This chapter discusses:

- sources of inspiration for generating artworks
- the development of a personal studio process
- techniques for generating a range of ideas, directions and potential solutions
- refinement of aesthetic qualities.
Introduction

This chapter is designed to enhance your knowledge of the way artists explore ideas when creating artworks. The chapter explores a range of starting points for generating, developing and refining ideas in order to commence art-making activities. It includes a range of approaches to finding direction, recording ideas, refining ideas and evaluating the potential of ideas to be translated into artworks.

The artist uses the talent he has, wishing he had more talent. The talent uses the artist it has, wishing it had more artist.

– ROBERT BRAULT

This chapter considers great themes in art as sources of inspiration for art-making. The great themes are those that have been explored by successive generations of artists throughout history. Also considered is the question of artistic inspiration within a cultural context, with reference to a wide array of ‘influences’ that impact artists. These influences are examined later in this chapter, and are explained using specific historical references.

This chapter also looks at the ways in which potential solutions are identified and developed. Approaches to future directions for the refinement of potential directions, evaluation of potential directions, media inquiries and exploration of aesthetic qualities are explored using examples that include student work.

Art is a powerful non-verbal mode of communication that engages our mind and senses. Take the time to consider what you are going to communicate, and what the best medium for that communication might be.

refinement the process of reviewing and polishing an idea, technique or artwork in order to improve it

Figure 9.1 Nhi Pham (student), 2015
The great themes

If you were to cut out all the images in this textbook and group them together, you would soon realise that all the disparate, random and unrelated images could be classified. Despite apparent differences in style, date, materials or media, the images in this textbook could be arranged into categories.

When we explore the historical development of art, we become aware that there are connections between artworks that transcend media and time. Genres in art are ideas, themes and topics explored by successive generations of artists. Genres are often called 'great themes', and are a source of inspiration for many artists. The great themes include:

- nature – including landscapes, fauna and flora, human interaction with nature and phenomena such as light and weather
- portraiture – historically, portraits were commissioned by patrons
- the nude – changing views of the human form
- the human condition – including works that explore emotion, personal interpretation of political and current events and interaction between races and sexes
- war – changing attitudes to war
- still life – including flora, décor and interiors.

ACTIVITY 9.1

An exploration of the great themes is a good starting point for the generation of your own ideas. Look at interpretations of a theme across art styles. What common elements are included in the artworks? For example, portraits of the High Renaissance and Mannerist periods contained clues about the achievements or social status of the sitter. Many entries in the Archibald Prize, Australia’s premier portrait competition, continue this tradition and provide clues about their sitter’s celebrity or social status.

In the mid- to late 1600s, Dutch Baroque artist Rembrandt left a legacy of self-portraits. Melbourne-based artist Edward Mclean only paints self-portraits. He does not sign them as Rembrandt did; he simply numbers his paintings.

Figure 9.2 Banksy, Calais 2015. Banksy’s graffiti at the refugee camp in Calais is a reimaging of Gericault’s Raft of the Medusa.
9.2 Artistic inspiration

Starting points

*Art is the stored honey of the human soul, gathered on wings of misery and travail.*

– THEODORE DREISER

Brainstorming and concept mapping are useful starting points when thinking about a direction for art-making. A concept map is a great way to clarify your thinking on topics for art-making. The concept map below was developed from a brainstorm of the topic ‘Artistic Inspiration’.

The mind map in Figure 9.3 illustrates the range of influences that may inspire artists. The items identified on each spoke of the concept map may consciously or unconsciously influence artists. Specific artists and historical periods have been included where appropriate.

**Artistic inspiration**

Do not commit to one style when generating ideas. Stay open to using many varied styles. Your annotation may explain that you are exploring a range of art styles to identify that which best communicates your intent.

We can often get attached to our ideas – but remember that the first idea is not always the best. You need to develop ideas by changing perspective, interpretation, art elements and design principles, and sometimes the medium.

Take a closer look at each spoke of Figure 9.4. Mind maps like this one can be used as stimuli for the generation of art-making ideas. Information, artworks and explanations of the concepts explored in this mind map are discussed below.

