Joan Ross – Pushing the Limits

**Course:** Stage 5 (elective course) Visual arts / Photographic and digital media

**Topic:** Ctrl + Alt + Shift, new perspectives in art and technology

**Lesson sequence duration:** 8 lessons

**Focus content:** Frames, conceptual framework, practice

# Overview

Joan Ross is an Australian artist working in the fields of photography, video, digital media and virtual reality. Joan Ross builds a narrative using humour and pastiche in her interdisciplinary works. Her works convey her feelings about the colonialisation of Australia and the impact this has had on Aboriginal peoples. Ross often works within the landscape genre; however, she transforms traditional colonial depictions of the land through the use of colour, symbolism and subject matter. She was awarded the Australian Centre for Moving Images (ACMI) 2018 Mordant Family VR Commission which led to the creation of the work ‘Did you ask the river?’ (2019). This artwork embraces interactive VR technologies, new technologies and explores ideas about land ownership and colonisation.

This learning sequence draws on the [‘Joan Ross – Pushing the limits’](https://vimeo.com/472548961/17c81a4a82) (00:10:32) video resource. Students interpret aspects of Ross’s artmaking practice to understand how she works across a range of new technologies to explore ideas and issues relevant to the world. They produce an extended response about how audiences respond to the works of Joan Ross, including the work ‘Did you ask the river?’ (2019) and ‘Colonial Grab’ (2015).

Students engage in artmaking activities to create a photomontage landscape that applies aspects of Joan Ross’s practice and processes and reveal the relationships between history, truth, and narrative.

## Outcomes

### Artmaking

Students will develop knowledge, understanding and skills to make artworks informed by their understanding of practice, the conceptual framework and the frames.

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| Area of content | Visual arts | Photographic and digital media |
| Conceptual framework | 5.2 makes artworks informed by their understanding of the function of and relationships between artist – artwork – world – audience. | 5.2 makes photographic and digital works informed by their understanding of the function of and relationships between artist – artwork – world –audience. |
| Frames | 5.3 makes artworks informed by an understanding of how the frames affect meaning. | 5.3 makes photographic and digital works informed by an understanding of how the frames affect meaning. |
| Representation | 5.4 investigates the world as a source of ideas, concepts and subject matter in the visual arts. | 5.4 investigates the world as a source of ideas, concepts and subject matter for photographic and digital works. |

### Critical and historical studies

Students will develop knowledge, understanding and skills to critically and historically interpret art informed by their understanding of practice, the conceptual framework and the frames.

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| Area of content | Visual arts | Photographic and digital media |
| Conceptual framework | 5.8 uses their understanding of the function of and relationships between artist – artwork – world – audience in critical and historical interpretations of art. | 5.8 uses their understanding of the function of and relationships between the artist – artwork – world – audience in critical and historical interpretations of photographic and digital works. |
| Frames | 5.9 demonstrates how the frames provide different interpretations of art. | 5.9 uses the frames to make different interpretations of photographic and digital works. |
| Representation | 5.10 demonstrates how art criticism and art history construct meanings. | 5.10 constructs different critical and historical accounts of photographic and digital works. |

[Visual Arts 7-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/visual-arts-7-10) and [Photographic and Digital Media 7-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/music-7-10) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2003, accessed on 12/03/2021

### Learning intentions

Through studying this sequence of lessons students will be able to:

* develop research and investigative skills using their Visual Arts Diary, and utilise their diary to plan and conceptualise artworks
* investigate and apply appropriate photographic and digital media conventions and activities to make art where meaning is shaped by values and beliefs about the individual, social structures and the artworld
* make artworks that demonstrate an understanding of the frames
* discuss and write about their understandings of different aspects of contemporary practice
* explain how artists interpret the world in making artworks and how they seek to represent concepts through a range of styles and approaches
* explain how critical and historical accounts provide a way to understand social conditions, perspectives and the social construction of meaning
* consider how critical and historical accounts provide a way to understand how art can represent issues related to class, gender, ethnicity, politics, science, globalisation, technology, economics and the environment.

### Cross curriculum content

Within this unit, cross curriculum content is addressed in the following ways:

#### Information and communication technologies (ICT)

Throughout the study of this unit, students will engage with a range of digital photographic practices to explore digital and contemporary technologies in their artmaking practice through work particularly in 2D and 4D forms, and in their research and investigation of critical and historical studies of art.

