of the creative arts, visual arts is concerned with ‘creative manifestations of the human imagination’ (Lynn 2002, p. 7). Through visual forms such as painting, drawing, collage, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, craft, photography, textiles and electronic media, we communicate to others—we express our feelings, aspirations and dreams, confront the taken for granted and attempt to make sense of our rapidly changing world. According to Eisner (2008), ‘with the arts, children learn to see ... we want our children to have basic skills. But they also will need sophisticated cognition, and they can learn that through the visual arts’ (n.p.).

From the beginning of our existence, we have been creating visual images to help expand both individual and cultural identity. The evidence of art in galleries and museums, public buildings and libraries and in our own homes points to a fundamental need within each of us to visually express who, what and where we are. As Eisner (1972) argues, art can vitalise life by drawing attention to the quality of experience. He further comments:

Art reminds us that the act of looking intensely, of opening one’s sensibilities to the environment yields a qualitative reward in the process of living.

3 The Value of Visual Arts Learning

Many consider art an intrinsic need that defines us as humans. If art is valued ‘for Art’s sake’, it becomes an important means of self-expression whereby imagination, play, spontaneity, experimentation and risk-taking are enhanced (McArdle 2012). For others, art is acknowledged as useful in improving cognitive processes. According to Wilks (2003) ‘... the visual arts, properly taught, encourage multiple solutions to problems, prize innovation and imagination, and rely on the use of judgement and sensibility’ (p. 27). Clearly problem-solving, divergent thinking and

creative judgement are crucial skills for all levels of the twenty-first century workforce.

Numerous studies have demonstrated art's capacity to improve students' self-esteem, motivation and engagement with learning (Deasy 2002; Fiske 1999; Hetland and Winner 2001; Martin et al. 2013), especially for those who are underachieving, disengaged and/or at risk of failure as mentioned in Chap. 2. In addition, art is seen as a language system, a way of communicating through a means other than verbal and as such invites understanding of cultural change and difference (Image 10.1).

Researcher Lois Hetland and colleagues believe that the visual arts teach students not only dispositions that are specific to art such as the craft of the visual arts and an understanding of the art worlds but at least eight other dispositions that have the potential to transfer to other areas of learning. The term 'dispositions' (Tishman et al. 1995) refers to a trio of qualities—art skills, alertness to opportunities to use these skills and the inclination to use them.

Hetland et al. (2013) refer to these dispositions as 'Studio habits of mind', as they encapsulate both cognitive and attitudinal aspects of thinking and working. They are non-hierarchical and include:

Image 10.1 Beau's artwork



- *understand art worlds* including domain and communities;
- *stretch and explore*;
- *reflect*—question and explain—evaluate;
- *observe*;
- *develop craft* including technique and studio practice;
- *engage and persist*;
- *envision*; and
- *express* (see *Studio thinking 2: The real benefits of visual arts education* for more detailed discussion).

Clearly, ‘students need to be given the opportunity to think like artists, just as they should be given the opportunity to approach the world mathematically, scientifically, historically and linguistically’ (Hetland et al. 2013, p. 4). Art is another way of providing the critical connection that engages a child in learning and coming to know about themselves and the world.

4 Technical Activities Masquerading as Visual Arts

A number of years ago, I was supervising a pre-service teacher on a professional experience placement. Wanting some feedback from the Year 2 co-operating teacher, I arranged to meet her at lunchtime in her classroom. At the agreed time, I entered the room to find her ‘redoing’ the children’s art works. It seems that the previous ‘art session’ had been devoted to making cows’ faces using brown paper bags. The teacher was now refolding the cow’s ears so that they ‘looked perfect’ for her upcoming display ... Please replace ‘looked perfect’ with stereotypical, identical craft! (Robyn Gibson)

In the following section, we examine several key principles, which contribute to an effective visual arts programme and a rewarding visual arts lesson. It is probably prudent at this point to identify those activities which are actually substitutes for art-making. As such they should be avoided since they are not art at all as the above anecdote so clearly demonstrates.

When visual arts is taught well, children are engaged in art-making and produce original works of art. The later point needs to be stressed—no two pieces of art work look the same. Creating original artworks is both stimulating and rewarding while producing work that looks just like its neighbour confirms in children (and their teachers) that there is a right and a wrong way to do art.

Students who produce work that follows a step-by-step sequence of instructions make very few informed decisions themselves. Moreover what they produce is generally less skilful than the adult example which ultimately leads to disappointment and frustration. By controlling a step-by-step procedure to produce art, a teacher does nothing to foster invention and creativity. Any activity can be made more creative with a little effort and enthusiasm.

