



# Visual arts—the journey

In the visual arts, students undertake a journey beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through Year 6 to Years 7 and 8. For the students who choose to continue the journey, it can extend to Year 12. With the introduction of the new Stages 4-5 visual arts syllabus, the entire continuum of learning will be complete. This article seeks to draw together the common threads between the three syllabuses and to show how students can develop understandings and skills through teachers addressing the areas of content.

The draft *Visual Arts Years 7–10 Syllabus* creates a dialogue with and between the *Creative Arts K–6 Syllabus* and the *Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus*. This article outlines the emerging content terminology and evolving visual literacy in visual arts K–12.

## The preparation

An overview of the content, tracing lines from Early stage 1 to Stage 6 in each of the three areas – practice, conceptual framework and frames, provides a starting point for departure.

## Destination 1: The *Creative Arts K–6 Syllabus* (visual arts)

The visual arts component of the *Creative Arts K–6 Syllabus* was to be implemented in schools last year.

The content of visual arts in the syllabus is based on developing knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes through *learning to* and *learning about* by *Making* and *Appreciating* artworks.

**Making** involves investigating aspects of the world by interpreting subject matter and exploring a range of expressive forms and techniques to make artworks. Making also includes an understanding

and appreciation of artists, their works, the world and audiences.

**Appreciating** involves looking at, talking, reading and writing about artists and artworks. Students refer to how artists work and interpret the world in different places and times, and how studying subject matter, techniques, forms and meanings of artworks, recognises the roles of artist and audience.

The scope and sequence of making and appreciating in visual arts K–6 is described in terms of *Subject Matter* and *Forms* and refers to how areas of content may be investigated and revisited in different and more complex ways over time. Teachers construct sequential learning experiences by connecting units of work and building upon previous learning experiences.

**Subject Matter** is broadly described as people, other living things, objects, places and spaces and events.

**Forms** are broadly described as drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture and 3D forms, ceramics, fibre, photography and digital forms.

The implementation of the *Creative Arts K–6 Syllabus* is supported by resources providing information on K–6 visual arts content, programming and units of work. These include:

*arts action*. (Department of Education and Training, Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate 2002.)

A CD-ROM resource developed for teachers and featuring teaching strategies, programming models and assessment tools which can be viewed and downloaded.

4 ARTS. (Department of Education and Training, Curriculum Support Directorate 2000.)

A teachers' training package developed for school coordinators to conduct professional development workshops.



**Art Criticism and Art History** involves:

- evaluating and explaining the significance of particular artists, artworks, audience responses and representations of the world
- understanding how a network of ideas can inform the meanings of artworks and locate them in critical narratives and significant histories
- well-reasoned accounts and how different value positions affect the way information is interpreted and explained
- alternative ways to generate and shape critical and historical investigations by using different frames
- investigating points of view involving artists and artworks, audience responses and changing interpretations of the world
- time and place and how artworks reflect the way artists interpret ideas, issues and events, and how circumstances, beliefs and technologies affect what is produced
- an exchange of opinions and viewpoints in written and oral accounts.

**The Conceptual Framework** provides a model for understanding the agencies of the artworld (artist, artwork, world and audience) and their intentional and functional relationships.

**The Frames** (subjective, structural, cultural and postmodern) provide different philosophical, theoretical and interpretative frameworks for understanding the layering of meaning, significance, value and belief in and about the visual arts.

The Stage 6 assessment and examination weighting components for preliminary and HSC courses involve 50 % for artmaking and 50 % for art criticism and art history.

**Visual Arts Content Endorsed Courses** include:

- Photography, Video and Digital Imaging
- Visual Design
- Ceramics.

The implementation of the *Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus* is supported by the following resources from the Professional Support and Curriculum

Directorate and the Board of Studies. These include:

*HSC Online*. Department of Education and Training and Charles Sturt University.

This evolving web site features articles on artists' practice, aspects of syllabus content, assessment and approaches to study. It will soon include work samples and interviews with artists, gallery directors and writers.

*CURRICULUM SUPPORT*. Department of Education and Training.

This quarterly newsletter is distributed free to all government high school teachers. It contains articles written by art writers, academics and curriculum officers. Each edition contains some information on the Stage 6 syllabus.

*Visual Arts Stage 6 HSC Implementation Teacher's Handbook*. Curriculum Support Directorate, Department of Education and Training 1999.

An HSC Implementation Workshop handbook for teachers introducing the *Stage 6 Visual Arts Syllabus* and teaching and learning strategies. Parts of this are included on the web site HSC Online.

*Visual Arts Higher School Certificate Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement*. Board of Studies 1999.

A reporting supplement containing a Visual Arts HSC Sample Examination Paper, Marking Guidelines for Art Criticism and Art history and Artmaking, and the Draft HSC Performance Bands.

