



Learning Resource

James C Sourris AM Collection education resource: Years 5 and 6, Visual Arts

Years 5 and 6: Visual Arts

In Years 5 and 6, students draw on artworks from a range of cultures, times and locations. They explore the arts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and of the Asia region and learn that they are used for different purposes. While the arts in the local community should be the initial focus for learning, students are also aware of and interested in the arts from more distant locations and the curriculum provides opportunities to build on this curiosity.

As they make and respond to the arts, students explore meaning and interpretation, and social and cultural contexts of the arts. They evaluate the use of forms and elements in artworks they make and observe.

Students extend their understanding of safety in the arts. In Years 5 and 6, their understanding of the roles of artists and audiences builds on previous bands. They develop their understanding and use of performance or technical skills to communicate intention for different audiences. They identify a variety of audiences for different arts experiences as they engage with more diverse artworks as artists and audiences.

<https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>

Unit of Work	My culture
Key inquiry questions:	How has Sebastian Di Mauro's family history and Sicilian culture influenced his artworks? How can artists use materials to communicate meaning in artworks? How can artists make sculpture inspired by nature?

Content Description

ACAVAM114 – Explore ideas and practices used by artists, including practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent different views, beliefs and opinions:

- exploring cross-media effects and characteristics of representation when making artworks inspired by observation or imagination, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art from the local community, graffiti art, graphic design, or manga art
- considering viewpoints – materials and technologies (What is the artwork made of? How does the choice of material enhance the audience's understanding of the artist's intention? What made you want to touch this sculpture?)
- trialling different ways to represent views, beliefs or opinions in their artworks in response to exploration of how artists communicate their views, beliefs, and opinions through art

ACAVAR117 – Explain how visual arts conventions communicate meaning by comparing artworks from different social, cultural, and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks.

- explaining the artistic vision of artists from different contexts, particularly referencing the meaning their artworks convey, for example, Aboriginal rock art, graffiti art, Egyptian art
- considering viewpoints – meanings and interpretations: For example – What is this artwork about? What visual conventions have been used to convey meaning? How did the artist represent their subject matter? How does the artwork reflect the artist's perspective about the environment? How did the audience react to the artwork when it was first displayed?

<https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>

Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

Learning Objectives

Students are learning:

- to consider how the choice of materials communicates meaning in artworks
- to explain how artists communicate points of view about their own lives
- to explore art materials and the conventions of sculpture.

Success criteria

Students will be successful when they can:

- talk with understanding about the influence of Sebastian Di Mauro's family history on his artworks
- explain the significance of the materials in Di Mauro's works and consider the meaning materials could have in their own artworks
- explore the elements of sculpture by using organic forms inspired by Di Mauro's practice.

Teaching Notes

Timing

2 x 1-hour lessons (with potential for extension)

Resources

Lesson 1

- tangible examples of the symbols referred to in the video if available, such as:
 - a bowl of sugar or piece of sugar cane
 - photo of a cane fire e.g. <https://hdl.handle.net/10462/photosbd/0314631>
 - bottle or bowl of olive oil, or a picture of it
 - piece or picture of Astro turf e.g. <https://syntheticturfgroup.com.au/>
- paper and pencil with which to write and draw In order to get the most out of this resource, become a State Library [member](#) today for free and immediate access to digital resources.

Lesson 2

- A diverse collection of natural forms (flowers, leaves or seed pods) to refer to. Students may be able to bring these from home or find in the school grounds: or you may be able to borrow materials from other classrooms or educators.
- Plasticine, clay or play dough (enough for each child to have a handful to work with). If using clay, have some plastic bags so it doesn't dry out and join pieces together using slip and scoring and prepare by a video such as this one: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CY_iAf8JAI.
- Simple modelling tools like wooden skewers, toothpicks and picnic cutlery.

Teaching Notes

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

Once you have set up your free State Library Membership you will be able to access the eBooks and data bases referred to in this resource, as well as the quality on-demand streaming video platform, Kanopy.

Learning Activities

Lesson 1

Inquiry question: how can an artist represent their family heritage?

Before viewing:

Set the context: explain to the students that they will be watching a short film about the artist, Sebastian Di Mauro.

Di Mauro was born in North Queensland in 1955. His dad's parents migrated to Australia from Sicily, early in the 20th century, when his dad was only a young child. Di Mauro's mum's parents also migrated from Sicily before she was born, and his artwork explores his Sicilian background or heritage.

