# Visual Arts glossary

2D/two-dimensional

Artworks that exist on a flat surface, that have height and width, such as paintings and drawings.

3D/three-dimensional

Artworks that have depth as well as height and width, such as sculpture and installation.

4D/four-dimensional

Artworks that have depth, height, width and added temporal and spatial dimensions. For example, artworks that incorporate time, such as time-based installations, or artworks that incorporate performance on a moving image.

## A

aesthetic knowledge

An understanding of how the visual conventions (art elements and art principles), materials and techniques of an artwork work together to influence the mood or emotion of an artwork. Aesthetic knowledge can contribute to creating visual appeal in an artwork to evoke an emotional response from a viewer. Aesthetic knowledge can also be related to the style and genre of an artwork and the art form.

analog

Relates to artworks that are created and manipulated by hand with tangible materials (e.g. paint, paper or markers), as opposed to digital arts works, forms or processes created using digital tools.

arts discipline

Specific area of arts practice such as dance, drama, media arts, music, visual arts and visual communication design. Within each discipline, a diverse range of styles, genres and forms are practised.

art elements

Art elements are a component of the visual conventions of an artwork. Art elements include colour, line, shape, form, tone, texture, sound, time and light.

artist

Artists include visual artists, craftspeople and designers. Artists work individually and collaboratively using diverse visual arts practices to create artworks.

artist statement

A description of what the artist, curator or director wants the audience to know, displayed with the artwork or included in program notes.

art principles

Art principles are a component of the visual conventions of an artwork. Art principles include emphasis (including focal point), movement, rhythm, unity, variety, space, repetition (including pattern), balance, contrast, proportion and scale.

arts experience

An experience that engages the senses (e.g. artworks experienced in daily life, popular culture, formal or informal performances, exhibitions and/or designed environments).

arts space

A place where artists display or perform artworks. This can be formal such as a gallery, theatre or exhibition hall, or informal such as a public space.

artwork

An artwork is an outcome of an artist’s practice. An artwork may be a completed product or a work in progress. Artworks can be experienced in person and/or digitally, for example by visiting galleries, exhibition spaces or public places, or by accessing artworks in online gallery spaces or in printed media such as arts journals.

audience(s)

Individuals or groups of people who experience artworks in a range of settings and contexts (formal, informal, virtual or interactive) through intellectual, emotional and social engagement. Social and cultural factors, and the context of the creation and viewing of an artwork can all alter the way audiences view, engage, interpret and respond to artworks.

## C

composition

The placement or arrangement of elements, components or conventions in artworks.

concept

A thought, idea or notion related to a theoretical construct. A concept can be more complex than a general idea. A concept is generally the primary idea or influence behind an artwork and can contribute to the overall theme of a series of artworks or an exhibition.

context

The context of an artwork is the frame of reference that allows the meaning of an artwork to be interpreted. Interpretation of the meaning of an artwork can evolve from the context. The context of an artwork can be the location and time in which the artwork is made, presented or viewed. Context can also be the economic, philosophical, historical, social or cultural influences on the practices of the artist, the artist’s intentions, and their communication of ideas, values and beliefs in their artworks.

conventions

Traditionally, stylistically or culturally accepted ways of doing things. Each art form has hundreds of conventions built up over time. Conventions are dynamic and ever-changing.

In Visual Arts, conventions can refer to the combination of art elements, art principles, composition and style.

Country

The physical environment that a particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ group has a relationship with. Referring to this territory as ‘Country’, rather than land, indicates a reciprocal and deep relationship and one where Country both owns and is owned by the People. The concept of Country includes lands, waters and sky.

craft

An intellectual and physical activity where artists explore the materials and processes to produce unique objects for the purpose of experimentation with form or function, exhibition, production and personal or community needs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples draw no distinction between art and craft. Similarly, contemporary culture values the interplay between art and craft, design and craft, the art and designer or the design and maker. The crafted and handmade sit alongside the manufactured design object as part of historical, national and cultural identities.

critical and creative thinking

Critical and creative thinking involves the application of skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reasoning, logic, imagination and innovation. This capability can be consciously developed through the application of metacognitive skills.

curate

The process of selecting and organising material, such as artworks and aspects of artists’ practice, that communicates the artists’ processes, ideas, intentions and/or perspectives. Curating can be part of the process for preparing for informal or formal exhibiting of artworks for an audience.

## D

digital media

Digital media are the applications used to create visual arts works. Digital media examples include software, hardware, apps and online platforms used to create and display artworks. Screen-based artworks, concept art, animations and 2D, 3D and 4D artworks can be created with digital media.

digital tools

Digital hardware, software, platforms and resources used to develop and communicate learning, ideas and information.

