

# Visual Art 2019 v1.1

Supporting resource: Stimulus, inquiry questions and focus

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## Stimulus, inquiry questions and focus in the Visual Art syllabus

In Unit 3, students frame a self-directed inquiry question in response to a teacher-facilitated direct stimulus or firsthand experience. Through independent investigation of their inquiry question and application of critical thinking skills, students build knowledge about art, artist and audience to generate a personal focus and commence a body of work.

### Area of study: Developing

#### How do artists generate solutions to visual problems?

##### Subject matter

In this inquiry process, students will:

- develop a personal inquiry question to guide investigation and generate a self-directed focus, to inform art practice and solve visual problems
- implement ideas for a personal inquiry through a teacher-facilitated direct stimulus or experience, e.g.
  - provocation from an expert lecture and/or class visit, editorial, article or symposium
  - excursion to a specific site, either art-related or drawing on local context and interests, e.g. environmental, social, historical or cultural
  - personal reaction, interest or story relevant to a specified text
  - scientific, philosophical or artistic process and experimentation
  - investigation of a historical event
  - presentation of empirical data (socioeconomic, historical, scientific)
  - learning in another subject.

## Selecting a stimulus

All students engage with the same stimulus or experience that is facilitated by the teacher. When selecting a stimulus, consider how it will:

- suit the learning styles, personal interests, beliefs and values of students
- inspire relevant, individualised open-ended questions
- invite further research in both making and responding
- provide opportunities for complex investigation with multiple pathways and layers of meaning
- be appropriate for learners with different needs
- relate to and build on students' prior learning experiences.

# Generating an inquiry question

Students generate an individualised inquiry question in response to the stimulus.

- Inquiry questions should
  - be open-ended to allow diverse research pathways
  - genuinely require research that leads to new knowledge
  - relate to the context/s specified in the investigation
  - not apply to almost any artist or artwork
  - be answered in the body of work focus.
- The following question prompts help to develop open-ended questions
  - Who is responsible for ... ?
  - Who do I ... ?
  - What happened when/to ... ?
  - What will happen if/when ... ?
  - What caused ... ?
  - What do I think about ... ?
  - What is it like to be ... ?
  - What is the origin of ... ?
  - What is the result of ... ?
  - Where is ... ?
  - Where do I ... ?
  - When will ... ?
  - Why does ... ?
  - Why do I ... ?
  - How can I ... ?
  - How am I ... ?
  - How do artists ... ?

## Sample stimulus and inquiry questions

Resource	Unit 3: Investigation — Stimulus sample A
<b>Stimulus</b>	<p>Maloof, J &amp; Siskel S (dirs.) 2013, <i>Finding Vivian Maier</i> (documentary), Ravine Pictures, USA.</p> <p>Written and directed by John Maloof and Charlie Siskel, this documentary (1 hour 23 minutes) is a biography of the posthumously discovered work of 'secret' photographer Vivian Maier (b. 1926, d. 2009, New York, USA).</p>
<b>Source</b>	<p>This documentary is available on DVD and may be available online.</p>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>This documentary demonstrates the inquiry process of historian/artist/collector John Maloof. After a chance finding of the negatives of photographer Vivian Maier, Maloof begins a quest to uncover the mystery, identity and body of work of a photographer who kept her work and life a secret, only uncovered after her death.</p>
<b>Learning activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch the documentary <i>Finding Vivian Maier</i> (2013).</li> <li>• Document the inquiry questions and inquiry process Maloof works through to build his knowledge of the photographer and uncover the intentions of her art practice. Record the questions Maloof asks during the film             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– (10:24)                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who are her inspirations? (Robert Frank, Diane Arbus, Lisette Model, Helen Levitt)</li> <li>▪ Was something wrong? Was a piece of the puzzle missing?</li> <li>▪ Why did Vivian Maier make these images?</li> <li>▪ What drove her to such compulsion, to an obsessive degree, to take so many pictures?</li> <li>▪ Why were they never shown?</li> </ul> </li> <li>– (38:00)                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who is responsible for the interpretation of an artist's work? (Explore the issue of posthumous development of the body of work.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>– (41:00)                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does the media reveal the folly of humanity?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop questions through contexts             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Personal — How does an artist's practice reflect the influences of their life and experiences?                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Candid image as a pure expression of human nature; experimental approaches with self-portraiture, shadows, lighting</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Contemporary — How is meaning and significance of past artworks challenged when viewed through a lens of 21st century ideas and issues?                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Privacy of individuals with contemporary photography techniques; photographer as observer, critic, documenter, voyeur</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Cultural — How does the artwork communicate about the influence of society and the time when it was created?                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation of society, culture; representation of figures, landscapes and relationships; influences of developing photographic style and form</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Formal — How do materials, techniques, application, skills or display influence the impact and interpretation of artworks?                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expression in black-and-white photography; technique and camera allowing the artist to realise her intentions; use of reflections, shadows, framing, posture, expression, distortion, intentional vs. accidental.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Resource	Unit 3: Investigation — Stimulus sample A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask what techniques the filmmaker uses to capture the character of Vivian Maier and those who tell her story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– discovery</li> <li>– interpretation</li> <li>– secret identity</li> <li>– cultural background</li> <li>– violence/obsession/mental illness</li> <li>– termination of employment</li> <li>– living alone</li> <li>– death (old lady in the park).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Develop inquiry questions such as:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the evidence left by a person communicate an understanding of the individual?</li> <li>• How does the photographer capture the self-portrait?</li> <li>• What do photographers' self-portraits reveal about themselves and their surroundings?</li> <li>• How close can a photographer come into the space of a stranger?</li> </ul>
<b>Develop more inquiry questions about:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• photographic technique</li> <li>• artist inspiration and intention</li> <li>• contextual influences</li> <li>• the 'selfie' as an art form</li> <li>• obsessions</li> <li>• narrative structure in film</li> <li>• the folly of humanity</li> <li>• the artist as observer of society and culture</li> <li>• assumptions about identity</li> <li>• secrets and identity</li> <li>• compulsion</li> <li>• fear, threat and violence</li> <li>• intentional vs. accidental representation</li> <li>• photography vs. moving image</li> <li>• anonymity of the artist</li> <li>• fake identity.</li> </ul>