Another cause for concern is the use of templates especially with young children. At the heart of this practice is the desire to produce an image which looks better than what the child could create themselves. But we learn to draw by creating images

ourselves. Recent evidence suggests that drawing should be a curriculum essential (Taylor 2014). Noella Mackenzie's (2011) work on drawing found that tapping into young children's drawing and storytelling improved their literacy goals. As a primary visual language, drawing has creative, expressive and educational value. Visual Arts as a subject is about experiential learning and if we wish to move the STEM to STEAM agenda (see Chap. 11 for more detailed discussion) then drawing may be the answer.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that we as teachers can unwittingly dilute children's learning which integrates visual arts with other subjects in a tokenistic manner. Often in an integrated curriculum, art, craft and design are treated as 'services' and/or decorative to other more important subjects such as literacy and numeracy. Thus children may be required to provide illustrations for science projects and social studies posters or construct costumes, props and backdrops for theatre productions. While such activities may generate valid design and craft learning, they have little or nothing to do with authentic art learning.

5 An Effective Visual Arts Programme

Our role as creative teachers is to provide authentic experiences in a variety of challenging art forms that promote individual invention, aesthetic exploration, problem-solving and skill development (Brown et al. 2017). For the teacher who is not confident in their own creative abilities, designing and implementing art experiences that are meaningful, relevant and connected can prove problematic. Unlike language learning or mathematics, there are very few art resources that require the teacher to be inventive—to have faith in their own creative efforts and act as a facilitator as children engage in an art-making process, which involves experimentation, risk-taking and the unexpected!

Finding the right balance between teacher-led skill-based instruction and student-centred open-ended learning is not an easy task (Brown et al. 2017). So, when developing your visual arts programme, consider the following:

1. Think about the students in your class. What are their previous experiences working with art materials? At this stage of development/readiness, what are they genuinely interested in? Don't forget yourself. What art content appeals to you?
2. Teach *how* to use a variety of media, tools and techniques, but link these to authentic types of creative expression.
3. Connect visual arts to the students' lives. Instead of isolated art activities or art used as a reward for finishing other work, integrate art *with, about, in* and *through* the other creative arts and the curriculum.
4. Provide an aesthetically stimulating classroom that displays (and regularly changes) children's artworks.
5. Limit direction giving and offer descriptive feedback rather than praise (see Sect. 9, p. 165).

6. Integrate opportunities for students to respond/reflect on art, that is, write or tell stories about their art, create musical compositions to accompany their art, develop role-plays using actual art-making processes and products.
7. Provide opportunities where students can work individually, in small collaborative groups and as a whole class on in-depth art projects that can be worked on over sustained periods of time.

- **Activity** Recall an ‘art experience’ you had at school. It could have occurred in kindergarten, primary or secondary school. Identify those aspects that made it a positive or negative experience for you. Compare your observations to the suggestions above. How do they compare?

6 The Quality Visual Arts Lesson

Like any effective lesson, a quality visual arts lesson requires considered planning, sound organisation and authentic assessment strategies all within a time period that can span from 30 minutes to more than one hour. Given the amalgam of creativity, self-expression and disparate materials, the mix is often daunting to the less experienced teacher. It is therefore important to keep in mind a number of key attributes when developing a visual arts lesson.

A quality visual arts lesson allows students an opportunity to make and respond. These interrelated strands are identified in *The Australian curriculum: The arts*. It is not a time to construct 25 identical ‘artworks’ (refer to Sect. 4, p. 158). This dual focus—making and responding—can be achieved through a learning and teaching process that incorporates three interrelated components: exploring/experimenting, making/developing and responding/appreciating. Each is vital to the success of a well-rounded visual arts lesson in any early childhood, primary or middle school classroom.

1a) *Exploring*: Despite the best intentions, a visual arts lesson can flounder if students are not given adequate time to ‘explore’ the topic or theme prior to art-making. Here is a perfect opportunity to incorporate other KLAs especially the other creative arts disciplines.

A relatively easy option is to ask the students to brainstorm the topic and while this may be effective in the first couple of instances, it becomes stale if repeated at the beginning of every art lesson.

Instead, consider the following possibilities:

- read a quality picture book, short story or poem (sadly poetry seems to have faded in popularity in recent years);
- watch a segment of a film followed by a brief but animated discussion;
- listen to a piece of music and develop movements to accompany it;
- select a character and walk/talk in role;
- learn/sing a song; or

- engage in a direct experience which involves the senses, for example, feel the texture of an old pair of boots. NB: This strategy is especially important for young students.