**Patronage**

Patrons are wealthy persons or institutions who commission artworks. Patronage is an important historical influence on artists. Great themes like ‘Portraiture’ exist largely due to patrons. Historically, a patron provided food, shelter, materials, assistants and financial support to an artist in exchange for artworks. Italian painter Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) had wealthy patrons and Spanish painter Francisco Goya (1746–1828) enjoyed the patronage of crowned kings. During the Byzantine and Renaissance periods, the Roman Catholic Church was the patron of artists who created religious art including papal portraits. The system of patronage has transmuted into today’s system of ‘stables’ – that is, individuals or groups of artists exclusively attached or contracted to one gallery.

**Nature**

The earliest recordings of nature date back to about 35 000–30 000 BCE. These comprise images of animals in caves at Chauvet Pont d’Arc in France. Some Australian rock paintings have also been dated to around this time.

The earliest examples of images we can call landscapes were discovered within the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs. Stylised images of animals and fields adorned the burial chambers of pharaohs. The discovery of Pompeii revealed that realistic images of animals decorated mosaic floors in the villas of the Roman Empire. Frescoes of landscapes were used as *trompe-l’oeil* within Roman houses. The Italian artist Giotto (c. 1267–1337) introduced landscapes into Byzantine paintings. Landscapes finally became a genre through the work of English painter John Constable (1776–1837) and the French Barbizon School.

trompe-l’oeil: an art technique that uses realistic imagery in order to create an optical illusion that makes objects appear in three dimensions.
Figure 9.4 Mind map: Inspiration can be found everywhere
Myths and legends

Most cultures have myths and legends, which are usually moral tales that explain behaviour and consequences. Some myths and legends attempt to give meaning to historic events or natural phenomena, while others address questions of origin. Creation myths, including modern religion, fall into this category.

Indigenous, Western and Eastern art includes depictions of myths and legends. Contemporary arts, including hyperrealist sculpture, fantasy art and digitally manipulated images and film, present us with realistic images of creatures, people and places drawn from tribal, classical and contemporary myths.

Technology

Artists have either adapted to new technology and used it to improve their communication or celebrated new technology by incorporating it into their artworks.
Celebrating new technologies

When Cyril Power (1872–1951) created The Tube Staircase (Figure 9.7) in 1929, it was described as having an uncompromising modernity that recalled the industrial subject’s charming delicacy of colour. He has created an extremely decorative piece that is strong yet delicate, which would seem to be quite different from the reality of an underground railway station staircase.

French painter Claude Monet (1840–1926) has been inspired by technology in Gare Saint Lazare, Paris (Figure 9.8). Though not his prime focus, the technical achievement depicted in his painting cannot be ignored. Monet’s painting captures the excitement of two technologies. The first is construction in new materials that enabled engineers to cover the span of the entire railway station and suspend a glass ceiling; the other is the expansion of rail. The new technology, whether a conscious or an unconscious stimulus, is celebrated within this artwork.

Figure 9.7 Cyril Power, The Tube Staircase, 1929, colour linocut, ed. 34/50, on thin paper

Figure 9.8 Claude Monet, Gare Saint Lazare, Paris, 1877, oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris
Creating and exploring new technologies

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) pioneered the technology of oil painting and experimented with a range of techniques for improving fresco painting and the casting of sculptures. Like Leonardo, contemporary artist Stelarc (1946–) pushes the boundaries of technology in his work on the human–machine interface. Stelarc collaborates with scientists, computer technicians and engineers to question evolution and the limits of human form. He once grew a third ear on his forearm and designed a robotic third hand that mimicked his own hand. In 2006, he exhibited a robotic arthropod (Figure 9.9). The robot scans a gallery with an ultrasound sensor. When a human comes into the gallery space, it rears up on its pincer legs, showing all of the alarm signs of a murderous robot spider.

Hyper-realist sculptor Patricia Piccinini (1965–) also collaborates with fabricators to use new silicone sculpting in her artworks. Piccinini creates sculptures that explore the theme of evolution and genetic manipulation (Figure 9.10).

**ACTIVITY 9.2**

1 Find out more about Patricia Piccinini’s work by visiting her website.
2 Find out more about Stelarc by visiting his website.