Resource	Unit 3: Investigation — Stimulus sample B
<b>Stimulus</b>	Briët K (dir.) 2016, <i>Smoke That Travels</i> (documentary), USA. Written and directed by Kayla Briët, this documentary (13:00 minutes), is a personal exploration about preservation of culture and the artist's identity.
<b>Source</b>	This documentary is available online: <i>Smoke That Travels</i> (2016), <a href="http://www.vimeo.com/189570347">www.vimeo.com/189570347</a>
<b>Summary</b>	This award-winning short film is the product of the young artist's investigation of her culture through a personal inquiry question: 'What happens when a story is forgotten?' The film is both personal documentary and expressive in style. The artist presents interviews, archival footage, cultural song and dance, text and personal commentary.

Resource	Unit 3: Investigation — Stimulus sample B
<p><b>Learning activities and inquiry questions developed through context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Smoke That Travels</i> 2016 documentary</li> <li>– Kayla Briët's 2016 TED Talk, <i>Why do I make art? To build time capsules for my heritage</i>, <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-ONUFFt2qM">www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-ONUFFt2qM</a> (5:56 minutes). In this presentation, Kayla Briët talks about her work and her motivation to make <i>Smoke That Travels</i>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• After viewing both films, discuss and research through analysis, interpretation and experimentation, ideas and issues raised by the following contexts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Personal — How does an artist's practice reflect the influences of their life and experiences? How does an artist use symbols, metaphors and expression to communicate personal stories, thoughts, feelings, philosophies and ideas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider how the film was generated from the artist's inquiry question: 'What happens when a story is forgotten?' (2:03), which she says was stimulated by her concern that her native heritage could be lost.</li> <li>▪ How would you answer this question in relation to your own personal stories, thoughts, feelings, philosophies and ideas?</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Contemporary — How do artists communicate or provoke ideas about current issues and concerns and challenge established philosophies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The artist's father says, 'Today as an American Indian, we struggle with keeping language alive, keeping true culture and customs alive.' (9:24)</li> <li>▪ How does this relate to your experiences and your own culture?</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Cultural — How have historical or contemporary events contributed to the meaning of the artwork? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The artist talks about the cultural influences on her upbringing. Her mother is Dutch–Indonesian and Chinese with immigrant parents, and her father is Ojibwe and an enrolled tribal member of the Prairie Band's Potawatomi Tribe in north-eastern Kansas, USA.</li> <li>▪ What cultural, social and historical influences have you had in your life that have made you who you are today?</li> <li>▪ Through travelling with this film, the artist met Indigenous people in other countries who share similar experiences to her own. Her conversations and research increased her knowledge and understanding about how other people struggle to preserve and pass on language and culture to future generations.</li> <li>▪ In what ways do you participate in and gain knowledge about your cultural heritage? How does your story compare to cultures not your own?</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Formal — How do formal elements and principles contribute to the meanings and messages in the artwork? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Smoke That Travels</i> is constructed from interviews, archival footage, text, personal video, voice-over commentary, and the artist's music compositions.</li> <li>▪ How has the artist combined visual imagery, sound and movement to represent her culture, communicate her knowledge and express her concerns?</li> <li>▪ What visual imagery and elements, audio and other expressive or cultural forms communicate your heritage, personal story, values or beliefs?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Resource	Unit 3: Investigation — Stimulus sample C
<b>Stimulus</b>	Artist case study: Patricia Piccinini
