

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES: FOCUS ON THE AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION TEACHER RESOURCE

QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY | GALLERY OF MODERN ART

KEY CONCEPT ELABORATION

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art forms, styles and techniques are reinvented with contemporary media and found materials to connect past and present.

Year
11



LEARNING GOAL

Students' explore traditional and contemporary artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to provide insight into relationships between people, cultures, country and place.

The Invisible → Invisible connections → Invisible made visible

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art stand in an important place originally occupied by the Turrbal and Yugara (Jagera) peoples. The Gallery proudly recognises them as traditional owners of this site and we respectfully acknowledge their Elders past, present and future.

AFTER

Follow-up work to consolidate cognitive and affective learning.

Student responding/making

- The invisible made visible
- In response to Carmichael and Macnamara's works, create a series of tangible objects connecting memories, the past and traditional practices. Consider how practices relate specifically to people and places.

SAMPLE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Six milk bottles symbolises the student's grandfather and father who worked together on a milk run for 6 years and the deterioration of their relationship. The blue is symbolic of the blue glasses the student, her father and grandmother need to wear to cope with dyslexia.



The meal symbolises the student's regular family sit down meals. The motifs come from the utensils and the patterns from the back of the chairs they all sit on, handmade by her grandfather. The cloth is stained with wine to represent the sharing of food and drink. Sewn threads connect the cutlery, signifying the connections the family members share with each other.



CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Peachey / artworks supplied by students from Redlands College.

SELECTED ARTWORKS

Judy Watson / Waanyi people / Australia b.1959 / *sacred ground beating heart* 1989 / Natural pigments and pastel on canvas / 215 x 190cm / Purchased 1990. The 1990 Moët & Chandon Art Acquisition Fund / © Judy Watson/Licensed by Viscopy | **Sonja Carmichael** / Ngugi people of Quandamooka, Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island)/ Australia b.1958 / *Deranji Dabayil (Rocky place, healing waters): Baskets of Culture*, 2017 / Commercial raffia and ghost net strands / Dimensions / Commissioned 2017. Queensland Art Gallery/ Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artist | **Vernon Ah Kee** / Kuku Yalanji/Waanyi/Yidinyji/Gugu Yimithirr people / Australia b.1967 / *Unwritten III* 2007 / Charcoal / 76 x 56cm / Purchased 2008. The Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artist | **Shirley Macnamara** / Australia b.1949 / Nathaniel Macnamara / Indjalandji-Dhidhanu/Alyawarr people / Australia b.2004 / *Cu* 2016 / Hand-coiled copper wire and raw copper / 22 x 25 x 25cm / Purchased 2017 with funds from Gina Fairfax through the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artists

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES: ORGANISING IDEAS

Country/Place — highlights the special connection to Country/Place by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and celebrates the unique belief systems that connect people physically and spiritually to Country/Place.

- OI.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.

Culture — examines the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' culture through language, ways of life and experiences as expressed through historical, social and political lenses. It gives students opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.

- OI.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of Country or Place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation

People — addresses the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. It examines kinship structures and the significant contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples on a local, national and global scale.

- OI.7 The broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia.

VISUAL ART GENERAL SENIOR SYLLABUS

Content and cross-curriculum connections

Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives:

- Consider interpretation, context and integrity when discussing the cultural value of subject matter, styles and imagery, sensitive materials, stereotypes and the use of biographical materials.

Unit 1: Art as lens

- Beginning with tangible forms as inspiration, students examine and respond to focuses of people, places and objects, producing figurative and non-figurative representations.
- Contexts – contemporary and personal

Unit 2: Art as code

- Students explore the concept of 'art as code' to learn how visual language is capable of expressing complex ideas. Although both spoken language and visual language vary by culture, visual language has the potential to transcend and communicate across cultures, time and geography.
- Context – formal and cultural

BEFORE

Preliminary preparation to provide context and prior knowledge of concept.

Organising idea: People

Focus — The invisible

View Vernon Ah Kee / *Unwritten I, II, III* 2007

- Respond using Visual Thinking Strategies¹ question framework
- View <http://learning.qagoma.qld.gov.au/artworks/unwritten-i-ii-iii/> and consider Vernon Ah Kee's comments on how many Australians view Indigenous Australians
- Discuss: featureless faces; the idea of a non-people; suffering; representation of Aboriginal people with Western characteristics to gain acceptance; the negative tendency to objectify and stereotype other people into categories.

Organising idea: People/Country

Focus — Invisible connections

View Judy Watson / *sacred ground beating heart* 1989

- Respond using Visual Thinking Strategies question framework
- Watch Judy Watson's interview about *sacred ground, beating heart* <http://learning.qagoma.qld.gov.au/artworks/sacred-ground-beating-heart/>
- Discuss: the artist's description of sensing ancestors being present while visiting her matrilineal Country in North West Queensland; standing on a rock where Peoples past would have stood, memories permeating from the ground into her being; depiction of aerial landscape view on unstretched canvas creating a sense that the canvas becomes like skin, embedding ground and skin.

Making

- Where do you feel a connection to land or place through family, heritage or spirit? Connecting through that which cannot be seen; memories from the ground through the body.
- Create a composition with no horizon that depicts the ground on where you walk; a place that has significant historical/spiritual connection. Place objects into the composition that also depict connection to place and people from that place.

DURING

Motivate, stimulate new ideas, and create personal connections through the gallery experience.

TEACHER guided floor talk — Visual Thinking Strategies¹ question framework:

1. What's going on in this painting/sculpture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?
What is the work about? Do we know if the artist has responded to a lived or learnt experience? What makes it important to their culture/society today?

¹ Yenawine, Philip. *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines*. Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2013.