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**Figure 9.9** Stelarc, *v*, aluminium, stainless steel, acrylic, pneumatic actuators, electronics, LCD screen (2 m diameter), Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2006, photography by Stelarc

**Figure 9.10** Patricia Piccinini, *Still Life With Stem Cells*, 2002. Silicone, polyurethane, human hair, clothing, carpet. Life-size, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist, Tolarno Galleries and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.
Art styles and the works of individual artists often inspire others. Historically, formal training within the apprentice systems of the centuries from the 1200s to the 1700s included replication of the artworks of the masters. At the age of 13, Michelangelo (1475–1564) was apprenticed to the painter Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449–94), from whom he learnt to draw and paint. At 14 he studied sculpture under Bertoldo di Giovanni (1420–91). Michelangelo's art was influenced by prominent philosophers and writers who visited the studio of his master. Michelangelo's *The Pietà* is considered one of the great art masterpieces of the Renaissance. When he was alive, Michelangelo was hailed as the best sculptor of his generation; now we would probably consider him the greatest sculptor of all time.

During the eighteenth century, the training of exemplary apprentices was undertaken by newly formed academies, which trained pupils through the practice of copying the works of masters. The academies also dictated taste through their selection of works for public exhibition. Students of these academies were part of a select group who had access to galleries and historically significant artworks. Today, we have more opportunity to be inspired by art than previous generations. We can freely access exhibitions at state and regional centres. We are exposed to art through the medium of television and our computers. Our current digital technologies enable us to access artworks easily, wherever they are in the world. This same technology has enabled artists to borrow imagery from other artists, a practice that has become known as appropriation. Consent is required when appropriating all or part of an artwork, as most artworks are protected under copyright laws and may not be reproduced without permission.

**Figure 9.11** Michelangelo, *The Pietà*, 1498–1499, St Peter's Basilica, Vatican City
Not all artists appropriate images; some borrow composition or reinterpret themes. Look at the three images on the following page. Inspired by classical literature, Michelangelo painted a depiction of Leda and the Swan. Unfortunately, the original was lost; however, the copy shown in Figure 9.12 is believed to be an exact replica of the original. Notice the similarities between the compositions of Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) (Figure 9.13) and Sidney Nolan (1917–92) (Figure 9.14) and the work of Michelangelo.

Culture, social, political

Throughout history, artists have been inspired by current events and social change. The Impressionists were inspired by the first World’s Fair and Japanese art, while Dadaists and Surrealists were believed to be motivated by social change, including Einstein’s theory of relativity.

A brief history of religion in Europe

The fall of the Western Roman Empire around 600 CE marked the beginning of the period known as the Dark Ages. For approximately 400 years, Germanic barbarians and other warlike tribes created chaos in Europe. Wars, revolts, famine, violence and poverty replaced Roman rule. Art existed in the remaining empire, but was constrained in style and expression by the dictates of the Roman Catholic Church. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the holy crusades brought Catholicism and order to much of Europe. The Middle Ages saw the establishment of Christian churches and monasteries throughout Europe, and the church suppressed the scientific, artistic and social knowledge of the Egyptian and Greco-Roman empires.

Art became decorative and formulaic, following the strict dictates of the church. The church’s dominance lasted until the mid-fifteenth century. The Renaissance marked a movement away from the Byzantine art and architecture of the early church. Within affluent, politically stable provinces and kingdoms, artists and academics rediscovered ancient knowledge. Artists once again began to explore the philosophy of naturalism as pursued by ancient Greco-Roman artisans.

By the eighteenth century, some philosophers and men of science began to question social belief and convention. They questioned the church’s divine order, creation and oppression of historical information and knowledge. Eventually, these ideas
gave rise to an era known as the Age of Enlightenment. The foundations of modern science and democracy arose from this period in history. Goya and French artist Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) were painting at this time, and were strongly influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment. The idea of countries adopting the Classical Greek example of democracy was popularised, and the ideals of freedom and egalitarianism swept through Europe. In France, this resulted in the French Revolution. David became the revolution’s artist, and he was invited to record the building of the new French democracy. The beheading of reigning monarchs Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette heralded the new age. The revolution ended when Napoleon elected himself the new Emperor of France and chose David as his court painter. David’s painting *The Oath of the Horatii* (Figure 9.17) reflects the oath of allegiance that Napoleon demanded of David and all French citizens. In Spain, the monarchy became increasingly dictatorial in an attempt to suppress the kind of rebellion experienced in France. Despite this, Goya held to the Enlightenment belief of freedom and egalitarianism. As he witnessed the barbarity of the Peninsular War, he questioned his faith in human nature. His darker paintings of rituals and nightmare figures questioned the side of the human psyche that enables us to demonise others and express hatred as acts of terror and war.

