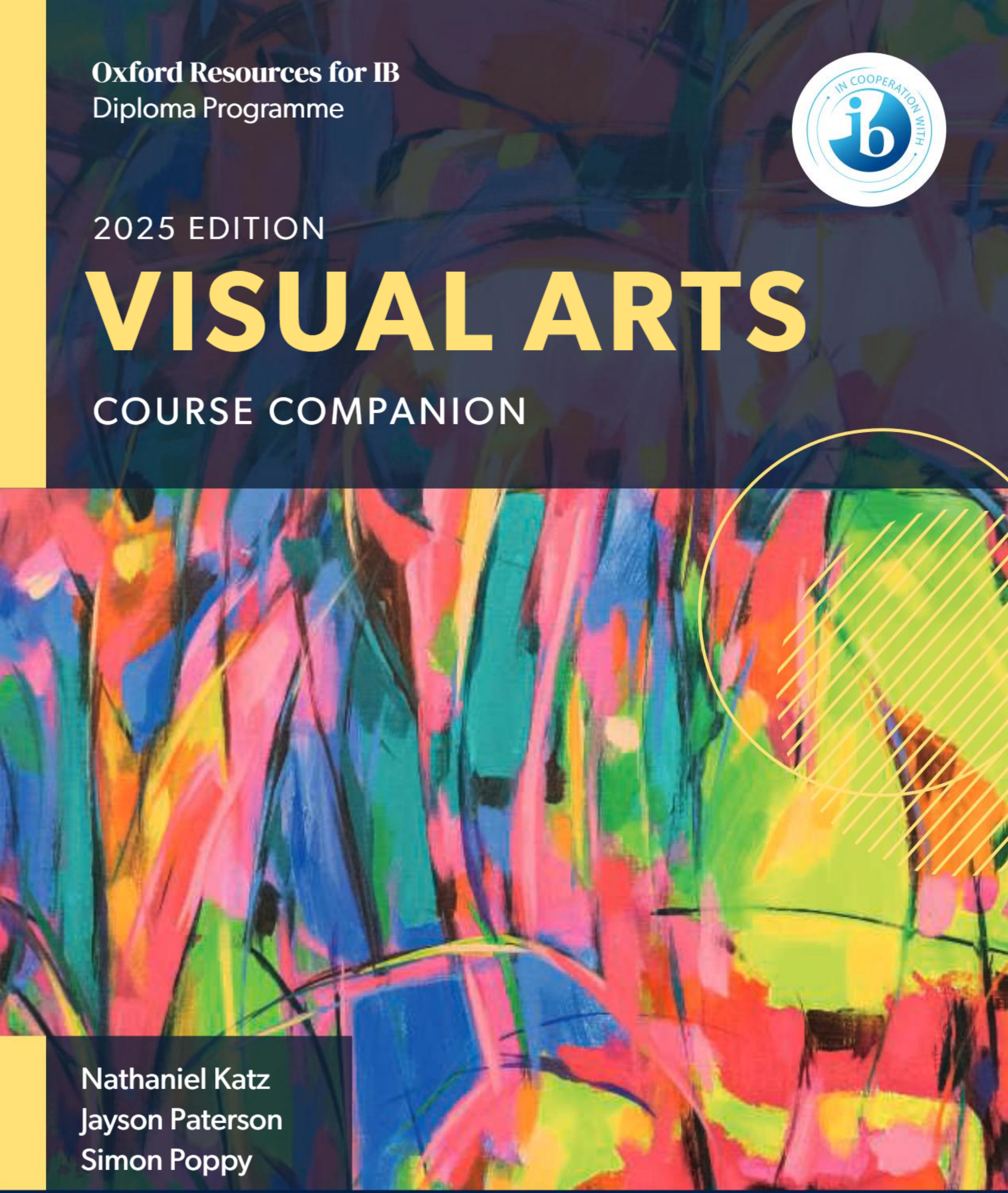

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2025 EDITION

VISUAL ARTS

COURSE COMPANION

Nathaniel Katz
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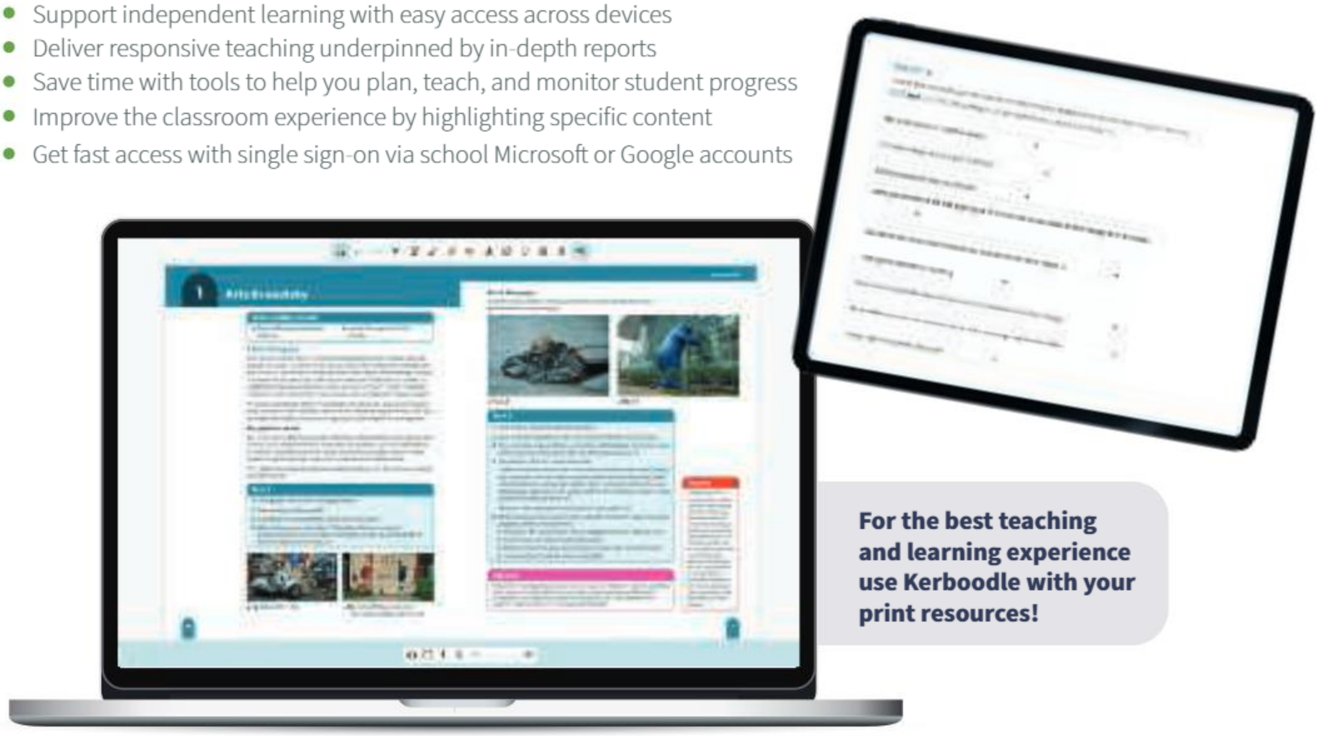

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Introduction

How to use this guide

Visual arts are an essential part of our lives, as an expression of our cultures and identities. They combine aesthetics and ideas to influence both our intellect and our emotions. As individuals and in communities they affect us in personal, local and international ways. Sometimes they affirm and at other times, they question traditional practices and values, both challenging and reassuring us. The IB course embraces these ambiguities and acknowledges that, in the 21st century, visual arts have expanded beyond traditional media, forms and spaces to reach diverse audiences and engage with challenging issues.

The course is special as it celebrates that students are creating artworks in widely differing contexts and with evolving technologies. It gives you, the visual arts student, the freedom to become an artist of your own making, whether you wish to follow traditional paths, challenge past practice or combine the many possible ways of creating as an artist.

When you make art for this course, you will think about what you want to communicate and who your audience is. You will make connections with other art-makers, past and present, and you will communicate with different audiences. As you pursue your own trails (or lines of inquiry) as an artist, you will adopt a questioning disposition so that you can understand and explain the decisions you have made. Ultimately, the course will enable you to create, communicate and connect as a contemporary artist.

This 2025 edition of the Course Companion will help you to complete the IB visual arts course successfully. It has been written to both inform and inspire you. It includes a wealth of ideas to challenge and stretch your creativity, but also suggestions to save you time and help you to work effectively.

You can choose to use this book as a guide throughout the course or simply as a reference to reach for in a moment of panic when you need answers to your questions. It is organized to reflect this flexibility.

Chapters 1–3 focus on the syllabus content, that is, the essential skills you will use as you make art. You will learn what a line of inquiry is, about different art-making forms and the creative strategies you can use, and what it means to situate your art-making. These chapters introduce the objectives that underpin your learning in visual art, which will be the focus of your lessons in school.

You will be introduced to ways of thinking and acting as an artist that will help you to become an imaginative and skilled creator of art that is unique and personal to you. They will also equip you with the critical skills to relate your art-making to other artists, and to the world and your place in it.

Chapters 4 to 7 are devoted to the assessment tasks that you will complete towards the end of the course, with each chapter devoted to a different task. Each task focuses on specific course outcomes and will be assessed by a different examiner. You must understand that the examiner does not bring any knowledge about your artistic practice from having marked your other components; each task is assessed on its own merits alone. The assessed tasks that you submit will depend on whether you are taking standard or higher level, as shown in this table:

Art-making inquiries portfolio (AIP)	Standard level	40%
Art-making inquiries portfolio (AIP)	Higher level	30%
Connections study (CS)	Standard level	20%
Artist project (AP)	Higher level	30%
Resolved artworks (RAW)	Standard level	40%
Selected resolved artworks (SRAW)	Higher level	40%

There is no set order to follow as you complete these tasks, but your teacher will structure lessons to achieve a balance between them.

Your teacher will have introduced the *Visual arts guide* to you. This is the official course syllabus that tells students, teachers and examiners the required content and assessment methods for the course. The guide is essential, but this book will help you to better understand the language that has been used in the official guide.

Alongside the text you will find feature boxes. These give you tips, highlight essential knowledge and specialist terms, suggest links to the theory of knowledge (TOK) or give advice on how to learn and work effectively. Each assessment task has a strict word count and examiners are instructed not to consider any material that goes over the word count in their evaluation of your work. The word count includes both typed and handwritten text (but excludes citations). At the end of the book, you will find Chapter 8: Writing about art and the glossary. These will help you to write more concisely and talk like an artist when you critique in class, annotate in your journals and assemble the assessment tasks.

Visual arts journals

Your visual arts journals are the most important learning tool for your course, and you will find suggestions of ways that you can use your journals throughout the book. Art-making is a generative process as visual artists transform and create work. From the very first moments of your course, you will gather imagery, words and reflections. Traditionally, artists have used sketchbooks to do this, though contemporary artists also use digital methods, photo files and videos; you will want to use these too. This is why the *Visual arts guide* refers to "journals", as you will have much more than a single notebook. A sketchbook can be effective, as everything is bound together, but a folder (physical or electronic), a desk drawer or even a shoebox might serve as your safe store where you gather all your generative art-making.

Some artists organize their work systematically, while others prefer the spontaneity of chaos. Whatever methods you choose, compiling your journals involves curation, which the guide describes as "an ongoing activity that artists conduct to build connections, organize materials and be able to choose how to communicate meaning to different audiences" (IBO, 2025). The choices you make as you play and plan with visual material in your journals are expressions of your imagination as an artist; as the guide explains, "Students curate every time they select and organize their artwork. This may be assembling imagery and resources at the beginning of the creative process, or making choices to combine and reconfigure elements of their artwork to develop a personal visual language" (IBO, 2025). This is why there is no fixed recommendation for how you organize your journals—it is a personal, artistic choice. However, your teachers may require you to start the course in a sketchbook to help you to develop a routine of journalling.

Journals are a space where you can mix sketching with messy scribbles and make mistakes, free from the judgement of others. They are where you can curate imagery using electronic pinboards, mood boards or cut-and-paste scrapbooks. You might enjoy decorating and embellishing your journals, but remember, their purpose is not to be aesthetically pleasing, they are instead your personal source of creativity—an art idea generation system!

What do I include in my visual arts journals?

In your journals you will record, play and plan, as you follow art-making lines of inquiry by:

- mind mapping your art intentions with flow charts and concept webs
- annotating images and diagrams to develop themes and record choices as ideas unfold
- observing real life, through notes, sketches, drawings, photographs and videos
- collecting and selecting research from books and online sources
- recording visits to museums, galleries, artists' studios and workshops
- gathering visual stimuli and contextual ideas
- logging discussions with your teachers and classmates by writing down your responses to feedback
- documenting digital creative processes
- noting references so that it is easy to add citations when you submit assessed work.

You will experiment with art-making strategies by:

- playing with new skills and technologies
- exploring new concepts and ways of working
- experimenting with different art-making forms
- refining your existing art-making.

You will evaluate your progress as an artist by writing about:

- your intentions, the artworks that inspire you and your own artworks
- your plans for changes and future development
- the challenges that you face and how to improve your art-making.

How will my journals help me in the assessment tasks?

Your journals are not directly assessed, but they will be the main source of material when you prepare for assessment. How to use them to do this for each of the assessment tasks is explained in detail in chapters 5 to 7.

Tip

Be organized and keep your artwork safe. Put a contact email or phone number in your journals so they can be returned to you if you lose them. Make sure that you have an electronic record of all your artwork, including all the planning, research, roughs, trials, mistakes and changes that you make. You will need these when you curate your work for assessment. It is easy to accidentally delete files or simply forget where you have stored them, so back up everything to a cloud storage system.

ATL Thinking skills

Make using your journals regularly a habit. Keeping a journal by your side in the classroom will help remind you of your objectives and make referring to source images and artist connections easier. As your class comes to an end, you can make quick notes to remind you of your intentions; this will allow you to refocus quickly next time. Between classes, reflect on the progress of your current artwork or start to think about ideas and images for the next one.

Case study

Allegra has used a notebook as one of her journals. The advantage of a notebook is that it is personal, private and outside of the art rules that might constrain your creativity in class. You can pull it out to make art anywhere and anytime, to add thoughts and notes or just to doodle. Visual doodling is a great way to slow down your looking and access your unconscious. This has helped Allegra to develop a personal visual language. She plays with colour and uses different drawing strategies to experiment, sometimes copying but more often adapting different conventions of drawing to create a personal visual world.

◀ **Figure 0.1** Allegra's visual arts journal

Haichuan, as an aspiring fashion designer, generates ideas for new designs in several ways, including drawing on paper, digital collages and photography. The visual arts journal for Haichuan is a concept more than a physical space. It is a place where he gathers, reviews, plays and experiments, and makes decisions about how to transform ideas into wearable art.

Seeing that so much of Haichuan's generative work straddled digital and analogue media, and required real-world mock-ups, a traditional paper journal was not practical; instead Haichuan maintained his journal digitally using a Google slide deck as a repository of all of his work, which he consistently added to and reviewed.

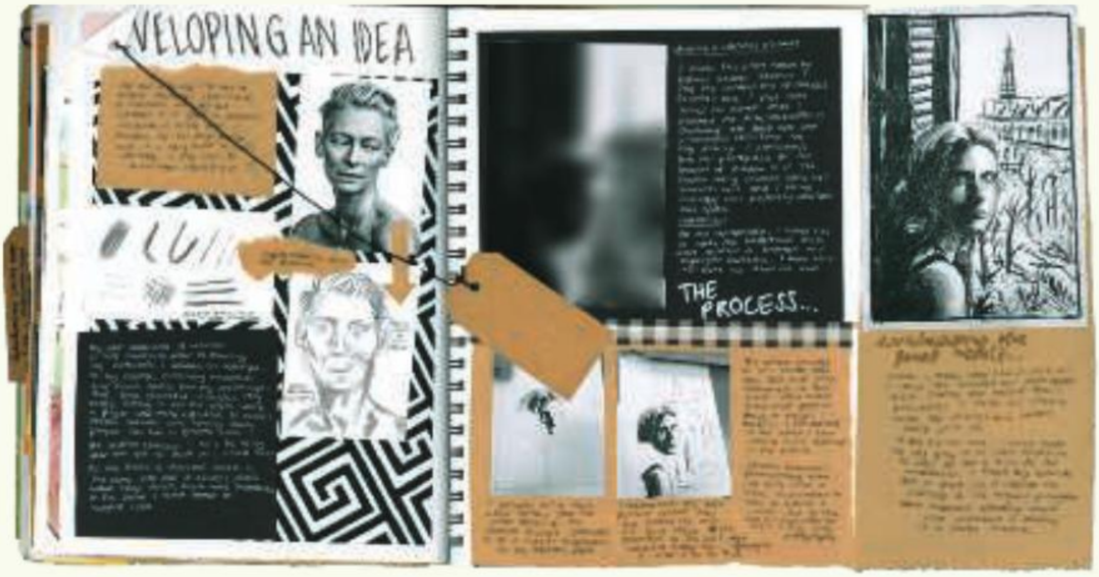
▲ **Figure 0.2** Haichuan's journal

Case study

Lauren used a more conventional sketchbook for most of her visual arts journals. She enjoyed the physicality of a book format and would most often work across a double-page spread. Lauren considered the presentation of her inquiries carefully, considering the nature of a book as a physical object that invited interaction with a reader.

▲ **Figure 0.3** Spreads from Lauren's journal

In the centre pages presented above, Lauren is exploring drawing ink as a medium. She has added an envelope to stow small ink sketches that she could have easily glued to a page, but she liked the idea of having to take the little images out of the pocket to engage with them, like a mini art folio.



▲ **Figure 0.4** An extended spread from Lauren's journal

In this spread, Lauren has extended the format by adding a fold-out panel to the right-hand edge of the sketchbook. She often used this device to add afterthoughts or to document the outcomes of her inquiries on pages where she had previously generated her ideas or recorded a process. She has also added a swing tag that she used as a bookmark so that she could easily return to pages that she thought were significant, often adding comments to these that linked to other pages in her journals.

▲ **Figure 0.5** Spreads from Lauren's journal

How to use this book

Key terms

These introduce the definitions of important terminology and concepts used to explain Visual Arts. They are collected in the Glossary on page 184.

Tip

These boxes provide helpful tips for the Visual Arts course.

Connection boxes link content with other parts of the book.

TOK

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is an important part of the IB Diploma course. It focuses on critical thinking and understanding how we arrive at our knowledge of the world. The TOK features in this book pose questions for you that highlight these issues as starting points to open up TOK-adjacent discussions.

Activity

This feature gives you an opportunity to apply your knowledge and skills, often in a practical way.

ATL

These ATL features give examples of communication, self-management, research, thinking, and social skills, and prompt you to think about how to develop your own strategies.

Case study

This feature provides real life examples of students' and artists' artwork, to provide inspiration and encourage reflection.

1

Lines of inquiry

What is a line of inquiry?

A **line of inquiry** is a path of exploration and experimentation that you will take in your art-making and is guided by a question or **generative** statement. When you follow a line of inquiry, you are engaging in **art-making as inquiry**.

Lines of inquiry are several paths that you will take during your two years as a Diploma visual arts student, guided by several questions or one central question initiated by your interests, practice or any encounter that fosters your curiosity. Your lines of inquiry can be related to each other and grow out of each other in a linear and expanding way, like the branches of a tree. Or they might lead you in several simultaneous and non-linear divergent paths, like the tentacles of an octopus. Sometimes a line of inquiry will lead towards the creation of a resolved artwork, but that is not always the end goal of this exploration. The aim is a deep engagement with skills, techniques and concepts.

In this chapter, the term "art-making as inquiry" will be used to refer to the entire creative practice that you will engage with in the course. The term "line of inquiry" refers to one individual exploration within art-making as inquiry. Lines of inquiry have several identifying features that once understood will help your art-making to become filled with curiosity, experimentation, playfulness and intentionality.

The core areas

When following lines of inquiry, you will engage with the three core areas of the visual arts course: create, connect and communicate.

Create

When you create, you are learning, experimenting with and applying art-making forms and strategies in order to fulfill your intentions. You can do this by trialling several media in order to evaluate the one best suited for your idea. Or you can investigate the techniques of an artist and transcribe their work visually. You could make several sketches in which you trial different strategies or compositions. Working on realizing an artwork, integrating feedback, revising and refining are also elements of creating.

Connect

Connecting means situating your work within its context. This can be done by considering how your work fits within your personal, local or global context. Or you could look at the work of other artists and investigate how their work sat within the context of their own time. Another way of connecting is by entering into conversations with your peers, finding out what they are working on, getting feedback about your work and offering feedback to others.

Communicate

Communication is about developing the language, both visual and written, with which to express your intentions. It is about finding ways to share your work with others, as well as making decisions about how to select, organize and present the work. It is also about engaging in dialogue with an audience about your work.

During the first year of the course, your teacher will teach the core areas separately through individual units. Once you begin working more independently, the core areas will become intertwined as you create original

> "*In art-making as inquiry, students form inquiry questions and generative statements throughout the creative process. These may bring opportunities to refine and resolve artwork, progressing the development of lines of inquiry and of art-making. Whatever shape their inquiry takes, students can meet the assessment objectives of the course following personal paths while engaging with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies.*"
>
> Visual arts guide *(IBO, 2025)*

Key terms

Line of inquiry: the thread that you explore through your creative processes, propelled by one or more inquiry questions or generative statements and initiated by your interests, ongoing practice or by any encounter that fosters specific curiosity.

Generative: capable of producing or creating something.

Art-making as inquiry: the collection of your lines of inquiry, which together make up your artistic process.

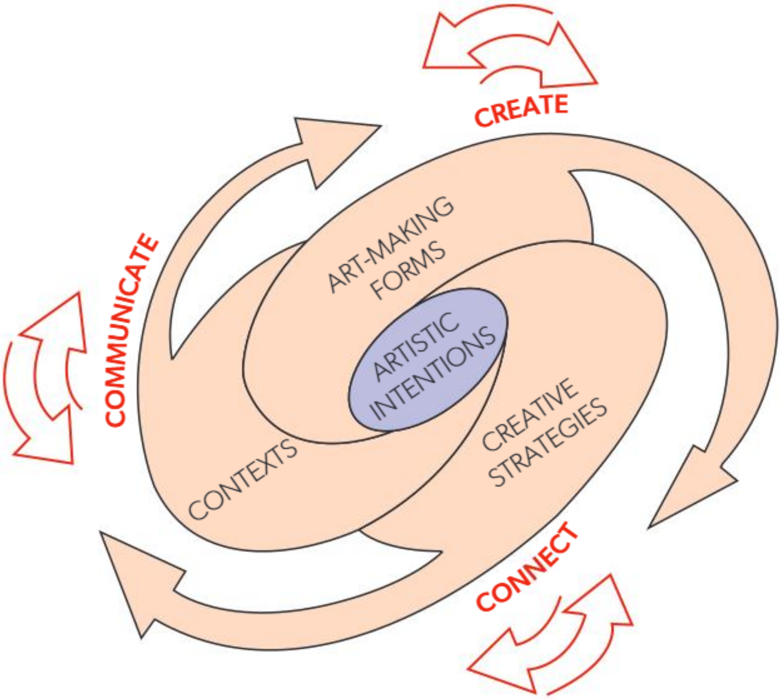
works, connect your art-making and research with the work of others and communicate the results of your inquiry through artworks at various stages of resolution.

How are lines of inquiry different from any other type of art-making?

More about the range of art-making forms and creative strategies can be found in Chapter 2: Art-making forms and creative strategies.

More about situating yourself and your work within your personal, local and global context can found in Chapter 3: Situating.

Art-making as inquiry is a focused, creative art-making practice in which artistic intentions are informed by context and combine art-making forms and creative strategies. A line of inquiry should begin with a question or generative statement that will give your exploration an intention. This question should be formulated with consideration for your context: who you are, where you are and the world around you. In order to give direction and focus to your exploration, you will identify both art-making forms and creative strategies that you can experiment with in order to approach your question or statement.



▲ **Figure 1.1** The art-making as inquiry diagram

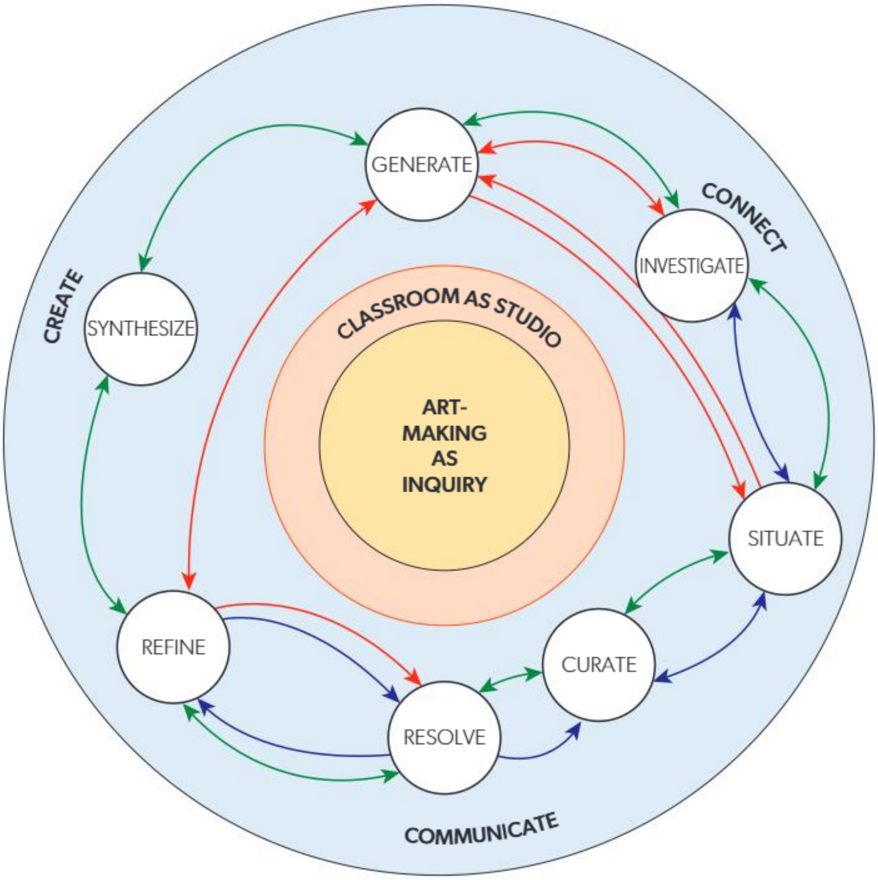
The creative process and assessment objectives

The Diploma visual arts course does not define a specific creative process that you must follow. Artists work in many ways, and finding the process that is most effective for you is what is important.

The course does define seven assessment objectives that must be achieved. They are formulated to align with the activities that are undertaken when working creatively in an art-making inquiry. These objectives are meant to be integrated into your creative process so that you meaningfully engage in art-making as inquiry. The assessment objectives should be seen as ingredients for a successful creative process in the course.

The objectives are not organized in a linear manner, and it is up to you (and your strengths and preferences) how you approach them to move through your lines of inquiry. The seven assessment objectives are listed here and are expanded on further in this chapter on pages 15–21:

- curate
- generate
- investigate
- refine
- resolve
- situate
- synthesize.



▲ Figure 1.2 An overview of the visual arts course, showing the core areas and assessment objectives; the three different-coloured arrows represent three possible paths

In the *Visual arts guide*, these objectives are shown as a spiralling diagram (Figure 1.2), with connection points and paths as possibilities for defining creative art-making practice. Some of these are logical starting points (generate, investigate), while others seem more intermediary (refine, synthesize, situate) and some appear as finalizing (resolve, curate).

Remain open to the many ways in which these can be arranged as you work organically through your lines of inquiry. It is important that you address each of these objectives at some point in your art-making, because they will appear later on in the assessment criteria of the submitted tasks.

The assessment criteria for each task on the course are explained in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. In those sections, each criterion is linked to the relevant objective and prioritizes them according to the awarding of marks.

How to set up your space for art-making as inquiry

Classroom design and its structures play a big part in successfully engaging in an art-making inquiry. The visual arts course refers to this as "the classroom as studio",

Key terms

Students at work: the time that you spend engaged in your art-making practice, experimentation, planning and refining your ideas.

Dialogue: an informal conversation about your work with your classmates or teacher.

Critique: a formal moment in which you present your work to receive constructive feedback from your peers and teacher.

a concept that elaborates on the research and writing of Lois Hetland and others in their book *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education* (Hetland et al., 2013). The concept suggests that if the classroom is set up in a similar way to an artist's studio, you will develop a mindset that will help you to make art.

The *Visual arts guide* describes a classroom design that facilitates several types of activities and interactions. While not every school or classroom will be able to accommodate a major rearrangement of the space, there are small and individual things that can be done to create the conditions for success. The following is a list of some of the structures for the classroom as studio:

- **students at work**
- **dialogues** and **critiques**
- research.

These will be explained in detail in this chapter, and we will start with setting up your work space. There is a full list of the structures of the classroom as studio in the *Visual arts guide*.

Students at work

All of the structures listed above are essential for successful art-making as inquiry. However, students at work is the one that will define most of your time as a Diploma student.

Create for yourself an independent working space, where you can post your inspiration, experiment with materials, develop works and safely store ongoing work. What this space looks like will depend on your school's resources. Ideally, you will have a small table and a section of wall that you can claim for yourself and not have to share with others. The advantage of your own space is that you can leave your work out without worrying about others needing the space.

▲ Figure 1.3 Rowan's studio

If space is limited, or if you are taking part online, consider setting up a shared virtual space where you can compile and develop ongoing work and share it with your teacher and peers. An example of this is the presentation of Haichuan's visual arts journal on page vii.

In Figure 1.3, Rowan has various print-making studies on a display board behind his table. He also has images of various vases from art history to inform his ceramic work. On the table he has some dedicated art materials, so he is always ready to work when inspiration arrives.

▲ Figure 1.4 Sophia's studio

Sophia is a painter, so having an easel is essential for her work. As shown in Figure 1.4, she has some studies on the display board, along with a mind map developing her ideas. The table is mostly used for storing her paints and other equipment.

If you are lucky enough to have your own working space, it is also your responsibility to keep the space tidy so that you use it properly. Creative inspiration comes in many forms and is at times messy, but to maximize your success in the course, it is vital to have a useable space for working.

Haichuan's inquiry is in the intersection of technology and fashion. He spends most of his time working with textiles on mannequins (see Figure 1.5). A table is necessary for setting up the sewing machine. However, having such a messy desk can prove challenging.

Activity

Knowing what kind of space you need for working on your inquiry is something you will figure out during the two years of the course. The space that you set up for yourself at the beginning of the course may not be the same space that you are looking for towards the end of your second year. Asking yourself a series of questions about your needs and revisiting them at the key points of your inquiry (perhaps when moving from one line of inquiry to the next) can be helpful for establishing your working space.

Some questions for setting up your working environment:

1. Do you have access to light and/or a window?
2. Do you need access to water?
3. Do you need a table, easel or any other specialized equipment?
4. Do you work on a small or large scale?
5. Do you work fast or slow?
6. Do you work in a physical or digital journal?
7. Will your primary workspace be in a workshop?
8. What do you need for inspiration?
9. What distracts you from your work?
10. Do you trust yourself to work better if you are alone or with others?
11. Do you need to be completely alone to work or do you need to socialize?
12. How often do you need teacher support?
13. Who is your **artistic constellation**?
14. How do they work?
15. Do you plan to spend considerable time before or after school working?
16. If you spend time working in your bedroom, how often do you clean it? What kinds of inspiration do you keep there?
17. Do you need your phone or any books beside you?

▲ Figure 1.5 Haichuan's messy but creative studio

Key term

Artistic constellation: the artists who are important to you and have influenced your work.

Dialogues

Another important structure in the classroom as studio is dialogues. It is vital that you can have informal conversations about your work with your classmates. Even in the most stereotyped depictions of artists isolated in their studios, there is always a moment of encounter and exchange with other artists.

Famously, La Closerie des Lilas in Montparnasse, Paris was a meeting point for innovators of the Cubist art movement in the early 20th century. Likewise, Max's Kansas City in New York City was a meeting spot for artists from the New York School in the 1950s and 1960s. Later it was a hangout for Andy Warhol and members of his factory in the 1960s and 1970s (Cohen, 2018).

Having space and time for you to discuss your work with classmates outside formal critiques is essential. In this way, you can test your ideas in a low-stakes environment, get feedback on what you are doing, skill share and glean ideas

▲ Figure 1.6 The classroom as studio

from each other. In Figure 1.6 we see several studio spaces that all open up to a central meeting place. This encourages free movement and interactions.

Getting started

How to come up with ideas for making art

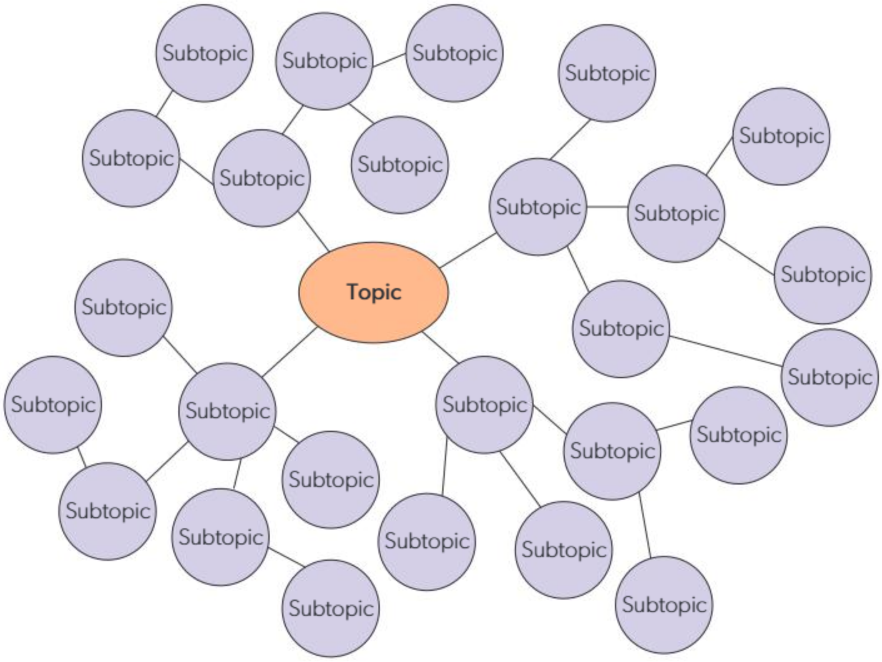
As a Diploma visual arts student, you are expected to independently create art that is personally meaningful to you. You will receive support and guidance from your teacher in learning how to use a variety of art-making techniques and creative strategies. But what you make work about and what you want to say with your artwork is up to you, as a young artist engaging in creative practice at a specific time and place in the world. The first step in making personally meaningful art is having an idea about what is important to you.

Brain dumping

Brain dumping is a similar process to brainstorming in that it aims to transfer ideas from the brain to another storage system, such as your visual arts journals. Brain dumping might begin as a list of ideas that you make in your visual arts journals. It becomes more organic and fluid as you get other ideas or make a list of related tasks, which you jot down as you go. It is a good idea to set a time limit to do your initial brain dump. When the time runs out, finish writing the last point, then start to organize and evaluate the points. It may be useful to categorize the ideas into “concepts” and “medium/techniques”, or “now”, “maybe later” and “probably not”.

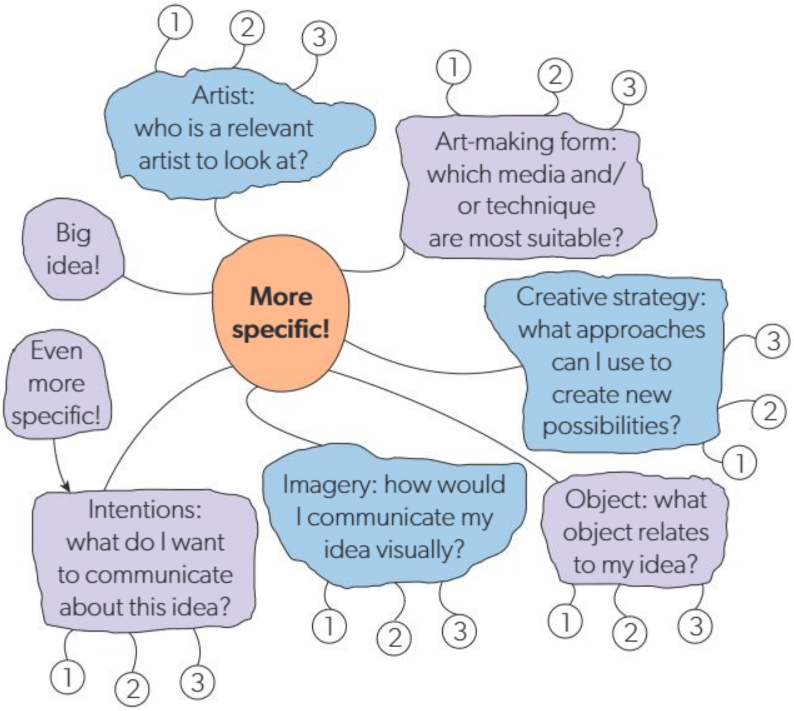
Concept webs and mind maps

Concept webs and mind maps are visual/written techniques used to expand upon ideas. After brainstorming or brain dumping, they are a powerful way to take key ideas and flesh them out. With either concept webs or mind maps, place the key idea at the centre or bottom of the page, and develop the idea further



▲ Figure 1.7 Diagram of a mind-map structure with branches that are used to explore it from various points of view. Mind maps most often result in a tree or root-like image (see Figure 1.7), while concept webs take on a web or starburst shape. When developing ideas for art-making using concept webs or mind maps, it is a good idea to add sketches, cartoons and doodles so your brain is already beginning to give visual form to your ideas. This is also more interesting for the examiner.

When you have identified areas of interest, it can be helpful to create more focused mind maps that allow you to begin thinking about how you might communicate your ideas visually. A six-branch mind map will lead you to consider an idea through several lenses and can lead to a range of sketches, trials and experiments. You can also approach the six-branch mind map in a linear manner, with one idea leading to the next, the order of which can be rearranged. Starting with your central idea, the six elements to consider in the mind map in Figure 1.8 are: intentions, imagery, object, art-making form, creative strategy and artist.



▲ Figure 1.8 Diagram of a six-branch mind map

Drawing

In the visual arts course, drawing is considered one of the available art-making forms. But drawing is so much more than another option for your artistic outcomes. Because drawing is so immediate (as soon as you make lines with a pencil, it is there for you to see), it is often used by artists as a thinking, researching and planning tool.

When engaging in art-making as inquiry, you will find drawing to be an invaluable companion. Use drawing at all stages of your process. Keep a notebook or journal in which to record your ideas and make drawings as part of your mind-mapping strategies to begin visualizing imagery. Sketch to develop ideas further and consider composition and formal arrangement. Draw into and on top of ongoing work as a form of revision and draw next steps and future directions after the resolution of works.

> *To draw is to apply pen to paper. But to draw is also to pull on some thread, pulling it out of its knotted tangle or skein, and we also speak of drawing water from a well. There is another meaning too, as when we say, 'I was drawn to him' [...] Drawing is thus a depicting, a hauling, unraveling, and being impelled toward something or somebody.*
>
> *Michael Taussig (2011)*

Drawing as an art-making form is covered in Chapter 2: Art-making forms and creative strategies.

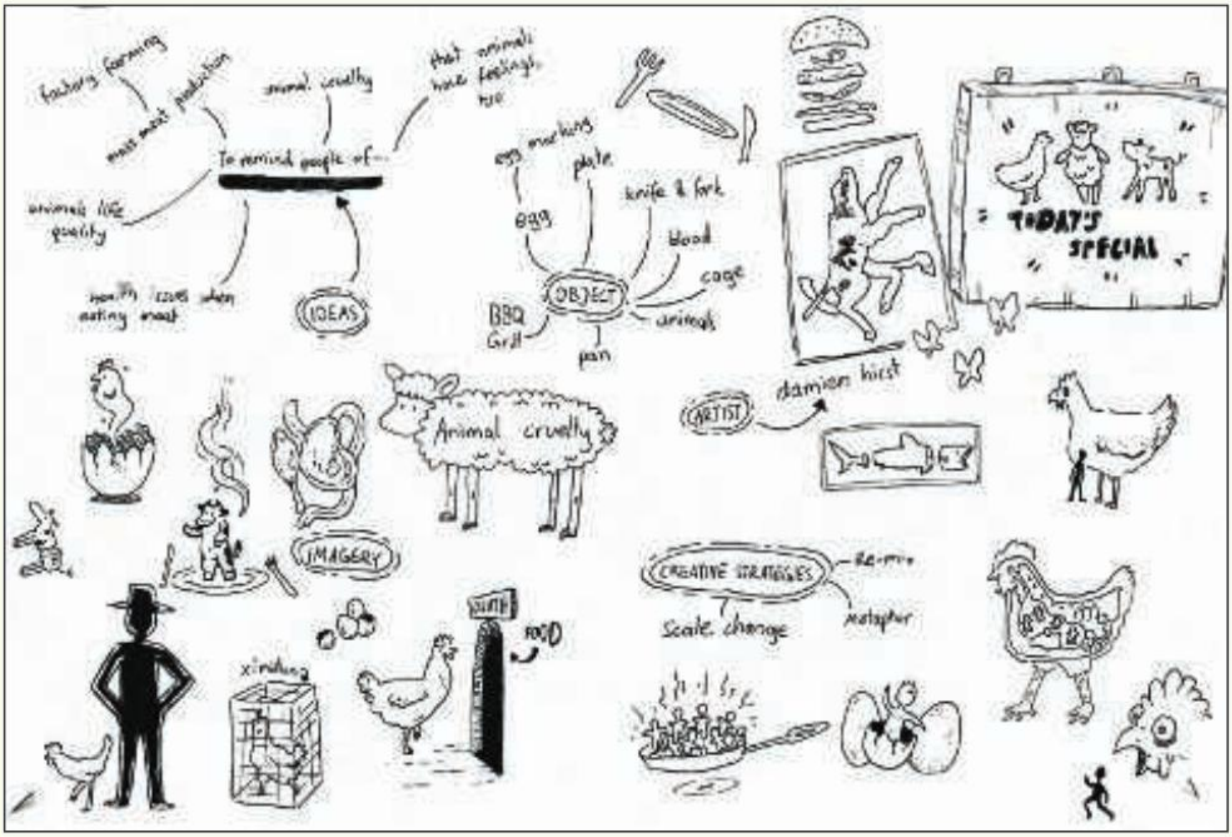
Case study

Ina started very broadly with a mind map on 21st-century issues to identify the areas that she felt passionately about. The subtopics were also broad and covered a range of topics, from the political to the personal. As Ina began to draw associations between her subtopics, in some areas the content became highly specific and personal.

As a vegetarian, Ina felt particularly drawn to the topic of animal cruelty. In her next mind map she started to draw this out in several of her subtopics, from pollution to meat-eating traditions and from addiction to guilt.

It was clear to her that she would develop a line of inquiry exploring questions of animal cruelty.

The next step was to develop more clearly and specifically the ideas that she would explore and her intentions in relation to form and concept. In order to do this, Ina developed a six-branch mind map (with only five branches, as she left out the art-making form branch), shown in Figure 1.9. Ina is a visual thinker and the mind map contains as many drawings as words, particularly when thinking through possible imagery. Ina used sketching as a form of thinking in an effective manner.



▲ **Figure 1.9** Ina's six-branch mind map

The more focused mind map allowed Ina to identify imagery and strategies that could be explored in her inquiry. But first she developed some inquiry questions that would guide her art-making. (We will consider how to develop great inquiry questions later in this chapter.) The first three questions in Figure 1.10 are personal and specific and can be used for a wide range of exploration in art-making, but they don't yet identify a path for inquiry. Those questions are:

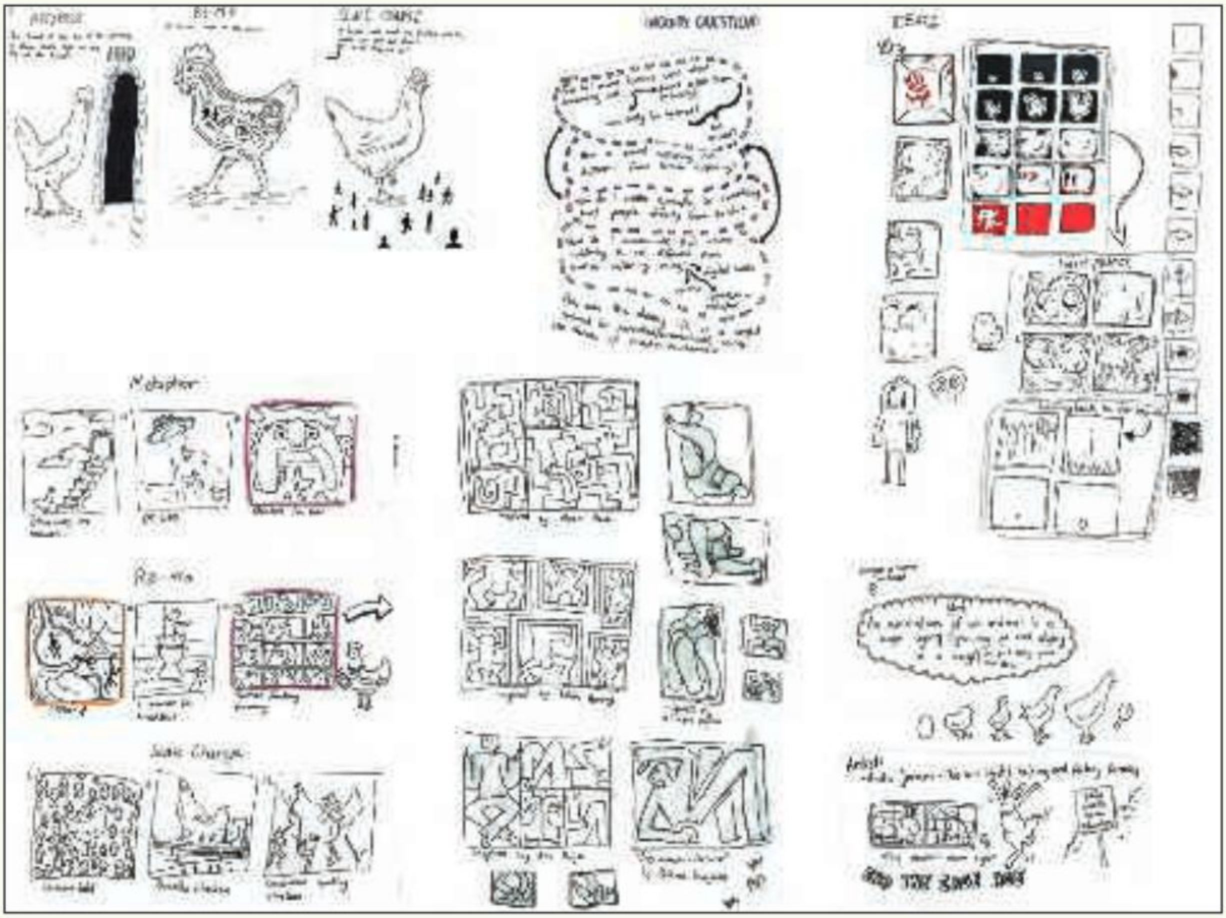
- How do I make humans care about something that doesn't affect them personally or that can easily be ignored?
- How is animal suffering not different from human suffering?
- How do I create sympathy for something that people already know exists?

The next two questions begin to spell out specific ways in which to experiment with forms and strategies to communicate meaning.

- How do I communicate that animal suffering is not different from human suffering using: digital media, re-mix, symbolism or metaphor?
- How can the dreary life of a caged animal be presented/communicated using the theme of time or claustrophobia?

The questions are open-ended enough that one could imagine a range of outcomes as a result of an art-making inquiry. They are specific enough that Ina can get right down to experimenting. The second question is particularly generative in that it identifies the subject and a strategy to communicate, which can be explored through forms, strategy and imagery.

In Ina's thumbnail sketches there are already some clear visual developments of these questions, which will be developed further once she begins experimenting with a range of techniques.



▲ **Figure 1.10** Ina's inquiry questions and idea development

More on the Future Farmers can be found in Chapter 6: Artist project (HL).

TOK

As part of the mind-mapping process, it is useful to think of objects that you associate with the topics and concepts you are exploring. Using objects when developing ideas can be very generative in creating new connections. Objects can arouse a range of emotions, associations and symbolic meaning when used in art-making. Putting an object through a transformation can elicit new meanings and interpretations. Objects communicate function, meaning and knowledge without the use of words. Objects and their usage create new knowledge about the world.

The TOK IA Exhibition was inspired by *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, a podcast and book by the former director of the British Museum, Dr Neil MacGregor. In the book he explores past civilizations through the objects that they made and used. Thinking about history through objects allows us to step out of the chronological production of historical knowledge and think about new associations across time and space. Objects serve purposes that sometimes defy the historical narrative.

The American artists collective Future Farmers often use objects as tools, props and imaginary devices, as well as invitations for audience participation. Their work suggests the potential for objects to communicate knowledge. This sentiment is also found in Anglo-Irish satirist Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in which he describes a scheme to remove the need for words. The suggestion is that people would carry with them any objects they needed to refer to.

How to write a good inquiry question

A good inquiry question is the first step towards a meaningful exploration. There is no specific formula for writing these questions; instead they should meaningfully come out of your mind mapping and idea creation. When you identify an area of interest, try to frame it as a question that will lead you towards making art. Generally, you should keep the following in mind. Questions should be:

- broad enough that they don't already prescribe what the work will look like when you complete it
- specific enough that you will be able to conduct a meaningful line of inquiry
- personal enough that you won't find a solution by searching for it on the internet.

The following are some categories under which successful inquiry questions generally fall. The list is not exhaustive and you may find that your question does not easily fit under these headings. Ultimately the category and wording of your question are only as important as the inquiry that they help to guide.

Visual language

Questions that search for a visual language are questions that guide you towards a formal investigation and how this will help to communicate your intentions. When engaging in this line of inquiry, you may already have an idea of the media or technique that you would like to use. When you experiment with the media, you are searching for a personal visual language that will communicate intentions. Some examples of inquiry questions in this category are:

- What happens to a memory when I try to freeze it in a painting?
- How can I use geometric abstraction to create a sense of collective hope?
- How can I communicate male fragility in thrown ceramic vessels?
- How can I use gesture as a metaphor for emotion?
- How can I use colour and pattern to communicate aspects of my Filipino culture?
- How can I use fabric to deceive viewers?
- Can figure drawing tell the story of ageing?

Personal context

Some examples of questions that centralize personal context include:

- How does my experience as a female artist impact my connection to the representation of women in art history?
- How can my struggles with depression be told through cartoons?
- How does my phone addiction influence my relationships?
- How does my experience as a football player impact my art-making?
- How does my obsessive-compulsive disorder influence me as an artist?
- How can I use sweets as a metaphor for grief?

Interdisciplinary thinking

Some questions require interdisciplinary thinking, for example:

- How is architecture an organic and evolving discipline?
- What is the relationship between motion $F = \frac{d}{dt}(mv)$ and photography?
- How is the circle a spiritual medium?
- How is fashion adapting to technology?

Research

Questions that require research could include:

- What would the cultural relics of an alien civilization look like?
- How can I tell the story of the slain dragon of Saint George?
- What would the future discovered remains from a climate catastrophe be?

Case study

Rwandan artist Christian Nyampeta's work is a good example of how you can use inquiry to shape your art-making. He has spent several years exploring a central question in his art-making: how to live together. Nyampeta's work utilizes a diversity of media, from more traditional forms such as drawing, sculpture and filmmaking, to furniture design, sourdough bread-making, staging a radio play and participatory actions and conversations (Nyampeta, 2013).

Nyampeta's starting point is the historical scar of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi in 1994: "The most important contradiction of my research focuses on how people live in the wake of radical ruptures [...] And what role and responsibility do [...] artists, such as myself, have in this?" (Nyampeta, 2023)

When Nyampeta inquires into the question "how to live together", it is multi-layered. It is both a reflection on the history of his homeland, and how people can come together and be a singular nation with shared goals and dreams. But it is also a mundane and practical consideration of what it looks like when people meet in shared, communal spaces.

Some of Nyampeta's earlier works on the subject were in fact inquiries into living structures and encounters. He designed and built wooden furniture-like structures that acted as proposals and invitations for different ways of interacting with each other. This type of medium is referred to as "**participatory art**" or "social practice", because the active participation of the audience and their dynamics are what determine the meaning in the work.

For the duration of the exhibition New Habits at Casco Art Institute in Utrecht, the Netherlands, Nyampeta scheduled a series of workshops examining what it means to wear a "habit", both literally and symbolically. The exhibition included a dying workshop where all attendees could bring an article of clothing to dye blue (Figure 1.11), a sandal-making workshop and a sourdough bread workshop, among others. The activities and workshops were a reflection on one's own habits and how to bring them into conversation with others in shared experiences.

Another question that Nyampeta poses is, "How come my name is Christian?" With this seemingly simple inquiry into the Christian roots of his name, Nyampeta tries to understand the historical conditions that led to the continuous suppression of Eastern Africa (Nyampeta, 2023). This project is realized through a series of drawings that create an autobiographical timeline, depicting scenes from his childhood schooling in Rwanda.

In Nyampeta's lines of inquiry we can see how seemingly simple questions can carry thoughtful and complex conceptual and material processes. His work also demonstrates how an engagement with one's own personal context organically opens up to both the local and global.

▲ **Figure 1.11** Nyampeta leading a blue dying workshop at Casco Art Institute in Utrecht, the Netherlands

Key term

Participatory art: art that requires the audience to participate in it or interact with it.

How to conduct art as inquiry

To make art as inquiry is to do and make things because you want to find out what happens and learn from that. Treat each stage of the creative process as a learning moment that may lead you to unexpected places and not as stages towards finishing an artwork.

The following are a few possible paths that could be used to develop a line of inquiry. They identify the various ways in which you will touch on the assessment objectives as an organic part of your creative process. For each of these you should have already generated an inquiry question.

Path A: The conceptual path

1. Generate

Generate several sketches of possible combinations of art-making forms and creative strategies for communicating ideas. Evaluate which one of these is most effective in communicating your intentions in ways that are subtle and complex. In Figure 1.12, Charlotte made several sketches on a range of topics, in which she utilized metaphor as a creative strategy. Her inquiry questions demonstrate a process of narrowing down the most powerful metaphor to work with: "How are (other) species dealing with human (created) obstacles?" This is further explored in additional sketches.

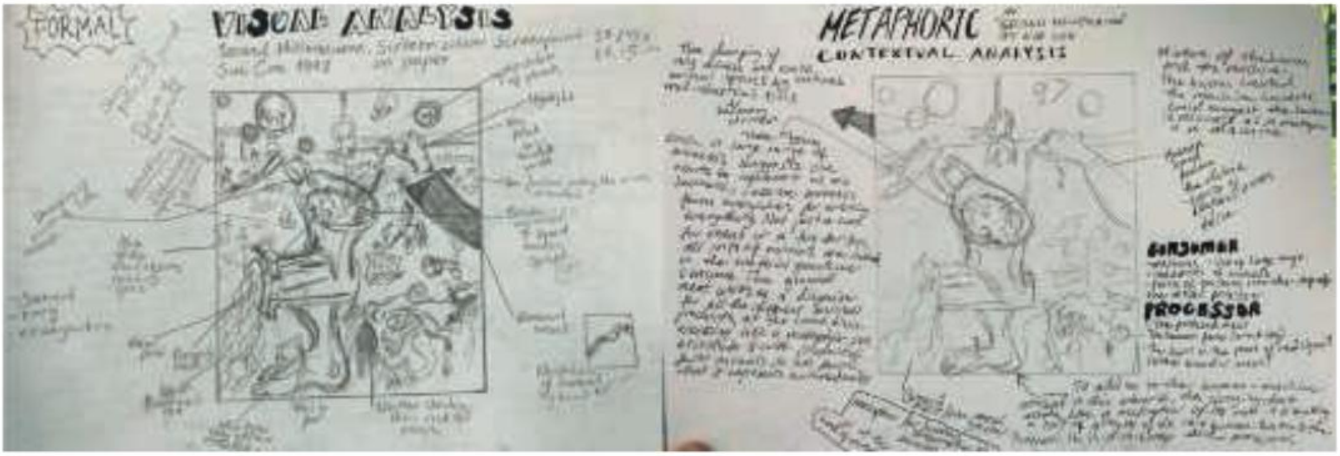
▲ **Figure 1.12** Charlotte's idea sketches

2. Investigate

Investigate an artist that utilized similar forms or strategies to understand how they used these to communicate their intentions.

3. Situate

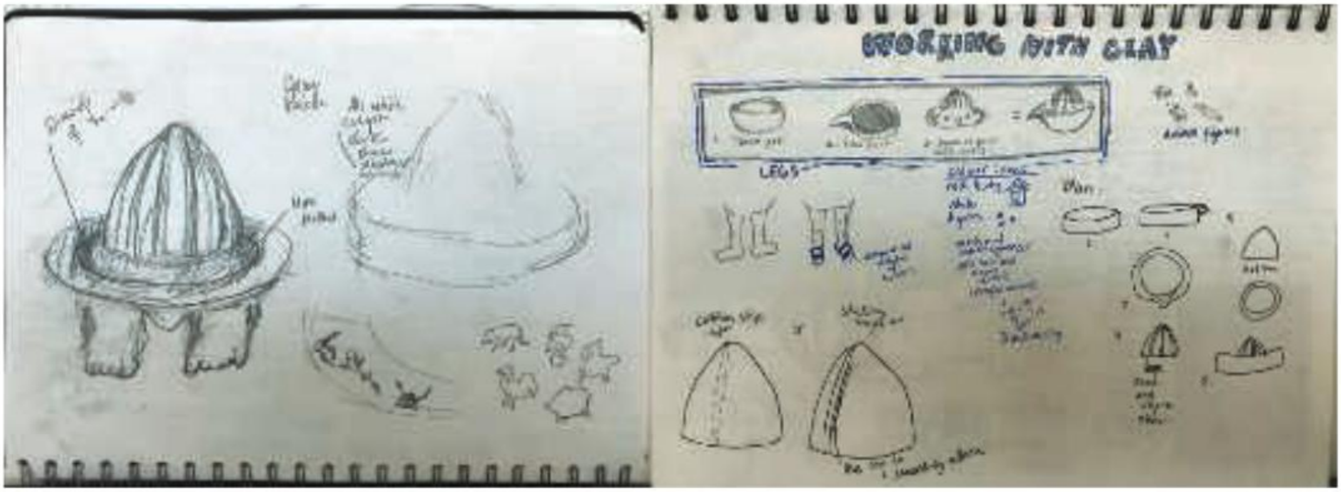
Situate the work of the investigated artist within their cultural context, to understand how your own context can inform the communication of meaning in your work. Figure 1.13 shows how Charlotte selected a work by British artist Sue Coe and explored her work and how she uses metaphor. She investigated the meaning of symbols in the work and how Coe uses creative strategies, such as hybridization and decontextualization, to communicate meaning. Finally, she contextualized the work within Sue Coe's ongoing animal rights activism work.



▲ Figure 1.13 Charlotte's critical analysis of Coe's *Second Millennium*

4. Synthesize

Synthesize the ideas of the investigated artist, along with your own intentions, and begin working on creating an artwork. Charlotte selected the strategy of hybridization utilized by Coe in order to develop ideas for a work that could communicate her intentions (Figure 1.14).



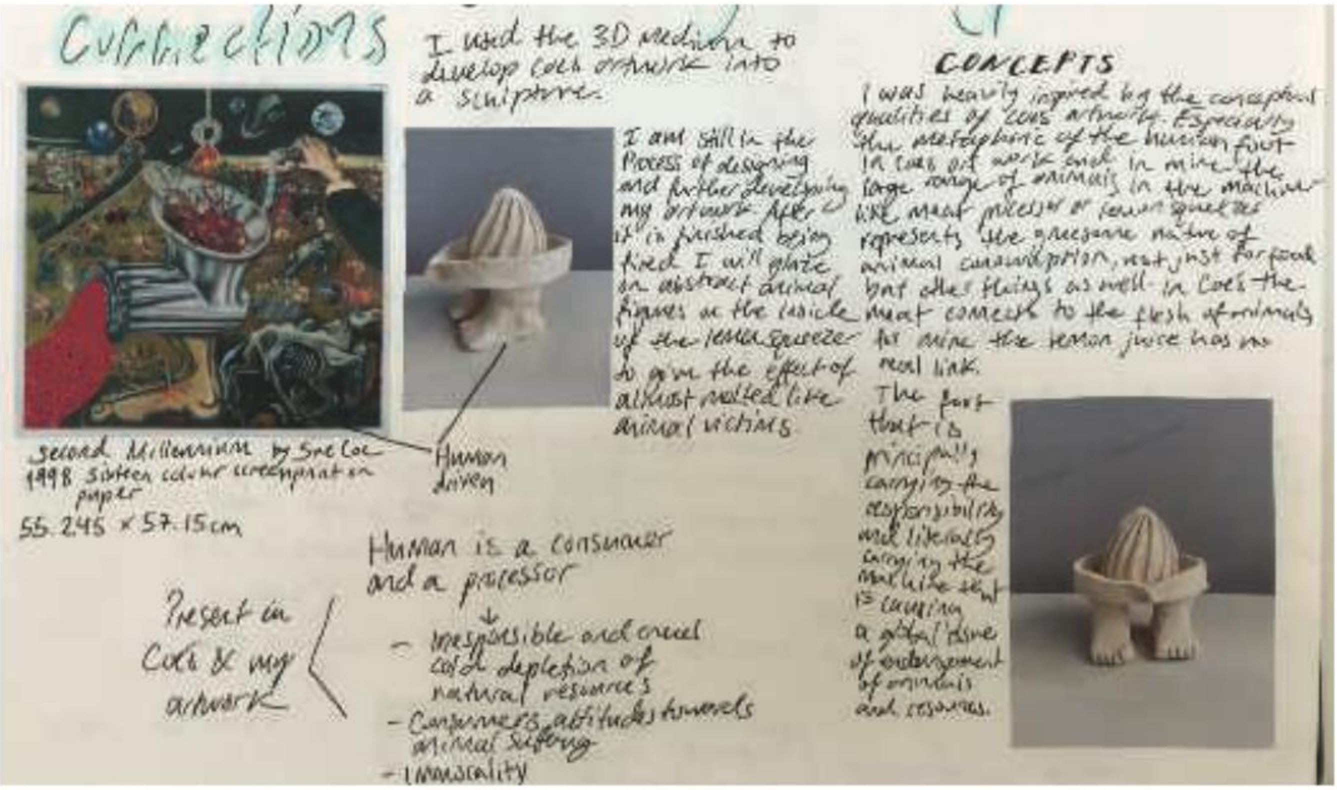
▲ Figure 1.14 Charlotte's refined sketches

5. Curate and refine

After having produced some trials of your work, curate a selection of your work in progress and seek feedback from your classmates. Use that feedback to refine your work.

6. Resolve

Using the feedback from your peers, resolve the work. Charlotte evaluated her work in relation to Coe's work and how the change of materials is significant (Figure 1.15).



Connections

I used the 3D medium to develop Coe's artwork into a sculpture.

I am still in the process of designing and further developing my artwork. After it is finished being fired I will glaze an abstract animal figures on the inside of the lemon squeeze to give the effect of almost melted like animal victims

Second Millennium by Sue Coe 1998 Sixteen colour screenprint on paper
55.245 × 57.15 cm

Human driven

Human is a consumer and a processor
↓
- irresponsible and cruel [illegible] depletion of natural resources
- Consumers attitudes towards animal suffering
- immorality

Present in Coe's & my artwork

CONCEPTS

I was heavily inspired by the conceptual qualities of Coe's artworks. Especially the metaphoric of the human foot in Coe's art work and in mine the large range of animals in the machine like meat processor or lemon squeezer represents the gruesome nature of animal consumption, not just for food but other things as well. In Coe's the meat connects to the flesh of animals for mine the lemon juice has no real link.

The foot that is principally carrying the responsibility and literally carrying the machine that is causing a global issue of endangerment of animals and resources.

▲ Figure 1.15 Charlotte's reflection

Path B: The material path

1. Investigate

Begin working with a medium or technique that interests you. Investigate the potential of your chosen form to communicate meaning. Charlotte was interested in trying to recreate the rings of a tree trunk using paint. The initial experiments were purely material, without too much emphasis on meaning. She tried various painting mediums to achieve a flowing consistency.

2. Generate

Generate several trials and sketches in your chosen media. Impose a creative strategy and see what happens. Charlotte started extending and elaborating on artistic techniques by constructing her own specialized tools. She combined smaller brushes to create larger brushes with varied points of pressure and adapted squeegees to apply different paint textures.

3. Synthesize

Synthesize your experiments in order to articulate an artistic intention for the work. Following her experiments with painting circles, Charlotte investigated the work of Hilma af Klint. She examined the significance of the circle in the artist's attempt to create a spiritual experience through an engagement with abstract shapes. Charlotte took this as a departure point for her circle paintings.

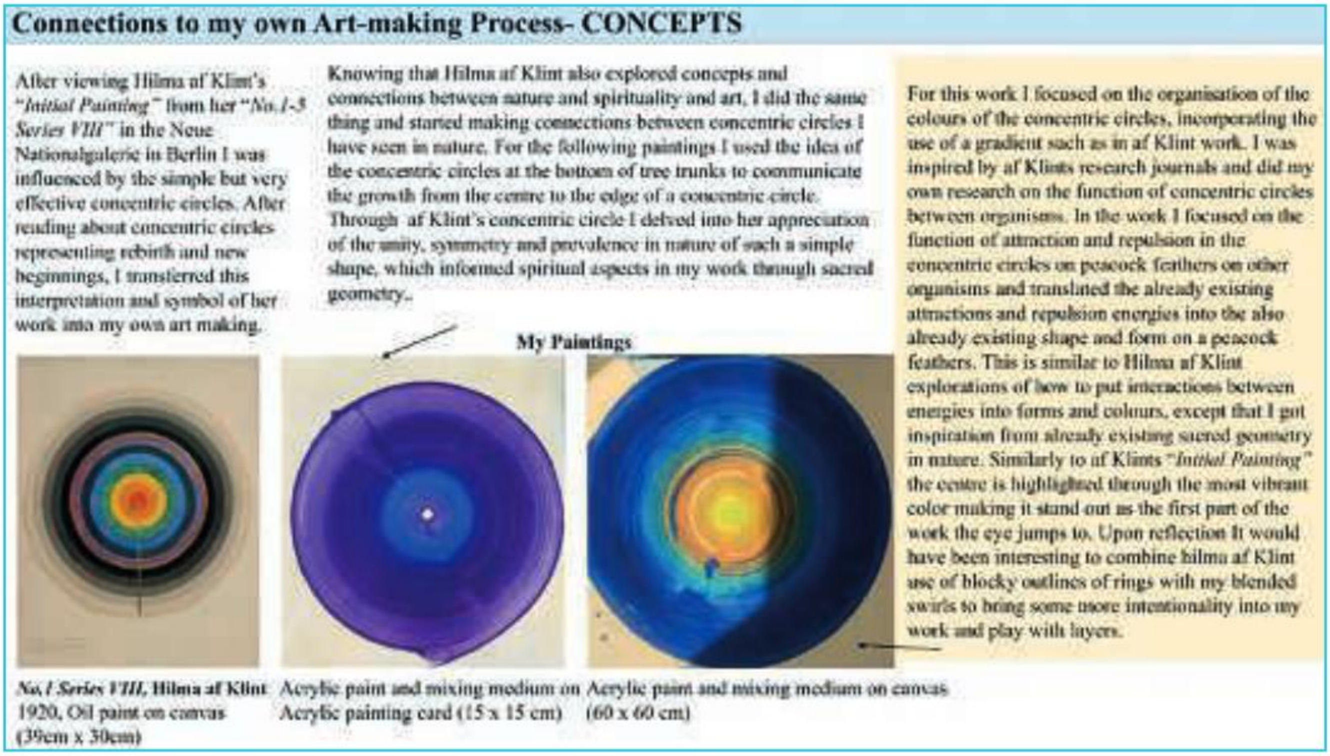
4. Resolve and curate

Resolve the artwork and curate the evidence of your process, as shown in Figure 1.16.

