



Learning Resource

James C Sourris AM Collection

Senior Visual Art: Unit 2 (Vernon Ah Kee)

Senior Visual Art

Learning in Units 1 and 2 builds a foundation for study in Units 3 and 4. The course of study focuses on contexts as a way of making and responding to artworks. Teachers provide a variety of learning experiences that explore each of the contexts and the unit concepts. Students encounter different options in making and responding that will assist independent learning in Units 3 and 4. Units 1 and 2 are developmental, where students experiment with and experience two-dimensional, three-dimensional and time-based media areas across Units 1 and 2. The balance of media areas is determined by the teacher and local resources. Learning experiences are scaffolded by the inquiry learning processes and work through researching, developing, reflecting and resolving. The course becomes less teacher-directed as students discover and become more confident in their individualised expression. By the end of Units 1 and 2, students should have experienced a diverse range of approaches for demonstrating solutions to visual problems. While students are not required to produce a body of work, they should be given the opportunity to understand the process of developing a body of work through teacher-directed learning experiences that relate to the concepts and focuses. In making and responding, students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate increasingly higher order critical analysis and thinking in a variety of forms. (QCAA, Visual Art 2019 v1.1, General Senior Syllabus, Page 14,) <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/the-arts/visual-art/syllabus>

Unit of Work

Unit 2: Art as code

Key inquiry questions:

- Developing — How do artists generate solutions to visual problems?
- Researching — How do artists react to stimulus?
- Reflecting — How do artists consider ideas and information, media techniques and processes?
- Resolving — How do artists communicate individual ideas as visual, written or spoken responses?

Content Description

1. implement ideas and representations to decode artworks and communicate in visual forms
2. apply literacy skills to communicate understanding of visual language, expression and meaning in the work of self and others
3. analyse and interpret artworks and art practices through the formal and cultural contexts
4. evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories to examine how diverse symbol systems are used by artists to communicate meaning
5. justify viewpoints using evidence of communication in artworks
6. experiment in response to symbol systems used by artists to communicate meaning
7. create multiple meaning and representations through knowledge and understanding of materials, techniques, technologies and art processes
8. realise responses to demonstrate how meaning is communicated through art forms.

<https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/the-arts/visual-art/syllabus>

Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

Learning Objectives

Students are learning to:

- create visual responses to communicate cultural ideas and formal theories through manipulation of visual language, materials, techniques, processes and technologies of two-dimensional artworks, such as line, tone, colour, shape and texture; composition, balance, repetition, contrast, harmony, emphasis and unity
- analyse and compare artworks through the cultural context to interpret social influences and representations of time, place, politics, purpose, ethnicity, gender and spiritual and secular beliefs on visual language and communication, and how these contribute to engagement, communication and meaning through
 - making, students explore cultural values, historical or current events, social pressures, and attitudes that affect them and others, and determine the origins of social meaning communicated in artwork
 - responding, students consider Aboriginal perspectives; regional, national, international, social and cultural identity of artists and audiences; and how artists use their work as a vehicle to invite change and provoke conversation
- experiment with a range of visual responses to explore communication through art language, such as - decoding expressive language, signs, iconography, symbols and visual language
- evaluate the various ways artists communicate ideas through visual language and expression, such as

- innovative and expressive, non-linguistic communication in diverse practices, traditions, and cultures by examining past and present influences on contemporary artists, including the work of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and contemporary artists from Asia
- artworks that communicate literal and conceptual meaning using familiar and unfamiliar text or other symbol systems

Success criteria

Students will be successful when they can:

- determine the origins of the social meaning communicated in Vernon Ah Kee's artworks
- communicate through visual language and symbols in experimental drawings based on their own cultural experiences
- evaluate the literal and conceptual meaning in Ah Kee's work and their own

Teaching Notes

Timing

5 x 1 hour lessons

Resources

Lesson 2

Each student requires 3-4 pieces of drawing paper, access to dry black and white drawing media such as charcoal, compressed charcoal, conte, soft pastels; objects to draw; torches (optional). Have some examples of tonal drawings on hand to show students.

Lessons 3-6

Each student requires A1 or A2 sized mid-toned/ grey paper; a range of dry black and white drawing media such as compressed or soft charcoal, conte crayon or soft white pastel; visual diary.

Teaching Notes

In order to get the most out of this resource, become a State Library member today for free and immediate access to digital resources.

<https://patron.slq.qld.gov.au/Register>

Once you have set up your State Library Membership you can access Kanopy, ebooks and databases including those referred to in this resource. Kanopy is an on-demand streaming video platform that offers classic films and documentaries, it's free with your State Library membership.

Kanopy films can be streamed in your classroom, or students can access via their personal devices using their State Library membership.

To access Kanopy, databases and other e-resources suggested in this resource, ensure students are logged in with their State Library membership before following the resource link.

Learning Activities

Lesson 1

Inquiry question: How does Vernon Ah Kee's work communicate meaning?

Before viewing the video

Students carry out online searches to find examples of Vernon Ah Kee's diverse art practice, including:

- **becauseitisbitter**, 2009;
- **tall man**, 2010 (QAGOMA collection) **NB students will need to search for the artwork in the QAGOMA collection - <http://collection.qagoma.qld.gov.au/qag/imu.php?request=search>*
- **Annie Ah Sam**, 2008 (QAGOMA collection) **NB students will need to search for the artwork in the QAGOMA collection*
- **cantchant**, 2007.