The anonymous English graffiti and stencil artist Banksy continually returns to Goya’s themes in his street art. Though exploring many similar themes to Goya, Banksy’s sense of irony and keen wit make the issues and the artwork accessible to a contemporary audience.
War

Throughout history, victors have celebrated their achievements. Images of victorious leaders in battles appeared as early as 662 BCE. Their message is unmistakable: ‘Here is the victor, our sovereign. See what he has done. See his might.’ This is certainly true of David’s *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (Figure 9.18). The painting is an entirely idealised view of a true event created to be a piece of propaganda. Throughout his career, David would specialise in these sort of works, promoting the idea that individuals should sacrifice themselves for the good of the state.

Goya challenged the way in which war was depicted in art. His revolutionary and graphic depiction of political martyrdom, commissioned to celebrate Spanish resistance to Napoleon’s army, shows the true horror of war. His *Disasters of War* series (Figure 9.19) marks a change from the celebratory, heroic military painting to the stark, confronting horror that continues to dominate our vision of war.

War is not just about the battlefield; it also brutalises those left behind. Käthe Kollwitz was a committed pacifist, which would have been very uncommon at the time when she was producing artworks. Her *War Series* (Figure 9.20) shows the emotional toll on a pregnant war widow who is mourning the loss of her husband. She is posed in a way that shows her trying to protect her unborn child against attack. The stark contrast of black and white in this woodblock print emphasises the solitude of the people who are left behind.

In October 2011, Ben Quilty toured with Australian troops as the official Australian war artist for the Australian War Memorial as part of its Official War Art Scheme (Figure 9.21). Official war artists have long...
been employed by the Australian War Memorial to produce specific artworks that document Australian military involvement in war.

War paintings could be considered propaganda images that foster the idea that war is noble. This vision of war is in stark contrast to the horrific and terrifying imagery of Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* (see Figure 6.17 in Chapter 6). Picasso (1881–1973) leaves no doubt that devastation, confusion, fear and destruction are the true nature of war.

Phuong Phi Tran used her own family’s experience during the Vietnam War as the catalyst for her studio work (Figure 9.22). She focused on the impact of war on children – a topic that is always relevant and is currently being highlighted with the issue of children in detention centres. When a theme is intensely personal, it is easier to immerse yourself in it. For many students studying VCE at the moment, war will be a highly relevant topic.

**ACTIVITY 9.3**

Use the pro formas provided in the *Art-isan Second Edition Interactive Textbook* titled ‘About me’ and ‘Clarifying my thoughts’ to help you generate and develop some ideas for art-making.

**ACTIVITY 9.4**

Table 9.1 provides an example you can follow to assist you in identifying your personal style and potential directions. Four periods appear on the table, as most teachers conduct a weekly theory lesson.

In this chapter, ‘genre’ is used to describe various historic and contemporary artworks that explore the same subject or theme – such as still-life or nature.

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Figure 9.21 Ben Quilty, *Captain S After Afghanistan*, 2011, oil on canvas
Figure 9.22 Phuong Phi Tran (student), *War Child*, 2015, acrylic on canvas
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 9.1 MY STYLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 × PERIOD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Towards a personal style: Deciding on a direction

All art requires courage.

– ANNE TUCKER

Pop artist Andy Warhol (1928–87) received some sound advice when he was a young artist. On the subject of finding artistic direction, he said, ‘A lady friend of mine asked me, “Well, what do you love most?” That’s how I started painting money.’

Warhol was also inspired by popular and current events, often replicating images from newspapers and responding to commercial and social fads, including the cult of celebrity. In the early 1960s, he presented the public with celebrities in his Icon series. The series featured photographic silkscreens of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe.

In order to develop an understanding of and sensitivity to your medium, it is important to visit as many galleries as you can. For those students who live in remote areas, this may mean travelling to the nearest regional centre or visiting online galleries. The more art you see, the better your understanding of visual effects and media application techniques will become. The more you try to recreate the techniques you have seen, the more sensitive you will become to your medium.