▲ **Figure 1.16** Charlotte's synthesis of experimentation to create resolved circle paintings

5. Refine

Reflect on what was successful and what did not work, as Charlotte has done in Figure 1.17. Seek feedback from your classmates in order to refine your work.



Connections to my own Art-making Process- CONCEPTS

After viewing Hilma af Klint's "*Initial Painting*" from her "*No.1-5 Series VIII*" in the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin I was influenced by the simple but very effective concentric circles. After reading about concentric circles representing rebirth and new beginnings, I transferred this interpretation and symbol of her work into my own art making.

Knowing that Hilma af Klint also explored concepts and connections between nature and spirituality and art, I did the same thing and started making connections between concentric circles I have seen in nature. For the following paintings I used the idea of the concentric circles at the bottom of tree trunks to communicate the growth from the centre to the edge of a concentric circle. Through af Klint's concentric circle I delved into her appreciation of the unity, symmetry and prevalence in nature of such a simple shape, which informed spiritual aspects in my work through sacred geometry..

My Paintings

No.1 Series VIII, **Hilma af Klint** 1920, Oil paint on canvas (39cm x 30cm)

Acrylic paint and mixing medium on Acrylic painting card (15 x 15 cm)

Acrylic paint and mixing medium on canvas (60 x 60 cm)

For this work I focused on the organisation of the colours of the concentric circles, incorporating the use of a gradient such as in af Klint work. I was inspired by af Klints research journals and did my own research on the function of concentric circles between organisms. In the work I focused on the function of attraction and repulsion in the concentric circles on peacock feathers on other organisms and translated the already existing attractions and repulsion energies into the also already existing shape and form on a peacock feathers. This is similar to Hilma af Klint explorations of how to put interactions between energies into forms and colours, except that I got inspiration from already existing sacred geometry in nature. Similarly to af Klints "*Initial Painting*" the centre is highlighted through the most vibrant color making it stand out as the first part of the work the eye jumps to. Upon reflection It would have been interesting to combine hilma af Klint use of blocky outlines of rings with my blended swirls to bring some more intentionality into my work and play with layers.

▲ **Figure 1.17** Charlotte's reflections on the connections between her work and that of Hilma af Klint

6. Generate

Use the outcome to generate new questions and new directions in your work. The circle paintings led Charlotte in new and related inquiries. She explored the glitch in the circle, where her technique had failed, and looked for new expressive possibilities. Charlotte also looked to bring in a more complex geometric abstraction in dialogue with her painted circles.

7. Refine

As Charlotte has done in Figure 1.18, refine your intentions for a new work.

▲ **Figure 1.18** Charlotte's new directions

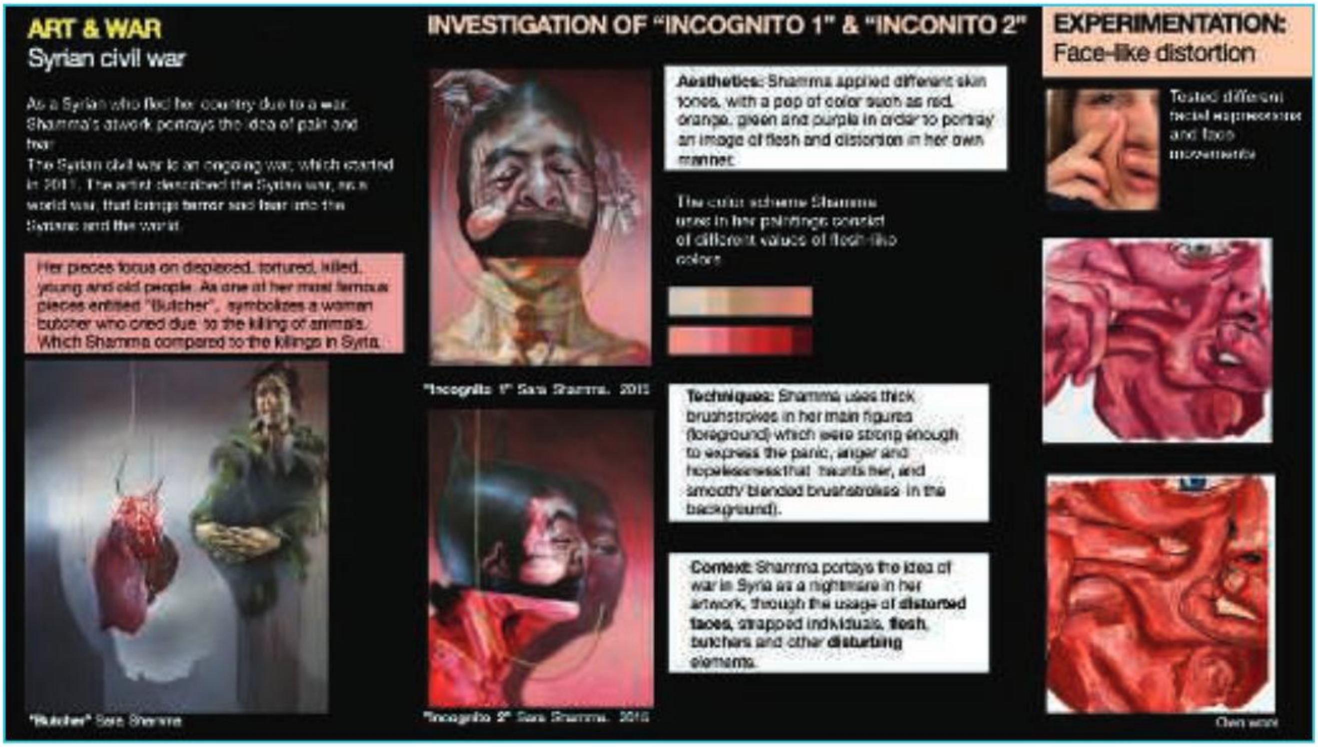
Path C: The research path

1. Investigate

Investigate an artwork that you have seen and are drawn to.

2. Situate

Situate the work within its context to understand how it communicates meaning. In Figure 1.19, the student explored the work of contemporary Syrian artist Sara Shamma, situating her work and the representation of power within the context of the ongoing civil war in Syria.



ART & WAR
Syrian civil war

As a Syrian who fled her country due to a war, Shamma's atwork portrays the idea of pain and fear.
The Syrian civil war is an ongoing war, which started in 2011. The artist described the Syrian war, as a world war, that brings terror and fear into the Syrians and the world.

Her pieces focus on displaced, tortured, killed, young and old people. As one of her most famous pieces entitled "Butcher", symbolizes a woman butcher who cried due to the killing of animals. Which Shamma compared to the killings in Syria.

"Butcher" Sara Shamma

INVESTIGATION OF "INCOGNITO 1" & "INCONITO 2"

Aesthetics: Shamma applied different skin tones, with a pop of color such as red, orange, green and purple in order to portray an image of flesh and distortion in her own manner.

The color scheme Shamma uses in her paintings consist of different values of flesh-like colors.

"Incognito 1" Sara Shamma. 2015

Techniques: Shamma uses thick brushstrokes in her main figures (foreground) which were strong enough to express the panic, anger and hopelessness that haunts her, and smooth blended brushstrokes in the background).

Context: Shamma portays the idea of war in Syria as a nightmare in her artwork, through the usage of **distorted faces**, strapped individuals, **flesh**, butchers and other **disturbing** elements.

"Incognito 2" Sara Shamma. 2015

EXPERIMENTATION:
Face-like distortion

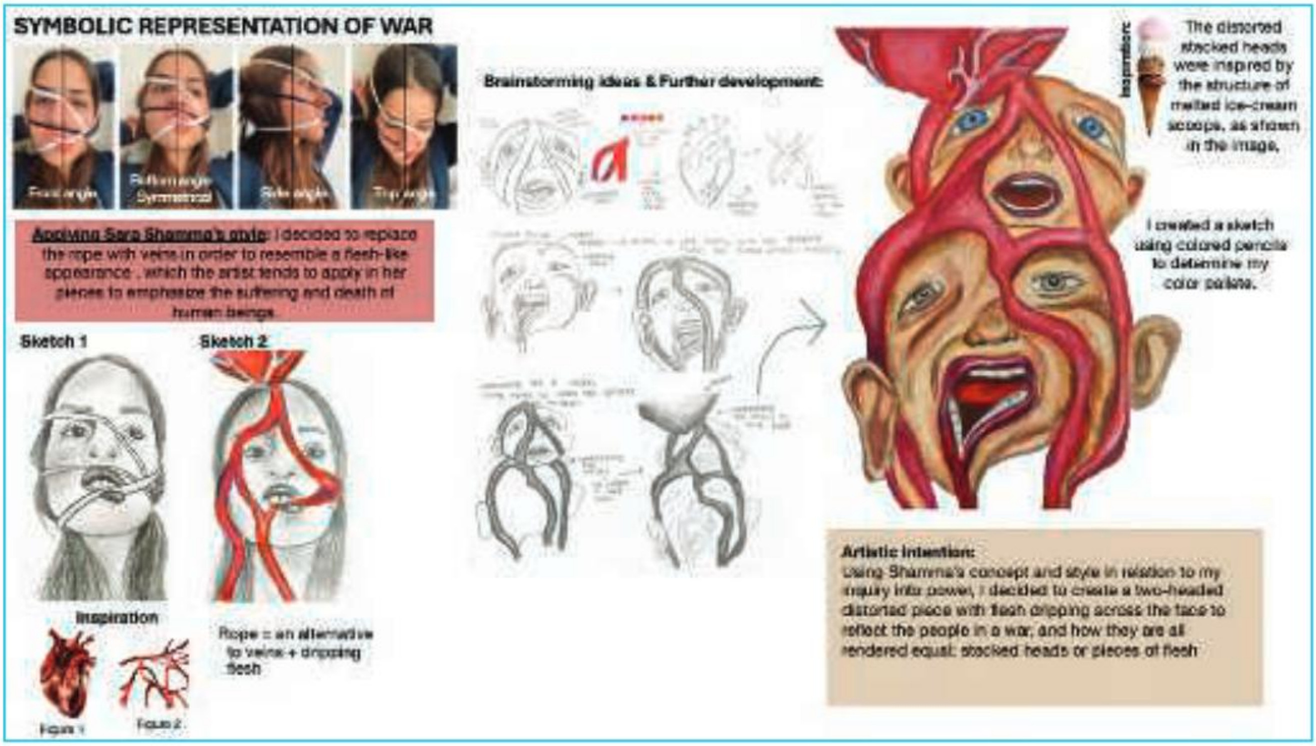
Tested different facial expressions and face movements

Own work

▲ Figure 1.19 Analysis of Shamma

3. Generate

Generate ideas that will situate your own work in context. In Figure 1.20, the student identified the use of distortion and colour as key elements in the work of Shamma. These elements were then applied in generating their own ideas for exploration.



SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF WAR

Applying Sara Shamma's style: I decided to replace the rope with veins in order to resemble a flesh-like appearance, which the artist tends to apply in her pieces to emphasize the suffering and death of human beings.

Rope = an alternative to veins + dripping flesh

Brainstorming ideas & Further development:

The distorted stacked heads were inspired by the structure of melted ice-cream scoops, as shown in the image.

I created a sketch using colored pencils to determine my color palette.

Artistic Intention:
Using Shamma's concept and style in relation to my inquiry into power, I decided to create a two-headed distorted piece with flesh dripping across the face to reflect the people in a war, and how they are all rendered equal: stacked heads or pieces of flesh

▲ Figure 1.20 The development of the student's concept

4. Refine

Discuss your ideas with peers in order to refine your intentions.

5. Resolve and curate

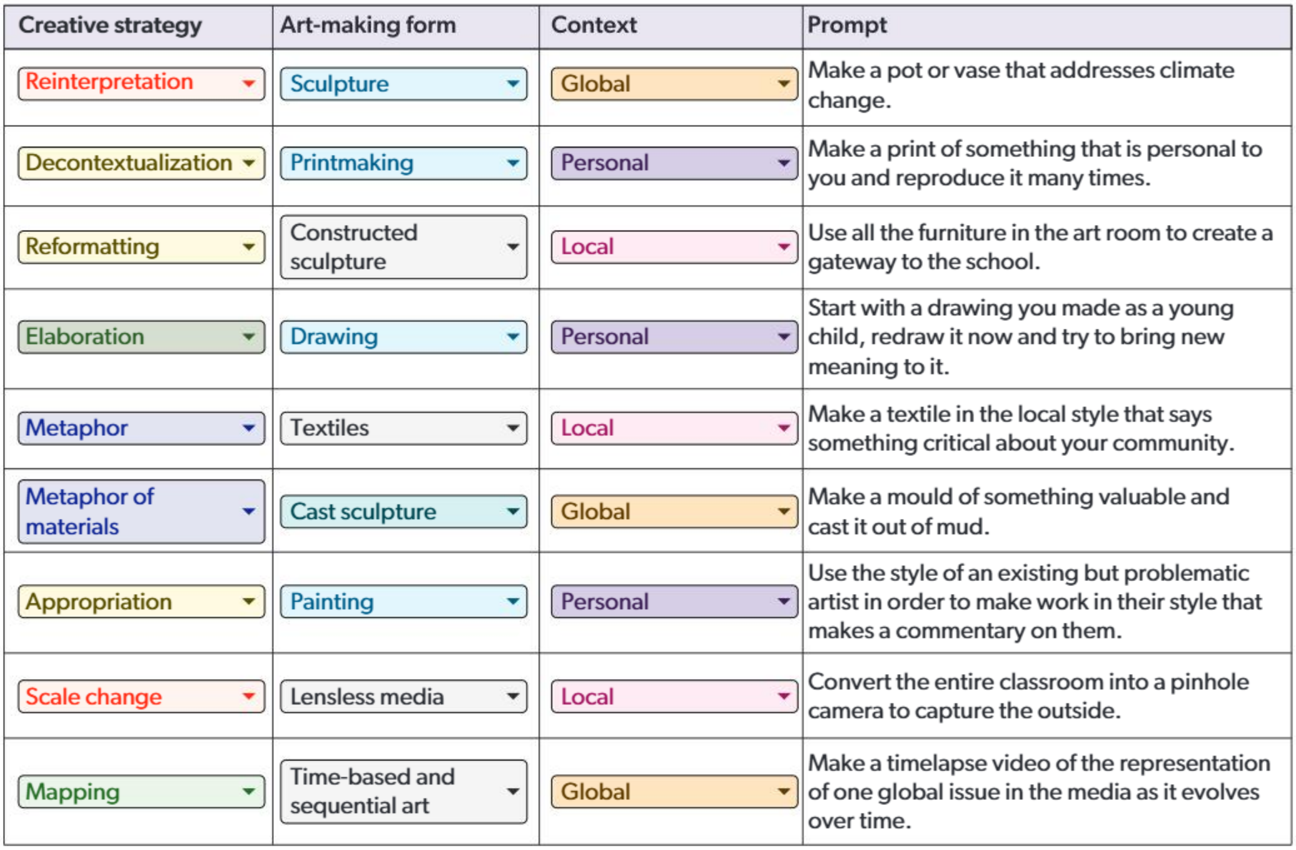
Resolve your work and curate it for display.

Example pathways

The following suggested paths are just some examples of the ways students approach a line of inquiry. As you construct your own path, remember that there are a few essential elements that you should be engaging with. At some point along the inquiry you should create, connect and communicate. Your inquiry should also cover most of the assessment objectives in a meaningful way. That way, when it is time to compile evidence of your work for the art-making inquiries portfolio, you are best positioned to reach the higher mark levels.

Activity

Sometimes, you may not know what your intentions are initially, or you may have intentions for an inquiry but not know which forms to use or which context would work best. You could try a list randomizer app or website to generate randomized combinations of forms, strategies and contexts that can prompt or inspire you (see Figure 1.21 for an example of some results). Now is a good time to try one to see if it would work for you.

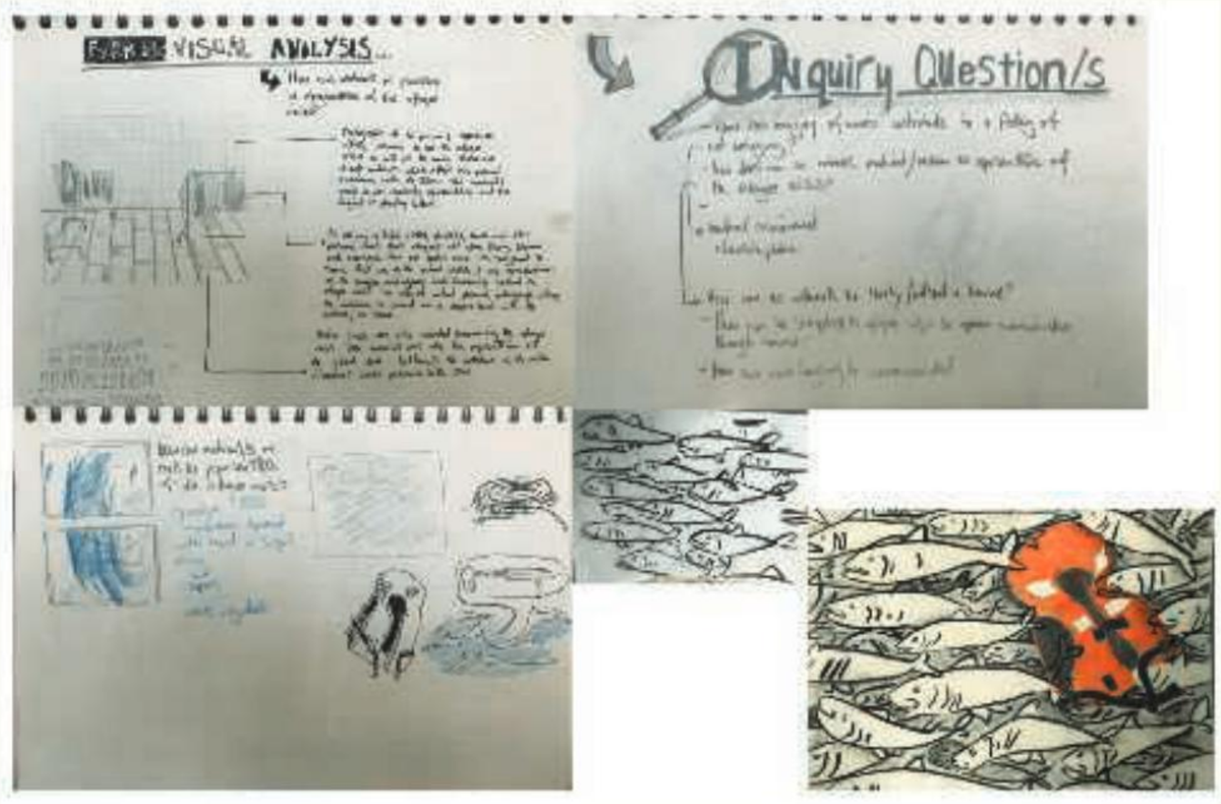


Creative strategy	Art-making form	Context	Prompt
Reinterpretation ▾	Sculpture ▾	Global ▾	Make a pot or vase that addresses climate change.
Decontextualization ▾	Printmaking ▾	Personal ▾	Make a print of something that is personal to you and reproduce it many times.
Reformatting ▾	Constructed sculpture ▾	Local ▾	Use all the furniture in the art room to create a gateway to the school.
Elaboration ▾	Drawing ▾	Personal ▾	Start with a drawing you made as a young child, redraw it now and try to bring new meaning to it.
Metaphor ▾	Textiles ▾	Local ▾	Make a textile in the local style that says something critical about your community.
Metaphor of materials ▾	Cast sculpture ▾	Global ▾	Make a mould of something valuable and cast it out of mud.
Appropriation ▾	Painting ▾	Personal ▾	Use the style of an existing but problematic artist in order to make work in their style that makes a commentary on them.
Scale change ▾	Lensless media ▾	Local ▾	Convert the entire classroom into a pinhole camera to capture the outside.
Mapping ▾	Time-based and sequential art ▾	Global ▾	Make a timelapse video of the representation of one global issue in the media as it evolves over time.

▲ Figure 1.21 An example of some results from a list randomizer app

Case study

Rowan's initial works in the Diploma visual arts class focused on themes of displacement. Living in Germany in the early 2020s, Rowan witnessed the huge influx of refugees due to wars and displacement. A few years earlier, the K21 Museum in Düsseldorf hosted an important Ai Weiwei exhibition in which the artist presented several works inspired by his time spent on the Greek island of Lesbos helping with the incoming refugees. Rowan was impressed by the way in which Ai Weiwei utilized the clothing left behind by people when they arrived from the harrowing voyage as a metaphor for the human cost of war and displacement. This led Rowan to his first inquiry question: "How can materials or processes be representative of the refugee crisis?" (see Figure 1.22).



▲ **Figure 1.22** Rowan's critical investigation and development of inquiry questions

Rowan made associations between the journey undertaken and the exposure to the elements of sun and seawater. He conducted some material trials with drawing prints off various textured surfaces, such as rope. With his first inquiry question in mind, he started exploring the technique of cyanotype, which can be seen in Figure 1.23. Creating an image using this technique involves coating paper with iron salts, exposing it to light and washing it with water. The process of making a cyanotype image could be a metaphor for the journey. These initial experiments, while not yielding satisfactory results, reinforced for Rowan his primary interest as an art-maker: that the conceptual meaning of a work should emerge from the direct materiality of the art-making.

▲ **Figure 1.23** Rowan's material exploration and studies for cyanotype

He was also very interested in print-making and continued his experimentation in this medium, with both intaglio and relief printing techniques. One of the aspects that Rowan found exciting was the ability to isolate the subject in the work using tonal value. He started developing sketches of individuals in isolation or small groups of people derived from everyday scenes that he witnessed, and these became the subject matter for his print (Figure 1.24). This led to the question "Can an artwork be lonely?"

Many of the prints that Rowan developed were of young men, either alone or in disagreement with others. These types of intimate portrayals worked well, particularly when utilizing various intaglio techniques, such as drypoint and etching.

▲ **Figure 1.24** Rowan's print-making exploration

The investigation of male loneliness and aggression in Rowan's prints led him to his next line of inquiry working in clay (Figure 1.25). At first he tried to explore this concept through abstract hand-built clay sculpture, but this felt too literal as an interpretation of the theme. Rowan then started throwing ceramic pots.

▲ **Figure 1.25** Rowan's exploration of ceramics

Reflecting on the process, he described the contrast between the great amount of effort required in throwing and the intended delicacy of the outcome. To an extent, this contradiction brought him back to the earlier line of inquiry investigating loneliness and aggression. Could the process of throwing a ceramic pot act as metaphor for male fragility?

At this point Rowan's material processes became wildly experimental, as he put a range of creative strategies into action that would also act as metaphors. In some thrown pots Rowan started to chip away at the hard clay, in some he squeezed or pressed into the still wet clay and in others he bent or twisted. Finally, he sucked the air out of vessels, causing them to deflate and collapse.

Rowan's three lines of inquiry at first sight appear as distinct paths. However, upon closer examination, we can see how there is also a thread that connects them. Each path enters into dialogue with the others to create a generative and interactive art-making practice.

ATL Research skills

To understand how to conduct research in your art-making, you must first understand what is meant when this term is used in relation to art. Research is used in several ways when referring to artistic practice. At its most basic, art practice is research: when you are making something, the activities that you are doing are a form of research. For example, when you are mixing paints to obtain a desired colour, you are researching the capacity and potential of paints when mixed to create new colours. Or when you are trying to manipulate clay into a form, you are researching the material nature of this substance. By putting emphasis on the making, and not on the final outcome, you are prioritizing the research aspect of artistic practice.

There is another way you can conduct research in the arts and this is by mimicking the research methodologies of other fields. You can approach a topic or idea as a scientist or historian and conduct research in those ways. But of course, art is not bound by the same rules. The outcomes of your research do not need to be verified or confirmed and you do not need to prove the value of your findings.

In fact, you can apply a level of subjectivity to the methodology and, through this, not only create new knowledge, but also reflect on and question the fields of knowledge that you are immersing yourself in. As the Japanese-British artist Simon Fujiwara states, "I'm an outsider in all these fields, but this gives me the liberty to work subjectively. Truth and accuracy are not my concerns …" (Fujiwara, 2009). Notably, Fujiwara's art practice is built around the central question: "What does it mean to be a 'self' in the 21st century?" (Fujiwara, 2024).

Whatever form of research your art-making takes, it is important that you document this in a systematic way. You can devise various methods for doing this. For example, if you are making colour studies, gather swatches of colours and record how you mixed them and with what proportions of each colour. You can test these colours in relation to other colours to evaluate their efficacy. Exploring an idea or topic can be documented through sketching, material trials, preliminary drawings, online research into artists and artworks and research into techniques and methods.

Case study

Borrowing research methodologies from other fields can offer opportunities for creative and imaginative artistic interpretation. The Canadian and French artist Kapwani Kiwanga uses various research methods in her works. For her work the *Sun Ra Repatriation Project*, Kiwanga researched the self-created mythology of the African-American jazz composer Sun Ra. She took on the fields of astronomy and astrophysics in order to "metaphorically repatriate" the remains of the musician to Saturn. While these fields of research gave Kiwanga the formalized language and methodologies for conducting her inquiry, the solution proposed by the artist is only made possible through artistic language.

In another instance, Kiwanga took on the role of historian for her project *Flowers for Africa*. She researched flower displays at diplomatic events that dealt with the independence of African nations. She recreated these floral arrangements for the exhibition (Figure 1.26). The floral arrangements acted as temporary and eroding monuments; in their eventual wilting over the course of the exhibition, visitors could reflect on the resilience of monuments and independence.

▲ **Figure 1.26** Kiwanga, *Flowers for Africa: Namibia*, 2017

The importance of critique

The critique is a formal moment in which you and your classmates will present your work in progress or completed works to receive constructive feedback from your peers and teacher. The feedback you receive will help you in defining next steps towards revising, refining and resolving a work, or it will point you in new directions or possible extensions of the works. The critique is an important step in your lines of inquiry because it is a moment for you to test your ideas and progress, and see whether, and how, it resonates with others.

The critique is a required activity in the visual arts course. It is the responsibility of your teacher to schedule the critique and set up a structure for feedback. It is your responsibility to prepare yourself and your materials, so as to get the most out of the critique. It is also your responsibility to be an active responder in the critiques of your peers.

▲ **Figure 1.27** An impromptu critique of museum investigations

Prepare for the critique carefully and present not only a resolved work, but evidence of all of your investigation. This could include sketches, material trials, and your investigations into other artists' artworks. The more materials you present, the more opportunities you will have for receiving a range of meaningful feedback.

You should also prepare for the critique by writing some questions that you have regarding your work. Perhaps you have doubts about whether the medium is appropriate for communicating your intentions, whether meaning is understood in the work or whether a creative choice that you made is working. Meaningful feedback can be challenging for students to give and often general comments such as "I like it" or "It's interesting" are given. After you share your work and explain your ideas, ask questions like the ones below to receive more useful answers.

To evaluate if your work communicates intentions:

- Is what you see the same as what was intended?
- Do you notice any contradictions?

To understand how the work communicates intentions through formal and conceptual qualities:

- What comes across as the most important part of the work?
- What is unresolved in the work?

To get suggestions to further push your work:

- What could be developed further?
- What ideas or techniques could I try or experiment with?
- What could I change?

Questions that connect to your larger practice of art-making as inquiry:

- Does the work connect to other works I made?
- Do you see a style or connecting idea developing?
- How might an audience react to the work?
- How can the work be taken further?

Questions that support assessment:

- How does the work meet the assessment criteria?
- Is there a criterion that is not addressed by the work or that needs to be developed more?

▲ **Figure 1.28** Materials prepared for critique

You can ask the same questions when you critique your classmates. It will support them in digging deeper into an understanding of their work. However, don't over-control your critique either. Sometimes a complete misunderstanding of your work may ignite new ideas and directions for you.

Finally, practise attentive listening. Ask for clarification if you do not understand a comment and find a way to document the feedback so that you can refer to it later. This can be in the form of taking notes yourself, asking a friend to take notes or asking for permission to record the conversation. Either way, the contents of this critique are an important part of your developing learning and you should take the time to review and reflect on the feedback that you receive.

You have completed a line of inquiry, now what?

A line of inquiry is never truly complete and can always be drawn out further and deeper into a lifelong inquiry through art-making. But at some point during your Diploma visual arts journey, you will probably reach a dead end or your interests will take you elsewhere. This is to be expected, as you are still learning and developing your areas of interest in the arts. You do not need to commit to one single path of exploration.

You have several options for planning your next lines of inquiry. At this point, it is important to consider and reflect on your inquiry question: is it still relevant? How has it transformed as a result of the line of inquiry that you just completed? Are there aspects of the question that you would like to continue exploring? If your inquiry question remains intact, to some extent your next steps will be a continued extension of your first line of inquiry. This will create a branch-like inquiry in which lines spring from one another.

The logical next step is to assess the feedback you received during the critique. Hopefully, your peers and teacher were able to identify areas that may be helpful in guiding your future work. It is possible that someone explicitly said, "You should try this next …", in which case, perhaps it is a good idea to reflect on this and see if it develops into an interesting line of inquiry. Another possibility is that something was said during the critique, either about your work or someone else's, that might have provoked a new idea for you. For this reason, it is so important to listen intently during the critiques.

It is possible that your inquiry question has not proven to be as engaging as you may have expected. If so, your next step will be to return to your initial mind map and take another path. It is likely that you created several subtopics and options to explore and it was just a matter of time until you returned to this starting point to go down another path.

Keep in mind, though, that you and your experience as an artist have now changed, having undergone one line of inquiry, so going back to the initial mind map is not a complete reset. Your relationship to those initial ideas might have changed and matured. Take some time to reconsider and see if you have a new or fresh take on them before you jump into the new line of inquiry.

At this point, check whether you can revise your inquiry question or write a new one that better reflects the direction that you would like to explore. Don't worry too much about whether the lines of inquiry connect with one another. It is perfectly fine to undertake several unrelated paths and, at some point, you might find a way in which they connect. After all, they are emerging from one creative brain.

The work you have completed in your line of inquiry will probably feed directly into one or more of your assessment tasks. The process may make it's way into the artist project (Chapter 6), while the resulting resolved work may be part of your resolved artworks or selected resolved artworks (Chapter 7).

Before moving on, it is useful to check that you have all of the necessary materials documented so that you can better curate your evidence when assembling work for submission. This will be explained in greater depth in the assessment chapters, but for now, it is important to assess whether you have documented:

- your ideation process, including the development of a clear inquiry question or generative statement and including mind-mapping and sketching
- your exploration and experimentation with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies
- your practical investigation of the works of other artists to inform your own art-making
- your ongoing reflections and refinement of your work.

It is important to remember that while lines of inquiry are meant to structure and define a creative process that encourages in-depth exploration and investigation of materials, techniques, ideas, strategies and contexts, they are not meant to restrict your creativity. Take many different lines of inquiry and explore your interests; be an independent art practitioner.

2

Art-making forms and creative strategies

The IB Diploma visual arts course requires that you experience and make artwork using various art-making forms and employ various creative strategies during the course. This is not intended to be difficult. On the contrary, it encourages a playful, experimental approach to your art-making. In this environment, casual discoveries, which often emerge from perceived failures, can be valued. The course is designed to help you build a repertoire of skills and techniques. They will then be at your disposal to use in more intentional, self-directed ways to develop a unique visual language of your own.

The use of the word "variety" in the *Visual arts guide* is deliberate. It is intentionally non-specific and simply implies more than one. The art-making forms and creative strategies you choose can be based purely on the intentions for your art-making and how they can be best realized in a material form. You have the freedom to discover where your strengths and passions rest as an artist.

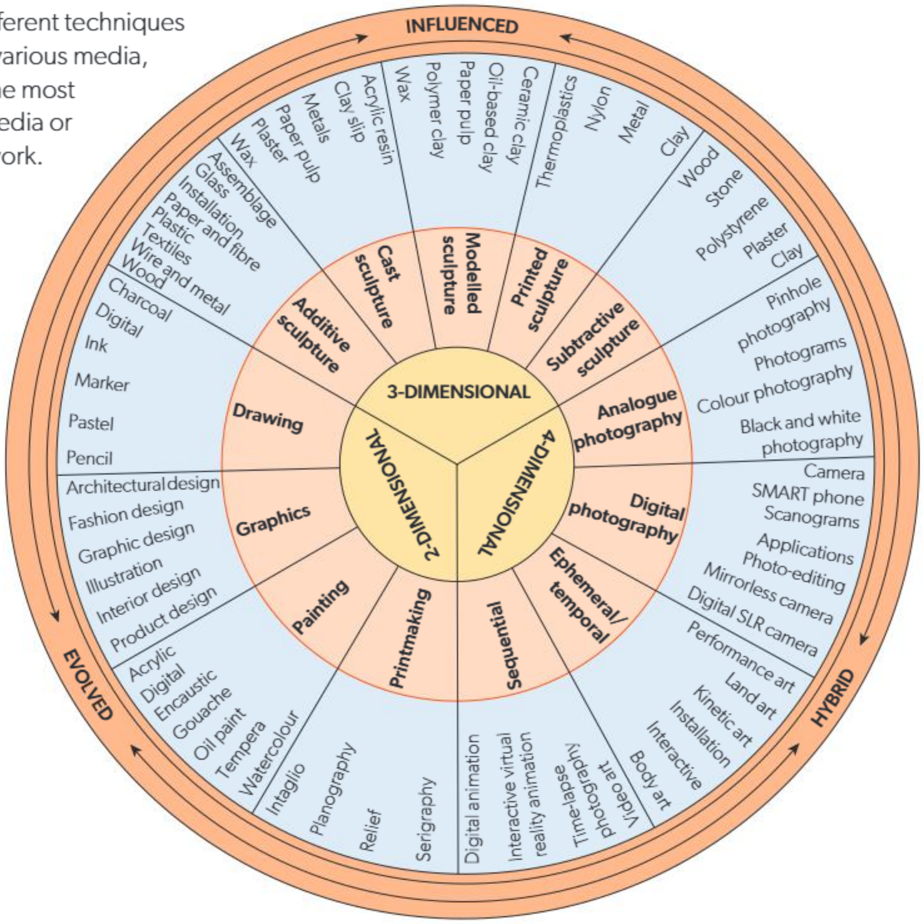
What are art-making forms?

The IB Diploma teacher support material provides the **art-making forms** diagram (Figure 2.1) to help you understand the similarities and differences between art-making forms and their associated **media**. It is a tool to explore a variety of forms and media in your art-making. Each medium has specific properties that an artist needs to consider for the appropriateness of realizing their artistic intentions. This can help direct you in your art-making inquiries: where to begin your practical investigations into different techniques and styles used with various media, as well as choosing the most appropriate forms, media or techniques for your work.

Key terms

Art-making forms: broad categories of creative endeavours by which artistic intentions are realized into artworks, using different expressive media, techniques, conventions and styles.

Media: the materials that give form to an artwork, such as acrylic or oil paint, and the techniques used, such as intaglio or planography.



▲ Figure 2.1 The art-making forms diagram represents one way of organizing and categorizing art-making forms and media

Key terms

Two-dimensional art-making forms: artists working in this form typically work on a flat surface that is defined by length and width. One example is drawing.

Three-dimensional art-making forms: artists working in this form need to consider height, width and depth. Three-dimensional art forms include sculptures.

Four-dimensional art-making forms: used to describe any artwork where the dimension of time and motion is considered an integral part of creating and experiencing the work, such as a video.

Atelier: a studio or workshop where an artist works.

Conventions: describes the accepted or traditional way of representing a subject within a specific cultural context. It is also the accepted or traditional practices associated with an art-making form or medium. Conventions can be challenged or subverted by artists.

Hybridization: involves combining different parts or elements of multiple things.

The model is organized as a series of rings within each other. The innermost ring groups the art-making forms into three categories: **two-dimensional art-making forms**, **three-dimensional art-making forms** and **four-dimensional art-making forms**. These categories group art-making forms based on how the artworks exist as physical objects in space and time.

The second ring lists the generalized art-making forms that are associated with one of the three broader categories. The third ring lists examples of expressive media that are best associated with each of the art-making forms. While the IB Diploma course refers to these as media, some art-making forms, such as sculpture or print-making, are categorized based on common or similar techniques, rather than the materials or medium that is used.

The range of art-making forms is expansive and continues to grow as new technologies emerge. Historically, apprentice artists learned their craft in **ateliers** under a master, usually adhering strictly to the conventional uses of the medium. Since the Modern movement, artists have pushed the boundaries of different art forms, challenging or outright rejecting long-established **conventions**, which has resulted in new forms and media that have been influenced by or evolved from the conventions of more traditional ones – a **hybridization** of forms and media, represented in the outer ring of the diagram. You may explore art-making forms and media that are not included in the diagram. You might also experiment with hybridization of forms, media and techniques, which is encouraged on the course.

Each art-making form and its associated media possess different material properties and expressive potential that you can explore. The course requirement for a "variety of art-making forms" in tasks such as the inquiries portfolio could be satisfied by showing you have worked with as few as two different media. However, you will need to explore the properties of more media before being able to make an informed choice about the best forms and media to realize your intentions.

How you will learn about different forms and media

Teacher-directed inquiry

Most schools structure the delivery of the IB Diploma visual arts course into three stages: teacher-directed inquiry, teacher-guided inquiry and student-directed inquiry. In the beginning of the first year of your programme, your teacher is most likely to use teacher-directed inquiry. They will provide the whole class with a focus for your art-making inquiry. This might be an inquiry question, a generative statement or some stimulus material to direct you in your art-making.

Your teacher will also tell you the form or medium that you will be working with for your art-making. This allows them to conduct a demonstration and workshops with the whole class. You will be able to experiment and become familiar with a small range of forms and media in a safe, guided manner.

However, this stage is unlikely to produce work that you will include as a part of your formal assessment, as it will not be independent work or as personal to you as the work you produce through student-directed inquiry. This doesn't make teacher-directed inquiries any less important. In this stage your teacher will instruct you and model the various skills and strategies that you need to be able to complete the course more independently.

Student-directed inquiry

As you gain more confidence and competence in art-making as a form of inquiry, the role of your teacher shifts from instructor to facilitator. As you transition from teacher-directed to teacher-guided inquiry and ultimately to student-directed inquiry, you will become responsible for developing your own inquiry question or generative statement. You will need to choose appropriate stimuli, as well as discover artists and artworks that can inform your art-making. You will develop your artistic intentions, while exploring and selecting the most appropriate forms, media, techniques and styles to realize your intentions.

This level of agency in your art-making can be both liberating and intimidating. This will be where your teacher, in the role of a facilitator, is critical. You will need to discuss your ideas with your teacher. They will be able to direct you as to what is possible at your school and what is not. They will tell you what materials the school can provide you with and what you will need to source for yourself. They may direct you to artists or artworks that you are unfamiliar with but which align in some way with your material or conceptual interests in your art-making.

School and public libraries often have technical manuals in art-making processes. Most of these will give overviews of different media and the techniques used in particular forms. They might show the common steps taken when using particular techniques through sequences of photographs with explanatory texts, describing what is happening in each image. (Keep this format in mind when you document your processes in your visual arts journals.) These books could be very helpful to you as you experiment with media and techniques.

The internet is also a good resource, with many artists posting tutorial videos in a range of forms and media on platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo. However, beware of trending techniques that are being used by multiple artists, such as using heat to melt oil pastels or crayons, or acrylic pours. The techniques you choose should be directly linked to your artistic intentions. They will likely be highly individual.

Visit art museums and galleries and look for artworks that speak to you. Look carefully at them. Observe their surfaces. Can you determine what forms and media have been used? Read any accompanying text, focusing on what is described as the medium. If permitted in the gallery, photograph the artworks and any accompanying explanatory texts. You can then undertake further research into the artists and their art-making practices. Some exhibitions have a published catalogue that you could purchase or an online catalogue. Either might include artist or artwork profiles. These encounters can become significant stimuli for your own art-making inquiries.

Your art teacher will always be your best resource throughout the course, but they will not be an expert in all aspects of art-making. You may find that your teacher has limited experience in a form or medium that you are interested in. In a larger school with a larger faculty of art teachers, your teacher may be able to direct you to a colleague who can help. In a smaller school, this might not be possible. Sometimes, what you want to do may be outside what is safely or practically possible given the constraints of expertise or resources available in your school. This is not unusual. Together with your teacher, you may be able to find an alternative process, using different materials that give you similar results.

ATL Research skills

Most libraries use the Dewey system for organizing and cataloguing resources. Books on the visual arts are found on the 700-numbered shelves, from 701 to 779. The technical manuals are grouped at the start of each form, usually on the shelves that end in the number 1. For example:

- 731 Processes, forms, subjects of sculpture
- 741 Drawing and drawings
- 751 Painting techniques, procedures, equipment, materials, forms
- 761 Printmaking, relief processes (block printing)
- 771 Photography, computer art, cinematography, and videography techniques, procedures, apparatus, equipment, materials.

▲ Figure 2.2 Your teacher will support you in your art-making inquiries

Key term

Support: a surface used when carrying out two-dimensional art-making forms, such as drawing or painting.

Activity

Once you have settled on a medium for your work, the best method of getting to know the medium is through playful, intentional experimentation. Your final intended artwork should never be the first time you have used a particular material or technique. Dedicate some time to becoming familiar with the properties of the forms and media you have available to you. These experiments will become a treasured part of your visual arts journals, where they become a personal resource to refer to as you consider future artworks. They could also add value to your inquiries portfolio.

As you experiment, aim to discover the specific properties of the materials. What are their strengths and limitations? How will these contribute to realizing your artistic intentions? Consider all the possible alternatives that you can think of with the materials. For example, if exploring painting, consider:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of paint?
- What media can be added to the paint and to what effect?
- What different **supports** can you paint on and how does that change the way the paint performs or behaves?
- What styles and techniques can you use?
- What are the different tools that you can use to apply the paint and to what effect?

These mini-inquiries could result in a rich exploration of the materials, providing you with a wealth of evidence to draw upon when it is time to curate your inquiries portfolio. It will also help you to gain a repertoire of skills that you will be confident using to create an artwork.

▲ Figure 2.3 Drawing presents a range of accessible media including graphite (pictured), charcoal and pastels

You can find more discussion about drawing in Chapter 1: Lines of inquiry.

Key term

Graphics: the group name for visual design-based forms of art, covering architectural, fashion, interior, product and graphic design, as well as illustration.

Two-dimensional art-making forms

When you work in a two-dimensional art-making form, you typically work on a flat surface that is defined by length and width. Such surfaces are commonly referred to as the support and are most often envisaged to be viewed on a wall. Traditional supports that have been used throughout history have included walls, timber boards and panels, as well as paper and textiles such as canvas, linen or silk. Two-dimensional art-making forms that are created on a flat surface usually consist of drawing, graphics, painting and print-making, or a combination.

Drawing

Drawing is an art-making form that most students are familiar with. Popular media used in drawing include charcoal, ink, different types of markers, chalk, wax or oil pastels and various types of pencil, including graphite and coloured pencils. Digital drawing is also categorized within this form. It involves producing an image using computer-based applications, often using a peripheral device, such as a graphics tablet. The image is then printed using a giclée (inkjet) or laser printer on different surfaces, including paper, fabric and acetates.

Graphics

The art-making forms diagram (Figure 2.1) uses **graphics** as a term to group visual design-based forms together. It covers architectural, fashion, interior, product and graphic design, as well as illustration. Graphics are rendered on flat surfaces using manual materials, such as a marker pen or pencil on paper, or digitally, using computer-aided design (CAD) or graphics applications. The graphics can be printed using giclée or laser printers.

Painting

Painting is an art-making form that involves applying paint to a support, usually with brushes, although fingers, palette knives and sponges are also often used. Common painting media include acrylic paint, **encaustic**, **gouache**, oil paint, **tempera** and watercolour. Timber panels, stretched canvas, canvas boards, paper or walls are often used as supports. Another form in this category is digital painting. An image is produced using a computer-based painting application, before being printed using a giclée or laser printer.

▲ Figure 2.4 You can work in a range of paint media including acrylics, oils and watercolours, painting on a variety of supports such as board, canvas and paper

Key terms

Encaustic: a form of painting that uses heat to bond pigment and wax to a surface.

Gouache: a medium used in painting that takes the form of an opaque watercolour.

Tempera: a medium used in painting made of pigments and a binder, such as egg yolk.

Print-making

Print-making involves transferring ink from a **matrix** to a final surface, which is most often paper but can also be fabric. Conventionally, print-making allows multiple identical copies of an artwork to be made. This is referred to as an edition. There are also processes in print-making that create unique prints. These are often referred to as artist's proofs or "APs". The print-making form includes the processes of **intaglio**, **planography**, **relief** and **serigraphy**. The matrices used in each approach vary.

Intaglio print-making usually uses a metal matrix such as copper, aluminium or zinc plates, but also includes light-sensitive emulsions on metallic bases. Conventional intaglio print-making involves manually incising (cutting) the surface of the metal or using a chemical, such as an acid, to etch into the metal. Ink is applied to the incised or etched areas and the surface of the plate is wiped clean. This ink is transferred from the recesses of the plate to the support when pressure is applied through an intaglio press.

Relief print-making usually involves a linoleum matrix (referred to as a linocut) or a timber matrix (woodcut). In relief print-making, material is carved away from the surface of the matrix and it is rolled with ink. The ink is transferred from the surface (or the areas left in relief) to the support.

Key terms

Matrix (pl. matrices): a base or template of an artist's image from which a print is made.

Intaglio: a form of print-making that involves etching a metal matrix, such as a copper plate, and applying ink to the surface, which is transferred through a press.

Planography: a process where images are printed from a flat surface.

Relief: a form of print-making in which an image is carved into a linocut or woodcut and transferred by ink to another surface.

Serigraphy: a print-making form that uses a silkscreen to produce printed images.

Planography includes processes where images are printed from a flat surface. Lithography and monotypes are the most common examples of planography. Lithography is a process that relies on the principle that oil and water cannot be mixed. Greasy, oil-based inks and drawing materials are used directly on a stone or prepared metal surface and chemically treated. The printing surface is kept wet, and the water is repelled from the greasy image, so that when ink is rolled over the surface, the ink will only stick to the greasy image area. Ink is transferred from the plate to the paper when pressure is applied to the plate using a lithographic press.

A monotype is produced by rolling ink over an impermeable surface, such as glass or plastic. The artist works back into the ink, removing ink from the surface with brushes and rags to reveal the desired image. Monotypes usually result in a single unique image.

▲ Figure 2.5 A student inspects two intaglio test prints (referred to as artist's proofs)

Serigraphy is a print-making form that uses a silkscreen to produce printed images. An example of serigraphy is using papercut stencils to block ink from transferring through the silkscreen to the support that is placed under the silkscreen. Greasy drawing materials and stop-out varnishes can also be applied directly to the silkscreen to create images. Photosensitive emulsions (which react to light) allow highly detailed and even photographic images to be applied to a silkscreen.

Three-dimensional art-making forms

When you work with three-dimensional art forms, you will need to consider height, width and depth. Three-dimensional art forms can be created as **sculptures in the round**, where the object can be free-standing or suspended from the ceiling and the audience is free to move around it, viewing it from all sides. Sculpture can also be produced in **relief**, where the object protrudes from an otherwise flat surface. Where the projection from the surface is limited, such as the image on a coin or medallion, this is called a **low-relief** or **bas-relief** (pronounced "bah-relief") sculpture. Where the projection is significant, this is

Key terms

Sculpture in the round: an art form that is free-standing or can be suspended from the ceiling, so the audience is free to move around it.

Relief sculpture: an art form in which the object protrudes from an otherwise flat surface.

Low-relief/bas-relief: used to describe a relief sculpture where the image projection is low.

called a **high-relief** sculpture. Unlike sculptures in the round, a relief sculpture can be presented on a vertical or horizontal surface.

The art-making forms diagram (Figure 2.1) subcategorizes three-dimensional art-making forms based on the processes used to create them. These include **additive sculpture**, **cast sculpture**, **modelled sculpture**, **printed sculpture** and **subtractive sculpture**.

Additive sculpture

Additive sculpture is an art-making form in which the artwork is produced by adding or joining different components together using glues; hardware such as nails, screws, nuts and bolts; or welding. The components may be made of the same or different materials. Additive sculptures are often referred to as "assemblage" or as "installations" when the work is produced for a specific place (site-specific). They can be made from various media including glass, paper and fibre, plastics, textiles, wire and metal and wood. Found, ready-made objects could also be used; if you do this in your own art-making, remember to acknowledge that the objects are found rather than made by yourself.

Cast sculpture

Cast sculpture refers to the process of creating a three-dimensional reproduction of a prototype or model. This involves pouring a liquid or molten material such as acrylic resin, clay slip, molten metals, paper pulp or plaster into a mould taken from the prototype or model. It is allowed to harden and is then removed from the mould to reveal the final sculpture. Cast sculpture also includes the processes of slumping or drape moulding, where a plastic material (such as clay, plastic, plaster-impregnated bandage or glass) is allowed to drape or slump over a mould.

Casting in metals is not possible for most schools, due to the dangers of working with molten metals and the expense of the materials and equipment. But often, visual arts is about illusion or ***trompe l'oeil***. Casts can be made in safety, using pouring plaster or acrylic resin, which can then be painted with rust base or verdigris base paints. These paints have metallic particles that react with an oxidizing agent that is applied after the paint is dry. The result looks convincingly like rusting iron or patinized bronze. Rubbing graphite powder into a surface can create the appearance of lead, without the risk of lead poisoning.

Modelled sculpture

Modelled sculpture encompasses any sculptural process that involves the working of flexible materials to build up a three-dimensional form. The sculpture is often worked by hand, then wooden, plastic or metal modelling tools are typically used to further refine the work. A potter's wheel can also be used when working with clay, using a technique referred to as "throwing". The most frequently used media include ceramic clays, oil-based clays (such as plasticine), paper pulp, polymer clays and wax.

Printed sculpture

Printed sculpture involves any process of making a physical object from a three-dimensional digital model, typically by laying many thin layers of a material on top of each other using a 3D printer. 3D printing is becoming increasingly accessible as an art-making form in schools.

Key terms

High-relief: used to describe a relief sculpture where the image projection is high or significant.

Additive sculpture: an art-making form in which different components are added or joined together, such as using clay or welding.

Cast sculpture: a sculpture formed using molten metal, liquid plaster or plastic, for example, by pouring into a mould to create a three-dimensional shape.

Modelled sculpture: a process that involves the working of plastic or flexible materials to build up a three-dimensional form.

Printed sculpture: making a physical object from a three-dimensional digital model, typically by laying many thin layers of a material on top of each other using a 3D printer.

Subtractive sculpture: any sculptural process that begins with a single mass of a medium and involves removing material until the desired form is reached.

***Trompe l'oeil*:** French for "trick of the eye", for example when objects appear to be real in a painting.

▲ Figure 2.6 Modelled sculptures are usually created by hand

▲ Figure 2.7 Different 3D printers use different media

Printed sculpture is an additive sculpting process. But it is distinguished from other forms of additive sculpture in that the artistry is in the development and creation of the three-dimensional digital model using a computer-aided design (CAD) application. Possible media used with 3D printers include clay, metal, nylon and thermoplastics.

Subtractive sculpture

Subtractive sculpture begins with a single mass of a medium and involves removing material from the mass until the desired form is reached. Commonly used media include clay, plaster, stone and wood. Subtractive sculpture is one of the earliest forms of sculpture, with examples predating recorded history. Traditionally, wood- or stone-carving tools, such as gouges and chisels, are used to slowly remove the unwanted material to realize the desired form. Electric tools, such as a handheld rotary tool, have made subtractive sculpture processes much quicker.

Four-dimensional art-making forms

In the IB Diploma visual arts programme, four-dimensional art-making forms are used to describe any artwork where the dimension of time and motion is considered an integral part of creating and experiencing the work. This includes the fraction of a second captured by a camera, **kinetic** artworks that constantly move or change form, and works that create temporal or multisensory experiences. Art-making forms that can be considered four-dimensional in this context include **analogue** and **digital photography**, **ephemeral/temporal** art forms and **sequential** art forms.

Key terms

Kinetic: referring to movement. Some artworks move and can therefore be described as kinetic, but we also move around static sculptures in a gallery so we experience them kinetically, through movement.

Analogue photography: art-making forms that use light-sensitive materials to capture time and motion.

Digital photography: art-making forms that use light-sensitive sensors, such as those in digital cameras and scanners, to capture time and motion.

Ephemeral/temporal art form: artworks that only exist for a short or specific time, such as performance art, or are likely to change significantly over time, such as land art.

Sequential art forms: artworks that involve the audience over a specified time and involve motion. Unlike ephemeral art forms, they can be experienced repeatedly.

Analogue photography

Analogue photography encompasses art-making forms that use light-sensitive materials to capture time and motion through short and long exposures. Some processes use a camera (lens-based) and some do not (lensless). Analogue photography includes chemically developed black-and-white or colour photography, photograms (which could include cyanotype, chlorophyll and salted-paper processes) and pinhole photography. Most analogue processes require access to a photography darkroom and specialized chemicals and equipment.

Cyanotypes and some salted-paper processes can be prepared in a darkened classroom. They are then exposed to sunlight before being fixed in water in a darkened classroom. Chlorophyll photograms can be made on large green leaves. Objects or a negative image prevent sunlight from reaching the chlorophyll in the leaves, temporarily blanching the image into the leaf. The image can be captured permanently through scanning or with a photograph.

Digital photography

Digital photography refers to lensless and lens-based art-making forms that use light-sensitive sensors, such as those in digital cameras and scanners, to capture time and motion through short and long exposures to create imagery. This can be done using digital SLR and mirrorless cameras, computer-based photo-editing applications, scanograms and smartphone cameras.

Artists working with digital photography also need to make choices about how the work is presented. Digital photography can be presented to an audience on a screen. It can also be printed on a range of different supports. These include paper stock that is coated to resemble conventional analogue photographic papers in matt, pearl or gloss finishes, as well as watercolour and rag-based papers. Specially prepared fabrics for giclée printers include canvas, silk, cotton and organza.

Ephemeral/temporal art forms

Ephemeral/temporal art-making forms only exist for a short or specific time, such as body art, interactive installations and performance art, or they are likely to change significantly over time, such as kinetic and land art. This art form can expand our definition of visual arts and blur the boundaries between visual and performing art forms. The artworks often challenge the notion of the fine art object and the concept of art as something that can be bought and sold. They often recall ritualistic or ceremonial cultural expressions.

Tip

When you consider making ephemeral or temporal artwork for your IB Diploma, you need to consider at least two distinct audience contexts. The first is the audience who will experience the artwork first hand, while it exists in time and space. The second is the audience, including a potential examiner, who will experience your artwork in a documented form, such as photographs or a three-minute video. You must take this into account as you plan and develop your work.

Sequential art forms

Sequential art forms encompass artworks that involve the audience over a specified time and involve motion. They are distinguished from ephemeral/temporal art forms because the artwork can be viewed or experienced repeatedly, even if the experience may change with interactive work. Examples of sequential art-making include digital animation, interactive virtual-reality experiences, stop-motion animation, time-lapse photography and video art. It is important to remember that the course limits all video-based work to three minutes, duration.

Challenging the boundaries

The art-making forms diagram (Figure 2.1) is not exhaustive. Like any contemporary artist, you are encouraged to playfully experiment with the possibilities. You could push and extend the conventions of the art-making forms, approaches and media, or combine different media and approaches.

For example, painting is conventionally considered to be a two-dimensional art-making form. Paint, however, often has volume and mass. This mass can be increased with special media that are added to the paint, such as an impasto medium or modelling compound that allows you to almost sculpt with the paint. Three-dimensional elements could also be fixed to an otherwise two-dimensional support. But with painting, you could completely abandon a two-dimensional support and paint on a three-dimensional object. This object can itself be significant and loaded with meanings.

How do I choose the most appropriate media for my art-making?

As you begin to work as a more autonomous, self-directed artist, you will be faced with the decision about which form and medium to work in. Sometimes, the desire to work within a particular form and with a specific medium will be the starting point. This can be very valuable in the early stages of your development as you will learn the properties of the media and the techniques you can employ to manipulate the form. This develops the vocabulary or fluency of your visual language.

When you have a concept or idea you want to communicate to an audience, your choice of form and medium can be an important contribution to the successful realization of your artwork. Consider the form:

- Can I communicate my idea or concept within the confines of two dimensions?
- Would three dimensions be more effective?
- Do I need to convey my idea in a single image or would a series or sequence of images be more effective, viewed over time, as in an animation?

Consider the medium:

- Would my concept be better realized through a naturalistic or an expressive style?

Consider any possible conceptual associations that an audience might have with particular media. For example, a painting or drawing often reflects the hands-on marks of the artist, reinforcing the notion of the original, unique fine art object, while printmaking or some photographic processes can appear mechanical and challenge notions of originality (see also the metaphor creative strategy: metaphor of materials on page 52).

Tip

How do I evaluate my proficiency with art-making forms and media?

As you experiment with media or develop an artwork, pause to reflect on your progress. The following questions may be helpful in setting learning goals to develop your visual language:

- How does your artwork compare to what you imagined the work to look like?
- How does your artwork compare to the work of other artists who you have investigated?
- What aspects of your work do you consider to be successful? Why?
- What aspects of your work do you consider to be disappointing? Why?
- What qualities in your work reflect the unique properties or characteristics of the medium that you have worked with?
- What limitations were presented by the medium that you used and has it affected the outcome of your artwork?
- What do you need to learn before you can improve your skills?

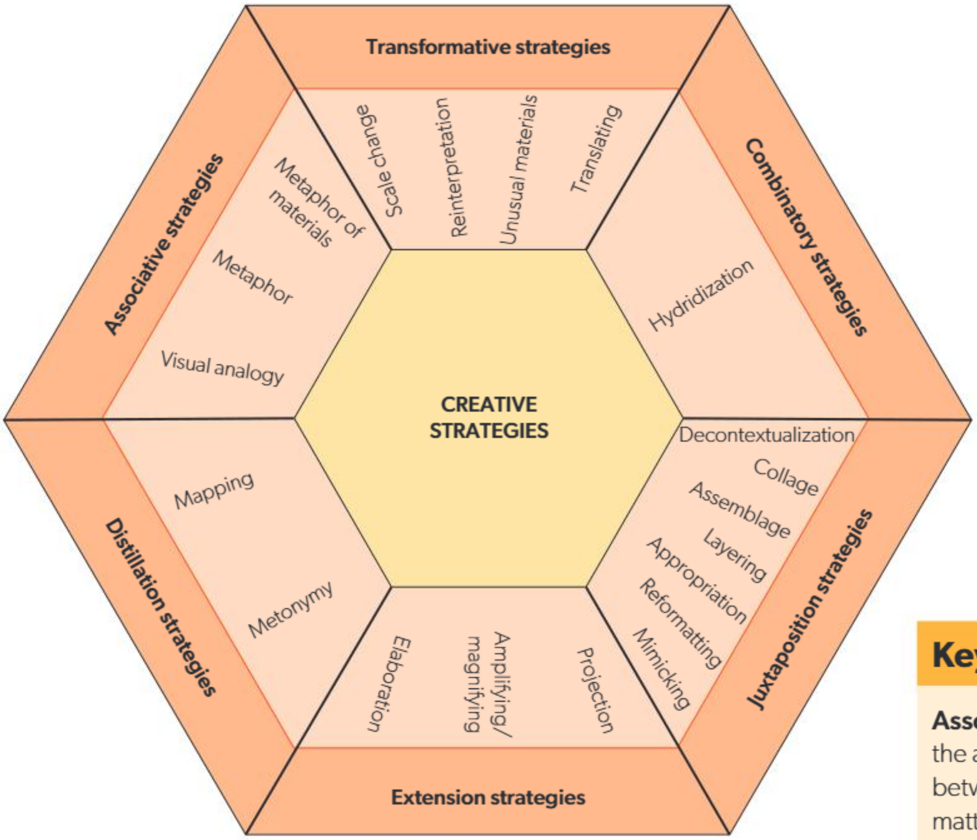
The last question will help you determine the next steps for your art-making inquiry.

What are the creative strategies?

The creative strategies are suggested art-making prompts that present a variety of possible approaches that you can use to start or develop your art-making. The strategies are informed by the practices of artists from the past and present to assist you in developing your art-making through creative-thinking processes. They are informed by the work of San Francisco State University art education professor Julia Marshall (1947–2022).

You can make use of the creative strategies framework at any stage of your art-making process. You could, for example, consider a creative strategy as a way to start art-making. You might find that the generative statements or inquiry questions you have developed for your art-making inquiry lean towards a specific creative strategy. Or, at the end of a creative process, you may feel dissatisfied with the outcome and use a creative strategy to explore a new direction.

The *Visual arts guide* encourages you to explore a variety of creative strategies in your art-making, but does not set a limit on them. The creative strategies represented in the framework are not considered to be exhaustive. Multiple variations of Marshall's work exist, developed in collaboration with art educators across the world. You could also use other creative strategies, such as musician and artist Brian Eno and multimedia artist Peter Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies: Over One Hundred Worthwhile Dilemmas* (1975) or Roger von Oech's *Creative Whack Pack* (1992). Both are sets of cards, with each card offering a challenging prompt that is intended to encourage lateral thinking and overcome creative blocks. You could also identify other creative strategies from the work of other artists and allow these strategies to inform your art-making practices.



▲ Figure 2.8 The creative strategies framework

The creative strategies framework outlined in the IB Diploma visual arts teacher support materials is presented in Figure 2.8. It presents the six categories of strategies that Marshall used: **associative**, **combinatory**, **distillation**, **extension**, **juxtaposition** and **transformative strategies**. Each category has between one and seven strategies associated with it. For each creative strategy, Marshall suggests an intentionally brief, open-ended thinking or art-making approach as a prompt. They are not intended to be instructional or formulaic. Rather, the vagueness is intended to permit infinite interpretations and responses. You are free to develop each prompt into a variety of possible artistic approaches.

Transformative strategies

Transformative strategies promote significant or complete change in an image or object. This set of four strategies is informed by the Russian Formalist concept of "*ostranenie*" or defamiliarization (Shklovsky, 1917). Defamiliarization is the creative technique of presenting common images or objects in unfamiliar or strange ways, giving audiences opportunities to perceive the familiar in new or different ways. Marshall's transformative strategies include **scale** change, reinterpretation, unusual materials and translating.

Scale change

Scale change involves altering the relative size of an image or object. Scale can be manipulated to change the visual impact of an artwork. Larger-than-life images or objects can promote a sense of awe. Life-size objects suggest familiarity and intimacy, while smaller-than-life scales can create a sense of empowerment.

Key terms

Associative strategies: involve the artist suggesting associations between images, objects, subject matter and materials. This might be done through metaphor.

Combinatory strategies: combining multiple elements to create new images or objects, new meanings or new forms and media.

Distillation strategies: involve extracting the essence from a complex idea or structure to highlight the most significant parts.

Extension strategies: involve elaborating subject matter, ideas and concepts to highlight meanings or to suggest or create new ones.

Juxtaposition strategies: incorporating two or more visual qualities, images or objects to emphasize contrast.

Transformative strategies: promote significant or complete change in an image or object.

Scale: refers to the size of an image or object, most often in relation to something else.

Case study

▲ **Figure 2.9** Oldenburg and van Bruggen exhibitied *Shuttlecocks* from 1992–1994

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen were collaborative artists, best known for their public sculptures, typically featuring larger-than-life replicas of everyday objects.

> “*Asked to create a large-scale project integrated into the setting of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, we traveled to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1991, prepared to transform the vast, imposing lawn that stretches before the massive neoclassical facade of the museum. While visiting the galleries soon after our arrival, Coosje was attracted to the headdresses worn by Native Americans in a painting by Frederic Remington, which led to our initial concept of large feathers scattered over the lawn as if dropped from the wing of a huge passing bird. As we proceeded to research the site, we came across an aerial photograph of the museum grounds that reminded us of the layout of a tennis court. We imagined the museum building as a net, with balls distributed over the grounds, but soon determined that the ball shape would be too repetitive. What if, as Coosje suggested, feathers were combined with the ball form to become a shuttlecock, a lyrical object, with the ability to float, spin, fly, and land in many different ways? We proposed three 17-foot-high shuttlecock sculptures for the lawn, each in a different position. Although their placement appeared to be random, the shuttlecocks were actually located at strategic points that would bring the far reaches of the site together. A fourth shuttlecock, in an inverted position reminiscent of a tepee, ‘landed’ on the other side of the museum.*”
>
> *Claes Oldenburg (1994)*

Reinterpretation

Reinterpretation involves changing your art-making technique, style or style of representation. You could consider how meaning might be constructed or altered by using reinterpretation in your work. You could experiment to see if the change could better realize your artistic intentions for your artwork.

When considering reinterpretation as a strategy in your work, you could consider artists such as Rembrandt and Van Gogh, who produced multiple self-portraits during their lives, representing themselves in different ways. Artists who reuse personal motifs or symbols in their work could also be helpful, such as the Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta’s *Silueta* series from the 1970s. She used silhouettes of the female form, based on her own body, in different landscapes.

Unusual materials

Sometimes, artists intentionally use unconventional materials that are not the expected forms and media of traditional art-making. The options are limitless. Unusual materials could include any wet or dry medium that can leave a permanent (or possibly impermanent) trace. You could use found or discarded objects.

