

Glossary for Visual Arts

The glossary for Visual Arts includes terms commonly found in Visual Arts education and for presentation and production techniques. The intent of the glossary is to promote consistent terminology when creating curriculum and assessment documents as well as communicating with stakeholders.

Aesthetics: A branch of philosophy that focuses on the nature of beauty, the nature and value of art, and the inquiry processes of human response.

Analysis: One of the steps in art criticism, analysis is discovering how the principles of design are used to organize the elements of art. In art history, analysis is the step, which determines the style and aesthetic meaning of the artwork.

Art: In the National Visual Arts Standards, the word art is used in the classificatory sense to mean “an artifact or action that has been put forward by an artist or other person as something to be experienced, interpreted, and appreciated.”

Art Criticism: Describing and evaluating the media, processes, and meanings of works of visual art; usually involves the description, analysis, and interpretation of art, as well as making comparative judgments or determination of the quality of the artwork.

Art Leadership: Refers to the function and service and/or to persons assigned to that function, who are specialists in art curriculum, assessment, and instruction, but who may or may not be certified as supervisors in visual arts.

Arts Literacy: Encompasses the paramount goal of certified visual arts educators—to instill in students the ability to make meaning and find meaning in visual products of art. Artistic literacy is the knowledge and understanding required to participate authentically in the arts, resulting in or as evidenced by fluency in the language(s) of the arts, or the ability to create, perform/produce/ present, respond, and connect through symbolic and metaphoric forms that are unique to the arts. It is embodied in specific philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that enable an artistically literate person to transfer arts knowledge, skills, and capacities to other subjects, settings, and contexts.

Artistic Processes: As used within the context of the National Core Arts Standards (refer to Part Tree) are defined as follows: Creating—Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work. Performing—Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation.

Presenting — Interpreting and sharing artistic work

Producing — Realizing and presenting artistic ideas and work

Responding—Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning

Connecting—Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

Appropriation: Intentional borrowing, copying, and use of pre-existing objects or images with little or no transformation applied to them.

Artifact: An object from a particular culture or stage of technological development.

Artist Statement: Information about context, explanations of process, descriptions of learning, related stories, reflections, or other details in a written or spoken format shared by the artist to extend and deepen understanding of his or her artwork; an artist statement can be didactic, descriptive, or reflective in nature.

Artistic Investigations: In making art, forms of inquiry and exploration; through artistic investigation artists go beyond illustrating pre-existing ideas or following directions, and students generate fresh insights—new ways of seeing and knowing.

Art-making Approaches: Diverse strategies and procedures by which artists initiate and pursue making a work.

Artwork: The outcome, product, or result of using a creative process to produce or delineate objects and/or images that are intended primarily for aesthetic purposes and to communicate ideas through visual language; any of the art forms, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, or other artistic productions.

Assessment: A systematic, formative process for determining whether or not student learning is taking place. The process of assessment is used to inform both student and teacher, and to aid in setting individual learning goals and objectives for the student.

Authentic Assessment: Assessment that reflects real-life experiences and require the student to apply what has been learned, which makes the application authentic. Such assessments use process folios, self-reflective logs, and portfolios to assess learning. Both formative and summative, authentic assessment shapes and enriches student learning and can also be used to summarize and encapsulate what was learned.

Brainstorm: Technique for the initial production of ideas or ways of solving a problem by an individual or group in which ideas are spontaneously contributed without critical comment or judgment.

Characteristic(s): Attribute, feature, property, or essential quality that can be used to describe works of art and design.

Collaboration: Joint effort of working together to explore, formulate and solve creative problems.

Conceptual: Ideas, thoughts, schemata; art arising out of conceptual experimentation that emphasizes making meaning through ideas rather than through materiality or form.

Constructed Environment: Human-made or modified spaces and places; art and design-related disciplines such as architecture, urban planning, interior design, game design, virtual environment, and landscape design shape the places in which people live, work, and play.

Contemporary Artistic Practice: Processes, techniques, media, procedures, behaviors, actions, and conceptual approaches by which an artist or designer makes work using methods that, though they may be based on traditional practices, reflect changing contextual, conceptual, aesthetic, material and technical possibilities; examples include artwork made with appropriated images or materials, social practice artworks that involve the audience, performance art, new media works, installations, and artistic interventions in public spaces.

Content: Meaning, significance, and information in a work of art.

Context: Interrelated conditions surrounding the creation and experiencing of an artwork, (the artist, viewer/audiences, time, culture, presentation, and location of the artwork's creation and reception) in which something exists or occurs.

Cultural Contexts: Ideas, beliefs, values, norms, customs, traits, practices, and characteristics shared by individuals within a group that form the circumstances surrounding the creation, presentation, preservation, and response to art.

Copyright: Form of protection grounded in the U.S. Constitution and granted by law for original works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression, covering both published and unpublished works.

Creative Commons: Copyright license templates that provide a simple, standardized way to give the public permission to share and use creative work on conditions of the maker's choice. (<http://creativecommons.org/>).

Creativity: Ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, to conceive and develop rich, original new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc., and discover unexpected connections, and invent or make new things.

Creative Process: The process of defining a problem, using knowledge and experience, creatively brainstorm, developing possibilities, putting ideas to work – in an artistic context or outcome.

Criteria: In art and design, principles that direct attention to significant aspects of a work and provide guidelines for analysis and judgment; evaluating its success.

Established Criteria: Identified principles that direct attention to significant aspects of various types of artwork in order to provide guidelines for evaluating the work; these may be commonly accepted principles that have been developed by artists, curators, historians, critics, educators and others or principles developed by an individual or group to pertain to a specific work of art or design.

