Significant events 

Unit overview

Students look at artworks that record and interpret Australian history. They discuss how artists create points of view in the way subject matter is organised and how colour and texture has been used. The students make drawings, prints and paintings that represent historical events and Australian icons.

Subject matter

People, objects, places and spaces.

Forms

Drawing, painting, printmaking.

Duration

5 to 8 weeks.

Resources

Image

* [Ned Kelly paintings, Sidney Nolan](https://web.archive.org/web/20100423171026/http:/www.ironoutlaw.com/html/gallery.html)
* View of East Side of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, George Raper (consider also images of Sydney Cove by John Eyre, Jacob Janssen, Conrad Martens and Thomas Watling)
* [Edge of the Trees, Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley](http://www.janetlaurence.com/edge-of-the-trees/)
* Images of the First Government House and the Union Jack
* Pictures of flags representing different companies

Beyond the frame

* [View upon the Nepean River at the Cow Pastures, NSW, Joseph Lycett, image no.22](http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=34528)
* [The Meat Queue, Max Dupain, image no.8](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/119.1976/)
* [Manly Beach – Summer is here, Ethel Carrick Fox, image no.4](http://johnmcdonald.net.au/2011/ethel-carrick-e-phillips-fox/)
* [Manly Beach - Five Girls on Longboards, Ray Leighton, image no.20](http://blogs.sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/surfcity/?paged=2)
* [McMahon’s Point Ferry, Streeton, image no.28](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=81092)

Other

* acrylic paint
* brushes
* art paper
* magazines for collage images
* coloured paper squares
* screens for printing, printing inks and squeegees
* fabric off-cuts
* scissors
* needles and thread or sewing machine

Outcomes and indicators

Making

VAS3.1 – investigates subject matter in an attempt to represent likenesses of things in the world.

* Explores subject matter from particular viewpoints including issues, activities and events.
* Uses symbols suited to the interpretation of different kinds of subject matter.

VAS3.2 – makes artworks for different audiences assembling materials in a variety of ways.

* Makes artworks for a certain purpose, site or event.

Appreciating

VAS3.3 – acknowledges that audiences respond in different ways to artworks and that there are different opinions about the value of artworks.

* Identifies some reasons why artworks are made, e.g. the artist’s personal interest, a work commissioned for a site, a work made to commemorate an event in a community
* Recognises that an artist may have a different view to an audience about the meaning of a work.

VAS3.4 – communicates about the ways in which subject matter is represented in artworks.

* Recognises how concepts and the forms of artworks shape the way in which subject matter is represented
* Discusses the artist’s intention and the use of techniques in selected work.

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Learning experience 1

Appreciating artworks

1. Look at the images:

View upon the Nepean River at the Cow Pastures, Lycett.

McMahon’s Point Ferry, Streeton.

Manly Beach – Summer is Here, Carrick Fox.

The Meat Queue, Dupain.

Manly Beach – Five Girls on Longboards, Leighton.

* What is the form of each work (e.g. painting, photograph, etc)?
* What do you think is the function of each work? Why did the artist create or record that particular scene?
* What is the artist saying about the people, the time and/or the place?

1. Discuss how artworks can be a record of places, people and events and also reflect a particular point of view.

* What particular view of history does each work give?

Note – artists can represent a specific view of history, representing places, people and events in a way to give the audience a particular impression.

1. Determine the approximate dates of each image and order them chronologically.
2. Look closely at The Meat Queue and Five Girls on Longboards

* What images or objects in the photographs indicate the period?

Note – discuss clothing, hairstyles etc.

Extension

1. Look at View of East Side of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson by George Raper.
2. Discuss how the objects, buildings and symbols inform the viewer about early European settlement.

Note – give details of date, media and dimensions. Explain that the painting is made by a European settler and that this might be reflected in the way the scene is represented.

1. Look at Edge of the Trees by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley.
2. This work is referred to as an installation.

* What is an installation?
* What images, symbols, objects, etc inform the viewer about early settlement?
* Which groups of people are referred to in this installation?
* What information are we given about their lifestyles?

Note – give details of date, media and dimensions. Edge of the Trees is an installation on the forecourt of the Museum of Sydney. It consists of 29 wood, sandstone and steel pillars and oxide, hair, shells, bones, ash, seeds, spinifex and honey. There is also the recorded sound of Koori voices and cut-out receptacles in the poles containing archaeological fragments from the old Government House.

1. How do View of East Side of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson and Edge of the Trees differ in their interpretation of early settlement?

Note – for more information about Edge of the Trees by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, refer to the following:

* [Sculpture magazine – Australian women exploring the landscape](https://web.archive.org/web/20050404152106/http:/sculpture.org:80/documents/scmag99/sept99/austral/austral.htm)
* [Interview with Janet Laurence](https://web.archive.org/web/20050306035056/www.artwrite.cofa.unsw.edu.au/0020/2020_pages/Salvestro_Janet_Laurence.html)
* The book Edge of the Trees by Dinah Dysart (Historic Houses Trust Publication 2000. ISBN: 0 949753 71 8).

Learning experience 2

Making collages representing viewpoints of Australian identity

1. Look at images of First Government House and the Union Jack (British flag) which are symbols of early European settlement in Australia.
2. Discuss other objects which could be symbols of early European settlement (1788-1820). Select a number of symbols to depict the idea of the period.

Note – record these symbols.

1. Draw, paint or cut from newspapers and magazines, examples of the symbols.
2. Arrange and attach these onto a surface (cardboard, paper, etc).

Extension:

1. Incorporate sketched or photocopied images of early settlement into the artwork.

Note – images photocopied onto transparencies can be incorporated into layering of the artwork.

Learning experience 3

Designing a new Australian flag

1. Refer to different examples of flag designs.
2. Discuss the different symbols and colours that represent different countries.
3. Discuss symbols for an Australian flag, e.g. objects, things, colours, shapes.
4. In groups of 3–4 students, plan a design for the new flag. Keep the shapes simple and limit the colours.
5. The design can be drawn, collaged (using cutout shapes of paper and/or fabric) or screen-printed.

Note – if screen printing, cut a separate stencil for each colour. Overlaying two colours can produce a third colour if the ink is transparent enough.

Appreciating – reflecting

1. Display the designs. Discuss the effectiveness of designs in relation to the intentions of each group.

Learning experience 4

Appreciating artworks

1. Refer to one of Sidney Nolan’s Ned Kelly paintings.
2. Discuss the story of Ned Kelly.

* How has the artist used his imagination in representing the Ned Kelly story?
* How has the artist presented Kelly?
* What ideas is the artist expressing about the event?
* Is the artist sympathetic?
* What type of feeling or atmosphere do the colours give the artwork?

Note – refer to different interpretations of Kelly and his actions (hero or villain). Refer to distorted figures, use of colour, changed scale and unexpected groupings.

Making paintings about historic figures

1. Identify other historic (Australian) figures.

Note – record historic figures.

1. Create a painting about Ned Kelly or another historic figure, placing him or her in an environment.
2. Use a variety of textures and layering to create the landscape, e.g. make rubbings with crayons on the paper surface then paint over with watery paint.

Appreciating – reflecting

1. Write a poem about the figures depicted in each of the artworks.