Case study

Ackroyd & Harvey (established 1990) is an artistic collaboration between Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey, both born in 1959 in England. They have become internationally acclaimed for creating works that combine art, activism, architecture, biology, ecology and history. Themes referenced in their work include perceptions of memory and time, nature and culture, urban political ecologies, ecological degradation and the climate emergency. Their art-making practice often involves ephemeral, process-based artworks and art events. Processes of germination, growth and decay feature in artworks that respond to people and place. Their work combines their profound interest in local ecologies and global concerns.

Lille Madden / Tar-Ra (Dawes Point), Gadigal Land, Sydney 2022 was one of two of Ackroyd & Harvey's "photographic photosynthesis" works created for *Rīvus,* the 23rd Biennale of Sydney. Using germinating grasses as a light-sensitive material, they created two five-metre-high portraits. One portrait was of environmentalist and Australian First Nations (Arrernte, Bundjalung and Kalkadoon) woman Lille Madden (Figure 2.10) and the second of Uncle Charles "Chicka" Madden, her grandfather and a widely respected Gadigal Elder. The photographs were taken under the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which was built on a significant Gadigal land, known to indigenous people as Tar-Ra.

The materials used in this work are unusual. The process used, photosynthesis, is the biological process of green-leafed plants using sunlight to make energy in the form of sugars. A byproduct of the process is oxygen, which is released into the atmosphere. There was a deliberate choice by the artists to use these materials, which support their environmental concerns.

▲ **Figure 2.10** Examples of unusual materials in artistic practice: *Lille Madden / Tar-Ra (Dawes Point), Gadigal Land, Sydney 2022*, by Ackroyd & Harvey

Translating

Translating means transforming an image or object into a different form or medium. When you give physical form to your ideas, you are translating your thoughts into a visual language. You might begin considering which form or medium will best convey meaning effectively to your audience. As you review and reflect on your progress, you might conclude that an artwork is not reaching the potential you had hoped for. As a refining intervention, you might explore translating the idea, image or object through a different form or medium to see if this works better.

Translating involves engaging with creative and critical thinking to reformat ideas and better realize your artistic intentions. Translating does not always result in abandoning partially completed artworks. It could include a partial translation, where a form or medium becomes hybridized, such as three-dimensional elements added to a painting.

Combinatory strategies

Combinatory strategies involve combining multiple elements to create new images or objects, new meanings or new forms and media. They have been used in art-making since ancient times, for example the Ancient Egyptian representations of the gods with animal heads. Like transformative strategies, they find their origins in the concept of defamiliarization. Marshall identifies hybridization as the only combinatory strategy.

Key term

Ready-made: a term developed by Marcel Duchamp to describe manufactured items removed from their original context by the artist to become art.

Combinatory strategies were explored extensively in the Dadaist and Surrealist movements of the early 20th century, through the development of the rectified **ready-made**. These were existing objects that were altered by the artist, such as Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*. Meret Oppenheim's 1936 *Object: Le Déjeuner en fourrure [Lunch in fur]* (Figure 2.11) is a typical example of defamiliarization. The very familiar becomes very strange by covering an everyday cup, saucer and spoon in animal fur. Imagine drinking a cup of tea or coffee from that cup!

▲ Figure 2.11 Oppenheim, *Object: Le Déjeuner en fourrure [Lunch in fur]*, 1936

Hybridization

Hybridization can be explored in a variety of ways, drawing together objects and imagery from the organic and inorganic or from different classification systems, such as plant and animal. You could begin an artwork by presenting yourself with a generative statement as an artistic challenge, for example representing the human body using only car parts. As a refining intervention, you might consider choosing car parts that have a practical association with the body part they represent, perhaps using the fuel pump as a heart or the air filters for lungs.

Case study

Patricia Piccinini's diverse art-making practice includes drawing, photography, hyperrealistic sculpture and video. She hybridizes the physical qualities of different organisms into surrealistic, often humanoid forms or animal forms displaying human-like qualities or behaviours. Her work can be both compelling and grotesque, exploring the boundaries of the artificial and natural.

> “*My practice is focused on bodies and relationships; the relationships between people and other creatures, between people and our bodies, between creatures and the environment, between the artificial and the natural. I am particularly interested in the way that the everyday realities of the world around us change these relations. Perhaps because of this, many have looked at my practice in terms of science and technology, however, for me it is just as informed by Surrealism and mythology. My work aims to shift the way that people look at the world around them and question their assumptions about the relationships they have with the world.*”
>
> *Patricia Piccinini (2014)*

▲ Figure 2.12 from the Hope *Exhibition* is typical of Piccinini's hyperrealistic sculptural work

Juxtaposition strategies

The juxtaposition strategies involve incorporating two or more visual qualities, images or objects. The aim is to create contrast, suggest ideas that unify seemingly disparate things and/or to suggest new meanings. Marshall's juxtaposition strategies include decontextualization, collage, **assemblage**, layering, **appropriation**, reformatting and mimicking.

Decontextualization

Decontextualization involves changing the context of an image or object. In your art-making practice, as a generative process, decontextualization could involve taking the subject of your artwork and considering how different surroundings or situations alter the suggested meanings in the artwork. As a refining intervention, you might consider reworking an artwork or changing the surroundings or situation. You might consider placing the artwork in a different context and evaluate how this affects the meaning of the work or your audience's perceptions of it.

Collage

Collage involves **juxtaposing** images to develop or reveal a theme or concept that unifies them. There is an obvious overlap in collage as a creative strategy and collage as a two-dimensional art-making technique used in drawing, painting and print-making (often called chine collé). As an art-making technique, collage might be used to contribute a texture or an image to an artwork. For example, in the Cubist still-life compositions of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, newspapers were collaged into paintings instead of painting a representation of a newspaper.

As a creative strategy, collage emphasizes process over the end product, bringing imagery together to suggest new meanings. When using collage as a generative strategy, you might collect published images that relate to an idea or theme that you have identified in your generative statement or inquiry question. You could begin by placing contrasting images together, considering how they play off each other, implying meaning. As a refining strategy, you might consider adding collaged elements to a work to pose new questions or enhance the clarity of your intentions.

Key terms

Assemblage: when objects (often found from everyday life) are put together to create a sculpture, like a three-dimensional collage.

Appropriation: when an image or idea is taken from its original context and recycled by an artist in order to create new meanings or to subvert its conventional meaning.

Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* on page 65 (Figure 3.12) is an interesting example of the use of decontextualization. Turn to Chapter 3: Situating to read more about it.

Key term

Juxtapose: to place one thing against another to achieve contrast. In art, placing different images together creates new meanings or emphasizes the intrinsic qualities of each piece.

Case study

▲ Figure 2.13 Mutu's collage work *Double Fuse* (2003) critiques cultural appropriation and stereotypes

Wangechi Mutu is a Kenyan-American visual artist working between New York and Nairobi. Her work examines the violence and misrepresentation afflicting today's black women, as well as colonialism, globalization and consumerism. Mutu describes her process as an intellectual and actual vandalization of advertising images. In *Double Fuse*, she collages mass-produced imagery to create a pair of figures that resemble the black American-born French dancer Josephine Baker. Mutu is interested in Baker's use of African stereotypes. As a performer in France, Baker danced in a costume that reflected a European fantasy of African dress.

Assemblage

Assemblage involves juxtaposing objects to develop or reveal a theme or concept that unifies them. As with collage, there is an overlap between assemblage as a creative strategy and assemblage as an art-making technique. As a technique, assemblage involves using a range of three-dimensional materials to give visual form to an idea. As a creative strategy, assemblage prioritizes the process over the end product, bringing three-dimensional materials together to create new meanings. When using assemblage as a strategy, you might consider the meanings implied by objects and how, by bringing different objects together, you can create new meanings.

Case study

▲ **Figure 2.14** *Monaro* (1989) is an example of assemblage sculpture

Rosalie Gascoigne (1917–1999) was an Australian artist who worked predominantly in assemblage sculpture. Her work strongly connects to the landscape where she lived in rural Australia, recollecting her feelings and emotions. Gascoigne often used found materials that reflected the effects of being exposed to the weather in her art-making. She used faded timber drinks crates, aged domestic items such as torn floor linoleum, building materials such as galvanized tin, corrugated iron, hardboard and old reflective traffic signage. These objects made abstract references to the Australian landscape.

Monaro (Figure 2.14) was created using old timber drinks crates found at a local drinks factory. Gascoigne struggled to cut straight lines with a bandsaw, which resulted in the curved lines in this work. The half-legible black words contrasting against the bright yellow crates remind the audience of the reflective traffic warning signs that mark hazards along rural roads in Australia. The curved lines are suggestive of wind blowing over a wheat field before harvesting.

Layering

Layering as a creative strategy employs visual imagery that is superimposed over other images to juxtapose meanings. Each layer can add different levels of meaning to the image. When using layering, you need to consider how much and which parts of an image need to be clear and unobscured and which parts can be hidden or partially hidden. Which areas should be **opaque**, **translucent** or **transparent**?

As a generative strategy, you will need to make decisions about the forms and materials you use. Digital platforms will provide you with the greatest control over how opaque an image becomes. Considering different materials in other art forms will allow you to exploit their physical properties in your work. You could also think about working in a different mode. For example, you could borrow strategies from graphic design, as seen in posters or billboards. This could be a way of incorporating different physical and conceptual layers into your work.

Key terms

Opaque: cannot be seen through. Adding white to a colour will make it opaque.

Translucent: light can be seen through but detail is obscured, as in a stained glass window or a translucent glaze of paint.

Transparent: can be completely seen through, such as clear glass.

Appropriation

Appropriation involves using, reworking and recontextualizing an existing image or style to create new meanings. Appropriation as a creative strategy is more than copying and recreating an existing artwork. It is an intentional process where the artist wants the audience to recognize the original image, bringing all of their associations with the image to the new context, but wants to imply new meanings in its reworking.

As a generative process, appropriation begins with the source image. It requires you to think about how the image could be reworked to address a more contemporary issue or your artistic intentions. As a refining strategy, you could ask questions about how your intentions might be resolved by drawing upon the visual language and strategies that have been used successfully by other artists.

Case study

▲ Figure 2.15 *Sir No Beard* (2007)

Daniel Boyd (born 1982) is a contemporary Australian First Nations artist working in painting, sculpture and installation. Boyd's work parodies European Australian historical narratives by appropriating historic depictions of colonial heroes and representing them as pirates.

In *Sir No Beard* (Figure 2.15), Boyd appropriates Benjamin West's portrait of the botanist Sir Joseph Banks, who travelled with Captain James Cook. The title acknowledges the perception of local Aboriginal people that Cook and his crew were women due to their lack of facial hair. It also refers to Blackbeard, an infamous pirate. Boyd has given Banks an eye patch, which is often associated with pirates.

As in the source portrait, the man in Boyd's portrait is surrounded by cultural artefacts collected during his journeys. Among these, Boyd has included his self-portrait, as a decapitated head in a jar. This refers to the head of Aboriginal resistance fighter Pemulwuy, which was cut off and sent to Banks in England for his specimen collection.

Boyd appropriates West's portrait to expose the role Banks played in acts of cultural piracy and suppressing Aboriginal people.

Reformatting

Reformatting and mimicking are very similar to each other. Both refer to art-making that appropriates practices from areas usually considered outside the fine arts. Reformatting involves using a format or form from outside the visual arts, such as science. It is focused on the format or form the artwork takes.

You might consider if reformatting your work into a form that would not traditionally be considered a visual art would allow you to realize your artistic intentions. What if your work was presented as a television advertisement, billboard, cinema trailer, museum specimen or an archelogical artefact?

Mimicking

Mimicking uses methodologies from a non-art discipline. Unlike reformatting, mimicking is focused on a process rather than a format. However, mimicking often results in works that are reformatted or presented in ways that resemble the products of the chosen discipline.

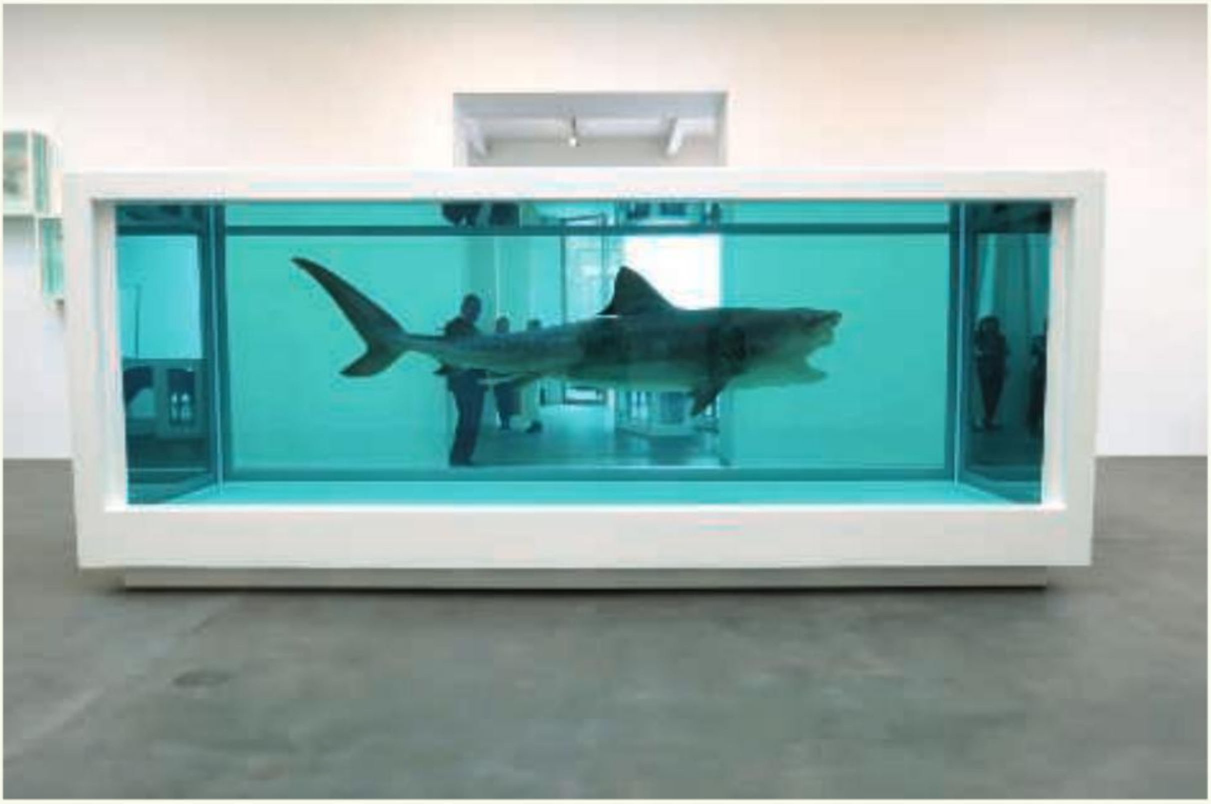
In your work, assuming the role of a curator, scientist, archaeologist, private investigator, cartographer or an athlete and using methodologies from their fields may be ways to develop your ideas.

ATL Communication skills

A visual language is like a spoken language. It can be learnt and understood. Visual literacy is the ability to understand, interpret and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image. Your visual literacy links to your understanding of imagery as a system of signs and symbols. Some meanings may be culturally specific, others developed by association, like the emotions we attach to certain colours or qualities of line. Exploring the expressive potential of different art-making forms, media and techniques is one way to develop your visual language fluency, while employing creative strategies will help you explore different ways of constructing imagery to convey meaning through your art-making.

Case study

In this 1991 work, British artist Damien Hirst presents a preserved tiger shark within a steel and glass display case (see Figure 2.16). The shark is suspended by wires in formaldehyde, giving it the appearance of swimming in an ocean. The title hints at the themes explored throughout his work: life, death and mortality.



▲ **Figure 2.16** *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991)

In creating this work, Hirst assumed the role of a natural history museum curator. He collaborated with taxidermists (who preserve dead animals) to ensure the long life of the specimen after the original shark decayed and needed to be replaced in 2006. The work is presented in a glass display case, a format that would be more familiar in the context of a natural history museum than an art gallery. This draws into question the relationship between art and museums.

Extension strategies

The extension strategies involve elaborating subject matter, ideas and concepts to highlight meanings or to suggest or create new ones. Marshall's extension strategies include projection, amplifying/magnifying and elaboration.

Projection

Projection takes ideas or concepts to logical or absurd conclusions. As a generative process, you can use a projection strategy to ask questions such as, "What would the world look like if …?" As a refinement strategy, you can consider what an audience would expect to happen next in your art-making. What would take them by surprise? Your work can become speculative.

Case study

▲ **Figure 2.17** *Yuka* (2000) is a work from the *My Grandmothers* series

Miwa Yanagi is a Japanese artist who works in still photography, moving images and performance art. Her photographs depict women through various stages of life in fantasy scenarios that comment on issues of femininity, consumerism and ageing.

In Yanagi's *My Grandmothers* series, she interviewed women and asked them to imagine what they expected to be doing in 50 years. She then created images to accompany the imagined accounts.

Yuka (Figure 2.17) depicts a grandmother riding in a motorcycle sidecar across the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. The image is presented alongside the text developed through the interview process. While humorous and surreal, Yanagi challenges assumptions about women and ageing.

Amplifying

Amplifying exaggerates something, making it larger than life. As a creative strategy, amplifying takes parts or the whole of a subject and exaggerates them for emphasis and meaning. An example is the prehistoric artefact the *Venus of Willendorf*, which was created 30,000 years ago and exaggerated the physical features of the female form, leading to the belief that it was a fertility talisman. Ancient Egyptian murals represented figures in different scales, with larger figures showing their relative importance over smaller figures. Caricatures, particularly in political satire, often exaggerate the size of an individual's prominent features, such as their ears. Ask yourself what amplification in your artwork might suggest to an audience.

Elaboration

Elaboration means adding more detail and further meaning. As a creative strategy, elaboration involves carefully arranging parts and details in an artwork to create sophisticated imagery that conveys meaning. Intentionality and care need to be emphasized. Overworking an image is a possibility and the meaning could become too obvious; the work could appear contrived.

As a generative process, elaboration considers layers of symbolism that can be developed in an artwork. While as a refinement strategy, elaboration might be used if the intention of an artwork is too obscure. You might consider what you can add to an image to further convey meaning to an audience.

Consider the example in the appropriation case study of Daniel Boyd's *Sir No Beard* (2007), Figure 2.15 on page 47. Artists will often use more than a single creative strategy in an artwork. The inclusion of the artist's self-portrait in a jar is an example of elaboration. How does this contribute to the layers of meaning in the image?

Distillation strategies

The distillation strategies involve extracting the essence from a complex idea or structure to highlight the most significant parts. Marshall's distillation strategies include **metonymy** and mapping. Distillation strategies demonstrate the power of the visual language.

Key term

Metonymy: replacing the name of an aspect of something with a word closely related to it, for example using "tongue" to mean "language".

Metonymy

Metonymy is a creative strategy named after a literary device. It uses a part or element of something to represent the whole. As a creative strategy, metonymy can be a visual or conceptual version of this practice, where a singular image that is derived from or associated with the subject matter is used to represent it in its entirety.

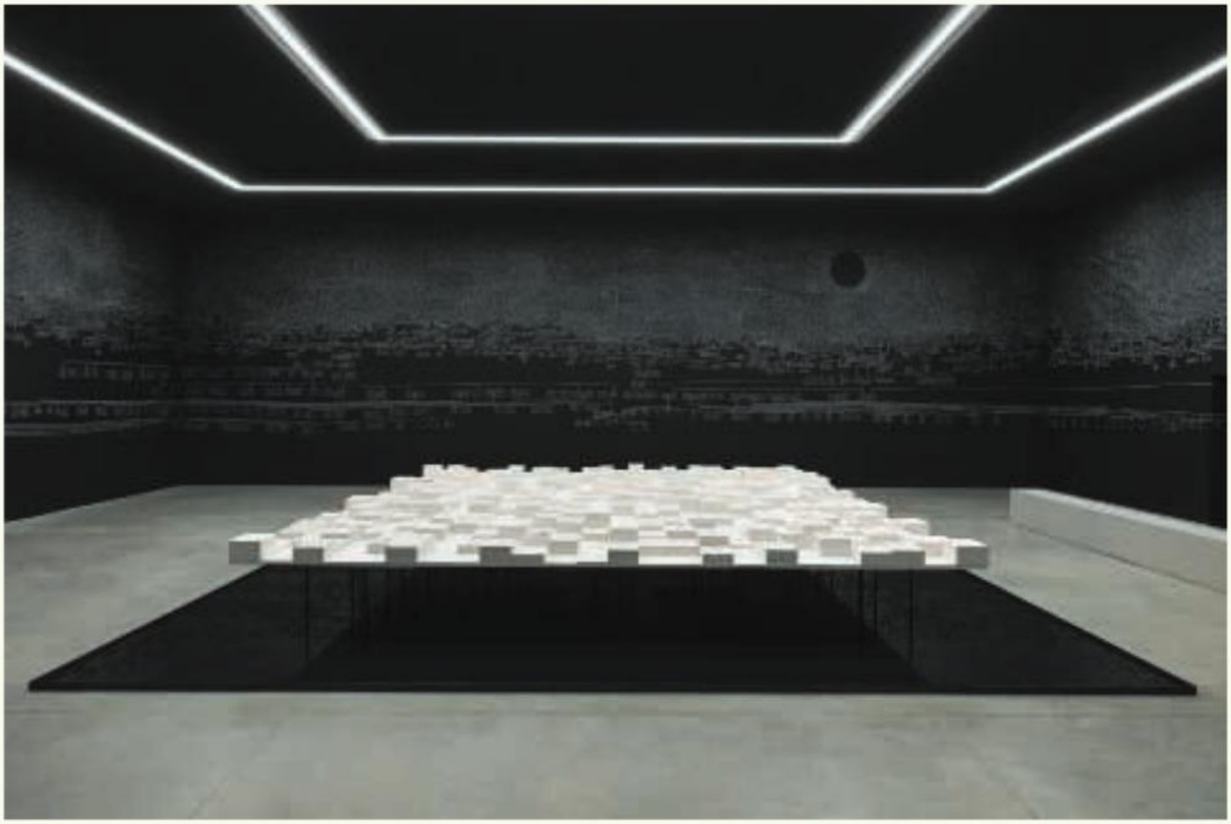
Marc Riboud's photograph of Jan Rose Kasmir captures the moment a young anti-Vietnam war protester stood up against the American National Guard during a 1967 anti-war march, presenting the soldiers with a flower. This singular image has come to represent the "flower power" peace movement of the late 1960s to early 1970s. Moving forward to 2005, street artist Banksy draws upon the same visual language in his work *Love is in the Air*. It is a black-and-white stencilled image of a masked figure hurling a bunch of coloured flowers towards an unseen enemy.

Mapping

Mapping involves organizing ideas, objects and images graphically. Artists have explored ideas graphically through maps and other visual organizers. Graphic organizers are used to convey complex ideas simply, such as a simplified map of a public transport system.

Mapping might emerge from your brainstorming, where you seek to make connections between a range of ideas. It does not need to be limited to static art forms; it could become time-based. For example, you might use a flowchart graphic organizer to develop an interactive artwork that presents an audience with choices that make each experience of the work different.

Case study



▲ **Figure 2.18** Moore skilfully varied the density of his map so that the text resembled the landscape in a vast panoramic view wrapping around four walls

Archie Moore's *Kith and Kin,* winner of the 2024 Golden Lion award, is a profound exploration of Australian First Nation histories and kinship. Hand drawing with white chalk on blackboard-like walls, Moore traced his Kamilaroi and Bigambul relations over millennia, connecting life, death, people, and places. A reflective pool in the middle of the installation served as a memorial for those who died in state custody, with redacted coroner's inquest documents symbolizing systemic injustices.

Associative strategies

The associative strategies involve the artist suggesting associations between images, objects, subject matter and materials. The associations might be ideas, themes or concepts. Marshall's associative strategies include visual analogy, **metaphor** and metaphor of materials.

Visual analogy

Visual analogy makes simple one-to-one comparisons. You have come across visual analogies throughout your schooling. They are a powerful tool for learning. We can use something familiar to make something unfamiliar easier to understand. For example, you might have been taught about the layers of the Earth by comparing it to a fruit. The skin of the fruit represents the Earth's upper crust, the flesh of the fruit is the mantle and the fruit's seed is the Earth's core.

Key term

Metaphor: an image that symbolizes a different idea or feeling is metaphorical. For example, Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* can be seen as a metaphor for idyllic rural life in the south of France.

Visual analogies can create more sophisticated imagery to better communicate your intention to an audience. You might begin with your original ideas and then consider different images or objects that have a similar structure, characteristic or function. As a refining strategy, considering alternative imagery based on analogies may make an image less obvious to an audience, encouraging them to think more deeply about your work.

Metaphor

Metaphors allow artists to create imagery with implied meanings. The imagery draws upon ideas and experiences that an audience is already familiar with. It asks the audience to consider these familiar ideas in a new way. When artists use metaphor as a creative strategy, it often causes the audience to consider the logic or idea behind the comparison.

Metaphor of materials

For centuries, artists have constructed objects or images from materials that have meanings in themselves. This is known as metaphor of materials. To some extent, all materials and objects have significance and can imply a meaning.

Artists have used objects in portraits to suggest qualities of a sitter's character or to assert their social standing. In still-life paintings, specifically the **vanitas**, objects were chosen to represent the briefness of life and the pointlessness of the pursuit of pleasure. In your art-making, you could consider creating an artwork using materials or objects that are loaded with a particular meaning. These meanings can range from the universal to the highly personal and **subjective**.

Key terms

Vanitas: a type of still-life painting in which specific objects are used to represent a theme.

Subjective: something that is informed by feelings, opinions and personal experiences.

Case study

▲ Figure 2.19 *Atrabilarios* displays odd shoes and pairs of shoes

Atrabilarios (1992–1997) is an installation by Colombian artist Doris Salcedo. It displays the shoes of women who have "disappeared" because of the actions of criminal and military organizations. Shoes are encased within niches in drywall, covered by a translucent membrane made of cow bladders, surgically stitched into the drywall (see Figure 2.19). Referencing forensic science, the shoes bear a physical trace of missing loved ones. The installation resembles a columbarium—a structure for housing urns of human remains. Salcedo's work explores themes of pain, loss and trauma, as well as the capacity of art to facilitate mourning.

Activity

Using art-making forms and creative strategies in your art-making practice

This activity is designed to demonstrate how a straightforward observational drawing task can be developed further by employing a creative strategy. It also provides opportunities for transitioning from one medium to another and from one art-making form to another.

Choose a familiar everyday object you could hold in one hand. The nature of the object is not overly important. It could be organic, such as a piece of fruit, or an inorganic object, such as a pair of sunglasses.

Now, choose two contrasting drawing media: one for precision or its ability to render a good likeness of the object, such as a graphite pencil or charcoal, and the other for expression, such as oil pastels.

Complete two drawings of the object from direct observation, one using each medium. Render the object as faithfully as possible. As you work, pay attention to the behaviour of each medium and make a note of your observations for your visual arts journal.

Using the transformative strategy of scale change, reimagine the object many times larger than life. Choose either a three-dimensional or four-dimensional form to realise the artwork. For example, you might carve the object from a block of polystyrene foam or construct it from scraps of timber and steel. You might use image editing software to take the object, enlarge it and install it in a garden or plaza as a piece of public art.

In your visual arts journal, reflect on your art-making, considering the effect that changing the scale of a familiar object has on the way an audience relates to the work.

▲ **Figure 2.20** The first drawing was completed using a woodless graphite pencil

▲ **Figure 2.21** For the second drawing, oil pastels on black cover paper were used

▲ **Figure 2.22** For the second part of this activity, the student made a cast of the apple in plaster of Paris in an alginate mold. It was painted with a Verdigris finish before being photographed and digitally manipulated into a photograph of the Venus de Milo taken on a visit to the Louvre.

3 Situating

What does "situate" mean?

This chapter provides you with the skills to **situate** your artworks and those of other artists. Art is not created in isolation, but is influenced by the contexts of time and space. If you are sitting up late at night listening to music and doodling in your sketchbook, the where, when and why of what you are doing becomes a part of the art you create. It is an expression not just of you and your **context**, but also your culture.

The *Visual arts guide* states that students are "expected to evidence how, as part of their art-making, they situate their own artworks and art-making, as well as those of other artists, in relation to context(s), audience(s) and communities of artistic practice" (IBO, 2025).

By situating your artworks, or those of other artists, you will learn how their meaning and significance has been impacted by context and culture.

Contexts are the surroundings, environment and atmosphere in which art is created and viewed; put simply, the "when" and "where" of art. Context can be seen as expanding from the personal—the artist or viewer—to their immediate surroundings, and then outwards from local to national, and beyond to the global. Context can also be evaluated both backwards and forwards in time. This can be done by considering what preceded the artwork and influenced its form, then focusing on the moment of its creation and how it was viewed in a contemporary context, and finally considering how it is seen by new audiences. Each audience's interpretation is influenced by their own context, as artworks are continuously redefined as they travel through time to the present.

We will first consider how to situate your own art-making. Then we will consider the importance of audiences and delve into what is meant by cultural significance and how you can apply this to your art-making. We will finish with the ways you can use research to support your investigation of "situate".

Activity

Mapping your connections

In your visual art journal create a spider plan of your interconnections as an artist. Map out the three domains: the artist (that's you!), your audience and your contexts. Place your art-making practice at the centre of the plan.

Now read the definition of communities of practice in the 'Social Skills' feature on page 57; this will help you to add the detail of both your audience and your context. Add the personal, local and global context for your art.

Read the section on cultural significance on pages 62–66 and refer to the Burra Charter; these will help you situate your art-making.

Your plan will be quite complex now. You might collage or sketch into it as well as annotating.

Highlight the pathways that connect audience to artwork and to you. Where are the connections clearest? Which of the connecting threads are culturally significant? Perhaps you could strengthen and explore these cultural links in your next artworks?

Key terms

Situate: the exploration of the connections between your work, the work of other artists and the context your work was created and exhibited in.

Context: the surroundings, environment, atmosphere and period of time in which an artwork is created and viewed.

Chapter 5: Connections study (SL) explores how situating will be examined in your work if you are taking the standard level course.

Chapter 6: Artist project (HL) explores how situating will be examined in your work if you are taking the higher level course.

Activity

Start sharing and pairing cultural signifiers with a friend by listing your preferences for dress, make-up, hairstyles, music and food. These might suggest how, even if you share the same school and friends, your upbringing, ethnicity and gender may have influenced your way of living in the world or your "habitus".

Then reflect on other forms of difference in how you live, such as language, beliefs, customs, kinship and celebrations. For example, how do you and those you live with celebrate birth, coming of age, marriage and death? Discuss this and consider which of these are important in relation to your judgements of visual art.

Key term

Objective: something that is informed by facts and evidence.

How do I situate my art-making?

You situate your artworks by considering the impact of contexts on when and where they were made and the connections between yourself, the artwork and audiences. So, a starting point is to adopt a questioning disposition. Ask yourself:

- "Where am I?"
- "What is the situation I find myself in?"
- "Where am I looking from?"
- "How can I define my cultural identity?"

We are all influenced by the values and beliefs we have grown up with. Think about your cultural identity and what makes you different to others. Reading the section in this chapter on cultural significance will help you to consider this. Remember that these differences influence the way you interpret the world, the art you are interested in and the judgements you make about it.

Where am I looking from?

Begin by considering the feelings and memories that make you unique. After all, many artists use the inner world of their thoughts and even their dreams as a creative stimulus. It can be difficult to define what makes our experiences unique and understand that our cultural identity defines our world perspective, as we tend to think of culture as referring to people other than ourselves. This is because we have taken on "ways of being" from the society we live in. These have become so habitual that we do not notice them any more. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called this "habitus", which he said becomes so much a part of us that "it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu, 1992). Making comparisons with other students is a way to see ourselves from outside and hence understand what kind of fish we are and the waters we swim in.

TOK

▲ **Figure 3.1** Cézanne used his art to situate himself in relation to how he sees

How do we situate ourselves when we look at objects? Can we define objects independently from our perception of them—how we observe them through the five senses? Our senses intermingle as we process our surroundings in time and space, influenced by our emotions. Philosophy has often preferred the **objectivity** of the sciences to the subjectivity of the visual arts, distrusting the transient qualities of light or colour. In his still life *Apples and Oranges* (Figure 3.1), Paul Cézanne investigates the tensions between the permanence of the apples and the changing ways he sees them. He is situating himself in relation to how he sees. Do you think that art can give a truthful representation of the world?

Where do I make art?

Consider the physical spaces where you create your art—the geographical surroundings and physical landscape, whether urban or natural. Art-making is often created in response to a place that has special significance to the artist. This might be through capturing the formal aesthetic qualities that impact consciousness, such as light and shadow falling across surfaces, a colour or the physical properties of a pavement or wall. The material qualities of our built environment contribute to our personal sense of place and become a part of our memories, as we link them to the emotions and events of our lives. How does your environment, the atmospheres and spaces that you live in influence your art-making?

The philosopher Walter Benjamin suggested that we "fashion a shell for ourselves" through the spaces we inhabit (Benjamin, 1999). As an artist, perhaps you have made a creative shell of the room you sleep in as a visual expression of your identity. This might be where you can make art privately, rather than on the kitchen table or in the classroom. Each of these spaces becomes your artist studio for those moments.

But maybe you also think about your art in other spaces, such as on the journey to school, in a café or maybe at the weekend or on holiday. These spaces may be intimate and private, allowing for introspection or the expression of your feelings in the art you make. Consider your relationship with time and space as you travel from your bed into your room, to your house or flat and then cross the doorstep to enter the external world of the street. Think about how you feel as you travel to your school buildings, through the corridors and then arrive at the classroom art-making space. These different spaces suggest different audiences, from family to friends to companions and then strangers. Each of these audiences bring a different viewpoint to your art-making. Each audience has a different expectation of art. These are formed from their contexts and their relationship to you.

For example, Isabelle reflects in her journal on how Janet Echelman's *Earthtime 1.8* (Figure 3.2) engages with audiences by writing, "I find Janet Echelman's work very applicable to what I want my sculptures to be. She is always conscious to interact with her audience. By making such immense works and strategically placing them in busy urban areas, the public interact and are absorbed by them in their day-to-day lives."

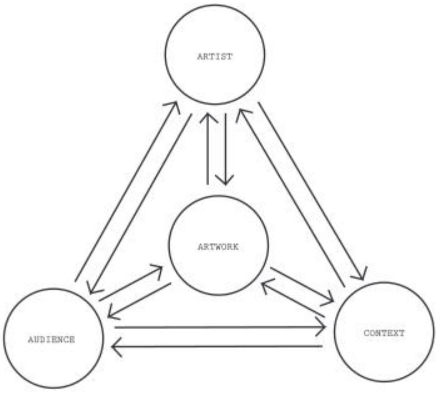
Audience

Even if your initial motivation is introspective, when you make art, the intention is to communicate ideas and feelings to others (to an audience), so making and responding to art is a social practice. Your first audience may be those you live with. It will certainly include your teacher and classmates. Each of these audiences will bring with them different expectations, opinions, and perhaps prejudices when they view your art. Remember that the spectator is never passive or neutral. They may be motivated to praise and encourage you, they might admire your art or they might choose to critique it. Their opinions may be coloured by jealousy or friendship.

▲ Figure 3.2 Echelman's *Earthtime 1.8* in Oxford Street, London

ATL Social skills

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a common interest in something and who learn about it from one another. In the visual arts, communities of practice means those who you share your art-making interests with. By engaging with the other students in your class, you can solve problems together. You can expand your community of practice beyond your school by sharing your art-making online or by making links with local galleries and art groups to give and receive feedback. You can drive your learning by interacting with others.



▲ Figure 3.3 Willats' socially interactive model of practice

TOK

Consider these quotations about the gaze:

"In advertising, males gaze and females are gazed at." (Fowles, 1996)

"Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at." (Berger, 1972)

"Women are depicted in a different way to men—because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him." (Berger, 1972)

Find adverts that illustrate these statements and others that contradict them. Discuss the intentions of the advertisers. Do the images manipulate their audience? Do the images make assumptions as to the values and viewpoints of the audience?

There are anonymous audiences too, such as those who see your art online or when you exhibit it in a public space like the school library, café or art gallery. These audiences have no knowledge of you as a person, so perhaps their opinions are more objective. The praise of a stranger might be worth more to your self-esteem than that of a friend or relative.

Thinking about your audience might influence how you make your art. You might set out to shock or disturb the viewer, or you may fear exposing the personal aspects of your art to those you know well. An artist communicates with an audience through artworks and the audience in turn reacts and responds. This social dynamic is modelled by artist Stephen Willats (Figure 3.3) and referred to in the *Visual arts guide* (Willats, 2012).

Each audience brings their own cultural baggage with them; they arrive with their own ideas and contexts that will influence the way they view art. So the audience, as well as the artworks and art-makers, can be situated through considering the impact of culture on their perspectives.

How an art audience looks at figurative images is sometimes referred to as the gaze. The term "the male gaze" was first used by Laura Mulvey, a feminist film theorist, to describe the objectification of women in visual media. It highlights how gender politics impacts an audience's viewpoint. The gaze is a way of considering the social power relationships between the observer and the observed. James Elkins' description of the different types of gaze you might experience when looking at a figurative painting in a gallery is a useful prompt when considering different audiences:

> *You, looking at the painting, figures in the painting who look out at you, figures in the painting who look at one another, figures in the painting who look at objects or stare off into space or have their eyes closed. In addition, there is often the museum guard, who may be looking at the back of your head, and the other people in the gallery, who may be looking at you or at the painting. There are imaginary observers too: the artist, who was once looking at this painting, the models for the figures in the painting, who may once have seen themselves there, and all the other people who have seen the painting—the buyers, the museum officials, and so forth. And finally, there are also people who have never seen the painting: they may know it only from reproductions ... or from descriptions.*
>
> *James Elkins (1996)*

Audience

My friends thought that I was making a self-portrait!

Audience

What my Great Aunt might have thought:

"In your sculpture I am heavier and more solid. You have exaggerated my features. I look younger. I am no longer dreamlike, beautiful and distant. I am no longer in the past but in the present – this is not really a sculpture of me but of yourself as me Isabelle?"

My ceramic portrait of my aunt

Personal Context

I am now, and she was then, a young woman. The photograph shows the 1920's style. In the 1920's women were shown as distant beautiful objects, as if she is dreaming.

1920's context fashion Sleek, glossy flapper style hair. Thin arched eyebrows

Artist

I am a young British woman in the 21st century but I wanted to situate myself in relation to my aunt as a young woman in the early 20th century and explore this part of my heritage. She emigrated to Australia when she was my age, and I recently left my home in Dubai for a school in England. I wondered how she felt so I chose a photo of her that was taken when she was 18. Imagining her context and feelings was a starting point for me to reflect on my own situation. The sculpture is from the photo of my great aunt above.

▲ Figure 3.4 Isabelle's thoughts on how she situates her artworks

Isabelle situates her artworks and herself in time and place (Figure 3.4). She reflects on where she lives, the origins of her family and how different audiences view her sculpture. She considers how the social freedoms for a young woman have changed since the early 20th century.

Evaluating the influence of other artworks on your art-making

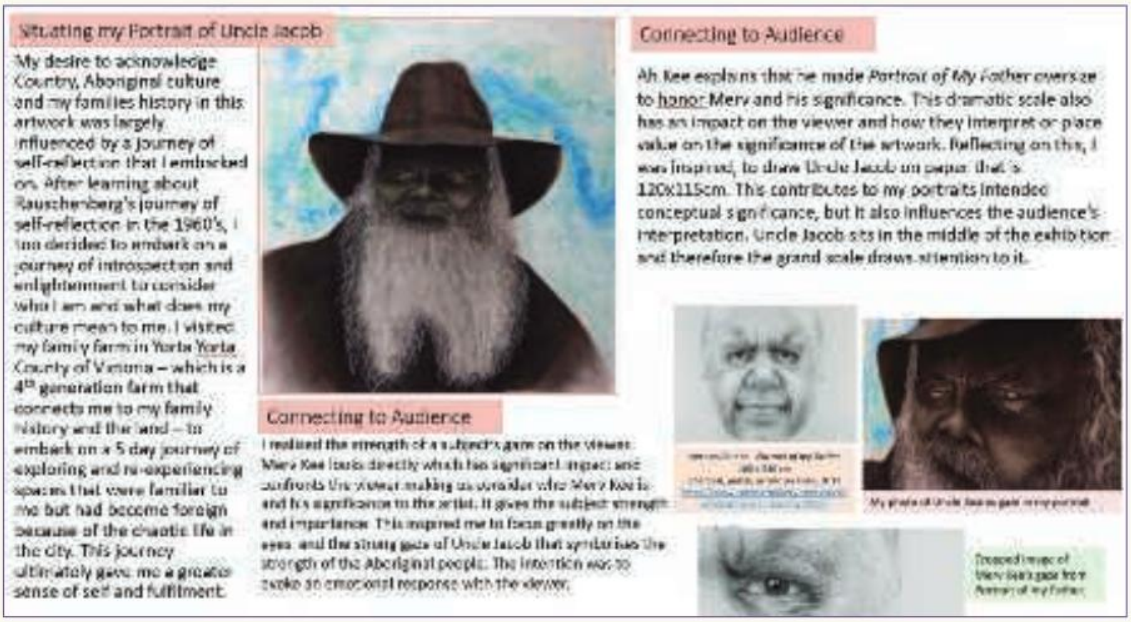
Artists transform and reinvent images in reaction to what others have done before or in response to their contemporaries. Some build on traditional practices, while others react against conventions. Whether you are **emulating** other artists or making a countercultural artwork, you will be situating your art-making in the context of other artists. To do this, you will need to evaluate how you have been influenced, which might have been though a shared technique, style or idea. You also need to situate the artists that have influenced you by investigating what influenced them.

Key term

Emulate: to copy an aspect of someone's work or be inspired by it.

Case study

In Figures 3.5 and 3.6, the student evaluates his line of inquiry, explaining how he has been influenced by the artist Vernon Ah Kee to "engage with the subject" of his portrait. At the same time, he contextualizes Uncle Jacob, a Nywaigi elder, in relation to the Tindale Collection and as "a symbol of the persistence and endurance of Aboriginal people, culture, and knowledge". He situates himself, as the artist, through recounting his journey of reflection from the city to his family farm. He discusses the personal contact he had with Uncle Jacob on a school trip and his response to "the wetlands of the Nywaigi country that flow into the Great Barrier Reef". He concludes, "My time on the islands gave me greater understanding of the significance that they hold in conjunction with the Tindale Collection." He also considers how his drawing interacts with an audience through scale and the powerful gaze of the subject.



Situating my Portrait of Uncle Jacob

My desire to acknowledge Country, Aboriginal culture and my families history in this artwork was largely influenced by a journey of self-reflection that I embarked on. After learning about Rauschenberg's journey of self-reflection in the 1960's, I too decided to embark on a journey of introspection and enlightenment to consider who I am and what does my culture mean to me. I visited my family farm in Yorta Yorta County of Victoria – which is a 4th generation farm that connects me to my family history and the land – to embark on a 5 day journey of exploring and re-experiencing spaces that were familiar to me but had become foreign because of the chaotic life in the city. This journey ultimately gave me a greater sense of self and fulfilment.

Connecting to Audience

I realised the strength of a subject's gaze on the viewer. Merv Kee looks directly which has significant impact and confronts the viewer making us consider who Merv Kee is and his significance to the artist. It gives the subject strength and importance. This inspired me to focus greatly on the eyes and the strong gaze of Uncle Jacob that symbolises the strength of the Aboriginal people. The intention was to evoke an emotional response with the viewer.

Connecting to Audience

Ah Kee explains that he made *Portrait of My Father* oversize to honor Merv and his significance. This dramatic scale also has an impact on the viewer and how they interpret or place value on the significance of the artwork. Reflecting on this, I was inspired, to draw Uncle Jacob on paper that is 120X115cm. This contributes to my portraits intended conceptual significance, but it also influences the audience's interpretation. Uncle Jacob sits in the middle of the exhibition and therefore the grand scale draws attention to it.

My photo of Uncle Jacob's gaze in my portrait

Cropped image of Merv Kee's gaze from Portrait of my Father

▲ **Figure 3.5** The student's reflections on his *Portrait of Uncle Jacob*

How Ah Gee's *'Portrait of my Father'* impacted my creative process

I realised that the process of creation is culturally significant. Ah Kee drew his portrait because the subject was personal for him. He wrote " I went to Palm Island and had a meeting with him and talked with him about the portrait and the project" (Ah Gee "My Father") I realised that I had to choose a subject that had a similar connection to me and who represented a community and the spirit they symbolise. This inspired my decision to draw a portrait of Uncle Jacob – A Nywaigi elder who I met on a school trip in 2022. He made as significant impact on my sense of self. And is a symbol of the persistence and endurance of Aboriginal people, culture and knowledge. Like Ah Kee I worked from photographs, and I immersed myself in Uncle's country to feel its strength. Country is referenced in the background of my portrait.

How Ah Gee's *'Portrait of my Father'* impacted my cultural connection to the Tindale Collection

I was able to learn that Uncle Jacob's family history is also connected to the Tindale Collection. Through my trip I was able to understand the lingering oppression that these islands hold. Studying Ah Kee's process provided insight into the dispossession of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders from colonists. It taught me to present and honour my subject by undertaking a portrait that engages with the subject and expresses their identity.

Example of photo of Uncle Jacob taken by me

Photo edited into black and white by me – to help draw in black and white. Inspired by Ah Kee's process

Photo (taken by me) of me working from photos I took of my subject like Ah Kee does

Photo taken by me:
My school group with Uncle Jacob on Nywaigi country.
See wetlands in the background of photo that inspired the abstract water colour in the the background of the portrait.

▲ **Figure 3.6** Situating the portrait

Evaluating how your own art-making has been influenced by other artworks is a skill that will be examined at several points in the end-of-course assessment tasks, which are explained in Chapters 4 to 7.

If you are taking standard level, in your connections study you will show how two other artworks have influenced one of your resolved artworks. If you are taking higher level, you will need to connect your project with two other artworks. Both tasks require investigation and an understanding of the cultural significance of the artworks you have chosen. In practice, you are likely to refer to dozens of artworks and multiple images that inspired and helped to develop your lines of inquiry. Ensure you develop your understanding of these connections throughout the course; don't leave it until you prepare to submit!

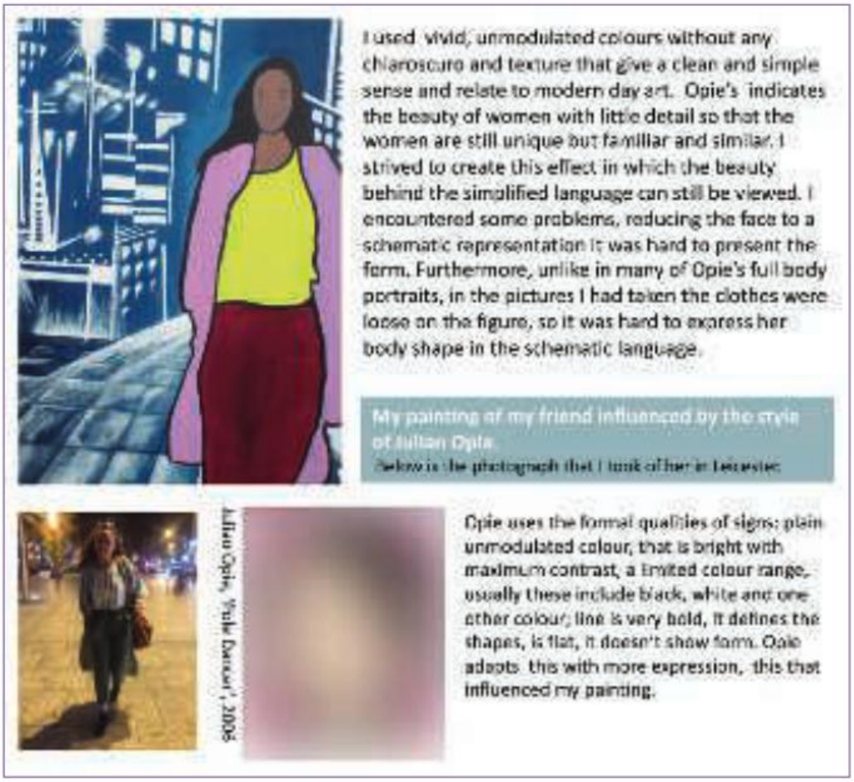
Consider the ways in which your own practice might be influenced.

- **Technique, materials and media:** artists are frequently inspired to change their working methods by seeing what others have done. Perhaps you were encouraged to change the scale, format or medium. Perhaps you began to use paint more freely. Or maybe you were inspired to be more accurate and attentive to detail.
- **Formal qualities:** are there connections in the approach to colour, light, form and texture? Look for similarities that you could demonstrate, for example if you started using saturated colours for the first time in response to a vibrant painting.
- **Concepts:** how do the ideas of other artworks link to your lines of inquiry? For example, there might be a strong political, social or environmental connection.
- **Cultural:** you might share aspects of culture with artists who inspire you or you might appropriate aspects of a cultural tradition to your art-making.

In Figures 3.7 (right) and 3.8 (page 62), two students reflect on their influences. In Figure 3.7, Emily details how she was influenced by the artist Julian Opie. In Figure 3.8, the student explains how Goya's portraits have influenced their own painting.

ATL Thinking skills

Use your visual arts journals routinely to note the connections with other artworks as they happen. Look for the reasons that made you select a work: was it a colour, an unusual or disturbing image or an impressive technique? What was it that caught your eye and how is it feeding your own art-making? Consciously analyzing your intuitive decisions will give you greater control over your creative powers.



I used vivid, unmodulated colours without any chiaroscuro and texture that give a clean and simple sense and relate to modern day art. Opie's indicates the beauty of women with little detail so that the women are still unique but familiar and similar. I strived to create this effect in which the beauty behind the simplified language can still be viewed. I encountered some problems, reducing the face to a schematic representation it was hard to present the form. Furthermore, unlike in many of Opie's full body portraits, in the pictures I had taken the clothes were loose on the figure, so it was hard to express her body shape in the schematic language.

My painting of my friend influenced by the style of Julian Opie.

Below is the photograph that I took of her in Leicester.

Julian Opie, 'Yuki Dancer', 2006

Opie uses the formal qualities of signs: plain unmodulated colour, that is bright with maximum contrast, a limited colour range, usually these include black, white and one other colour; line is very bold, it defines the shapes, is flat, it doesn't show form. Opie adopts this with more expression, this that influenced my painting.

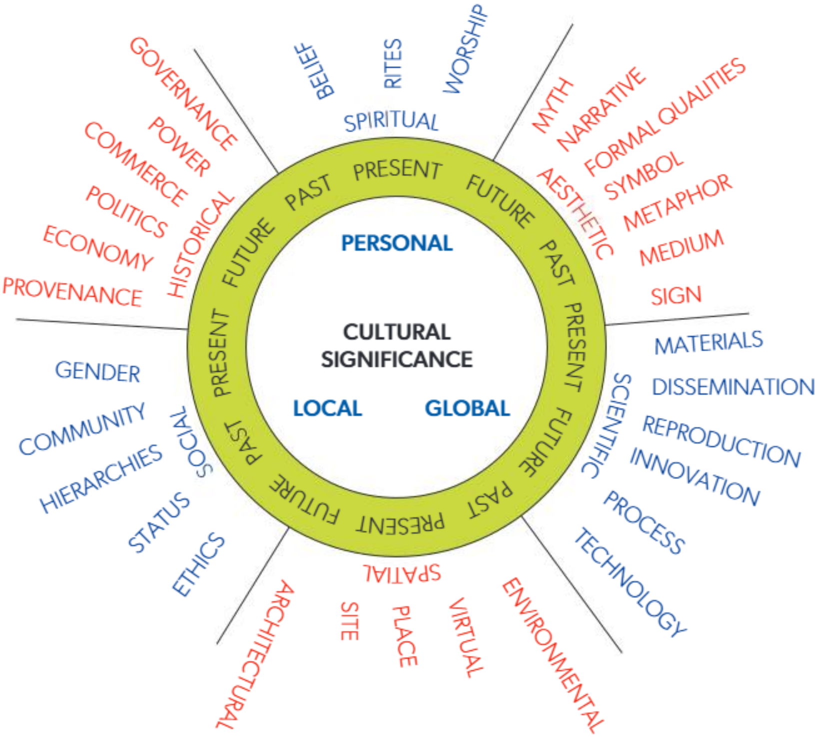
▲ Figure 3.7 Emily's thoughts on the influence of Julian Opie

Much like Hendricks captured the spirit of his subject through style 'Portrait of Kevin', my closest mate, radiates from the canvas exuding nobility and grace like the one of 'Lawdy Mama' an opulent touch aligns with the grandeur of religious icons.

Left: My portrait of Kevin.

The background ensures that the viewer's attention is held captive by the subject, yet not overwhelmed by excessive detail. I've adopted a similar strategy in my works, ensuring that the distribution of visual weight remains harmonious, allowing for the artwork to breathe and the viewer's gaze to flow naturally. Goya had a knack for capturing his subjects in a manner that exuded a sense of grace, dignity, and confidence. Taking inspiration from this, I focus intently on the expression of the subject. A slight tilt of the head, a gentle curve of the spine, or the positioning of the hands can speak volumes about a subject's character and state of mind. In my artwork, the subject exudes an aura, achieved by imitating the graceful postures seen in Goya's subjects

▲ Figure 3.8 This student reflects on Goya's influence



▲ Figure 3.9 The six aspects of cultural significance

Cultural significance

Contexts are linked to cultural factors, that is, the way people live in a particular time or place. To analyze these, it is helpful to use the description of cultural significance from *The Burra Charter*, which is referred to in the *Visual arts guide*. *The Burra Charter* was written to identify the principles of Australian heritage and defines cultural significance as "aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations" (*The Burra Charter*, 2013). These areas, as well as the spatial area, are presented in Figure 3.9 as a prompt to evaluate the cultural significance of artworks. We will outline these six areas so that they can act as prompts for analysis. We will also apply this framework to situate example artworks by well-known artists and consider how to use these prompts to evaluate the cultural significance of your own art-making.

Aesthetic cultural significance

We all hold differing ideas of what is beautiful, and these values change through time and across cultures. For example, Van Gogh's colours were seen by many of his contemporaries as crude, whereas modern audiences tend to understand the expressive and symbolic value he intended when he said, "I have tried to express the terrible passions of humanity with the red and the green" (Van Gogh, 1888).

The appropriation by others of artefacts that have an aesthetic cultural significance for a people may be viewed as transgressive and can cause us to reflect on how images are used to subvert or to exert power.

Aesthetics also encompasses the use of sign, symbolism and metaphor. Yuval Noah Harari suggests that it is the power of the human imagination that enables us to represent shared ideas and collective actions symbolically. He uses the example of Peugeot's lion motif to demonstrate how a sign can represent a collective enterprise, such as a car company. This is a modern example of the way cultural symbols are used to unite a group of people in a shared endeavour. This use of symbols has always existed in human societies (Harari, 2015).

We might extend this reflection on the cultural symbol of a lion to consider that not only is it a sign which unites, but it also acts as a metaphor for abstract qualities, such as bravery or the power of nature. An image often replaces the body in our memories. An example is portraiture, when a photograph transcends time, as demonstrated by their importance in cultural celebrations of rites of passage such as birth, marriage or death.

Aesthetic cultural significance also refers to the ways art is used to relate myth and stories. As Gerald McMaster explains, "Prior to scientific discourse, societies all over the world devised narratives of creation, resurrection, and complex systems of supernatural beings, each with specific powers, and stories about their actions. Throughout the world, myths provide people with explanations, histories, role models, entertainment, and many other things that enable them to direct their own actions and understand their own surroundings" (McMaster, 2009). All societies have used visual symbols and metaphors to tell myth and story, to represent the intangible and embody beliefs, as shown in the ancient artwork in Figure 3.10.

Scientific cultural significance

Scientific or technological significance refers to how innovation affects art. Some examples are changes in the materials and processes of art-making, such as the development of pigments and paints, the invention of the printed image and the many ways of reproducing and distributing images, such as analogue and then digital photography. Imagine the power of an image before there was any means of reproduction, as when Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* could only be viewed by a select audience: the owner, Francis I of France, and his guests.

Walter Benjamin reflected on the impact of the distribution and copying of art and on ideas of authenticity in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production* (Benjamin, 1935). He suggested that the original artwork retains an "aura" that has a greater power than its copies. "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (Benjamin, 1968). As a modern audience, we might consider whether there is such a thing as an original for a digital work of art that can be infinitely reproduced.

Key term

Aesthetic cultural significance: the nature of beauty and the meanings we bring to the formal qualities of art, such as colour, form and space.

▲ Figure 3.10 Ancient San rock art, Western Cape, South Africa

TOK

Is the gendering of colour culturally determined?

For example, the German artist Philipp Otto Runge associated warm, yellow-orange colours with the male and cool, blue colours with the female (Gage, 1999).

In pairs or small groups, discuss this topic and share examples of colour gendering from your experience.

Key term

Scientific or technological cultural significance: how innovation affects art, changing the processes and ways of reproducing and distributing images.

Scientific and technological changes also impact the interpretations of artist and audience as they change the way we see the world. A familiar example is how time-lapse photography first recorded the movements of a horse's legs as it galloped, overturning artists' mistaken beliefs about how they moved. The philosopher Henri Bergson suggests that we only see with our conscious minds what we already understand intellectually or scientifically, as our minds ignore visual information that does not fit our mental picture of the world. So science shapes our cultural vision and has a direct influence on how we see the world.

Historical cultural significance

Situating artworks in a historical context reveals the relationship of images to the changing forces of power and economy. Artworks are commissioned or bought, sold and traded, and they have commercial value. Economic factors also impact the production of artworks. They are often produced in areas of wealth and trade, such as Rembrandt's Amsterdam in the 17th century or Jackson Pollock's New York of the 20th century.

Artworks are also used by governments to impose ideology or exert power; consider how they are used as propaganda or, conversely, how often they are censored. Gathering together a conquered people's cultural artefacts in museums happens in many nations. We might question whether ethnographic museums preserve past cultures or destroy them by taking artefacts away from their true context. The impact of colonialism on the original cultures of a people is described by Antonio Gramsci as "cultural hegemony", which is when a ruling power imposes a set culture on a culturally varied people to control or dominate them (Bullock, 1999). This is evident when a dominant group in a society enforces its authority with images that demean through racism and sexism. It is a subject that has been explored by many contemporary visual artists and is an important theme in modern art criticism.

Key terms

Historical cultural significance: the impact that historical events have had on the creation and perception of an artwork through time.

Provenance: the record of all the owners of a work of art since it was created.

Following the journey of an artwork through time is an effective way to trace changing cultural significance, as in the example of Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*. The portrait can be situated in the context of early 20th-century Vienna, when it was commissioned from Klimt by Adele's Jewish husband, Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer. It is an example of the sophisticated aesthetic of Klimt's golden style and of his cultural influences. However, following the story of the painting through time and across continents adds **historical cultural significance** for a modern audience.

▲ Figure 3.11 Maria Altmann, niece of Adele Bloch-Bauer, next to a reproduction of Klimt's painting of her aunt

Provenance refers to the record of who has owned a work of art and it can be found on museum websites. Researching provenance will help you to situate an artwork in relation to the differing audiences who have viewed it. For example, the Neue Galerie in New York lists the provenance of Klimt's portrait as follows: "Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer, acquired from the artist in 1907, until seized by the Nazis, autumn 1938. With Dr Erich Führer, Vienna, by 1939; Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna, inv. no. 3830, 1941. Heirs of Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer, restituted by the Republic of Austria, 2006. Neue Galerie New York, 2006, acquired from the above" (Neue Galerie, 2024).

From this provenance, we can trace the story of Klimt's painting after it was commissioned. During the persecution of the Jews in the 1940s the Bloch-Bauer family fled. The painting was stolen by the Nazis and then transferred to the Austrian national gallery, the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere. In 1998 an investigative journalist, together with Adele's niece, hired a lawyer and, after a long legal battle, in 2006 an Austrian arbitration panel agreed that the painting should be returned to her.

Spatial cultural significance

In the introduction to this chapter, we considered how art might be situated in a space which expands from the locality of the artist and artwork, outwards to a global context. Consider the natural environment as a setting for art, as is the case for much ancient art but also for land art and sculptures in a park. Or the street artist who appropriates disaffected urban spaces, such as underpasses, subways and train sidings, or who intervenes in commercial or public spaces through the subversion of advertising. Traditionally, artwork is placed in a physical space such as a gallery, home, exhibition or installation, or a place of worship or public square. Each of these bring into consideration different styles of architectural space that will also influence how the audience interacts with the art.

You might consider the **spatial cultural significance** of these locations and how an object's function and significance change when it is exhibited in a special place.

Key term

Spatial cultural significance: how the architecture or environment where an artwork is located influences how the audience interacts with it.

What makes some objects art? Why do we place artefacts in museums and how does this change the way we view them? Who chooses them and why? Placing objects in museums open to the public is a relatively new cultural practice dating from the 19th century, when there was a preference for rich surroundings, ornate gold frames and expensive wall coverings to create a sense of value. In contrast, Modernism prefers clean white spaces and more recently, Postmodern display favours a mixture of styles. In the 21st century an artwork is also reproduced and disseminated in electronic forms on monitors and in virtual spaces, so it can be experienced by a global audience.

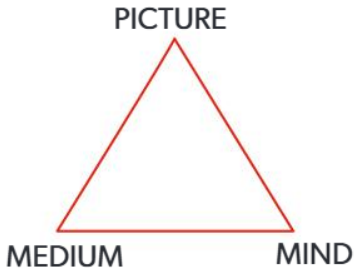
When museum and exhibition curators select, place and juxtapose artworks, they create new meaning. They decontextualize the object. Sometimes the curation of the object in this new space is organized to suggest the original context to the visitors through accompanying videos or related images. In the 19th century, exhibits were often part of rich dioramas reconstructing the object's original situation to evoke romanticized interpretation. Nowadays, a modern audience relies on accompanying labels and text to understand the original context.

Decontextualization is also a creative artistic process that suggests new ways of seeing and interpreting objects or even questions the values of the audience, museum or art practice itself. Visitors to a modern art exhibit often hope to be surprised or even shocked by what they see; in visiting an exhibition they are seeking out the new ways of viewing images and artefacts that the decontextualized space of a gallery can provide.

Marcel Duchamp famously played with the expectations and values of an art audience when he decontextualized a urinal. Removed from its original, utilitarian context, he inverted it, placed it on a pedestal, signed it "R. Mutt", titled it *Fountain* and submitted it for an art exhibition. He suggested through his act that a urinal became a work of art because of the intervention of the artist (see Figure 3.12). Situating an object in an art gallery or museum transforms the relationship between the artwork and audience. We look at objects differently because we arrive with the expectation of a new experience. The surroundings

▲ Figure 3.12 Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917 of the neutral white space of a modern gallery create this special atmosphere, where the audience tends to show the respect of those visiting a shrine or place of worship.

Our consciousness is a space occupied by images too. Think of the mental visions that exist in your mind and in your dreams and are created in your imagination. These are spaces occupied by pictures from both our personal and collective memories that transcend the physical. Hans Belting presents this exchange between mental and physical images as a triangle (Figure 3.13), where the medium, whether new or ancient, transmits the picture to the mind (Belting, 2011).



▲ Figure 3.13 Belting's illustration of the transmission of pictures to the mind

Key terms

Cultural anthropology: the study of different peoples and their ways of living.

Social cultural significance: the impact of different ways of life on the creation and perception of artworks.

Social cultural significance

Cultural anthropology is used to understand the social functions of artworks in societies, such as to bind peoples together, establish group identity, represent nation or ethnicity, demonstrate norms of behaviour or enforce relationships of power and authority. Art of the modern era has often been a means to subvert and challenge the cultural norms and traditions that societies impose on individuals.

Artworks are not passive; they are active objects that are shared, exchanged and consumed. They can be a focus of group ritual and celebration. Art also defines the social role of the individual, as is evident in the many cultural signifiers of gender or status. These signifiers are particularly evident in how we present our bodies, through clothing and make-up. This could be with uniforms and the accepted codes of formal dress or the more informal expressions of fashion that signal our individuality, status or affiliation to a group.

▲ Figure 3.14 How we choose to present our bodies is a statement of **social cultural significance**

Spiritual cultural significance

Humans, unlike animals, give symbolic power to images. The art historian Ernst Gombrich illustrates this by asking us to imagine poking a needle through the eyes of a photographic portrait (E.H. Gombrich, 1953). Why does this feel different to poking the needle elsewhere on the image? Because of the power of images, some religions make them the focus of worship or destroy images that offend their religious beliefs. Many artefacts in museums had **spiritual cultural significance** to the peoples from whom they were taken. Investigating the original purpose of artefacts reveals how these meanings have been erased by situating them in the neutral space of a museum.

Key term

Spiritual cultural significance: the impact of spiritual or religious beliefs on the creation and perception of artworks.

Situating art in time

In the past, art in museums was hung in chronological order. This has increasingly been replaced by thematic displays that juxtapose times and cultures to create new meanings. This matches how a modern audience consumes images in books and online: in a way that is fast, furious and eclectic. It is as if for the contemporary art audience, "past, present, and future are always present within us and that all three enlighten and influence our experience of the present" (McMaster, 2009).

Presentism

Presentism is the inappropriate application of current thinking to works of the past. Values, norms, beliefs and the understanding of society are in constant flux, and contemporary positions on issues such as gender, equality, ethics and the environment are very different to those of history. Reflecting on how you, your parents or grandparents differ on a current issue is a way of recognizing that views change over generations.

You may challenge historical views, but try to avoid **anachronism**—being out of place in time—by attributing your present-day values and interpretations to past artworks or artists. Beware of imposing the modern ideas of individualism, freedom, and equality on artworks situated in very different contexts. Be careful to consider the economic or social constraints of the time, and remember that technologies and knowledge have changed how we understand the world.

Key terms

Presentism: the inappropriate application of current thinking to artworks from the past.

Anachronism: taking or using something out of the context of its own time.

Case study

▲ **Figure 3.15** ***Nelson's Ship in a Bottle*****, Trafalgar Square, 2010**

Yinka Shonibare's installation *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle* (Figure 3.15) is an example of how researching context deepens our understanding of the cultural significance of an artwork. By situating this sculpture and its audiences in the cultural contexts of time and place, we see how the artist has used metaphor and symbol to give meaning. The location is significant, as Trafalgar Square in London celebrates a British naval victory led by Admiral Lord Nelson in 1805. His statue stands on the top of the column in the square.

Lord Nelson was a supporter of slavery and British colonialism in the West Indies, hence the historical significance of where Shonibare has situated his artwork. He is interested in awakening the audience to Britain's colonial past. The artist's personal context is significant as his own parents emigrated from Nigeria, which was a British colony until 1960. The sculpture is in a public, secular space, visited by over 4 million people a year from all over the world.