- **Contemporary criteria:** Principles by which a work of art or design is understood and evaluated in contemporary contexts which, for example, include judging not necessarily on originality, but rather on how the work is re-contextualized to create new meanings.
- **Personal criteria:** Principles for evaluating art and design based on individual preferences.
- **Relevant criteria:** Principles that apply to making, revising, understanding, and evaluating a particular work of art or design that are generated by identifying the significant characteristics of a work.

Critique: Individual, collective, or collaborative reflective process by which artists or designers experience, describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate a work of art or design.

Cultural Traditions: Pattern of practices and beliefs within a societal group.

Curate: Collect, sort, and organize objects, artworks, and artifacts; preserve and maintain historical records and/or catalogue exhibits.

Curator: Person responsible for acquiring, caring for, and exhibiting objects, artworks, and artifacts.

Curriculum Document: This refers to the printed statement of the curricula, including the plan for a particular course or unit of the curriculum at any grade level.

Design: Application of creativity to planning the optimal solution to a given problem and communication of that plan visually to others.

Digital Format: Anything in electronic form including photos, images, video, audio files, or artwork created or presented through electronic means; a gallery of artwork viewed electronically through any device.

Elements of Art: The visual components of color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value; may be two- or three-dimensional, descriptive, implied, or abstract. Shape is two-dimensional, flat, or limited to height and width.

Engagement: Attentive participation in an activity.

Exhibition Narrative: Written description of an exhibition intended to educate viewers about its purpose.

Experimentation: The act, process, or practice of investigation; testing of an idea, concept, skill, principle, and/or material.

Expressive Properties: Moods, feelings, or ideas evoked or suggested through the attributes, features, or qualities of an image or work of art.

Fair Use: Limitation in copyright law which sets out factors to be considered in determining whether or not a particular use of one's work is "fair," such as the purpose and character of the use, the amount of the work used, and whether the use will affect the market for the work.

Formal and Conceptual Vocabularies: Terms, methods, concepts, or strategies used to experience, describe, analyze, plan, and make works of art and design drawn from traditional, modern, contemporary, and continually emerging sources in diverse cultures.

Formative Evaluation: Judgment of an individual's work while the work is in progress. Used to shape, guide, improve, and form the work as it advances toward completion. It is not a final judgment of the product's quality or success (see Summative Evaluation).

Genre: Category of art or design identified by similarities in form, subject matter, content, or technique.

Image: A visual representation of a person, animal, thing, idea, or concept.

Innovative Thinking: Imagining or and conceiving something new and unexpected, including fresh ideas and ways of looking at things and new approaches to old problems as well as formulating new problems.

Interdisciplinary: Any learning activity planned or conducted cooperatively by one or more members of the visual arts staff and a representative of another subject or area of learning.

Interpret: To respond to artwork by identifying the feelings, moods, and ideas communicated by the work of art. Interpretation also calls for the investigation of the influence of time and place upon the artist who created the work of art.

Materials: Substances out of which art is made or composed, ranging from the traditional to "non-art" material and virtual, cybernetic, and simulated materials.

Media Arts: Arts which incorporate electronic and digital hardware and software to create, integrate, and animate products that reflect cultural, artistic, and/or aesthetic ideas and concerns. An important component for visual arts learning in the 21st century, Media Arts includes the Moving Image, Imaging Design, Sound Design, Interactive Design, Multimedia and Intermedia, and Virtual Design (3-D, 4-D, & 5-D). [Source: National Coalition for Core Arts Standards].

Medium/Media: Mode(s) of artistic expression or communication; material or other resources used for creating art.

Narrative Artwork: A work of art whose primary purpose is to tell a story.

Play: Spontaneous engaged activity through which children learn to experience, experiment, discover, and create.

Portfolio: Actual or virtual representative collection of artworks and documentation demonstrating art and design knowledge and skills organized to reflect an individual's creative growth and artistic literacy.

Preservation: Activity of protecting, saving, and caring for objects, artifacts, and artworks through a variety of means.

Preserve: Protect, save, and care for (curate) objects, artifacts, and artworks.

Principles of Art: Balance, emphasis, movement, proportion, rhythm, unity, and variety; the means an artist uses to organize elements within a work of art.

Scope and Sequence: Provisions in the curriculum for the variety of learnings in art recommended in Part One of this document, organized for the appropriate development of learnings by the students and for the effective articulation of the developmental plan through grades K–12.

Style: Recognizable characteristics of art or design that are found consistently in historical periods, cultural traditions, schools of art, or works of an individual artist.

Subject Matter: The main focus of the artwork (e.g., the person in a portrait, natural environment in a landscape, objects in a still life).

Summative Evaluation: The concluding, final judgment of quality, success, or failure of a product based on pre-established criteria. In a classroom environment, it usually culminates in a grade for an assignment.

Technologies: Tools, techniques, crafts, systems, and methods to shape, adapt, and preserve artworks, artifacts, objects, and natural and human-made environments.

Text: That form which information can be gathered, expanding beyond the traditional notion of written language to encompass visual representations such as paintings, sculpture, diagrams, graphics, films, and maps.

Venue: Place or setting for an art exhibition, either a physical space or a virtual environment.

Visual Components: Properties of an image that can be perceived.

Visual Imagery: Group of images; images in general.

Visual Organization, Approaches, and Strategies: Design strategies such as hierarchy, consistency, grids, spacing, scale, weight, proximity, alignment, and typography choice used to create focus and clarity in a work.