Using their State Library login, guide students to perform a digital search of the [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) online database (choose the kids' level and the world atlas app).

Explore the maps of Italy and Sicily, talking about where they are located in the world. Zoom in to see the volcano, Mt Etna, and zoom out to see to see the distance between Australia and Sicily. Discuss the sense of adventure and risk travelling long distances held at that time because there were no airplanes to travel quickly or internet to communicate easily. Migrants may never have been able to visit their families or hometown again because of the time and expense of travelling back.

Ask students to imagine how different it would be to migrate from Sicily then and now.

Some students may wish to talk about their own experiences of their own family's experience of migration. Allow students to share their experiences.

View video:

Students view [**Sebastian Di Mauro interview: The James C. Sourris AM Collection**](#)

After viewing

In the classroom provide tangible examples of the materials that Di Mauro used to communicate meaning in his works, such as a bowl of sugar, piece of sugar cane, photo of cane fire (e.g. <https://hdl.handle.net/10462/photosbd/0314631>, bottle or bowl of olive oil, piece or picture of Astro turf (e.g. HYPERLINK "<https://syntheticturfgroup.com.au/>")<https://syntheticturfgroup.com.au/>. Allow students to touch, smell and taste these.

Ask students to discuss the film in small groups, especially the meaning Sebastian Di Mauro gives to everyday materials in his artwork. Have groups report back to the class with their ideas about the meaning of the materials. Students may have answers similar to the following:

- sugar represents Di Mauro's early life in North Queensland, where sugar cane is grown
- olive oil represents Di Mauro's mother's Sicilian cooking
- Astro turf represents Di Mauro's grandparents' journey to Australia to start a new life, looking for greener pastures.

Reflecting

Ask students to reflect on and share the following:

- Think about what sugar means to them and their own families.
- How sugar can have different meanings or represent different viewpoints or ideas, and why they think that is.
- Consider that Sebastian Di Mauro seemed to have a happy childhood - what materials might have he used if he had a different experience of his Sicilian heritage and his upbringing?

Individual thinking, writing, and drawing

1. Students brainstorm a list of materials that they think represent their own family. Suggestions could be ingredients in favourite family recipes or meals, plants or crops grown by the family, clothing or fabrics that are special to the family or a family member, objects that are special to the family, games played by the family and so on. Encourage students to list everything that comes to mind and to not judge or edit their list at all.
2. Students choose one of these materials and write down what meaning it would have to them if they used it in an artwork about their own family's heritage.
3. Students draw the material/object from memory.
4. Students make 3 thumbnail sketches showing how artworks made with this material might look.
5. Students share their viewpoint and drawings about materials and meaning in small groups or with the whole class.

Extension

- Students take one of their thumbnails and resolve it as a finished artwork.

- Follow up with a lesson about symbolism and the notion that the material or object could stand in for the family. Students make a drawing or collage of their family using the symbols they have identified.
- Students look up the meaning of *tentative* in a dictionary. They answer the question: Why was Sebastian Di Mauro tentative about making artworks relating to his Italian background?

Lesson 2

Inquiry question: how can an artist represent nature?

Analysis

This observation activity is both a link to the previous lesson and an analysis activity.

Prepare students for the activity by pairing them up and explaining the process:

1. one person is the drawer and the other is the describer
2. they sit side by side
3. the drawers must sit with their backs to the artwork so they cannot see it
4. the describer sits facing the artwork
5. the describer will describe the artwork to their partner, who is then going to draw it
6. the drawer cannot ask any questions and must draw what they hear the describer saying
7. the describers cannot react to the drawer's drawing because they are simply looking at the artwork and describing what's in front of them.

When everyone is set, project an image of [“Spill, Tuft, Lure.”](#) 1999-2000 and ask students to begin the activity. Give students 3-5 minutes to carry out the activity.

After they finish, lead a debrief conversation. Ask the drawers and describers to share and reflect on their experiences.

Lead a discussion with students about the organic forms in “**Spill, Tuft, Lure.**” In an art sense the word **organic** means derived from nature, so organic forms are often curved and asymmetrical. A **form** is a three-dimensional shape or object, like a chair or a person. All sculpture is **three dimensional** because it has height, width, and depth, as opposed to **two dimensional artworks** like drawing that only have the two dimensions of height and width. Teachers might write these terms on the board or on a poster for the room so students can become familiar with the language of sculpture and use it as they work.

