



















Visual Arts Glossary





Reinventing objects

Term	Meaning
2D	artworks that exist on a flat surface, that have height and width, such as paintings and drawings 
3D	artworks that have depth as well as height and width, such as sculpture and installation 
4D	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 
abstraction	in Visual Arts, the process of moving from representational to non-representational qualities in art
aesthetic	specific artistic awareness, or a deep appreciation of the meaning of an artistic experience through intellectual, emotional and sensual response to a work of art in Visual Arts, the philosophical theory or set of principles governing the idea of beauty at a given time and place 
appropriation	in Visual Arts, refers to the adopting or borrowing of pre-existing objects or images from human-made visual culture. Re-contextualising the pre-existing objects and images to create a new meaning
art form	specific shape or quality an artistic expression takes, such as dance, drama, media arts, music and visual artworks 
artists	generic term for the maker of an artwork in each of the five Arts subjects 
artwork	generic term for a performance or an artwork in each of the five Arts subjects. Artworks are ... frequently described with reference to forms or styles 
assemblage	a work of art produced by organising or composing into a unified whole; a group of found or discarded objects
atmosphere	the established mood or feeling conveyed in an artwork or performance 
audience	individuals or groups of people who experience the arts in a range of settings and contexts (formal, informal, virtual or interactive) through intellectual, emotional and social engagement. The artist is audience to their own artwork 
background	in Visual Arts, the part of an artwork that suggests distance to the viewer, maybe behind foreground and mid-ground elements
balance	in Visual Arts, a design principle. The arrangement and visual weight of elements within an artwork. There are three different types of balance: symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial
catalogue	in Visual Arts, a published list of works of art in an exhibition or collection. It may contain images and descriptions, explanations of works and detailed comments or essays to provide context to the work

codes	in Visual Arts, accepted ways of arranging materials into familiar forms, such as print, painting, moving image or sculpture	
collage	in Visual Arts, the technique of building an artwork by positioning various materials together and gluing or attaching them onto a surface	
colour	visual perception of light reflected or emitted from objects. Colour is used to describe subject matter and create mood and feeling in an artwork. There are many different colour schemes in art, e.g. primary colours, secondary colours, warm colours, cool colours, complementary colours	
complementary colours	colours that sit opposite each other on the colour wheel: red — green, yellow — purple and orange — blue. The high contrast of these colours creates a vibrant and excited mood	
composition	the placement or arrangement of elements or parts in artworks	
compositional effects	application and manipulation of design elements and principles that affect the composition of an artwork, e.g. overlapping	
concept	in Visual Arts, an idea with clearly defined characteristics that serves to organise thinking and provide a plan for action	
context	in Visual Arts, the social, cultural, historical, ideological, philosophical, technological, environmental, political, economic, spiritual and religious frameworks in which artworks have been, or are, created. Context informs the concepts and focuses, allowing intended and suggested meaning to evolve	
contrast	in Visual Arts, a design principle. The amount of difference in tones (values), colours, textures, shapes or other design or visual elements in an artwork	
conventions	traditional or culturally accepted ways of doing things based on audience expectations. Each art form has hundreds of conventions built up over time and widely accepted by audiences	
cool colours	the blues and greens of the colour spectrum, associated with the sea, ice, and forest. Cool colours tend to have a calming effect and recede in a composition. See also 'warm colours'	
craft	an intellectual and physical activity where artists explore the materials and processes to produce unique objects for the purposes of: experimentation with form or function; exhibition; production; and personal or community need. Indigenous cultures draw no distinction between art and craft and, similarly, contemporary culture values the interplay between the art/craft, design/craft, the art/designer or the design/maker. The crafted and handmade sit alongside the manufactured design object as part of historical, national and cultural identities	
crop	to make something smaller by being selective when cutting	
cultural protocols	principles and practices that guide the beliefs, values and behaviours of a cultural group in a particular situation. Protocols are present in all cultures and are important in ensuring people interact and behave in a culturally respectful manner. For Australia's First Peoples, cultural protocols include a diverse range of historic and current customs, practices and traditional lore that are part of Australia's First Peoples' cultural observances	