*The Visual Arts Stage 6 Support Document*. Board of Studies 2000.

A support document which provides information on the conceptual framework and the frames, sample units of work, sample case studies, the Body of Work, using extracts of writing and assessment advice.

*HSC Visual Arts web site*. Board of Studies.

The site contains the syllabus, *Board of Studies Bulletin* articles and information and support material including *ArtExpress* and work samples.



A sustained engagement with drawing is required in the Mandatory Course.

The concept of the *Body of Work* is introduced in the elective course, and may include one or more individual works that can be related through the interpretation of subject matter and/or an experimental approach to the use of expressive forms, materials and techniques.

A visual arts diary records artmaking ideas and intentions and may take various forms, e.g. a sketchbook, folder, container for 3D works, CD-ROM, video, computer and digital files or slides, and can include, photographs, collections, paintings, sketches, annotated diagrams, notes, comments and reflections.

The Department will provide resources which will be published online and professional development programs for teachers to support implementation of the syllabus. The Board of Studies will support the new syllabus with a print resource (released in August) and a CD-ROM (released in November).

The consultation period for the draft writing briefs of two new Stage 5 Syllabuses, *Visual Design* and *Photographic and Digital Media*, occurred from the 10 February to the 21 March.

Opportunities to develop school-based courses will continue to be available, e.g. Ceramics.

### Destination 3: The Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus

The *Visual Arts Stage 6 Syllabus* was implemented in 2000 and includes the preliminary and HSC courses.

*The Preliminary course* provides a broad-based experience in the visual arts. *The HSC course* provides sustained investigation of content in increasingly independent and interpretative ways as a network of relations.

Course objectives are based on developing knowledge, skills and understanding by interpreting and representing the world from an informed point of view in the practices of artmaking, art criticism and art history. Syllabus content is identified as *Practice*, the *Conceptual Framework* and the *Frames*.

*Practice* refers to *artmaking*, *art criticism* and *art history* and to the social structures, positions, actions and sequences that affect choices, perceptions, directions, ways of working and views of those involved in the visual arts.

*Artmaking* involves:

- a network of procedures to make art
- how judgment is central to making informed decisions
- representation and how ideas are reflected in visual and aesthetic forms
- conceptual strength, meaning and resolution as intentions or a point of view in artmaking practice
- adopting different frames as a focus of inquiry in the representation of intense experience, cultural issues, signs and symbols and challenges to art relationships
- the conceptual framework as a model for understanding the agencies of the artworld
- working in a range of forms investigating the potential of materials, processes, techniques, styles and qualities.

*Forms* include the material, physical and virtual properties of visual arts.

*2D forms* include drawing, painting, printmaking, graphic design, photography and digital media.

*3D forms* include sculpture, ceramics, textiles and fibre, designed objects and environments (e.g. wearables, jewellery, architectural design and product design).

*4D works/time-based works* include film and video, digital animation, documented forms, performance works and interactives.

Students are expected to work in at least two expressive forms in the preliminary course and are required to make a body of work in one or more of the expressive forms during the HSC course.

A visual arts process diary is required to provide evidence of a student's working processes, involving decisions and actions made in the production of artworks. The diary can be a sketchbook, folder, large container, computer disk or slides which can include drawings, paintings, photographs, collections, annotated diagrams, notes, conceptualisations and reflections.



*Enter Art.* (Department of Education and Training, Curriculum Support Directorate 2000.)

A K–6 visual arts resource kit developed in conjunction with the Art Gallery of NSW referencing works from the permanent collection and focusing on art appreciation as a framework for artmaking.

*Beyond the Frame.* (Department of Education and Training, Curriculum Support Directorate 2000.)

A Stage 3 and Stage 4 visual arts resource package of images from regional galleries throughout NSW with learning activities for making and appreciating artworks.

*Shaping Ideas.* (Department of Education and Training, Curriculum Directorate 1997.)

A guide to programming and sequencing visual arts K–6, with units of work for each stage.

*Creative Arts K–6 Units of Work.* (Board of Studies, NSW 2000.)

A support document with units of work in each arts form.

## Destination 2: The Visual Arts Years 7–10 Draft Syllabus

The new Stages 4 and 5 visual arts syllabus will be available in May 2003 for implementation in Years 7 and 9 in 2005 and for Years 8 and 10 in 2006.

The draft *Visual Arts Years 7–10 Syllabus* contains the following features:

Syllabus outcomes are organised in terms of the different aspects of content and should be considered in relation to one another rather than as discrete entities.

Syllabus content is based on developing knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes by *learning to* and *learning about* the visual arts. This can be achieved by making artworks and critically and historically interpreting art, informed by the field of practice, subject to different interpretations.