#### Aboriginal and Indigenous

Students can investigate how visual arts reflects and constructs beliefs and attitudes about cultural identity, and the relationships between Indigenous cultures and the world.

#### Difference and diversity

Students investigate the relationships within the conceptual framework and how personal, social and cultural differences can be examined and represented in artworks. Students can focus on conventions and innovations in the representation of ideas, beliefs and perceptions about the representation of history and the landscape through the frames and conceptual framework.

#### Environment

Students engage in artmaking practice using a range of media, within different frames and the conceptual framework to explore how the natural world is represented and how artists can create artworks that comment on the environment. Students investigate a range of relationships between artists and artworks and the natural, built and social environment.

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## Learning sequence

### Joan Ross – pushing the limits

#### Students will:

* investigate and interpret the artmaking practice of Joan Ross using the frames and conceptual framework.
* investigate the range of postmodern artmaking techniques and strategies used by Joan Ross including new technologies to engage her audience.
* understand that through the postmodern frame Joan Ross might be thought of as a social commentator.
* create a collage artwork that makes an environmental comment and demonstrates an understanding of postmodern techniques such as appropriation, juxtaposition, pastiche, humour and irony.
* demonstrate an understanding of postmodern techniques and Photoshop when making an animation that makes a comment about human impact on the environment.

#### Teacher notes

* You may like to include a demonstration of how to sketch plans for the collage artwork and annotate plans to guide student understanding.
* Students can make the collage by hand using scissors and glue and a range of collected magazines and source material provided by the teacher.
* Prior knowledge of Photoshop is recommended or the use of tutorials during class to facilitate the animation process. Teacher is advised to run through the series of steps and familiarise themselves with the process before teaching lessons.
* All activities from resource booklet should be collated in the visual arts process diary or the photographic and digital media journal.

Differentiation

* All activities from resource booklet can be modified to suit classes and lesson sequences can be divided up into more manageable steps.
* The collage task can be completed by hand with materials provided by the teacher.

#### Ongoing assessment/feedback

* Formative assessment collected throughout Artmaking and Critical and Historical activities, to be recorded in student’s Visual Art Diaries.
* Summative assessment activities (completed artworks, written responses) could be developed into formal assessment tasks.