## E

embodied practices

Describes aesthetic, sensory, cognitive and physical engagement through stillness, movement, exploration of space or working with materials, used to generate, develop or communicate ideas or meaning. An artist who uses embodied practices to create artworks will consider the engagement of all the senses and art making contributing to wellbeing.

exhibit/exhibition

A formal or informal display of visual arts work and/or visual arts practice for audiences, including sharing work with peers, or a curated exhibition in a formal space and/or on online platforms.

## F

form

Form can be specific to art practices, such as ceramics, sculpture, painting, drawing and analog or digital photography, and includes two-dimensional form, three-dimensional form and four-dimensional form. It refers to the physical nature of the artwork.

Form is also an art principle, where three-dimensional shape is created by texture, tone or use of materials.

*See also:* 2D/two-dimensional; 3D/three-dimensional; 4D/four-dimensional

formal setting

Presentation of artworks in a specifically designed exhibition space such as a gallery, museum or webpage. Artworks that are exhibited/displayed in a formal setting or space have been curated considering the audience and their engagement and interpretation of the artworks.

found objects

A found object is a natural or human-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic value the artist sees in it.

## G

gestural

Act of art making using free, sweeping movements. The term ‘gestural’ is often used with painting and drawing. The practice has its origins in expressionism and was adopted by abstract expressionist painters, who physically acted out their inner impulses in expressive paint marks.

## H

hybrid art forms/artworks

An art form where 2 or more art forms are combined into one artwork or the artist creates artworks using a combination of forms. Examples of hybrid art forms include collage, kinetic sculptures, music with colour sequences and calligraphic dances. With the combination of art forms, a new art form is made or the art forms used are modified.

*See also:* multi-arts/multimedia

## I

idea

A thought, notion or impression. An artwork can represent a number of ideas, which can be interpreted differently by audiences and viewers based on their experience, background, values and beliefs. Linked ideas can be termed as a theme (e.g. globalisation, horror, or city or country life).

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)

The rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to own and control their cultural heritage. It refers to all aspects of cultural heritage, including the tangible (e.g. cultural objects) and intangible (e.g. knowledge).

informal setting

Presentation of artworks in an environment that may not be considered a formal exhibition space, gallery or museum. Informal settings can include community events, classrooms or other areas in the school environment, such as corridors or the school yard. Street art is also considered to be displayed in informal settings.

Informal settings can be also virtual, such as the display of artworks on mobile devices, computers or street projections.

interdisciplinary

The creation and production of artworks using more than one arts discipline. Across the Arts curriculum, students can make artworks using the knowledge of the practices of various arts disciplines, for example the creation of performance works using the knowledge and skills of music, drama and visual arts.

*See also:* transdisciplinary

## M

maquette

A scaled model of an object or structure made from materials such as clay, paper, cardboard or plastic. Maquettes can be created using digital modelling software in virtual environments.

materials

The resources and technologies to make 2D, 3D and 4D artworks. Materials can include:

* physical materials such as paint, dyes, charcoal and clay
* contemporary or emerging materials such as digital media
* organic, recycled or repurposed materials such as dry leaves, recycled cardboard or plastic, fabric, textiles or household objects.

media

The materials used to create artworks, including digital tools (e.g. cameras, software, online platforms) and traditional materials (e.g. paint, paper, clay).

*See also:* materials

multi-arts/multimedia

A combination of different art forms in one artwork; a work or practice that expands beyond one art form.

In contemporary art practice, multimedia artworks are made from a combination of electronic media such as video, film, audio and computer hardware and software.

Multimedia practices include the development, creation and production of content for digital products and services, providing electronic access to information services and broadcasting radio and television programs on the internet.

*See also:* hybrid art forms/artworks

## N

narrative

In Visual Arts, ‘narrative’ refers to the story told in the artwork. Narrative can be a style of artwork. Narrative artworks generally depict daily life or tell a moral story to the viewer.

*See also:* style; visual narrative

## P

personal expression

The unique style and expression developed by an artist through their own arts practice to represent and communicate their own ideas, perspectives and meaning in their artwork.

physical space

An environment to exhibit, present or display artworks. Physical spaces can include galleries, environments where traditional artworks (e.g. paintings, sculptures and prints) and sound-based, moving-image and screen-based artworks are presented.

Place

‘Place’ is significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

For Torres Strait Islander Peoples, ‘Place’ is a space mapped out that Torres Strait Islander individuals or groups occupy and regard as their own and that has varying degrees of spirituality. It includes lands, waters and sky.

