



ART
GALLERY
NSW

PATHS TO ABSTRACTION

1867–1917

26 JUNE – 19 SEPTEMBER 2010
ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

DA VINCI PROJECT
EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT

DA VINCI PROJECT SUPPLEMENT

STARTING WITH ART

OVERVIEW

The *Looking and Making* activities in this section are specifically designed for K–6 and some 7–12 students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, and include discussion, art-making, role-play and the use of sensory materials.

The *Pre-visit* and *Post-visit* activities aim to provide students with pre-exhibition familiarity and post-exhibition reinforcement to support understandings of, and engagements with, the artworks. *In the exhibition* activities aim to link classroom investigations to the original art objects on display within the exhibition.

This concrete and sensory approach to the looking at and the making of artworks can offer something to students of all ages and abilities and as such teachers of all students may find relevant ideas in these activities.

HOT ART (Higher order thinking skills)

OVERVIEW

The investigation, writing and research activities in this section are specifically designed for Stage 3 and Stage 4 gifted and talented students and support the development of meta-cognition through critical thinking, problem solving, the generation of ideas and evaluation.

The *Pre-visit* activities aim to provide teachers and students with a greater understanding of the artists and artworks in their historical and cultural context prior to the exhibition experience. *Post-visit* activities will enable students to synthesise their knowledge, reinforce the experience of the exhibition and support their understanding of the artists, history and ideas at the turn of the 20th century that led to abstraction in art.

PRE-VISIT RESEARCH

Stage 3 & 4 Visual Arts/HSIE

Abstraction

‘This exhibition explores the paths travelled by artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who as they moved from their origins in representation towards abstraction, created the conditions and opportunities for the revelations and revolutions of the art and of the Western world during the 20th century.’

‘...if we do accept the notion that every work of art is, to a varying degree, a construct of the imagination, then those journeys to the non-figurative are readily comprehended.’

Discuss the meaning of these two excerpts from the foreword by Edmond Capon, director of the Art Gallery of NSW, for the *Paths to Abstraction 1867–1917* catalogue.

Debate this question: ‘Abstract art is better than representative art at reflecting human perception’.
Create a negative and affirmative team.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler
Nocturne in grey and silver, the Thames, c1873

oil on canvas, 44.7 x 60.3cm

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1947

James Abbott McNeill Whistler
Nocturne in grey and silver, the Thames, c1873

oil on canvas, 44.7 x 60.3cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1947

STARTING WITH ART

Looking and making activities

PRE-VISIT

Look at an image of this painting. Is it daytime or night? How can you tell what time of the day it is? **Imagine** walking along the Thames River. What you would see, hear and smell?

Find the Thames on a map of London. **Search** for images of the river in the day and night. **Compare** its appearance in the different light.

Imagine meeting the artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler while he was painting this work. **Write** a story about this meeting.

Write a description of a boat ride down the Thames.

IN THE EXHIBITION

Is this a quiet or loud painting? **Imagine** the sounds you would hear if you were to float into the painting.

Find other paintings of water scenes in the exhibition. **List** three things that are different and three that are the same. **Imagine** these water scenes using all your senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. **Explain** your sensory response to each work.

Choose your favourite artwork in the exhibition. **Explain** why you like this work to your classmate.

POST-VISIT

Compose, play and record two pieces of music to accompany this painting, using percussion instruments. **Perform** the music in class and ask the audience which piece best suits the painting.

Visit a river, creek or pond in your local area. **Observe** how light reflects on the surface of the water. **Notice** if there is movement in the water. **Consider** the colours you would use to paint the reflections and ripples. **Use** a digital camera to document the water scene.

Paint your own water scene in a similar style to Whistler's. **Think up** a musical title for your painting.

HOT ART

Investigation, writing and research activities

PRE-VISIT

Write a one-page biography of James Abbott McNeill Whistler. **Include** information about his family's relocation to St Petersburg, Russia.

Research works of Whistler's that have music references in their titles, including *Symphony in white, no III, Arrangements in blue and silver, Harmony in grey and gold and Nocturne: black and gold – the fire wheel*. How does the subject matter in these paintings relate to their titles?

IN THE EXHIBITION

Locate three Whistler paintings in the exhibition. **Write** the title and date of each work. **Draw** small sketches of the compositions. **Consider** the musical references in the titles of his works. **Discuss** how the title relates to the meaning of the work. **Find** works of other artists in the exhibition that have titles related to music.

