

# Visual Art 2019 v1.1

## Unit 1 high-level annotated sample response

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### Transcript of video: Reverse chronology investigation — multimodal presentation

This video is available from

[www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/portal/media/snr\\_vis\\_art\\_19\\_unit1\\_asr\\_investigation.mp4](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/portal/media/snr_vis_art_19_unit1_asr_investigation.mp4)

Unit 1 high-level annotated sample response is available from the QCAA portal.

### Unit 1 Art as lens

*How do artists use and manipulate found objects in artworks to express personal viewpoints?*

Student (throughout): This is my reverse chronology investigation for Unit 1: Art as lens. This investigation responds to the inquiry question: How do artists use and manipulate found objects in artworks to express personal viewpoints? Joachim Froese, Cornelia Hesse-Honegger and Juan Sánchez Cotán inspired me in my experiments with ideas, materials and processes. Using the personal context as they have, I chose objects that had personal meaning to me, and manipulated them in a range of ways.

#### *Key artists*

The key artists have each expressed a personal viewpoint by using or manipulating humble, found objects. Froese uses photography to present imagined narratives as truth. In contrast, Hesse-Honegger's work objectively illustrates insects, to point out the harm of radiation. Juan Sánchez Cotán's oil painting practice was innovative for his time because his subject matter was humble food. Their three works are linked by the artists' close observation of objects and an illusion of realism. I'm interested in the way artists represent objects realistically. Froese is directly influenced by Sánchez Cotán's still life images and he uses insects, which is a link to Cornelia Hesse-Honegger's practice.

### Key artist 1

Joachim Froese's *Rhopography* series uses a contemporary lens to reinterpret the historical genre of still-life painting. The title *Rhopography* references the humble subject matter of Froese's photographs. His focus is the presentation of truth through the medium of photography. He manipulates found objects to convey his personal view that every photograph is made from the subjective view of the photographer, even if it is documenting an event.

### *Rhopography*#36

Froese composes his black and white photographs into narratives like a storyboard. He doesn't crop or digitally edit his images. Instead he uses traditional darkroom (analogue) techniques which leave visual clues that "signify truth". These clues "include black borders around each print and the sharp focus" (Froese, n.d.). Due to these devices, the audience is challenged to consider the existence of a scene like the one depicted in *Rhopography* #36 (figure 1).

This is a triptych in which the 'action' mostly occurs within the narrow depth of field along the front of the picture plane. The dark background, mouldy grapes and the blurry, scurrying insect suggest a secretive and dirty setting, like behind the fridge. Froese is working in miniature with decomposing grapes and an unidentifiable insect which the audience knows is very small. These tiny objects are presented in large scale, thereby challenging audience expectations because we expect insects and grapes to be tiny and insignificant. My experimentation has been influenced by Froese's practice because I used photography, similar subject matter and compositional arrangements.

### Key artist 2

Cornelia Hesse-Honegger's work can be read through a cultural context as a response to the impact of nuclear energy. The focus of her practice is the impact of radioactive pollutants on insects. She made extensive studies of insects in affected areas between the late 1980s until 2007. She "made over 300 detailed drawings of damaged or malformed insect bodies, wings, feelers, asymmetric body sections, black spots and ulcers" (Hesse-Honegger, 2008). She uses found objects (insects) to express her personal viewpoint about the danger of nuclear power. Her work challenges audiences to question the safety of nuclear power because the insects make us wonder what the impact could be on human beings.

### *A squash bug*

Hesse-Honegger uses a binocular microscope to observe her subjects then makes detailed watercolour sketches (Hesse-Honegger, n.d.). Figure 2 is an example of her illustrations. This insect has a malformed left antenna. Contours outlining the legs are visible in the image but have not had colour, tone or texture applied, whereas the body, head and antennae are complete. This signifies to the viewer that the legs are less important to the researcher than the more resolved part of the drawing and is in keeping with the genre of scientific illustration. In scientific illustration realism is important because the drawing is an official record. My experimentation has been influenced by Hesse-Honegger's practice through her use of the insects, and the ideas of beauty and disgust they represent for me.