Shonibare has placed a replica of Lord Nelson's ship HMS *Victory* in a giant glass bottle, a reference to the folk art of sailors. He has replaced the sails on the boat with wax-print textiles. This type of fabric was produced in the Netherlands, but is inspired by Indonesian batik patterns and sold in West Africa. The mixture of places that contributed to the fabric echoes Shonibare's own identity, as both a British and African artist. This underlines the idea that cultural symbols are not straightforward or simple. The work has significant aesthetic and material context.

How to apply situating to your art-making

As you follow lines of inquiry in your practical art-making, you will be influenced by other artists' work. These might be intuitive choices—connections don't always need to be rational or premeditated—or your teacher might suggest works to help your development of concepts or techniques. To deepen your understanding of these works, you need to apply some of the suggestions from this chapter. Your aim is to create artworks, communicate to audiences and make connections.

Look at the following examples. Each student has taken a different approach to situating their art-making and evaluating cultural significance in relation to their influences. Remember that these are isolated excerpts from their lines of inquiry. You don't need to engage with all aspects of the practice of situating all the time, just when it is meaningful to your art-making. You might start your evaluation by placing the artwork in time and place, both past and present. Then use the cultural significance diagram and these four guiding questions as prompts:

- What is the cultural significance of the artwork?
- How does this artwork connect to my art-making?
- Are there links to my cultural context?
- How does the artwork impact the audience?

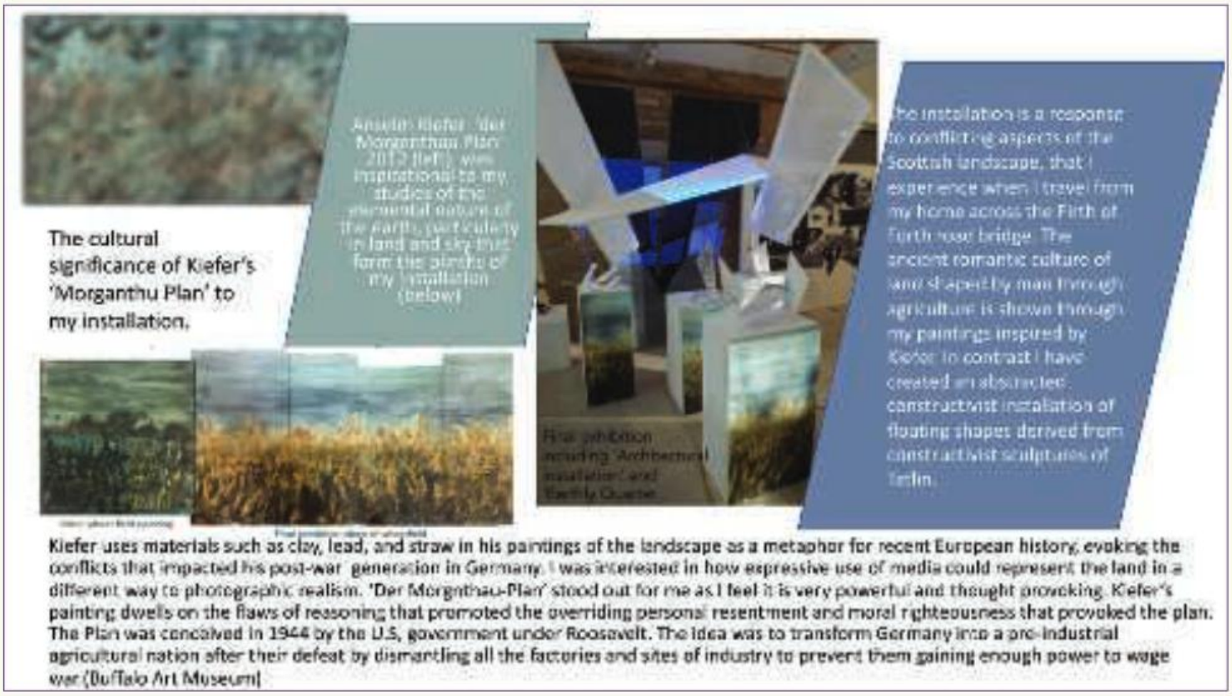
I became interested in Botticelli's 'La Primavera', especially as she represents spring, the relationship to women and notions of purity, nature and change through allegory.. Themes which dominate Angela Carter's stories that I have been reading such as 'The Bloody Chamber'. Botticelli uses narrative and beauty to evoke the darker sides of nature. I wanted my portrait to show this ambiguity.

Left. My self-portrait photo shoot. I wanted to reimagine myself as Flora

▲ Figure 3.16 Emily makes effective visual connections. She investigates Botitcelli's painting through a photoshoot and sketches. Her comments explain how Angela Carter's stories have been the catalyst for this reworking of 'Flora' in a modern context as an allegorical self portrait.

Case study

Jack situates his line of inquiry in the context of his experience of driving over the Forth Road Bridge and through the surrounding landscape (Figure 3.17). The project culminated with a filmed gallery installation. The project was influenced by Anselm Kiefer's *Morgenthau Plan* and Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*. Note how in Figure 3.18 he connects the audience's experience of Tatlin's monument with his own intentions for the audience of his installation. He contextualizes both works, but note that he only selects aspects of his research that are directly relevant to his art-making.



The cultural significance of Kiefer's 'Morganthu Plan' to my installation.

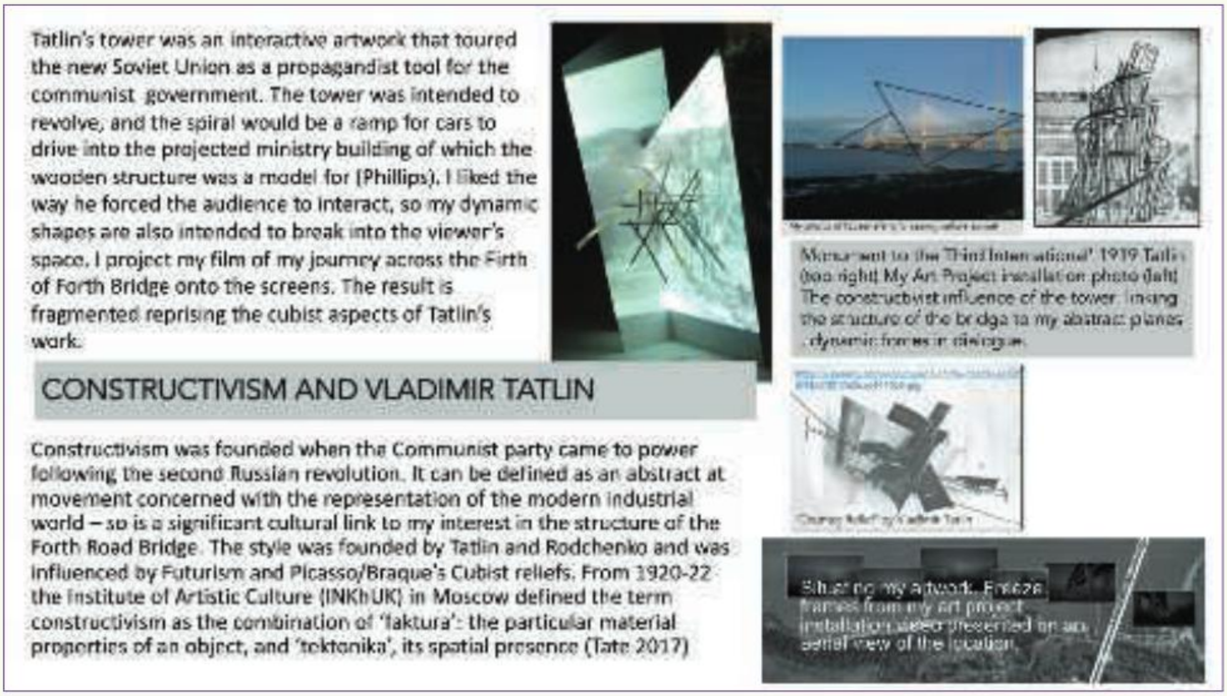
Anselm Kiefer 'der Morgenthau Plan' 2012 (left) was inspirational to my studies of the elemental nature of the earth, particularly in land and sky that form the plinths of my installation (below)

Final exhibition including 'Architectural installation' and 'Earthly Quarter'

The installation is a response to conflicting aspects of the Scottish landscape, that I experience when I travel from my home across the Firth of Forth road bridge. The ancient romantic culture of land shaped by man through agriculture is shown through my paintings inspired by Kiefer. In contrast I have created an abstracted constructivist installation of floating shapes derived from constructivist sculptures of Tatlin.

Kiefer uses materials such as clay, lead, and straw in his paintings of the landscape as a metaphor for recent European history, evoking the conflicts that impacted his post-war generation in Germany. I was interested in how expressive use of media could represent the land in a different way to photographic realism. 'Der Morgnthau-Plan' stood out for me as I feel it is very powerful and thought provoking. Kiefer's painting dwells on the flaws of reasoning that promoted the overriding personal resentment and moral righteousness that provoked the plan. The Plan was conceived in 1944 by the U.S, government under Roosevelt. The idea was to transform Germany into a pre-industrial agricultural nation after their defeat by dismantling all the factories and sites of industry to prevent them gaining enough power to wage war (Buffalo Art Museum)

▲ **Figure 3.17** Jack situates his artwork in the context of his own experiences



Tatlin's tower was an interactive artwork that toured the new Soviet Union as a propagandist tool for the communist government. The tower was intended to revolve, and the spiral would be a ramp for cars to drive into the projected ministry building of which the wooden structure was a model for (Phillips). I liked the way he forced the audience to interact, so my dynamic shapes are also intended to break into the viewer's space. I project my film of my journey across the Firth of Forth Bridge onto the screens. The result is fragmented reprising the cubist aspects of Tatlin's work.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND VLADIMIR TATLIN

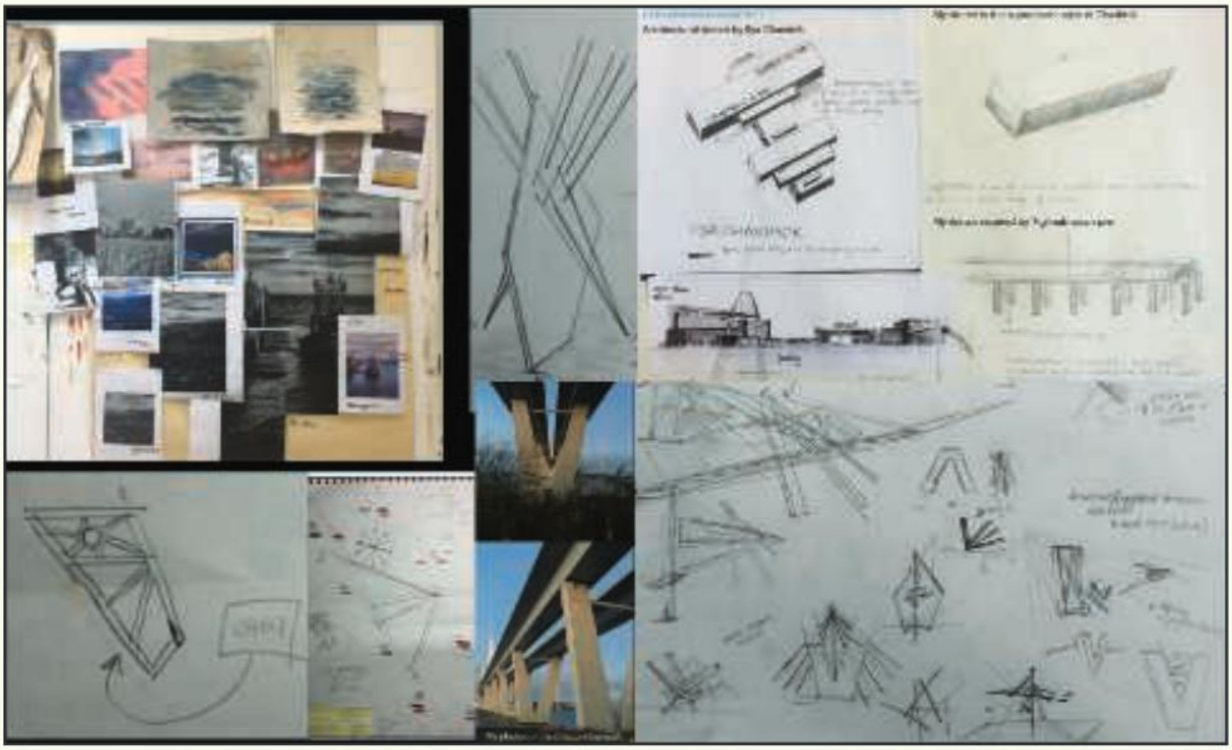
Constructivism was founded when the Communist party came to power following the second Russian revolution. It can be defined as an abstract art movement concerned with the representation of the modern industrial world – so is a significant cultural link to my interest in the structure of the Forth Road Bridge. The style was founded by Tatlin and Rodchenko and was influenced by Futurism and Picasso/Braque's Cubist reliefs. From 1920-22 the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK) in Moscow defined the term constructivism as the combination of 'faktura': the particular material properties of an object, and 'tektonika', its spatial presence (Tate 2017)

'Monument to the Third International' 1919 Tatlin (top right) My Art Project installation photo (left) The constructivist influence of the tower linking the structure of the bridge to my abstract planes - dynamic forms in dialogue.

Situating my artwork. Freeze frames from my art project installation video presented on an aerial view of the location.

▲ **Figure 3.18** Jack situates his work in the context of another artist, Tatlin

Furthermore, Jack situates the project through his photographs and sketches (Figure 3.19). Note the interactive mood board that he created to evoke context (top left). He is exploring the constructivist buildings through drawing alongside his own construction plans. He juxtaposes his media experiments with the photographs of the landscape and reproductions of paintings that inspire him.



▲ **Figure 3.19** Excerpts from Jack's visual arts journal

Research skills

To situate artworks and evaluate their cultural significance, you need to research their contexts. Research is not simply gathering together information. Rather, think of it as an investigative skill, where you will find answers to questions that you have carefully prepared. It is important to learn where to find information and how to assess the usefulness and accuracy of what you find. Following the seven steps outlined in Figure 3.20 (which are explained in this section) will make your research more effective and save you time.

▲ **Figure 3.20** The research strategy to follow in your work

Activity

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an IB key term and is defined as "critically examining and challenging collective assumptions" (IBO, 2024). This means the ability to change your ideas and actions in response to new knowledge. Are you flexible in your thinking? Do your ideas develop as you learn? Or are you a "flat-earther" who holds on to received ideas whatever arguments are given?

Cultural beliefs are collective, and situating your art-making sometimes requires a critical examination of the assumptions that we share as social groups.

When we view a photograph of others, we bring into play our culturally determined assumptions. Photography is an objective process as the camera records data—light and dark at a fixed point in time and space—but when we look at a photograph, we make subjective judgements. We conjecture and make assumptions because our interpretations of meaning are culturally determined; they are never objective.

Choose a photograph to analyse. It could be historical or it could be an image from current news or an advertising campaign, or perhaps a photograph that you are using as source material for your art-making. What does the photograph tell us about the needs, desires, values and beliefs of the assumed audience? What collective assumptions can we challenge by critically examining the image?

It is easier to read social values when looking at the past, as in this car advert (Figure 3.21). Here, the photographer promotes a lifestyle and assumes the audience shares the same cultural values. In what ways might we question those assumptions? Can you apply the same critical reflexivity to analysing a contemporary photograph?

Use the following prompts to develop the analysis of the photograph that you have chosen:

- What was the purpose of the photograph?
- Who were the intended audience?
- What assumptions did the photographer make about the values of the audience?
- Might some people disagree with those values and why?
- Have these assumptions changed across time and cultures?

▲ **Figure 3.21** A car advert from 1953

Key terms

Cite: to refer to a piece of work you have used in your research.

Citation: a reference, usually in a bibliography, to a piece of work you have used in your research.

1. Get organized

Your visual arts journal is an essential tool in the task of organizing your thoughts. Whether you choose to keep this as a paper or electronic record, start by putting your inquiry into words. This will help you to clarify your objectives.

Remember to record the sources of all your research while you work, as you will need to **cite** them later. There are online **citation** tools that can help you, such as Zotero and RefWorks.

2. Inform yourself

This is the broad stage when you learn about the topic. You probably won't use all this research directly, but it will allow you to effectively select useful material later on. Encyclopedias, such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and museum websites are useful for this first stage, but use more than one source so that you can check the reliability of any facts you note.

3. Identify your needs

This is when you identify and select your focus, and it is best achieved by turning your research into questions. Remember you are not aiming to become an expert on these topics, but instead you are finding material which will inform your own art-making.

4. Select your search words

Consider the scope of your topic and how much you need to know. What is relevant to your practical art-making? Then select the most appropriate websites and databases. Check which sources your school has subscription access to, such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, LexisNexis and JSTOR, as these will lead you to academic articles.

If your school does not have any subscriptions, try your local library. Google Scholar and Google Arts & Culture are free, as are all the big museum websites, which are full of well-researched and reliable content. Many national newspapers have free online databases which can be a good source of art exhibition reviews.

Make a list of key words for your searches. You might pull these from your general research and then use the bibliographies on these websites to link you to more detailed information. If you are researching a contemporary artist, try sending them or their gallery an email. They might be willing to answer your questions directly. Museum and gallery curators and artists are often pleased to help when approached directly by students.

5. Make notes

Use your questions to target your reading and try to differentiate between opinion, fact and theory. Copy other people's exact words when ideas are well phrased or striking, as you may want to quote these in full later. Otherwise, write ideas in your own words, noting the source to cite (including the page number). Don't waste time paraphrasing; it is much better to note your own key headings, labels and subpoints. You can develop these in your own way later. Don't highlight or underline as this just puts off the note-taking until another time and doubles your work.

6. Evaluate your research

Remember that anyone can put information on the internet. You need to adopt a doubting disposition and ask these three questions to assess reliability:

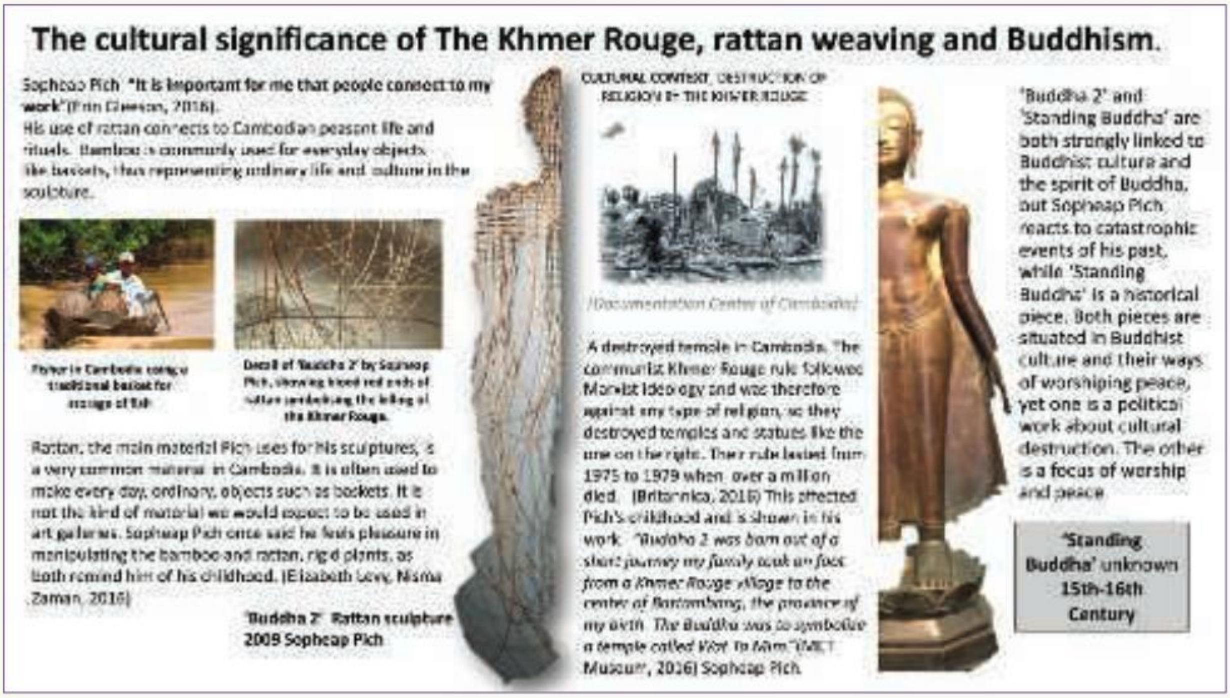
- Who wrote the information? If the name of the author is on the page, type their name into the search bar and find out their credentials. Do they have any qualifications to write on this topic? If the page is linked to an organization, check it out. Are they well known and established? If you can't find answers to these questions in a few minutes, it might be a sign that this is not a reliable source.
- Why was it written? Is the site sponsored by a museum, university, government or company? You can use the domain name to check them out, as this might influence the objectivity of the author. For example, a commercial gallery may be keen to promote the importance of an artist whose works they are trying to sell. This does not invalidate the information, but knowing the purpose helps you to judge potential bias.
- How is it written? The way information is presented can indicate reliability. Has the author followed the same standards that your IB teachers would expect of you? Signs of good quality are that the content is understandable and well organized, the author gives a balanced account (with both positive and negative aspects) and there are references to reliable sources. Signs of bad quality are a lack of citations, unsourced opinions, generalized statements and

the use of phrases like "some critics" and "many commentators", which might suggest that the content is conjecture.

7. Review your research strategy

Were you successful in finding the information you needed? Your research should have enabled you to better understand your topic and suggest deeper research. Or perhaps you could not find answers to your questions? If so, review your strategy with your teacher. Maybe you did not understand the topic well enough to select the relevant content from articles? Have a look at Figure 3.22, which Anna made to evaluate the cultural significance of Sopheap Pich's artwork. See how she selected her research to support an analysis that was meaningful to her art-making.

Case study



The cultural significance of The Khmer Rouge, rattan weaving and Buddhism.

Sopheap Pich **"It is important for me that people connect to my work"** (Erin Gleeson, 2016).
His use of rattan connects to Cambodian peasant life and rituals. Bamboo is commonly used for everyday objects like baskets, thus representing ordinary life and culture in the sculpture.

Fisher in Cambodia using a traditional basket for storage of fish

Detail of 'Buddha 2' by Sopheap Pich, showing blood red ends of rattan symbolising the killing of the Khmer Rouge.

Rattan, the main material Pich uses for his sculptures, is a very common material in Cambodia. It is often used to make every day, ordinary, objects such as baskets. It is not the kind of material we would expect to be used in art galleries. Sopheap Pich once said he feels pleasure in manipulating the bamboo and rattan, rigid plants, as both remind him of his childhood. (Elizabeth Levy, Nisma Zaman, 2016)

'Buddha 2' Rattan sculpture 2009 Sopheap Pich

CULTURAL CONTEXT, DESTRUCTION OF RELIGION BY THE KHMER ROUGE

(Documentation Center of Cambodia)

A destroyed temple in Cambodia. The communist Khmer Rouge rule followed Marxist ideology and was therefore against any type of religion, so they destroyed temples and statues like the one on the right. Their rule lasted from 1975 to 1979 when over a million died. (Britannica, 2016) This affected Pich's childhood and is shown in his work. "*Buddha 2 was born out of a short journey my family took on foot from a Khmer Rouge village to the center of Battambang, the province of my birth. The Buddha was to symbolize a temple called Wat Po Nhim*" (MET Museum, 2016) Sopheap Pich

'Buddha 2' and 'Standing Buddha' are both strongly linked to Buddhist culture and the spirit of Buddha, but Sopheap Pich reacts to catastrophic events of his past, while 'Standing Buddha' is a historical piece. Both pieces are situated in Buddhist culture and their ways of worshiping peace, yet one is a political work about cultural destruction. The other is a focus of worship and peace

'Standing Buddha' unknown 15th-16th Century

▲ Figure 3.22 Anna's evaluation of the cultural significance of Pich's artwork

Anna has been using split willow to make sculptures and has found a Cambodian artist, Sopheap Pich, who makes similar structures from rattan. At step 1 of her research, she intends to research his art-making and notes in her journal two possible lines of inquiry: "Why did he choose rattan to construct his sculptures?" and "How has Cambodian culture impacted his artwork?"

At step 2, Anna finds a brief biography of Sopheap Pich on Wikipedia and realizes that recent Cambodian history is important to his work. An article on *Encyclopaedia Britannica* outlines this history and the beliefs of Buddhism.

Anna is then able to identify her needs (step 3). She asks focused questions: "How have political events in Cambodia impacted Sopheap Pich's art-making?", "What is the cultural significance of Buddhism to his artworks?" and "What is the significance of his choice of rattan as a medium?"

Anna sees that the bibliography for the Wikipedia entry for Sopheap Pich cites an exhibition at The Met. Searching the exhibition pages on The Met's website leads to a useful analysis of his work and a further link to interviews with the artist on YouTube. This shows how following a trail, as in step 4, can lead you from a general article to more specialized information.

In her final analysis, Anna has selected the key findings from her research to situate Sopheap Pich's artwork in time and place, referencing historical, material and spiritual cultural contexts. Notice that she has cited the sources in the text.

Visiting artists' studios, museums, exhibitions and galleries

A work of art is experienced differently in real life. Experiencing art in time and space sharpens your perception. This might be through a school visit to a museum or gallery or perhaps seeing an artwork displayed in a public space. Or you might be lucky enough to visit an artist's studio. Wherever and however you see art, record your experiences carefully in your visual arts journals.

Key term

Schematic: instead of a literal representation, a symbolic diagram (like a straight line for a road that may be curved in real life).

Activity

It is possible to see a lot of art in a short time by wandering through a museum. But it is important to slow down if you are to have significant takeaways to influence your art-making. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of focused first-hand observations in front of one work and balance this with your more general wanderings.

Prepare your visit by arriving with an objective. Before your visit, scan the museum/gallery website to select works that you think you want to see. Check that they are currently on display! Then download information and make some preliminary notes in your visual arts journal. You might change your mind when you arrive if you are inspired by something new, but this preliminary research will still be useful.

Check whether the museum allows photography (often they don't for special exhibitions). If they do, use your phone to record the way the artwork is displayed and to give a sense of the scale of the space and the piece. Note the details on the exhibit label. If the work is three-dimensional, record your kinetic experience by moving around the work. Change the pace of your observation by making a **schematic** drawing with annotations. Explain to a friend why you find the work impactful and listen to their impressions, then make a focused copy. Use these questions to deepen your observations:

- Why is this piece exhibited here?
- How is the work exhibited?
- How was the work made?
- What did the artist do first?
- How would I make a copy of this artwork?
- What materials would I need?
- How does it relate to the other works exhibited nearby?

Take a closer look. Usually, you can see the underpainting and raw surfaces that the artist has worked on by examining the edges of a painting. With sculptures, consider the combination of the processes of construction or reduction, modelling or casting. Use the subject-specific vocabulary explained in Chapter 8 to help you to make detailed notes in your visual arts journals about the artworks that interest you.

Consider the architecture and decoration of the room and the museum. Ask yourself, how could this artwork be displayed differently? Would this change the meaning? Look at the framing or lack of it and, for a sculpture, the pedestal or lack of one. How might you present this piece differently? Who made these choices and why? Not necessarily the artist, but perhaps a gallerist or the most recent owner of the artwork. As you leave the gallery, reflect on how what you have seen will influence your art-making when you return to the studio classroom.

4

Art-making inquiries portfolio (SL and HL)

What is the art-making inquiries portfolio?

The art-making inquiries portfolio is an externally assessed task that both standard-level (SL) and higher-level (HL) candidates must complete. It is a curated collection of visual evidence of your art-making practice presented in a maximum of 15 screens, supported by no more than 3,000 words. In doing so, you will demonstrate your understanding of art-making as a process of inquiry.

This task is the largest externally assessed component of the standard-level visual arts course, worth 40% of your total mark. At higher level, it is equally weighted with the artist project task and worth 30% of your total mark. It places a high value on the practice of art-making as inquiry that you will undertake as a developing artist. It is uploaded to the IB for assessment as a single PDF file, plus a separate list of sources.

In the art-making inquiries portfolio, you need to show evidence of an art-making process that demonstrates:

- that you have explored and experimented with a variety of media and techniques
- that you have selected art-making materials, media and techniques that are appropriate to your artistic intentions
- that your art-making practice has been informed by practical, hands-on critical investigation of artists, artworks and artistic genres
- how your ideas and intentions for your art-making have been formed through generative statements and/or inquiry questions
- how your art-making has developed through your lines of inquiry
- how you refine your material and conceptual art-making by engaging in critical reflection throughout your art-making process.

Additionally, your art-making inquiries portfolio must be clearly and coherently presented with succinct, fluent use of subject-specific language.

Tip

The most useful source of evidence for your art-making inquiries portfolio will undoubtedly be your visual arts journals. Treat every entry in your journals as a potential art-making inquiries portfolio screen. Keep any handwriting clear and legible, and write concisely, using subject-specific terminology rather than lengthy descriptions.

See Chapter 8: Writing about art to learn more about using subject-specific language in your work.

How to approach the art-making inquiries portfolio

At both standard and higher levels, you will gather and select visual evidence of your investigations. You should include the discoveries you made while experimenting with different forms, media and techniques or while practically investigating the work of other artists. Your evidence will also need to include critical reflections that you made while you were working with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies. Explain what creative interventions you made in response to your critical reflections to develop and refine the **visual language** of your artistic intentions.

You will organize this evidence along one or more lines of inquiry. Explicitly state and visually articulate the generative statements or inquiry questions that you used to direct your art-making inquiries.

Key term

Visual language: a set of skills, techniques, motifs and symbols that enable an artist to communicate meaning to their audience through their art-making in a way that is effective, meaningful and personal.

ATL Self-management skills

A strong body of visual evidence is critical to succeed in this task. It is important to develop a routine to maintain your visual arts journals and take the time to document your processes. This will ensure that you have a breadth of evidence to select from when you compile your art-making inquiries portfolio.

To establish a positive work habit, from the first week of the course, dedicate 30 minutes of your home study time to working in your visual arts journals. Use the time to document what you have done during visual arts in the school day. Or you could critically reflect on the progress of your current work, setting goals or posing additional inquiries for the next lesson.

Depending on the way your classes are scheduled, you could choose one class each week or each fortnight to regularly spend time on your visual arts journals. Alternatively, spend 10 to 15 minutes at the end of each lesson making some notes on what you have done and setting goals for the next lesson. If your school's policies permit it, use your smartphone to keep a regular photographic record of the development of your work. Take one photo before you begin, another halfway through a lesson and another at the end of class. Print these and use them to illustrate the development of your work in your visual arts journals.

ATL Research skills

The portfolio requires in-text citations and a separate list of sources, so keep a list of any sources you refer to in your work. This includes any sources you have used in your research to help inform your ideas or images that you have used as sources or inspiration. As soon as you cut a picture from a magazine or save an image from the internet, record where it came from. If you research a particular process or technique, record the source of the information. When citing and referencing the words of others in your portfolio, you should include materials generated using artificial intelligence tools.

Most word processing documents have a referencing tool that will assist you in formatting your citations and list of sources in your school's academic style. There are also online applications that can assist with this.

Importantly, you do not have to represent *all* of the artwork that you produce during the course in the art-making inquiries portfolio. For this task, you select the evidence that demonstrates most clearly that you have met the course requirements and which shows your strongest achievements against the assessment criteria.

This evidence could be taken from any of the different forms your visual arts journals may have taken throughout the course. This includes sketchbooks, notebooks, digital documents and so on. But it could also include photos of preliminary work, such as sketches, maquettes and other incomplete or unresolved pieces that have been significant in the development of your art-making.

The assessment criteria

The art-making inquiries portfolio is externally assessed by examiners appointed by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). Your teacher may provide you with ongoing informal feedback as you progress through the course, but they can only provide you with formal feedback on a single complete draft of your portfolio.

The IB does not prescribe the nature of the feedback that your teacher will give you. Your teacher may use the marking criteria to provide you with a predicted mark and highlight areas for improvement. Or they might annotate your draft with questions, highlight a detail you have missed, point out an aspect of the assessment criteria you have not thoroughly addressed or draw your attention to a source you have not acknowledged. They are not permitted to edit or correct your work. After all, your assessment should be a reflection of your achievement, not that of your teacher.

As you curate your portfolio, you must be familiar with the assessment criteria used to mark it. This will enable you to select and organize the evidence that best shows your achievements against the mark descriptors. As you work in your visual arts journals, it is helpful to know what the criteria mark levels require, so you can be intentional in how you document your inquiries. But you do not need to organize your visual arts journals based on the assessment criteria. The criteria are holistic and consider the portfolio as a whole.

How your work will be assessed (IBO, 2025)

Objective	Criteria	How well your work shows	Marks
Investigate	A: Exploration and experimentation	• exploration and experimentation with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies to develop a visual language	8
Investigate	B: Practical investigation	• **practical investigation** of the work of other artists to inform your art-making	8
Generate	C: Lines of inquiry	• your use of inquiry questions or generative statements • development of your art-making through visually articulated line(s) of inquiry	8
Refine	D: Critical review	• critical reflection • refinement to enhance material and conceptual practice	8
Total			32

Key term

Practical investigation: a type of inquiry that begins with critical observation and analysis of an artwork. It focuses on how an artist has structured an image, the techniques they have used or the style they have worked in and the creative strategies they have used to develop an artwork or convey meaning. It results in practical, hands-on experimentation, synthesizing chosen aspects of the artist's practice into your own art-making.

Understanding criterion A: Exploration and experimentation (8 marks)

Key question	To what level do the curated visual and written materials evidence exploration and experimentation with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies to develop a visual language?
Examiner's focus	• Documentation of your exploration of and experimentation with different art-making materials and creative strategies. • The development of your visual language. • The development of your technical skills.
Significant mark descriptors	• "Explorations and experimentations are effective in developing a visual language." • "The exploration and experimentation with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies show purpose that is meaningfully accomplished." (IBO, 2025)

Criterion A is concerned with measuring how effectively your exploration and experimentation with a range of forms and media while using different creative strategies has enabled you to develop a personal visual language. Your visual and written evidence must reflect your playful, but intentional explorations of media and techniques towards a level of technical accomplishment.

Accomplishment, in this context, does not imply mastery of the medium that you have experimented with. It is more concerned with your awareness of how any properties of the medium that you explore could assist you in expressing your artistic intentions and developing your visual language.

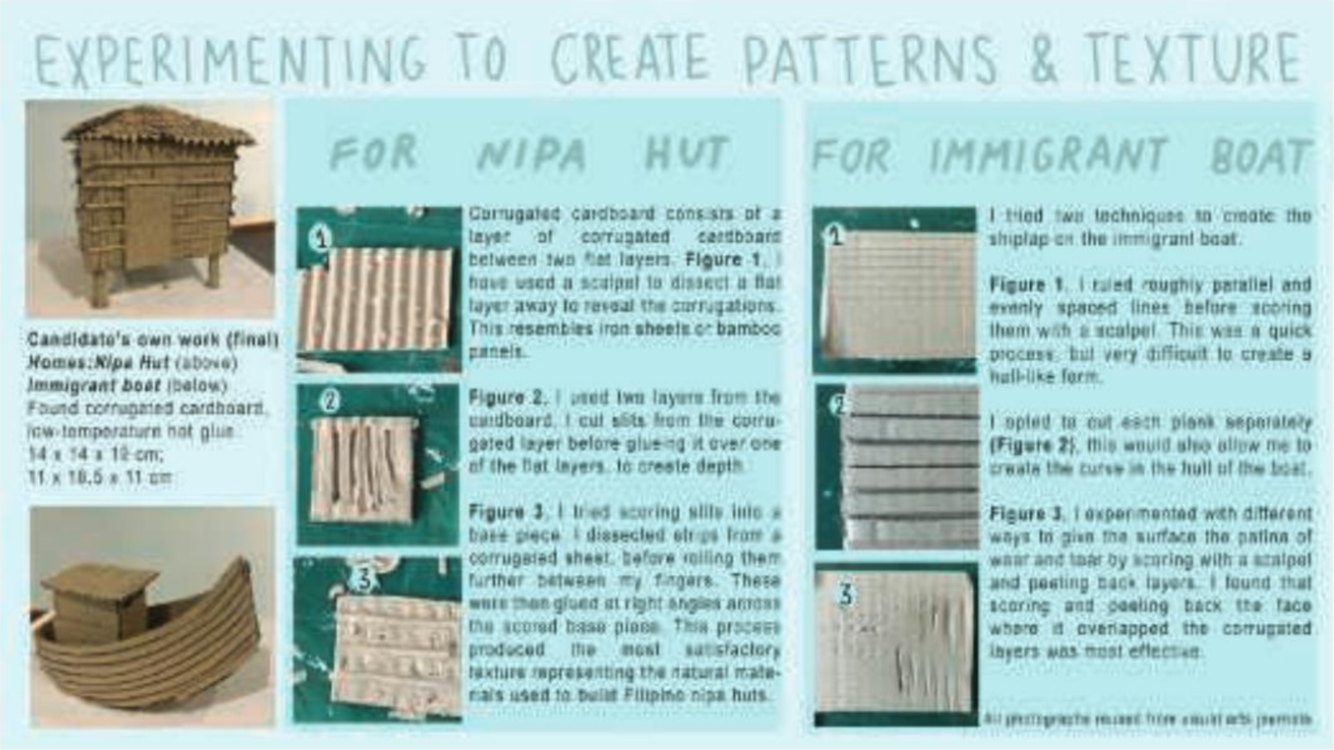
By experimenting playfully with art-making materials and techniques, and being critical of the outcomes, you will become progressively more deliberate and fluent in your visual language. You will develop the ability to consider and control how meaning is constructed in the media, techniques, styles and creative strategies that you choose.

Your visual evidence for criterion A will most likely come from your visual arts journals. But your experiments will likely take place outside of a sketchbook or other form of visual journal. Some experiments will need to be undertaken on different supports, for example different types of paper, scraps of fabric, different timbers or composite boards. Others will need to be three-dimensional, in the form of a maquette, a prototype or digital files on your computer.

Some experiments with forms and media will occur before you have settled on an idea for your art-making. Others will represent a critical moment during the development of an artwork, where further experimentation is required to address any challenges encountered along the way.

You can also evidence your exploration by documenting research into the conventions of different art-making forms. You can explore the characteristics and behaviours of different media and materials in practical experiments. You should critically reflect on the expressive potential of each media you experiment with, as well as any techniques and styles associated with the form.

In Figure 4.1, Gwen mostly addresses criterion A in her portfolio screen. The images show experiments that she conducted with scraps of corrugated cardboard to create different textures and patterns. Gwen included images of the final outcomes of the experiments in the form of two sculptures, shown on the left side of the screen. While she primarily intended to address criterion A, some of her evaluations of the outcomes of her experiments could also contribute to the assessment of criterion D (critical review).



EXPERIMENTING TO CREATE PATTERNS & TEXTURE

Candidate's own work (final)
Homes:Nipa Hut (above)
Immigrant boat (below)
Found corrugated cardboard,
low-temperature hot glue
14 x 14 x 12 cm;
11 x 18.5 x 11 cm

FOR NIPA HUT

Corrugated cardboard consists of a layer of corrugated cardboard between two flat layers. **Figure 1**, I have used a scalpel to dissect a flat layer away to reveal the corrugations. This resembles iron sheets or bamboo panels.

Figure 2. I used two layers from the cardboard. I cut slits from the corrugated layer before glueing it over one of the flat layers, to create depth.

Figure 3. I tried scoring slits into a base piece. I dissected strips from a corrugated sheet, before rolling them further between my fingers. These were then glued at right angles across the scored base piece. This process produced the most satisfactory texture representing the natural materials used to build Filipino nipa huts.

FOR IMMIGRANT BOAT

I tried two techniques to create the shiplap on the immigrant boat.

Figure 1. I ruled roughly parallel and evenly spaced lines before scoring them with a scalpel. This was a quick process, but very difficult to create a hull-like form.

I opted to cut each plank seperately (**Figure 2**). this would also allow me to create the curve in the hull of the boat.

Figure 3. I experimented with different ways to give the surface the patina of wear and tear by scoring with a scalpel and peeling back layers. I found that scoring and peeling back the face where it overlapped the corrugated layers was most effective.

All photographs reused from visual arts journals

▲ Figure 4.1 Gwen experiments with patterns and textures to address criterion A

Understanding criterion B: Practical investigation (8 marks)

Key question	To what level do the visual and written materials show practical investigation of the work of other artists to inform your art-making?
Examiner's focus	• evidence that shows a critical exploration of other artists' work through practical, hands-on experimentation • evidence that demonstrates that you have critically and analytically investigated the artwork or art-making practices of other artists • evidence of practical exploration of aspects of these artists' art-making practices
Significant mark descriptor	"There is effective practical investigation to meaningfully inform the student's work, with evidence that in their art-making the student effectively synthesizes the outcomes of the investigation of other artists' work." (IBO, 2025)

The first part of the mark descriptor refers to "effective practical investigation". "Effective" reflects the quality of the approach (how you experimented) and the outcomes of the experiments. An effective approach is likely to be clearly focused on a specific quality in an artist's work, but with the scope for a range of different experiments or attempts. An effective outcome is likely to show a clear resemblance to the qualities that you are exploring, but could also begin to become more personalized.

Look again at Charlotte's experiments with the work of Hilma af Klint in Figure 1.17, Chapter 1: Lines of inquiry. Consider how effective her practical investigations into af Klint's practices are.

"Practical" implies that this research will result in you getting your hands dirty! You will not achieve this by writing an essay. Your experiments need to be hands-on in nature. The statement goes on to say that these experiments must "meaningfully inform" your artwork. To meet this criteria, the investigation needs to arise from an intention that you want to realize in your work. There must be a specific quality you want to exhibit in your work, an idea you want to effectively convey or a visual problem you want to solve.

Knowing where to start with practical investigation is a challenge when you simply want to begin making art. Looking at art starts as a visual experience before it becomes an intellectual one. Being able to browse for something that you like or are drawn to is important.

Once you have closely observed and studied your chosen artworks, you can undertake art-making experiments to replicate aspects of the artist's style or technique. To an extent, you can also explore the way they think and perceive the world. This will increase your repertoire of skills and techniques that you can employ in your own work.

An examiner will not expect you to replicate an entire artwork. Your investigations can sharply focus on a specific visual problem that you want to solve in your art-making. For example, imagine that you were playing with the creative strategy of scale in your art-making, exploring how you could exaggerate forms in your imagery. You might investigate the way Alberto Giacometti elongated the human form in his drawings, paintings or sculpture. Or you may be interested in how Salvador Dalí gave elephants long, spindly legs in his images.

ATL Research skills

Art galleries and museums are fantastic resources. Always take a visual arts journal, pencil and a smartphone or camera with you. Record the date of your visit. Browse the collection until you find works that make you want to stop and consider them further. Record the details of the work from the accompanying text. Always include the artist's name, their nationality, date of birth, date of death (if applicable), the title of the work, date of completion, medium and size. Make sketches of the work and, where permitted, take photographs of the work.

Reflect on what made you stop at this work. Was it the subject matter or the style? Was it something about the visual qualities of the work? Was it familiar to you—a work you may have seen before? Try to articulate exactly what has captured your attention. Now you have a starting point for further investigation. You could find other works by the same artist or by other artists working in the same period or style.

If you do not have ready access to galleries and museums, you could visit virtual museums online. Good-quality books on art can also be useful and they can be easier to browse than the internet when you are unsure of what you are looking for. Start with general books that cover a broad range of styles and, as you find work that appeals to you, narrow your search. Once you have the names of some artists and works that interest you, the internet becomes a valuable resource. Many contemporary artists have their own websites.

This experimentation cannot be effectively accomplished with an exercise completed just to address this criterion or a class exercise that everyone does similarly. It must emerge from your desire to develop as an artist and improve your art-making. When your artwork takes on aspects of the qualities that you have investigated, it is said to have been informed by them.

The ultimate goal of your practical investigation into the styles and techniques of other artists is synthesis, which is expressed in the second part of the level descriptor. Synthesis, in this sense, is achieved when the artists' styles and techniques you have investigated are combined with your own artistic concerns to create a new personalized style and technique.

For criterion B, Gwen began by choosing the contemporary Australian artist Ben Quilty. In Figure 4.2, Gwen identifies the visual qualities in Quilty's *Self-Portrait After Madrid* (2007). She shows an example of the beginnings of her own practical investigation into his painterly and expressionistic technique. To access the higher mark bands, Gwen would need to go further, showing how she integrates this technique into her own work or synthesizes Quilty's style with her own in new ways. Portfolio screens that address criterion B will often also show evidence that may address criterion A (exploration and experimentation) and criterion D (critical review).

Colour: Quilty uses a wide range of neutral shades and tones for his portrait.

Texture: A rough texture is achieved through his painterly style, which is loose with limited blending. Quilty layers impasto paint in broken colour.

Movement: This is created through the single, visible strokes going in different directions, creating movement and depth in the face.

Quilty, Ben (Australian, b.1973)
Self-Portrait after Madrid

I was drawn to the colours that Quilty chose to use in his portrait. I tested this out by trying to recreate different colours that he used. This was harder than I thought, and was one of the first times I had tried creating fleshtones.

After looking at Quilty's work, I was drawn to his painterly style and brainstormed the features of the style.

After creating the colour swatches, I wanted to try Quilty's painterly style by replicating a section from his portrait. I found it quite challenging as someone who likes control and is very tight in my painting style.
By contrast, Quilty's painterly style employs loose, expressive strokes of broken colour.
I am pleased with the modelling that is apparent in my replication. I plan to create a self-portrait employing this technique.

Candidate's work, after Quilty. Oil on canvas paper 21 x 15 cm

▲ Figure 4.2 Gwen experiments with Quilty's painterly and expressionistic technique to address criterion B

Understanding criterion C: Lines of inquiry (8 marks)

Key question	To what level do the curated visual and written materials show the student's use of inquiry questions or generative statements and development of their art-making through visually articulated line(s) of inquiry?
Examiner's focus	• evidence that shows the development of initial ideas for art-making • your inquiry question or a series of questions or generative statements

Significant mark descriptors

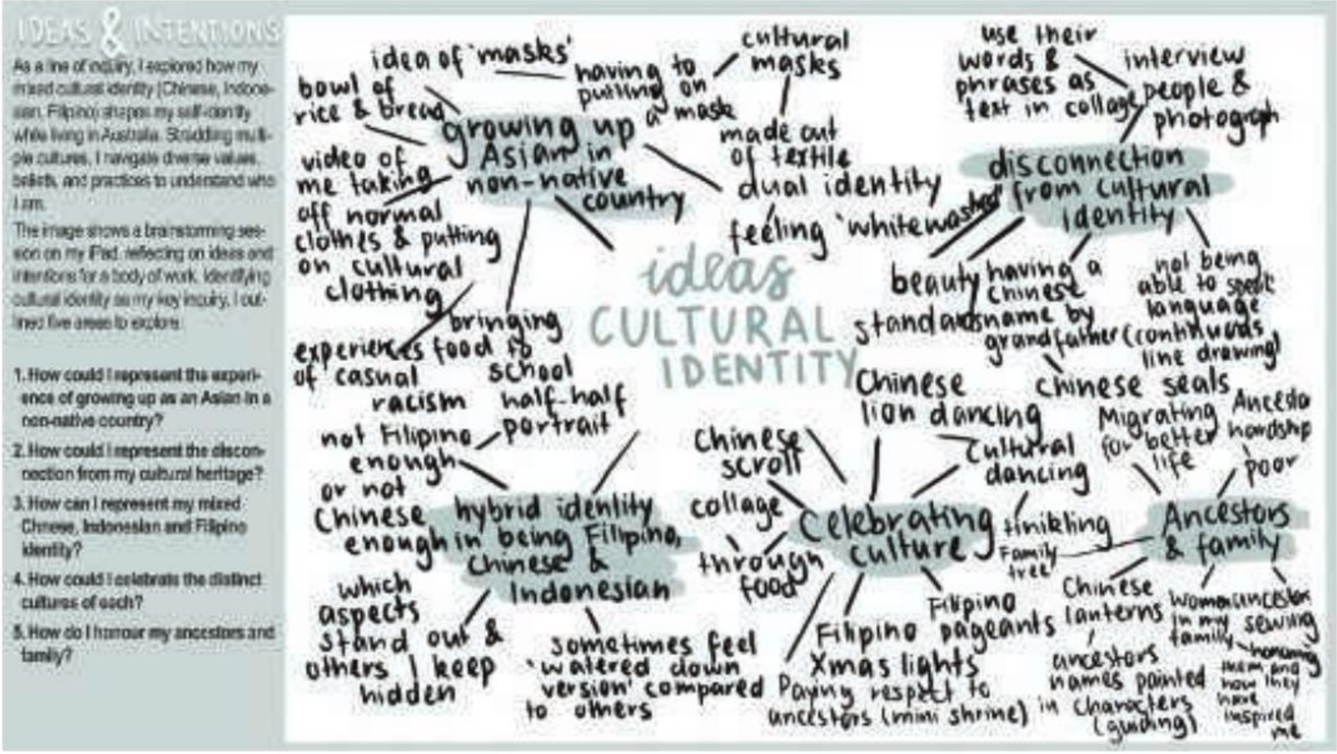
- "The student generates and progresses their artwork through relevant and effective inquiry questions or generative statements."
- "The submitted materials evidence art-making that is developed to fulfil artistic intentions […] there is clear and meaningful visual articulation of a line or lines of inquiry." (IBO, 2025)

The first mark descriptor reflects the importance of developing a line or lines of inquiry in your work. These may begin with an inquiry question or generative statement that you use to focus your art-making. They may include subsequent inquiry questions that arise during the development of your work. The first part of the second statement reflects the importance of documenting your processes and the progress of your art-making. Examiners are asked to evaluate the ways that your art-making practice develops from your inquiry questions and/or generative statements towards fulfilling your artistic intentions. The second statement goes on to place emphasis on using visual evidence to clearly support your art-making practice and demonstrate your line or lines of inquiry.

Reread Chapter 1: Lines of inquiry to remind yourself how lines of inquiry should be developed in your work.

This criterion is concerned with how you, as an artist, generate your ideas for art-making and develop your ideas through the art-making process. The word limit of approximately 200 words per screen will mean that you need to be thoughtful about the evidence you select to reveal your planning and thinking.

In Figure 4.3, Gwen shows the lines of inquiry she explored through her work, addressing criterion C. She includes a mind map that explores different facets of a theme she wanted to explore. Gwen highlights five branches in the mind map that she articulated as inquiry questions in the left-hand column. Evidence of how these ideas are explored and how they generate and progress her art-making will need to be evident throughout the portfolio, but they can evolve and change as the process of art-making as inquiry raises further questions or ideas for exploration.



IDEAS & INTENTIONS

As a line of inquiry, I explored how my mixed cultural identity (Chinese, Indonesian, Filipino) shapes my self-identity while living in Australia. Straddling multiple cultures, I navigate diverse values, beliefs, and practices to understand who I am.

The image shows a brainstorming session on my iPad, reflecting on ideas and intentions for a body of work. Identifying cultural identity as my key inquiry, I outlined five areas to explore.

1. How could I represent the experience of growing up as an Asian in a non-native country?
2. How could I represent the disconnection from my cultural heritage?
3. How can I represent my mixed Chinese, Indonesian and Filipino identity?
4. How could I celebrate the distinct cultures of each?
5. How do I honour my ancestors and family?

Figure 4.3 Gwen's mind map and inquiry questions address criterion C

Understanding criterion D: Critical review (8 marks)

Key question	To what level do the curated visual and written materials show your critical reflection on and refinement of your art-making to enhance your material and conceptual practice?
Examiner's focus	• visual and written evidence of your critical reflection • evidence of refinements in your artmaking to enhance your material and conceptual practice
Significant mark descriptors	• "There is evidence of student decision-making and practical interventions that are effective in enhancing their material and conceptual practices to meaningfully fulfil intentions." • "The student justifies their processes of refinement." (IBO, 2025)

Tip

For each level descriptor for criterion D, the second statement uses a different command term. In this context, they mean:

Outline (1–2 marks): give a brief account.

Describe (3–4 marks): give a detailed account.

Explain (5–6 marks): give a detailed account including reasons or causes.

Justify (7–8 marks): give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion. (IBO, 2025)

The first mark descriptor describes a process of artistic refinement. Creative decisions are made and interventions are undertaken with the hope of improving or further developing an artwork. It implies the need for critical reflection that informs the decisions and interventions. The second descriptor indicates that you also need to provide a justification for the interventions that you have made. This includes explaining why an intervention was needed, as well as the thought processes behind any decisions made.

Art-making and the practice of being an artist is a discipline. It involves growth and development that is personal, intellectual and technical. You are not the same artist today as you were yesterday. As soon as you begin to create a work of art, you are developing a set of skills as an artist. While many students find making art to be therapeutic and relaxing, in practice, our brain is constantly engaged in high-order thinking when we make art. It continually evaluates your work, while simultaneously directing your body as it gives visual form to the ideas and concepts that were conceived in your mind. Your fine motor skills develop as you engage your fingers and hands to undertake the physical task of art-making. As you work, you build a set of skills in representation, rendering or modelling as you try to make the outcome of your endeavours match up to your artistic intentions.

Each artwork you develop will involve research and planning, making, reflecting, problem-solving, reworking, reflecting again and refining. This continues until your work is resolved to your satisfaction or you give up trying. Regardless of the outcome—whether it is a success or failure—you will have grown as an artist. Your ideas will have become more sophisticated and your skills more diverse and better honed.

Critically reviewing and refining your work are disciplines to adopt in order to improve your art-making practice. For criterion D, you need to show that you can review and refine selected ideas, skills, processes and techniques and justify the decisions and interventions that you make.

ATL Thinking skills

Evaluating and reflecting on your art-making practice can occur at any stage during the art-making process, not just at the end. A simple routine you can use is to ask yourself these questions and answer them in your visual arts journal:

- What am I trying to achieve in my work?
- What's working? What are the strengths in my work?
- What's not working? What are the weaknesses or what's not going as well as I had hoped?
- What are my strengths as an artist?
- What are my limitations as an artist? How have I attempted to overcome perceived weaknesses in my work?
- What art-making problems or challenges have I encountered? How have I addressed (or tried to address) them?

Finding ways to improve an artwork is essential to your development as an artist. Most often, this will require minor shifts in your art-making process, usually to resolve difficulties or problems as they arise. However, concluding that you cannot realize your original intention is nothing to be ashamed of. Perhaps you were not familiar enough with the limitations of a particular drawing or painting medium or perhaps the laws of physics prevent you from realizing an ambitious sculptural form. You will learn a lot as an artist in experiencing these problems and finding ways to work around them. They may also generate rich evidence for your art-making inquiries portfolio.

If you finish a work and are not completely satisfied with the outcome, working in a different form or medium can be useful for reviewing and refining it. You can use the art-making forms diagram as a resource for this. Take a painting, for example, and think about how you could represent the same idea sculpturally.

Similarly, trying a different creative strategy can compel you to think differently about the idea or imagery. Referring to the creative strategies diagram can be helpful here, but so can critically and practically investigating the work of other artists. Try to identify the strategies that they have used and employ them in your work. While you seek to improve and resolve your work, addressing criterion D, you are also potentially creating more evidence addressing criterion C.

Return to Chapter 2: Art-making forms and creative strategies, Figure 2.1, to remind yourself of the art-making forms diagram. Figure 2.8 shows the creative strategies diagram.

For criterion D, Gwen reviewed the development of a lino-printing process over two screens (Figure 4.4), although both screens also address aspects of criterion A (exploration and experimentation). Gwen struggled with keeping to the word count (she uses 254 words in the first of these two screens alone), but she felt she couldn't reach the higher mark bands of this criterion without some analytical commentary.

CRITICAL REVIEW – LINO PROCESS

Candidate's work
Fairest of them all (AP)
Lino print, acrylic relief printing ink on cartridge paper
21 x 21 cm (plate size)

Candidate's work
Fairest of them all (AP of each reduction stage)

Four-colour reduction print

The reduction process was confusing, but I found online examples helpful. Planning with pencils on less successful proofs also aided me. I refined my cutting skills with lino tools and used a registration sheet to align each print layer. I preferred the final coloured edition over the initial monocoloured artist proof.

I chose lino printing for this work to reflect my concept of Asian beauty standards pressuring women to conform. I commented on the value of unique differences over uniformity by reproducing my self-portrait in various flesh tones.

Monocolour Artist's Proof

I planned to show different skin tones by printing the first proof in an edition of different colours. However, feedback from a class critique was that it looked simplistic, so I tried the reduction process to introduce more colours and complexity.

I created lino plates like rubber stamps for the text fair, fairer and fairest.

I tried stamp pad ink (black) and relief printing ink (red), but relief printing ink was the only ink that printed reliably over the lino print.

I chose burnt red ink, which harmonized with the flesh tones and resembled most stamps.

Adding text:

Responding to peer and teacher feedback, to more clearly convey struggles with Asian beauty standards, I wanted to use text. I used "Fair," "Fairer," and "Fairest" instead of hexadecimal skin tones or mantras like "I must be lighter". This subtle, lyrical choice promotes audience reflection on the standards making Asian women question their beauty while recalling fairy tales.

Candidate's work
Fairest of them all (included as selected resolved artwork)
Series of five lino reduction prints: acrylic-based relief printing ink on cartridge paper
21 x 21 cm (plate size)

Successful

I think the overall series is successful.

It communicates my intentions clearly, commenting on beauty standards, how they impact one's identity but also with the nuances of colonialism and Westernisation.

I think the text stamps around the image effectively resolved my concept with the image.

The modal language of "fair", "fairer" and "fairest" conveys the struggles I have felt with beauty standards associated with skin tone in my culture.

Challenges

Understanding the reduction process was challenging and the importance of using a reliable registration process to ensure each layer of the image was aligned.

Choosing a balance of opaque and transparent inks where the layers of colour would not clash was difficult, particularly as the reduction process for each colour scheme had to be done simultaneously. Once more material was cut away from the plate, I could not go back and reprint earlier stages of the image.

Conclusions

While I initially found the process of peer critiques to be daunting and intimidating, I ultimately found the feedback from my peers to be helpful – particularly when it became clear that my intentions were not being conveyed in the way that I had hoped.

This resulted in a number of interventions that I feel helped me resolve my work – specifically using the reduction process and incorporating the text.

CRITICAL REVIEW – LINO PROCESS CONTINUED

▲ Figure 4.4 Gwen's critical review of the lino-printing process addresses criterion D

Case study

▲ **Figure 4.5** Extracts from Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907

Look at the four different depictions of women in Figure 4.5. They are from Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. This is considered to be one of the most significant images of modern Western art, certainly in the development of the Cubism style. What do you notice? Compare the first two faces, which are from the left side of the original painting, to the second two, which are from the right-hand side. Look specifically at how their faces are represented. How do they differ?

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler was a contemporary art dealer to Picasso and one of the first champions of the emerging style of Cubism. Kahnweiler perceived *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* as the beginning of Cubism. He recognized the different styles used on the left- and right-hand sides of the painting. In his book *The Rise of Cubism* (1920) Kahnweiler: recalled that in early 1907, Picasso had embarked on a peculiar and large painting featuring women, fruit and drapery, which he ultimately left incomplete. Kahnweiler observed that the work begins in the style of other works completed around 1906, such as Picasso's *Self-Portrait with Palette* (1906) or his portrait of *Gertrude Stein* (1905–1906). The first two faces on the left of the original reflect this style with large, serene eyes and rounded features, painted in flesh tones, black and white. However, he notes that the second two faces, which were on the right, are depicted with angular lines and vibrant colours like blue, yellow, black and white. These faces resemble the early stages of Cubism.

What Kahnweiler observes as unfinished in Picasso's piece is in fact evidence of an artist in the midst of reviewing and refining their work. Here is Picasso's development from a style of representation as seen in his *Self-Portrait with Palette* (1906) to the more angular and fractured style that was to become recognizable as Analytical Cubism.

Preparing your art-making inquiries portfolio for submission

Your art-making inquiries portfolio represents just a sample of the art-making inquiries that you undertake during the course. It is how you reveal to an examiner the depth of your thinking and exploration throughout your art-making practice as an IB Diploma visual arts student. All this is done in just 15 screens and 3,000 words.

While presentation is not explicitly assessed in this task, the way you present your portfolio will affect how accessible your work is to an examiner. The electronic file that you submit can be seen as a curated body of evidence that reflects your material and conceptual art-making practice. In this context, curating is the process of collecting, organizing and presenting your evidence clearly and coherently.

At different stages of your course, your teacher will most likely make opportunities for you to compile and present mock or practice art-making inquiry portfolios. This might happen at the end of a teacher-directed unit of work or at the end of your first year. This will provide you with a valuable opportunity to practise the process of curation. The feedback you receive may reveal areas in your portfolio where you have not addressed an aspect of one of the criteria as well as another. This will help you adjust the way that you use your visual arts journals, for example, or develop other helpful disciplines in your art-making practice. Your actual art-making inquiries portfolio, however, will likely be compiled towards the end of your course.

Aside from adherence to the screen and word limits, there are two principles to keep in mind as you gather your evidence. These are following one or more lines of inquiry and selecting appropriate evidence.

Following lines of inquiry

Firstly, your portfolio must follow one or more lines of inquiry. This means that as you select your evidence, you need to organize it according to how different aspects of your processes and art-making practices are interconnected.

You may have followed lines of inquiry that you were able to take to a point of resolution. Your line of inquiry may have started with a single inquiry question or generative statement, which then diverged into sub-inquiries. You may have initially thought that you were pursuing several different lines of unrelated inquiries, but later on you realized that there is a common theme or idea that links your inquiries together.

All of these, and other possibilities, are equally valid, but they need to be demonstrated in the way that you select, present and organize your evidence. This may mean that the order of the screens does not follow the order of the assessment criteria. For example, if a line of inquiry emerged from a practical investigation into a specific artwork, then evidence that supports criterion B may be a suitable starting point. It may have resulted in generating ideas, inquiry questions (criterion C) and media experiments (criterion A). Perhaps challenges developed, which were considered through a process of review (criterion D) and were resolved by considering different creative strategies and media exploration (criteria A and D).

Selecting the best evidence

The evidence that you select for your portfolio should present the highest level of achievement against each of the assessment criteria. You will need to gather visual evidence that shows:

- that you have experimented with and explored a variety of media, techniques and creative strategies, considering their expressive capacity
- that your art-making practice has been informed by practical investigation of other artists' artworks
- how your initial ideas and intentions have been formed and how these ideas have progressed by considering inquiry questions or generative statements
- how you have engaged in a critically reflective art-making practice to refine your ideas and enhance your skills, processes and techniques.

Examples of suitable evidence

Criteria/descriptors	Examples of possible evidence		
Criterion A: Exploration and experimentation	**Art-making forms**		
	Two-dimensional	**Three-dimensional**	**Four-dimensional**
Exploration and experimentation with a variety of art-making forms … to develop a visual language	Research-based investigation in media and techniques.	Research-based investigation in media and techniques.	Research-based investigation in media and techniques.
	• Scanned samples of pages from visual arts journals showing exploration of the expressive qualities of drawing, painting or print-making media and techniques, with annotations. • Annotated screenshots of work in progress.	• Photographs of maquettes, experimenting with media or methods, with annotations. • Photographic records of your exploration of different sculptural methods, media and techniques, with annotations.	• Annotated screenshots of work in progress taken from a range of digital art-making platforms. • Annotated proofs, contact sheets and test strips. • Storyboards produced for video art or performance.
Exploration and experimentation with a variety of … creative strategies to develop a visual language	• Samples from visual arts journals or of preliminary work demonstrating similar ideas explored through more than one creative strategy. • Samples from visual arts journals of brainstorming which includes consideration of several creative strategies.		
Criterion B: Practical investigation *Practical investigation of the work of other artists to inform your art-making*	• Side-by-side annotated comparison of an artist's work and your own, showing attempts to replicate and synthesize aspects of the artist's practice into your work. • Samples of work produced by observing an original work of art and producing copies of the work or a detail of the work to understand the style or technique. • Samples from visual arts journals or photographs of your work in progress which shows evidence of, or draws attention to, a technique or style informed by another artist's practice.		

Criterion C: Lines of inquiry *Your use of inquiry questions or generative statements*	• Explicit use of an inquiry question or questions. • Explicit use of a generative statement or statements. • Use of brainstorming or concept mapping in visual arts journals to develop inquiry questions or generative statements. • Use of brainstorming or concept mapping in visual arts journals to expand inquiry questions or generative statements.
Development of your art-making through visually articulated line(s) of inquiry	• These should be evident across the whole submission through annotations that relate content back to the line or lines of inquiry that develop from the inquiry question(s) or generative statement(s). • Connections made across different evidence.
Criterion D: Critical review *Your critical reflection*	• Critical reflections on photographs of artwork in progress, using annotations or call-outs. • Analysis of the visual qualities of your artwork, considering strengths and weaknesses. • Reflections on and evidence of action taken as a result of teacher or peer critiques of your artwork.
Refinement to enhance material and conceptual practice	• Using the visual arts journals to consider ways to improve an artwork. • Using the visual arts journals to reconsider an artwork through the lens of a different creative strategy. • Presenting sequences of images or a side-by-side comparison of images showing a process of refinement, supported by reflective evaluations, critical annotations and justification of interventions. • Documentation of the processes of problem-solving and resolution. • Annotations that give justifications for decisions and creative interventions. • Photographic evidence of creative interventions made to improve the technical quality of a work or to better communicate conceptual concerns.

Curating your art-making inquiries portfolio

Selecting your evidence

The portfolio is presented as screens. The use of the word "screen" is intentional. It reminds you that your portfolio must be submitted electronically as a PDF file. Your submission will be viewed by the examiner on a computer screen. You can consider each screen as a page or even a presentation slide if you find that helpful.

You can create screens in a variety of ways from a range of sources of evidence:

- Single pages scanned directly from your visual arts journals—remember that any words used in your visual arts journals will contribute to your word count.
- Single pages scanned directly from your visual arts journals, but with annotations added (possibly electronically)—these notes could clarify, update or reflect on the work, or make connections to other screens in the submission.

- Compilations of smaller extracts scanned directly from your visual arts journals—these could be arranged together to illustrate a particular aspect of your art-making practice.
- Sequences of images of works in progress taken from a range of digital art-making platforms—include annotations explaining what is being done in each shot and why.
- Slides developed in presentation software that use images, graphics and text.
- Photographs of preliminary work that you have undertaken, with annotations such as title, media and size—examples include designs, cartoons, sketches, artist's proofs, maquettes and other mock-ups.
- Photographs of resolved works that were excluded from your final resolved artworks (standard level) or selected resolved artworks (higher level), but were important to your art-making process.

