

The Visual Arts

An Introduction

The Visual Arts include a wide array of media, tools and processes. The areas most people associate with the visual arts include drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture and photography. There are, however, many other areas that fall entirely or partially within the visual arts, ranging from design areas such as architecture and the built environment, fiber and clothing to the folk arts and from crafts to video animation. One of the challenges to art educators as they design local curricula is to select appropriately among the many media available, choosing those that provide the best vehicle for their students to meet local program goals and objectives by creating and responding to art. In other words, curriculum objectives should drive the choice of media, rather than vice versa. Students need breadth, through experiencing and working with a variety of media, and depth, through mastering at least a few media sufficiently that they are able to use them to express or communicate their ideas and feelings. Through those experiences, they also need to gain insight into the enormous body of visual work that has been created throughout the centuries, from early cave paintings to the present.

Parents, preschools, and elementary schools should offer young children opportunities to experiment with and develop skills in using a variety of materials to create visual images. Children in Grades K-8 should be encouraged to use and extend their visual imaginations through creating their own art work and studying others' work, in required art classes under the guidance of expert art teachers. All teachers should encourage students to draw on the skills they develop in art classes to express their ideas in visual form, such as by illustrating whole-language books, designing figures and illustrations to enhance their social studies or science presentations, and designing and decorating their classrooms and school environment. Students should be encouraged to apply their visual understandings across the curriculum as well, such as by identifying and interpreting the wealth of visual symbols encountered in their daily lives.

By the time their required art sequence ends in grade 8, all students should be able to communicate effectively through a variety of two- and three-dimensional art media, including electronic media. High schools should offer elective sequences that continue growth in those media, as well as Advanced Placement courses in areas such as studio art and art history for advanced and highly motivated students.

Students also benefit from integrated arts experiences, i.e., those that involve more than one art form. Each of the four arts disciplines at least occasionally occurs in combination with each of the others. Dance is usually accompanied by music, and is

often inspired by a particular piece of music. Visual artists work with producers to develop costumes and scenery for works of theatre. There are various genres of musical theatre, such as opera and American Broadway musicals, that combine all four art forms. Performance art usually blends visual arts elements with theatre, and often incorporates music, media arts, and dance. Some arts teachers make reference to other art forms for instructional purposes. Music teachers often use creative movement to teach or assess rhythmic concepts, or to determine whether students understand the expressive shape of a particular passage. Drama teachers may have their students refer to art work to establish the tone and setting of theatre from different cultures and historical periods. Creators of original art work in one discipline often are inspired by work in another. For example, many works of dance choreography or music composition were inspired by the visual arts or theatre. Such connections provide rich opportunities for helping students understand the connections among the five arts disciplines, both during the learning process and when presenting multi-arts work.

The Artistic Processes for Visual Art

CREATE

[Creating in visual arts and design](#) is defined as conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work. Students engaged in the creative process generate and conceptualize artistic ideas; organize, develop and refine those ideas, and create an original work of art that communicates meaning. Creating can happen individually or collaboratively, in any media, utilizing any technique, and applying any skill or concept. Through the creative process students have the opportunity to investigate big ideas allowing for the development of innovative thinking skills and an opportunity for risk taking. Whether inspired by research, the artwork of others, discussion, materials, their surroundings, world events, their own thoughts or dreams students can explore themes and shape their artistic investigations either following or breaking with traditions or conventions.

For Creating, the [Connecticut Visual Arts Standards](#) emphasize investigation, exploration, and experimentation. Creative practices evoke deep and meaningful engagement in the visual arts. Exactly what the creative process looks and feels like will vary depending on grade-level and developmental stage. At the earliest stages, creating involves engaging in imaginative play and exploration with materials to build skills and create a work of art or design. At the advanced level students engage in experimenting, planning, and making multiple works of art and design that explore a personal meaningful theme, idea or affect social change. The creative process allows all students to organize and develop artistic ideas and refine and complete artistic works of art. Creating in art provides a vehicle for students to reflect on important aspects of life and in the process develop sensitivity to others' points of view.

PRESENT

In the context of the [Connecticut Arts Standards](#), presenting in the visual arts includes interpreting and sharing artistic work. When engaged in the process of presenting, students will be able to develop and refine artwork and artistic techniques, select, analyze and interpret, artistic works for presentation, and convey meaning through the presentation of artwork or objects. Students investigate big ideas such as, the criteria artists and curators consider when preparing for an exhibit, and how artworks, objects, and artifacts collected, preserved, and presented by museums communicate meaning and a record of social, cultural, and political experiences. Through the presenting process students consider what criteria to use when selecting works for presentation and discover how refining their work can affect its meaning for themselves and the viewer.

Presenting will look different depending on the grade level and developmental stage. In the earliest grades a student may identify reasons for saving and displaying objects, artifact, and artwork, and the places where these items may be displayed or saved. Students at the middle level may analyze and evaluate methods of preparing and presenting art based on certain criteria in addition to analyzing why and how an exhibition or collection may influence ideas, beliefs, and experiences. At the advanced high school level, students investigate, compare, and contrast methods for preserving and protecting art, curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences, and engage in critique, presenting and justifying their choices for a specific exhibit.

