

# **CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES AND ART EDUCATION**

**HOW CAN WE FRAME CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES  
TO ACKNOWLEDGE WIDER CULTURAL  
PERSPECTIVES, AND WHY SHOULD WE DO SO?**

# OVERVIEW

- Culturally responsive teaching in the art classroom
- Curriculum connections & Cross-Curriculum priorities
- VCE Cultural Framework
- Teaching with Indigenous Art: Do's and Don'ts
- Cultural and Religious Sensitivity
- Three practical ideas for the art classroom
- Implications for pre-service and graduate teachers
- Connections with your teaching experiences
- Useful Resources

# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING IN THE ART CLASSROOM

## What is it?

- Using culturally sensitive strategies and content to ensure equitable opportunities for academic success, personal development, and individual fulfillment for all students.
- Teaching to and through the strengths of ethnically diverse students in ways that are both culturally relevant and effective. (Dr. Geneva Gay, 2010, p. 31)

# Why is it important to introduce culturally diverse art, artists and ideas into the art classroom?

- **Cultural competence**

- Function **comfortably** in cross-cultural settings
- Interact **harmoniously** with people from cultures different from their own
- Cope effectively with dealing with the **unfamiliar**
- Establish **rapport** with others and sense other people's feelings
- Communicate with people from other backgrounds
- **Respect** of others' beliefs, values, stories, myths and perspectives

- **Exposure**

- Many students have little or no exposure to people, art and literature of other cultures.

- **Global citizenship**

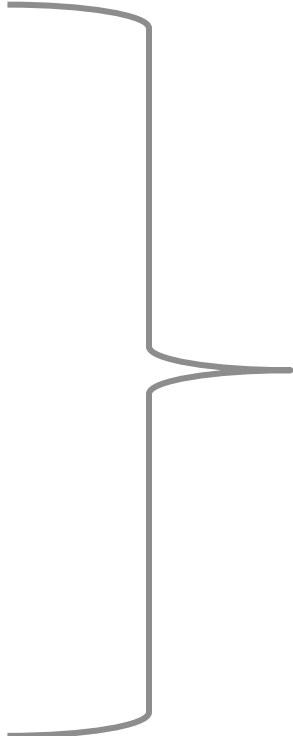
- Fosters attitudes understanding, tolerance, respect and acceptance
- Examine similarities, adaptations, and cross-cultural borrowings.
- Intercultural, interethnic, and interracial appreciation

- **Social Justice**
  - Move away from Eurocentric worldviews and cultural bias in teaching materials
  - Multiple ways of doing, seeing and teaching the art curriculum.
  - Indigenous and intercultural perspectives
- **Increases student achievement**
  - Relevant, engaging, draws on students prior knowledge, contextualized learning builds positive racial/cultural/ethnic identities, incorporates local communities

(Alice Lai, 2012, p. 18)

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

## AusVELS General Capabilities

- Intercultural Learning
  - Social Learning
  - Personal Learning
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“Students learn about themselves and their place in society.”

“Students develop skills in building social relationships and working with others.”

“They take responsibility for their learning, and learn about their rights and responsibilities as global citizens.”

## ACARA: conceptual framework for developing teaching resources



<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/CrossCurriculumPriorities/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-histories-and-cultures>

# CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

## Australian Curriculum and AusVELS

- Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

## Issues

- Indigenous perspectives and engagement with Asia not *explicit* in The Arts domain.
- Draft Arts Domain includes explicit Indigenous perspectives as progression points.



# Examples: Asian artists

## 1. Xu Bing (b. 1955 Chinese, now working in America).



*Book from the Sky* 1987-1991  
Hand printed books, ceiling and wall scrolls and wall scrolls from false letter blocks.



" Make the Past Serve the Present, Make the Foreign Things Serve China (a pair) "

### Creating and making

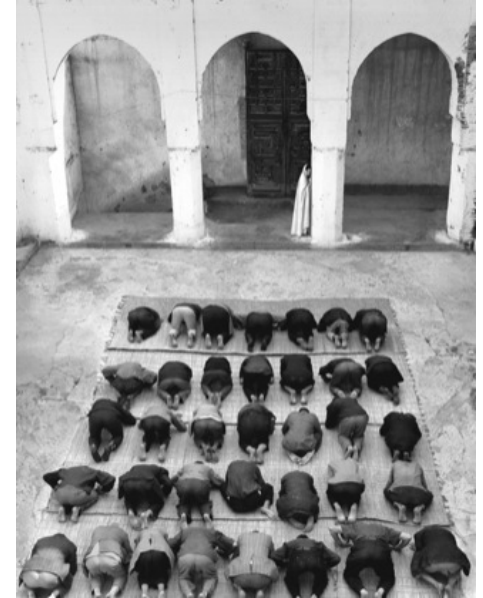
- Create a body of work that involves text to explore an issue of personal cultural concern
- Design an installation that involves lettering to define form and/or create meaning.