POST-VISIT

Paint a series of small, semi-abstract paintings on paper based on the Whistler artworks from the exhibition. **Play** music while you are painting. **Exhibit** the work in your classroom. **Write** titles for the paintings using references that relate to music that inspires you. **Display** your research on Whistler in your exhibition.

DA VINCI PROJECT



Paul Cézanne

Banks of the Marne c1888

oil on canvas, 65 x 81.3 cm

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 2008 with funds provided by the Art Gallery of New South Wales Foundation, the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, and donors to the Masterpiece Fund in joint celebration of the Foundation's 25th anniversary and Edmund Capon AM OBE's 30th anniversary as Director of the Gallery

Paul Cézanne

Banks of the Marne c1888

oil on canvas, 65 x 81.3 cm

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 2008 with funds provided by the Art Gallery of New South Wales Foundation, the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, and donors to the Masterpiece Fund in joint celebration of the Foundation's 25th anniversary and Edmund Capon AM OBE's 30th anniversary as Director of the Gallery

STARTING WITH ART

Looking and making activities

PRE-VISIT

Cézanne is a well-known French artist. **Point** out France on a map. In class talk about the world Cézanne lived in. **Find** out if there were cars, trains, telephones or television invented when he was a boy. Would you like to live in Cézanne's time? **Explain** your reasons.

Describe what is in the foreground, middle ground and background in the painting. **Imagine** rowing the boat to the other side of the river. What is the weather like on this day? **Picture** what you would see and do on the other side.

Find the Marne River on a map of France. **Research** the environment, architecture and the customs and food of this region. **List** reasons why many artists and tourists have been attracted to northern France.

IN THE EXHIBITION

Stand in front of *Banks of the Marne* in the exhibition. **Observe** the surface of the painting. **List** the colours you can see. **Describe** the brushstrokes. **Think** about the size and type of brush Cézanne might have used. **Role-play** Cézanne applying paint to the canvas. How long do you think it took to create this painting?

Is the painting smaller or larger than you expected? Do you think Cézanne could have carried this canvas to the Marne to paint in front of this view? Could you carry a canvas this size? What other equipment would Cézanne have needed to paint this canvas?

What type of frame does this painting have?
Compare the frame to others in the exhibition.

POST-VISIT

Research other artworks by Cézanne, such as his still-life, portrait and landscape paintings. **Notice** how he uses individual strokes of paint to build up the image. **Experiment** with painting a landscape using brushstrokes of colour.

Explore your school environment using a view-finder. **Describe** what you can see at different angles. **Sketch** one of these views. **Title** your drawing and exhibit it in class.

Photograph your local environment at different times of the day using a digital camera. **Print** and pin up the photos in class. **Create** a painting in the style of Cézanne based on these images.

Write a story about visiting the exhibition.
Illustrate your story.

HOT ART

Investigation, writing and research activities

PRE-VISIT

Research and write a paragraph about the artist Paul Cézanne and Paris in the 1880s.

Choose two of the people who influenced Cézanne during his life and create a PowerPoint presentation about them, making reference to how they influenced him to pursue art as a career and way of life.

Major exhibitions have been held in Australia over the past ten years that have included paintings by Cézanne. **Choose** two of these significant exhibitions and **explain** how this artist has influenced 20th century art practice.

IN THE EXHIBITION

Locate *Banks of the Marne* and *At the water's edge* c1890 in the exhibition. **Compare** and contrast colour, composition, brushstrokes and the degree of abstraction in these two Cézanne paintings.

POST-VISIT

Photograph a series of landscapes or urban settings and transfer them to a computer. **Manipulate** the images using software, breaking up the picture plane and playing with the tone and colours to create Cézanne-like artworks. **Choose** one work by each student to publish in an art magazine format. **Create** several copies and distribute them throughout the school community.

DA VINCI PROJECT



Wassily Kandinsky
Study for 'Painting with white border' (Moscow) 1913

watercolour, gouache, ink, 39 x 35 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1982
© Wassily Kandinsky/ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy, Sydney.

Wassily Kandinsky

Study for 'Painting with white border' (Moscow) 1913

watercolour, gouache, ink, 39 x 35 cm

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1982

© Wassily Kandinsky/ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy, Sydney.