**Practice** includes *artmaking, critical and historical interpretations and refers to the social structures, positions, actions and sequences that affect choices, perceptions, directions, ways of*

*working and the different views that circulate and are exchanged in and about the visual arts.*

(p. 18 *Visual Arts 7–10 Draft Syllabus*)

**The Conceptual Framework** identifies the artist, artwork, world and audience as the agencies of the artworld and provides a model for understanding the diversity and variety of functional and intentional relationships between these agencies.

(p. 18 *Visual Arts 7–10 Draft Syllabus*)

**The Frames** are identified as subjective, structural, cultural and postmodern. They provide *different points of view for understanding the layering of meaning, significance, value and belief in and about the visual arts.*

(p. 18 *Visual Arts 7–10 Draft Syllabus*)

**The Mandatory Course** is offered as a 100 (indicative) hour course and provides foundation learning in visual arts in Years 7–10. The course is designed for study in Years 7–8 (Stage 4) with 50 % of the course allocated to artmaking, 30 % to critical and historical interpretations and 20 % for any aspects of content that maximize the interests of students and teachers.

**The Elective Course** is designed for Years 9–10 (Stage 5) as a 200 hour course and provides for broader, deeper and more extensive learning in the Visual Arts. The course weightings are: 40 % of the course is allocated to artmaking, 40 % to critical and historical interpretations and 20 % for any aspects of content that maximize the interests of students and teachers.

Artmaking in the mandatory and elective courses explores diverse concepts and a range of subject matter, which is not explicitly stated.

Artworks and bodies of work should be developed within at least two of the 2D, 3D and 4D expressive forms:

**2D forms** include flat works, e.g. painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, digital media and collage.

**3D forms** include works that involve volume and mass and exist in space, e.g. sculpture, ceramics, textiles and fibre, designed objects and environments.

**4D forms** include works that exist in real and virtual time, e.g. time-based works, film and video, digital animation, documented forms, multimedia and performance works.



## Journey's end

In summarising the journey, the common features for each of the three stages is the inter-relationship between artmaking and critically and historically interpreting the art world.

From the earliest years to the HSC, students are engaged in looking, describing, making judgements and developing the skills to communicate ideas. The ability to represent ideas with appropriate use of materials (intentionality and resolution) is reinforced by acknowledging the relationship between making and being critically and historically informed.

The content of each syllabus underscores the value in assuming multiple perspectives.

By the end of Stage 6 the students who have undertaken the journey will have a wealth of knowledge and understanding about past and contemporary practice to enable them to participate in the art world, as creative practitioners, as informed consumers, critical appraisers and commentators in the public and private domains. For some students the journey continues to tertiary study, to work in a field of the arts or to undertake recreational pursuits.

Wendy Ramsay  
Visual Arts Consultant

## Vocational Learning in Creative Arts

Creative Arts teachers will be able to provide enhanced learning opportunities to students by clearly demonstrating the relationship between the creative arts curriculum and a student's vocational and life long learning needs.

The *Vocational Learning in Creative Arts* book distributed to all NSW government secondary and central schools in Term 1, 2003 highlights the links between the subject and course pedagogy and the employment related skills students can gain through their study of Creative Arts in Stages 5 and 6.

The book outlines career planning opportunities creative arts courses offer students, including credit transfer arrangements between the HSC and TAFE NSW and between TAFE NSW and university. It also describes career areas that may interest students as a result of their enjoyment of the study of creative arts. In addition, the book contains relevant worksheets and career planning activities creative arts teachers can use to bring a vocational perspective to learning in and beyond their classroom.

The *Vocational Learning in Creative Arts* book is also designed to complement the *Employment Related Skills Logbook*, provided to NSW government school students in Years 9–12. The logbook is a classroom tool which enables teachers to demonstrate how every lesson is of value to all students in preparation for their future. It enables students to better articulate what they learn. In addition to acquiring academic knowledge, students develop employability skills including organisation, teamwork, communication and problem-solving. Research confirms that these skills are what employers and further education and training institutions are looking for in school leavers.

Funding has been identified, under the School to Work Program, for all NSW government schools with secondary enrolments to enable teachers to review the booklet and plan for its use in their classroom programs.

Over the period 1999–2003 the NSW Government has committed \$21.5million to improve career and transition planning for school leavers under the School to Work Program.

Training in the use of the *Vocational Learning in Creative Arts* book will be offered to KLA network meetings in districts across the state. “Teachers are not being asked to teach anything additional to current syllabus requirements”, says Reg Newitt from the Creative Arts Unit in Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate. “The booklet and implementation support will demonstrate that embedding a vocational context into the full range of teaching and learning programs is sound and provides enormous benefits to students”.

“Many teachers are already providing excellent vocational learning opportunities K–12,” says Julie Bell, Leader, Vocational Learning, from the