Before you decide how best to present your evidence you will need to decide which evidence to include. Begin by reviewing the assessment criteria. Look particularly at the level descriptors and what they are assessing.

Remember that the assessment criteria for the portfolio are identically weighted. It is important to ensure that your evidence covers all the criteria evenly and consistently. However, this does not mean that the number of screens should be evenly divided between each criterion; some criteria may require more screens to be addressed at a similar level of depth.

Remember, you are expected to have worked with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies. Your portfolio is not intended to document every aspect of your inquiries, but make sure that you do show evidence of working in more than one art-making form and more than one creative strategy.

Activity

Consider the evidence

At the end of each semester, review any sketchbooks and notebooks that might form a part of your visual arts journals. A useful strategy is using a set of small sticky-note page markers in four different colours. Assign a different colour to each criterion, A through to D. As you come across evidence for an aspect of the level descriptors, use a sticky note as a bookmark. If you think a page addresses more than one criterion, use more than one sticky note. Referring to the assessment criteria, make a quick assessment of your evidence. Consider at what mark level does your visual and written evidence show:

- your exploration and experimentation with a variety of art-making forms and creative strategies to develop a visual language
- practical investigation of the work of other artists to inform your art-making
- your use of inquiry questions or generative statements in your art-making process
- the development of your art-making through visually articulated line(s) of inquiry
- your critical reflections on your experimentation and art-making
- refinement to enhance your material and conceptual practice in your art-making?

Do you have enough to satisfy all of the assessment criteria? If any criteria are lacking in evidence, you will need to gather more.

Does the evidence you have reflect your highest levels of achievement in each criterion? What, if anything, do you need to add (or take away) to reflect what you have learnt and the skills you have developed more clearly?

Organizing your evidence

When you are satisfied with the quality and range represented in your evidence, you can begin to organize it into an order that will take your examiner through your lines of inquiry. Arrange the evidence from the beginning of each creative process through to your resolution of the line of inquiry. As you do this, you may discover that some of it needs additional explanation or justification for your line of inquiry to become clear to someone who is not as familiar with your work as you are. These details can be added in text boxes or call-outs, including labelled arrows and other shapes.

From the outset, plan to submit the maximum number of 15 screens. Any less and you are not taking every opportunity to showcase your art-making practice. You need to be informative and clearly explain your intentions, ideas and processes, as well as justifying the artistic decisions you make throughout your line(s) of inquiry.

Keep in mind that this task has a strict word count. Any legible text in your evidence is counted, along with any further annotations You need to be informative and clearly explain your intentions, ideas and processes, as well as justifying the artistic decisions you make throughout your line(s) of inquiry. Remember that citations do not count towards your word limit.

You need to include full citations for any image, including for your own artwork in the same way you would acknowledge the work of another artist. This helps distinguish between your work and other artists' works. It also makes very clear the form and media you have worked in and gives the examiner a sense of the scale you are working in. Citations for your own work can help communicate ideas about your intentions, through well-chosen titles, and indicate the variety of media you have explored. Do not use your own name. Use the phrase "Candidate's work" or "My own work" as the assessment process requires students to be anonymous.

Tip

Do not use your own name. Use the phrase "Candidate's work" or "My own work" as the assessment process requires you to be anonymous. Maintaining anonymity is a way to make the assessment less subjective. This is why you use a candidate number in your examinations and why you are required not to identify yourself in this task with your name or the name of your school. It is also preferred that any photographs that you use do not include your face or cannot be used to identify your school.

There are exceptions, however. An examiner would expect to see your face if you were working on self-portraits or in a performance. Or you might discuss your cultural heritage or gender, for example, if this was of particular significance to your artistic intentions.

An example of a suitable way to present a full citation is:

- My own work
- Title of work in italics (for example, *Adventure in a latte glass*)
- Medium (for example, Oil on canvas)
- Size (for example, 120 cm × 60 cm).

Presenting your evidence

The *Visual arts guide* does not prescribe how screens are produced. For most students, the most effective way of working will be to scan or photograph pages from the visual arts journals and other physical evidence. This can be assembled using presentation programs such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple Keynote. Screens can also be crafted with a range of Adobe products, including InDesign and Photoshop. One or a combination of these is possible. You will need to choose the process that best suits your way of working and will be the most time effective. All of these options can save or convert the document to a PDF file.

PDF-creating programs like Adobe Acrobat also have tools to compress files if they become larger than the maximum file size. When the *Visual arts guide* was published, the maximum file size for uploading documents was 50 MB. This may change over the life of the guide. Your teacher can check the most up-to-date requirements in the annually published *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*.

When taking evidence from a book format, such as a sketchbook, notebook or visual arts journal, it is recommended that you use a flatbed scanner or camera. Most printers include a flatbed scanner and photocopiers often have a scanning facility, allowing for scanning larger items than most home printers. Scan at 200 pixels per inch (PPI) to a JPEG or PDF format. Most programs will accept these formats.

You can use a camera or smartphone to capture pages too. Keep the pages as flat as possible and be mindful of any shadows (including your own) or any light glare on reflective surfaces. Some scanning apps are available for smartphones that use the phone's inbuilt flash to make the lighting more even. They often have tools that can correct the keystone effect—the distortion that occurs when a camera is not perfectly parallel to the surface it is capturing, resulting in trapezoidal shapes rather than rectangles.

▲ **Figure 4.6** Keeping track of the development of your artworks by taking regular photographs will provide you with essential visual evidence

Your screens for the portfolio must be static. They cannot include dynamic elements like animations, transitions, embedded media (video or audio) files, hyperlinks and QR codes.

The format for a screen is not specified. It is important to think about the end user: the examiner. Most examiners will mark the portfolio on a laptop or home computer. Most computer monitors are oriented horizontally, so it is best to present your screens horizontally. Most monitors use a widescreen format, so try working with a 16:9 ratio at no more than 200 pixels per inch. You should also be able to read each screen without having to zoom in and out to read the text. For electronically submitted work, the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme* requires that the minimum font size is 11 points. Any handwritten text, such as evidence you draw from visual arts journals, should also be a similar size when it is viewed on a screen.

▲ **Figure 4.7** Arial font

Arial is recommended as a reliable font for legibility when viewed on screen. Sans serif fonts (fonts that do not have the small strokes, or serifs, at the ends of the letters) and those with a high x-height (the height of the lowercase letters) are easier to read on a screen. These fonts include Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, Calibri, and Open Sans, whereas Times and Times New Roman are not recommended. You can use more decorative fonts to add personality and flair to headings, but in the body of your text, use a sans serif font consistently throughout your presentation.

Consistency is also important for other aspects of your screen design, such as the colour scheme and backgrounds. Avoid using generic backgrounds that are usually provided with presentation applications. These can compete with and become a distraction from your artwork. Instead, opt for plain coloured or toned backgrounds. Neutral tones are the most complementary for artworks, such as black, white or shades of grey. Ensure that the tonal value of your text contrasts with the background, making it easy to read. Avoid adding imagery purely as a decoration or embellishment. This is particularly true if the imagery has no link to your work. It will detract from the content that is being assessed.

Use large, high-quality reproductions of artworks, including your work and the work of other artists. Wherever you can, use an image or some form of graphic organizer in place of text. Highlighting details and enlarging them can be a very effective way to show particular challenges and successes. Or it can be used to make comparisons with other works, including the work of artists who have informed your practice. This will allow you to use the limited number of words permitted in the word count where they add the most value to your assessment marks: revealing and explaining your thinking, justifying your creative decisions and interventions and analyzing, reflecting on and evaluating your work.

When it comes to layouts, look at the way quality magazines organize information—particularly art, design and fashion magazines. Look at how images, headings and subheadings and columns of text are used. Consider how the reader moves from one part of the page to the next: usually top to bottom and left to right. Consider how features have been used to catch your attention first: size and scale, a change of colour or some other form of emphasis. These are things that you need to think about as you organize your evidence on a screen.

▲ Figure 4.8 This shows a range of different ways images and text can be presented in your art-making inquiries portfolio

Completing the references list

Throughout your portfolio, whenever you use words that are not your own, you are required to use both in-text citations and a full list of sources. The list is uploaded as a separate document as part of your submission. You will also create a list of sources for either your connections study (SL) or your artist project (HL). Your sources should include any text generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools. You must clearly distinguish your words and ideas from the words and ideas of others by using quotation marks or italics.

You are also expected to distinguish between your images and the images of others that you have used. You need to be particularly careful when you use imagery (including found images and objects) and ideas taken from other artists. This is especially true when you are replicating the work of others in any work that you might include in the portfolio. For example, if you used a creative strategy that involves appropriating the work of others, to avoid the risk of **plagiarism**, you must explicitly refer to the sources of your inspiration and reference them clearly.

Key term

Plagiarism: using someone else's words, ideas or work without acknowledging the source.

All images of artworks included in your portfolio must be accompanied by citation lines providing the name of the artist, title, medium, size (and, if possible, location) of the artwork and the source of the image. As mentioned earlier, your own work should be labelled as "Candidate's work" or "My own work".

The IBO does not prescribe which style(s) of referencing or in-text citation should be used. Schools will usually adopt an academic referencing style that is used consistently in all areas of your school. Your teacher or the teacher-librarian will be able to support you in meeting the requirements of your school's style guide. Guides for the most-used styles can be accessed online.

Make a habit of keeping a record of the sources that you have used as you work. Word processing applications have referencing tools that will assist you in doing this. You can compile a list of your sources in several common referencing styles in a "manage sources" database tool. You simply identify the style and complete all the known data fields. In a text document, you can ask the tool to create an in-text citation or generate a reference list of all the sources that you have used. There are also smartphone applications and web pages that can help you with this.

Referencing style	In-text citation	Full citation for list of sources
APA	(Katz, Paterson & Poppy, 2025)	Katz, N., Paterson, J., & Poppy, S. (2025). *Oxford resources for IB DP visual arts 2025 course book.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
MLA	(Katz, Paterson and Poppy)	Katz, Nathaniel, Jayson Paterson and Simon Poppy. *Oxford resources for IB DP visual arts 2025 course book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025.
Chicago	(Katz, 2025)	Katz, Nathaniel, Jayson Paterson, and Simon Poppy. 2025. *Oxford Resources for IB DP Visual Arts 2025 Course Book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Harvard	(Katz, Paterson, & Poppy, 2025)	Katz, N., Paterson, J., and Poppy, S. (2025). *Oxford resources for IB DP visual arts 2025 course book.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

When you complete your portfolio, review it and make a checklist of all citations that you have included in the document. Check that they are included in the list of sources.

5

Connections study (SL)

What is the connections study?

The connections study is an assessment task for standard level only. If you are taking higher level, you can skip this chapter and move on to the project task chapter that follows.

The connections study is worth 20% of your total mark for visual arts. It is made up of two document files, one that contains the study and a second with a list of your sources. These are uploaded to the IB for external assessment.

For the study, you will choose one of your resolved artworks to situate. You will situate the artwork by making connections between it, yourself and your audience. You will also investigate the context and cultural significance of each of these. Look at Figure 5.1 (which was first shown in Chapter 3: Situating). Your task is to apply this thinking to your own art.

With your chosen resolved artwork you will:

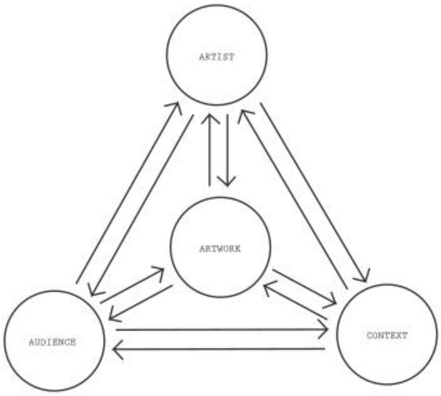
1. connect it to your context
2. connect it with two artworks by different artists
3. investigate the cultural significance of the two artworks by different artists.

The connections study is designed to assess how well you meet three of the assessment objectives for the course: situate, investigate and curate. Check you understand what they mean before you tackle the task.

- Situate: Chapter 3: Situating is devoted to this assessment objective. If you skipped reading it earlier, now is the moment to turn back and find out what "situate" means. It is fundamental to the connections study.
- Investigate: this is the research you undertake into connections, context and cultural significance. Contexts and cultural significance were also explained in Chapter 3. For the connections study, you will need to demonstrate your understanding of them in the knowledge you apply to the two artworks by different artists. This could include your discoveries through different experiences, such as seeing the artwork first hand, reading essays about the artwork or practical investigation through your own related art-making.
- Curate: you will need to present your connections study effectively. How you curate the content—how you select, organize and arrange images and words—should enhance the reader's understanding of your meaning. As curating involves both images and words, you will need to use subject-specific language.

This chapter explains how to complete your connections study so that it meets these three assessment objectives.

Chapter 3: Situating covers situating your artwork in greater depth.



▲ **Figure 5.1** Willats' socially interactive model of practice

The glossary in this book, as well as Chapter 8: Writing about art, will help you to use subject-specific language.

What are the requirements of the connections study?

The connections study is an opportunity to pursue what interests you most in your art-making. But it is important to remember that there are formal requirements that you must conform to when you submit. Your submission will include a PDF containing your study, along with a text file containing your list of sources.

Your connections study must be arranged in three clear sections, to cover the three aspects we outlined above. They are: to connect your chosen artwork to your context, to connect your chosen artwork with two artworks by different artists and to investigate the cultural significance of the two artworks. There is a maximum of ten screens to do this. You can distribute the ten between the three sections as best fits your study. Make sure it is clear where one section ends and the next starts. The obvious way to do this is by using clear screen titles.

The table summarizes the requirements for your connections study assessment.

Your task	Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
You will: • connect your resolved artworks to your own context • connect your resolved artworks to two artworks by other artists • show understanding of the cultural significance of your two connected artworks.	• Situate • Investigate	• 10 screens • 2,500 words maximum • List of sources

As your work will be seen on screen by the examiner, it makes sense to design for a horizontal format. Think about legibility too. If you are scanning handwritten content, it is essential that it is readable on screen. Similarly, small text and poor contrast between the text and the background will spoil your presentation. For example, red text on black rarely works. If you are ghosting images behind text, ensure that the contrast is great enough to make the words readable. We will return to these points when we discuss how to curate the connections study.

How you use subject-specific vocabulary is considered in all the assessed tasks. For the connections study, you will need to be specific and accurate with these terms, so use Chapter 8 and the glossary at the end of this book to help you. You are not judged on your spelling or grammar as this is visual art. It is your accurate use of subject terminology that is assessed (though it is good practice to write as correctly as you are able to).

How to cite your sources in this task

Your second submitted file will be a list of the sources you used for the study. These are the websites, books, academic journals, museum and gallery publications, interviews and zines, among many other places, from which you might get information. The list will need to include where your images came from. You will also need to submit a list of sources for your inquiries portfolio, so referencing is an important skill to learn for your whole visual arts course.

Even if you use your own words, you must cite the sources of your ideas. The IB requires in-text citation. This identifies the origin of an idea, information or image at the point you use it. Only including the source (without the in-text citation) is not sufficient. Your school will have a recommended citation style for you to follow. Be careful with quotations too; if you are using exact words from a source they must be placed in quote marks as well as being cited.

Do not forget to caption your own artworks whenever they appear. However, the study must remain anonymous to the examiner. Use captions such as "My own photograph/artwork" or "Student photograph/artwork", rather than your name. Also give the examiner the details of the scale and medium of your work.

You must cite the use of any artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Remember that AI uses existing knowledge to formulate text. This can be helpful in summarizing and drawing together information as a preparatory step to evaluating cultural context, but your task is to evaluate the significance of this knowledge to you, the artist—a unique position that AI is not able to take. This is illustrated in Anna's use of AI in her connections study later in this chapter.

How to approach the connections study

At the start of your course you were guided by your teacher, who will have introduced the learning objectives that underpin the visual arts course. Art-making is a way to explore the world and especially the things that really interest you. It is through these personal engagements that we situate ourselves in relation to our context.

As you gained more understanding and became more independent in your art-making, you will have developed lines of inquiry and completed artworks that are specific to you and express your interests. It is from these that you will choose a resolved artwork for the connections study. The second year of the course will be the time to plan how you will complete the study.

Using art journalling

You will have recorded your lines of inquiry in your visual arts journals, so start by reviewing these. We all have different ways of working. You might have kept your journals as a series of sketchbooks, notebooks, an online blog or interactive files. Alternatively, you might have a collection of sketches, annotations and material experiments in a folder. The connecting threads between these items are the history of your developing lines of inquiry. By reviewing your visual arts journals you can reflect on the development of your ideas.

Hopefully, you will already have formed a focus and begun to collate potential material for your connections study by tracking the influences of other artists on your art-making. Spend some time looking back over your journals and reflect on the five resolved artworks that you are selecting for submission. You will need to choose one of these for the connections study. It needs to be an artwork that was both influenced by other artists and reflects your context.

Sharing your ideas

Talking to those around you can make it easier to choose the best artwork from your resolved artworks. It helps to talk and test the suitability of your choice by posing questions. Can you explain to an audience how the resolved artwork that you have selected connects to your context? This audience could be your art class, so preparing a presentation might be an activity that your teacher proposes.

Forming an explanation of the significance of your artwork, which you then present to others, will help you to clarify your thinking. Listening to your fellow students' presentations will build a dialogue around the personal significance of your various artworks. This will help you as a group to each explain what is unique and personal to your artwork.

After these interactions, log the comments in your journals. You can use them when you prepare the text to explain how your resolved artwork connects to your contexts and audiences.

Exhibiting an artwork is the obvious way to gauge an audience reaction. It is also one of the structures of the classroom as studio. Perhaps there is a space in your school, such as the library, the school reception, shared student spaces or even outside the headteacher's office, where you can display your work to a wider

ATL Communication skills

Talking about your artwork does not need to be a formal activity. For example, try explaining your artwork to your family or perhaps to a friend as you travel to school. Explain to them how you were influenced by the ideas and techniques of other artworks and how your context has impacted your art-making. As you explain the connections, do they make sense? Sometimes, when we speak an idea aloud to an audience, we notice the flaws in our reasoning, so we need to think again and clarify what we meant.

These new audiences will bring fresh ears as they have not been influenced by the work you have developed in class. Their comments will force you to be clearer and more coherent in your explanations.

audience. Or ask a local café, hairdresser or doctor's waiting room if you can put your artwork on their walls. You could leave a comment book for visitors to write their thoughts, as artists sometimes do in a gallery. Others will approach you to make comments and ask you questions about the artwork. Their reactions might be a surprise to you and you will need to explain your work in your answers. Record these experiences in your journals; they will help you in the connections study task.

Journal examples

You will also have recorded all the influences on your practical art-making in your journals. These might initially be through inspiration mood boards with images from social media and then perhaps using digital or traditional paper scrap boarding. The advantage of scrap boarding is that you can juxtapose your own images with those that inspire you. Annotating the links helps to capture the connections to develop later.

The scrapbook aesthetic of Katya's journal (Figure 5.2) has allowed for the playful association of imagery. Hannah Höch's work has been modernized and explained by visual juxtaposition. Subject-specific terms clarify meanings without the need for formal writing or long explanations.

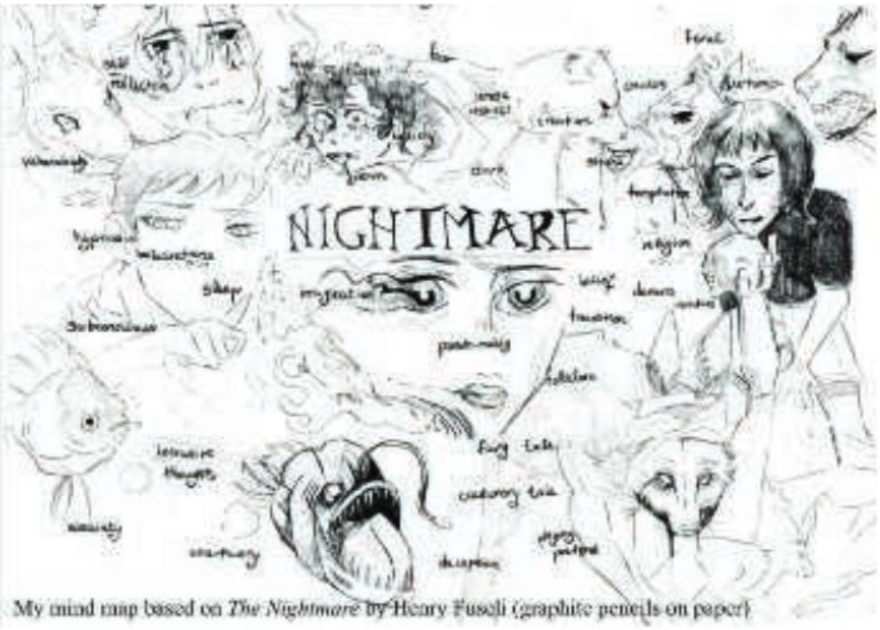
▲ Figure 5.2 Katya's journal is an exploration of the influences on her art from works by Patrick Caulfield and Hannah Höch

Sketching and annotating enriches the links with your art-making, especially when you use subject terminology. It helps to explain why certain works interest you and are catalysts to the development of your ideas. You can begin to extract the aspects of the works that are important to your art-making.

A small journal makes drawing in a public space less conspicuous and the activity becomes a private exchange between you, as the spectator, and the artwork. As he sketched in a museum, Jules did not attempt to make an accurate copy of the two paintings he was looking at. Instead, his drawing in Figure 5.3 is an exploration that forced him to slow down his looking. Away from the museum, he has played with collage additions so that the paintings by Henri Matisse and Georges Braque are appropriated into his own visual language.

▲ **Figure 5.3** Jules' use of subject-specific terms will strengthen the connections with his own art-making

In Figure 5.4 the student has mind-mapped visual imaginings prompted by Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare*. The freedom with which they respond to the painting is highly effective, acting as a bridge between the original artwork and the student's creativity.



▲ **Figure 5.4** The influence of Fuseli is transformed in these journal sketches into something personal and new

Nikki investigated the cultural significance of colonialism (Figure 5.5). The connections between ideas, knowledge and artworks are short and abrupt, reflecting the brutality of the topic. The placing of the images subverts any cultural hierarchies that might have existed between artworks and contextual photographs.

▲ **Figure 5.5** The presentation of Nikki's ideas reflects the tone of the subject matter—colonialism

As you can see from these examples of visual arts journals, the connections study is not unconnected to other parts of the course. You are selecting aspects of your art-making from your journals that are relevant to present to the examiner. Do not approach this as a separate activity. Only include what is needed to meet the assessment criteria (which will be discussed in the next section). Foreknowledge of how your work will be assessed will prevent you from wasting time by including irrelevant aspects, and will help you to emphasize what is important.

The assessment criteria

We will now explore the three assessment criteria for this task. As these are what the examiner will use to assess your study, it is important to understand them before you assemble your submission. Remember that you are presenting an investigation that situates one of your artworks in relation to context and cultural significance. As with any coursework submission, you are curating evidence to demonstrate your understanding to the examiner.

How your work will be assessed (IBO, 2025)

Objective	Criteria	How well your work shows	Marks
Situate	A: Connections with context(s)	• how your chosen resolved artwork connects to your own context(s)	8
Situate	B: Connections with artworks	• the connections between your chosen resolved artwork and at least two artworks by different artists	8
Investigate	C: Investigation of cultural significance	• understanding of the cultural significance of the two artworks by different artists selected in connection with your own chosen resolved artwork.	8
Total			24

The following six words feature in the higher-level mark descriptors that you will be aiming for: analysis, understanding, meaningful, relevant, justify and evaluate. Take a moment to consider how they might be evident in your submitted task.

Analysis

In the *Visual arts guide*, "analysis" is defined as to "break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure" (IBO, 2025). This is similar to taking something apart or splitting it into its different components to understand how it works. Chapter 8: Writing about art equips you with the specialist vocabulary to do this. For example, you might describe the overall effect of a painting, but to understand how it is achieved you need to conduct an analysis. This might involve looking in detail at the techniques and materials, but also the style, influences and many other factors that together communicate the overall meaning. This is a higher-level skill than describing, which is why it is linked to the higher mark bands. Analysis can equally be applied to ideas, as these too need to be taken apart, discussed and explained to be understood.

Understanding

Understanding is achieved through analysis. One dictionary defines understanding as "the power of abstract thought; intellect" (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2024). You will explain to the examiner the experience of your art-making by applying your knowledge of visual arts. As you do this, you will need to keep in mind the three key words "meaningful", "relevant" and "justify". In this context, meaningful means that what you write and what you show is purposeful and relevant. Your ideas, whether expressed visually or in words, should connect in a logical, coherent and sensible way. The content should justify your opinions. "Justify" is also an IB command term and is defined as to "give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion" (IBO, 2025). You will also need to evaluate the evidence that you present, that is, to "make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations" (IBO, 2025).

Activity

How well has Emily's connections study screen (Figure 5.6) met these six assessment words: analysis, understanding, relevant, meaningful, evaluate and justify?

Connections : narrative, medium and metaphor

Botticelli and Bernini inspired me to think that nature was close to beauty. I was influenced by the vivid and violent narratives and allegories that inspired them. I made connections between the female beauty and nature symbolised by the flowers Botticelli's 'Primavera' and the tree in Bernini's 'Apollon and Daphne'.

Medium

'Daphne and Apollo' influenced the medium. I used a white ceramic that echoed the traditional appeal of the marble. It was important for me to use a medium that would express the purity of beauty when compared with nature and especially with the delicate flowers in 'Demeter' as well as 'Aphrodite' the white ceramic was suitable because of the pure image it creates, that is not bimed by any other aspects. The texture also had to be smooth and tactile so that the figure appeared beautiful.

'Primavera' Botticelli 1478-82)

Allegory

I combined the face and nature in the same way as these artists used mythology to suggest the closeness of the human form plants and flowers. Bernini's 'Daphne and Apollo' shows the metamorphosis of Daphne into the bark of a tree, in 'Demeter' the sculpture also contains elements of transformation into nature.

My sculpture 'Demeter'

The flowers in 'Demeter' represent fragility, human beauty and nature, like Flora in Botticelli's 'Primavera' but also the metaphor for fertility.

'Apollon and Daphne' Bernini (1622-25) Marble

Narrative

The shocking story of 'Daphne and Apollo' is similar in horror in Botticelli's 'La Primavera' where the figure of Chloris has been ravaged by Zephyr and is transforming into Flora the goddess of spring. (Britannica) This links to my sculpture, which represents the ideals and aesthetics of a person's relationship to nature.

"She rejected every lover, including Apollo. When the god pursued her, Daphne prayed to the Earth or to her father to rescue her, whereupon she was transformed into a laurel." (Britannica,Encyclopaedia)

▲ Figure 5.6 Emily has shown her understanding of the connections between her work and those that inspired her

Notice how the juxtaposition of the images in Figure 5.6 justifies her comments about the connections, as we can see how each of the artworks uses natural forms in a similar way. The research into meaning is relevant to her ideas about visual allegory. There is an analysis of the connections between her artwork and the two artworks that inspired her, which demonstrates her understanding.

Understanding criterion A: Connections with context (8 marks)

For criterion A, you need to explain to the examiner the ways in which the resolved artwork that you have selected connects to your context. It is the connections that you make that are important. You are not being asked to tell the examiner the story of your life, but you are being asked to demonstrate how your artwork is specifically linked to your context.

Let us check the top level descriptor for criterion A: "The connections with the student's context(s) are justified by visual evidence. The study evaluates how the student's chosen resolved artwork communicates the connections" (IBO, 2025).

Notice that two of the command terms we discussed earlier, "justify" and "evaluate", feature here. The examiner is expecting you to make judgements about the connections. They are looking for visual evidence that supports what you say, so there is no point in describing connections that are not clear in your art-making. You might have a strong emotional attachment to the subjects of your artwork or strongly held beliefs that you want to share as you situate the artwork. But you should ask yourself: are these really evident in the artwork and are they relevant?

Choosing your evidence

You have selected a resolved artwork that is important and connected to you. What are these connections and how are they evident in the artwork? Let's consider how a well-known artist might approach this question.

▲ **Figure 5.7** Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from the Bibemus Quarry*, 1897

For criterion A, Cézanne is going to present his resolved painting *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from the Bibemus Quarry* (Figure 5.7). To connect it with his context, he will only consider points that are supported by visual evidence. He evaluates the connections by telling us:

- This is the mountain that he has seen since his childhood and he has always been fascinated by how it dominates the surrounding landscape.
- He lives in the south of France, where the light is intense and the colours are striking.
- He paints directly from nature; it is summer and hot so he has chosen a situation where he can set his easel up in the shade of the quarry.
- He is interested in the new science of geology, which he wants to explore in relation to his local landscape, saying to his friend Antoine-Fortuné Marion, "In order to paint a landscape well, I first need to discover its geological foundations" (Wilkin, 2020).
- His old school friend Jean-Fortuné Marion is now director of the Natural History Museum in Marseille. They are both interested in new scientific discoveries and the works of Charles Darwin, which reveal that the earth is much older than previously believed. They have been looking for evidence of this in the rocks of this quarry.

He justifies these connections by pointing out that in the painting he has:

- composed the scene to make the mountain dominate
- echoed the forms of the mountain with the forms of the rocks
- used sharp contrasts and vibrant colours to capture the sunlight
- emphasized the mass of the earth and given the quarry visual focus through the glowing ochres
- used the painting's title to draw attention to the importance of the location.

He concludes with his big concept. The painting is a metaphor, where this small part of the earth represents the geology of millions of years and his fleeting presence, situated as a painter in the quarry.

Like Cézanne, the connections that you make will be unique to you and will depend on the form of your resolved artwork. For example:

- a still-life painting can link to the artist's context through the cultural significance and meaning of objects chosen
- a landscape through the significance of the scene selected
- a portrait through the connections with the subject chosen
- a fashion design through the significance of choices of fabrics, colours and techniques
- an installation through personal resonances of the kinetic and visual experiences
- a photo shoot through the associations of time, place and subject to you
- a sculpture through the engagement with materials and forms.

Activity

Some guiding questions

It might be helpful to look back at the ideas in Chapter 3: Situating to see which of these apply to you as an artist. Ask yourself:

- In what ways does my artwork show the influences of where I am in time and space?
- Do my personal life experiences have evident/relevant connections to the artwork?
- Has sharing ideas with others influenced the concepts that appear in my artwork?
- How has my cultural context impacted my artwork?

These phrases might help you to introduce the connections with your context:

- "I was inspired by …"
- "The aspects of the work that most clearly show the development of my ideas are …"
- "As I developed my ideas, I considered how …"
- "As I review my work in the context of my situation/my surroundings/my influences …"
- "Looking at the artwork, the connections can be seen in the way that …"

Then follow through with specific evidence of how and where this can be seen in the artwork.

Case study

Anna has prepared two screens that will address criterion A (Figure 5.8). She presents her resolved artwork, a painting of her great-grandfather, and explains how this relates to her context. She is studying away from home and this situation is her motivation for a reflection on the importance of her family.

I had an exchange to Kunming, China. Whilst doing so the pictures I had taken of Buddhists especially caught my eye. I thought they displayed a very interesting culture and belief.

Own photographs

Both Colour and the shape of the head are very important elements that help show the Buddhists culture. The cloth worn by most Buddhists are a very reddish colours however they massively vary in their tone. Whilst some cloths are carmine red others are a warm orange or slightly magenta.

Connections with my context

I became increasing interested in the idea of subjective, artistic reality of portraits. Portraits are a representation of a person, capturing a split of a second in form of photographs, yet when in form of drawings or paintings portraits can represent way more of the nature of a person, involving the viewers not only with the artist's individual expression but also motivating them to interpret what they see in their own way. I wanted to make a portrait that would reflect the context of my family.

My family became very meaningful to me when I left my home in Germany to take the diploma in a British school. I wondered about how the young Buddhist monks I had photographed in Tibet missed their families and began to think about how I could use my art to confront the absences that I felt. I wondered if I could make an interpretation of the traditional family tree or a different sort of portrait.

The resolved artwork I selected for the connections study 'Portrait of my Great Grandfather' Mixed media and ash on board. 50cm x 40cm. Below is a detail of the texture.

Portrait of my Great Grandfather Mixed media and ash on board

My photos of my Great Grandfather

Ash Head No. 10 Zhang Huan 2008

Connections with my context

My line of inquiry for this resolved artwork was an investigation of how portraits bridge time and place. I thought about my family tree and the close links across generations, between myself, my parents and my brother. This led to a series of sketches of them in my visual art journals (on the left). A family celebration of my great grandfather's 100th birthday was the inspiration to make him the focus and I took a series of photographs to use. I wanted the painting to have special value to me and to be a celebration of the four generations of our family. This is when I saw Zhang Huan's ash paintings and sculptures and I began to think of how the materials I used could add significance.

▲ **Figure 5.8** Anna uses two screens to explore the connections between her context her resolved artwork

Understanding criterion B: Connections with artworks (8 marks)

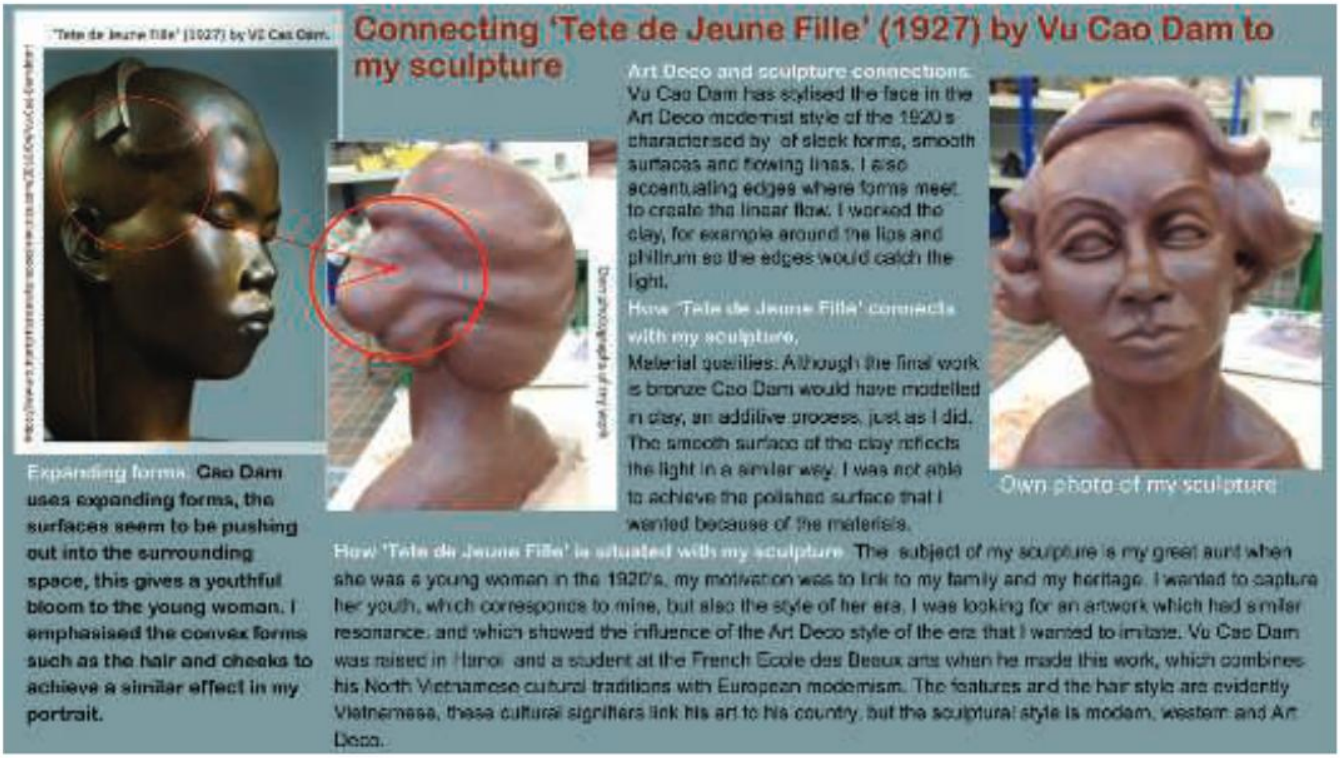
For criterion B you need to explain to the examiner the connections between your chosen resolved artwork and at least two artworks by different artists. You will need to use visual evidence to support the connections that you make. The top level descriptor is a useful reminder of your aims when you compile these screens: "Relevant and meaningful visual evidence demonstrates and justifies the connections with at least two artworks by different artists. The study analyses and justifies how the chosen resolved artwork connects with and is situated in relation to at least two artworks by different artists" (IBO, 2025).

You are going to analyse and justify the connections. Notice that the descriptor has two elements:

1. how the two artworks connect with your artwork
2. how the two artworks are situated with your artwork.

This is not just about making connections; you also need to situate the artworks. This means that you will use the relevant aspects of "situate" that were explained in Chapter 3. This includes the context and cultural significance of the artworks for both the artists, yourself and different audiences.

For example, look at Figure 5.9 by Isabelle, which touches on some of these elements. She situates Vũ Cao Đàm in Vietnam ("cultural signifiers link his art to his country"). Isabelle also mentions her own objective, "to link to my family and heritage" through the portrait of her aunt in the 1920s.



'Tete de Jeune fille' (1927) by Vũ Cao Đàm.

Connecting 'Tete de Jeune Fille' (1927) by Vu Cao Dam to my sculpture

Own photographs of my work

Art Deco and sculpture connections: Vu Cao Dam has stylised the face in the Art Deco modernist style of the 1920's characterised by of sleek forms, smooth surfaces and flowing lines. I also accentuating edges where forms meet to create the linear flow. I worked the clay, for example around the lips and philtrum so the edges would catch the light.

How 'Tete de Jeune Fille' connects with my sculpture,

Material qualities: Although the final work is bronze Cao Dam would have modelled in clay, an additive process, just as I did. The smooth surface of the clay reflects the light in a similar way. I was not able to achieve the polished surface that I wanted because of the materials.

Own photo of my sculpture

Expanding forms: Cao Dam uses expanding forms, the surfaces seem to be pushing out into the surrounding space, this gives a youthful bloom to the young woman. I emphasised the convex forms such as the hair and cheeks to achieve a similar effect in my portrait.

How 'Tete de Jeune Fille' is situated with my sculpture. The subject of my sculpture is my great aunt when she was a young woman in the 1920's, my motivation was to link to my family and my heritage. I wanted to capture her youth, which corresponds to mine, but also the style of her era. I was looking for an artwork which had similar resonance, and which showed the influence of the Art Deco style of the era that I wanted to imitate. Vu Cao Dam was raised in Hanoi and a student at the French Ecole des Beaux arts when he made this work, which combines his North Vietnamese cultural traditions with European modernism. The features and the hair style are evidently Vietnamese, these cultural signifiers link his art to his country, but the sculptural style is modern, western and Art Deco.

▲ Figure 5.9 Isabelle connects through making stylistic, formal and material links between the sculptures

The connections study is not a comparison task. It might be helpful to make comparative lists in your visual arts journals or use a Venn diagram to clarify similarities and differences. But it would be a mistake to include these in the study itself without developing the connections they suggest to you and explaining the influences on your art-making. The *Visual arts guide* suggests that these connections might be:

- "investigating their own context(s) relevant to the chosen resolved artwork—for example, through research, observation, fieldwork
- "discoveries about the artworks by the two different artists they have chosen to make a connection with, gained through a range of experiences such as direct observation, research and practical investigation
- "investigation of the contexts and cultural significance of the two artworks by the other artists
- "discussion informed by research about the cultural significance of technical, stylistic or conceptual choices made by artists, including themselves, to communicate with their audience
- "reflection on how artworks might be perceived differently in different contexts
- "use of and reference to relevant and reliable sources to support the study
- "direct engagement with the artworks they connected with or with their authors" (IBO, 2025).

The connections might be technical, conceptual or stylistic. Here are some suggestions as to how you might make these connections and examples of some submitted for assessment.

Formal qualities

Use Chapter 8: Writing about art to make links between the formal qualities of your artwork and the other two you have chosen. This is an excellent way to start making connections. But do not simply describe and analyse; make sure you explain how the elements of art communicate the artwork's meaning.

Influence on my own work: "FG Line" and "Automat"

Description and context

Contrast in formal qualities

Contrast in cultural context and symbol

Influence on formal qualities

Influence on formal qualities

Influence on cultural context and symbol

▲ Figure 5.10 This student's presentation of their connections is highly effective

In Figure 5.10, the student begins by considering shared formal qualities and differing material qualities. These comparative statements lead to a focus on the qualities of the student's drypoint etching that have been influenced by Edward Hopper. The student then develops deeper cultural and conceptual connections, such as the experience of liminal spaces in cities. The presentation effectively juxtaposes images to enhance the narrative connections between the works. Short paragraphs and the use of headings guide the reader through the ideas.

Technique, media, and materials

Artists are frequently inspired to change their working methods by seeing how others have manipulated materials. Perhaps it was a skilful manipulation of materials that prompted you to see if you could achieve the same qualities? Maybe the art-making strategies—such as a change of scale, format or combination of media—link the artworks. Perhaps you began to use paint more freely. Or maybe you were encouraged to be more accurate and attentive to detail.

Concepts

How does the function and purpose of the works you studied connect with your creative idea development? There might be strong political or social connections. In Figure 5.11, the student has connected their installation with Song Dong's work.

Statement of intention

I want to create an installation that visibly shows aspects of my life including places, objects, and smells. These will be presented in clay/ceramic hexagons. The hexagons are used to display this connection and how honey was used as a preservation so preserving my memory is also incorporated as an aspect of my work. Therefore honey is a symbol of preservation in my works. This links to Song Dongs work and how his intention was to preserve his mother memory through using found objects that his mother hoarded in her house.
The medium I will use for this work is clay/ceramics while also using found objects such as sand, water, fabric, recordings, and smells. This links to my inquiry through the idea of my own memory, and how each of the object holds its own memory and significance from my life

The found objects that are seen in Song Dongs Work on the right has been used as inspiration for using found objects and materials in my own work on the left

Found objects that can be seen in Song Dongs work https:// [illegible]

Top left – Holds sand from what I perceive as my home (Manly beach) where I grew up
Top right – Holds dirt from the front yard of my family home
Bottom middle – is the gold chain gifted from my grandmother

Candidates own images

▲ Figure 5.11 This student notes the shared use of smell and objects in their work and Song Dong's

> *A visual language enables artists to communicate meaning.*
>
> *IBO, 2025*

Visual language

It is likely that you have been influenced by the visual language of the two artworks you are connecting to. An analysis of this might involve exploring the characteristics and behaviours of different media and their expressive potential. Or you might analyse shared techniques, conventions, styles, signs and imagery.

In Figure 5.12, the Clayton Brothers play with the forms, media and conventions of visual language in the painting this student analyses. The student identifies the "fluidity", "colour", "Manga style" and "Pop surrealism", then analyses the formal qualities that link with their resolved artwork. A mind map explores how the figure will feature in the resolved artwork and engages with the visual language of *Brace Together Spin Spin*. The colour connections with the chosen artwork are evidenced by the colour swatches, further justifying links made in the text.

Connections between my mind map and the Clayton Brothers' "Brace Together Spin Spin" / Adding COLOUR / connection POP SUREALISM & MANGA

POP ART / POP CULTURE / MANGA: WHY I ADD COLOUR:

▲ Figure 5.12 The student's connections are both visual and written

Aesthetic qualities

Aesthetic qualities are the visual characteristics of an artwork that evoke emotions and values. Aesthetic judgements are culturally determined and artists are working within the conventions of their culture and tradition. For example, traditional sculptural materials create aesthetic value by using bronze and stone. But a contemporary art audience is used to these aesthetic conventions being challenged.

In Figure 5.13, the student has suggested an everyday aesthetic by knitting their artwork. This mirrors works by Dorothea Tanning and Louise Bourgeois and their subversive installations. The student has understood that these artists use household materials, such as cloth, to evoke the conflicting feelings of domesticity. The student also mentions the tensions of "the human condition", explaining their use of "neutral and skin-toned hues to imply skin". They state that they "created female clothing that becomes an extension of the body rather than a body on its own".

Connection to my own art making

Function and purpose

Similar to Louise Bourgeois, I explore the human condition through my own experience. In this case I explored the feeling associated with loss and how it feels as though your heart is being ripped out of your body. So in this work, I aimed to portray this feeling to the audience in a way they can similarly relate, through a visual depiction of how it feels, similar to how Louise Bourgeois brings her feelings to life in her installations

Additionally, like all the artists I explored the female form, however, instead of creating a form from stuffing I created female clothing that becomes an extension of the body rather than a body on its own.

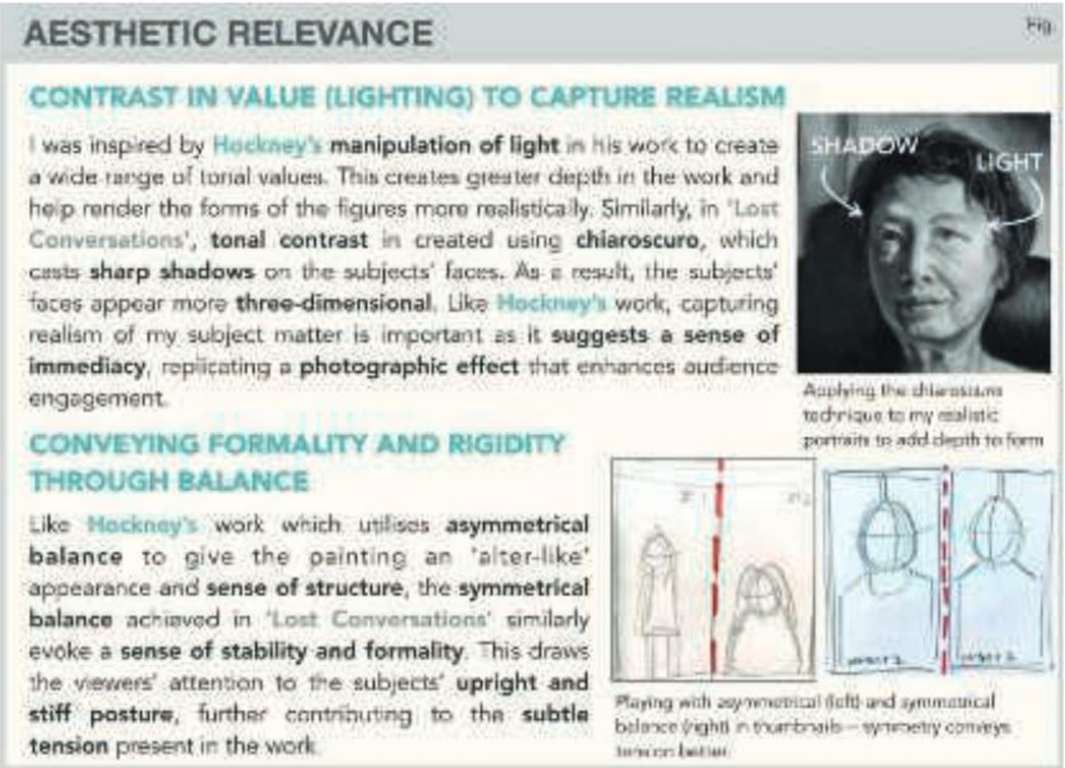
Formal qualities

Dorothea Tanning mixes unnatural and supernatural with familiar objects, for my work I wanted to make the wearer the familiar form in my artwork and the heart falling out is the unnatural aspect of my work. So I am similarly incorporating familiarity with the unnatural. I made the colour of the crochet to be as close to skin colour as possible so it blends in with the human and just draws the eye to the heart falling out.

I similarly employed neutral and skin-toned hues to imply skin. However, unlike them, I integrated skin colour to meld my work with the human form, while these artists employed pale, natural shades to give their sculptures a sense of human lifelessness.

▲ Figure 5.13 This student notes their inspiration from the works of Tanning and Bourgeois

Aesthetic connections might involve tracing how formal qualities have linked the works. Notice the effective use of subject-specific terms and analysis of visuals by the student in Figure 5.14. They also consider the effect of these on the function and meaning for the audience.



AESTHETIC RELEVANCE

CONTRAST IN VALUE (LIGHTING) TO CAPTURE REALISM

I was inspired by Hockney's **manipulation of light** in his work to create a wide range of tonal values. This creates greater depth in the work and help render the forms of the figures more realistically. Similarly, in 'Lost Conversations', **tonal contrast** is created using **chiaroscuro**, which casts **sharp shadows** on the subjects' faces. As a result, the subjects' faces appear more **three-dimensional**. Like Hockney's work, capturing realism of my subject matter is important as it **suggests a sense of immediacy**, replicating a **photographic effect** that enhances audience engagement.

Applying the chiaroscuro technique to my realistic portraits to add depth to form

CONVEYING FORMALITY AND RIGIDITY THROUGH BALANCE

Like Hockney's work which utilises **asymmetrical balance** to give the painting an 'alter-like' appearance and **sense of structure**, the **symmetrical balance** achieved in 'Lost Conversations' similarly evoke a **sense of stability and formality**. This draws the viewers' attention to the subjects' **upright and stiff posture**, further contributing to the **subtle tension** present in the work.

Playing with asymmetrical (left) and symmetrical balance (right) in thumbnails – symmetry conveys tension better

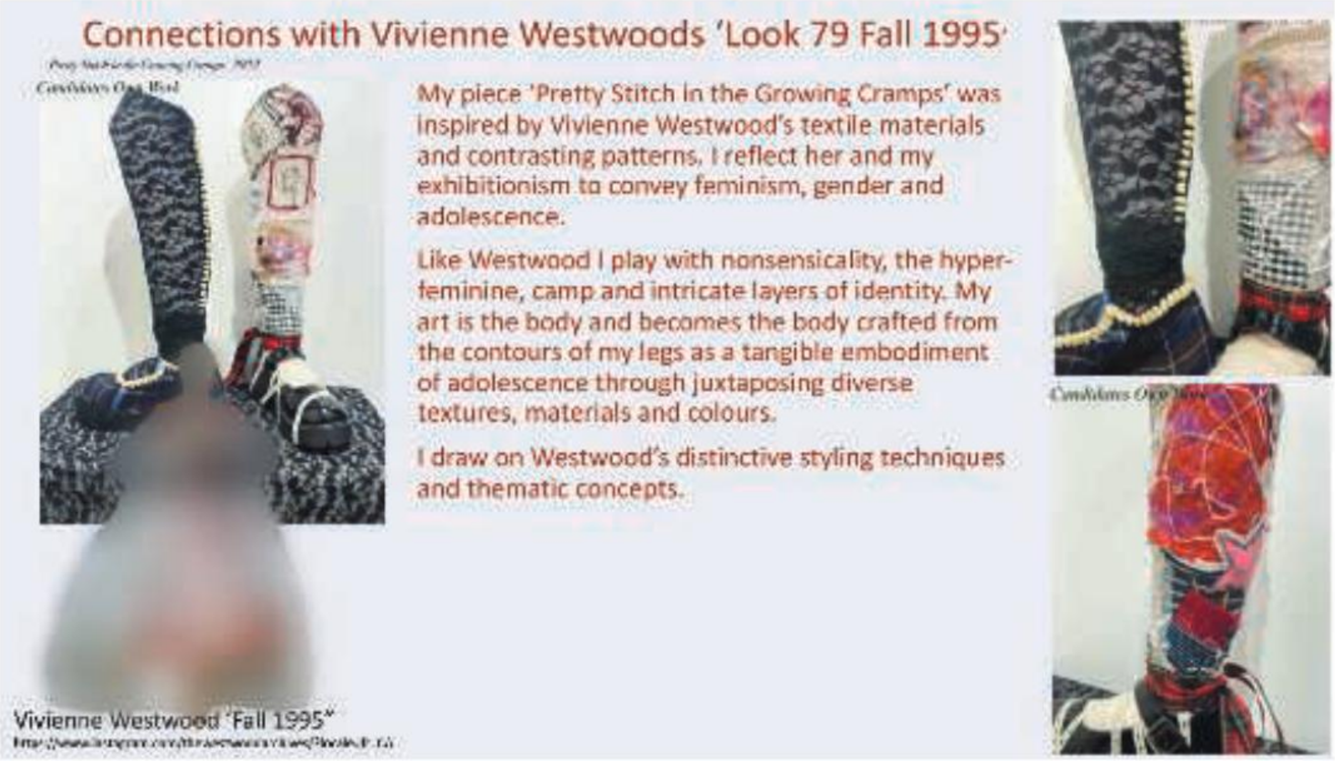
▲ Figure 5.14 This student makes a close analysis of the formal qualities that influenced their painting

Cultural significance

There are likely to be cultural links that connect the works. These may start from the choices you make, as you will be influenced by your own culture when selecting artworks. Have you used these cultural insights to situate your art?

Fashion is a strong manifestation of culture. The student in Figure 5.15 has understood the cultural significance of Vivienne Westwood's visual language and how it both subverts and engages her audience. She situates Westwood's "inner notions of femininity, gender and adolescence" by linking these to her own objective "of reflecting the intricate layers of identity".

The student situates herself and her artwork by referencing "female adolescence" and her own body ("crafted from the contours of my own legs"). The juxtaposition of the student's work *Pretty Stitch in the Growing Cramps* with Westwood's *Look 79 Fall 1995* effectively supports the connections made in the text.



Connections with Vivienne Westwoods 'Look 79 Fall 1995'

My piece 'Pretty Stitch in the Growing Cramps' was inspired by Vivienne Westwood's textile materials and contrasting patterns. I reflect her and my exhibitionism to convey feminism, gender and adolescence.

Like Westwood I play with nonsensicality, the hyper-feminine, camp and intricate layers of identity. My art is the body and becomes the body crafted from the contours of my legs as a tangible embodiment of adolescence through juxtaposing diverse textures, materials and colours.

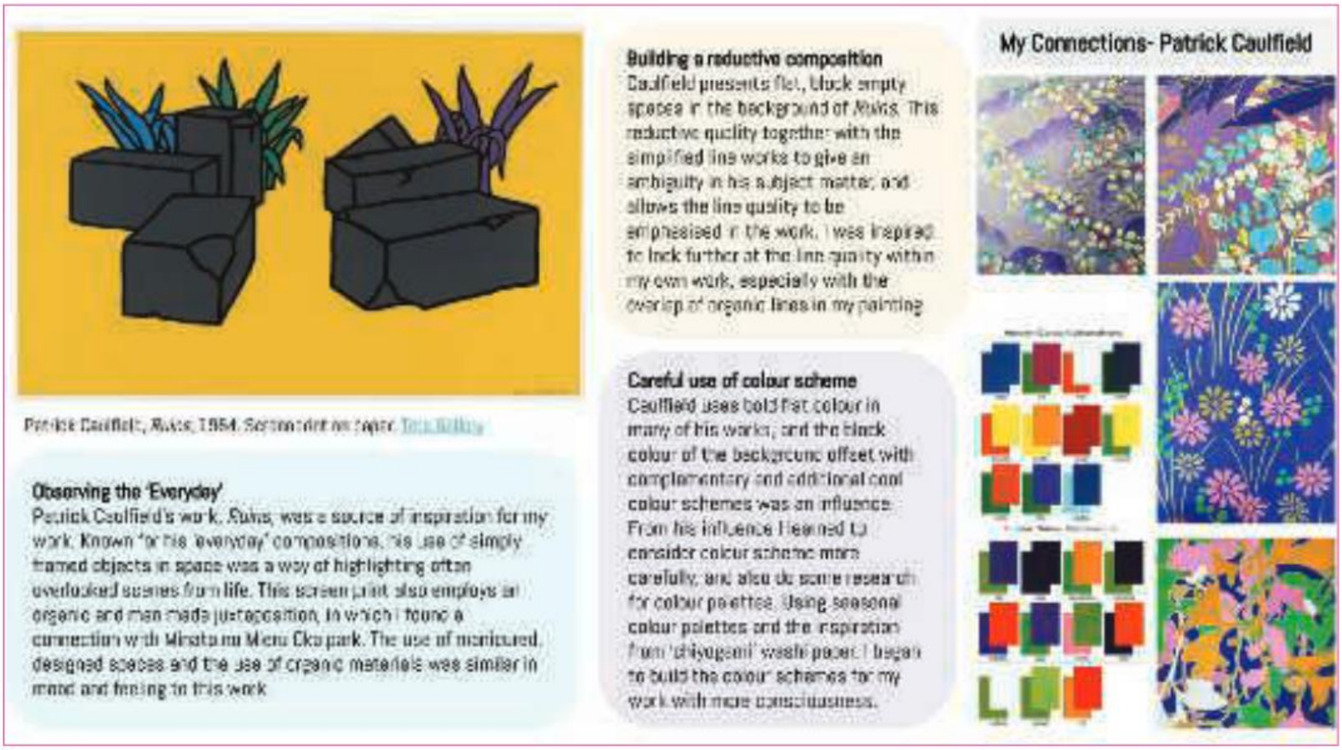
I draw on Westwood's distinctive styling techniques and thematic concepts.

Vivienne Westwood 'Fall 1995"

▲ Figure 5.15 This student effectively analyses the cultural significance of Vivienne Westwood's visual language

Choosing your evidence

You will need to explain connections visually, by juxtaposing your artwork with examples that you have studied. The illustrations need to be large enough for the examiner to see the features that you are connecting. Notice how effectively Emma's connections screen (Figure 5.16) uses visual means to support her text, which is less than 250 words.



Patrick Caulfield, *Ruins*, 1964. Screenprint on paper. Tate Gallery

Observing the 'Everyday'

Patrick Caulfield's work, *Ruins*, was a source of inspiration for my work. Known for his 'everyday' compositions, his use of simply framed objects in space was a way of highlighting often overlooked scenes from life. This screen print also employs an organic and man made juxtaposition, in which I found a connection with Minato no Mieru Oka park. The use of manicured, designed spaces and the use of organic materials was similar in mood and feeling to this work

Building a reductive composition

Caulfield presents flat, block empty spaces in the background of *Ruins*. This reductive quality together with the simplified line works to give an ambiguity in his subject matter, and allows the line quality to be emphasised in the work. I was inspired to look further at the line quality within my own work, especially with the overlap of organic lines in my painting

Careful use of colour scheme

Caulfield uses bold flat colour in many of his works, and the black colour of the background offset with complementary and additional cool colour schemes was an influence. From his influence I learned to consider colour scheme more carefully, and also do some research for colour palettes. Using seasonal colour palettes and the inspiration from 'chiyogami' washi paper, I began to build the colour schemes for my work with more consciousness.

My Connections- Patrick Caulfield

▲ Figure 5.16 Emma uses as much imagery as text to make her connections

Activity

Some guiding questions

It might be helpful to ask yourself straightforward questions about your two selected artworks by other artists before you start writing about criterion B.

- Why did I choose them?
- What visual and conceptual similarities are there with my artwork?
- What was I trying to achieve in my own art-making when I chose this artwork?
- How has studying these artworks changed how I make and think about art?

The following starter phrases may help you to write about connections.

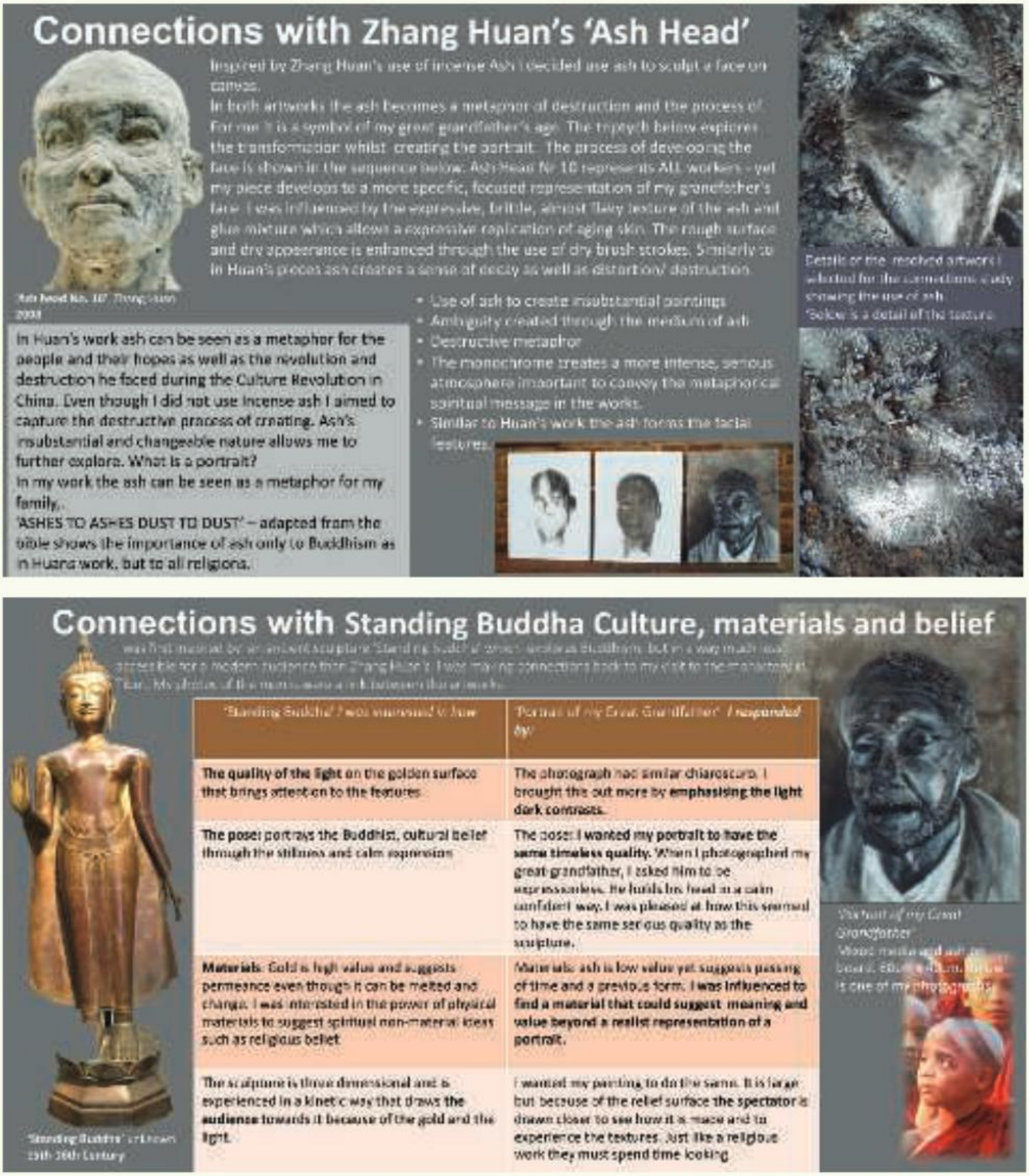
- I was influenced by …
- When I saw … I was fascinated by …
- I was struck by the artist's use of …
- The aspects of the work that most impacted my art-making were …
- As I developed my ideas I considered how …
- The ideas from this artist that are most evident in my work are …

Follow through with specific evidence of how the works are connected. These phrases might help you:

- This is evident in my use of …
- My choice of [colour/forms, etc.] shows …
- I then developed the concept into …
- The influence can be seen in the way that I …

Case study

Anna has prepared two screens that will address criterion B (Figure 5.17). She explains the connections between her portrait of her great-grandfather, a 16th-century Buddhist sculpture and Zhang Huan's *Ash Head No. 10*. Notice how she has curated the visuals to link with the screens addressing criterion A, which we looked at in Figure 5.8.



Connections with Zhang Huan's 'Ash Head'

Inspired by Zhang Huan's use of incense Ash I decided use ash to sculpt a face on canvas.

In both artworks the ash becomes a metaphor of destruction and the process of. For me it is a symbol of my great grandfather's age. The triptych below explores the transformation whilst creating the portrait. The process of developing the face is shown in the sequence below. Ash Head Nr 10 represents ALL workers - yet my piece develops to a more specific, focused representation of my grandfather's face. I was influenced by the expressive, brittle, almost flaky texture of the ash and glue mixture which allows a expressive replication of aging skin. The rough surface and dry appearance is enhanced through the use of dry brush strokes. Similarly to in Huan's pieces ash creates a sense of decay as well as distortion/ destruction.

'Ash Head No. 10' Zhang Huan 2008

In Huan's work ash can be seen as a metaphor for the people and their hopes as well as the revolution and destruction he faced during the Culture Revolution in China. Even though I did not use incense ash I aimed to capture the destructive process of creating. Ash's insubstantial and changeable nature allows me to further explore. What is a portrait?

In my work the ash can be seen as a metaphor for my family.

'ASHES TO ASHES DUST TO DUST' – adapted from the bible shows the importance of ash only to Buddhism as in Huans work, but to all religions.

- Use of ash to create insubstantial paintings
- Ambiguity created through the medium of ash
- Destructive metaphor
- The monochrome creates a more intense, serious atmosphere important to convey the metaphorical spiritual message in the works.
- Similar to Huan's work the ash forms the facial features.

Details of the finished artwork I selected for the connections study showing the use of ash. Below is a detail of the texture

Connections with Standing Buddha Culture, materials and belief

'Standing Buddha' I was interested in how	'Portrait of my Great Grandfather' I responded by:
The quality of the light on the golden surface that brings attention to the features.	The photograph had similar chiaroscuro. I brought this out more by **emphasising the light dark contrasts.**
The pose: portrays the Buddhist, cultural belief through the stillness and calm expression	The pose: **I wanted my portrait to have the same timeless quality.** When I photographed my great-grandfather, I asked him to be expressionless. He holds his head in a calm confident way. I was pleased at how this seemed to have the same serious quality as the sculpture.
Materials: Gold is high value and suggests permeance even though it can be melted and change. I was interested in the power of physical materials to suggest spiritual non-material ideas such as religious belief	Materials: ash is low value yet suggests passing of time and a previous form. **I was influenced to find a material that could suggest meaning and value beyond a realist representation of a portrait.**
The sculpture is three dimensional and is experienced in a kinetic way that draws **the audience** towards it because of the gold and the light.	I wanted my painting to do the same. It is large but because of the relief surface **the spectator is** drawn closer to see how it is made and to experience the textures. Just like a religious work they must spend time looking

'Portrait of my Great Grandfather' Wood medium and ash on board. [illegible] is one of my photographs

'Standing Buddha' unknown 15th-16th Century

▲ **Figure 5.17** Anna's screens addressing criterion B

Understanding criterion C: Investigation of cultural significance (8 marks)

For criterion C, you need to demonstrate to the examiner your understanding of the cultural significance of the two artworks that influenced your resolved artwork. You are not being asked to investigate every aspect of the two artworks. You need to investigate the aspects of cultural significance that are important, to understand them in context, and especially those aspects that link with your resolved artwork. You need to show that you have researched the following three aspects of the artworks' cultural significance:

1. Their significance in their original context, by considering when, where and why they were made.
2. Their significance across time and space, by evaluating the different ways they have been experienced since their original context.
3. Their significance for different audiences, by reflecting on how the artworks might be experienced differently in varied contexts.