<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piccinini, P 2018, <i>Curious Affection</i> (exhibition) QAGOMA Brisbane.</li> <li>• Zeccola, C 2016 (dir.), <i>A Dark Fairytale</i> (documentary), 12 February 2017 (TV broadcast) ABC TV.</li> <li>• <i>Patricia Piccinini</i>, <a href="http://www.patriciapiccinini.net">www.patriciapiccinini.net</a>.</li> <li>• Art Gallery of South Australia 2011, 'Patricia Piccinini: Education resource', Education &gt; Resources &gt; Past Exhibitions, <a href="https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/Piccinini20online20resource.5753a67.pdf">https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/Piccinini20online20resource.5753a67.pdf</a>.</li> <li>• Tasmanian Museum &amp; Art Gallery 2009, 'Patricia Piccinini Evolution interpretative resource', Learning and discovery &gt; Resources &gt; Online resources &gt; Archive &gt; Art and Decorative Arts, <a href="http://www.tmag.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/66681/Patricia_Piccinini_-_Education_kit.pdf">www.tmag.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/66681/Patricia_Piccinini_-_Education_kit.pdf</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b>	Contemporary Australian artist Patricia Piccinini works in sculpture, video, installation, photography and drawing. She creates work that overlaps art, science, technology and fantasy. Her imagined creatures are sometimes confronting and invite questions on humanity, ethics and our future.
<b>Learning activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View and discuss the artist's body of work and students' personal reactions.</li> <li>• Analyse and interpret artworks through the contemporary, cultural, personal and formal contexts.</li> <li>• Consider multiple themes presented through the artist's body of work, such as the impact of science and biotechnology, contemporary ideas of family and relationships, anthropomorphism of machines.</li> <li>• Use presented themes to imagine and manipulate portraiture and representations of familiar objects.</li> <li>• Research a contemporary or historical scientific theory and apply this new knowledge as ideas and representations in experimental artworks.</li> </ul>
<b>Inquiry questions to investigate artist's practice and generate individual inquiry questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What scientific knowledge does Piccinini access and reference in her artworks?</li> <li>• What ethical issues do Piccinini's artworks raise?</li> <li>• What manufacturing technologies does Piccinini make use of to create artworks that exploit reality?</li> <li>• What does Piccinini explore and communicate about the human experience through her artwork?</li> <li>• What is the overlap between art, technology, psychology, imagination and reality?</li> </ul>

# Generate a focus for the body of work

The purpose of IA1 is to generate a focus for the body of work. The stimulus and the inquiry question are the starting point for the body of work journey. The focus answers the inquiry question and defines the direction of further inquiry, artworks and intended meaning.

## Examples

The following two examples of an individualised inquiry question and the student-directed focus are in response to the same stimulus.

The following sample is an unedited authentic student response produced with permission. Any identifying features have been redacted from the response. It may contain errors and/or omissions that do not affect its overall match to the characteristics indicated.

- **How much external control is required by artists to express their ideas?**

The focus of my body of work will be about the relationship and balance between external artistic control, materials, and the hidden laws of nature. Through an exploration of control and lack thereof, I intend to create work where resolution is found within the uncontrolled nature of my raw materials. A suggestion of control may be implemented through organised arrangements or patterns within the uncontrolled works. Aligning with the philosophy of Gutai, employing simple materials and pushing limitations, the boundaries between traditional and abstract art becomes unimportant. The debate over whether an artwork is representational or abstract becomes irrelevant as the focus is on the materiality. The innate quality of the materials will become the fundamental subject matter of my work.

(See IA1 high-level annotated sample response 1: Investigation — inquiry phase 1 (15%) 1)

- **Can the landscape be personified and become a visual metaphor for personal experience?**

The Chillagoe environment triggered a strong personal reaction in me. It began an investigation into how I could communicate to audiences the psychological connections and associations that I made with this landscape. This has become my focus; to explore the idea of the landscape as a visual metaphor that contains a much deeper reflection on my past and specifically the dramatic terrain of my family life.

(See IA1 high-level annotated sample response 2: Investigation — inquiry phase 1 (15%) 1)



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