Margaret Preston (1875–1963) was determined to be a modernist artist. At a time when female artists were seen as hobbyists, she forged a career that won her the acclaim of artists and the general public. In 1893 she studied at the National Gallery of Victoria School of Art. In 1904 she toured Europe, seeking out modern art. By 1927 she came to the realisation that ‘Art is the tangible symbol of the spirit of a country’. This understanding guided her direction as she developed art that had a sense of Australianness. She found inspiration in the motifs of Indigenous cultures and from the 1920s to her death in 1963 she remained a strong advocate of Aboriginal art, which had in her lifetime received little public attention. During the time that Preston was creating artworks, it was viewed as perfectly acceptable to appropriate from other cultures; however, this is viewed differently today and can be considered cultural misappropriation and as unacceptable.

Figure 9.23 Andy Warhol, Liz, 1965, silkscreen on paper, Tate Glasgow

Figure 9.24 Margaret Preston, Aboriginal Design, with Sturt’s Pea, 1943, colour masonite cut, hand-coloured in gouache on buff wove paper
ACTIVITY 9.5

Now that you have identified some of your preferences, including art elements and design principles, it is time to reflect and consider possible directions.

1 Using conferencing, have a classmate, friend or parent interview you and ask you the following questions. The interviewer should record all your responses.

ART STYLE QUESTIONS
- Which artists, artworks, clippings or issues did you finally select for analysis?
- What was it about these that interested you?
- Which artists explore this subject?
- What were the artists who you researched expressing through their works?
- How did the information you obtained about other artists exploring a similar interest influence you?

ART-MAKING QUESTIONS
- What do you want to express through the artwork?
- Which medium will best enable you to communicate your feelings, thoughts or intentions?
- Which style will best enable you to communicate your feelings, thoughts or intentions?
- Which compositions will best enable you to communicate your feelings, thoughts or intentions?
- Which colour palette will best communicate your feelings, thoughts or intentions?

2 Ask the interviewer for warm and cold feedback on the recorded responses. Critical questions for feedback are:
- Did my responses make sense?
- Have I thought through my intention thoroughly?

Is there something obvious that I have not seen or considered?

3 Is there a theme, topic or idea related to my intention that I have not seen? The feedback may enable you to critically appraise your intent and direction. Once you have decided on a direction, the next step is to plan for success.

9.3 Planning for success

Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter.

— OSCAR WILDE

Now that you have explored various starting points and directions for art-making, what do you do with this knowledge and how do you utilise it?

The exploration proposal is designed to let you articulate your art-making ideas. The clearer you are about your medium, motivation and what you intend to make, the easier it will be for you to plan for success.

Planning is an essential art-making skill. Forget what you have heard or seen in documentary snippets; artists plan their art-making activities. The painter Jeffrey Smart (1921—) and the sculptor Henry Moore (1898–1986) are excellent examples of artists who have planned. Both artists explore potential solutions within their visual diaries, creating numerous drawings and carefully considering the use and placement of elements such as colour, texture and form. Both artists have engaged in the creation of maquettes. These miniature
versions, called ‘studies’, enabled the artists to carefully consider composition, use of art elements and use of design principles prior to commencing the artwork.

Student Rachel Vongkham deconstructed commercial photographs within her visual diary as shown in Figure 9.25. She drew on the magazine clippings and made notes about their composition. The understanding she developed improved her own photographs, especially when posing, lighting and framing her subjects.

**Goal-setting**

Weekly goals for your art-making are a great motivator. The SMART Goals approach is a good method to guide the development of your plan. Smart goals are:

- Strategic
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timely.

Contemplate the various stages of your inquiry and chart these using tables like Tables 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4. This will help you to plan and monitor your progress, and can be of assistance in proving **authenticity**. Planners like these will also enable your teacher to order resources that you may require. You will need to work with your teacher to plan approximately 14 weeks of practical classes per semester. Some sample categories for you to consider including in your planners are provided.
TABLE 9.2 PERIOD PLANNER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ART-MAKING</th>
<th>1 × PERIOD</th>
<th>1 × PERIOD</th>
<th>1 × PERIOD</th>
<th>1 × PERIOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 goal: Decide direction</td>
<td>Explore art books and images.</td>
<td>Lay out clippings and photocopies.</td>
<td>List things I like.</td>
<td>Select three for analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 goal: Prepare five sketches</td>
<td>Explore principles of balance and emphasis.</td>
<td>Look at elements of colour, line and shape.</td>
<td>Apply explorations to sketch an image.</td>
<td>Change the perspective on the sketch, change the viewpoint, change the line work, change the tone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 9.3 WEEKLY PLANNER 1