STARTING WITH ART

Looking and making activities

PRE-VISIT

How is Study for 'Painting with white border' (Moscow) different to the other artworks in this education kit? Do you think Kandinsky carefully planned this painting?

Discuss in class.

Listen to music in class and talk about how it makes you feel. **Discuss** how Kandinsky wanted to make artworks that gave you a similar feeling to listening to music.

Find images of paintings by Kandinsky. **Talk** about how these artworks are similar or different.

IN THE EXHIBITION

Locate this painting in the exhibition. **Record** all the colours you can see. Do the colours overlap? Do you think Kandinsky painted this quickly or slowly?

Describe what you can see in this painting. **List** the type of lines you can see. How does this artwork make you feel?

Look at the works in this room. **Find** your favourite artwork. **Explain** why you are drawn to this artwork.

POST-VISIT

Imagine how Kandinsky created this work. **Write** the steps Kandinsky took to create this artwork.

Listen to music and create a series of watercolour paintings.

Experiment with creating mixed media artworks on paper. **Use** watercolours and collage then add bold lines of black to define areas you want to highlight.

Talk about visiting the exhibition in class. **Think** about the artwork you liked the most. **Complete** a painting of your favourite work from memory.

HOT ART

Investigation, writing and research activities

PRE-VISIT

What is striking – even today – about the writings and letters of Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc from around 1912 (the time of the Blaue Reiter Almanac) is their realisation of a great revolutionary era unfolding, in which they have a pioneering role.

[Annegret Hoberg, *Paths to Abstraction 1867–1917*, p 71]

Research the life of Wassily Kandinsky, his friend Franz Marc, the Blaue Reiter group and the Blaue Reiter Almanac.

IN THE EXHIBITION

Locate two of your favourite Kandinsky paintings or works on paper in the exhibition. **Write** down the title and date of each work. **Describe** how each composition represents or references spirituality, music, colour and abstraction. **Draw** one of the works.

POST-VISIT

Compose pieces of music based on Kandinsky paintings in small groups in the classroom, using found objects and voice to make the sounds. **Perform** the works in front of a projection of each Kandinsky painting.

Paint a canvas inspired by one of Kandinsky's paintings or drawings using your own subject matter and music as inspiration.

TEACHER NOTES

This Da Vinci Project education kit supplement has been written to highlight key artworks, ideas and activities for students with a disability and for gifted and talented students, to be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition *Paths to Abstraction 1867–1917*.

This resource has been designed to complement the *Paths to Abstraction 1867–1917* education kit, which will also be of value to Da Vinci Project education audiences.

Available at www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/ed/resources/ed_kits

Produced by the Public Programs Department
© Art Gallery of New South Wales 2010
Art Gallery of NSW, Art Gallery Road,
The Domain, Sydney 2000, Australia
pp@ag.nsw.gov.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Da Vinci Project: Starting With Art activities written by Danielle Gullotta, coordinator, K–6 school and access programs
Da Vinci Project: HOT art activities written by Sherryl Ryan, coordinator, gifted and talented programs

Design: Mark Trzopek

Production: Cara Hickman

Access Partner **Clayton Utz**

Cover:

Kasimir Malevich *House under construction*
1915–16 (detail) oil on canvas, 97 x 44.5 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra, purchased 1974

DA VINCI PROJECT

PATHS TO ABSTRACTION 1867–1917

PROGRAMS

Note: Limited student numbers per hour

• **Starting with art: Understanding abstraction:**
A workshop tour for students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities which includes discussion, art-making, role-play and the use of sensory materials. Pre- and post-visit activities are provided.

Years K–12 • 1 hour • 8 students or less • free with student exhibition entry

• **HOT ART: HOT Abstraction** An in-depth discussion tour for gifted and talented students including a one-hour practical workshop. Pre- and post-visit activities are provided.

Years 5–8 • 2 hours • Wednesdays • \$270 per group of 15 or less (includes exhibition entry)

BOOKINGS

Bookings for all access and gifted and talented Programs essential. Three weeks' notice required. For further information and bookings contact the coordinator, access programs or Co'ordinator gifted and talented programs.

tel: (02) 9225 1740

fax: (02) 9225 1842

email: pp@ag.nsw.gov.au

For further information about Da Vinci programs and other access and gifted and talented programs offered year round please visit:

Years K–6

www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/ed/k6/access

Years 7–12

www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/ed/712/access