Ask students what natural objects they think might have inspired the sculptural forms in “**Spill, Tuft, Lure**” and what makes them say this. Allow students to share their responses.

Lead a discussion with the class about the use of the material, carpet underlay, and covering the forms in “**Spill, Tuft, Lure.**” This is another material often used by Di Mauro, which has personal significance to him because it has a noise cancelling quality that is significant. It represents his loss of Sicilian language that makes him effectively silent. Ask students to think back to the video and pose the following questions:

- Which language did Di Mauro’s grandparents speak?
- Which two languages did Di Mauro speak as a small child?
- What did he notice as he grew older and his grandparents were not around to speak Sicilian with him anymore?
- How does the carpet underlay represent this feeling?

View video

Students re-view the final section of the video, [Sebastian Di Mauro interview: The James C. Sourris AM Collection](#), from 3:38 minutes.

After viewing

Show students some images of Di Mauro’s sculptures that illustrate his ideas about using organic forms. These sculptures are clearly based on organic forms such as seed pods or small seeds and students should be able to identify this.

Suitable examples are:

- [“Floccus,”](#) 1999-2000
- [“Turf Sweet”](#) series

Reflect

Students discuss the following in pairs:

- Imagine you are the audience walking around the exhibition, what would you be thinking? How would you be reacting to the artworks? What would you like to ask the artist?

Invite some students to share reflections with the class.

Making

1. From a broad range of natural forms available to them, students choose components and copy them in plasticine. They can experiment with changing the scale of them to make them larger or smaller. They repeat the process using several different organic forms to inspire a range of small sculptural responses. They might trade one or more of their forms with other students.

2. Students then explore the possibilities of joining two or more of their forms together in a stack or side by side or in a radiating pattern. Or they might make a small family of objects in varying sizes, that are arranged with negative space between them.

To extend this activity in complexity and time, these optional steps could be added:

3. Students choose a body part to model with the plasticine, such as an ear, nose, finger, toe, eye, mouth, arm, or leg. This may take some careful looking at their own body or at the features of their classmates. They might decide to make several of the body parts in different ways.
4. Students combine the organic sculptural pieces with the body part sculptures in a creative way such as stacking them or using a radiating form. Remind students that the sculptures should show a connection between human and organic forms but should not just be seed pods with faces or legs.
5. Students can title their work and write a short artist's statement to explain to an audience how they have been influenced by Sebastian Di Mauro's practice.
6. Students could arrange their work into a class exhibition.

References

Ceramic arts daily. 2011, **Pottery Video: How to Make Pretty Organic Forms from Simple and Complex Pinch Pots**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CY_iAf8JAI

Di Mauro, S, 2009, *Footnotes of a Verdurous Tale: Sebastian Di Mauro 1987- 2009*, Pane e Zucchero, my Sicilian Story, p84
<https://sebastiandimauro.com/footnotes-of-a-verdurous-tale/>

Di Mauro, S. A, 2015, *Stories in Search of a Perfect Home*, <http://hdl.handle.net/10072/380207>

Di Mauro, S. website, <https://sebastiandimauro.com/>

Encyclopaedia Britannica online library edition data base (use your SLQ log in. Choose the kids level and the world atlas app) <https://library-eb-com-au.ezproxy.slq.qld.gov.au/levels/kids/browse/atlas>

SLQ, Transcript of Sebastian Di Mauro digital story
<https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/Sebastian-Di-Mauro-Digital-Story.pdf>

Additional Resources

Bundaberg canegrowers, Green versus burnt cane harvesting <https://www.bdbcane growers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Green-vs-Burnt-Cane-Harvesting.pdf>

SLQ, At our Table digital stories, 2009, Ingham Digital Story, [The digital story in Ingham celebrates the area's Italian heritage featuring an interview with Mario Chiesa manager of the Chiesa & Sons Butchery and footage of celebrity chef Dominique Rizzo, drawing on her Sicilian roots and cooking for the primary children at Our Lady of Lourdes School, Ingham. 4 mins, 49 seconds, <http://hdl.handle.net/10462/mp4/480>

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.

Date prepared: 6 August 2020

Date revised:

These learning notes may be reproduced for non-commercial educational use only. For other uses please contact State Library at copyright@slq.qld.gov.au