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| Lesson | Teaching strategies | Assessment | Resources |
| Lesson 1 | **Critical and historical studies**  **Learning intention**  Investigate, discuss and interpret different aspects of the contemporary artmaking practice of Joan Ross.  **Lesson steps**   * Introduction to the artmaking practice of Joan Ross. Students are given a copy of [resource booklet](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/7-12/visual-arts/stage-4-5/ctl-alt-shift/creativearts-visualarts-resource-ctrlaltshift-joanross-resourcebooklet-s5.docx) activity 1, ‘Joan Ross conceptual framework artist – artwork’ task'. Teacher reads through the task with the students and explains that they are about to watch a video about the artist Joan Ross and that they will need to take notes using the handout. Teacher might play the video through once and then once more, stopping to allow time for note making. Students make notes under the headings and use the questions on the handout as a guide. Teacher stops the video to allow time to support note making and check understanding of new or unfamiliar words and phrases and ensures that these are added to the table. * On completion of the video, students share their notes with peers in small groups of 2-3 and add to their own summaries with new ideas. * Teacher leads a discussion that guides students to share and add to their notes – asking students to share responses to specific questions in activity 1 and checks for their understanding. * Students are then asked to continue to work in small groups to complete activity 2 a modified [Frayer diagram](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Browser?cache_id=ceb3c) using an online digital tool to define two new words identified as part of activity 1. Teacher provides a completed example Frayer diagram for the class to see. This example has a definition of appropriation, facts and characteristics and an image that provides an example. The Frayer diagram has been modified to remove the ‘non-example’ quadrant and add instead an ‘image’ quadrant so that students paste in a visual example of the new word/ concept from a Joan Ross artwork. See the example in the [resource booklet](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/7-12/visual-arts/stage-4-5/ctl-alt-shift/creativearts-visualarts-resource-ctrlaltshift-joanross-resourcebooklet-s5.docx) for activity 2. Frayer diagram definitions are submitted to the teacher digitally and later either displayed in the classroom or shared for the entire class as a combined pdf resource via digital means. * Students write a paragraph summarising their understanding of the practice of artist Joan Ross and include three words from the shared Frayer diagrams in their responses. * Finally, all students are to look over the questions that they identified in activity 1. If they have any further questions about Joan Ross they are asked to highlight them on their notes or to write them on a slip of paper to hand in at the end of the lesson for the teacher to review. | Formative assessment:  Student notes recorded Visual Arts Diary  Formative assessment:  Completed writing task in diary or journal. | [Joan Ross – pushing the limits](https://vimeo.com/472548961/17c81a4a82) (vimeo link, (00:10:31)  Joan Ross [resource booklet](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/7-12/visual-arts/stage-4-5/ctl-alt-shift/creativearts-visualarts-resource-ctrlaltshift-joanross-resourcebooklet-s5.docx).  [Frayer diagram](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Browser?cache_id=ceb3c) online digital tools and examples that can be modified as suggested in lesson steps. |
| Lesson 2 | **Critical and historical studies**  **Learning intention**  Understand that through the postmodern frame Joan Ross might be thought of as a social commentator and that she uses the techniques of appropriation, juxtaposition, parody, pastiche and irony to critique colonial values.  **Lesson steps**   * Lesson begins with teacher briefly sharing some of the questions about Joan Ross and her artworks written by students in the previous lesson. Questions that are straightforward are answered and others have been grouped into similar themes to be unpacked throughout the next few lessons. The teacher explains that today the class will be examining one artwork by Joan Ross in detail and that this will help to answer further questions about her practice. * Teacher asks students to take a new page in their art diaries and to write down all the words that they can recall that are associated with the postmodern frame. Several of the student Frayer diagram definitions that relate to postmodernism are also shared with the class with the teacher asking students to read out their own definitions. Definitions for five postmodern frame words including appropriation, juxtaposition, parody, pastiche and irony are shared with class. * Teacher explains that Joan Ross uses appropriation in many of her works including the video works [The Claiming of Things](https://schoolsnsw.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/CAVASecondaryEd/ES9Ne9Bv8-pJsaeQpa1QdmwBgBqgEzxDeFfHPPDi5KyqHA?e=9PFXHe) (07.36) and C[olonial Grab](https://joanross.com.au/Colonial-Grab-Video) (07:32). Joan Ross is known for appropriating the work of several colonial era painters such as John Glover and Joseph Lycett. To quickly introduce the practice of English born Australian colonial landscape artist [John Glover](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/multimedia/john-glover-the-artist/) teacher shares a quick video with the class. * The class then watches the video [Colonial Grab](https://joanross.com.au/Colonial-Grab-Video) (07:32). Teacher asks students for examples of appropriation and juxtaposition in the video. Responses are discussed and shared with the class. * Teacher provides students with [resource booklet](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/7-12/visual-arts/stage-4-5/ctl-alt-shift/creativearts-visualarts-resource-ctrlaltshift-joanross-resourcebooklet-s5.docx) activity 3 reading about ‘Colonial Grab’, 2015 