curate	in Visual Arts, to select, organise and present artworks in an exhibition or museum
design	to conceive, plan, outline and fashion the form and structure of a work. Design involves, in varying portions, a combination of creativity, concept analysis and synthesis, aesthetics, and problem resolution. All art forms use the design process when creating and shaping elements and materials as a part of the activity of art making. Learning design within The Arts involves analysing needs, understanding and selecting and testing materials and processes, and providing solutions that satisfy social, cultural, communicative and environmental needs and understandings. Teaching design through The Arts involves divergent and convergent thinking, visualisation, imagination and immersion in and beyond material and technological solutions
design elements	[the visual components used to create an artwork. They] include line, colour, shape, texture, space and form 
design principles	accepted conventions associated with organising design elements and can include unity, balance, hierarchy, scale, proportion, emphasis, similarity and contrast 
drawing	in Visual Arts, a technique that creates a two-dimensional graphic sketch or design
emphasis	in Visual Arts, (also known as focal point) the part of the composition that first catches the viewer's attention. Emphasis can be created by a contrast of elements, e.g. colour, value and shape
ephemeral	existing or lasting for a very short time, short-lived
evaluation	in Visual Arts, the act of considering and assessing artwork in order to judge its value, quality or importance through a spoken or written statement
exhibition	selection, organisation and public display of a collection of items
fibre craft	creation of art forms using plant, animal or synthetic textiles and yarns, e.g. basketry, knitting and weaving
focus	in Visual Arts, to draw the audience's attention to a particular point in the artwork; and the individualised interpretation of a concept 
forms	the whole of an artwork created by the elements and the way they are structured in Visual Arts, two-dimensional form (see 2D) [including drawing, painting, design, printmaking, digital imaging and photography], three-dimensional form (see 3D) [including sculpture, fibre crafts and installation] and four-dimensional form (see 4D) [including performance, cross-media and digital imaging] 
format	related to shape, size, plan, organisation or style
found objects	natural and manufactured objects repurposed in an artwork
function	the way that a product works for a particular purpose and user
hybrid art form	the combination of more than one art form within an artwork 
imaginary	not real; created from the imagination

in situ	A Latin term for 'on site'. If we see something 'in situ', we see it where it will actually be placed when it's finished. Used in Visual Arts as a way to illustrate how a design or artwork will be installed in a particular place
installation	in Visual Arts, the hanging or arrangement of artworks in an exhibition; and a three-dimensional art form often created for a specific site and using materials or features of the site
interpretation	in Visual Arts, to respond to the thoughts and feelings experienced to explain the meaning or significance of an artwork
juxtapose	to place images or objects in close proximity to force comparison of ideas
length	a measure in distance of time or space
line	in Visual Arts, a mark made by a tool or implement. The different types of line are directional, expressive and communicative
materials	physical, [digital and virtual] resources, equipment including technologies, and information used to make artworks. For example, paint, digital camera, pencil, [found objects]
meaning	what an artist communicates via an artwork; or what a viewer understands and interprets from an artwork
medium	the material used in making an artwork
mixed media	varied materials and processes applied to an artwork. These could include the use of materials used for collage, digital imaging, drawing, painting and sculpture techniques
narrative artwork	an artwork that communicates a story, experiences or events
painting	in Visual Arts, the technique of applying paint materials to create an artwork
pattern	in Visual Arts, a sequence of consistent or corresponding shapes or lines
personal style	distinctive and preferred use of forms, materials, images, objects and ideas, which may communicate personality or experiences of the creator
perspective	the standpoint used to define perceived views or beliefs
photography	in Visual Arts, the technique of capturing and printing two-dimensional images with a device that records light onto a surface, either through chemical or digital processes
popular culture	the sum of ideas, beliefs and valued, common objects that are perceived to represent a culture at any given time
positive and negative space	in Visual Arts, positive space is the space that the subject occupies. Negative space is the empty spaces — that which is not occupied by the subject
practices	the application of Arts skills and knowledge to create, represent, communicate and respond in a specific art form
practise	regularly revising, developing and consolidating skills, techniques and repertoire as a class or as an individual