The purpose here is to excite, enthuse and engage the students in the upcoming art-making process.

1b) *Experimenting*: In some cases, you will be asking the students to work with a new material, tool or technique. Without the necessary time to experiment, this is likely to yield less than desirable results. For example, if students have had no prior experiences using hand building clay, the teacher needs to devote time for them to ‘play’ with this new material. This could include brief experiments such as:

- Close your eyes and tell the person beside you what it feels like.
- Does it have a smell?
- Make the tallest structure you can.
- Can you make something inside something else?
- Can you make a texture on the surface using only your fingertips?

Such simple activities allow the students to become acquainted with the material and learn what it can and cannot do.

2) *Developing/Making*: Usually the body of the visual arts lesson will be taken up with art-making. Depending on the age of the children, all instructions may be given at the beginning of this stage or staggered throughout the activity. However very clear expectations regarding behaviour and safety need to be highlighted early. Referring to the previous exploration of clay, the teacher needs to develop a strategy for quickly gaining attention over the obvious noise that accompanies clay work. If playing background music then turning the music down can be very effective while asking students to repeat a clapping, clicking, tapping pattern may not (especially with hands covered in clay)!

Many teachers assume that art-making is an individual pursuit, and while it can be, there should be ample opportunities for children to work in pairs, small groups and collaboratively as a class. There may also be times within a visual arts lesson where responsibility for art-making shifts. The exemplar on ‘Cubist Faces’ on p. 169 details this shift in ‘art ownership’.

3) *Responding/Appreciating*: After the artworks are completed (or even if they are not), time needs to be devoted to reflecting on the process and/or responding to the product. It is extremely difficult for students to develop their skills, techniques and understanding of art if they are denied an opportunity to look closely at their art, the art of their peers and that of professional artists and make informed judgements about what they see, what they like and what they might change when given an opportunity.

Not surprisingly, this is the component of the visual arts lesson that routinely fails to occur for obvious reasons: lack of time—the lesson took longer than expected; it is replaced with clean-up tasks—or sadly, teachers fail to realise its significance to the students’ artistic development.

Like the exploring component of the visual arts lesson, in terms of the responding/appreciating stage, teachers tend to resort to a tried-and-true but tired strategy. ‘Tell me about your artwork’ may be fun for the first one or two students but by number 22 this process becomes tedious. Therefore teachers should opt for an activity that complements the art-making that has occurred. This can be done as a class, in small groups or individually. It can be done in writing or verbally or it can incorporate other KLA’s to make a truly integrated experience (see next Sect. 7).

7 Art Appreciation Strategies

Current visual arts curricula are based on the educational premise that children should actively participate in making and developing but also be afforded time to respond and appreciate artworks. While the concept of the child/artist is important in establishing the foundations for creating using artistic media, children need opportunities to look at and respond to works of art not just as objects but as ‘aesthetic objects’ (Mai 2013). Lea Mai’s work with three- and four-year-old children’s aesthetic experiences in an art museum revealed that young children deploy complex strategies for engagement with chosen works of art, are able to connect with artworks through multiple communicative forms and sustain their aesthetic experiences for substantial amounts of time.

Through reflecting on and responding to their own artworks and the works of artists, children develop the skills of talking and thinking (and later, reading and writing) about the arts. When they engage in art criticism, children describe, analyse, interpret, judge, challenge and value artworks and artistic ideas. (Wright 2012, p. 239)

Students don’t automatically know how to make appropriate judgements especially when they are looking at art. Like many adults, without instruction and guidance, children tend to either express love or hate for a work. However, through a range of well-planned activities, students can decode artworks and begin to grasp the concept that to *appreciate* art means to understand it—not that you have to love or even like it.

‘Just as there are many ways of seeing children, there are many ways of seeing art’ (McArdle 2012, p. 33). But for many teachers, art appreciation conjures images of tedious lectures concerning dry, boring facts about dead, white European males! This is definitely not the case in the primary or middle school context. In fact, art appreciation does not aim to fill children’s heads with facts about art, but to develop their strategies for looking at art and making sense of what they see.

One of the main purposes of art criticism (or learning about art) is to encourage people including children to hesitate before artworks, to take time to really see/experience them and to initiate dialogue. For those who may feel intimidated by this process using an established method of critique may be a useful place to begin. Feldman’s (1994) *Inquiry method* uses four main steps:

1. **Naming**—this is a stalling process as it requires people to stop and look. Describe objects but don't interpret. List images that can be seen in the artwork (i.e. a man, the horizon, etc).
2. **Analysing**—collecting evidence and discriminating/describing (i.e. the man is pale and asleep, the horizon is high, etc).
3. **Interpreting**—an explaining step. Collecting evidence from Stages 1 and 2 to create meaning (e.g. Why do you think the young man is in the water?).
4. **Evaluating**—making a qualitative judgement. It requires an opinion about the artwork based on the three previous steps (e.g. What do you think of it? Why?).