### Discussion / Exploring and Responding

- Globalisation is the trend towards considering worldwide issues, multiculturalism and the speed of mass global communication. After examining Xu Bing's works, discuss the possible effects of globalisation and the power of language on art practice.
- How might 'calligraphy' be different from 'writing?' Discuss the nature of Xu Bing's Chinese calligraphy – the relationship between drawing, writing, painting and images.

## Examples: Islamic artists

### 2. Shirin Neshat, (b. 1957, Iranian born living in America)



# VCE ART: THE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

## Unit 2 Area of study 1 – Art and culture

### Outcome 1

***Analyse, interpret, compare and contrast artworks from different cultures using the Formal Framework and the Cultural Framework.***

- Focus is in on the ways in which art communicates the values, traditions and beliefs of societies

### Outcome 2

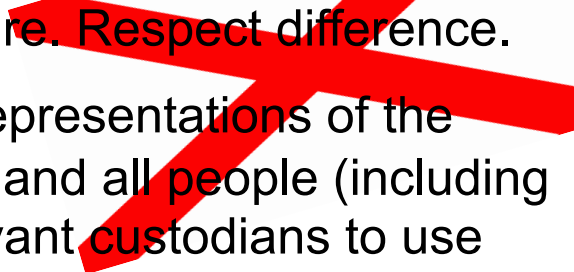
***Demonstrate technical and artistic development in the presentation of visual responses that include one finished artwork, through the exploration of selected media, materials and techniques.***

- Emphasis is on the development of areas of personal interest related to cultural identification.
- Students apply the Formal and Cultural Framework to reflect upon and annotate their artmaking

# TEACHING WITH INDIGENOUS ART: THE DO'S AND DON'TS



- **Be open** to new ways of seeing. PD opportunities – increase skills and intercultural understandings (e.g. PD in museums/galleries).
- Use external resources, Indigenous artists and communities, with Indigenous knowledge.
- Range of teaching materials: Video interviews, documentaries, writing, music, theatre and websites made by or in consultation with Indigenous people.
- Encourage students to build own personal symbolic language. Don't copy.
- Design learning experiences that reflect local minority language groups.
- Consult. Contact [vaeai.org.au](http://vaeai.org.au) (Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.)
- Build cross-curricular learning with Indigenous studies / Humanities / English subjects.

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- Don't make generalisations about Indigenous culture. Respect difference.
  - Don't copy patterns, designs, dances, songs, or representations of the Dreaming. They have special spiritual significance and all people (including Indigenous people) must get permission from relevant custodians to use them.
  - Avoid sensitive and sacred topics. Find out what is regarded as sensitive in your local area. This will vary from place to place, community to community.
  - Avoid concentric circles or squares, objects of sacred significance, sacred stones, bullroarers, body paintings that are not publicly permissible, emu feather shoes, ground red ochre (symbolises blood), red head bands and kangaroo teeth.
  - Do not expose sacred or secret meanings nor ask your students to do so.
  - Don't be tokenistic or patronising in your approach to teaching with Indigenous art. Teach with Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (not about).
  - Do not use the names, work or images of deceased Aboriginal people for some time following their death as sign of respect.



# CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SENSITIVITY



Stelarc, 'Sitting/Swaying: Event for rock suspension', Maki Gallery, Tokyo, Japan 1980.





# TEACHING WITH INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: 3 IDEAS FOR THE ART CLASSROOM

- Journey Maps (VELS 5)
- Spiritual Connection to Land (VELS 5/6)
- Comparing Cultural Understandings of Ownership, Copyright and Appropriation (VCE Studio Arts Unit 3)



# 1. JOURNEY MAPS

## 'Journey Maps' Australian Indigenous Art Appreciation and Printmaking Project

### Year 7

This unit focused on looking at Indigenous artworks from Central Australia and the Northern Territory. Students explored how symbols can help represent a storytelling and can reveal journeys across landscapes.

The students then create symbols of their own to tell a story of their journey from home to school each day.