primary colours	colours that cannot be created by mixing other colours, e.g. red, yellow and blue. See also 'secondary colours'
printmaking	in Visual Arts, the technique of impressing a design onto a surface, e.g. reproducing an image by offsetting an embossed or engraved plate or block onto paper or fabric
proportion	The size relationship between objects or features within an artwork. See also 'scale'
purposeful play	is a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations (Early Years Learning Framework) 
ready-made	the term ready-made refers to a sculpture made using manufactured or mass-produced items that are selected and displayed by an artist. The term was first used by French artist Marcel Duchamp in 1913 and was seen as a radical new art form that challenged accepted art traditions and conventions
realistic	the appearance of real life
recontextualise	to consider an idea or subject in a context that is different from its original context
relief	in sculpture this refers to a method of moulding, carving or stamping where raised parts stand out from the surface to a greater extent than the rest
representation	the expression or designation of a character, place, idea, image or information by some other term, character, symbol, diagram, image, sound or combination of visual and aural expression, based on shared social values and beliefs  a concept in Visual Arts  may be the sum of subject matter, forms, styles, techniques, visual conventions, materials, technologies
response	in Visual Arts, a reaction to experiencing an artwork. Responses can be made in a variety of forms, e.g. an opinion, critique or artistic reply
rhythm	a series of elements in an artwork that makes the eye move from one component to an other
scale	the size relationship between objects as they appear in an artwork in relation to their usual or real physical size. See also 'proportion'
sculpture	in Visual Arts, the technique of manipulating materials to produce a three-dimensional artwork, e.g. carving, assembling or modelling
secondary colours	colours that are created by mixing two primary colours, e.g. red mixed with blue creates the secondary colour purple. See also 'primary colours'
sequence	the linking together of series of ideas, much like words are linked together to form sentences and paragraphs  in Visual Arts, the order of an object, factor or detail following another
sensory	related to the senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell
shape	a design element in Visual Arts, the appearance of a surface or outline of a form
silhouette	a darkened shape of an object

similarity	aspects of objects, people, places or qualities that resemble or associate with features of comparable entities
size	measurable dimensions of an object or representation
social commentary	messages and points of view about social issues communicated through written texts and visual images
space	a design element in Visual Arts; the area taken up by the objects (positive space) or the area that surrounds the objects (negative space) in an artwork
stimulus	material or concepts that inspire, provoke or lead to artistic ideas or responses
style	the influencing context of an artwork, such as Impressionist in Visual Arts; ballet or hip hop in Dance; Romanticism in Music; or postmodern, twenty-first century or contemporary, among many others. the defining context, features or characteristics of an artwork, e.g. a particular art movement influencing characteristics of an individual artist's artwork
subjective	relating to feelings; decision-making influenced by an individual's opinion or taste
symbol	a mark or character used to communicate an idea without the use of words
symbolism	the use of symbols to represent or communicate meaning
technique	in Visual Arts, the manner of making or skills used in making an artwork
technologies	the tools and equipment that can be materials for making and responding. One of the five key concepts in Media Arts
texture	a design element in Visual Arts; real or implied surface qualities of an object in an artwork, representing how the surface would feel to the touch
tone	in Visual Arts, the lightness or darkness of a colour (value)
unity	the agreeable combination of elements or principles in an artwork
viewpoints	a collection of perspectives, lenses or frames through which artworks can be explored and interpreted
virtual	having characteristics of something without being real, e.g. existing as a digital representation
virtual exhibition	in Visual Arts, where art is presented in an online space. See also 'virtual'
visual conventions	combinations of components and approaches, such as combinations of elements, design principles, composition and style
visual devices	combinations of approaches or techniques in compositions and representations
visual elements	see design elements
warm colours	the yellows and reds of the colour spectrum, associated with heat, sun and fire. Warm colours advance in a composition. See also 'cool colours'