For Aboriginal Peoples, ‘Place’ refers to the special places that exist within Country, the purposes of which vary significantly. They can include places of ceremony and initiation, birth and the provision of healing and health care; places of learning; and places for Sorry Business. These places vary greatly over the various landscapes and seascapes across the continent. There are some parts of Country that have landmarks that directly relate to the ancestor spirits and the creation of existence. These are especially important as culturally significant places and need to be cared for. There are also other places on Country that are important for ceremony, as mentioned above, which are also considered especially important for Aboriginal communities.

practices

The application of arts skills and knowledge to create, represent, communicate, make, produce and respond in a specific arts discipline, form, tradition, style and/or genre. In any arts discipline, the practices of making and responding are interdependent and interactive. For example, the practices of interpreting, analysing, comparing and contrasting, reflecting, evaluating and appreciating can inform the art making process.

protocols

Rules, practices and customs of a group. Respectful ways of interacting with and experiencing the arts, including protocols for protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights.

processes

The methods and steps used to make artworks using materials, tools and technologies.

## R

refine

To bring together the ideas and elements of an artwork, particularly through the use of technical skill and processes using materials and techniques.

region/regional

An area of the world sharing common characteristics, for example a geographical region such as the Mallee region in Victoria or a regional intergovernmental organisation such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

representation

The use of images and symbols to represent ideas, concepts and meaning.

resolve

A final step in the creation or production of an artwork where the artist considers how to finalise the expression and representation of ideas using visual conventions, materials and techniques.

## S

sequence

A series of still and/or moving images with or without sound that are intentionally put into an order.

stimulus material

Anything that acts as inspiration for generating or developing ideas for artworks, including the world of the student, images, experiences, observations, provocations, sounds and texts.

style

The distinctive characteristics of an art form, artwork or arts practice that allow them to be grouped into related categories, by culture, time, place or other contexts.

subject matter

Representation of ideas or concepts in an artwork. The subject matter of an artwork can take the form of symbols to represent a narrative or story. The subject matter can also be characterised by abstract elements such as visual elements and the composition of the work.

## T

technical skills

Proficiencies associated with different art forms (digital and traditional forms) including materials, tools and technologies. Examples include hand-building skills in ceramics, camera techniques in photography, compositing skills with digital assets and computer software to create screen-based works, and editing skills for video and animation.

techniques

The knowledge and skills used in making an artwork in a specific art form using tools, technologies, media and materials.

technologies

In visual arts, digital (e.g. hardware and software) and analog (e.g. pencils, paper, paint, ink, clay and textiles) technologies are used by artists to make artworks. Technologies are also used to present visual communication designs including screens, projections and audio technologies.

theme

The principal idea or connection of ideas and concepts in an artwork, series of artworks or exhibition.

transdisciplinary

The creation and production of artworks using more than one arts discipline. Across the Arts curriculum students can make artworks using the knowledge of the practices of various arts disciplines, for example the creation of performance works using the knowledge and skills of music, drama and visual arts.

Transdisciplinary artworks differ from interdisciplinary art forms and artworks as, similarly to multi-art forms and artworks, the use of transdisciplinary practices can evolve new art forms and practices.

*See also:* interdisciplinary; multi-arts/multimedia

## V

values

Ideas and beliefs specific to individuals and groups.

viewers

Individuals or groups of people who look at artworks in a range of settings (formal, informal, virtual or interactive). Social and cultural factors, and the context of where an artwork is presented can all alter the way viewers interpret and respond to artworks.

viewpoints

Viewpoints are an inquiry tool to consider ideas, concepts, practices and processes used to create artworks. Viewpoints allow students to investigate artworks and art practices from multiple perspectives.

virtual

Representation on a screen or ephemeral environment in contrast to physical existence. Virtual artworks are often sound-based, moving-image and time-based works.

Virtual settings and exhibitions of artworks are the presentation or display of artworks online or on a screen creating a similar experience for the viewer or audience as if they were experiencing the work in a physical space. Virtual spaces/settings/exhibitions include sequenced presentations of artworks, websites, virtual galleries, video works and projections.

visual arts practices

Visual arts practices are the ways that artists go about their work. Visual arts practices include:

* examining other artists’ works and practices (e.g. identifying and analysing influences or considering how artists are using and adapting arts processes)
* developing creative and critical thinking when observing and analysing artists’ works, and when documenting and reflecting on their own visual arts practice
* developing ideas, studio practice and collaboration
* experimenting with and developing knowledge and skills in using visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials
* creating artworks that represent ideas, perspectives and/or meaning
* considering where, how and why they share their artworks and ideas with audiences.

visual conventions

Visual conventions are traditional, cultural and stylistic ways of working in visual arts, craft and design. They reflect agreed expectations for various art forms and are impacted by factors such as the time and culture they were created in and the choice of materials. They include the elements and principles of art. Visual conventions are dynamic and evolve as visual art forms and practices develop over time.

visual narrative

The story told through visual elements and conventions in an artwork. The visual narrative can include the composition of the artwork and the visual conventions that can tell a story to the viewer or audience.

*See also:* narrative