## 2. SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO LAND



### Art Responding

Watch Video “Two Thirds Sky: Artists in Desert Country” [www.abc.net.au/iview/#/indigenous](http://www.abc.net.au/iview/#/indigenous)

Follow the creative journeys of five contemporary artists - Indigenous and non-Indigenous - to discover different ways of understanding the Australian desert.

- Compare the ways in which the artists represent their spiritual connection to the land through their art work.
- What impact has Indigenous art and perspectives had on the non-Indigenous artists work?



### Art Making

Students collect photographs, stories and drawings of places which have personal meaning to them. These could be natural or urban environments.

Students create an art work that represents their spiritual connection to their special place.

# 3. COMPARING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF OWNERSHIP

VCE Studio Arts Unit 3, Area of Study 3, Outcome 3  
Legal Obligations and Ethical Considerations

Australian copyright legislation (Jan 2005) - copyright remains with the artist until 70 years after his or her death unless sold by the artist.

Aboriginal law - ownership / custodianship of representations of Dreaming stories is continuous. It cannot be bought or sold and cannot expire. Custodianship is passed on according to Aboriginal law.

Compare Australian copyright legislation with Aboriginal law of custodianship.

- What are the differences?
- How have these differences come about?
- Why might it be problematic to apply Australian copyright legislation to an Aboriginal artist's work such as Kitty Napananka Simon's "Women's dreaming" painting opposite?



# IMPLICATIONS FOR PRE-SERVICE AND GRADUATE TEACHERS

- Become **reflective practitioners** to evaluate own teaching practices.
  - Develop awareness of your own cultural perspective – expectations, beliefs and behaviour, and move out of your “comfort zone”.
  - Realise that your cultural perspective is not a universal norm, nor is it the “right” one.
  - **Professional responsibility:**
    - 1.3: Strategies for teaching to the learning strengths of students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
    - 1.4: Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
    - 2.4: Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- Australian Professional Standards for Graduate Teachers

# CONNECTIONS WITH YOUR TEACHING EXPERIENCES

- Did you teach/observe teachers using art from other cultures? (e.g. Asian, Pacific Islands, Indigenous, Islamic art).
- If so, how was this taught? Comment upon the artists, artworks and teaching/learning activities used. How was it related to Curriculum?
- Have you encountered teaching experiences with Indigenous art, in particular? What made them good/bad examples?
- How many of you have had the opportunity to teach with Indigenous art or artists?
- How many of you had culturally diverse students in the classroom? How were they catered/not catered for in terms of learning content/strategies?

# USEFUL RESOURCES

- **Books**

- *Art lessons from around the world: 200 classroom activities from different cultures*, by Alice Escobar.
- *Multicultural Art Activities: Intermediate*, by Betty Gaglio Cavanaugh  
[http://books.google.com.au/books?id=4q3Y3GK7VRIC&pg=PA28&lpg=PA28&dq=art+activities+multicultural&source=bl&ots=m9btzGQBEB&sig=XGRPT8qGD7m3LI4zx\\_Ly7u6XXRA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ZwykUZb6MsqhkW8qIH4Cw&ved=0CGgQ6AEwCQ](http://books.google.com.au/books?id=4q3Y3GK7VRIC&pg=PA28&lpg=PA28&dq=art+activities+multicultural&source=bl&ots=m9btzGQBEB&sig=XGRPT8qGD7m3LI4zx_Ly7u6XXRA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ZwykUZb6MsqhkW8qIH4Cw&ved=0CGgQ6AEwCQ)
- *Art from many hands: multicultural art projects*, by Jo Miles Schuman
- *Aboriginal art and the dreaming : teaching about Aboriginal art, craft and design in secondary schools*. Adelaide, : Dept. for Education and Children's Services, 1994

- **Websites**

- NGV Asian Art Resource and Programs: <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/learn/schools-resources/asian-art2>
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Asian Resources: <http://www.metmuseum.org/en/learn/for-educators/publications-for-educators>
- Aboriginal Education:  
<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/apac/detcms/aboriginal-education/apac/teaching-resources/aboriginal-art-online.en?oid=SiteProxy-id-9526170>
- NGV Tradition and Transformation: <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/learn/schools-resources/tradition-and-transformation>
- Gordon Benne, NGV Resource: <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/learn/schools-resources/gordon-bennett>
- ACARA: conceptual framework for developing teaching resources: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/CrossCurriculumPriorities/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-histories-and-cultures>



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