View video

Students view **Vernon Ah Kee interview: The James C Sourris AM collection** <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/research-collections/art-and-design/australian-library-art/james-c-sourris-am-collection>

After viewing

Lead a class discussion to cover the following topics:

- What motivates Ah Kee to make art?

- How does being Aboriginal inform Ah Kee's practice?
- What does Ah Kee try to communicate through his practice?

Students individually evaluate the various ways Ah Kee communicates literal and conceptual meaning through visual language and expression, text and iconography. Students refer to the video and artworks to justify their viewpoints.

Lesson 2

Inquiry question: How can visual responses communicate cultural ideas through manipulation of visual language, materials, techniques and processes?

Equipment and materials:

Each student requires 3-4 pieces of drawing paper, access to dry black and white drawing media such as charcoal, compressed charcoal, conte, soft pastels; objects to draw; torches (optional)

Remind students about how Vernon Ah Kee talks about memories or a sense of drawing as a small child under his nana's table. He makes the point that all small children love drawing.

Ask students to think about their earliest memories of drawing and to share these memories with their table group.

Explain that during this activity they should try to capture that feeling of curiosity that they had as small children as they explore art media and approaches similar to those used by Ah Kee.

Revisit the video to remind students about the way Ah Kee holds the charcoal and his mark making.

Discuss and suggest strategies such as scribbling, hatching, crosshatching, dotted or broken lines, patterns, smudging, using the side of the crayon as well as the end of it and so on.

Challenge students to make as many different marks, lines, tonal areas as they can, without the need to actually draw a subject.

Invite them to sit under the table, as Vernon Ah Kee did when he was a child, if that provides a safe place for them to complete the task without distraction.

After 20 minutes invite students to return to seats.

In the second stage of this lesson, students choose one or more of their experimental approaches to use to draw a grey scale. This is a simple rectangle approximately 3 cm x 18 cm, divided into 9 sections. Begin by making one of the end sections black. Progress along from black by making the tone in each section progressively lighter until the last section is left white. The scale should progress evenly without big jumps.

The third stage of this lesson is to apply a range of tones to draw a simple object such as a cup or a paint bottle. The point of this activity is to develop some control over the placement of dark and light tones in order to depict the form of the object. Torchés could be used to add more dramatic lighting to help students see the shadows and areas of light. Students should try to include several tones. This task requires careful observation. Have some examples of tonal drawings on hand to show students.

Students reflect on their application of media to create meaning.

Lessons 3-6

Inquiry question: how can cultural symbols create meaning in art works?

Equipment and materials: A1 or A2 sized mid-toned/ grey paper; a range of dry black and white drawing media such as compressed or soft charcoal, conte crayon or soft white pastel; visual diary.

Discuss with students what cultural symbols are and how they create, add or deepen meaning in artworks. Explore how selection of cultural symbols can impact how artworks are perceived, read. Can they think of any examples of artworks with cultural symbols?

Before beginning students should research, brainstorm and develop a code they could add to their works to provide cultural information about themselves. The code may:

- be a symbol
- be a significant cultural object that represents family history or ancestry
- be based on text or numerals
- be small or large
- form a background
- be repeated or unique
- be a prop used in the photography shoot
- be identifiable or unidentifiable

Students read about the Tindale Collection and view Vernon Ah Kee's drawings in the State Library Queensland **Transforming Tindale** Gallery, Tindale collection

<https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/discover/past-exhibitions/transforming-tindale/gallery>

Students view the short documentary, **Vernon**

<https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/discover/past-exhibitions/transforming-tindale/digital-stories>

After viewing

Students work in pairs to answer the following:

- Describe the way Vernon Ah Kee holds his charcoal while drawing the portrait of his great grandmother in the video?
- What device did he use at the beginning of the drawing process and what was the point of that?
- Who was Tindale and what was the point of his photographs?
- What code is included in the photographs and in some of Ah Kee's drawings from the Tindale collection?
- What meaning can be derived from the large scale of Ah Kee's great grandmother's face?

Making

Students photograph each other to use it as the basis of a large-scale black and white tonal drawing on grey paper.

The digital photo can be projected onto the drawing surface using an overhead projector or data projector if one is available, as Ah Kee does. Alternately it can be drawn free hand or with the aid of a grid.

Students are to incorporate a cultural symbol/s from the list they brainstormed

Students refine their application of light and dark tones as the drawing progresses.

Students write a 150-word artist's statement that communicates the meaning of the portrait through the cultural context.

Additional Resources

Video

Texture: Mark Making and Optical Value

<https://slq.kanopy.com/video/texture-mark-making-and-optical-value>

Value: How artists use value

<https://slq.kanopy.com/video/value-how-artists-use-value>

Ebook

Drawing School: Fundamentals for the beginner by Jim Dowdalls

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/slq/reader.action?docID=5398300>

Transforming Tindale Learning Notes

<https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/get-involved/learn/teachers/secondary-teachers/transforming-tindale>

State Library of Queensland acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their continuing connection to land and as custodians of stories for millennia. We are inspired by this tradition in our work to share and preserve Queensland's memory for future generations.

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