Look back at Chapter 3: Situating to remind yourself of the details of cultural significance.

As we did with criteria A and B, it makes sense to review the top-level descriptor to fully grasp what is required:

"There is analysis, evaluation and clear understanding of the cultural significance of the two selected artworks both in their original context and for different audiences. The investigation is effectively connected to the chosen resolved artwork with evidence of relevant and meaningfully used research" (IBO, 2025).

You are being asked to analyse and evaluate, as in the previous criteria. Notice the importance of showing the examiner that you have understood the significance of your research. You will achieve this by only selecting research that is relevant to an explanation of cultural significance. You need to use your artistic judgement to select what is meaningful. There is no value in sharing all your research material with the examiner. After all, anyone can find information on the internet and AI can do that very effectively. We will look at how AI might help in this task and explore where your artistic judgement is needed.

Case study

For criterion C, Anna entered her inquiry question into ChatGPT: "What is the cultural significance of Zhang Huan's use of ash in his paintings and sculptures?" Here is the response in full:

"Zhang Huan, a renowned Chinese contemporary artist, is known for his provocative and deeply introspective artworks that often explore themes of spirituality, identity, and the human condition. His use of ash holds significant cultural and symbolic meanings.

1. **Buddhist Influence**: Zhang Huan draws inspiration from Buddhist philosophy and practices, particularly the concept of impermanence (Anicca). In Buddhism, ash symbolizes the transient nature of life and the inevitability of death. By incorporating ash into his artworks, Zhang Huan emphasizes the impermanent and ephemeral nature of existence.
2. **Historical Context**: Ash has historical and cultural significance in China, where it has been used in various rituals and ceremonies for centuries. Zhang Huan's use of ash can be seen as a nod to this tradition, connecting his contemporary art practice with the cultural heritage of his homeland.
3. **Cathartic Process**: Zhang Huan's early performances involved covering his body with ash, which served as a form of purification and transformation. This cathartic process of applying ash can be interpreted as a ritualistic act, allowing the artist to confront personal and collective traumas, as well as societal issues.

4. **Materiality and Texture**: Beyond its symbolic meanings, ash possesses unique material qualities that add depth and texture to Zhang Huan's paintings and sculptures. The gritty texture of ash creates a visceral and tactile experience for the viewer, inviting contemplation and reflection.
5. **Environmental Concerns**: In some of his works, Zhang Huan uses ash collected from incense burned in Buddhist temples, highlighting the connection between spirituality, nature, and human existence. This usage also brings attention to environmental concerns, as ash is a by-product of combustion and can symbolize both creation and destruction.

Overall, Zhang Huan's use of ash in his paintings and sculptures transcends mere materiality, imbuing his artworks with layers of cultural, spiritual, and existential significance. Through his innovative exploration of this unconventional medium, Zhang Huan challenges viewers to reflect on the transient nature of life, the interplay between tradition and modernity, and the universal themes of mortality and impermanence" (ChatGPT, 2024).

The ChatGPT answer is very helpful to Anna. She can immediately:

- adapt the five topic headings to organize her research
- note that the rituals of Buddhism are culturally significant and ash has a historical significance to Huan's work; she will need to research these to understand how
- note the useful descriptive vocabulary for ash ("gritty texture", "visceral", "tactile") that she could use
- note the ideas that link well with her own artwork, such as "themes of mortality and impermanence" and "ephemeral nature of existence"
- look up the word "existential", which she doesn't understand, and realize this is relevant too.

The ChatGPT response does not give any references for the information. This is frustrating, partly because the *Visual arts guide* specifies "use of and reference to relevant and reliable sources to support the study" (IBO, 2025). But it is mainly frustrating because it does not allow Anna to follow up the leads to check that the information is correct.

AI collects and sorts the information available, but it is not able to assess its accuracy. The better known the artist, the more information there is available. This becomes a problem because there is so much content posted online that there is a danger that uninformed general opinion distorts the AI's answers. When you use AI, you need to assess this potential bias.

Imagine you ask your brilliant friend to help you with your homework. Sometimes they are useful, but are they always reliable and are they always right? The better informed you are, the better placed you are to judge when your friend is talking sense. The same applies to the use of AI.

Anna will cite the use of ChatGPT as required by the *Visual arts guide*. She could potentially do this by giving the prompt she used and indicating when she used any of ChatGPT's answer in her study. However, though she used the AI response to her question to start her research, she did not use any of the response in her final submission. She used other sources.

The Wikipedia entry on Huan has extensive references, bibliography and external links to interviews with the artist and exhibition reviews. Reading some of these helped Anna to understand the cultural significance of his use of ash and she was able to cite these sources in her study. If you use Wikipedia, you must cite it, but bear in mind that it is considered potentially unreliable as it can be edited and updated by anyone. However, it can lead you to other sources, as it did for Anna, which are appropriate to use in your study.

In Anna's case, AI helped her to identify topics for her research. But it did not help her to demonstrate her understanding of the cultural significance of Huan's work. That required an artist's understanding of which content was relevant to her.

The cultural significance of Zhang Huan's 'Ash Head #10' 2008'

Spiritual cultural significance Ritual, rites and worship.

In Buddhism, incense ash acts as an offering to enlightened ones. The ephemeral smoke is a mirror the transitory nature of life. (Wilde, 2016)For Huan ash is a way to express all the dreams, aspirations and longings people have "infused" into the ash. "When I see people going to the temple and praying, they have all their life's wishes and prayers going along with this particular material-burned incense offerings." For Huan it represents the collective spirit of the Chinese population. (Huan, 2016)

WHY ASH?
Huan's fascination for incense ash, started when he visited Longhua Temple in Shanghai and saw the burning of incense. From Zhang's original interest in performance Arts one can understand the importance in the process of his Art, and in his use of ash. He uses ash in Ash head No 10 to express the ambiguity of the work and its potential for change. (Huan, 2016).

Aesthetic cultural significance: The material qualities of ash are of a tactile, dusty substance, which , absorbs the light. This adds to the meaning of the work. It makes what is a modern artwork look ancient and suggests transience, the figure seems to have passed through a fire. Maybe this is a metaphor for the Chinese cultural revolution and the changes that the Chinese people have lived through?

The Audience: I saw this sculpture when it was exhibited in The Saatchi gallery in London. It was surrounded by other sculptures and paintings by Zhang Huan. They all used ash, so the overall effect was sombre almost religious. The visitors were quiet and approached the works carefully, fascinated by the grey toned surfaces. For a western audience, the historical significance of the context is not immediately clear.

Ash head No. 10' Zhang Huan 2008

The cultural significance of Zhang Huan's 'Ash Head #10' 2008'

Historical Cultural significance: Zhang Huan uses ash to 'haunt' his subjects with 'blessings and solicitude from the human world'. He places his works in context of the Cultural Revolution to restores spiritual and emotional lives of the generation of the tragic time. By doing this Huan raises awareness in his audience. (Huan, 2016)
As Zhang Huan emotionally connects to the audience through his personal link to the images and stories behind them, he has a different approach to the work.

The series of incense ash paintings by Huan consisting of skulls, "representing the transmigration of life, the realization of enlightenment and rebirth", flags showing the "the discrepancy between government and culture", as well as portraits representing „the personalities and souls of individuals."(Genna, 2015)

Zhang Huan painting with ash

Hulton Archive / Getty Images

Local and personal context: Being born in 1965 just prior to the Cultural Revolution in Anyang, a rather small Chinese town in the Henan Province, Zhang experienced the full scale of the Revolution. For him many of his childhood memories are associated with death of relatives and friends including his grandma and neighbours.

Artistic context/National Context: Zhang Huan is contemporary to the Chinese Cynical realist art movement that developed post the Tiananmen square massacre in the 1990's. It was a reaction against official Chinese state art and became successful in the West. It was a seen by critic Li Xianting as a "parody of social realism". (Wide Walls 2024) However, Zhang was interested in performance and his art has more universal meanings. engaging with their cultural identity, historical thinking and historical awareness. Yet they do not purely focus on the past, but make it more accessible with elements important to the present. (Huan, 2016)
Global Context: Zhang Huan's work is now seen on the international art market.

▲ Figure 5.18 Some of Anna's exploration of the cultural significance of Zhang Huan's *Ash Head No. 10*

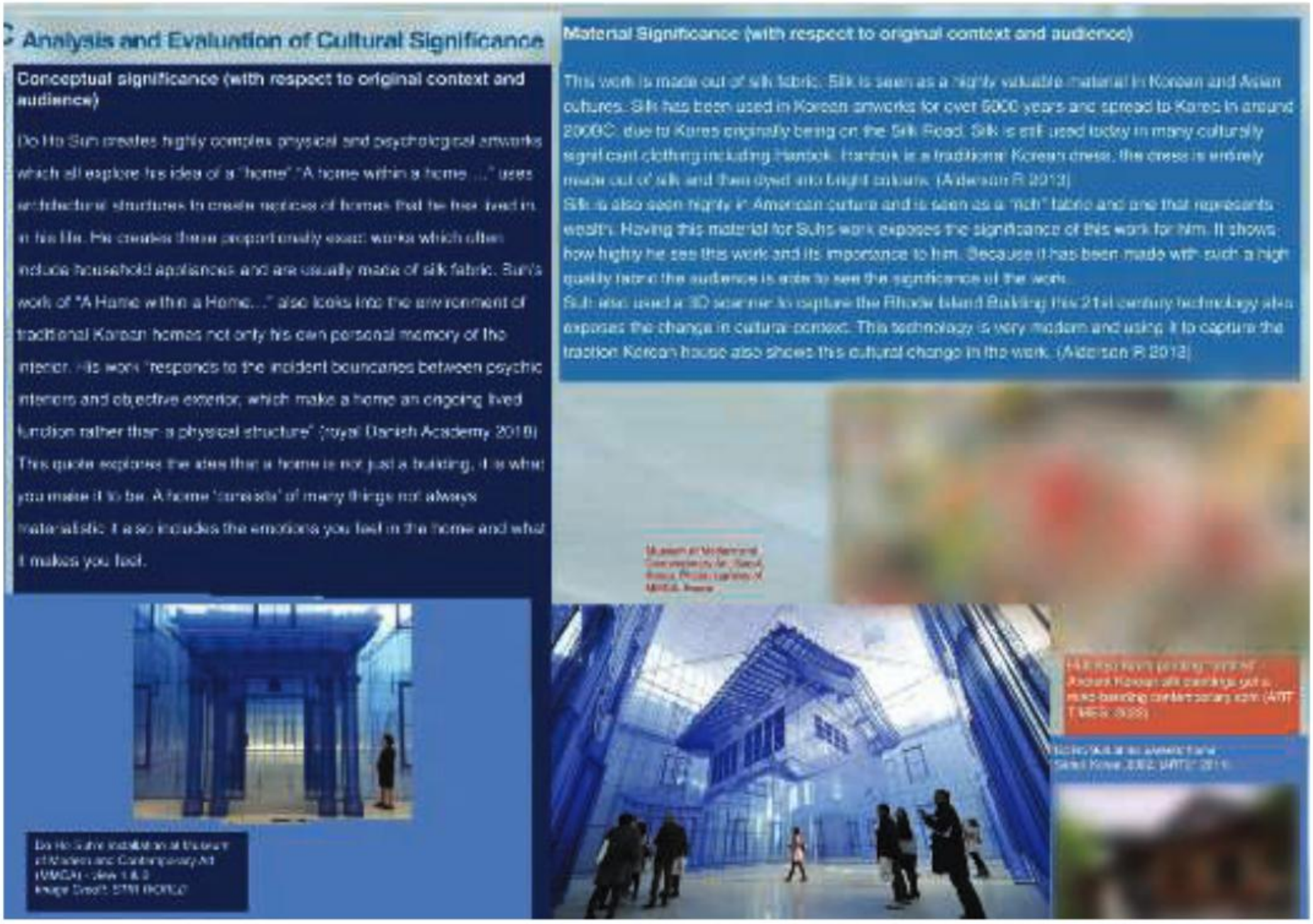
Guiding questions

These inquiry questions can be used together with the explanations of cultural significance in Chapter 3: Situating to start your investigation:

- What is the context of this artwork? When and where was it made?
- What cultural signifiers are evident in the artwork? What signs and symbols are present?

- How do the material qualities, form, style and technique contribute to its cultural significance?
- Why was the artwork made? You might consider the artist's intentions and the context of the intended audience. Who was it for?
- How did cultural ideas influence the artwork/artist?
- What artists and art movements influenced the artist?
- How has this artwork influenced other artists?
- What was the cultural significance of the artwork when it was made?
- How is the cultural significance of the artwork different now?

In Figure 5.19, the student effectively evaluates the cultural significance of Do Ho Suh's work *Home Within Home* through carefully selected evidence. They have not filled the screen with supplementary details of the history of silk or irrelevant context such as the artist's life. Instead, the three elements—silk, home and modern technology—are each presented through carefully cited sources and images. Note the insightful reference to modern technology. The relevance of the quotation from the Royal Danish Academy is justified by the student as they suggest why notions of "home" are significant to this installation.



Analysis and Evaluation of Cultural Significance

Conceptual significance (with respect to original context and audience)

Do Ho Suh creates highly complex physical and psychological artworks which all explore his idea of a "home". "A home within a home ..." uses architectural structures to create replicas of homes that he has lived in in his life. He creates these proportionally exact works which often include household appliances and are usually made of silk fabric. Suh's work of "A Home within a Home..." also looks into the environment of traditional Korean homes not only his own personal memory of the interior. His work "responds to the incident boundaries between psychic interiors and objective exterior, which make a home an ongoing lived function rather than a physical structure" (royal Danish Academy 2018) This quote explores the idea that a home is not just a building, it is what you make it to be. A home 'consists' of many things not always materialistic it also includes the emotions you feel in the home and what it makes you feel.

Material Significance (with respect to original context and audience)

This work is made out of silk fabric. Silk is seen as a highly valuable material in Korean and Asian cultures. Silk has been used in Korean artworks for over 5000 years and spread to Korea in around 200BC due to Korea originally being on the Silk Road. Silk is still used today in many culturally significant clothing including Hanbok. Hanbok is a traditional Korean dress, the dress is entirely made out of silk and then dyed into bright colours. (Alderson R 2013)

Silk is also seen highly in American culture and is seen as a "rich" fabric and one that represents wealth. Having this material for Suhs work exposes the significance of this work for him. It shows how highly he see this work and its importance to him. Because it has been made with such a high quality fabric the audience is able to see the significance of the work.

Suh also used a 3D scanner to capture the Rhode Island Building this 21st century technology also exposes the change in cultural context. This technology is very modern and using it to capture the tradition Korean house also shows this cultural change in the work. (Alderson R 2013)

▲ Figure 5.19 In this example, the significance of the material choice, silk, is evaluated in both a Korean and a North American context

Preparing your connections study for submission

Curating images and words effectively on screen can be time-consuming. Plan carefully and familiarize yourself with the advice in this section. Here are some initial pointers:

- Decide how you are going to organize the ten screens by pasting in the images and text across all of them before designing and refining each one.
- Give each screen a clear title to remind yourself of its focus.
- Divide text into short paragraphs, annotations or lists. It can be useful to give these headings too, so you identify a clear objective for each part. This will allow you to use the space effectively and see where there might be potential repetition or overcrowding.
- A title screen at the start of the presentation is not required. The examiner will only assess the first ten screens, even if the first just has a single title or image.
- Do not include your name or candidate number at any point on the screens—stay anonymous!

This is a visual presentation supported by words and not an essay with illustrations. The requirements are designed to help you limit what is included and the word count emphasizes the importance of visual communication.

How to use visuals effectively

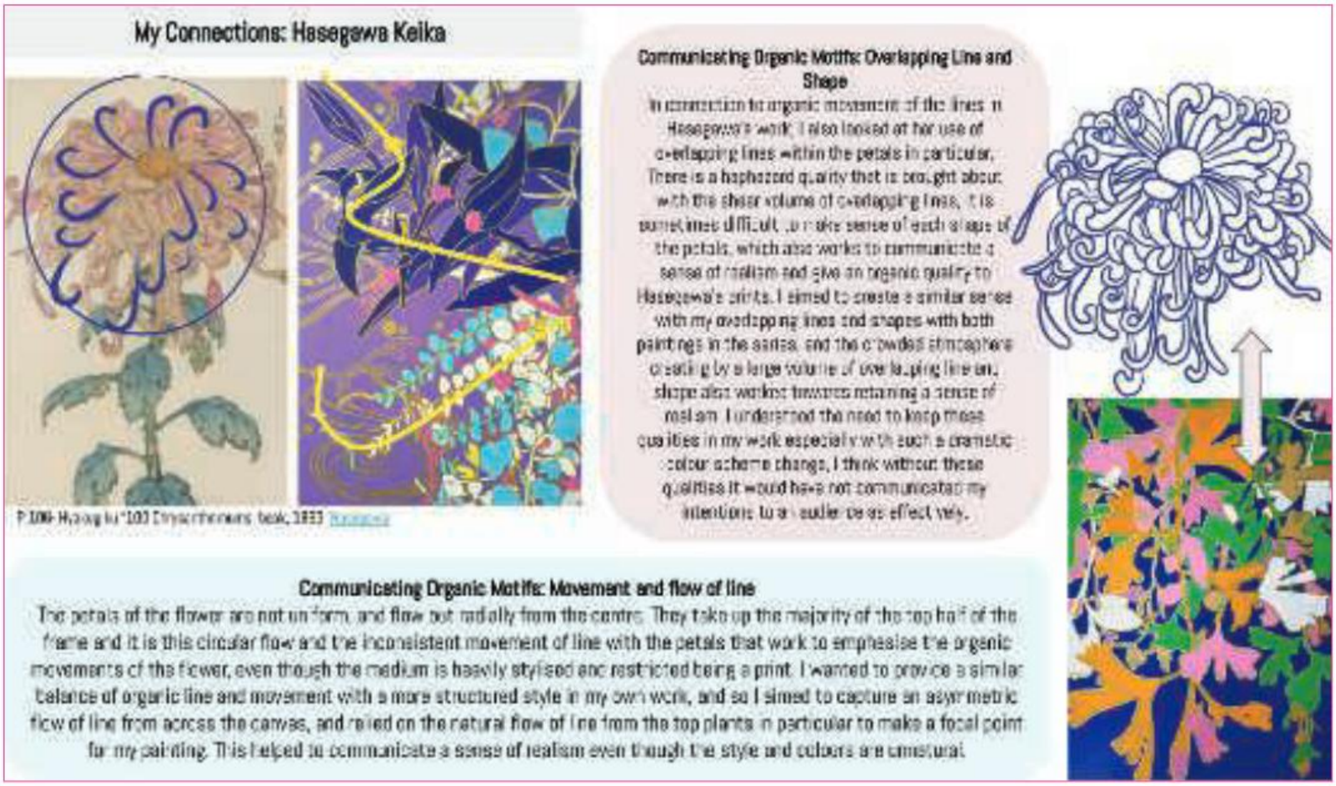
Juxtapose, contrast and compare. You will need to explain connections visually by positioning your own artwork adjacent to the selected artwork that you have studied. These don't need to be large, just clear so that the links are obvious. Often, cropping details is the most effective way of showing this.

Avoid repetition of the same image of the selected works. Instead, each time you place the image, think how it can be used to enhance what you want to say and use other images to contextualize it.

▲ **Figure 5.20** Cultural significance can be demonstrated with imagery supported by short texts

Your own work might be situated by the inclusion of contextual images that show relevant cultural aspects. It may be meaningful to include some of your unresolved work if the process is directly linked to the selected resolved artwork. However, be careful not to become distracted by repeating content from your inquiries portfolio that is not relevant to this task.

An effective screen communicates the meaning before the text is read. Look at Figure 5.21 from Emma's connections study. The graphic line drawing in the top right demonstrates how the outlines in Keika Hasegawa's print have influenced her use of line and rhythm. The arrows and circles Emma has added on the images draw our attention to the connecting visual dynamics. Before we start to read, we already understand the comparisons she is making. The aesthetic choices of background colours harmonize with the woodblock colours and the white spaces allow visual relief so that the text is easy to read.



My Connections: Hasegawa Keika

Communicating Organic Motifs: Overlapping Line and Shape

In connection to organic movement of the lines in Hasegawa's work, I also looked at her use of overlapping lines within the petals in particular. There is a haphazard quality that is brought about with the sheer volume of overlapping lines, it is sometimes difficult to make sense of each shape of the petals, which also works to communicate a sense of realism and give an organic quality to Hasegawa's prints. I aimed to create a similar sense with my overlapping lines and shapes with both paintings in the series, and the crowded atmosphere creating by a large volume of overlapping line and shape also works towards retaining a sense of realism. I understood the need to keep these qualities in my work especially with such a dramatic colour scheme change, I think without these qualities it would have not communicated my intentions to an audience as effectively.

Communicating Organic Motifs: Movement and flow of line

The petals of the flower are not uniform, and flow out radially from the centre. They take up the majority of the top half of the frame and it is this circular flow and the inconsistent movement of line with the petals that work to emphasise the organic movements of the flower, even though the medium is heavily stylised and restricted being a print. I wanted to provide a similar balance of organic line and movement with a more structured style in my own work, and so I aimed to capture an asymmetric flow of line from across the canvas, and relied on the natural flow of line from the top plants in particular to make a focal point for my painting. This helped to communicate a sense of realism even though the style and colours are unnatural.

▲ Figure 5.21 Emma's connections with Hasegawa's print

The examiner will not zoom in on details. If you want to draw attention to an area, crop and enlarge it so that it is clear on a standard screen view. Similarly, text should be readable, not small, and in contrast to the background. Be careful with ghosting images behind text as this can affect legibility.

Caption images with the artist, title, medium, dimensions and, where relevant, the location. The captions do not count towards the word count. Quotations are not included either. Remember to present these correctly by using speech marks and citing the source. Using quotations without commenting on them is rarely of value, as it does not show you understand the significance of the words. So follow any quotation with an explanation, such as, "This refers to …", "This explains the importance of …", "This shows/demonstrates/justifies …". This will help you to make a meaningful analysis of why the words are important.

Significant connections for me with Hasegawa's work

- Sensitivity to seasons, observing change
- Capturing a sense of stillness, a meditative atmosphere
- Calm, peace, feeling 'at home'
- Style of work- keeping organic movement and line while using a stylised technique

▲ Figure 5.22 Although the text is brief, it is all significant and relevant

How to keep within the word count

Using the subject-specific language from Chapter 8: Writing about art will allow you to say more with fewer words. There is no need for long sentences. Annotations and lists can be more efficient than longer written passages. Focused bullet points can be very effective, as in Figure 5.22 from Emma's connections study.

The key to keeping within the 2,500 word limit is intelligent selection. Aim to write no more than 250 words per screen. Think about what you want to say and think about your audience—the visual arts examiner. They are not reading your work to increase their knowledge. They are reading to assess your ability to research and analyse the cultural significance of the selected artworks and the connections to your resolved artwork.

There is no value in adding background content, irrelevant facts, generalized artists' biographies or general historical facts. Be ruthless in cutting out repetition. If you exceed the word count, the examiner will stop at that point, so the last part of your study will not be read. If you scan extracts from your journals, you need to crop out or blur any text that is not relevant to this task, otherwise it will add to the word count.

Think like an examiner

Now that you have read this chapter, you should have a firm grasp on what you need to do for the connections study. You should also have a clear understanding of criteria A, B and C. You can think like an examiner to check how well your own tasks meet the criteria.

Tip

This activity can easily be adapted for all of the assessment tasks, not just the connections study.

Activity

Pair up with a friend and pretend to examine each other's artwork. Make sure you only look at the assessment task you intend to submit. Ask your teacher for a copy of the criteria from the *Visual arts guide*, so that you can look at the level descriptors for each. The grid for criterion A is given below as an example.

To take on the role of an examiner, you need to put aside everything else you know about your friend. Look with the mindset of the examiner at only the evidence presented.

1. Read the level descriptors. These are the mark bands for each criterion. Use the explanations of the key terms 'analysis' and 'understanding' from the start of this chapter to familiarize yourself with the vocabulary.
2. Use a highlighter to indicate the key words in the descriptor that best describe the work. This will help you choose a level that fits. Then you can tell your friend which band their work matches for each of the criteria.
3. Explain to your friend why you have awarded the level by pointing out evidence in the work that supports your decision. When you give feedback, always give the positive points first. Giving two positive points to each point for improvement is a good rule to follow. Aim to be kind and supportive, but also honest and helpful. Sometimes, simple suggestions about what is missing or what you found confusing are the most useful. Swap roles and listen to your friend's comments about your work.
4. The most important step is the final one. Look again at your own work, thinking about the advice you received, but also with the mindset of an examiner. What changes could you now make to reach those top levels?

Mark	Level descriptor (IBO, 2025)
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The connections with the student's context(s) are minimal or superficial, with irrelevant or ineffective visual evidence. The study outlines how the student's chosen resolved artwork communicates the connections.
3–4	The connections with the student's context(s) are partially justified by visual evidence. The study describes how the student's chosen resolved artwork communicates the connections.
5–6	The connections with the student's context(s) are mostly justified by visual evidence. The study explains how the student's chosen resolved artwork communicates the connections.
7–8	The connections with the student's context(s) are justified by visual evidence. The study evaluates how the student's chosen resolved artwork communicates the connections.

6

Artist project (HL)

What is the artist project?

The artist project (AP) is a higher-level only, stand-alone, ambitious art project that you will situate within context and in relation to an **audience**. The AP is worth 30% of the total marks for the course. One of the fundamental features of the AP is a careful consideration of the context and location in which the artwork is presented or realized and the interaction of the audience experiencing it.

The AP is intended to be carried out during the second year of the course. By then, you should have developed a greater understanding of how to conduct an arts-based inquiry and situate work within a context. You will propose, research, dialogue and realize an original artwork in location. You will then reflect on its successes and imagine future iterations.

While the AP involves making an artwork, it is quite different from the selected resolved artworks assessment task. This task requires you to create five artworks and demonstrate your technical and conceptual qualities. For the AP you will create one artistic project. In both tasks, you will be asked to situate the work in a wider context. For the selected resolved artworks, you will also situate the work in relation to your own practice. In contrast, in the AP you will be asked to situate the work in relation to a selected location and an audience.

Key term

Audience: a group of people who see and experience an artwork.

In this task you are making an artwork, but it is your ability to situate the work that is being assessed. In all but one of the assessment criteria (C: Dialogues), "situate" is an assessed objective. The other objectives assessed are "investigate" (A, B), "refine" (C), "synthesize" (D) and "curate" (D). With so much emphasis on situating, it is essential to understand its use in this task.

To understand how the visual arts course uses "situate" to contextualize art-making, you should take the time to review Chapter 3: Situating.

In the 1970s, the British artist Stephen Willats was creating artworks in collaboration with the residents of housing projects in the UK. He contrasted the work that he was making with a traditional studio-based art-making practice, calling his work a socially interactive model of practice.

His interest in networks, feedback systems and cybernetics led Willats to develop a diagram for art-making (see Figure 3.3, page 58). The artwork shows a continuous dialogue between it, the artist, the audience and the context. All of these feed into and inform the meaning of the artwork.

Making art in this framework means that you cannot remove the context in which you are making it from the meaning that it eventually communicates. Nor can you remove the interaction that an audience has with your work. Its success is dependent on the consideration of all of these aspects and allowing them to inform the artwork. This model of art-making is now commonly referred to as participatory art, social practice or socially engaged art-making, and is an important part of the contemporary art landscape.

You will not necessarily need to make a work that has a direct social interaction at its core. However, you need to develop a project in which the context and audience play a pivotal role in defining the meaning of the work and determining its success. Your project will actively engage with the questions of where it should be located and who the work is for.

Audience

Throughout history, artists have created works with the intention of sharing them with others. Sometimes, audiences were small and exclusive, as with the commissioning of works for a private collection. Sometimes, works were made to be seen by wider audiences, like an exhibition. Historically, the work of art was concluded when the artist finished it and the audience saw or experienced it.

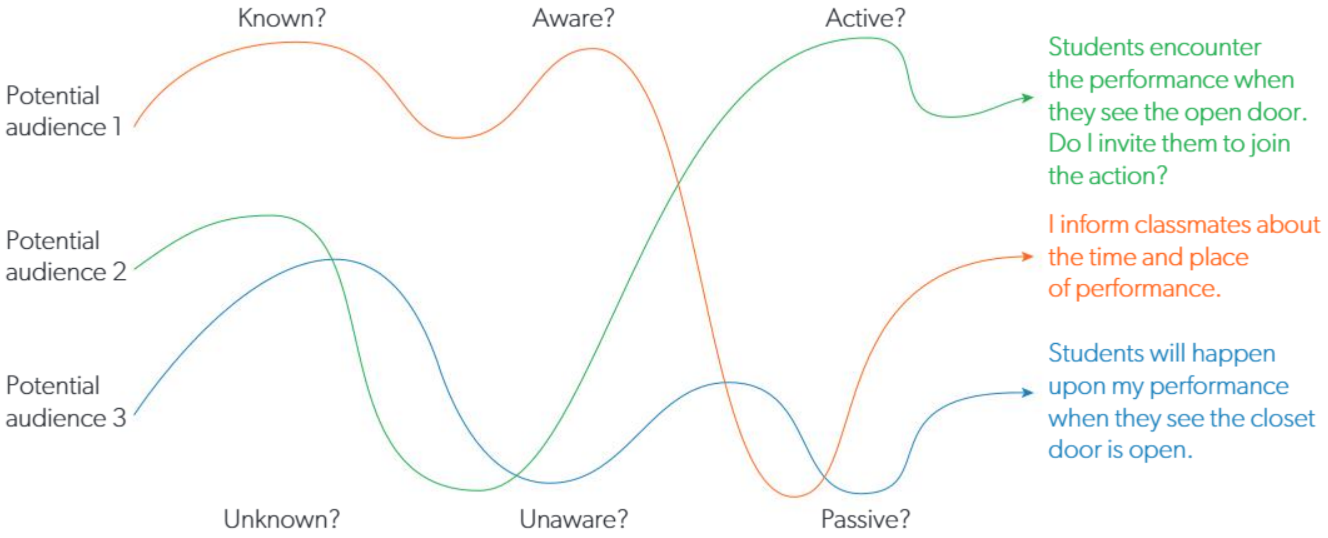
In the mid-20th century, artists started to challenge the idea that an artwork is complete when it leaves the artist's studio. Instead, artists suggested that an audience actively experiencing a work is an essential element in its realization. The French conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp wrote, "All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act" (Duchamp, 1957).

Contemporary artists have challenged conventions further by making the existence of an artwork reliant on the participation of an audience. In these instances, an audience moves from passive viewer to active participant.

When you consider the audience for your AP, a few categories might be helpful in determining the form your work takes.

Is your audience known or unknown?	• Known audiences can include members of your class, school, family, community centre, etc. In general, a known audience is a safe audience because they will for the most part be supportive of your work. • Unknown audiences are people who might come to an exhibition opening or encounter your artwork in a public space. Their reaction to your work is entirely unpredictable and this can have both negative and positive outcomes.
Is your audience aware or unaware?	• Aware audiences know that they are encountering an artwork. As a result, they enter into their art-experiencing mode. This means they might be looking for an aesthetic experience or viewing the work with a critical eye or with contextual understanding. • An unaware audience will encounter your work without the knowledge that they are in the presence of an artwork. The result is that their reaction might be less guarded, they might be caught by surprise and they might have an authentic experience. Not knowing that something is an artwork has its risks as well. They might reject the work outright or refuse to see the aesthetics in it. Working with an unaware audience also has ethical considerations. Since the audience is not necessarily choosing to engage with your artwork, you have to consider what might be appropriate to impose on an audience.
Is your audience passive or active?	• Passive audiences are the traditional art viewers who visit a museum or gallery. They look at the artwork, have a reaction to it and then move on. • An active audience, on the other hand, plays an important role in bringing meaning to the artwork. It might be that the artwork is interactive and requires the intervention of an audience in order to activate it. This applies to a kinetic sculpture or augmented-reality scenario. An artwork can also be participatory, as you will read below with the example of Future Farmers. In this type of artwork, it is only through the involvement and activity of the audience that the work reaches resolution and acquires meaning. If you make a participatory work, you will have to consider how you will ensure participation from an audience. Again, you will have to give ethical consideration to who you involve and what you will be asking them to do.

With these three categories, you can make considerations about the audience that you are directing your work towards. It might be helpful to create a table or diagram in your journal where you identify different audience types. In it you can consider the implications to your artwork of different combinations of audience types. An example has been created for you in Figure 6.1.



▲ **Figure 6.1** Potential audiences planning diagram

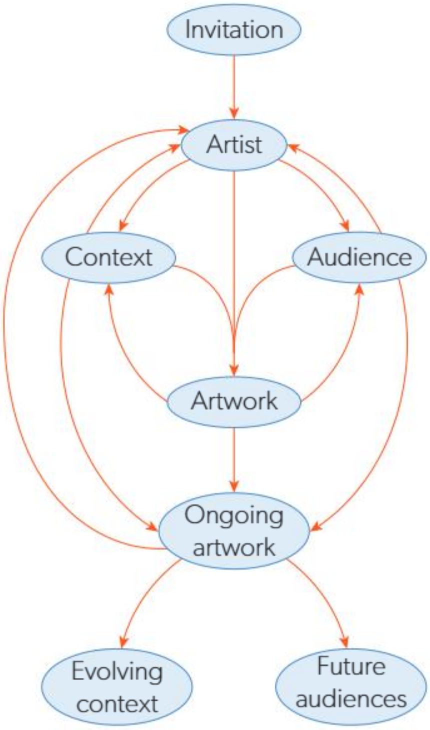
Audience dialogue

What does it mean to make an artwork that is in dialogue with a context and audience? Many contemporary artists work in this way, responding to a commission or open call from a museum. They might apply to a local government-funded town-improvement competition with a context-specific proposal. When the artwork is approved by the commissioning institution, it is realized in a specified location. Often these works have a social aspect to them, meant to increase the participation and engagement of the public.

An example of this is the work of the American artist collective Future Farmers. The group was founded in the 1990s by San Francisco-based artists and designers Amy Franceschini and Michael Swaine. The Future Farmers are at the forefront of the participatory art movement, integrating artistic propositions, social participation and ecological concerns. Their project Flatbread Society was started in 2012 in response to an invitation to develop an artwork for the waterfront development of Bjørvika in Oslo, Norway.

▲ **Figure 6.2** Future Farmers, *Flatbread Society Bakehouse*, Oslo, Norway, 2017

> *We formed Flatbread Society as a proposition for working with local people to establish an aligned vision for the use of this land. Flatbread Society uses grain as a prismatic impetus to consider the interrelationship of food production to realms of knowledge sharing, cultural production, socio-political formations and everyday life. Flatbread Society's dynamic activation of the site through public programs, a bake house and a cultivated grain field has attracted the imagination of farmers, bakers, oven builders, artists, activists, soil scientists and city officials; while simultaneously resulting in the formation of an urban gardening community called Herligheten and a full time farmer hired in collaboration with the Norwegian Farmers Union."*
>
> *Future Farmers, 2024*



▲ **Figure 6.3** The *Flatbread Society Bakehouse*'s interaction between artist, artwork, context and audience

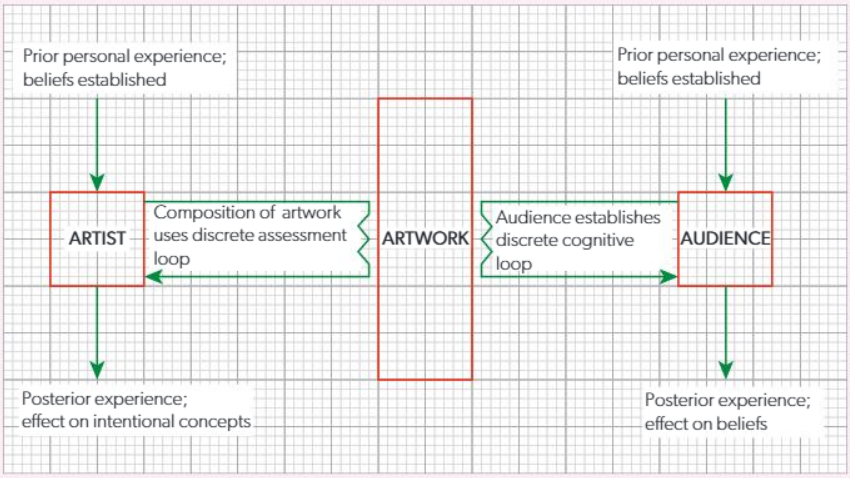
The Flatbread Society perfectly illustrates the intersection of artist, audience and context. The Future Farmers responded to the context of a waterfront development project by researching the background and history of the land on which it was to be realized. This research led to the idea of referencing the land's history as former farmland. The group decided to sow a wheat field and build a bakehouse to be utilized by the local community. Once the artwork was realized by the artists, it entered into a continuous feedback loop that continues to inform its meaning in new ways:

- The work attracted the interest of a wide audience.
- The audience enriched and grew the project further.
- The artists supported these new directions through public programming.
- The audience expanded and new uses were introduced.
- The site and its context were transformed by the project into something new.
- The artwork became self-sustaining, generating its own meaning through the interplay of audience, context and artist.

TOK

For your AP, you are asked to consider where you will realize your project and how an audience will interact with it. In his socially interactive model of practice, Stephen Willats argued that a work of art only acquires its meaning in the interaction between artist, artwork, context and audience. We often think of artists working in isolation in their studio, finishing a work and then presenting it in a gallery. We imagine that making and viewing a work are separate activities.

What is the role of the audience in the visual arts? What is the role of the audience in informing the meaning of a work? Does art require an interaction or response? Is the meaning of an artwork the result of the artist's intentions only? Does an artwork possess its own meaning that is separate from the artist or audience?



▲ **Figure 6.4** Stephen Willats' traditional model of the relationship of the artist to the audience

What are the requirements of the AP?

The AP is a structured task, with specific steps to be completed in the submission materials. The submission will consist of three files, as outlined in the table. There is a specific screen and word count for each criterion. These details are listed under the criteria headings later on in this chapter.

Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
• Investigate • Situate • Refine • Synthesize • Curate	• One PDF file of up to 12 screens including visual evidence and supporting written materials. The total word count must not exceed 2,500 words and the student must comply with the exact word counts set for each section
	• One video file up to three minutes long presenting the project artwork realized in the chosen context. The video is submitted accompanied by the artwork details and a short text with the finalized artistic intentions (100 words maximum).
	• One separate text file listing the sources

Read the section on citing your sources in Chapter 5: Connections study (SL) to help you compile your list of sources for this task and the case study about Anna's use of AI on pages 115–116 for guidance about using AI to inform your list of sources.

How to approach the AP

It is best to set aside dedicated class time to work exclusively on this task, though it can be developed and worked on while also working on your selected resolved artworks. Give yourself a set amount of time (for example, ten weeks) to complete this task. You and your teacher can evaluate and scale up or down the ambition of your project within the given time. In ten weeks you would not be able to construct a public bakehouse as the Future Farmers did, but you will certainly be able to accomplish more than a single painting. Break down the task into sections, for example:

- three weeks for ideation, context and location research, the initial material trials and preparation of the proposal
- three weeks for research into the work of others, the beginning phases of making the project and critique and feedback sessions to refine intentions
- three weeks to realize the work in location, observe and record audience interaction and reflect on outcomes
- one week to compile and curate the digital submission.

The AP is intended to be done at the beginning of your second year, as you gain more independence in your art-making practice. Towards the end of your first year or at the beginning of your second, you will have identified (either individually or with the support of your teacher) a specific idea that is appropriate for this task. This should be developed as your artist project. Your idea might have these characteristics:

- It has a strong link to a place or context.
- It deals with issues of social or cultural significance.
- It interconnects with an artwork or movement from the past.

Tip

Making an artwork within a context and in relation to an audience may seem challenging because it adds new elements to your planning. However, all artists are always working within a context. Sometimes, we forget just how much the artwork we make is informed by who we are, where we live, what is important to us and what is going on in the world. When you identify who you are as an artist and what is important to you, your work can take on greater meaning. When you consider potential audiences for your work, and where and when they might experience it, your planning is enriched. You are already thinking about the moment of your work's presentation.

- It has a social element.
- The location in which you will display it contributes to its meaning.
- It relies on the participation of an audience for its realization.
- It is a slightly more ambitious project.

If your idea possesses some of these aspects, it is a good candidate for the AP. Start using journalling or research to begin an investigation into the context of the work. This initial brainstorming will directly feed into criterion A, the proposal.

The assessment criteria

We will now explore the assessment criteria for the AP. Further details about the assessment requirements for each criterion are explained later in this chapter.

How your work will be assessed		
Objectives	**Criteria**	**Marks**
Investigate Situate	A: The proposal	8
Investigate Situate	B: Connections with artworks	8
Refine	C: Dialogues	6
Synthesize Curate Situate	D: Realization	10
Situate	E: Post-production evaluation	4
Situate	F: Future development	4
Total		40

Understanding criterion A: The proposal (8 marks)

What is a proposal?

The proposal presents your initial ideas for the AP. It needs to be completed before you move on to making the project. It includes an engagement with and research into your chosen context. It also justifies your initial intentions and how you plan to situate the proposed project within a context. You should include a consideration of the possible location where you will present or realize your work and what audiences it is intended for.

It may be useful to review Chapter 1: Lines of inquiry to remind yourself of the ways that inquiry can emerge and develop.

Since the AP is a stand-alone work, it is an opportunity to follow your interests without the constraints of producing work that is similar to your other pieces. You are free to create art that may connect with the next step in your studies or career, whether it is arts-related or not. Perhaps you would like to study architecture, but have not had the opportunity to explore this in your art-making inquiry. You could make an AP that explores architecture through a site-specific construction.

If you are unsure what to propose for your AP, there are several ways to generate ideas. One useful method is to start with a mind map. Place yourself or a topic that you feel passionately about at the centre. Making art about something that you have a personal connection to will produce more meaningful and powerful outcomes. A six-branch mind map will prompt you to consider various possibilities for an idea. Ask yourself:

- What is important to me?
- What do I want to communicate in my work?

After you have come up with a personally meaningful idea, you should identify the context of your work. Ask yourself:

- Why is this idea meaningful to me and my personal context?
- Does this idea relate to my local surrounding context?
- Am I thinking about a global context and how does this relate to me?

Next you should think about the context in which you would like to present the work.

- Is there a significant context or place where the work must be experienced?
- How will the considered context or location support your work in communicating meaning?

These questions should be written and reflected on at length in your journal. When you curate your submission, you will have the opportunity to shorten the text to meet the word count.

Once you have settled on an idea that you would like to explore, it is time to consider the context of the work. Research your chosen context.

- What is the history of this context?
- How is the context related to place?

Consider the most appropriate form for your work in the chosen context. Is there a medium that it naturally makes sense to utilize in this context (something inherent to the context, which might not be a traditional art-making form)?

Identifying locations

Consider how an audience might engage with your work in its location.

- How do you want an audience to encounter your work? What kind of experience should they have?
- Does communicating the meaning of the work rely on audience interaction with the work?

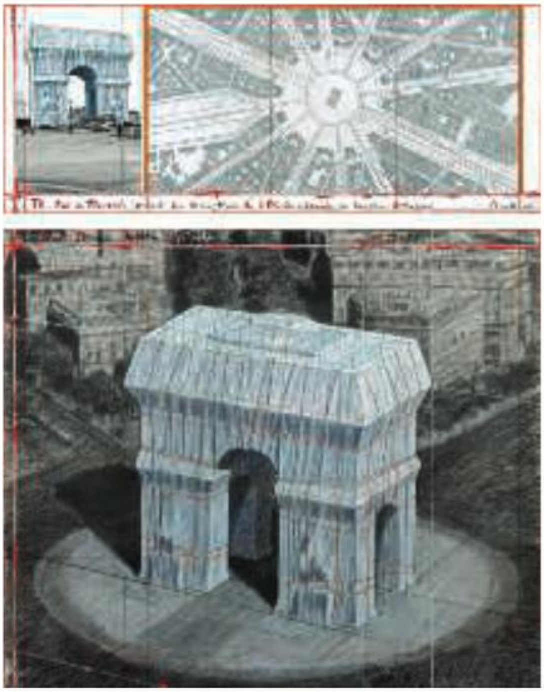
All of this initial work can be done in your journal. The most effective way to research context and location is by doing some field research, including site visits and observation. The Bulgarian and French artist duo Christo and Jeanne-Claude made an artwork out of their fieldwork and preparatory studies. Their projects were seemingly impossible to realize due to their scope and ambition, but thanks to their preparatory studies, they received the funding to realize them.

They covered the Arc de Triomphe in Paris with 25,000 square metres of recyclable polypropylene fabric in silvery blue and 3,000 metres of red rope. They also created a floating pier of 100,000 square metres of shimmering yellow fabric on Lake Iseo in Italy. Some projects by the artists were never realized in location, yet the sketches and studies stand as artworks in their own right.

Tip

As with all proposals, your project will undergo changes as it develops. The proposal is evidence of the initial stages of your planning. Your intentions for the work at this stage do not need to match what is eventually realized in context (criterion D). It is important that this is an authentic initial proposal, so that it can act as a road map for the realization of your project.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude included a map of the location, photographs taken in context and drawings of their proposed project.



▲ **Figure 6.5** Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped,* Paris, 1961–2021, part of the Project for Paris

Assessment requirements

Your task	Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
You will: • justify your proposal by presenting an investigation and awareness of the chosen context • consider technical and conceptual intentions • consider how and where the work could be realized for an audience.	• Situate • Investigate	• Three screens • 500 words maximum • Visual and written evidence

Choosing your evidence

Your proposal needs to include a combination of visual and written evidence. You are limited to three screens and 500 words. The table lists some things that you can include in your proposal:

Mind maps (including visuals and text)	• These are great for evidencing your ideas and developing intentionality in relation to concept, form and context. Note that the words in the mind map count toward your word limit.
Investigations into context and location (including visuals and text)	• Observational studies, photographic location scouting, archival images, location sketches, mapping, diagramming, written observations, research into context, cited articles, generative writing and annotated images.
Formal and conceptual consideration (including visuals and text)	• Sketches, material trials, experimentation with a range of creative strategies, evidence of previous work done in a similar manner and annotated images.

→

Statement of intentions (text)	• A clearly stated explanation of what you intend to make, what ideas you will be exploring, what media you will be using, what context you will be engaging with, where the work will be presented and how audiences will engage with it.
Imagining audiences (including visuals and text)	• Sketches, sketches on top of photographs, diagrams of interaction and research into audiences and their interactions in the selected context/location.

For Viviane's AP, she developed ideas from her interest in biology and biodiversity loss through human-driven climate change. In Figure 6.6 (a screen from her proposal), she has identified two relevant contexts: a national park on an island in the Netherlands where she holidays with her family and the Fridays for Future protest movement taking place in her hometown in Germany. Through visual research, including photographs from the location and collaged newspaper images, Viviane identified signs (whether they are informational signs in the park or protest signs at a demonstration) as an overlapping area and potential site for her intervention.

Proposal: Situating in context

Context: On holidays my family and I often visit the island of Schiermonnikoog. It's a small island in the north of the Netherlands with many national parks. Less than a thousand people live on the island and no cars are allowed. Although it is a protected environment, climate change is impacting the biodiversity on the island.

Context: Living in Germany I've followed the climate protest movement Fridays for Future. On many Fridays, students walk out of school and head downtown to join other students in large demonstrations to bring awareness about climate change.

Photographs of the island of Schiermonnikoog in the Netherlands

Hand painted signs play a big part in the demonstrations. It's a way for us to communicate our feelings about the environment

Signs play a big part in both of these contexts

At every entrance to a national park is always a sign instructing visitors on how to be respectful of the environment

Digital collage from newspaper photographs of Fridays for Future protests

Own photos

▲ Figure 6.6 A screen from Viviane's proposal for her artist project

In the next screen from Viviane's proposal (Figure 6.7), she has already started to develop the idea further and form it into an initial statement of intentions. She identified key inquiry questions that she will research further, as well as the artistic movement of interventionist art and the history of signs in protest. For her statement of intentions, she clearly stated the location of the intervention, her goal of raising awareness through the use of signs as her medium and the desired audience. In an additional text box Viviane further explored the audience: who they will be and how they will encounter the work.

A small mock-up on the left makes clear that the idea is still in development at this stage and it will most likely transform as more in-depth research is conducted and feedback is received.

Proposal: Ideas and intentions

Intentions: I will use strategies from climate change protests in order to intervene in the natural environment of the National Park Schiermonnikoog and raise awareness about biodiversity loss due to human-driven climate change. The project should address people when they are out enjoying nature and shock them into an awareness of how their actions affect the environment.

Inquiry questions to develop:
- How can art visualise the effects biodiversity loss on humans?
- How to use art to make people aware about how their actions impact the environment?
- How can I use signs in a creative way to shock people?

Audience: The audience should be shocked when encountering of the work. This is intended for people to encounter when they are going for a hike on the island. When people go to Schiermonnikoog on holiday, they usually want to forget about the problems back home and get in touch with nature. This project is meant to remind people that evidence of their actions is visible everywhere and especially in natural environments.

For further research:
-Artists using interventionist art strategies
-The history of signs in protest

▲ Figure 6.7 A further screen from Viviane's proposal for her artist project

Understanding criterion B: Connections with artworks (8 marks)

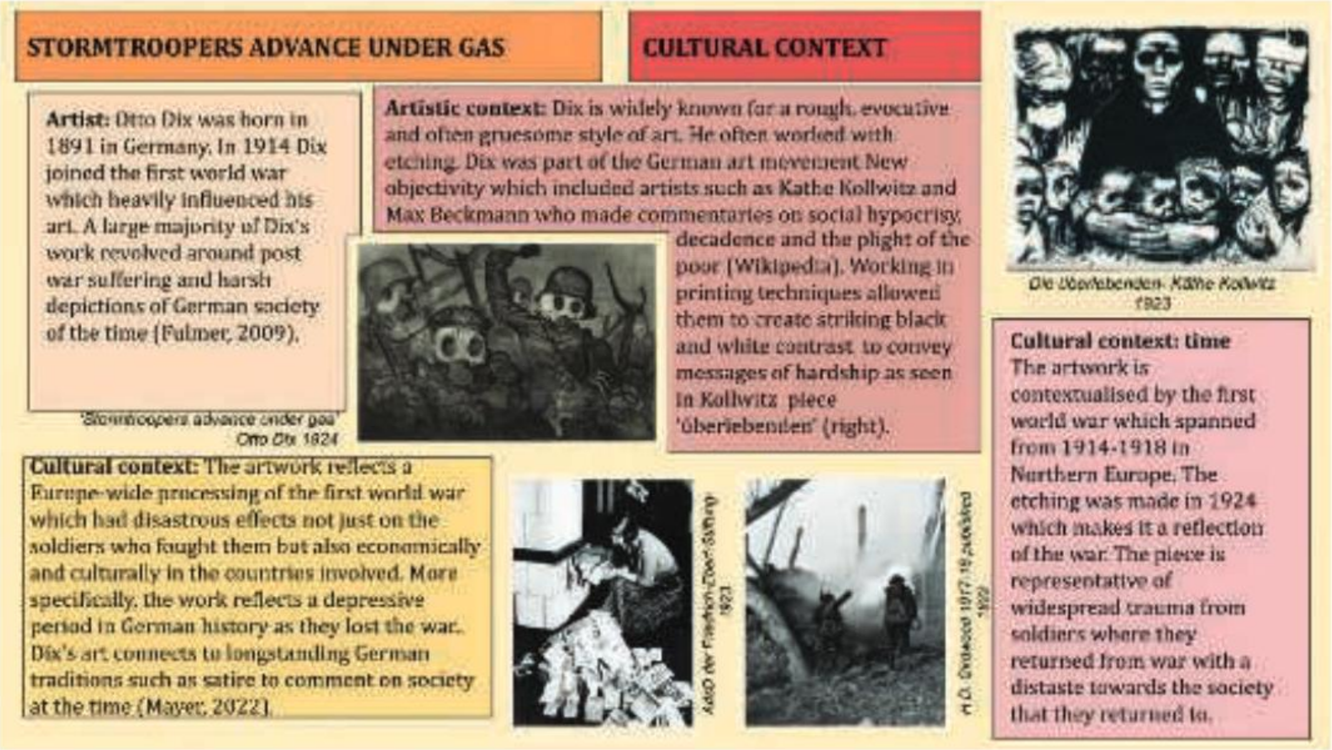
Making connections with the work of other artists

Throughout history, artists have been deeply connected with the specific conditions in which they were living and working. This had a great impact on the artworks they have produced. Your task is to investigate two personally relevant artworks to understand their cultural significance. By doing so, you will be situating them within their context. The works that you choose need to be relevant to you and your ideas, so the investigation can inform your choices about how you are situating your own work. This can be done by looking at several aspects of an artwork to determine its relevance:

- The personal circumstances of the artist and how this may have impacted the artwork.
- The emergent ideas or trends within the artistic community at the time the work was created.
- The politics of the time and how any political movements, wars or policies may have impacted the work.
- The reception of the work at the time by audiences and how this may have been impacted by any of the above factors.
- How the reception of the work has changed over time, until today, and how this may have been impacted by various factors.

In Chapter 1: Lines of inquiry, we followed Rowan's lines of inquiry as he explored print-making and ceramics. His experiments with cyanotype were his starting point. Though these did not yield results as a line of inquiry, he later picked up the idea for his AP. He intended to create a large-scale cyanotype that would develop in a public place in front of an audience.

Rowan was interested in the political nature of print-making and investigated the German artist Otto Dix's etching *Stormtroopers Advancing Under Gas*. In Figure 6.8, he conducted an investigation into the cultural context of Dix's etching. This type of investigation allowed him to contextualize the artist and artwork within a specific time and place to understand the significance of the work when it was created.



STORMTROOPERS ADVANCE UNDER GAS

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Artist: Otto Dix was born in 1891 in Germany. In 1914 Dix joined the first world war which heavily influenced his art. A large majority of Dix's work revolved around post war suffering and harsh depictions of German society of the time (Fulmer, 2009).

'Stormtroopers advance under gas'
Otto Dix 1924

Artistic context: Dix is widely known for a rough, evocative and often gruesome style of art. He often worked with etching. Dix was part of the German art movement New objectivity which included artists such as Kathe Kollwitz and Max Beckmann who made commentaries on social hypocrisy, decadence and the plight of the poor (Wikipedia). Working in printing techniques allowed them to create striking black and white contrast to convey messages of hardship as seen in Kollwitz piece 'überlebenden' (right).

Die Überlebenden- Käthe Kollwitz
1923

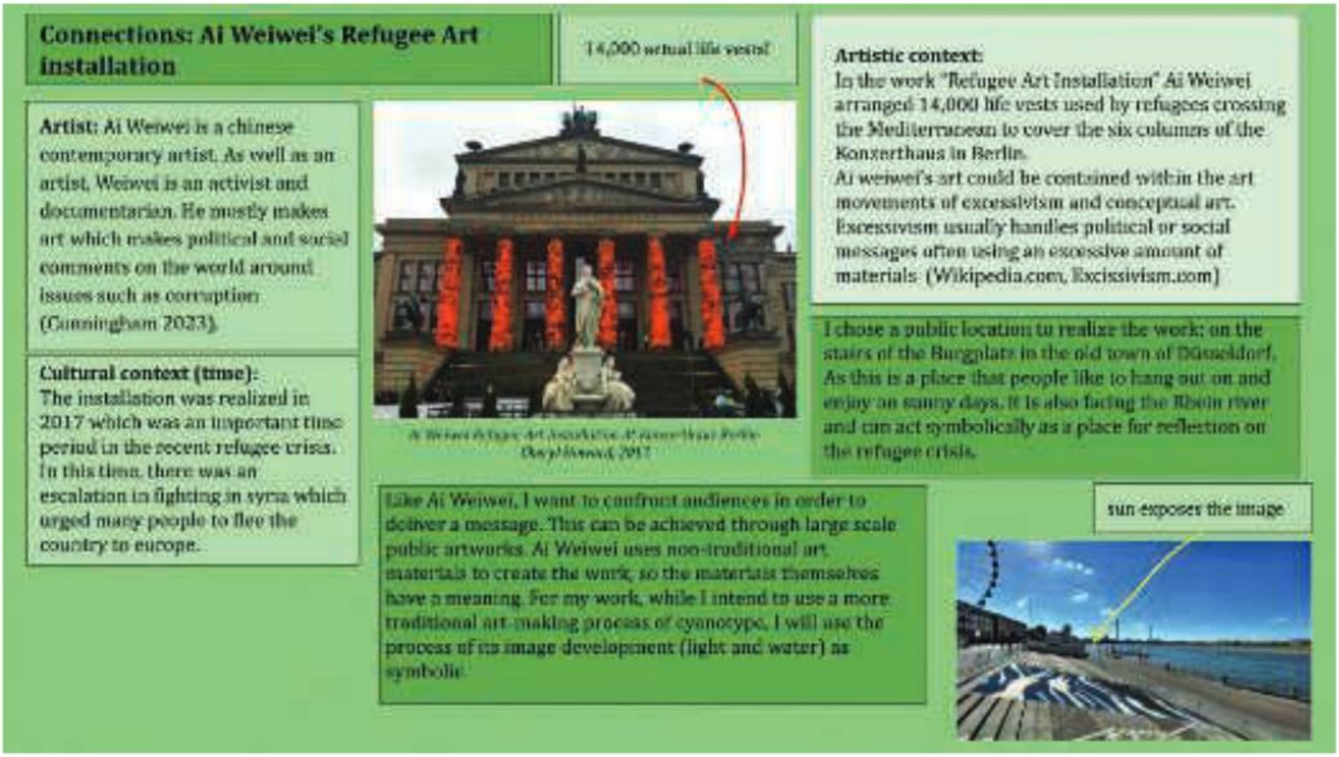
Cultural context: The artwork reflects a Europe-wide processing of the first world war which had disastrous effects not just on the soldiers who fought them but also economically and culturally in the countries involved. More specifically, the work reflects a depressive period in German history as they lost the war. Dix's art connects to longstanding German traditions such as satire to comment on society at the time (Mayer, 2022).

Cultural context: time
The artwork is contextualised by the first world war which spanned from 1914-1918 in Northern Europe. The etching was made in 1924 which makes it a reflection of the war. The piece is representative of widespread trauma from soldiers where they returned from war with a distaste towards the society that they returned to.

▲ Figure 6.8 Rowan's connections with Otto Dix and the medium of print-making

Print-making and its impact on spreading the political message of an artwork was one of the primary interests for Rowan in making connections. For this reason, the choice of a political print-maker like Dix was significant for his developing project.

For his second connection, Rowan looked at a more contemporary artwork by the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. While the work itself is not a print, Rowan was interested in the way the artist situates his work in public spaces, using large-scale installations and non-traditional materials. In Figure 6.9, Rowan investigates the relationship between his own choice of medium and context and the choices of Ai Weiwei.



Connections: Ai Weiwei's Refugee Art installation

14,000 actual life vests!

Artist: Ai Weiwei is a chinese contemporary artist. As well as an artist, Weiwei is an activist and documentarian. He mostly makes art which makes political and social comments on the world around issues such as corruption (Cunningham 2023).

Cultural context (time):
The installation was realized in 2017 which was an important time period in the recent refugee crisis. In this time, there was an escalation in fighting in syria which urged many people to flee the country to europe.

Artistic context:
In the work "Refugee Art Installation" Ai Weiwei arranged 14,000 life vests used by refugees crossing the Mediterranean to cover the six columns of the Konzerthaus in Berlin.
Ai weiwei's art could be contained within the art movements of excessivism and conceptual art. Excessivism usually handles political or social messages often using an excessive amount of materials. (Wikipedia.com, Excissivism.com)

I chose a public location to realize the work: on the stairs of the Burgplatz in the old town of Düsseldorf. As this is a place that people like to hang out on and enjoy on sunny days. It is also facing the Rhein river and can act symbolically as a place for reflection on the refugee crisis.

Like Ai Weiwei, I want to confront audiences in order to deliver a message. This can be achieved through large scale public artworks. Ai Weiwei uses non-traditional art materials to create the work, so the materials themselves have a meaning. For my work, while I intend to use a more traditional art-making process of cyanotype, I will use the process of its image development (light and water) as symbolic.

sun exposes the image

▲ Figure 6.9 Rowan's connections with Ai Weiwei

Assessment requirements

Your task	Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
You will: • demonstrate and justify connections with at least two artworks by different artists • analyse, understand and evaluate the cultural significance of the two selected artworks, both in their original context and for different audiences, with relevant research to meaningfully inform the project.	• Investigate • Situate	• Four screens • 1,000 words maximum • Visual and written evidence

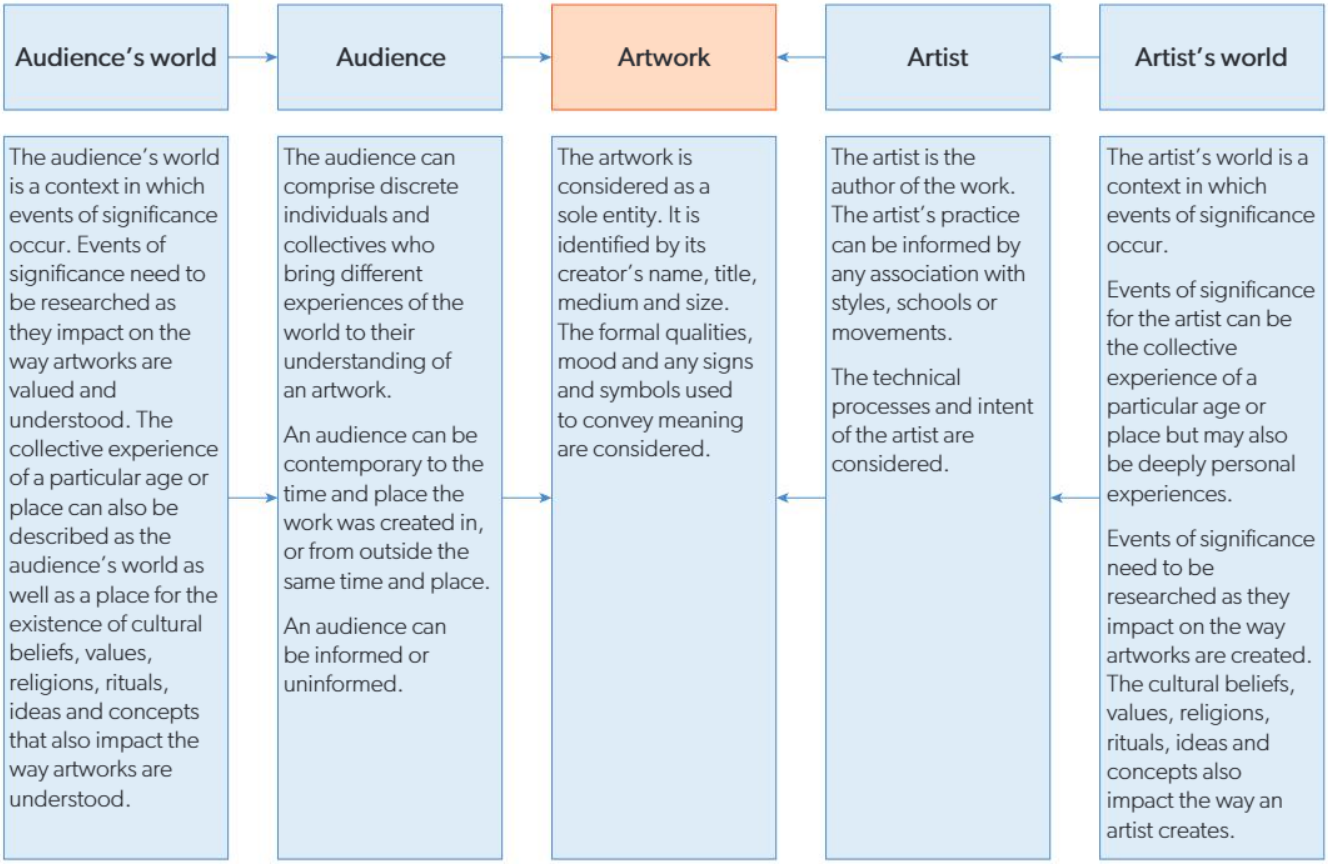
Choosing your evidence

The evidence for the connections with other artists' artworks should consist of two aspects. These are the investigation into the context and cultural significance of the selected artworks and a reflection on how they are relevant to and connect with your own developing project.

Since you have four screens and 1,000 words, there is enough room for creativity in how you curate this investigation. However, if you make it too text-heavy, you will quickly run out of words. The key is to include a variety of images that can visually support the task of contextualizing. These are some of the things that you can include in your connections:

- Images of the artwork: a clear reproduction of the artwork, ideally sourced from the museum or gallery that currently hosts the work. If the work is three-dimensional, include several images from a variety of angles. You could also include preparatory studies, artworks by the artist that preceded or followed the selected work, archival images of the work in its original display and images of the work in its current display. If you saw the work in person, include your sketches of the work. You should also include on-site formal investigations focusing on the relevant qualities that may have informed the reception of the work at the time and now.

- Images to contextualize the work artistically, such as artworks by other artists at the time: use these to highlight and discuss the ways in which the work was situated in relation to contemporary art movements. Explain how it either reinforced or broke with trends in the art world at the time of its creation.
- Images to contextualize the work within its time, such as archival images of the place in which the work was made and exhibited: use archival images from newspapers to give a sense of important events that may have informed the work.
- Diagrams analysing the reception of the work by its audience: for example, use June King McFee's conceptual framework (see Figure 6.10) or Willats' socially interactive model. Remember that any words in diagrams will be counted towards the word count.
- Diagrams analysing the potential reception of your own work by audiences to create a comparative analysis with the investigated work.
- Venn diagrams looking for similarities in context between your own work and the investigated work.



Audience's world	Audience	Artwork	Artist	Artist's world
The audience's world is a context in which events of significance occur. Events of significance need to be researched as they impact on the way artworks are valued and understood. The collective experience of a particular age or place can also be described as the audience's world as well as a place for the existence of cultural beliefs, values, religions, rituals, ideas and concepts that also impact the way artworks are understood.	The audience can comprise discrete individuals and collectives who bring different experiences of the world to their understanding of an artwork. An audience can be contemporary to the time and place the work was created in, or from outside the same time and place. An audience can be informed or uninformed.	The artwork is considered as a sole entity. It is identified by its creator's name, title, medium and size. The formal qualities, mood and any signs and symbols used to convey meaning are considered.	The artist is the author of the work. The artist's practice can be informed by any association with styles, schools or movements. The technical processes and intent of the artist are considered.	The artist's world is a context in which events of significance occur. Events of significance for the artist can be the collective experience of a particular age or place but may also be deeply personal experiences. Events of significance need to be researched as they impact on the way artworks are created. The cultural beliefs, values, religions, rituals, ideas and concepts also impact the way an artist creates.