RESPOND

[Responding in the visual arts](#) is defined by, understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning. When students are actively engaged in responding they can investigate big aesthetic questions such as: *What is art? What makes it art? What makes good art good? What makes valuable art valuable?* Interpretations of and reactions to works of visual arts have multiple influences including but not limited to, cultural perspectives and contexts, personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs, and social powers. These all factor into the process of making meaning from and evaluating the visual arts. During the responding process students at all levels have the opportunity to perceive, analyze, and interpret the intent and meaning of work of art. They will be able to apply artistic criteria and to evaluate their own work and the works of others.

What the responding process will look like will depend upon the level of the student. In kindergarten or first grade a student may select a certain work, explain their reason for selecting that work, and interpret that work by recognizing and describing the subject matter. On the other hand a high school student at the advanced level will be able to construct evaluations of works of art based on differing sets of criteria and analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis. Through the process of responding students can gain insights into the meanings of artworks and utilize criteria to engage in the process of criticism.

CONNECT

[Connecting in the visual arts](#) is defined as relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context. The process of connecting in visual arts asks students to relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen their understanding of art and to synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences in order to make art. When engaged in the connecting process, students are able to investigate and develop an awareness of perceptions, knowledge, and experiences.

Students will see how understandings of society, culture, and history are developed through analysis of and interactions with art. Similarly to the other three processes connecting will look different depending upon the level of the student. A grade one student should be able to identify a purpose for an artwork and create art that tells a story about a life experience. At the middle level, an eighth grade student may distinguish the different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity. An advanced high school student will be able to appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the belief, values, and behaviors of a society and to synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical and personal life with art while making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

Preparation for Careers in the Visual Arts

The Connecticut Visual Arts standards provide important twenty first century skills such as problem solving and high order creative thinking. These skills are needed no matter what career path a student may take. The following is a list of visual art and related careers and jobs.

Accessory Designer	Advertising and	Construction Drafting
Advertisement Designer	Communications Director	Cabinet Maker
Advertising Photographer	Advertising Art Director	Carpenter
Aesthetician	Advertising Layout	Clothing Designer
Aerial Photography	Animator	Ceramist
Airbrush Artist/Spray	Antique Dealer	Character Designer
Painter	Art Appraiser	Commercial Artist
Airplane Designer	Art History Librarian	Computer Graphic Artist
Animator	Art History Professor	Corporate Curator
App Designer/Developer	Art Restoration	Costume Designer
Art Appraiser	Art Materials Sales	Court Room Artist
Art Critic	Art School Director	Creative Director
Art Director	Art Educator	Color Consultant
Art Historian	Art Therapist	Culinary Artist
Arts Administrator	Automotive Designer	Custom Framer
Art Conservationist	Basket Maker	Dental Technician
Art School Director	Bookbinder	Digital Illustrator
Art Supplies Retailer	Book/ebook Designers	Digital 3D Modeler
Artist Agent	Camera Operator	Display/Exhibition
Architect	Cartoonist	Planner/Designer
Art Consultant	Cartographer	Dressmaker
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Artist	Documentary Filmmaker
Architectural Illustrator	Concept Artist	Educator
	Cosmetologist	Fashion Designer

Fashion Merchandising	Mapmaker	Seamstress
Fashion Photographer	Mechanical Engineer	Shoe Designer
Film Editor	Mechanical Draftsman	Sign Painter
Fiber Artist	Medical Illustrator	Silversmith
Fine Artist	Memorial Designer	Special Effects Designer
Floral Artist	Menu Designer	Special Effects Makeup
Furniture Designer	Metal Smith	Stained Glass Designer
Food Product Designer	Museum Director/Curator	Stage/TV/Screen Designer
Folk Artist	Mural Artist	Stamp Illustrator
Gallery Owner	Neon Sign Maker	Stock Photography Seller
Game Designer	Newspaper Layout Artist	Storyboard Illustrator
Gardener	Occupational Therapist	Surface Designer
Greeting Card Designer	Online Curator	Surgeon
Glassblower	Ornament Designer	Tapestry Designer
Graphic Consultant	Package Designer	Tattoo Artist
Graphic Designer	Painter	Technical Illustrator
Graphic Novel Author	Paste-up Artist	Television/Film Producer
Golf Course Designer	Pattern Maker	Textile Designer
Lawyer	Pattern Maker Technician	Theme Park Designer
Hat Maker	Performance Artist	Tailor
Home Products Developer and Marketer	Personal Stylist	Textbook Illustrator
Ice Sculptor	Photographer	Tile Designer
Lighting Engineer	Photojournalist	Toy Designer
Illustrator	Plastic Surgeon	Typographer
Industrial Designer	Porcelain Designer	Underwater Photographer
Industrial Technologist	Portrait Photographer	University Lecturer/Professor
Interior Designer	Potter	Urban Planner/Designer
Jeweler	Press Designer Production Artist	Utensil Designer
Jewelry Designer	Prop Designer	UX Designer
Journalist	Printmaker	Video game Designer
Kinetic Artist	Puppet Artist	Visual Communications and Technology
Lace Maker	Quilter	Vendor Display Designer
Landscape Architect	Researcher	Venetian Glass Designer
Landscape Artist	Rug Designer	Wallpaper Designer
Lithographer	Restoration Artist	Watchmaker
Logo/Branding Designer	Sand Sculptor	Watercolorist
Illustrator	Scenic Designer	Weaver
Magazine Layout Designer	Scientific Graphic Illustrator	Website Designer
Make Up Artist	Sculptor	

Wedding Photographer
Window Display Artist

Wood/Metal/Plastic
Fabricator

Wood Carver/Turner
YouTube Video Creator