Students who understand the basic elements of art and the concepts that artists use will be more able to think and talk intelligently about art using its metalanguage. In turn, they will be able to apply this knowledge to their own artworks and those of their peers, which increases understanding, enjoyment and confidence.

How do we as teachers and art educators foster such substantive communication (*NSW quality teaching model* 2003; *Productive pedagogy* 2001)? How do we encourage children to talk about their art and the artworks of others? What mechanisms can we utilise so that they look more closely at an artwork, make sense of what they see through decoding, describing and interpreting and thereby develop strategies for responding, discussing and reflecting on these artworks in meaningful ways? (Gibson 2002).

In recent years, *Visual Thinking Strategies* (VTS 2013) have been employed in a number of galleries and museums as a teaching method to improve critical thinking skills through teacher-facilitated discussions of visual images. VTS uses art to teach thinking, communications skills and visual literacy. Three questions are essential to the strategy:

What's going on in the image?
 What do you see that makes you say that?
 What more can we find?

Such simple prompts can be handled individually, in pairs or small groups while responses to these questions can be delivered verbally, in writing or perhaps via another art form.

8 Encouraging Children to Talk About Their Art

Traditionally, any number of approaches have been, and continue to be, used by teachers to elicit verbal comments from children about their art. Robert Schirrmacher in *Art and creative development for young children* (1998) has identified six of the most common approaches used by adults to respond to children's art:

Complimentary

Using this approach, the teacher tells the child that their art is nice, pretty, lovely or even beautiful. But as with any compliment, the opportunities for rich verbal dialogue are usually limited to ‘thank you’. In addition, what are the criteria for a ‘nice’ drawing? Words such as ‘nice’ and ‘pretty’ are superficial ones and need to be replaced with terms that provide specific feedback to the student.

Judgemental

Teachers tell children that their art is good or even great. However most teachers don’t want to rank students’ art as good, better or best and so to compensate, they simply tell all children that their art is good. As a result, these judgemental terms are routinely repeated and become meaningless. Not surprisingly, teachers may lose credibility in the eyes of their students by using this approach.

Valuing

In this approach, the teacher tells the students that she likes or even loves their art. However, Schirmmacher (1998) warns that ‘rewarding and encouraging the child for processing is very different from putting the teacher’s “seal of approval” on the finished product’ (p. 166). We need to emphasise that we hope children will create to express themselves not to please their teacher or other adults.

Questioning

Much of children’s art is private and egocentric. Smith (1983) maintains that it is unwise and can even be harmful to ask ‘what is it?’ of children who are making non-representational art. For many young children, the end product is of no consequence, while others may be hurt or even insulted that their teacher does not recognise what they have created.

Probing

Typical comments when using this approach are ‘Tell me about your art’ or ‘What can you say about this?’ According to Schirmmacher (1998), probing has merit but it should be used sparingly, as there is a tendency for this approach to grow stale with repeated use.

Correcting

The teacher attempts to provide children with specific feedback that will enable them to improve their artworks. Using this approach, the teacher encourages the student to approximate reality in their art. However, it must be stressed that art and children’s art, in particular, is not a copy of the real world. In fact, Lowenfeld (1982) argues that a teacher’s corrections or criticisms do not foster children’s artistic growth but rather discourage it.


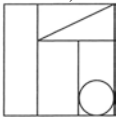
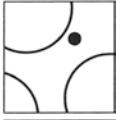

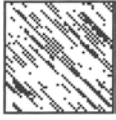
Clearly there are concerns with each of these ‘art dialogue’ approaches. The question becomes one of ‘What is a teacher to say or do?’ Eisner (1982) maintains that ‘what the arts make possible ... is an invitation to invent novel ways to combine elements’ (n.p.). Therefore rather than looking for representation in children’s art, teachers should focus on the abstract, design qualities or the ‘syntax’ of their art. With little effort, teachers can use the aesthetic elements of art as a framework for verbally responding to children’s art (Image 10.2).