from the Art Gallery of NSW website and the table to complete. Class reads the description of the artwork and the quote by Joan Ross and teacher checks for understanding and defines any further new words/ ideas. * Teacher provides students with the activity 3 table from the Joan Ross resource booklet and explains the task. Students sketch still images from video – they may need to watch it again on their own devices and pause scenes – and add their notes using the structural and postmodern frames. | Formative assessment:  Completed activities in visual arts diary/ photographic and digital media journal | Joan Ross [resource booklet](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/7-12/visual-arts/stage-4-5/ctl-alt-shift/creativearts-visualarts-resource-ctrlaltshift-joanross-resourcebooklet-s5.docx)  [John Glover](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/multimedia/john-glover-the-artist/) video from the NGV (00:00:00- 00:02:00).  [Colonial Grab](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zH18NDUztY), 2015, HD video animation (00:00:0-00:07:32)  [The claiming of things](https://vimeo.com/73357572), 2012, HD video animation (00:00:00-00:07:37) |
| Lesson 3 and 4 | **Artmaking – collaged landscapes**  **Learning intention**  Students create a collage artwork that demonstrates an understanding of postmodern techniques such as appropriation, juxtaposition, pastiche, humour and irony. They appropriate a colonial artwork depicting the Australian landscape and add contemporary elements to the scene to comment on the impact humans are having on our natural environment.  **Lesson steps**   * Students view Joan Ross’ digital animation [The Claiming of Things](https://vimeo.com/73357572) (07:37) and complete activity 4 in the [resource booklet](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/7-12/visual-arts/stage-4-5/ctl-alt-shift/creativearts-visualarts-resource-ctrlaltshift-joanross-resourcebooklet-s5.docx). Students list some of the images Ross has used to represent colonialism and environmental impacts – fences, graffiti, rubbish, household items dumped in the river, a bulldozer. * Teacher explains that each student will create a collage. The collage will be used in a later lesson to create a Photoshop gif animation. Both the collage and the animation should comment on the impact humans have had on the natural environment. * The collage task can be completed digitally using Photoshop or might be made by hand using scissors and glue. Either way – it is recommended that all imagery used by students is scanned or saved in an assets folder before being manipulated in any manner so that they can also be easily used for the video animation process. Images other than the background should be edited in Photoshop to remove the background, and then saved as .png files to preserve transparency. There are a few different techniques to achieve this – either by using the selections tools and then deleting unwanted parts of the image or using the eraser tool to manually erase the background. Teacher can refer to the Adobe help articles in the resource list for further guidance. * This collage is a preliminary study for an animation. Students should consider this collage to be representative of the end of the animation, showing the final position/ composition of their chosen elements. * Students are provided with or can choose from a range of colonial era paintings depicting the Australian landscape by artists such as John Glover, Willian Charles Piguenit, Eugene Von Guerard and Joseph Lycett. Students are guided to select paintings that focus on landscape with very little evidence of colonialism or urbanisation. * Students select a focus theme from the list below.   + urban development   + pollution   + climate change * Students collect images to add to their landscape collage/ digital collage that relate to their theme. Images might be sourced online or from magazines and photographs. Students are advised to include a central character that might change the landscape or cause destruction, as well as objects and other images that represent that change. * Students are advised to experiment with composition, focal point, scale, colour, pattern, texture and consider symbolism as they create their works. If working by hand with scissors and glue rather than in Photoshop, students are advised to decide on the arrangement of all objects in the scene before starting to work with glue to avoid difficulties that may occur when components are stuck down too soon. * Students’ completed collages should then be kept in their Visual Art Diaries and used as a visual reference when they move on to their animations. | Formative assessment:  Completed activities in visual arts diary/ photographic and digital media journal and the saved assets folder of imagery.  Summative assessment: Finished collage | [The Claiming of Things](https://vimeo.com/73357572) , 2012 digital animation (00:00:00 - 00:07:37)  The following Adobe help articles may provide guidance:  [Photoshop selection tools basics](https://helpx.adobe.com/au/photoshop/how-to/selection-tools-basics.html)  [Erase parts of an image in Adobe Photoshop](https://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/erasing-parts-image.html)  [Move, copy, and delete selected pixels in Photoshop](https://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/moving-copying-deleting-selected-pixels.html)  Joan Ross [resource booklet](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/7-12/visual-arts/stage-4-5/ctl-alt-shift/creativearts-visualarts-resource-ctrlaltshift-joanross-resourcebooklet-s5.docx) |