▲ **Figure 6.10** June King McFee's conceptual framework

Understanding criterion C: Dialogues (6 marks)

Dialogues: Getting feedback on your work

As you develop your artist project, you should engage in ongoing feedback with your teacher and peers. This will help you to improve your ideas and perhaps point you in new directions.

The project requires that you have at least one moment of formal feedback with your teacher and peers, which is documented. This type of feedback is most commonly referred to in artistic circles as a "critique". During the visual arts course, you will be expected to participate in a number of formal and informal classroom critiques. Your response to a critique will be assessed.

In order to get the most out of this critique, carefully consider the questions that you would like to ask your peers about the ongoing development of your ideas. The assessment objective aligned with this criterion is to "situate". You should show peers your work in progress and ask questions that tell you about how your project functions in your chosen context and how an audience engages with the work.

With the help of your teacher, you should schedule your critique at a time that would be most useful for you in realizing the project. If you receive feedback too early in the process, you may not have done much yet. The feedback will not be very helpful in improving the work. Likewise, if you are too far into the making of your project, any feedback might come too late for you to make any meaningful changes.

The timing of the critique can correspond with its order in the criteria: after the proposal and connections, but before the realization. Before the critique you should have completed a proposal, looked at connected artists and started some general planning, trialling and experimenting for the realization of your work. The more visual evidence you have of what the project will look like, the better the feedback your peers and teacher will be able to give you. Some visual evidence that may be useful to present during your critique includes:

- your proposal and initial intentions
- images of the chosen location
- diagrams or mock-ups of desired audience interaction
- images of the work in progress, prototypes, sketches, etc.

Some questions that you could ask your peers include:

- What comes to mind when you view the artwork in progress?
- Are the ideas, concepts or symbols communicating my intentions?
- Does my chosen location work well in relation to my intentions?
- Do my choices in media support my intended meaning?
- How would an audience interact with the work?

Assessment requirements

Your task	Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
You will: • demonstrate how you responded to feedback in order to refine your project in relation to the context and audience.	• Investigate • Situate	• Two screens • 500 words maximum • Visual and written evidence

Choosing your evidence

The evidence that you present to demonstrate your engagement in critical dialogue should show how you responded to the feedback received. To do this, you could include the following:

- images of work in progress, with reflections on the feedback received about how it functions in context
- images of the original location and any change of location following feedback
- critical reflection on and revision of the chosen context
- mock-ups of audience interaction with the work based on feedback
- a comparison of context and audience interaction following critical dialogue
- reflective text on how the work can be refined.

For Daniel's project (Figure 6.11), he drew inspiration from Michelangelo's Ignudi figures in the Sistine Chapel. He created a series of paintings of his friends performing exercise routines in similar poses. He planned to situate the project in the gym.

Initially, he had intended to hang the paintings from the ceiling, in order to create a similar impact on the viewer as in the Sistine Chapel. In the formal critique with his peers, Daniel presented the paintings in progress hanging from the classroom ceiling. He also made a digital mock-up of the paintings hanging in the gym.

His peers discussed whether Daniel's figures would have the desired impact hanging from the ceiling or whether he could use other parts of the gym to communicate his message more effectively. One suggestion was to use the mirror wall as a place of display. Following the critique, Daniel created a digital mock-up with the paintings on the mirror wall of the gym and included this in his "dialogues" section.

DIALOGUES

My project is inspired by the ignudi of the Sistine chapel. Initially I planned to create a miniature sistine chapel, creating four of my own ignudi and having the four paintings hanging up in the gym and looking down onto the viewer. My Ignudi are performing a workout that directly mimics the poses of the ignudi in the Sistine chapel.

My desired impact is that as people are working out they are thinking about anxiety disorders such as bigorexia. Based on this discussion, I thought about alternative locations in the gym that would have a greater impact on the viewer. In the photoshop trial to the right I placed the paintings on the wall of mirrors, so that they become like a reflection to the viewer.

In the critique my classmates discussed the effectiveness of displaying the paintings from above and whether they would have the desired effect on the viewer, or whether they would be noticed at all. Suggestion to reconsider the placement of the paintings.

▲ **Figure 6.11** Daniel's dialogues screen

Tip

Your revised and original intentions do not need to match. Do not go back and change your initial intentions to match the revised intentions. The examiner marks each of these criteria separately and looks at the whole submission. They want to see that you have made changes to your intentions based on the feedback that you received in criterion C. The examiner might ask themselves:

- What did the candidate originally want to do?
- What feedback did they receive?
- What changes did they make based on this feedback to arrive at this revised and completed work?

Understanding criterion D: Realization (10 marks)

Realization of the AP

You have made a proposal, researched other artists, received feedback from your peers and now it is time to realize your project in context. To realize a project is different from finishing an artwork. Realizing means to place the project within your chosen location and see how it functions in relation to the context and audience. Considerations about your desired audience and their interaction with the project will help to determine how and when you place the work in location.

Another important consideration is what your role is in the presentation of this work. Are you actively a part of the work as a performer? Do you need to be around the work to help the audience participate with it? Do you need to direct a crew of participants or helpers for the work to happen? Finally, based on when, where and how the work will be presented and your role in it, you need to decide how you will document the work.

Criterion D is how the evidence of your outcome is assessed, through a short video and your finalized intentions. This criterion is weighted more than the others and is worth 10 marks because the results of all of your hard work are assessed. Three aspects of your project will be assessed and these directly connect to the points from above. It is important that your video shows all of these points:

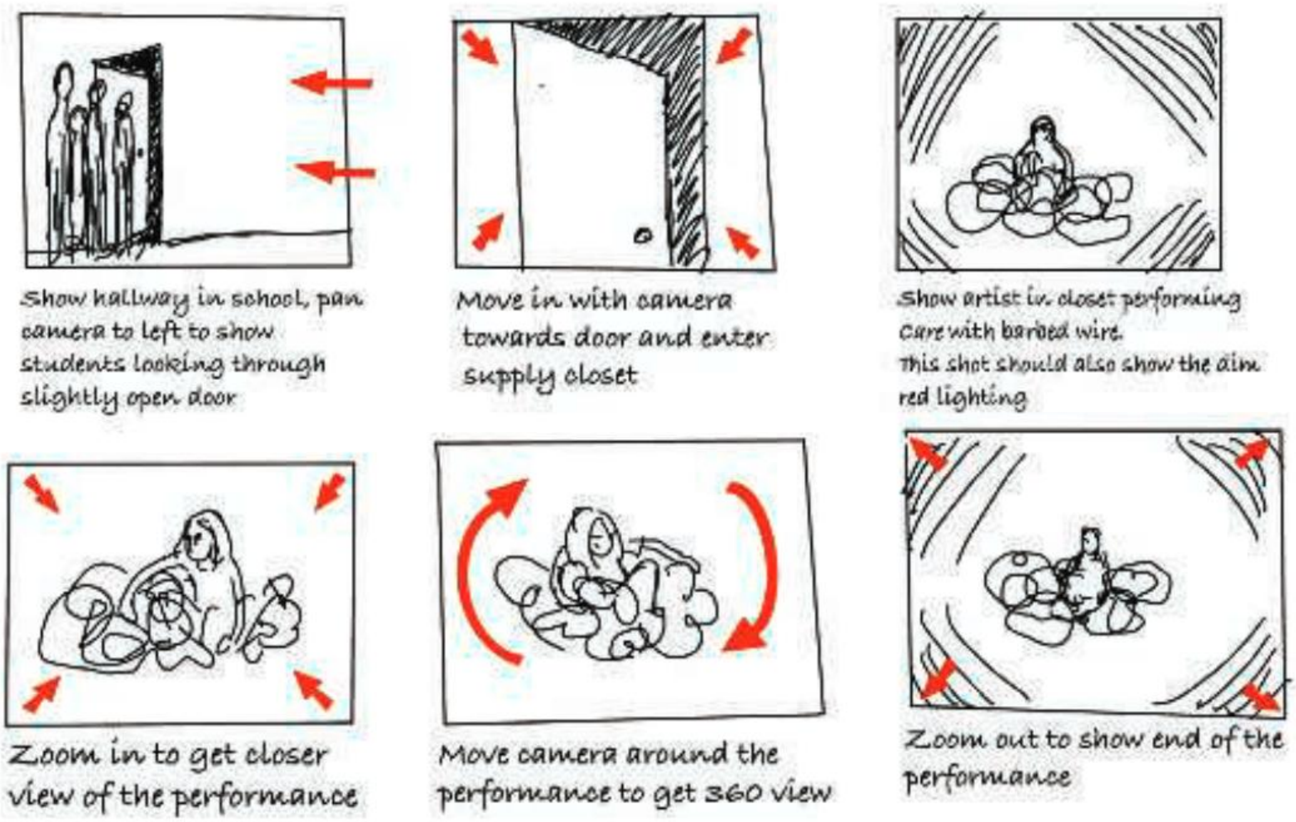
- The synthesis of concept and form in relation to intentions. Now that you have completed the work, how do the concepts (your ideas) and media (your materials) work together to communicate your intentions?
- The functioning of the work in the chosen context and in relation to audiences. The project is realized when it is in a specific context and in relation to an audience. How does the work function now that it is in location and the audience is interacting with it?
- The revised intentions and how they consider context and audience. Following your critical dialogues, and as your work developed, you may have refined your intentions. Are these intentions successful? Do they carefully consider the context and audience?

Assessment requirements

Your task	Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
You will: • demonstrate how you realized your intentions for the project through a synthesis of concept and form • demonstrate how your work communicates with real or potential audience(s) • demonstrate how your work functions in the chosen context.	• Synthesize • Curate • Situate	• A video of up to three minutes documenting the realization of the resolved project artwork in context • A text of 100 words maximum outlining refined artistic intentions

Choosing your evidence

You will present a video up to three minutes long for the examiner to assess your work. They will look at how it functions in the context and in relation to the audience. The content you choose to include is going to be important in communicating all the assessed aspects.



Show hallway in school, pan camera to left to show students looking through slightly open door

Move in with camera towards door and enter supply closet

Show artist in closet performing Care with barbed wire. This shot should also show the dim red lighting

Zoom in to get closer view of the performance

Move camera around the performance to get 360 view

Zoom out to show end of the performance

▲ Figure 6.12 An example of a storyboard for Claire's artist project, *Care*

You are not assessed on the video itself, but rather on how well the video fulfils the criterion descriptors. You should not heavily edit the video or add effects or splashy titles and you should not add a soundtrack. Some other important points to keep in mind for the video are:

- The video can be a sequence of still images saved as a video file. This accommodates a range of artworks.
- The only audible sound should be the sound from the location where you are recording. If your work has a sound element, such as speaking or music, this should be audible. Make efforts to capture the sound in the space in real time, so that you can also record the audience interaction with the work. If your artwork uses music, remember to properly cite it in your list of sources.
- If your artwork has a video element, such as a projected video or screen with animation, do not just upload the video as your final piece. The examiner will need to see the video in location. However, you can edit your submission so that part of it presents the context and audience in relation to the work and part of it plays the video in full screen.
- If your work is digital, such as an augmented-reality (AR) or virtual-reality (VR) painting, the video must still demonstrate how the artwork is placed in relation to a context (real or virtual) and how an audience interacts with it (physically and virtually). You can approach this by starting with a long shot of the location in which you placed the digital artwork (VR glasses, laptop, tablet). Show the interaction of the audience with the work, then switch to the digital environment to show the digital interaction with the work. Make sure that the physical location you selected has significance in relation to the digital context explored in the work. For example, imagine an AR work that creates a user

Tip

It is a useful exercise to storyboard your video in your visual arts journal, so that you have a clear plan for the video recording (see Figure 6.12). Planning ahead will also give you an opportunity to think about where you will set up your camera. Decide on the time of day when you will record and any other factors that might impact your video fulfilling the criterion.

experience where the environment is filled with greenery. For the physical location, the artist could choose an urban space. An empty car park would create a contrast between the physical and virtual experiences.

The assessed aspects in this criterion can be addressed in your video in the following ways:

- The synthesis of concept and form in relation to intentions is assessed. The video should offer some still moments in which the entire work is visible, as well as some close-ups on areas of detail and technical resolution. If the work is three-dimensional or an installation, a 360-degree view or walkthrough will also be necessary.
- The functioning of the work in the chosen context and in relation to audiences is assessed in this criterion. A shot establishing the work in its location will be necessary. If the work relies on interaction with the audience, be sure to capture the audience as they interact with it. The presence of people in the video can also give the examiner a sense of scale. If you use people in the video, make sure there are some shots of the work in which it is entirely visible and not blocked by the audience.
- The technical, conceptual and contextual aspects of the work are assessed in relation to your revised intentions. Having clearly stated intentions will improve the assessment of your work. You will write your revised intentions in a text box on the submission page for this component.

▲ **Figure 6.13** Claire's performance, *Care*

Claire's artist project, *Care*, followed an investigation into the performance art of Marina Abramović. She was particularly drawn to the use of pain inflicted on the body of the performer and how that can subvert and surprise an audience. The project was performed in a supply closet at the school and students encountered it unexpectedly when they looked through the open door.

Claire's revised artistic intentions were: "*Care* is a performance about balancing the need to take care of those who hurt us and how this becomes damaging for ourselves. It is performed in a small supply closet at school with a red light illuminating the room. Students approach the light to peek in through the open door and encounter the artist caring for a tangle of barbed wire. The artist wraps bandage on the barbed wire, while red paint stains the hands and shirt as a visual reminder of the pain. This performance is inspired by Marina Abramović and her self-destructive and shocking art."

Understanding criterion E: Post-production evaluation (4 marks)

Evaluating your work

As with all artworks, evaluating the work after it is completed is important for your continued growth as an artist. With the AP, there are additional elements in its completion, namely its realization in a context and in relation to audiences. These two aspects have some unpredictability to them and are to some extent out of your control.

Evaluating the work in terms of how it functioned in the context and how an audience interacted with it gives you a range of issues to consider. This includes, and goes beyond, the successful resolution of an artwork. You should consider the application of formal and conceptual qualities. American educator Peter

Pappas proposed a method for reflection in which all elements are important for a successful consideration of the work. In his method, the higher-order thinking happens in the evaluation (this criterion) and the creating (criterion F).

CREATE	How could I take the project further? What would be my plan? (Criterion F)
EVALUATE	How did my project function in my chosen context? In relation to an audience? What went well? What were the challenges?
ANALYSE	Is there a pattern or method to the way that I situate work or engage an audience?
APPLY	How could I use these methods or strategies again?
UNDERSTAND	Did the realization of the project fulfil my intentions?
REMEMBER	How did I realize the project in context and in relation to an audience?

▲ **Figure 6.14** Pappas' method of reflection, adapted for criteria E and F

When reflecting on your artist project you can begin by remembering, understanding and analysing the work. As you approach the evaluative phase, ask yourself some of these questions:

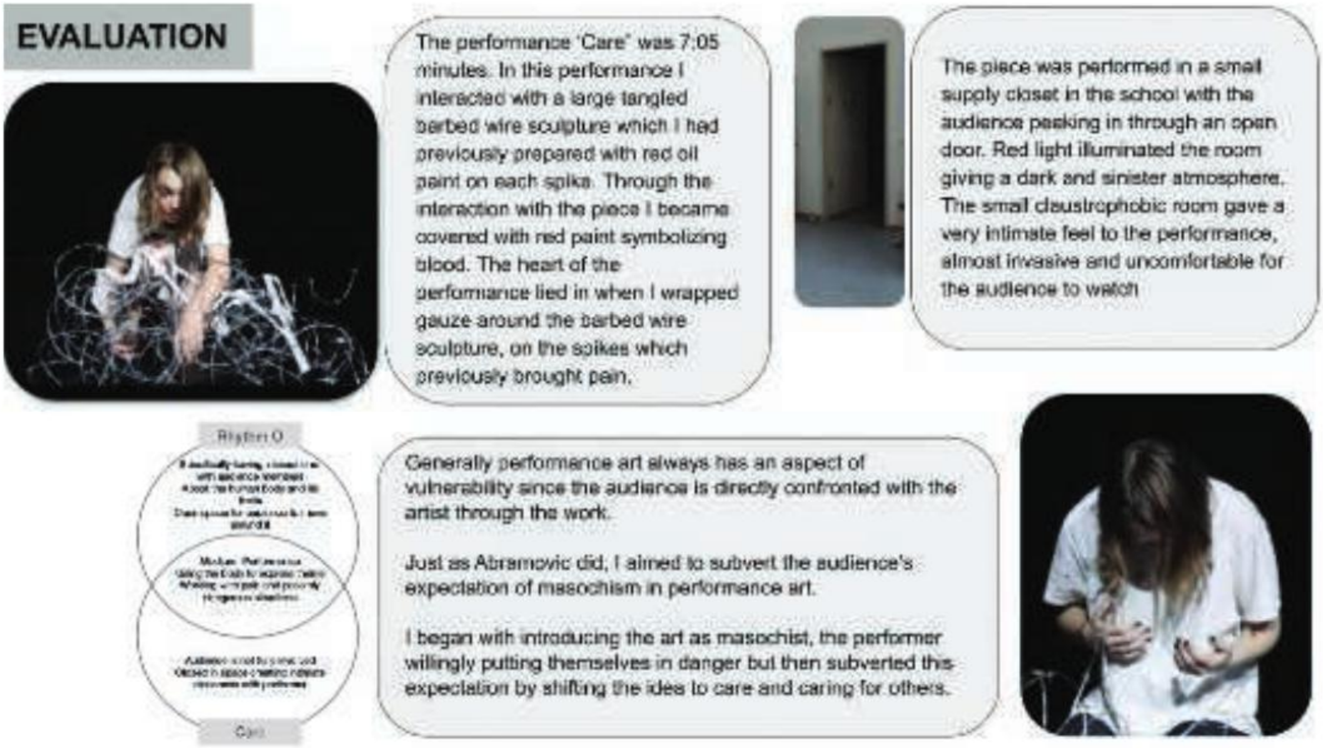
- Did the project function as expected?
- What was successful about it?
- What aspects did not go so well?
- Did your material, formal and conceptual choices function once the work was realized in location?
- Was the medium in which you realized the work effective within the chosen context?
- Did the context support the communication of your concepts and ideas?
- Did the formal qualities of the work successfully integrate with the location?
- Based on your observations, how did the audience interact with the work?
- What kind of feedback did you get from the audience?

Assessment requirements

Your task	Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
You will: • evaluate how successful the realization of the project was in situating it in the context and in relation to the audience.	• Situate	• Two screens • 300 words maximum • Visual and written evidence

Choosing your evidence

In the evaluation of Claire's project *Care*, she focused on the aspects of the location as context and the relationship with the audience. She included key images from the performance. She also put in a Venn diagram in which she evaluated her performance in relation to Abramović.



EVALUATION

The performance 'Care' was 7:05 minutes. In this performance I interacted with a large tangled barbed wire sculpture which I had previously prepared with red oil paint on each spike. Through the interaction with the piece I became covered with red paint symbolizing blood. The heart of the performance lied in when I wrapped gauze around the barbed wire sculpture, on the spikes which previously brought pain.

The piece was performed in a small supply closet in the school with the audience peeking in through an open door. Red light illuminated the room giving a dark and sinister atmosphere. The small claustrophobic room gave a very intimate feel to the performance, almost invasive and uncomfortable for the audience to watch

Generally performance art always has an aspect of vulnerability since the audience is directly confronted with the artist through the work.

Just as Abramovic did, I aimed to subvert the audience's expectation of masochism in performance art.

I began with introducing the art as masochist, the performer willingly putting themselves in danger but then subverted this expectation by shifting the idea to care and caring for others.

▲ Figure 6.15 Claire's evaluation of *Care*

Understanding criterion F: Future development (4 marks)

What could you do next?

The AP needs to be completed within a specific time frame to meet the requirements of the course. However, timelines and deadlines are artificial constructs in the creative process and creativity develops over time. For the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, mentioned on page 123, decades would sometimes pass before one of their works was realized.

Criterion F focuses on future developments. It is an opportunity to use the reflection and evaluation in criterion E to imagine what directions your work might take if you had another chance, more time and greater resources. You can approach this in a practical way. You could suggest some small changes that would have better served your work in situating it within context or in relation to audiences. Or you can approach this criterion with imagination. You could comment on how you would rework the project without the constraints of time and course restrictions. While you want to be realistic about a future direction your work could take, you will not need to actually create this work. There is room for imagination and ambition.

Assessment requirements

Your task	Assessment objectives	Formal requirements
You will: • propose new directions and ideas to further develop your artistic practice that are informed by the evaluation of the project.	• Situate	• One screen • 200 words maximum • Visual and written evidence

Choosing your evidence

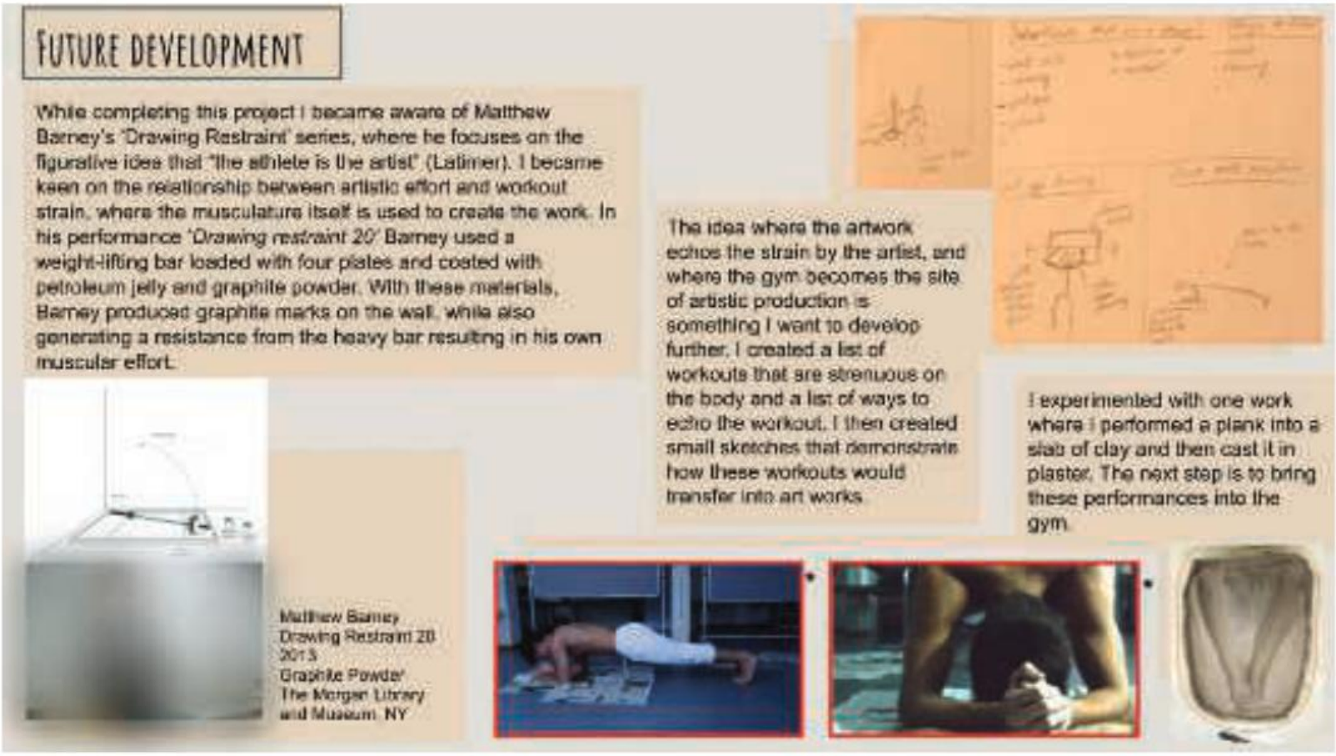
The evidence that you present for this criterion can be similar to the proposal, but on a smaller scale. This is your opportunity, based on the evaluation, to make a future proposal. You can include:

- Mind maps (including visuals and text), to further develop ideas and intentions or suggest new directions.
- Considerations of new contexts and locations (including visuals and text): this can include location sketches and digital mock-ups, mapping, diagramming and written observations.
- Formal and conceptual considerations (including visuals and text): this can include sketches and mock-ups of the artist project in new forms and exploring new concepts.
- Research into new artists who provide you with inspiration.
- A statement of intentions (text): this is a clearly stated explanation of what further ideas you could explore, what media you could use, where the work could be presented and how audiences will engage with it.

Following Daniel's project in the gym on page 137, he became aware of the American artist Matthew Barney's *Drawing Restraint* series. In these works, Barney used his athleticism to overcome restraints in order to create a drawing. The actions became the medium for artistic creation. For his future development, Daniel started to think about a series of artworks that could be realized in the gym, through the physical strain of exercise. In his future development screen (Figure 6.16), Daniel included a description of his inspiration. He added sketches in which he thought through how the work could be realized. He also put in images from his first experiments, in which he held a plank position with his arms in a slab of clay for as long as he could.

Tip

Note that the words in your mind map count towards your word limit.



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

While completing this project I became aware of Matthew Barney's 'Drawing Restraint' series, where he focuses on the figurative idea that "the athlete is the artist" (Latimer). I became keen on the relationship between artistic effort and workout strain, where the musculature itself is used to create the work. In his performance '*Drawing restraint 20*' Barney used a weight-lifting bar loaded with four plates and coated with petroleum jelly and graphite powder. With these materials, Barney produced graphite marks on the wall, while also generating a resistance from the heavy bar resulting in his own muscular effort.

Matthew Barney
Drawing Restraint 20
2013
Graphite Powder
The Morgan Library and Museum, NY

The idea where the artwork echos the strain by the artist, and where the gym becomes the site of artistic production is something I want to develop further. I created a list of workouts that are strenuous on the body and a list of ways to echo the workout. I then created small sketches that demonstrate how these workouts would transfer into art works.

I experimented with one work where I performed a plank into a slab of clay and then cast it in plaster. The next step is to bring these performances into the gym.

▲ **Figure 6.16** Daniel's ideas for the future development of his project

7

Resolved artworks (SL) and selected resolved artworks (HL) tasks

What is the resolved artworks (SL) and selected resolved artworks (HL) task?

The resolved artworks (SL) or the selected resolved artworks (HL) are the internally assessed components that evaluate the success of your art-making endeavours. In this task you will demonstrate your ability to create a resolved, coherent body of work. It must communicate your conceptual intentions by using the technical skills you have developed throughout your visual arts course. This task is worth 40% of the total marks for the course.

At both standard and higher levels, you submit digital (photographic or video) documentation of five resolved artworks for assessment. You are encouraged to include your strongest, most resolved artworks, in terms of how they measure against the assessment criteria. Each work includes a title, the details of the medium or media used and the size of the work. You are also required to submit a written rationale for the body of work. This is where standard and higher level differ.

What are the requirements of the resolved artworks (SL) task?

At standard level, you must submit a PDF consisting of two screens (or pages), using a maximum of 700 words. The screens should explain the main ideas or artistic concerns that you aim to communicate through your body of work. You can also provide information about the technical, conceptual and stylistic choices which you feel contributed to the overall coherence of your resolved artworks.

The table summarizes the requirements of the resolved artworks (SL) task and how it is assessed for standard level.

Resolved artworks task (SL)		
Your task	**Assessment objectives**	**Formal requirements**
You will create a body of five resolved artworks that reflect: • your intentions as an artist • a synthesis of concept and form • technical resolution.	• Curate • Synthesize • Resolve	SL students submit six mandatory files: • five image or video files (up to 3 minutes long), each accompanied by a title and details of the media and size; two optional image files can be supplied per artwork to show details or additional views • one PDF file with a maximum of two screens for the written rationale (700 words).

HL

What are the requirements of the selected resolved artworks (HL) task?

At higher level, you must submit a PDF file that presents up to eight screens (or pages), using a maximum of 1,700 words in two sections.

The first section is similar to standard level. You can use three screens or pages (rather than two) and a maximum of 700 words to explain your main ideas or artistic concerns. As at standard level, you should also provide information about your technical, conceptual and stylistic choices. However, you must also **justify** your reasons for selecting the individual artworks you have included. On your third screen you should include the selection chart. This shows the five artworks selected for this body of work and three additional artworks that were not selected.

In the second section, you will have five screens with a maximum of 1,000 words to present artwork texts that critically analyse each of your selected five artworks. You should consider the technical, conceptual and stylistic choices of each piece, and situate them within your body of work and the work of other artists that have informed your art-making practice.

The table summarizes the requirements of the selected resolved artworks task for higher level.

Selected resolved artworks task (HL)		
Your task	**Assessment objectives**	**Formal requirements**
You will curate a coherent body of five resolved artworks that: • communicate your artistic intentions • demonstrate your best accomplishments in the synthesis of concept and form • demonstrate technical accomplishment.	• Curate • Synthesize • Resolve • Situate	HL students submit six mandatory files: • five image or video files (up to 3 minutes long) of artworks, each accompanied by a title, media and size; two optional image files per artwork can be submitted to show details or additional views • one PDF with up to eight screens: o a rationale of two screens (maximum 700 words) o selection chart (one screen) o five artwork texts (five screens, maximum 1,000 words).

- "Resolved" in art indicates completion. For this task, it signifies achieving your intended representation or message. Resolution often requires critical dialogue with your teachers and peers.
- "Selected" means carefully choosing the best option. At higher level, it implies a process of curation. You must refine your entire visual arts output to a selection of five works, concentrating on your artistic intentions.
- Traditionally, a "body of work" referred to an artist's lifetime output, also called their "oeuvre" or "corpus". In contemporary usage, it often means a subset of artworks with shared themes or styles. In this course, it refers to artworks produced during the course, representing either an entire output or a curated selection.

How to approach the resolved artworks task

During the course, you will craft various artworks, experimenting with forms, media and creative strategies. Your explorations may come from diverse starting points and inquiries. Any initial idea, no matter how unexpected, could lead to a significant resolved artwork. Record all your ideas in your visual arts journals. Art-making inquiry tends to be exploratory and experimental, but the learning that occurs is intricately linked to the success (or otherwise) of the resolved work. This understanding will become crucial in creating your rationale.

Regularly review your artworks' progress and seek informal feedback from peers and teachers. This is one of the structures of the classroom as studio and is referred to as your **communities of learning**. Reflect on this feedback in your visual arts journals, with the aim of enhancing your work. Document your process with visuals—screen captures for digital work and photographs for physical pieces—alongside reflections and evaluations.

Key term

Communities of learning: the relationships that you develop with peers, your community and the field of art in order to inspire you, further your practice and find support.

Completing a body of work for assessment is time-consuming and often time-critical. Procrastinating or endlessly tweaking a piece for perfection can be a time sinkhole. There is also a risk of a work going from nearly finished to becoming overworked. Rather than risk overworking, document artworks thoroughly before making decisions. Consider detailed photographs of problematic areas. Reflect and evaluate in your visual arts journals before making decisions.

- Consider printing a postcard-sized image of your work. Viewing at a smaller scale offers a different perspective, contrasting with the detail-oriented focus during creation. Seeing your work from a distance promotes unity and coherence, enhancing your overall perception of it.
- Try putting a simple frame on a painting or a window mount on a drawing, print, photograph or digital image. Put a sculptural work on a dais or plinth against a plain, neutral-coloured wall. A frame or plinth can permit the eyes to come to points of rest as they take in your work.
- Seeking teacher and peer feedback through an informal peer critique can also be helpful. At this point in your art-making progress, asking for explicit feedback about your specific areas of concern becomes more important. Ask:
    - What areas of the work do your peers or teacher consider to be strong and resolved?
    - What areas are weaker and need greater resolution?
    - If your work was their work, what would they try?
    - How well are your intentions communicated through your work?

Remember, you do not want your ideas to be too obvious or shout at your audience, but you do want to provoke thought.

Reflect on any discoveries made using these strategies in your visual arts journals. If progress is evident, continue developing those areas. If you are stuck, consider temporarily shelving the work and starting something new. It can be helpful to work on a number of artworks concurrently.

▲ Figure 7.1

TOK

"Art is never finished, only abandoned."

This quotation, attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, expresses the frustrations of the artistic process and the elusive concept of completion in an artwork. As a class, conduct a discussion about the quotation. Consider if an artwork is ever finished or how an artist can know that an artwork is finished (or at what point they abandon the work).

TOK

Questions related to the IB theory of knowledge course that a visual arts student might consider while resolving and selecting artworks might include:

Perspectives:

- Can a work of art have meaning of which the artist themselves is unaware?
- Can art change the way we interpret the world?
- What are the justifications for, and implications of, claiming that there are absolute standards for "good art"?
- Who determines what art is valued, and on what criteria?
- Should your judgements about art be given the same weight as those of an expert?
- What role does the history of an art form play in evaluating present work?

Methods and tools:

- Does convention play a different role in the arts compared to other areas of knowledge?
- How does the medium used change the way that knowledge is produced, shared or understood?
- To what extent are the methods of justification different in the arts compared to other areas of knowledge?

Ethics:

- Is the production and enjoyment of art subject to ethical constraints?
- Do the arts have the power to challenge established moral values?
- Are moral and aesthetic judgements more a matter of taste than a matter of truth?

Theory of knowledge guide (IBO, 2020)

The assessment criteria

As this is an internally assessed component, your teacher is responsible for marking your work, using the assessment criteria published in the *Visual arts guide*. Their marking is moderated against the international standards set by the International Baccalaureate Organization. Moderation is a process that ensures that marks from one school are comparable to any other school.

A moderator will view a sample of digital files from your class. For this reason, your teacher is required to assess your resolved artworks from the digital files that you submit. This means that they are likely to be interested in the quality of your digital image and video files, ensuring that they are a true representation of your work.

It is important to remember that your teacher's mark is not final and may be adjusted by the International Baccalaureate Organization through moderation.

ATL Self-management skills

In the IB Diploma, the Arts group of subjects (also known as Group 6 subjects) can be the most time-intensive of all courses. As there are no written examinations in the Arts, each subject relies upon coursework for internal and external assessment.

Time is needed for you to acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding to make artwork. You also need time to document, review and monitor your progress, so managing your time will be one of the most important skills you develop.

Unlike preparing for a written exam, you cannot cram for visual arts. You need to use all of your time effectively. You should spend a similar amount of time on maintaining your visual arts journals to the time you spend on consolidating your learning in other subjects. Use them to record what you have done, reflect on how the work is progressing and what you are learning, and plan what you will do next.

If you decide to create a large-scale or complex artwork, make sure you plan for the time it will take. If you decide to work with clay, you need to allow a couple of weeks for drying time before the piece can be bisque fired. You may also need time for surface treatments before a glost firing.

You should include in your plan sufficient time to document your resolved work for submission. Better still, plan to document your work as you complete it.

Your teacher will hold at least three meetings to review your progress and complete a mandatory authentication form. The *Visual arts guide* allows flexibility in these discussions, which could be informal one-on-one chats, formal critiques in small groups or class-wide sessions. At these stages, evaluate yourself against the assessment criteria. Use the discussions with peers and your teacher to refine your work to meet the higher achievement levels.

Throughout the course, you must be familiar with the assessment criteria, but it is not necessary for you to constantly refer to them as you develop each artwork. The assessment criteria for both resolved artworks and selected resolved artworks consider the body of work as a whole.

Resolved artworks (SL only) assessment criteria summary

How your work will be assessed (IBO, 2025)			
Objectives	**Criteria**	**How well your work shows:**	**Marks**
Curate	A: Coherence of body of artworks	A coherent body of five artworks.	8
Synthesize	B: Conceptual realization	Synthesis of concept and form to communicate artistic intentions.	12
Resolve	C: Technical resolution	Resolution in the application of media and use of formal qualities to communicate intentions.	12
Total			32

Selected resolved artworks (HL only) assessment criteria summary

How your work will be assessed (IBO, 2025)			
Objectives	**Criteria**	**How well your work shows:**	**Marks**
Curate	A: Coherence of body of artworks	The selection process of five resolved artworks from the student's wider production. A coherent body of five selected resolved artworks.	8
Synthesize Situate	B: Conceptual realization	Synthesis of concept and form to communicate artistic intentions.	12
Resolve	C: Technical resolution	Resolution in the application of media and use of formal qualities to communicate intentions.	12
Situate	D: Understanding of artistic context	Critical analysis to situate each of the selected five resolved artworks.	8
Total			40

To evaluate these criteria, your teacher considers all the visual and written evidence that is presented in the digital image or video files of your artworks. They will assess the accompanying details, including the title given to each work, the medium (or media) used in the works and the size of the works. They will also assess the rationale, which for higher-level students includes the selection chart and artwork texts.

Understanding criterion A: Coherence of body of artworks (8 marks)

At both standard and higher level, criterion A asks the question: to what level does the submitted visual and written materials evidence a coherent body of five resolved artworks? Additionally, for higher-level students, criterion A asks the question: to what level does the submitted visual and written materials evidence the selection of work from the student's wider production? The assessment criteria level descriptors specifically focus on your rationale, the references made to your body of work and how successfully the rationale is realized or evident in your body or work.

When something has coherence, all of its parts fit together well. It could also appear to be well-organized, logical, clear to understand, consistent and unified. Coherence is often evident in relationships or "dialogues" between individual artworks that together effectively communicate an overall meaning.

For standard level, the criterion A level descriptor at the highest mark level (7–8 marks) states: "The rationale is clear and justifies artistic intentions. There are relevant and meaningful references to the student's main technical, stylistic or conceptual choices" (IBO, 2025). This part focuses on your written rationale. Your teacher is looking for valid reasoning that supports your artistic intentions in the rationale. Your reasoning needs to be supported by the visual evidence of your artwork. The level descriptor goes on to state, "The relationships among the five artworks are meaningful and the body of work communicates with coherence." This part considers the whole body of work but is informed by the rationale.

For higher level, at the highest mark level (7–8 marks), the descriptor states: "The rationale provides meaningful and effective evidence to justify how and why the five artworks were selected from the student's wider production to fulfil their intentions" (IBO, 2025). This focuses on the rationale and the selection chart, showing the selected works and three works that were not included. Your teacher is looking for valid reasons in the rationale as to why you have included some artworks and excluded others.

The level descriptor goes on to state, "The relationships among the five artworks are meaningful and the body of work communicates with coherence." This part considers the whole body of work, but is informed by the rationale. This includes the 1,000 words that are permitted for the artwork texts. They should explain the context in which the works have been created, how the selected works convey meaning and how individual pieces are situated within the body of work as a whole.

The *Visual arts guide* emphasizes that coherence is not achieved through repetition or similar ideas. Instead, coherence can be achieved conceptually, technically or stylistically, where a dialogue is created among artworks, revealing connections between them.

▲ **Figure 7.2** Though Tess has experimented with different media, her works are connected by a shared theme: the sea

Coherence can often be seen in groups of artworks, for example in Tess's work in Figure 7.2. Her work evolved from her love of seashells and the beach, so she explored natural forms that might be found in the ocean or on the coast or shoreline. She gave the artworks titles which further suggest her conceptual interests:

- *Cypraea* and *Conch* (a series of two large charcoal drawings)
- *Looking into the Rockpool* (a mixed-media collage of ink, felt-tip pen and marbled papers on cartridge paper)
- *Artefacts* (a collage of nine felt-tip pen shell studies on cartridge paper)
- *Shoreline* (a series of three white earthenware bas-relief castings)
- *To the Sea* series, *Call to the sea* and *Salute to the sea* (a pair of two sculptures, raku clay and polystyrene cone form, polymer clay and steel dressmakers' pins).

The learning objective for this assessment criterion—curate—also suggests that coherence is achieved through the thoughtful and considered process of selecting, organizing and presenting the works for submission.

Your teacher (and any examiner who moderates your body of work) will view the artworks in the order in which you submit them. For higher-level candidates, this is reinforced in the selection chart. The order in which you organize your artworks can assist you in showing coherence. Think about groups of artworks: it can make sense to place pieces with a similar style or theme together.

Higher marks are more likely to be awarded where your rationale explains valid justifications for the conceptual, technical and stylistic choices you made through the development of your resolved body of work. Your justification must be supported by the artworks that you have submitted and coherence must be evident across a combination of conceptual, technical and stylistic concerns.

- Conceptual concerns refers to your artistic intentions for both individual artworks and the body of work. While diverse in forms and techniques, coherence may stem from an overarching theme or works exploring specific ideas that emerged from a common, broader concept.
- Technical concerns involve construction and composition. Your body of work may encompass various ideas and styles, yet coherence can be achieved by thoughtfully considering image construction, formal qualities and the organization of elements.
- Stylistic concerns pertains to media application and forms of representation. Coherence can be achieved through consistent expressive or formal approaches, including exaggerated colours or structured formalism. Influences from art history or specific artists may also shape your practice.

Tip

Tips for coherence

Ask yourself these questions when considering the coherence of your resolved artworks:

- How do artists incorporate themes, techniques and styles in their artwork?
- How do the themes, techniques and styles of different artists compare?
- How do artists interpret themes, such as conflict or love, across different times and cultures?
- What are the identifiable themes, techniques and styles in the work I am creating and have created?
- What relationships can I see between different artworks I have created and in what ways can they be considered a coherent body of work?

And for your selected resolved artworks (HL only):

- Which artworks will I include in my body of work and which works will I exclude to demonstrate coherence? What qualities am I basing these decisions on?
- Which artworks in my body of work connect with one another and may help the audience to appreciate the intentions I have for my body of work?

Understanding criterion B: Conceptual realization (12 marks)

Criterion B poses the question: to what level do the five resolved artworks evidence a **synthesis** of **concept** and **form** to communicate artistic intentions?

For standard level and higher level, the highest level descriptor (10–12 marks) states: "The five resolved artworks demonstrate synthesis of concept and form" (IBO, 2025). This implies that there is an effective relationship between what the student wishes to communicate through the artworks and the media they have

Key terms

Synthesis: the combination of concepts with forms to create new, complex and unified artworks.

Concept: refers to the subject matter, purpose and function of an artwork, including ideas, issues and theories that may be explored through the artwork.

Form: refers to the (usually) physical or experiential nature of an artwork, including art-making forms and media as well as technical and stylistic approaches.

chosen to use. The level descriptor goes on to state, "Conceptual realization is meaningful. There is accomplished and creative communication of intentions." This considers how successful the work is in provoking an audience to think about and understand the ideas explored in the work.

Conceptual **realization** involves using imagery, symbols and techniques creatively to convey intentions. This does not mean that you need to create conceptual art (art that prioritizes the idea over the physical form). Conceptual realization focuses on your intentions, emphasizing the meaning in your artwork beyond visual representation. To succeed in this criterion, the intentions that you communicate through your written rationale, and might suggest in your titles, need to be evident in the resolved artwork.

Artworks do not need to be overly obvious in their meaning. Students often recycle familiar art forms, like mimicking pop art by Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. Pop art elements may suit themes of commercialism and mass production, but they are used so often they may result in predictable artworks that seem to lack subtlety or complexity. Similarly, reproducing images from media, like sport stars or celebrities, or using Barbie dolls to attempt social commentary often feel contrived and lacking in depth. This artificiality undermines genuine expression, diluting otherwise significant messages. To stand out, your exploration must yield fresh, convincing ideas.

In stronger bodies of work, conceptual qualities may not be immediately obvious to an audience. Rather, they may provoke questions and thoughts for the audience through more subtle and considered use of symbols, complex imagery or layers of possible meanings.

To create more nuanced artwork, thoroughly research topics that interest you. Avoid naivety. Formulate questions that you want your audience to consider. Explore various creative strategies in your visual arts journals to express ideas or provoke thought.

▲ Figure 7.3 Charlotte's sculpture, *Equus*

Key term

Realization: the achievement of a desired intent; giving form to a concept.

Tip

Tips for conceptual realization

When considering how well your work addresses criterion B, ask yourself the following questions:

- What elements in an artwork contribute to the effective communication of ideas?
- How do artists communicate concepts in their work?
- How can my choices of forms, media, technique and style enhance the realization of my conceptual concerns or the communication of my intentions to an audience?
- Which of my artworks use signs, symbols or motifs?
- How effectively are my ideas being communicated through my artwork?

Charlotte's life-sized sculpture *Equus* (Figure 7.3) illustrates how material practice can support and inform conceptual intentions. With *Equus*, Charlotte continued her inquiry into reused waste materials by constructing the horse bust using straw-board and plastic bags. The sculpture was crafted in recycled straw-board to create the underlying formwork and covered with a skin created with single-use plastic. The head and neck of the horse were treated with a bronze verdigris patina, drawing conceptual links to traditional bronze horse sculptures. However, the mane was left untreated, exposing the actual materials used. The sculpture was presented on a wooden trophy mount, which Charlotte felt created a paradoxical element between a plastic "synthesis of life" and the representation of the dead.

Understanding criterion C: Technical resolution (12 marks)

Criterion C considers the question: to what level do the five resolved artworks evidence resolution in the application of media and use of formal qualities to communicate intentions?

For both standard and higher level, the highest level descriptor (10–12 marks) states: "The five resolved artworks demonstrate assured and insightful application and manipulation of media and materials to communicate artistic intentions" (IBO, 2025). This focuses on the technical skills demonstrated in the execution of an artwork as appropriate to the stated artistic intentions. The level descriptor continues with "There is evidence of resolution, with fluent and effective use of formal qualities", which considers the overall level of finish or completeness of a work.

The level descriptor uses a range of terms that are specific to this context. They are explained in the table.

Term	Explanation
Application	how media and materials are used in an artwork
Artistic intentions	the desired function, purpose or meaning for an artwork
Assured	refers to a level of confidence demonstrated in an artwork that reflects experience with a medium and competency or mastery in it
Effective	means successful in producing an intended or desired result (in this context, manipulation of formal qualities)
Fluent	means the ability to confidently express or communicate (in this context, to express artistic intentions)
Formal qualities	refers to all of the tangible, physical aspects that make an artwork: light, colour, space, composition, depth, texture, the manipulation of media and so on
Insightful	reflects having an understanding of the inherent properties of a medium that are exploited in an artwork
Manipulation	suggests a level of control over the properties of a medium
Resolution	refers to the point where an artwork is considered to be complete or finished

The highest level descriptor requires an "assured and insightful application and manipulation of media" (IBO, 2025), which includes evidence of sensitivity, sophistication, control and an excellent understanding and use of media in a resolved body of artwork.

Technical resolution refers to the ability you demonstrate in intentionally manipulating formal and visual qualities in your art-making to realize your intentions. This could encompass qualities such as exaggerated colour or line to express emotion or convey mood. You could employ a dynamic composition to suggest motion or action. Or you could juxtapose a jarring soundscape with otherwise tranquil video imagery to communicate inner turmoil.

Technical resolution—or lack of it—is often the easiest thing to recognize when looking at art. Unlike with expressive styles, seeing errors in proportions is easier, for example, in a large, hyper-realistic portrait. Importantly, this criterion does not evaluate your technical skills in isolation. Instead, it considers the technical skills that you display in the form, media, styles and techniques you have chosen to fulfil your artistic intention.

When selecting art forms and media, consider if the technical abilities you have been able to demonstrate sufficiently convey your ideas. Competency comes with practice. Each medium has unique potential and limitations; choose accordingly, finding one that is right for your artistic intentions. Peer and teacher feedback, along with self-reflection, help in decision-making. Use the feedback to adapt your choices, always with the intention of creating alignment between your technical skill and your artistic intent.

Importantly, if your work shows evidence of technical skill, this can enhance your achievement in other criteria, for example your conceptual realization. Conversely, artwork that shows a lack of competence may weaken the overall impact of a body of work.

Technical resolution may seem to be the most accessible aspect of the assessment of a body of artworks. It can look very different, depending on the form that the artist has used; the style, techniques or conventions they have employed; and the artistic intention they hoped to achieve in the work.

▲ **Figure 7.4** Jessica excels in her two-dimensional art forms

Jessica's self-portrait, an oil painting, and her coloured pencil portrait of her partner and his dog (Figure 7.4) show adept use of colour and value to convey form. Each piece skilfully captures distinct lighting atmospheres—interior and exterior—reflecting her technical competency.

Arianna's large, open ceramic vessel (Figure 7.5) uses a Korean surface treatment called "mishima". In the mishima process, patterns are carved away or impressed into the surface of the leather-hard clay. It is then inlaid with ceramic slip (a liquidized clay body) or sometimes a glaze, which contrasts with the clay used in the form. When dry, the form is lightly scraped back to reveal the distinctive patterns created by the contrasts in colour before a final glaze is applied.

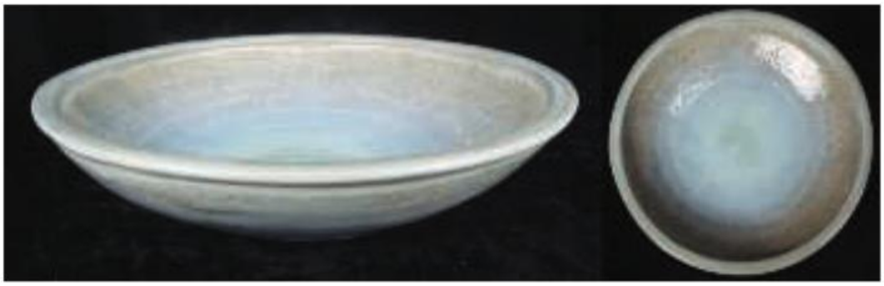
Tip

Tips for technical resolution

When considering how well your work addresses criterion C, ask yourself the following questions.

- How do artworks show technical resolution?
- What are the qualities in an artwork that might tell you that an artist has skill?
- How does technical resolution compare between different art-making processes and forms?
- Is technical resolution identifiable in all art forms?
- Can some art forms or artworks be successful even if there is no obvious evidence of technical skill?
- Where is the evidence of technical resolution in the work you are creating and have created?
- How are your skills evolving?

Refer to Chapter 3: Situating for an in-depth explanation of the term "situate".



▲ **Figure 7.5** Arianna's ceramic piece is an example of a challenging surface treatment

As there is neither a minimum nor a maximum number of forms or media that you must include in your resolved artworks (SL only) or selected resolved artworks (HL only), you can focus on and develop your technical skills in an area of personal strength.

Understanding criterion D: Situate (HL only, 8 marks)

Criterion D asks the question: to what level do the five resolved artworks evidence how the student situates these artworks through critical analysis? The criterion focuses on the "artwork texts" section of your rationale document. It assesses how the artwork texts align with the evidence provided (in the form of the digital image or video files of your artworks, the accompanying details and the overall rationale for the body of work).

The artwork texts are essentially short critical analyses of each work submitted. They seek to contextualize individual artworks within your body of work and with the work of other artists you have encountered through your broader visual arts experience.

This criterion is exclusive to the selected resolved artworks (HL only) component. The highest level descriptor (7–8 marks) states: "Critical analysis effectively situates each selected artwork within the student's body of work and in a wider artistic context" (IBO, 2025).

The criterion D level descriptors use two recurring terms:

- "Critical analysis" involves systematic examination, often using various models, to deconstruct an artwork's visual qualities and interpret its meaning.
- "Wider artistic context" describes how a student's art-making practice is situated within the set of art-making practices they have explored.

Situating requires you to consider your art-making through the different contexts of:

- space and place—where artworks were made (or sometimes, what they represent)
- time and culture—when artworks were made
- audience and exhibition—how artworks are experienced.

A sense of place may be important to you as an artist. Consider whether your neighbourhood and the local environment have had any influence on you as an artist or upon the artworks you create. Your personal context, including your lifestyle and lived experiences, can influence your art. If your environment is more natural or more urban, this may be reflected in the ways you respond to and represent your world in your art-making. The communities you live within are all aspects of your context. Your space and place can be expanded to a national and a global context, as you engage with national or international influences or travel and experience new surroundings.

The production of your artworks can be situated in relation to any significant events, moods or attitudes of the time. Your life experiences and how your work has been informed by the art-making practices of other artists are considerations that situate your work in time and culture. Does your work reflect religious or spiritual belief systems or myths, folklore or other cultural traditions? How might conventions influence the form of your artwork?

Art is created as an interaction with an audience. Within your classroom, your work is the subject of conversations with your peers and teachers, who critique and advise. Then it may be situated in a public space for a class exhibition. Consider the different expectations of the audiences for these places. How might the placement of your artworks in particular surroundings impact the meaning of them? Your artworks are submitted through digital reproduction. How might this affect the perception of your work?

Tip

Tips for situating your artwork

When considering how well your work addresses criterion D, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is my artistic context and how is this evident in my artwork?
- What was the significance of space and place to my art-making? How is this evident in my work?
- How has time and cultural context informed my art-making? How is this evident in my work?
- How is my work situated within the artistic context of the works of other artists that have informed my art-making practice?
- Who have I considered my audience to be for my artworks? What experiences or knowledge do I anticipate they bring to my work?

Preparing your resolved artworks for submission

The electronic submission of your work is the digital record of what you have achieved in your art-making and will be what your teacher views to award marks for this component. If your work is part of the moderation sample, an IB moderator will also use the evidence submitted to check the marks awarded by your teacher. The documentation must present your work well.

Photographically documenting your artwork

For both standard level and higher level, you need to submit still or moving photographic documentation of your artworks. They should be captured in whatever electronic means is most appropriate for the selected art-making form. A two-dimensional artwork is best captured through a single still photograph (but up to two additional images can be included if needed, such as for showing details). Three-dimensional artworks could be documented in three photographs, photographed from three different angles, or perhaps as a short video recording. Digital artworks, such as animations, are best exported directly from the software that was used to create them to a more universal file type, such as a JPEG or an MP4 file.

You will need to seek clarification from your teacher about the accepted digital file types and the maximum file sizes, as these can change from time to time in the life of a course. This information is given in the *IB Diploma assessment procedures* document, which is republished every year.

As images will be reviewed by examiners on standard monitors, large image files using high definition are not needed. Images are best saved in RGB format, at a maximum of 72 dpi, with a minimum width of 1,500 pixels to a maximum of 2,000 pixels. This results in an image that fits a standard computer screen, while also showing enough detail should an examiner wish to enlarge the work. It will also help to keep the file sizes small enough for a faster upload.

The image must be:

- a true (and the best) representation of your work
- sharply focused
- photographed against a plain, neutral background free of other distractions
- photographed to avoid light from the flash bouncing back or other nuisance light glare from reflective surfaces such as glass, glazes or metallic surfaces
- clearly the subject of the image, rather than the plinth, display panel, surroundings or mounting
- correctly colour balanced. Check that the white balance for still or video photography is correct for the type of lighting used.

Documenting two-dimensional artworks

Small two-dimensional works, such as works on paper, can be scanned directly into your computer using a flatbed scanner. Copy stands are also useful. These fix a camera to an adjustable vertical column. The artwork is placed perfectly parallel to the lens and is illuminated by an arrangement of lamps.

Larger two-dimensional work is best photographed hanging on a plain, neutral-coloured wall. Very acceptable results can be achieved working with natural light, provided that the light is even and without harsh shadows. If the light is uneven, additional lighting may be required. Inexpensive LED lights can be used successfully if you combine them with an improvised light diffuser, such as large sheets of white paper or translucent tracing paper clamped in front of the light source.

A longer focal length should be chosen to allow you to get some distance between yourself and the artwork, which will result in less converging vertical lines and distortion. Works should be photographed before they are framed or mounted, unless the framing is an integral part of the work. It is always easier to photograph an artwork without having a layer of glass over it that may catch a lot of reflections.

Documenting three-dimensional artworks

If you choose to use still photography to document sculpture, you need to be mindful of the background, as well as the sculptural form itself. Objects and architectural elements of the space around your work can become distracting or confused with the sculpture itself. Where possible, it is best to photograph the sculpture against a plain, neutral background. A narrow **depth of field**, created by using a lower f-stop (or wide aperture) is also helpful. This allows for a sharp focus on the sculpture, while slightly blurring the background. Photographing the sculpture with a camera at 45 degrees to the sculpture, from the front left, front right and rear of the sculpture, is usually sufficient to capture all of it. This gives the examiner a strong idea of how your work is experienced in the round.

Videos allow you to take a wandering eye around a sculpture. While plain, neutral backgrounds will give better results, video footage can be taken in situ, such as in the studio. Background distractions are minimized by the camera focusing on the sculpture and moving around it. Avoid excessive camera wobble and quick panning, tilting or zooming movements. If you do not have a steady hand, use a hand-held steady-camera device. Additional footage of details of the work can be filmed in separate takes and then edited together.

Key term

Depth of field: in photography this is the range of focus in front of and behind the point that the lens is focused on.

Documenting digital artworks (including digital photography)

Two-dimensional digital works are best documented by exporting them from the software that they were created with to a more universal file type, such as JPG or PNG files. Most often, this is done by using the "export to …", "save as …" or "save as copy" file options.

The exception is when you have made specific choices about how you want a digitally created image to be presented that are critical to the integrity of the work. For example, you might want to print an image onto specific textures, such as textiles or acrylic sheets. In such instances, you should apply the advice given above on documenting two-dimensional or three-dimensional work.

Animated, time-based or moving pieces should be exported directly from the software that they were created with. Save a copy from the **native file** format to a more universal file type, such as MP4 or MOV files.

Key term

Native file: a file format created for a specific software program. A program's native file format supports all the program's features and functionality in a way that more generic file types may not, but they often cannot be opened without the specific software program.

Post-production editing

After photographing your work, it is acceptable to use editing software to adjust the exposure, contrast and colour balance. This should be done to provide as close to a true likeness to your original artwork as possible. You may also correct any distortion caused by converging verticals and crop out background and unnecessary framing or mounting.

Excessive manipulation of the documentation of your artwork may be deemed unethical. Your teacher is required to authenticate your work and the presentation of it must be a true and accurate representation.

Completing the required accompanying details

When you upload your artworks and complete your rationale, you are required to give each piece a title and to note the details of the media that you used and the size for each of the artworks that you submit.

Giving titles to your artworks

Titles can be direct and descriptive or oblique and lyrical. They are an important way that you can give your audience (and your examiner) clues about the intentions behind your work. While it is common in modern and contemporary art for artists to leave work untitled or to number pieces, this is not helpful when your work is being used for assessment. How well you communicate your conceptual intentions is one of the criteria that is being assessed. For example, naming a self-portrait "Self-portrait of the artist" is obvious and very literal, but if instead, the work is given the the title "Mask", it allows the audience to speculate in what ways a portrait might be constructed to hide or conceal aspects of one's identity.

Conventionally, brackets can be used after a title to state if an artwork references, parodies or appropriates another artist's work. Brackets are also used for translations, where a language other than the language of the course's delivery is used. For example "The women of my street" (after Picasso's "Demoiselles d'Avignon").

Recording the medium or media used in your artwork

Regardless of how true a representation the visual record of your work is, it will not always be clear what media or processes have been used. Documenting this is particularly important if your work is moderated, because a moderator has not been a witness to you making your work (whereas your teacher has).

Providing details about the range of media you have used allows the moderator to appreciate any complexity in the processes that you have engaged with. They can also understand the material choices that you have made to realize your intentions. Providing thorough details demonstrates how seriously you have taken your art-making inquiries.

Examples of good media details include:

- Three-colour lino reduction print, water-based ink on rice paper.
- Constructed sculpture: rough-sawn timber, corrugated steel, galvanized nuts, bolts and washers, found construction helmet and a reclaimed gilded picture frame.

Generic terms, such as mixed media or multimedia, are not useful in the assessment process.

Giving the size of your work

Conventionally, for two-dimensional and three-dimensional work, sizes are given in the order of length by width by height. All measurements must be given in centimetres. When measuring an irregularly shaped form, measure the longest points of length, width and height.

If you are measuring multiple objects as a series, such as a set of three ceramic vessels, the objects' sizes can be recorded as three sets of measurements, separated by semi-colons. You could include simple instructions in brackets to help identify which dimension relates to each object in the photograph. For example:

25 cm × 5 cm × 5 cm; 10 cm × 5 cm × 5 cm; 15 cm × 15 cm × 15 cm (left to right)

If a work is time-based, the size is given as a duration in seconds (remember that the video documentation is limited to three minutes).

Preparing your rationale

You must provide a written rationale for your artworks, limited to 700 words. Examiners will only assess content within this word count: any writing beyond the word limit will not be considered towards the mark.

You will need to write your rationale in an IB-developed template that is saved as a PDF for the upload submission. Your teacher will make the template available to you. Two screens feature two text fields for the 700-word rationale. Include the word count in brackets after your text, like this: (689 words).

Your rationale should succinctly explain the overarching themes and concepts behind your five artworks, detailing the technical, stylistic and conceptual choices that tie them together. It is essential to ensure that your rationale aligns with the artistic intentions communicated through your body of work.

Tip

Subject-specific vocabulary is essential for writing concisely, ensuring clarity and maintaining accuracy in your rationale, while adhering to the word limit. Examiners consider your use of subject-specific terms when they evaluate the quality of your written work. Practise using this language in your visual arts journals and when discussing your work with peers to improve your fluency. This book's glossary offers a comprehensive visual arts vocabulary list.

At higher level, you also need to justify the reasons that contributed to the selection of your five resolved artworks. This must be included within the 700-word count, but is also supported by a visual artwork selection chart. You can also write individual artwork texts for each of the five artworks (roughly an additional 200 words per artwork or a total of 1,000 words).

Your rationale is an artist's statement. It is your chance to clarify your conceptual art practice to your audience. It should inform rather than merely describe, supported by your research and learning. Justify your statements and make specific references to your artwork, linking what you write with the visual evidence in your documentation. If there is a particular work that was instrumental in the way you perceive your body of work, you could describe it in more depth to draw your examiner into your thought process.

You may use personal pronouns to reflect your ownership of your work. Crafting succinct and persuasive statements about your artwork is crucial, but ensure they align realistically with your artwork. Inconsistencies will negatively impact your assessment.

Tip

It can be helpful to follow this basic structure for the rationale:

Overall premise for the body of work	• Outline of your artistic intentions. • Include any key concepts or ideas that are explored through your artworks, or an overarching conceptual concern that links your work.	Approximately 150 words
Analysis of artworks	• Analyse the technical, stylistic and conceptual choices in your artworks, roughly in the order you choose to submit them. • Reference influential artists or artworks. • Explain the significance of recurring imagery and motifs.	Approximately 300 words for HL Approximately 400 words for SL
Process of selection (HL only)	• Justify the inclusion of selected artworks based on technical strength, conceptual resolution and coherence, while explaining the exclusion of three works listed in the chart.	Approximately 100 words for HL
Connections and coherence	• Highlight connections between individual works and how you have aimed for coherence in your overall body of work.	Approximately 150 words

This structure aims to address all the assessment criteria but it is not mandatory; you can effectively use other approaches to organize key ideas in your rationale.

Your teacher can give feedback on one draft of your rationale. They cannot edit or correct it, but they can point out missing explanations and unclear sections or suggest reviewing your vocabulary if your subject-specific terms are inconsistent.

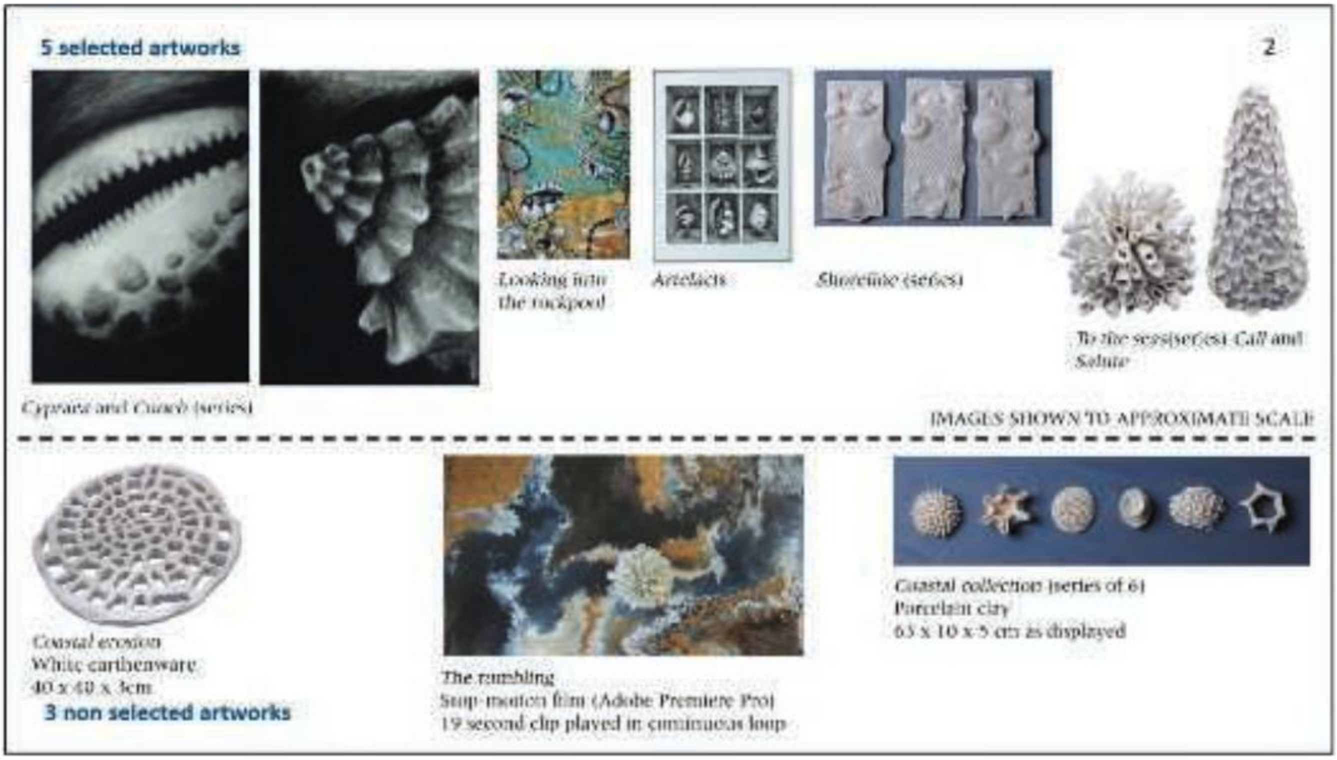
Preparing your selection chart (HL only)

The third screen of the rationale template features a selection chart. Here, you showcase five resolved artworks and display images of three other artworks that you chose to exclude. The template is a simple, linear presentation of your body of work. It is divided into two horizontal sections by a broken line. Above the line, you will supply your five selected artworks. Below the line, you will include images of the three artworks that you excluded.

You should include the title for each work to make referring to each work easier for you and your teacher. The other technical details (media used and size) will be included elsewhere in the submission, so can be omitted here.

The selection chart provides you with an opportunity to curate your work in a specific order, from left to right. Choose the order that you would prefer an audience, specifically your teacher and (potentially) a moderator, to view your artwork. This enables you to suggest relationships between works which might enhance the communication of your artistic intentions.