Image 10.2 Pia's artwork



9 Art Language and Vocabulary

There is little agreement regarding a generic list of the elements and principles of art. In fact, there has, and continues to be debate between artists and designers regarding the ‘true’ tools and applications of design. However, teachers may want to consider the following:

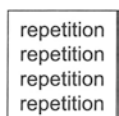
-  *line*—continuous linear mark. All lines have direction, that is, horizontal, vertical or oblique;
-  *shape*—two-dimensional, self-contained area of geometric organic form;
-  *size*—variations in the proportions of objects, lines or shapes;
-  *value*—the lightness or darkness of a colour, also called tone;
-  *texture*—the surface quality of an object either tactile or visual; and



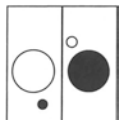
- *colour*—refers to specific hues and has three properties—chroma, intensity and value.

as appropriate elements to use when working with early primary-age students. These students could work with one element at a time. They could then identify the most important colours, lines or shapes in a work of art and eventually compare colours, shapes and/or sizes in two or more artworks. Perhaps they could develop questions about similarities and differences among the artworks since this process ‘encourages closer inspection of the visual representation’ (Hartung 1995, p. 37).

Depending on artistic experience, principles of design are as follows:



- *repetition*—the recurrence of elements within an artwork;



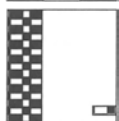
- *balance*—a feeling of visual equality either symmetrical or asymmetrical;



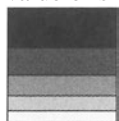
- *rhythm*—a movement in which some elements recur regularly;



- *harmony*—brings together a composition of similar units;



- *contrast*—is the occurrence of differing elements, such as colour, value or size;



- *gradation*—a series of transitional changes, that is, lighter-to-darker colours or larger to smaller shapes;



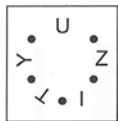
- *movement*—visual flow;



- *emphasis*—refers to areas of focal interest;



- *proportion*—involves relationship of size between objects. Also known as scale; and



- *unity*—a sense that everything belongs together.

may be useful for discussions with upper primary and middle school students. The teacher could structure the session to elicit and use words descriptive of specific compositions and utilise these to construct comments and questions of the artist. Besides identifying and describing the elements and principles within an artwork, older children may be able to make connections, create narratives, interpret intentions and ultimately develop the ability to critique a work of art in terms of compositional or structural aspects.

This is significant, in that the critique not only builds confidence in the students' dialogue about their own and other's work but it gives the students practice in receiving constructive criticism. Once again, it is important to recognise the often-damaging effects of negative criticism especially with something as personal and subjective as art. Elizabeth Hartung (1995) has suggested that the easiest way to minimise this is to begin the process of critiquing unfinished work. In this way 'students might be instructed on how to make the composition more effective as well as to offer comments about its successful aspects' (Hartung 1995 p. 37).

Visual Arts as a Springboard

In the second half of this chapter, we offer practical art ideas that can be adapted for use in any primary or middle school classroom. Many can be integrated into existing programmes. However since we are keen to demonstrate the logical connections across the creative arts, we have developed exemplars and units of work that lead with the visual arts but bring together the other KLAs.

10 Strategies to Encourage Art Dialogue

Here are a number of strategies which illustrate the different ways teachers can use writing and talking, drama and movement during art appreciation activities. Remember that these activities can be based on students' own work as well as on the work of professional artists, on reproductions as well as original artworks (collect photographs, postcards, old calendars, etc., as sources of inspiration).

The Missing Part

A section of an artwork is covered. Students are asked to imagine what is ‘hidden’. They draw this section and give it a title. Questions are then asked to identify who has come closest to discovering the missing part. For example, who drew a curved section? Does your image mirror part of the larger object?

Telephone Art

Working in pairs, one student phones another using an actual phone, mobile or prop to talk about a new piece of art they have just purchased. Through careful observation and explicit language, an informative conversation can be developed.

A What type of artwork is it?	B It's a
A Who created it?	B It's by a famous artist named
A How big is it?	B It's very large. About
A What colours are in it?	B Oh, it mostly
A Where are you going to hang it?	B Well, it would look really good in ...

Living Clay

Six artworks are displayed. In pairs, one child becomes the ‘sculptor’, the other a lump of clay. The sculptor moulds his/her clay either physically or through verbal instruction, into something in one of the artworks. The rest of the class needs to decide which artwork and specifically what, within that artwork, has been sculpted.

Every Picture Tells a Story

In small collaborative groups, students are assigned an artwork. These could be related to an English, history, geography or science unit. They discuss how they might create a still image that either reflects the artwork itself or their reactions to it. These are ‘presented’, and other class members are able to ‘tap-in’ to ask relevant questions. Students may respond with words, sounds and/or movements.