**EXAMPLE ART-MAKING IDEA: PRINTED AND WOVEN HANGINGS, OCEAN THEME, TRIBAL MOTIF**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH: DESIGN PROCESS</th>
<th>VISUAL DIARY TASK</th>
<th>PRESENTATION INQUIRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 goal: Research and investigate motifs</td>
<td>Research Oceania myths and legends about sea gods.</td>
<td>• Assemble sketches of images or clippings into visual diary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make technical notes on materials and construction techniques for each clipping.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 goal: Select motifs with which to work</td>
<td>Select tribal motifs of different islands in Oceania.</td>
<td>• Isolate and sketch motifs (patterns) found in the clippings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 9.4 WEEKLY PLANNER 2

**EXAMPLE ART-MAKING IDEA: PAINTING FANTASY THEMES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH: DESIGN PROCESS</th>
<th>VISUAL DIARY TASK</th>
<th>PRESENTATION INQUIRY</th>
<th>SAFETY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 goal: Explore media</td>
<td>Research materials needed to complete proposed artwork. Research fantasy images.</td>
<td>• Complete initial sketches of ideas.</td>
<td>What finishing techniques are used with this medium?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Experiment with materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 goal: Learn three basic application techniques</td>
<td>Research ways in which artists use this medium and apply them.</td>
<td>• Change elements – colour and line.</td>
<td>Continue finishing techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Experiment with materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY 9.6

1 Share your style table clippings and insights with a group, and also your preferences for the various media, elements and principles. Allow the group to brainstorm and suggest ideas and starting points for you.

2 Write to your teacher. Outline your identified style table interests, past experiences and challenges for the semester. This may assist you with your statement of intention and planning.

ACTIVITY 9.7

The information documented in your ‘Statement of Intent’ should identify your focus and guide your artistic exploration. Select a weekly table from the models suggested and construct the table with 14 rows. Consider what you need to learn, know and do, and fill in the table with this information.

GENERATING AND REFINING AESTHETIC QUALITIES

Painting is easy when you don’t know how, but very difficult when you do.

— EDGAR DEGAS

Once you have an idea and several images that you are considering, stop and take some time to think before you proceed. Remember that the first idea is not always the best. Critically evaluate the idea and record your observations within your visual diary. Critical questions at this stage are: Does the idea meet my intent? Is it the best format, presentation and style to communicate my intent?

Enhance, clarify and define the visual expression of your idea by redrafting the sketched idea. Manipulate the elements and then the principles on the copy and evaluate the resulting drafts. Through this process, you can create highly original and innovative works like those of Fiona Hall (1953–).

Fiona Hall contemplated how history is stored in museum collections and the way objects of nature are rolled out of their flat drawers for periodic exhibition. She made an association between collections in museum mat press drawers and tinned sardines, then she synthesised these ideas into a concept for art-making. She then had to learn to construct the works (Figure 9.26).

Artists have often changed or adapted their ideas, sketches, compositions or use of elements at any stage of the art-making process. When something is not working effectively during the art-making process, changes are made. After several attempts at painting Gertrude Stein’s portrait (Figure 9.27), Picasso painted out the entire face of his subject and sent the sitter, who was his patron, away. He completed the painting almost a year later. When comments were made that the sitter did not look like the portrait, he replied, ‘She will.’ Many years later, Gertrude Stein agreed with Picasso.

Figure 9.26 Fiona Hall, Plumeria acutifolia, Frangipani, Araliya, Malliya Poo, 1999, from the series, Paradisus Terrestris, aluminium and steel (24.5 x 11 x 1.5 cm (approx), courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery
Technical examinations of paintings with non-invasive techniques, such as infrared reflectograms, x-radiographs and photomicroscopy, make it possible to see how they were constructed. The new technologies have revealed that artists often rearranged their compositions and changed elements to improve communication, or they may have painted an entirely new painting. This is not an uncommon occurrence, but it is only since the development of new technologies that curators and conservators have been able to find out whether there is another image on the canvas.