| Lesson 5 and 6 | **Artmaking – constructed landscapes – digital animation**  **Learning intention**  Students take inspiration from the practice of Joan Ross and extend on the techniques and ideas investigated in their collage works by creating a short video animation using Photoshop.  **Lesson Steps**  Students produce a 5 second animation using the ‘timeline animation’ workflow, manipulating the size and position of layered images using keyframes. Resources from the Adobe Photoshop User Guide should be used as a reference and for troubleshooting purposes – see the article [Create timeline animations in Adobe Photoshop](https://helpx.adobe.com/au/photoshop/using/creating-timeline-animations.html). A workflow specific to this activity is provided here – it is recommended that teachers test this workflow prior to the lesson for ease of explanation and to identify any issues that may require troubleshooting. Remember to save after each step so that no work is lost.   1. Check that the landscape background and image assets (with backgrounds removed) are all saved together in a working folder. 2. Launch Photoshop and create a new document by selecting ‘File’ and then ‘New’. For this activity, use the ‘HDTV 1080p’ blank document pre-set, which is in the ‘Film and Video’ tab of the ‘New Document’ window. 3. Select ‘File’ and then ‘Place Embedded’. Navigate to the assets folder and select the background image. When it appears in Photoshop, resize and position the image and then press the ‘Enter’ key to finish placing it. 4. To give this image depth, the foreground can be isolated so that any added images can be animated to emerge from within the painting. Use the ‘Quick Select’ or ‘Lasso’ tool to select part of the landscape, and then use Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V to copy and paste the foreground onto a new layer. To stay organised, rename this layer ‘Foreground’. 5. To set up the document for animation, go to the ‘Window’ menu (top of screen) and select ‘Workspace’, then ‘Motion’. This will open the ‘Timeline’ panel at the bottom of the screen. Click the button that says ‘Create Video Timeline’ – the layers should now be visible in the timeline panel. Finally, open the timeline settings menu by clicking the icon (four bars) at the top-right of the timeline panel. Select the option ‘Set Timeline Framerate’ and change the framerate to 24fps. 6. To begin the animation process, import one of the object images using the ‘Place Embedded’ command. The image will load onto a new layer at the top of the stack in the layers panel (bottom right of screen), and a new video track on the timeline will be created. The layer order can be changed by clicking and dragging the video track up and down (or dragging the layer up and down in the layers panel). Consider which layers should appear in front or behind other layers. 7. To animate the layer, click the small arrow next to name of that layer on the far left of the timeline panel. Some options will be visible – transform, opacity, and style. Move the object image to its desired starting position (for example, hidden behind the foreground layer) and click on the stopwatch icon next to ‘Transform’. This will create a keyframe on the timeline, indicated with a small diamond icon. Advance the play head (click the top of the timeline where the time is indicated) and drag the object image to its final position. This will create a second keyframe for that track. To review the animation, move the play head back to the beginning of the track and press the play button (or press the space bar) – the object image should move from its first to second position. Keyframes can be dragged left or right on the timeline to decrease or increase the time between them, making the animation faster or slower. Clicking the stopwatch icon again will remove all keyframes for that track. 8. Repeat this process until all the object images have been imported and animated. More advanced techniques could be applied by experimenting with opacity, adding additional keyframes to create complex movement, or layering different parts of the landscape image. 9. To export the video, go to the ‘File’ menu and select ‘Export’ then ‘Render Video’. The pre-set ‘Vimeo HD 1080p 29.97’ is recommended as a good balance been file size and quality. Change the ‘Frame Rate’ to ‘Document Frame Rate’ or 24fps. Select ‘Render’ – remember to review the video and check for any errors.   As an extension activity, students could record sound effects to complement their video. This should be saved as a sound file in the assets folder with their images. To import into Photoshop, find the ‘Audio Track’ at the bottom of the timeline panel. Click the arrow next to the music note icon, and select ‘Add Audio’ to import the audio file. | Formative assessment:  Completed activities in visual arts diary/ photographic and digital media journal and the saved assets folder of imagery.  Summative assessment: Finished animation | Online article [Create timeline animations in Adobe Photoshop](https://helpx.adobe.com/au/photoshop/using/creating-timeline-animations.html). |

**References**

[Visual Arts 7-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/visual-arts-7-10%22%20/) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2003 (date accessed 17/12/2020)

[Photographic and Digital Media 7-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/music-7-10) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2004. (date accessed 17/12/2020)

Joan Ross – pushing the limits interview accessed on 12/03/2021 (need to link to doe website)

NGV curator talk video on [John Glover](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/multimedia/john-glover-the-artist/) video (date accessed 12/03/2021)

Joan Ross [artist website](https://joanross.com.au/) (date accessed12/03/2021)

Digital learning selector [Frayer diagram tools](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Browser?cache_id=4bf02) (date accessed 11/03/2021)

[Colonial Grab,](https://vimeo.com/228183878) 2015, HD video animation (07:32)

[The Claiming of Things](https://vimeo.com/73357572), 2012, HD video animation (07:37)

[Photoshop selection tools basics](https://helpx.adobe.com/au/photoshop/how-to/selection-tools-basics.html) (date accessed 11/03/2021)

[Erase parts of an image in Adobe Photoshop](https://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/erasing-parts-image.html) (date accessed 11/03/2021)

[Move, copy, and delete selected pixels in Photoshop](https://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/using/moving-copying-deleting-selected-pixels.html) (date accessed 11/03/2021)