Art Auction

Each group is assigned a ‘unique’ artwork which will be auctioned by a world-famous auction house. Collaboratively they compose the blurb to be used at the auction, which describes the artwork and gives insights into the artist and their practice. An ‘auctioneer’ from each group then attempts to sell their artwork for the highest price, thereby combining both language and drama into a fun yet informative activity.

Example**Cubist Faces**

This exemplar focuses on portraits and can be easily linked to the *Archibald Prize* at the New South Wales (NSW) Art Gallery (or another portrait exhibition). The subject matter could also be adapted to align with an English or Social Studies topic or theme. N.B. It assumes that the students have had a prior instructional lesson on how to draw a face. A number of cross-curricula activities are suggested for use before and/or following the Visual Arts lessons. Teachers can decide which are most appropriate for their students. The Visual Arts component is unusual in that it begins with the individual artist moving to a group of artists and then returning to the original creator.

Exploring Through Drama

In groups of 6–8, a volunteer is blindfolded and then tries to identify other group members by feeling their facial features. Students may stand, sit or kneel to add a challenge to this task.

In pairs, students mirror various facial expressions. With older students, ask them to attempt more complex emotions such as rage, alarm, bliss and so on. Take photographs of these expressions for later use.

Students form small, collaborative groups. Each group is given a reproduction of a famous portrait, for example Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* or Van Gogh's *Self portrait*. The groups need to compose a still image of the minute before the image was created or the minute after the image was created. The teacher can tap in to learn more about these scenarios.

Experimenting with Visual Arts

Divide a piece of cartridge paper into eight sections using a ruler. The sections do not need to be of uniform size.

Students select two colours (e.g. red and orange). Each section is painted using either colour (or both) utilising a different technique each time.

For example:

- add water to paint and apply with a roller;
- painting in one colour and applying the second colour using a toothbrush;
- using fingertips;
- using small pieces of sponge to print a pattern;
- scrunching paper towel and printing onto a painted section; and
- using a spatula or other kitchen tool to apply paint in various directions, etc.

Developing/Making

Sitting diagonally opposite, students create a 'representation' of this person drawing on their knowledge of the placement of facial features, hair and other distinguishing characteristics from previous lessons.

When complete, the portrait is divided into four sections using a ruler.

For example (Image 10.3).

The back of each section is labelled with the initials of the artist and two colour choices (i.e. purple and green).

Image 10.3 Lisa's portrait of Chloe



All pieces are jumbled and individuals collect any four pieces, none of which may belong to them.

Students paint these pieces using any/all of the techniques developed as a result of their experimental paintings. However they are restricted to the two colours specified on the back of each section.

When dry, individuals collect their original four facial pieces and bring them together to create a face. Pieces are taped together (at the back) and a black continuous line may be used to add lost detail but only to one part of the face (i.e. the right third; around the eyes; the left eye and nose, etc.) rather than the entire face (Image 10.4).

Responding/Appreciating: 'Whose Portrait is It?'

The teacher selects one student who sits at the front of the class wearing a headband onto which has been attached the name of an artist or famous artwork. Artists and artworks should relate to the portrait theme. For example, Picasso and *Weeping woman* (1937), Warhol and *Marilyn Monroe* (1967), Van Gogh's and *Self-portrait* (1889), Da Vinci and *Mona Lisa* (1503–1506) and Frida Kahlo and *Self-portrait with monkey* (1940).

The 'celebrity' asks yes/no questions of the class until they guess who they are or which portrait they are.

Taking It Further

Portraits show more than what a person looks like, and artists throughout history have been drawn to this particular subject matter. In pairs, students research



Image 10.4 Completed Cubist face

an artist who has focused on this genre. They then present their findings to the class via an art form (i.e. role-play, musical composition, movement performance, an art exhibition, piece of poetry or narrative).

Teacher's Reflection

I initially developed this exemplar for use with the pre-service teachers in my visual arts classes. Many were fearful about the prospect of drawing, so it was important to develop some strategies that would take the focus away from them. By giving a 'how-to-draw a face' lesson prior and then allowing other students to paint the various sections, the students experienced 'group ownership' of their portraits.

Many of these preservice teachers have trialled this exemplar with their own classes and always the results are positive both for the preservice teacher and the students engaged in the artmaking. (Robyn Gibson)

Example

Wheels

'Wheels' has been selected as the subject matter for the following visual arts unit of work for a number of considered reasons. Almost all children in western society have had direct experiences with wheeled objects albeit the family car, a bicycle or scooter, a supermarket trolley or a movable toy. Moreover the diversity

of wheel types offers unlimited art-making possibilities that integrate effortlessly with the other KLAs, including science and technology, mathematics and studies of society and its environment. It is also a unique topic in that it draws together experiences from home, school and the local community thereby creating meaningful connections across contexts.