Picasso was known to change his mind, and early in his career in 1901, when he would have had to be careful with his money, he painted *The Blue Room* (Figure 9.28) on top of a canvas on which he had already painted. *The Blue Room* is a very well-known painting from Picasso’s blue period, but it was not the painting that he first set out to do, as underneath the top layer of paint is another painting of an unknown man in a bow-tie.

*Art is a collaboration between God and the artist, and the less the artist does the better.*

— ANDRÉ GIDE

Refinement of **aesthetic qualities** can only be achieved through careful planning and time spent exploring and experimenting with media and the placement of elements. Each element and principle should be considered when generating potential solutions.

*Anyone who says you can’t see a thought simply doesn’t know art.*

— WYNETKA ANN REYNOLDS

Neo-Pop artist Jeff Koons (1955–) uses a computer to refine the aesthetic qualities of his ideas. He drafts by creating montages from scans of appropriated artworks and magazine clippings. Using photographic programs as drawing tools, he moves parts of the image until he achieves his desired balance. Koons then manipulates art elements or adds new textures, tones or colours to his image. He often introduces...
rhythm through the inclusion of principles such as pattern formed through repetition of background shapes. His *Popeye* series is an excellent example of how he constructs his images. The series is a homage to Pop artists Roy Lichtenstein (1923–97) and Andy Warhol, and to the Surrealist Salvador Dalí (1904–89).

Figure 9.31 is an exploration by student Cathy Truong in which she began to explore the visual quality of the element colour. Cathy reproduced her initial concept sketch 18 times and applied various washes of watercolour. From these experiments, she made decisions about the best colour palette for her to use when developing potential folio pieces.

**ACTIVITY 9.8**

The following activities may be completed manually or with computer aid using scans of your sketched ideas. Remember, you will need to record or print each version of the image.

1. Sketch, photocopy or scan one of your ideas several times. Cut out the subjects, shapes or forms and physically overlay them on top of the original sketch. Move the cut-outs around to improve the original image.

2. Consider elements such as tone, texture and colour that can reinforce the emphasis created. List and explain how these elements may enhance your work.

3. Photo-document or print out each variation of the sketch as you go. Paste these in your visual diary along with responses to the questions.
ACTIVITY 9.9

1 Creatively play with the principle of balance. Change the elements of shape and form within the sketch. Enlarge some areas or objects in the image and decrease others.
2 What effect does this have on the composition? Does it enhance emphasis and create better visual pathways through the image?
3 Photo-document or print out the changes to the image and annotate your experiments and conclusions within your visual diary.

ACTIVITY 9.10

Enhance the dramatic impact of the sketched idea by exploring changes to the viewpoint or perspective.

1 Try replicating the sketch so that you are looking up into the subject or form, then looking down and finally imagine seeing the image from behind.
2 Record what you imagine you would see. Colour in the resulting sketches in a palette that enhances the mood suggested by each sketch.
3 Working on the sketches, vary the widths and tones of any lines. Using black pencil, shade in some areas.
4 Photo-document your sketches and explain in your visual diary the impact of the changes on the images.

ACTIVITY 9.11

Complete the following set of questions using information from this chapter.

LOW-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

1 What elements are visible in Picasso’s Portrait of Gertrude Stein (Figure 9.27)?
2 How has Picasso applied the principle of balance within the composition?
3 How has he achieved emphasis on the face of the sitter?
4 What movement or visual pathway has he established through the image?

MID-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

1 What have you discovered about your personal taste in art?
2 Which spoke on the artistic inspiration mind map (Figure 9.3) did you choose? Which artists did you explore and how did they influence your art-making ideas?
3 What aspects of the conferencing feedback did you reject and why?
4 How did feedback from others influence your art-making decisions?

HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

1 Using appropriate art vocabulary, explain how you refined your initial sketched ideas and the resulting improvements.
2 What do you think Koons might do to improve Picasso’s Portrait of Gertrude Stein? Justify your response.
3 With reference to artworks and processes outlined in this chapter, explain Damien Hirst’s statement, ‘In an artwork you’re always looking for artistic decisions.’
4 With reference to the following quote and your visual diary, describe your progress towards developing a personal style

Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else’s opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.

– OSCAR WILDE (1854–1900), IRISH POET, PLAYWRIGHT AND AUTHOR

USEFUL WEBSITES

For a list of useful websites to explore, access the Art-isan Second Edition Interactive Textbook.