Main Topic: Arts
Sub Topic: Visual Arts

Outcome 1
*Visual Arts Ideas*

Students use creative processes and cultural understandings to explore and develop ideas.

Outcome 2
*Visual Arts Production*

Students use skills, techniques, processes, conventions and technologies to create art works appropriate to audience, purpose and context.

Outcome 3
*Responses to Visual Arts*

Students use their critical, social, cultural and aesthetic understandings to respond to, reflect on, and evaluate Visual Arts works

Outcome 4
*Visual Arts in Society*

Students understand the role of Visual Arts in society

**Ideas for teaching units in Visual Arts from an Aboriginal perspective**

- If possible have the students visit rock carvings in their natural settings. If this is not possible view pictures of traditional rock art. Students to look at the art work and discuss what meaning the work may hold.

- Students to investigate the different forms of traditional expression such as carving on rock and painting on bark.
• Students to compare the differing styles of engravings and paintings found throughout Australia. Students to note that each of these groups had their own languages, country, legends and ceremonies.

• Students to investigate the belief that not all art work was the creation of human artists. According to certain beliefs Aboriginal people have been in Australia since its beginning, its creation. This is sometimes referred to as the Dreaming. The spirit ancestors who created the world also created sacred pictures and made it the responsibility of various people to take care of these. Is there an equivalent in Western society?

• Students study some art work of the creation spirits. If possible have the work interpreted by an appropriate Elder.

• Discuss with students why rock paintings are still important to Aboriginal people today? Using headings such as
  ○ Symbolic significance
  ○ Major link to the past
  ○ Part of Aboriginal heritage
  ○ Record of Aboriginal history
  ○ Source of identity to present generations.

• Students to investigate techniques employed in rock engraving, such as:
  ○ Abrading – removing part of the rock surface by rubbing
  ○ Pecking - removing part of the rock surface by hitting with a stone or other object.
• Students investigate the different coloured ochres used in traditional paintings. These were premonitory: reds, browns, yellows, blacks and whites. Did any of the colours have a particular ingredient? What would have been the source for these colours? Was trading involved? Does all ochre come from rocks? Did Aboriginal people process the ochre to change its colour and if so how?

• One technique for applying paint to rock surfaces was a stencilled design where the paint was blown from the mouth. Have students make stencilled designs using only natural products.

• Some old paintings on rocks give the stories of the first Aboriginal contact with the Europeans. Students to investigate these pictures making a list of the types of objects such as boats, guns and people. Do these pictures portray the feelings these Aboriginal people had towards the visitors?

• Students study the style of painting known as X-ray where the pictures show internal features such as the skeleton, heart, lungs and other organs.

• Traditional rock carvings deteriorate over a period of time due to influences such as wind, sun, rain, fire, dust, animals, insects and people. Students investigate the different methods being used, found through extensive research, to protect these surfaces.

• Aboriginal Art covers a wide spectrum including painting on leaves, wood carving, rock carving, sculpture and ceremonial clothing, as well as artistic embellishments found on weaponry and tools. Students investigate examples of these and attempt to replicate ideas.
• Traditional Aboriginal Art is an important component of the system of restricted knowledge. At a metaphysical level it is a way of recording events and communicating with the spirit world. A traditional picture of a creation spirit is not simply a picture of that spirit but is in fact a manifestation of the spirit. This implies that the spirit resides in the painting and dictates how the painting can be handled. Discuss the importance of this with students and compare this to any western ideology. For example, would this be comparable to an image of Mother Mary?

• The concept that the depiction of a piece of art is owned by a person or a member of a group and cannot be painted by anyone else may be difficult for members of a western class to understand. Discuss the concept of ownership of a story and the importance that this ownership for Aboriginal people is maintained. What can be accomplished by governments in terms of copy right and us as members of the wider community.

• Perhaps the most notable case involving Aboriginal copyright occurred when one of the Aboriginal artist David Malangi’s designs was produced on the Australian one dollar note. Discuss the history of this event and its importance in protecting Aboriginal copyright.

• Watch the ABC Message Stick episode Who Paintin’ Dis Wandjina and discuss the concerns that arise when a graffiti artist is found depicting sacred images from the Kimberley in public spaces in Perth. Investigate further http://www.derbytourism.com.au/pages/aboriginal-art

• Investigate the work of prominent contemporary Aboriginal artists.
• Traditional Aboriginal paintings on bark are now regarded as examples of fine art and authentic pieces are commanding high prices in international art markets. Students to investigate examples of this work and invite an Aboriginal artist to produce some original pieces of their own for observation and discussion.

• Contemporary Aboriginal art predominately uses canvas as the medium. A great deal of Central Desert work gives bird’s eye view of the landscape and often tells a traditional Dreaming story. Investigate examples of this with students using this style to depict local area and satellite photographs.

• The history of dot painting is interesting and very little known. It is generally accepted that ‘dot painting’ began in the 1970’s when Papunya Tula artists used dots to modify their previous picture in an effort to cover over restricted images. The most famous artist of this medium is Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. Students can collect information on this style of art and its history by watching the DVD Mr Patterns. There is a Teachers’ Guide available for this documentary.

• Investigate the work of the ‘carpetbaggers’. That is, exploitative dealers who have sought to profit from the success of the Aboriginal art movement. An excellent resource for this is a story on ABC radio about the call for the ACCC to investigate the Aboriginal art industry.
  
  http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2006/s1592655.htm

Resources


For an explanation of Aboriginal Art Culture
http://www.aboriginalartshop.com/aboriginal-art.html

To see a collection of Western Australian Aboriginal Art on Display at the University of Western Australia
http://www.berndt.uwa.edu.au/

Examples of desert landscapes using ‘birds eye view’
http://www.molloygallery.com/about.aspx

Call for the ACCC to investigate the Aboriginal art industry.  http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2006/s1592655.htm

History and summary in Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Aboriginal_art