Starting with Social Studies

Ask the students to bring to school an object with wheels (i.e. a toy car, a scooter, a pair of roller blades, etc). In groups of 4–6, students categorise these objects. Possible categories may be based on size, purpose, number of wheels, toy versus a piece of sporting equipment and so on.

Descriptive Writing

Students write a description of one of the ‘wheeled’ objects. The description must offer clues without stating what the object actually is.

There are four of me.

Often one of us likes to go in a different direction.

You find us in the supermarket.

Break the class into two teams, a pupil reads their description while their team attempts to identify the object. Points are awarded/deducted on the number of clues necessary.

Exploring with Visual Arts

Students close their eyes and visualise a wheel—any wheel. In 3 minutes using a lead pencil, they draw their visualised wheel. No other instructions should be given at this point and drawings should be collected to avoid any ‘improvements’ that might occur.

NB: Display these memory drawings in the form of a large wheel, using string to create spokes.

Making/Developing

Either in the school car-park (during class time), using the wheeled objects from home or large photos, or images of various wheels, ask the students to make a detailed representation focusing on size, shape, line, tone and pattern using a range of lead pencils (if possible).

Prior to this lesson, the class could create a chart of possible drawing techniques including dark, coloured lines, dotted lines, cross-hatched, smudged areas and so on.

Ask the students to place themselves in different positions (i.e. directly in front of the wheel, standing, seated, etc.), in order to encourage a variety of perspectives of the same object. Allow 20–30 minutes for this drawing task (Image 10.5).

Responding

In pairs, compare the similarities/differences between the memory drawing and the direct observation drawing. The students should discuss and record their observations. For example, the memory drawing has fewer details. The direct observation is larger and more realistic.

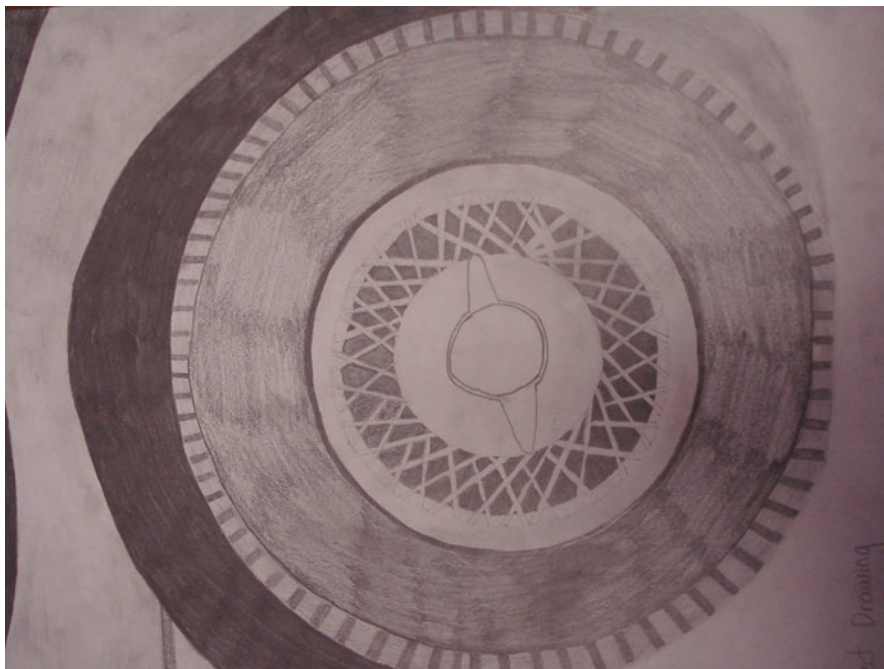


Image 10.5 Direct observation of wheel

Moving into Music

As a class, learn a song about wheels. ‘Wheels on the Bus’ is an obvious example, but there are numerous songs about trains, cars, trucks and bikes. Also consider singing in the round, thus replicating the movement of wheels.

The following lesson draws on both the experiences and artwork from the previous visual arts lesson and demonstrates the imperative of connection versus the one-off art lesson on a Friday afternoon.

Experimenting

Each student is given either a small piece of telephone/newspaper or brown paper. In groups of 6–8, they ‘invent’ a collage technique (i.e. cutting the paper into strips, tearing it into small pieces, scrunching then flattening it out, cutting it into squares to create a mosaic effect, etc.).