The chart must present your work so that the relative scale of the work is evident to the examiner by viewing the relative size of one image to the next. Your teacher will not be assessing the quality of your artwork from the images presented in the selection chart. They will refer to the images included in the upload.



▲ Figure 7.6 Tess's titles for her works help the assessor to reference specific works accurately

Figure 7.6 shows Tess's higher-level selected artwork chart. Three of her five chosen artworks are presented as series, as Tess believes they hold more significance together. The order chosen matches the intended viewing sequence as does the upload and artwork text order. Tess resized each image using a grid and included titles in 12-point font. She has given the media and size details of her three excluded works for assessment clarity. She will explain her exclusion of these works in her rationale.

Preparing your artwork texts (HL only)

In the last five sections of the rationale template, higher-level students must situate their chosen artworks through critical analysis, considering technical, stylistic and conceptual aspects. They should explore how these aspects place each artwork within a cohesive body of work and in relation to other artists. Students must also reflect on the significance of their artistic context, demonstrating awareness of how their artworks convey meaning and position themselves as artists within local, global and/or historical contexts.

Each artwork text you write explains and justifies the artwork through critical analysis. Consider your technical, stylistic and conceptual choices, explaining how they place each artwork within your body of work. You should also cover the broader artistic context, including relationships to other artists, styles, movements or traditions. Explain the resolution, specifically how form and concept are synthesized in the work.

Tip

The following guiding questions may be helpful as you consider your artwork texts (IBO, 2025):

- What is the main concept you want to communicate with this artwork? Why did you create this artwork?
- How do materials, techniques and stylistic choices communicate your specific intentions?
- Is this artwork intended for a specific audience?
- What inspired this work and why?
- How does this work show a relationship to the other artworks you have selected?
- Can you explain if those relationships are iconographic, stylistic, conceptual or technical?
- How have other artists influenced this artwork?
- Where would you position yourself as an artist?

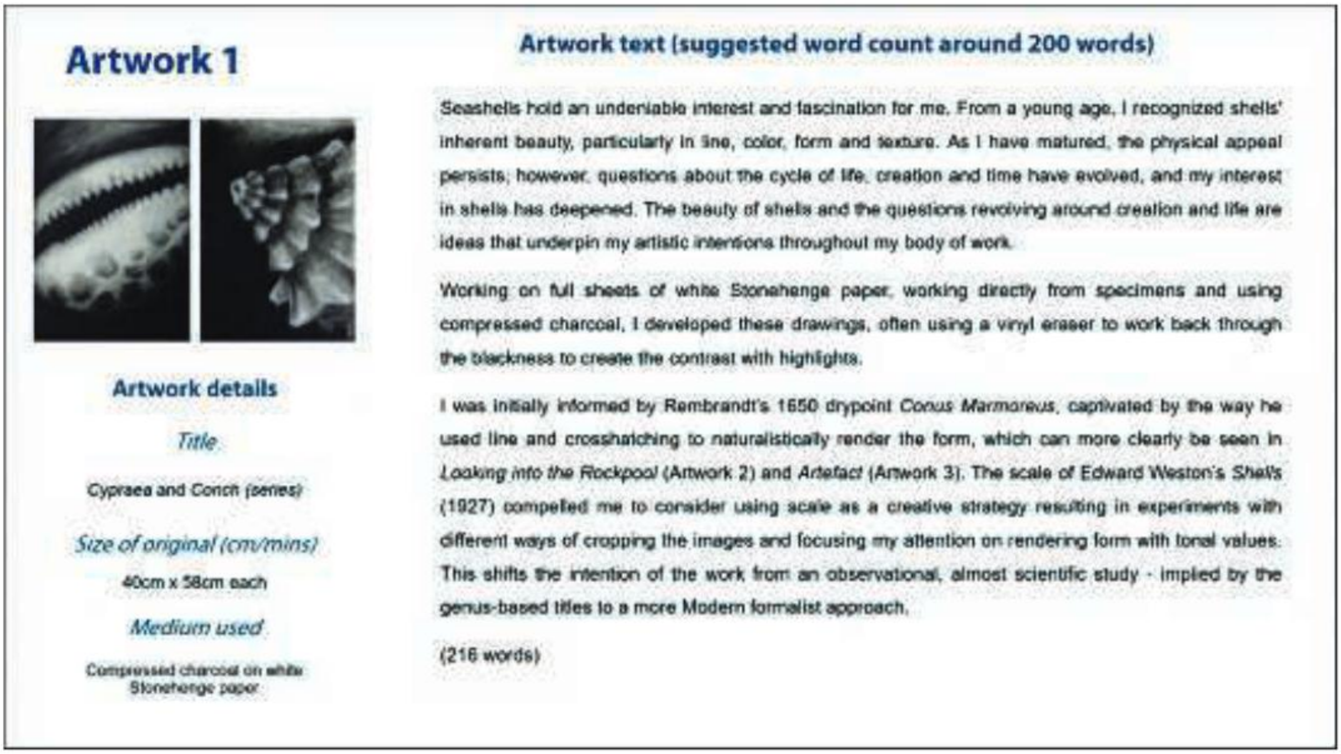
It is unlikely that you will cover all of these prompts in each artwork text. However, you should try to cover each of them across the artwork texts as a whole, particularly if the questions have more relevance to some artworks than others.

Figure 7.7 shows the first works that Tess wants her audience to see, as they exemplify her body of work.

Note that she has used 216 words of the 1,000 words available. She will need to use fewer words in the following texts. (Each of the five screens could use about 200 words, but there is flexibility here. For instance, a significant piece might need 300 words, while subsequent works on similar themes could be covered in 150 words each.)

Tip

It is recommended that you use a font size of 12 points for this written text. Remember to include, in brackets, a word count following each artwork text, like this: (198 words).



Artwork 1

Artwork details

Title

Cypraea and Conch (series)

Size of original (cm/mins)

40cm x 58cm each

Medium used

Compressed charcoal on white
Stonehenge paper

Artwork text (suggested word count around 200 words)

Seashells hold an undeniable interest and fascination for me. From a young age, I recognized shells' inherent beauty, particularly in line, color, form and texture. As I have matured, the physical appeal persists; however, questions about the cycle of life, creation and time have evolved, and my interest in shells has deepened. The beauty of shells and the questions revolving around creation and life are ideas that underpin my artistic intentions throughout my body of work.

Working on full sheets of white Stonehenge paper, working directly from specimens and using compressed charcoal, I developed these drawings, often using a vinyl eraser to work back through the blackness to create the contrast with highlights.

I was initially informed by Rembrandt's 1650 drypoint *Conus Marmoreus*, captivated by the way he used line and crosshatching to naturalistically render the form, which can more clearly be seen in *Looking into the Rockpool* (Artwork 2) and *Artefact* (Artwork 3). The scale of Edward Weston's *Shells* (1927) compelled me to consider using scale as a creative strategy resulting in experiments with different ways of cropping the images and focusing my attention on rendering form with tonal values. This shifts the intention of the work from an observational, almost scientific study - implied by the genus-based titles to a more Modern formalist approach.

(216 words)

▲ Figure 7.7 The artwork text for the first of Tess's selected resolved artworks, a pair of charcoal drawings of seashells

Activity

With a partner, look at the artwork text in figure 7.7 and the guiding questions in the tips feature above it. Discuss:

- Can you identify which of the guiding questions she has attempted to address in this artwork text?
- Why do you think these questions were significant for Tess?
- To what extent has Tess's artwork text helped you to understand her intentions?
- Where has she used subject-specific language?
- Consider the guiding questions she did not address. Can you account for why? Is there a question that you would have liked her to answer?

Individually, consider one of your artworks that you have completed or are in the process of completing. Give the work a title. Choose the two or three most pertinent guiding questions as prompts to develop a 200-word artwork text for your work. When finished, share your text with your partner using the same questions you considered for Tess's text.

Ensuring academic integrity

Academic integrity in the arts acknowledges that your work is built on the shoulders of your predecessors. This is crucial, especially in visual arts, where creativity is influenced by various sources.

Fairness is a key principle in maintaining academic integrity. Your grades should accurately represent your achievement. Crediting the influence of others' work does not devalue yours; it often reveals your creative process and depth of research, which is not always obvious when looking at a polished work of art. Include a citation or reference for any of your artworks that have been influenced or informed by other artists or ideas, following your school's referencing style.

The line between being influenced or informed and copying can be subtle. Influences can be unconscious. If you're unsure if your art and ideas are influenced by others, discuss this with your teacher. If in doubt, it is always safest to acknowledge an influence.

- When using secondary sources like the internet for inspiration in your artwork, make sure to reference them properly in your artwork texts.
- Include citation details for artworks that appropriate or parody the work of others, in the title, your rationale or the artwork texts.
- When referencing external ideas in your rationale, cite all sources both within the text and in a separate list.

Many artists include found or prefabricated objects in their art. Such art is considered to have been "constructed" by the artist and is acceptable in IB Diploma visual arts, but it must be acknowledged and explained in the relevant text.

- The media text must list any found or prefabricated objects that were included in an artwork.
- If a video-based work, installation or performance includes sound or music that was created by someone else, the source must be acknowledged in the media text, rationale or artwork texts.
- Similarly, with AI-generated imagery, the intentions and process must be clearly explained in the rationale or artwork texts.

During your coursework, collaborating with your peers on artwork offers valuable learning opportunities. It is a common practice in both traditional and contemporary art-making. Through collaboration, you can exchange ideas and techniques, enhancing your learning experience. However, collaborative work is not permitted for assessment in this course. Your submissions must show your individual achievement against the criteria, which can be unclear in group projects. When your work is submitted, you will be asked to confirm that your submissions are final and made solely by you. Your teacher is also asked to authenticate your work.

Sensitive issues and provocative art

Art possesses immense power to shock, provoke thought and prompt questions. However, this power demands careful and thoughtful use. Artists often address challenging or controversial subjects, occasionally yielding provocative outcomes. In your visual arts course, you may encounter artworks that surprise or shock you. However, while it may be tempting to create shocking art yourself, it should not be your goal. Examiners may flag work they deem offensive for review.

If you do want to explore sensitive topics in your creative journey, consult your teacher and school administration, including your IB Diploma coordinator. An important aspect of art-making is being sensitive to your audience and the culture in which you live and operate, including the culture of your school.

Tip

The *Visual arts guide* states that artworks created for the IB Diploma visual arts course must not:

- cause harm to people and the planet
- glamorize the taking of drugs
- incite or condone intolerance or hatred of others
- include excessive or gratuitous violence or reference to harmful behaviours
- represent explicit sexual activity. (IBO, 2025)

8

Writing about art

Using subject-specific language

The assessment tasks require the use of subject-specific language. This refers to words and phrases that have a shared meaning to artists and for the audiences of art when they read or write about the visual arts. You will need to use specialist terms when you are writing your proposal, tracing the development of your lines of inquiry and describing your art-making strategies. You will also use these words to explain your use of different art-making forms or when analysing your work and the work of other artists.

Throughout this book, subject-specific words have been put in bold and they are defined in the glossary. Learning how to use them will expand your art vocabulary. Using subject-specific language allows ideas to be communicated effectively and accurately without long descriptions. All of the assessment tasks have word limits to encourage you to write concisely. Using specialist vocabulary means fewer words and more meaning. It is particularly useful when you are using bullet points or annotations. How you use visual arts vocabulary will contribute to the level of your assessed work.

Subject-specific vocabulary assumes a shared understanding of meaning, and some words have meanings in visual arts that differ from their general use. For example, the definitions of **composition**, **form** and **perspective** in the glossary will help you to distinguish their specific meaning in visual arts from how they are generally used.

This chapter contains the language you will need to discuss art. First there is a suggested approach to critical analysis using the formal qualities. These are sometimes referred to as the “elements of art”. Then there are suggestions of useful terms for specific forms of art and a consideration of material qualities, process and technique.

Key terms

Composition: the arrangement and structure of the elements within a painting. In sculpture, it is the relationship of the forms to each other and the surrounding space.

Form: this word has a specific meaning in art. It refers to the three-dimensional aspect of objects. In images, form makes objects appear to be realistic solids, even though they are in fact two-dimensional. Form can also be used in the general sense of giving form to ideas, in other words, making concepts concrete.

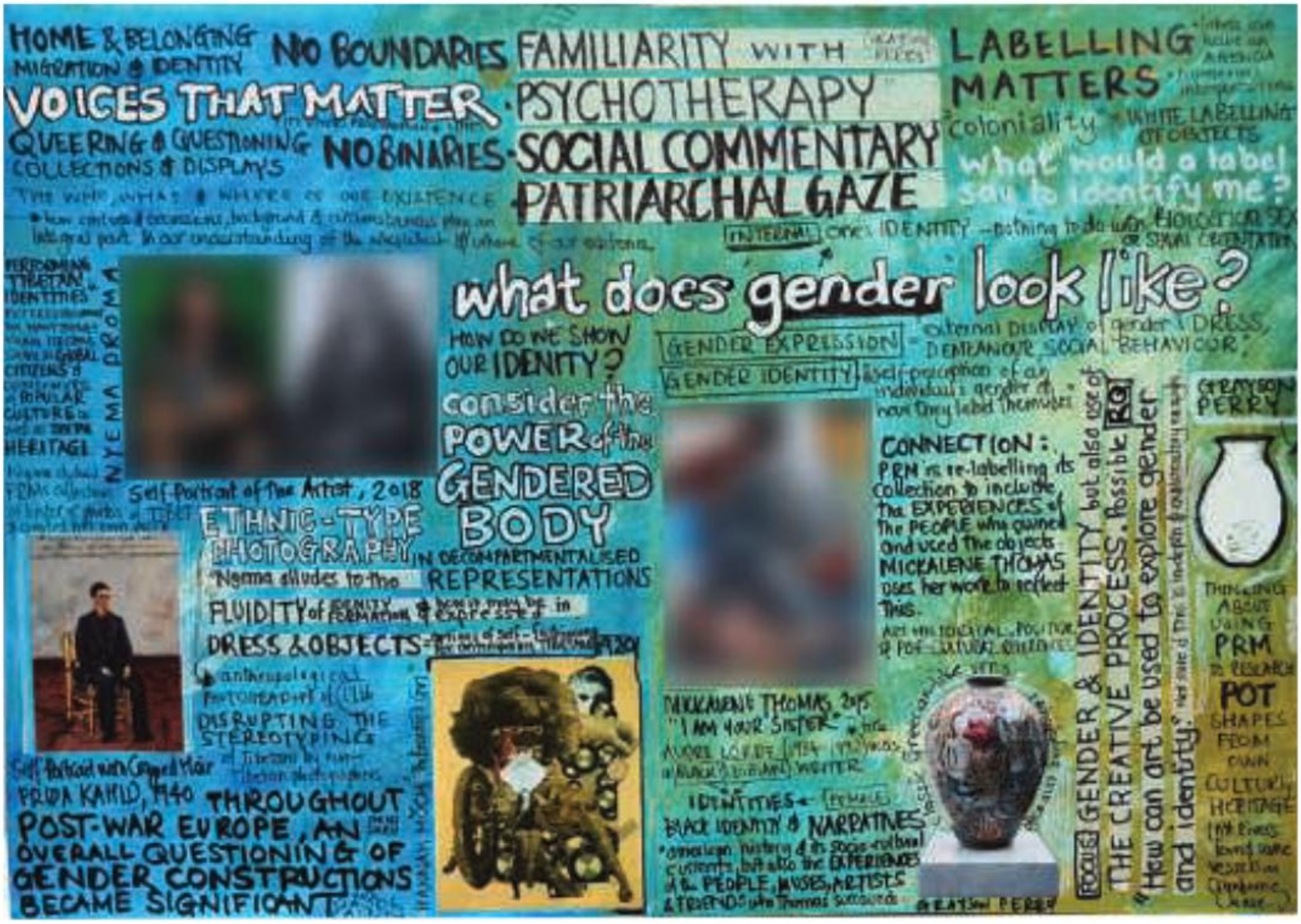
Perspective: the way an artist shows three-dimensional depth in a two-dimensional artwork.

▲ Figure 8.1 Emma has used subject-specific words to analyse Patrick Caulfield’s paintings without the need for long descriptions of the images

There are many good guides to using specialist art terms, such as:

- *The Thames and Hudson Introduction to Art* (De Witte, 2015)
- "Art terms" on the Tate's website (Tate, 2024)
- "Art terms" on the MoMA's website (MoMA, 2024)
- "Lesson 3: Elements of art" from the Khan Academy's College Art History course (The Khan Academy, 2024).

Subject-specific language is not confined to the formal terms of art. Writing about art will involve what the *Visual arts guide* describes as "social, political, ritual, spiritual, decorative and functional values" that "can be persuasive and are sometimes subversive" (IBO, 2025). Look at how in Figure 8.2 Nikki has used their journal to gather information about the cultural significance of gender from different areas of knowledge.



▲ Figure 8.2 Nikki has effectively mixed art terms with specialist vocabulary from other disciplines

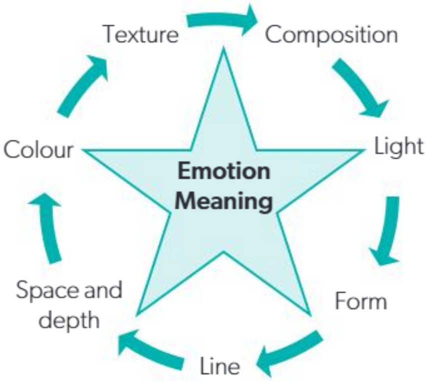
The formal elements of art

The formal elements of art are the physical qualities of an artwork and their visual effects. Analysis of the formal elements reveals how an artist communicates function and meaning through the use of materials and media. As art takes so many wildly different forms, you will need to be flexible in how you apply the vocabulary. For instance, it would be meaningless to apply painting terms to a sculpture or photograph.

However you decide to approach the analysis, always begin by noting the emotional impact of your initial impressions of the work. Our response to art is usually instinctive at first. It is physical and emotional, rather than intellectual or rational. It is through combining this emotional experience with rational analysis and researched knowledge that you gain insight into the function, meaning and cultural significance of artworks.

Tip

You could start your analysis with the seven formal points diagram (Figure 8.3). These points act as prompts to your description. You do not need to follow them rigidly; follow the order that seems most appropriate to the artwork.



▲ Figure 8.3 The seven formal elements of artworks

Composition

Composition is the arrangement and structure of the elements in an image. In sculpture, it is the relationship of the forms to each other and the surrounding **space**. The principles of harmony, rhythm, emphasis, **proportion**, variety and balance can all be considered in relation to composition.

When you analyse composition, you could discuss:

- the **format**
- the **golden mean**
- the **rule of thirds**
- the arrangement of lines and shapes
- **negative and positive space**
- **cropping**
- comparative scale.

When considering the scale and impact of an artwork you might ask:

- How does the human form compare to the size of the artwork?
- Do I need to stand back to experience the artwork?
- Do I need to come close to the artwork?
- What is the relationship between scale and the detail in the artwork?

Key terms

Space: the three-dimensional area in which objects are located.

Proportion: the relative size of an artwork: the relationship between its height, width and depth; do not confuse proportion with scale.

Format: the layout of a painting: landscape or portrait, panoramic (wide view), tondo (round), miniature, or whether it is part of a series: diptych (two), triptych (three), polyptych (multiple).

Golden mean: a system to create aesthetically pleasing proportions originating in ancient Greece. A line is divided so that the smaller section's relation to the larger section is the same as the larger section's relation to the whole, that is, approximately 5:8.

Rule of thirds: imagine a composition divided into thirds; these lines become the most significant points at which to place key elements.

Negative and positive space: negative space is the area around the form (void) and positive space is the area taken by the form (object). The relationships of positive to negative space can either balance a composition or alternatively create a visual dynamic through imbalance.

Cropping: this is when objects or shapes are cut off by the edge of the picture, as often happens in photography. Cropping is less evident in paintings before the invention of photography. Cropping reminds the viewer that we are looking through a window or seeing a portion of a reality that continues outside of the frame.

- How has the artist drawn the spectator into their world?
- What is the audience role in this scene?

You might ask the following questions about composition:

- Which shapes dominate? Where is the emphasis?
- Where is the eye led?
- Where are the major divisions? (A quick sketch can help to analyse these.)
- Is the composition arranged on a vertical/horizontal axis or with diagonals, or perhaps with arcs and circles?
- How does the composition make the audience feel?
- Are the shapes arranged in an organized and balanced way, designed to reassure? Or are the elements random and arbitrary in order to unsettle? Has the artist created rhythms and variety of interest?
- How do our eyes read the composition? Perhaps travelling from one aspect to another?

Tip

Useful words to use when describing composition include: **asymmetrical**/symmetrical, balanced, busy, calculated, chaotic, complex, confused, cropped, cut, divided, dramatic, dynamic, geometric, harmonious, informal, imbalanced, irregular/regular, formal/random, repeated, rhythmic, segmented.

Light

The use of light will determine the mood of an image. Darkness can create an intense depth and psychological power, for example in the backgrounds of Rembrandt's portraits, whereas light is uplifting and creates a sense of well-being, as in Claude Monet's landscapes. Soft light gives a suffused and tranquil atmosphere or a mysterious one. Strong light brings clarity and brilliance. Light **raking** across a surface will reveal the textures.

Tone is the intensity of light and dark. Consider tonal contrast separately from colour by converting an image into black and white. This will help you to better understand **value**. The artist might have used very strong tonal contrast or used mid-tones. They might have used a wide tonal range (from black to white) or a narrow tonal range (subtle shades of greys). Consider how the artist created the tonal effects. In graphic art, **cross-hatching** is used to build different densities of shadow. Sometimes light glows from within the image or radiates from the light of the white paper behind a drawing.

In Figure 8.4, the street artist Ernest Pignon-Ernest has used **chiaroscuro** to give a strong sense of form to his drawing of film director Pier Paolo Pasolini carrying his own body. He has enhanced the form with the outline around the figures. He needs to use strong contrast so the image will show up in the strong light on the streets of Rome.

Key terms

Asymmetrical: the opposite of symmetrical. Most compositions are arranged around an imaginary axis to create an imbalance (asymmetry) as this gives life and the impression of movement.

Raking: light which falls at an acute angle to reveal the surface textures or relief of an object.

Tone: the intensity of light and dark. Shading is a way of applying tone to a drawing.

Value: degrees of tonal variation.

Cross-hatching: hatching is the use of parallel lines to create tone; when these are overlaid in different directions (cross-hatching), successively darker tones are created.

Chiaroscuro: the modelling of light and dark to show form. A clear light source casts shadows, transforming a shape into a form.

▲ Figure 8.4 Pignon-Ernest has created effective contrasts of texture and colour in his artwork

You might ask these questions about light:

- Is the atmosphere cold or warm?
- Is the artist depicting or using artificial light? Perhaps candlelight or electric, gas, or neon light? Or are they using daylight? If so, is it cold, blue-tinted northern light or warm, yellow, southern sunshine?
- Where is the light source? Does it come from within the picture? Or from outside? Are there multiple light sources? What does this suggest about the scene beyond the picture frame?
- Perhaps the scene appears to be spotlit, as if on a stage in the theatre, as in many of Edward Hopper's paintings. Alternatively, is it cinematic, as in a film still?
- Consider the effects of shadow, obscurity and darkness. Maybe the light appears to filter through the gloom. How is the light used to create emphasis?
- Does the light have a symbolic or metaphorical meaning in the context of the artwork?

Form

Form refers to the three-dimensional aspect of objects. In images, form makes objects appear to be realistic solids, even though they are in fact two-dimensional. A simple way to see this is to draw a circle. Now shade one side, rendering from light to dark, then make it cast a shadow. You have used chiaroscuro to give an illusion of form by transforming a two-dimensional shape into an illusion of three-dimensional form.

Sculpture is the relationship between form and space, as sculptors deal with real form rather than the illusion of it. Forms in sculpture can be considered in relation to the surrounding space or **void**, as well as in relation to the space that they contain. Sometimes the volume of the form expands outwards as if it will fill the surrounding space, for example in Fernando Botero's sculptures. Conversely, the space can weigh in on the forms, seeming to crush them, as in Alberto Giacometti's sculptures. In sculpture you might refer to the physical **mass** of the forms.

Tip

Useful words to describe light and tone include: atmospheric, backlit, chiaroscuro, contrasting, **contrejour**, floodlit, graduated, highlighted, illuminated, **monochromatic**, rendered, spotlit, suffused.

Key terms

Contrejour: when an object or person is placed against the light (backlit), so that they form a silhouette.

Monochromatic: with only one colour. The artist may have chosen a single colour to create a mood, completing the picture only in tones of that colour. Contrast with "polychromatic".

Void: nothingness, or the empty space that is the opposite of mass, substance and form.

Mass: the body of matter. In sculpture, you might refer to the physical mass of the forms; in architecture, the sense of weight, solidity and force, such as in the ancient pyramids.

Key terms

Plinth: the base of a sculpture. A useful synonym is "socle", which is more often used to describe the base for classical sculptures.

Abstract: art that is non-representational; a circle, for example, is an abstract shape. Contrast with "figurative".

Depth: how far back the image appears to recede from the surface of the picture (the picture plane).

Picture plane: the surface of a two-dimensional work of art.

Linear perspective: when a scene is viewed from a single viewpoint with objects shown diminishing in size as they become more distant, as in a photograph.

Atmospheric perspective: when forms are out of focus in the distance and crisper in the foreground to give the effect of depth. This is sometimes reversed in photography, where depth of field is used to blur the foreground and sharpen the focus in the distance. The illusion of depth is just as effective.

Aerial perspective: when colour values are used to create an illusion of depth. More intense colours appear to come forward while desaturated colours recede.

Isometric perspective: a system to describe space where uniform objects remain the same size, so parallel lines give the illusion of depth. This is often used in plans and computer games.

Foreshortening: the illusion in perspective when a form, such as an outreached arm, leads into the space.

Viewpoint: the real, or imagined, position from which the spectator looks at a painting. Consider viewpoint in relation to illusions of depth and the use of perspective.

You might ask these questions about form:

- How has the illusion of form been created?
- Does the use of line emphasize the forms?
- How do the forms relate to the surrounding space?
- How has light been used to help describe the forms?

Of three-dimensional artwork you might ask:

- Is the form of this sculpture expanding or contracting?
- Is this an open or enclosed space?
- How do the forms relate to the surrounding spaces? To the **plinth**? To the ground? To the human form?

Tip

Useful words to analyse form include: **abstract**, biomorphic, closed/open, concave, convex, distorted, enclosed, flat, geometric, geomorphic (landscape formed by nature), massive, modelled, modulated, monumental, nebulous, organic, palpable, planar/flat, realistic, rendered, volumetric.

Space and depth

Space is the three-dimensional area in which objects exist. When making images, artists often create an illusion of space on a two-dimensional surface. **Depth** is how far back the image appears from the **picture plane**.

In sculpture and architecture, space or voids can usefully be related to mass or density.

The principal ways of creating an illusion of depth are:

- overlapping and intersecting planes or objects
- **linear perspective**
- **atmospheric perspective**
- **aerial perspective**
- **isometric perspective**
- **foreshortening**
- tonal contrast.

Depth can be shown without perspective and it is only in the western traditions that perspective has held such importance. Chinese landscape painting uses the concept of high, level and deep. Combined in a single scene, these different **viewpoints** create a floating sensation for the viewer. This is demonstrated in *Early Spring* by Guo Xi (Figure 8.5), where the distant mountain appears both near and far, and can be read as being on the same plane as the trees and rocks of the middle and foreground.

▲ **Figure 8.5** Guo Xi, *Early Spring*, 1072

When considering space and depth, it is important to ask where we, the viewers, are in relation to the artwork. In other words, what is the viewpoint? This can determine the effect of the image. Viewpoint also defines the way we read depth and the sense of space in an image. It can be used to establish a hierarchy between the spectator and the image. A high viewpoint gives power to the spectator. A low viewpoint makes it seem that we are less important than the figures in the scene; this is often the case with religious subjects.

When analysing space and depth, you will need to consider the conventions of different cultures. Guo Xi describes a totally believable spatial world in *Early Spring*, yet much of his picture is empty. He also reminds us that this landscape is an illusion by emphasizing the picture plane with his use of calligraphy.

If the picture is in strict linear perspective, there will be one fixed viewpoint. Often artists combine several viewpoints, even though the picture appears to be from one. You will need to consider the cultural context when writing about perspective. For example, non-Western art and the Cubists often use multiple viewpoints and very few artists follow the rules of perspective completely.

You might ask these questions about space and depth:

- How has the artist created the illusion of depth?
- Why did the artist show the space in this way?
- Do the forms come forward from the picture plane or do they recede, as if we are looking through a window?

TOK

Can form exist without space? Can space exist without form? Is a balloon defined by what it contains or by what surrounds it?

Start by asking these questions in front of a sculpture or a rubbish bin! Then apply the same questions to the planet Earth and the universe.

Tip

Useful words to describe space and depth include: aerial, atmospheric, background, diminishing, flat, foreground, illusionary, isometric perspective, linear, midground, overlapping, picture plane, picture window, receding, schematic, shallow/deep.

- Has the artist used foreshortening to create drama and to draw us into the scene?
- How have colour and atmosphere been used to give an illusion of space and depth?

You might ask these questions about viewpoint:

- Are we looked down upon from above to make us feel small? This is often the case with monumental sculpture.
- Are we raised up, perhaps even floating above the scene, to make us feel more powerful?
- Do we confront the scene directly as equals, as in a television or stage drama?
- Does the artist want to draw us into the scene or make us stand apart?
- At what height did the painter intend the work to be hung? If it is a religious work of art, the intention may be that we view the work from a kneeling position, looking up.

Line

Lines describe the edges of forms, where solid meets space. They define boundaries between light and dark or they follow **contours**. In his *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, Paul Klee famously played with the idea of what it is to draw a line: "An active line on a walk, moving freely, without a goal. A walk for a walk's sake. Their mobility agent is a point, shifting its position forward" (Klee, 1953). Lines can be conceptual and imaginary, such as the implied line that the viewer's eye takes as it follows shapes, colours and forms, or connects elements. When an artist draws a line, they leave a trace or mark of their action. Lines record gestures and tell us about the materiality of the media and texture. Mark-making when drawing depends on implements—such as fingers, pens, brushes, spray-cans, pencils or charcoal—and the surfaces worked on, such as paper, canvas or plaster.

Key terms

Line: the trace of a point which describes the meeting of planes at an edge or the division between light and dark. Think in terms of silhouettes or contours. Hatched lines can suggest tone and form, thus describing a plane or curves. Flowing lines can also be used without the modulation of tone to suggest form.

Contour: a line which connects points of equal value, such as the contour lines on a map showing points of equal height. The same principle is used in drawing when lines follow the boundaries of a form or points of equal tone.

You might ask these questions about line:

- What is the relationship of the lines to forms?
- What does the character of the lines tell us about the process of making the artwork?
- What do the lines tell us about media and materiality?

Line can effectively describe form. In the vase painting in Figure 8.6, notice how we read the volumes of the horses, yet there is no chiaroscuro.

Tip

Useful words to describe line include: angular, blurred, bold, broken, confident/hesitant, contoured, controlled, crisp, cross-hatched, curved, delicate, dragged, edged, engraved, etched, flowing, freehand, geometric, gestural, graceful, granular, harsh, heavy, hesitant, incised, loose, meandering, outlined, ragged, ruled, sensitive, sharp, sinuous, sketched, smudged, subtle.

And useful words for mark-making include: bleed, blot, blotch, drag, drip, erase, etch, inscribe, score, scratch, scumble, smear, smudge, splatter, spot, spray, stain.

▲ Figure 8.6 An Ancient Greek vase painting in black over red ceramic

Colour

Colour is the visual sensation of **hue** (red, for example), saturation (how strong the red is) and brightness (how light or dark the red is).

We can differentiate up to 5 million colours, but perception of colour is subjective. It is difficult to describe in words, so be imaginative and make up your own colour vocabulary. Use the names on paint tubes to help. Or refer to the many colour name websites to spark your imagination.

White, black and grey are not always considered true colours as they do not occur in the colour **spectrum** (see Figure 8.7). However, they are very important when you are analysing colour. Black will always intensify the colour values of its neighbours and grey will lessen the power of colours. Grey can also be used to create connections, helping to harmonize colours that would not normally link. White adds light and purity to surrounding colours.

Colour can also be analysed in relation to function, meaning and cultural significance. It might have been chosen for expression, associations, memories or for psychological effect. Some artists are more concerned with the **phenomenological** aspects of colour—the sensations of light. Painters such as Cézanne have attempted to resolve the conflict between our perception of **local colour** and reflected light.

You might ask these questions about colour:

- How have colour contrasts and harmonies been used?
- Is the composition constructed around **analogous colours**?
- How has the artist used colour to create a mood?
- What is the cultural significance of the colours?

Key terms

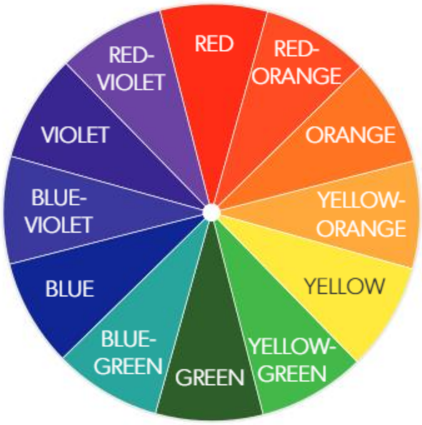
Hue: the distinct property of a colour that distinguishes it from other colours (as opposed to its brightness or saturation).

Spectrum: when white light is refracted into its different wavelengths of colours, as in a rainbow. The visible spectrum is red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

Phenomenological: the study of subjective experiences.

Local colour: the actual colour of an object when unaffected by reflecting light.

Analogous colours: colours which sit next to each other in the colour circle, such as yellow and green.



▲ Figure 8.7 The colour spectrum

Tip

Useful words to describe colour include: analogous, bleached, brash, bright, brilliant, contrasting, cool/warm, discordant, faded, fluorescent, garish, glazed, glowing, harmonious, hue, iridescent, monochromatic, muted, neutral, pale, pastel, **polychromatic**, primary, pure/muddied, secondary, subdued, **tertiary**, tint, translucent/opaque.

Key terms

Polychromatic: many coloured.

Tertiary colours: these are mixtures of the three primaries, used to make browns and the wide range of neutral colours in nature, such as the colours of skin, plants, wood, and so on. Along with pink and mauve, they do not occur in the spectrum.

Saturated colours: colours that are highly pigmented or at full strength.

Complementary colours: the three pairs of opposites on the colour circle are described as complementary. These are orange/blue, red/green and purple/yellow. When placed against each other they contrast and enhance, so red seems redder when placed next to green.

- Are the colour contrasts and harmonies related to white or to black?
- How would the impact change if the artwork was in black and white?

Colour is usually described in terms of contrasts, as the effect of a colour is always dependent on its neighbours. When you describe the effects of colour it can be helpful to consider harmonies and contrasts. Colours that are close on the colour circle will harmonize (these are also called analogous colours), while those that are far apart will contrast. Often artists will build a theme around colours that are adjacent, adding a strongly contrasting colour to activate the composition.

In your practical art, planning colour schemes around harmonies and contrasts is effective. Build a harmony from colours that are adjacent on the colour circle, to act as a foil to a colour that is opposite on the colour circle so that it "pops" out.

The three basic colour contrasts are:

- Contrast of hue, for example yellow against red.
- Contrast of saturation: the contrast of pure pigments with diluted pigments, for example the yellow sun against pale-yellow reflections. Hence you can refer to **saturated colours** or desaturated colours.
- Contrast of brightness (tonal contrast).

Four other useful colour contrasts are:

- Active and passive contrast: we sense reds, oranges and yellows as busy, moving hues, while greens, browns and blues tend to feel quieter and still.
- Contrast of temperature: colours can be felt as hot or cold hues. Although blue is generally regarded as cool, some blues are warmer than others. Colours such as yellow can have quite different temperature effects depending on their neighbours.
- **Complementary colours**: this term describes the three pairs of opposites on the colour circle: red against green, orange against blue and yellow against violet. When placed next to each other they enhance their hues. Red against green seems redder and the green seems greener.
- Contrast of colour key: as with notes in music, colours can be described as on a scale, with yellow at the top being high key and indigo blue at the bottom being low key.

TOK

We each see colour differently, and consequently philosophers have mistrusted colour because of its subjective nature. "Scientists are not concerned with colour but with radiant stimuli in light, or with the physiological processing of those stimuli by the eye. Whereas colour is in the mind which apprehends it" (John Gage, 2000).

- Can colour be considered as a useful area of knowledge if we each experience it differently?
- Is colour necessary to our understanding of the world? Is colour blindness a limitation?
- Do you agree with Gage's statement? Where does that place art?

"Blue is always different from yellow, for example, depressed ('the blues'), where yellow is gay, loyal ('true-blue'), where yellow is cowardly, and the like. Yellow has the same meaning as blue once in a blue moon." (Wittgenstein, 1953)

- Is language inadequate as a tool to describe colour sensation?
- Do you agree with Wittgenstein's colour mood associations?

Texture

Textures are the tactile qualities of surfaces, in other words the qualities of touch. Art often represents one texture with an equivalent in a different medium. Your description of texture will be linked to the media used to imitate the surfaces of objects, such as in representational painting when oil paint is used to mimic the surface of silk, fur, stone or flesh. In non-representational and conceptual art, texture can evoke a mood or act as a metaphor.

The support used will contribute to the texture: canvas, linen, board, wood, metal, silk, hessian, and so on. For sculpture, consider the surface of the material:

- Plaster is dry, absorbing liquids and light.
- Stone can be rough, abrasive, granulated and dull, or polished, smooth and reflective.
- Bronze is **patinated** and reflective.
- Wax is soft, greasy, and malleable.

Pattern and decoration are elements of texture. In textiles, the physical structure of the cloth, the warp and weft of weaving or the relief of embroidery contribute to its texture. Pattern adds to texture through repetition, a tracery of lines, latticework and through grids. Appliqué, embroidery and quilting are techniques which combine texture with decoration, achieving surfaces that have variety.

Key term

Patina: this is the sheen or colouration on an object's surface produced naturally by age or deliberately by the artist.

Tip

Useful words to describe texture include: abraded, actual/implied, brittle, coarse, delicate, dense, distressed, ephemeral, glossy, granular, layered, leathery, oily, open, pitted, plastic, satiny, seductive, shiny, slick, smooth, soft, sticky, tacky, tactile, touchy-feely, translucent, weathered.

In ceramics, pattern is often inscribed into a surface or built up in relief, creating both decoration and a real, tangible, physical texture (as in sculpture). Street artists appropriate the textures of the real world when they spray on brick, rendered walls, concrete or corrugated iron. The smooth, enamelled quality of spray paint contrasts with the weathered roughness of the walls they work on.

You might ask these questions about texture:

- What would these surfaces feel like to touch?
- How was this surface created?
- Is this a real texture or an imitation of texture?

Notice how the sculptor in Figure 8.8 has combined form, line and decoration to dramatic effect. The crisp edges draw the features through the contrast of strong sunlight with shadow. Although the face has been smoothed, the rough nature of wood remains in the chiselled marks behind the head.

Tip

Alternatives to the term "artwork" include: artefact, assemblage, depiction, canvas, collage, composition, graphic, illustration, image, installation, montage, picture, representation, sculpture, textile.

▲ Figure 8.8 An African Dogon head from Mali made in wood

Material qualities, process and technique

Your description of formal qualities will involve an analysis of making, but you also want to think further about the how and why of the medium and process. You might consider the artist's choice of materials, which may have been determined by value (economic, technical or traditional)—factors that were considered in Chapter 3: Situating.

Investigating why netsuke are carved from ivory and bone will lead you to not only think about the technical properties of carving the material, but also their cultural significance and how they connect with the artwork's function and meaning. The use of lapis lazuli blue in the Renaissance or Joseph Beuys' choice of felt and fat for his installations are culturally determined choices. The artist might want the viewer to be particularly aware of the materials.

At other times, artists seek to use materials to imitate, as is often the case in oil painting. A further idea to explore is John Ruskin's concept of "truth to materials". The idea is that an artist should reflect the distinctive nature of a medium in the way it is used and then be honest in expressing those distinctive properties. Think of Jackson Pollock dripping paint or an African sculptor carving wood. Neither artist attempts to hide the expressive qualities of their media; they are true to their materials.

The following section gives ideas for describing materials, technique and process for painting, sculpture, textiles, photography, print and installation art.

Painting

Paint can be opaque—solid and impermeable to light—or it can be translucent, allowing light to shine through a layer of colour, as in a stained-glass window. Consider the relationship between the consistency of the media (fluid or viscous) and the effects of the brushwork: fast and textured (loose brushwork), careful and controlled (tight brushwork) and flowing or heavy.

Paint consists of the pigment (the colour) and the glue (that binds the pigment) with the medium (which makes the paint flow when it is applied). There are various types available, each with its own characteristics.

Type of paint	Composition	Characteristics
Watercolours	pigment + gum arabic (a natural resin) + water	light, bright, fluid, spontaneous, delicate, transitory, pure
Acrylics	pigment + polyvinyl acetate + water	bright, intense, artificial, plastic, smooth, both opaque and translucent
Oil	pigment + oil and wax	translucent or opaque, fluid, shiny or dull, rich, varied, impasto, sensual, natural
Fresco	pigment + water applied onto wet plaster that acts as the binding medium	dry, flat, cool, pure, fresh, bright, light
Tempera	pigment + egg yolk	opaque, chalky, flat, pure, dry, even, smooth, cool, inexpressive

The support is the surface that has been painted on. Different surfaces create different effects:

- Wooden panel or board tends to lead to a smoother and more detailed painting.
- Metal is used for smooth and intricate detail.
- Canvas or linen is used for a freer, more textured surface with looser brushstrokes and dry brushwork, so one colour is fragmented over the underpainting.

If oil paint is put on an unsealed surface, the colours will fade and become dull as the oil soaks away. Usually the surface is sealed, traditionally with a **glue size**, although modern artists use an acrylic sealant on the surface before they paint.

Key term

Glue size: a method of preparing and sealing a canvas before applying oil paint to the surface.

About the artist's choice of media, you might ask:

- What are the effects of the materials and why did the artist make these choices?
- Has the artist used the materials to imitate reality?
- Has the artist been truthful to the properties of the materials or hidden them?
- What is the cultural significance of the choice of materials?

Sculpture

Sculpture is generally:

- constructed from materials such as wood, bamboo, plastics or metal (steel or iron)
- modelled from materials such as clay or plaster
- cast in materials such as bronze, wax, plaster, resins or plastics
- carved from wood, plaster or stone
- assembled from natural, found, manufactured or reused forms.

Traditional sculpting processes can be described as additive—where you start with a void (an empty space) and add bits—or subtractive, where you start with a mass of material and take some of it away. Michelangelo is reputed to have said that he saw the angel in the marble and, in carving it, set him free.

▲ **Figure 8.9** This colossal Olmec head from 1500–1300 BCE has been carved in situ. The hardness of the material has contributed to its expressive power

You might ask these questions about sculpture:

- Did the sculptor start with a block and carve it?
- Was it shaped from a soft material on an **armature** and then cast in a different medium?
- How has the surfaced been worked?

Key term

Armature: the structure that supports a sculpture, usually underneath the modelled material. It is often constructed from wire, wood or welded steel.

The surface of the sculpture will give you clues as to the processes followed. You might find traces of the artist's finger marks or evidence of the chisel. The treatment of surface textures will relate to the meaning and function of the work. Stone might be left its original colour and textured to reveal its intrinsic qualities, such as the smoothness of marble or grittier texture of granite. Or it could be painted naturalistically, as was often done in classical sculpture. Wood can be left rough, polished smooth or painted. Steel can be patinated, galvanized or left to rust.

Key term

Edition: both prints and cast sculptures are often produced as a numbered set of originals. These are then signed by the artist, after which the print plates or sculpture mould are destroyed to preserve the exclusivity of this "limited edition". Conventionally, prints are numbered in their margin as one in this sequence out of the total.

Cast sculpture is when the sculptor started with clay, plaster or wax to mould the forms, usually over an armature. Then a mould was made from this original, into which a molten metal is poured (usually bronze) to form a permanent version. The surface finish of bronze is called the patina, which is achieved by polishing to a reflective shine or oxidized, becoming green or brown.

Because metal is expensive, cast sculptures are usually hollow. You can tap a sculpture to find out if it is hollow or solid (if touching it is permitted). Casting allows the artist to make several copies of their original—an **edition**.

The relationship between form and space is always an essential element when analysing sculpture, even when colour and decoration grab our attention, as in Figure 8.10. Notice how the mass is emphasized by situating the pumpkin on the sand and against the sky to suggest a narrative or a metaphor.

▲ Figure 8.10 Yayoi Kusama, *Pumpkin*, 1994

Textiles and fashion

Textiles and clothing combine form, colour and texture and, as they are often made to be worn, movement and space. When writing about them, you can draw on all the elements of art. The making of textiles is as ancient as the history of humankind, so it has a complex vocabulary of materials and processes. There are full textile glossaries available online, such as:

- The George Washington University Museum: Textile Museum.
- For a modern fashion glossary, try British *Vogue*.
- For a sustainable fashion glossary with rich resources to create environmentally aware fashion, try *Condé Nast*.

When analysing textiles or clothing, first ask what it is made from. The raw materials might be wool (sheep, goat, camel or llama), cotton or silk. But most textile artists and many fashion designers combine multiple materials and processes, such as synthetic fibres, paper, hair or recycled materials.

You might then ask:

- What processes did the materials go through as they were transformed?
- How has the raw material been prepared? Refined, bleached or spun?
- Has it been coloured before being used? Dyed, stained, aged or distressed?
- How is the piece assembled or formed?

▲ Figure 8.11 When analysing the qualities of textiles, the tactile surfaces can be crucial to the effect, as in El Anatsui's use of recycled materials in *Dusasa II*, 2007

Photography

You will need to refer to specialist websites when writing about photographs. There are many available online, such as Adobe, which has a glossary with demonstrations, or Great Big Photography World.

Tip

Useful words to describe textiles and fashion include: adorn, construct/deconstruct, distress, embellish, **emboss**, entwine, fragile, frayed, interweave, knit, layer, loop, pattern, pleat, sculpt, sew, spin, starch, stencil, tatter, tuft, warp, weave, weft, yarn.

Key term

Emboss: to create a relief surface. In print-making, this can be achieved by pressing into soft paper, in leather-work by using stamps, in sculpture by carving and in ceramics by pushing into the soft clay.

Tip

Useful words to describe photographs include: digital/analogue, aperture, authentic, blurred/focused, captured, crisp, cropped, the decisive moment, depth of field, documentary, dramatic, factual, fake, fleeting, grainy, iconic, intimate, momentary, objective, posed/candid, snapped, split-second, transient, truthful, **voyeuristic**.

Key term

Voyeur: someone who gets pleasure from spying on others. Sometimes the artist makes us unseen onlookers into people's private lives.

When analysing photography, you can use the seven formal points as you would with a painting. Also ask these questions:

- Why has the photographer chosen this section of the view?
- Why has the photographer chosen this moment in time?
- Where is the focus?
- Where is the photographer situated?

The gaze of the photographer and the subject is often private and intimate. However, when an image is displayed in public this personal moment is shared with strangers.

Print-making

You will need to refer to specialist websites when writing about prints. You could try Print Center New York and the Center for Contemporary Printmaking.

When looking at a print, look for the process used. The caption should help you identify it—if it does not, ask your teacher for help. A print is usually one of a series or edition of identical prints, except for **monoprinting** and **monotype** (the clue is in the name—"mono" means one). Art prints often use technologies that were originally commercial, but have been superseded by more efficient processes. Woodcuts of the Middle Ages were replaced by engraving, just as lithographic printing of the 20th century was replaced by digital print technologies. Old-fashioned methods are used by contemporary artists for their distinctive creative properties.

Art print-making can be divided into two main categories: relief print-making and intaglio.

In relief print-making (or block printing), a surface is cut away so that when ink is rolled over the top areas they print as positive, while the removed areas remain white. These include:

- **woodcut**
- **collograph**
- **wood engraving**
- **lino printing**.

Intaglio processes are when the surface is incised so that when put through a press, the ink is pulled out from lines as a positive mark. These include:

- Engraving, in which copper or zinc plate is cut into with metal implements. Ink is applied to the plate, the top surfaces are wiped clean and under the pressure of a press the dark ink is lifted out, making positive marks on the white paper.
- Etching, in which a wax ground is used to protect a metal plate. The wax is drawn into so that the exposed metal can be etched by acid. The resulting grooves are printed in the same way as an engraving.

Key terms

Monoprint: one of a series of prints, each with individual variations.

Monotype: a unique print made by working freely with inks or paints on a smooth surface (metal, plastic or glass). Sometimes the paper is laid over the inky surface and the artist draws on the back to produce a granulated line. Alternatively, the paper is pressed onto the inked surface and a print is pulled. Edgar Degas used both monotype and monoprint extensively, often working onto his prints with pastel to adapt each differently.

Woodcut: a relief print-making technique. The side grain of wood is cut into to create a relief surface, which is then inked and printed. Woodcuts can be highly intricate, as in Japanese ukiyo-e, or very rough in character, as in the German Expressionist tradition.

Collograph: when a material such as card is cut into and/or built up with textures to create a surface that can be inked to be printed as relief, intaglio or a combination of both.

Wood engraving: a relief print-making technique. The hard end grain of wood is cut into to create a relief surface, which is then inked and printed. Wood engravings are often characterized by very fine details.

Lino printing: linoleum is a floor covering made from cork and oil that artists have adapted as a cheap and grain-free alternative to wood for relief printing. There are now synthetic alternatives available that are easier to cut.

- Drypoint, in which metal (copper or zinc) or plastic (usually acetate sheet) is inscribed to create a burr. This edge then holds ink, creating a line which can be both light and delicate or heavy and expressive.
- **Mezzotint**, in which a finely grooved surface of burred lines is created on copper plate by systematically rocking it with a hard steel edge. This surface prints as black, but the artist burnishes and scrapes the surface to create the design in lighter tones.

The other principal fine art print processes are lithography, which works on the principle of water being grease resistant, and screen-printing (also called serigraphy), in which inks are drawn through a mesh (see Chapter 2).

Installation art

Installation art involves space, time and materiality. When you write about it, describe the viewer experience, as installations engage with sensations of space, light and sound to achieve immersive experiences for the audience. All art exists in time and space, although contemporary practice has increasingly challenged the fixed nature of artefacts preserved in a museum.

Any exhibition can be seen as an installation, as it involves placing artworks in spaces for audiences. But conceptual art has pushed this experience into different realms with mixed-media pieces built specifically for large sites or galleries. Installation art, land art, performance, video and film suggest different questions. You might ask:

- How does the use of scale impact the viewer experience?
- How is the work experienced through time?
- What are the physical properties of the materials used and what associations do they carry?
- How have lighting and projection been used?
- Does the work involve audience participation?
- How are our senses involved? Perhaps the artist has used smell, touch, or sound?
- How is the space arranged to create atmosphere?

Key term

Mezzotint (or mezzoprint): an intaglio print-making technique. A finely grooved surface of burred lines is created on copper plate by systematically rocking it with a hard steel edge. This surface prints as black, but the artist burnishes and scrapes the surface to create the design in lighter tones against this dark background.

Tip

Useful words to describe time and motion-based art include: disorientating, engaging, environmental, ephemeral, evocative, immersive, interactive, kinetic, mesmerizing, multimedia, participatory, perception, sensory, sublime, temporary, transient

Glossary

Abstract: art that is non-representational; a circle, for example, is an abstract shape. Contrast with "figurative".

Additive sculpture: an art-making form in which different components are added or joined together, such as using clay or welding.

Aerial perspective: when colour values are used to create an illusion of depth. More intense colours appear to come forward while desaturated colours recede.

Aesthetic cultural significance: the nature of beauty and the meanings we bring to the formal qualities of art, such as colour, form and space.

Anachronism: taking or using something out of the context of its own time.

Analogous colours: colours which sit next to each other in the colour circle, such as yellow and green.

Analogue photography: art-making forms that use light-sensitive materials to capture time and motion.

Appropriation: when an image or idea is taken from its original context and recycled by an artist to create new meanings or subvert its conventional meaning.

Armature: the structure that supports a sculpture, usually underneath the modelled material. It is often constructed from wire, wood or welded steel.

Artistic constellation: the artists who are important to you and have influenced your work.

Art-making as inquiry: the collection of your lines of inquiry, which together make up your artistic process.

Art-making forms: broad categories of creative endeavours by which artistic intentions are realized into artworks, using different expressive media, techniques, conventions and styles.

Assemblage: when objects (often found from everyday life) are put together to create a sculpture, like a three-dimensional collage.

Associative strategies: involve the artist suggesting associations between images, objects, subject matter and materials. This might be done through metaphor.

Asymmetrical: the opposite of symmetrical. Most compositions are arranged around an imaginary axis to create an imbalance (asymmetry) as this gives life and the impression of movement.

Atelier: a studio or workshop where an artist works.

Atmospheric perspective: when forms are out of focus in the distance and crisper in the foreground to give the effect of depth. This is sometimes reversed in photography, where depth of field is used to blur the foreground and sharpen the focus in the distance. The illusion of depth is just as effective.

Audience: a group of people who see and experience an artwork.

Cast: to form molten metal, liquid plaster or plastic, for example, into a three-dimensional shape by pouring into a mould. Cast can also mean something formed by this means.

Cast sculpture: a sculpture formed using molten metal, liquid plaster or plastic, for example, by pouring into a mould to create a three-dimensional shape.

Chiaroscuro: the modelling of light and dark to show form. A clear light source casts shadows, transforming a shape into a form.

Citation: a reference, usually in a bibliography, to a piece of work you have used in your research.

Cite: to refer to a piece of work you have used in your research.

Collograph: when a material such as card is cut into and/or built up with textures to create a surface that can be inked to be printed as relief, intaglio or a combination of both.

Combinatory strategies: combining multiple elements to create new images or objects, new meanings or new forms and media.

Communities of learning: the relationships that you develop with peers, your community and the field of art in order to inspire you, further your practice and find support.

Complementary colours: the three pairs of opposites on the colour circle are described as complementary. These are orange/blue, red/green and purple/yellow. When placed against each other they contrast and enhance, so red seems redder when placed next to green.

Composition: the arrangement and structure of the elements within a painting. In sculpture, it is the relationship of the forms to each other and the surrounding space.

Concept: refers to the subject matter, purpose and function of an artwork, including ideas, issues and theories that may be explored through the artwork.

Context: the surroundings, environment, atmosphere and period of time in which an artwork is created and viewed.

Contour: a line which connects points of equal value, such as the contour lines on a map showing points of equal height. The same principle is used in drawing when lines follow the boundaries of a form or points of equal tone.

Contrejour: when an object or person is placed against the light (backlit), so that they form a silhouette.

Conventions: describes the accepted or traditional way of representing a subject within a specific cultural context. It is also the accepted or traditional practices associated with an art-making form or medium. Conventions can be challenged or subverted by artists.

Critique: a formal moment in which you present your work to receive constructive feedback from your peers and teacher.

Cropping: this is when objects or shapes are cut off by the edge of the picture, as often happens in photography. Cropping is less evident in paintings before the invention of photography. Cropping reminds the viewer that we are looking through a window or seeing a portion of a reality that continues outside of the frame.

Cross-hatching: hatching is the use of parallel lines to create tone; when these are overlaid in different directions (cross-hatching), successively darker tones are created.

Cultural anthropology: the study of different peoples and their ways of living.

Depth: how far back the image appears to recede from the surface of the picture (the picture plane).

Depth of field: in photography this is the range of focus in front of and behind the point that the lens is focused on.

Dialogue: an informal conversation about your work with your classmates or teacher.

Digital photography: art-making forms that use light-sensitive sensors, such as those in digital cameras and scanners, to capture time and motion.

Distillation strategies: involve extracting the essence from a complex idea or structure to highlight the most significant parts.

Edition: both prints and cast sculptures are often produced as a numbered set of originals. These are then signed by the artist, after which the print plates or sculpture mould is destroyed to preserve the exclusivity of this "limited edition". Conventionally, prints are numbered in their margin as one in this sequence out of the total.

Emboss: to create a relief surface. In print-making this can be achieved by pressing into soft paper, leather-work by using stamps, sculpture by carving, ceramics by pushing into the soft clay and so on.

Emulate: to copy an aspect of someone's work or be inspired by it.

Encaustic: a form of painting that uses heat to bond pigment and wax to a surface.

Ephemeral/temporal art form: artworks that only exist for a short or specific time, such as performance art, or are likely to change significantly over time, such as land art.

Etching: an intaglio print-making technique. A wax ground is used to protect a metal plate (copper, zinc, or steel). This is then drawn into so that the exposed metal can be etched by acid. The resulting grooves are filled with ink and the top surfaces are wiped clean. Using the pressure of a printing press, paper is forced into the lines, pulling the ink out to make a positive mark. Compare with "engraving".

Extension strategies: involve elaborating subject matter, ideas and concepts to highlight meanings or to suggest or create new ones.

Foreshortening: the illusion in perspective when a form, such as an outreached arm, leads into the space.

Form: refers to the (usually) physical or experiential nature of an artwork, including art-making forms and media, as well as technical and stylistic approaches.

Format: the layout of a painting: landscape or portrait, panoramic (wide view), tondo (round), miniature, or whether it is part of a series: diptych (two), triptych (three), polyptych (multiple).

Four-dimensional art-making forms: used to describe any artwork where the dimension of time and motion is considered an integral part of creating and experiencing the work, such as a video.

Generative: capable of producing or creating something.

Glue size: a method of preparing and sealing a canvas before applying oil paint to the surface.

Golden mean: a system to create aesthetically pleasing proportions originating in ancient Greece. A line is divided so that the smaller section's relation to the larger section is the same as the larger section's to the whole, that is, approximately 5:8.

Gouache: a medium used in painting that takes the form of an opaque watercolour.

Graphics: the group name for visual design-based forms of art, covering architectural, fashion, interior, product and graphic design, as well as illustration.

High-relief: used to describe a relief sculpture where the image projection is high or significant.

Historical cultural significance: the impact that historical events have had on the creation and perception of an artwork through time.

Hue: the distinct property of a colour that distinguishes it from other colours (as opposed to its brightness or saturation).

Hybridization: involves combining different parts or elements of multiple things.

Intaglio: a form of print-making that involves etching a metal matrix, such as a copper plate, and applying ink to the surface, which is transferred through a press.

Isometric perspective: a system to describe space where uniform objects remain the same size, so parallel lines give the illusion of depth. This is often used in plans and computer games.

Juxtapose: to place one thing against another to achieve contrast. In art, placing different images together creates new meanings or emphasizes the intrinsic qualities of each piece.

Juxtaposition strategies: incorporating two or more visual qualities, images or objects to emphasize contrast.

Kinetic: referring to movement. Some artworks move and can therefore be described as kinetic, but we also move around static sculptures in a gallery so we experience them kinetically, through movement.

Line: the trace of a point which describes the meeting of planes at an edge, or the division between light and dark. Think in terms of silhouettes or contours. Hatched lines can suggest tone and form, thus describing a plane or curves. Flowing lines can also be used, without the modulation of tone, to suggest form.

Linear perspective: when a scene is viewed from a single viewpoint with objects shown diminishing in size as they become more distant, as in a photograph.

Line of inquiry: the thread that you explore through your creative processes, propelled by one or more inquiry questions or generative statements and initiated by your interests, ongoing practice or by any encounter that fosters specific curiosity.

Lino printing: linoleum is a floor covering made from cork and oil that artists have adapted as a cheap and grain-free alternative to wood for relief printing. There are now synthetic alternatives available that are easier to cut.

Local colour: the actual colour of an object when unaffected by reflecting light.

Low-relief/bas-relief: used to describe a relief sculpture where the image projection is low.

Mass: the body of matter. In sculpture you might refer to the physical mass of the forms; in architecture the sense of weight, solidity and force, such as in the ancient pyramids.

Matrix (pl. matrices): a base or template of an artist's image from which a print is made.

Media: the materials that give form to an artwork, such as acrylic or oil paint, and the techniques used, such as intaglio or planography.

Metaphor: an image that symbolizes a different idea or feeling is metaphorical. For example, Van Gogh's sunflowers can be seen as a metaphor for idyllic rural life in the south of France.

Metonymy: replacing the name of an aspect of something with the thing itself, for example using "tongue" to mean "language".

Mezzotint (or mezzoprint): an intaglio print-making technique. A finely grooved surface of burred lines is created on copper plate by systematically rocking it with a hard steel edge. This surface prints as black, but the artist burnishes and scrapes the surface to create the design in lighter tones against this dark background.

Modelled sculpture: a process that involves the working of plastic or flexible materials to build up a three-dimensional form.

Monochromatic: with only one colour. The artist may have chosen a single colour to create a mood, completing the picture only in tones of that colour. Contrast with "polychromatic".

Monoprint: one of a series of prints, each with individual variations.

Monotype: a unique print made by working freely with inks or paints on a smooth surface (metal, plastic or glass). Sometimes the paper is laid over the inky surface and the artist draws on the back to produce a granulated line. Alternatively, the paper is pressed onto the inked surface and a print is pulled. Edgar Degas used both monotype and monoprint extensively, often working onto his prints with pastel to adapt each differently.

Native file: a file format created for a specific software program. A program's native file format supports all the program's features and functionality in a way that more generic file types may not, but they often cannot be opened without the specific software program.

Negative and positive space: negative space is the area around the form (void) and positive space is the area taken by the form (object). The relationships of positive to negative space can either balance a composition or alternatively create a visual dynamic through imbalance.

Objective: something that is informed by facts and evidence.

Opaque: not be seen through. Adding white to a translucent colour will make it opaque.

Participatory art: art that requires the audience to participate in it or interact with it.

Patina: this is the sheen or colouration on an object's surface produced naturally by age or deliberately by the artist.

Perspective: the way an artist shows three-dimensional depth in a two-dimensional artwork.

Phenomenological: the study of subjective experiences.

Picture plane: the surface of a two-dimensional work of art.

Plagiarism: using someone else's words, ideas or work without acknowledging the source.

Planography: a process where images are printed from a flat surface.

Plinth: the base of a sculpture. A useful synonym is "socle" which is more often used to describe the base for classical sculptures.

Polychromatic: many coloured.

Practical investigation: a type of inquiry that begins with critical observation and analysis of an artwork. It focuses on how an artist has structured an image, the techniques they have used or the style they have worked in, and the creative strategies they have used to develop an artwork or convey meaning. It results in practical, hands-on experimentation, synthesizing chosen aspects of the artist's practice into your own art-making.

Presentism: the inappropriate application of current thinking to artworks from the past.

Printed sculpture: making a physical object from a three-dimensional digital model, typically by laying many thin layers of a material on top of each other using a 3D printer.

Proportion: the size of an artwork: its height, width and depth; do not confuse proportion with scale.

Provenance: the record of all the owners of a work of art since it was created.

Raking: light which falls at an acute angle to reveal the surface textures or relief of an object.

Ready-made: a term developed by Marcel Duchamp to describe manufactured items removed from their original context by the artist to become art.

Realization: the achievement of a desired intent; giving form to a concept.

Relief: a form of print-making in which an image is carved into a linocut or woodcut and transferred by ink to another surface.

Relief sculpture: an art form in which the object protrudes from an otherwise flat surface.

Rule of thirds: imagine a composition divided into thirds; these lines become the most significant points at which to place key elements.

Saturated colours: colours that are highly pigmented or at full strength.

Scale: refers to the size of an image or object, most often in relation to something else.

Schematic: instead of a literal representation, a symbolic diagram (like a straight line for a road that may be curved in real life).

Scientific or technological cultural significance: how innovation affects art, such as changes in the processes of art-making and the ways of reproducing and distributing images.

Sculpture in the round: an art form that is free-standing or can be suspended from the ceiling, so the audience is free to move around it.

Sequential art form: artworks that involve the audience over a specified time and involve motion. Unlike ephemeral art forms, they can be experienced repeatedly.

Serigraphy: a print-making form that uses a silkscreen to produce printed images.

Situate: the exploration of the connections between your work, the work of other artists and the context your work was created and exhibited in.

Social cultural significance: the impact of different ways of life on the creation and perception of artworks.

Space: the three-dimensional area in which objects are located.

Spatial cultural significance: how the architecture or environment where an artwork is located influences how the audience interacts with it.

Spectrum: when white light is refracted into its different wavelengths of colours, as in a rainbow. The visible spectrum is red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

Spiritual cultural significance: the impact of spiritual or religious beliefs on the creation and perception of artworks.

Students at work: the time that you spend engaged in your art-making practice, experimentation, planning and refining your ideas.

Subjective: something that is informed by feelings, opinions and personal experiences.

Subtractive sculpture: any sculptural process that begins with a single mass of a medium and involves removing material until the desired form is reached.

Support: a surface used when carrying out two-dimensional art-making forms, such as drawing or painting.

Synthesis: the combination of concepts with forms to create new, complex and unified artworks.

Tempera: a medium used in painting made of pigments and a binder, such as egg yolk.

Tertiary colours: these are mixtures of the three primaries, used to make browns and the wide range of neutral colours in nature, such as the colours of skin, plants, wood and so on. Along with pink and mauve, they do not occur in the spectrum.

Three-dimensional art-making forms: artists working in this form need to consider height, width and depth. Three-dimensional art forms include sculptures.

Tone: the intensity of light and dark. Shading is a way of applying tone to a drawing.

Transformative strategies: promote significant or complete change in an image or object.

Translucent: light can be seen through but detail is obscured, as in a stained glass window or a translucent glaze of paint.

Transparent: can be completely seen through, such as clear glass.

Trompe l'oeil: French for "trick of the eye", for example when objects appear to be real in a painting.

Two-dimensional art-making forms: artists working in this form typically work on a flat surface that is defined by length and width. One example is drawing.

Value: degrees of tonal variation.

Vanitas: a type of still-life painting in which specific objects are used to represent a theme.

Viewpoint: the real, or imagined, position from which the spectator looks at a painting. Consider viewpoint in relation to illusions of depth and the use of perspective.

Visual language: a set of skills, techniques, motifs and symbols that enable an artist to communicate meaning to their audience through their art-making in a way that is effective, meaningful and personal.

Void: nothingness, or the empty space that is the opposite of mass, substance and form.

Voyeur: someone who gets pleasure from spying on others. Sometimes the artist makes us unseen onlookers into people's private lives.

Woodcut: a relief print-making technique. The side grain of wood is cut into to create a relief surface, which is then inked and printed. Woodcuts can be highly intricate, as in Japanese ukiyo-e, or very rough in character, as in the German Expressionist tradition.

Wood engraving: a relief print-making technique. The hard end grain of wood is cut into to create a relief surface, which is then inked and printed. Wood engravings are often characterized by very fine details.

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