### Key artist 3

Juan Sánchez Cotán (1560 -1627) was a Spanish artist whose still-life paintings, called bodegones, depict an austerity and simplicity which may be attributed to his strong religious beliefs. He gave up painting to become a monk so it is likely that his personal viewpoint is a rejection of material possessions in favour of a simple lifestyle. This simplicity is evident in the empty space around the objects in the painting.

### *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*

Sánchez Cotán used oil on canvas and meticulous application of paint, creating an illusion of reality. *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*, (figure 3) painted in 1602, contains fruit and vegetables treated as interesting objects. This means the audience sees them as textured and coloured forms rather than ingredients for a meal. Each component of the image has been thoughtfully placed to dissect the painting into a curve. The curve is emphasised by the solid black shape behind it. Sánchez Cotán used tone on each object to suggest three-dimensional form, adding to the effect of realism which he was aiming for. My experimentation was influenced by Sánchez Cotán's practice of arranging objects in front of a dark recess.

### Experimental research

I carried out my research through a personal context. A dead cockroach from my house provided a personal challenge for me. I also worked with food that was in my fridge and pantry. All my experiments reflect my home. I mainly used two-dimensional media and processes. I used real objects and arranged them to make a bodegone and I placed the actual dead cockroach in a variety of situations.

### Experimental research in response to Joachim Froese's practice

I used photography to create close-up images of dead insects and old food and I suggested a story through the arrangement of the photographs. I experimented with ways of organising the compositions including using 2, 3 and 4 panels. I tried colour and black and white as Froese does.

### Figure 4 *Cockroach and Potatoes*

This experiment has dramatic lighting. It also has added interest from the reflections on the black bench. The ambiguous forms are potatoes that had started to grow, and they invite viewers to look more closely to identify them. I used digital technology but Joachim Froese uses analogue technology. I experimented with Froese's technique of arranging the imagery into thirds both vertically and horizontally, to try to make it more interesting. Froese's work is much more dramatic due to his intense use of dark tone. This is a contact sheet of some of my photos.

Experimentation in response to Hesse-Honeggers's practice

I experimented with scale the way Hesse-Honegger does. She scales up the tiny bugs into large drawings to emphasise her viewpoint about the enormity of the impact of radioactive leaks on the environment. I made A4 and larger drawings to enhance the sense of disgust I feel toward cockroaches but found the drawings were also alarmingly attractive. Like her work, my cockroach was flawed. It was missing two legs. In experimenting with media and techniques, I made drawings using watercolour washes and ink. In these I was interested in trying to see an object (a cockroach) that is normally considered disgusting, through a lens of beauty. This contradicts the frightening subject matter. Drawing a very small insect without a microscope resulted in some generalising instead of close observation. I aimed in my drawings for an emotional response and I achieved this by emphasising the spiky, scary legs. My drawings are not as precise or as objective as Cornelia Hesse-Honegger's. These are larger drawings showing my diverse approaches.

Experimentation in response to Juan Sánchez Cotán's practice

I set up an arrangement of food in response to Juan Sánchez Cotán's sparse still-life. I made a charcoal drawing and a painting of it. I tried to capture the shadows and light and the emptiness of the arrangement. The box creates a frame for the arrangement and limits depth. This work could be developed by using other contemporary objects. I sat the cockroach on the painting and then photographed it, which is a multidisciplinary, contemporary way of working.

Reflective statement

In conclusion, it is apparent that there are many ways that artists can use and manipulate found objects to express their personal views. This investigative process has led me to make drawings, painting and photography using a range of materials and processes relevant to the artists. This has taught me a great deal about why artists make artworks and what types of personal stimulus an artist can respond to. It has shown me that even though the subject of the artwork might be a very simple everyday object, the artist might be communicating a much more complex idea.