These ‘experiments’ are pasted onto large sheets of paper to create a collage design bank and displayed around the classroom for future reference.

Developing

Using a simple cardboard viewfinder, each student selects a visually interesting area of their direct observation drawing of the wheel from the previous session. Students should be encouraged to move the viewfinder to more unusual areas rather than positioning it in the centre of their drawing.



Image 10.6 Wheel collage

On an A3 piece of cartridge paper, the students create a simple border which will contain their collage. Leaving the viewfinder in place, the selected area is enlarged onto the paper using a lead pencil. Only lines and shapes are captured; no shading is necessary.

Using only telephone/newspaper and brown paper, these areas are collaged. Students can refer to the classes' design bank for inspiration on various collage techniques.

When completed, black paper or aluminium foil is added for detail (Image 10.6).

Responding

Words, phrases and/or sentences referring to materials, techniques, design elements and so on are used to create an effective, integrated border around each collage.

Moving into Drama

Students watch a video of the history of transport paying particular attention to the wheeled vehicles. In groups of 4–6, they select a time period/type of wheel and create three frozen moments which reflect the wheeled object, its use and so on. Photographs should be taken so that after their 'performance', the pupils can add thought bubbles or speech clouds to their frozen images thus linking it to literacy.

Other Art-Making Possibilities

The earlier activities lend themselves to any/all of the following extension ideas:

1. The students move from 2D to 3D art-making. Using malleable wire and stiff cardboard, they can create 'objects' that suggest movement.
2. As a class, study Alexander Calder, an American sculptor and artist, most famous for inventing the mobile. Students can then develop their own Calderesque mobiles, incorporating wheels and spokes.
3. Using crayons or charcoal, pupils can take rubbings of the various wheel treads on cars, motor bikes, bicycles and so on. These could then be cut out and used to create textured artworks.
4. After watching a video segment about future travel, the students design and make their own futuristic wheeled vehicles, using a variety of recycled materials. When complete, these are spray-painted silver or bronze to create a futuristic look.

Literature

There are numerous quality literary texts and poems that can be studied in a meaningful way as part of a unit of work about wheels. Here are a few suggestions:

Mrs Armitage on wheels by Quentin Blake.

Mrs Armitage queen of the road by Quentin Blake.

Mr Gumpy's motor car by John Burningham.

Oi! Get off our train by John Burningham.

Mulga Bill's bicycle by A.B. 'Banjo' Patterson.

Please don't chat to the bus driver by Shen Roddie.

Teacher's Reflection

In this unit of work, there is a natural movement from drawing into collage which appeals to many students. Once again, I have used this with pre-service teachers who have then replicated it in their various classrooms. I have also replaced the subject matter with others such as bottles, shells and so on since it requires any object from which to create a direct observation which then forms the basis of the collage.

The unit also lends itself to endless integration possibilities utilising drama, media arts, movement and literature in order to create meaningful connections across the curriculum. (Robyn Gibson)

11 Conclusion

In this chapter, we focused on developing a clear understanding of what constitutes the visual arts. We then proposed a well-grounded rationale for its value to a child's learning and development. Time was devoted to identifying those activities, common in many primary and middle school classrooms which continue to masquerade

as art-making. Suggestions were made regarding developing an effective visual arts programme and a quality visual arts lesson which incorporates exploring/experimenting, developing/making and responding/appreciating. With a dual focus on making and appreciating, Feldman's (1996) *Inquiry method* plus a number of other innovative strategies were offered as a starting point for art appreciation to occur in and across the curriculum. Finally, several practical ideas leading with the visual arts but integrating a number of KLAs were provided. An exemplar using portraits and a unit of work around the theme of wheels were used to demonstrate the ease with which the visual arts can become an authentic springboard into innovative student learning.

Questions

1. Refer to the words and phrases generated from the first activity. Have your ideas/opinions about the visual arts altered after reading this chapter? If so, in what ways?
2. Consider the reasons why a classroom teacher continues to use templates with their Kindergarten class. Create a short role-play or interview scenario with a colleague to capture these reasons.
3. Select a child's artwork. Develop three to four questions that refer to either obvious elements or principles in the work. Ask these questions and record the child's responses. What have you learnt?

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Useful Websites

- A number of art gallery and museum websites worldwide offer excellent teaching resources. Here are a few to get you started on an exciting journey of discovery!
- Art Gallery of New South Wales
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au
- Museum of Modern Art, New York
www.moma.org

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

www.nga.gov.au

National Gallery of Victoria

www.ngv.vic.gov

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

www.portrait.gov.au

Tate Gallery, London

www.tate.org.uk