r e a – Finding the form

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

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

**Lesson sequence duration**: 10 lessons

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

# Overview

r e a is an Australian Aboriginal artist of the Gamilaraay/Wailwan/Biripi peoples of northern New South Wales. r e a commonly works with photography, film, digital media, and installation – allowing the concept to drive her material choices as she ‘finds the form’ that best conveys her ideas. Through her practice, r e a explores Aboriginal identities and histories from a postcolonial critical perspective. In particular, the works in this learning sequence reflect on the experiences of Aboriginal women from the Stolen Generations, drawing on r e a’s own family history and their experiences in the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls. Students examine how r e a carefully considers materials, techniques and symbolism to convey complex messages that interrogate Australian history and shift perspectives.

This learning sequence draws on the [rea – Finding the form](https://vimeo.com/434581578/9a249e054) (09:02) video resource to interpret aspects of r e a’s artmaking practice, focusing on her works from the 1992 photomedia series ‘Look Who’s Calling the Kettle Black’, and her 2009 video artwork ‘PolesApart’.

Students will engage in critical and historical investigations to strengthen their understanding of r e a’s artmaking practice and produce extended responses to the identified focus works.

Students will engage in artmaking activities that appropriate aspects of r e a’s practice and processes to create their own artworks that communicate personal and cultural meaning. In their artmaking, students will produce a 2D photomedia artwork and a silent film.

## 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 |
| Practice | 5.1 develops range and autonomy in selecting and applying visual arts conventions and procedures to make artworks. | 5.1 develops range and autonomy in selecting and applying photographic and digital conventions and procedures to make photographic and digital works. |
| 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 |
| Practice | 5.7 applies their understanding of aspects of practice to critical and historical interpretations of art. | 5.7 applies their understanding of aspects of practice to critically and historically interpret 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.

## Learning intentions

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

* investigate and apply selected conventions, activities, traditions, and customs of the field of visual arts to make art where meaning is shaped by values and beliefs about the individual, social structures, the artworld and power.
* focus on how cultural and community identities and social perspectives can be represented in the making of art.
* investigate and employ a range of conventions including codes, symbols and signs and consider how communication is embedded in the material and conceptual organisation of artworks and offer a way to develop representations of ideas and interests in the world in the making of art.
* 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/ or the environment.
* identify and seek to explain how artists and audiences can read artworks as images or texts by understanding conventions including codes, symbols, and signs and how these are embedded in the material and conceptual organisation of artworks.
* recognise beliefs about the individual, social structures, the artworld and power when critically interpreting art.

## 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 photographic and digital editing software to produce digital media artworks and consider how r e a makes deliberate technical choices in her practice to communicate meaning in her artworks. Students use ICT effectively and appropriately to create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively to create artworks and art historical and critical interpretations.

### Aboriginal and Indigenous

Students investigate how visual arts reflects and constructs beliefs and attitudes about cultural identity, the relationships between Aboriginal cultures and the world. Students examine the impact of political, economic, and technological change on Aboriginal artmaking practices through the frames and the conceptual framework.

### 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. They develop intercultural understandings. Students can focus on conventions and innovations in the representation of ideas, beliefs, and perceptions about the world through the frames and conceptual framework.

## Learning sequence

### r e a – Finding the form

#### Students will:

* Identify and explain intentions, actions, and choices in r e a’s artmaking practice through her selection and use of materials, signs and symbols.
* Explore how r e a’s material choices and use of symbolism communicates meaning about cultural histories including the experiences of Aboriginal women from the Stolen Generations.
* Select appropriate source material to explore aspects of the world in their own artmaking using a carefully considered visual language.
* Consider how to select and apply conventions and procedures in their own artmaking practice to embed meaning in their artworks.
* Create composite images (digital collage) using a range of imagery and a carefully considered visual language to communicate their own experiences and/or cultural narratives.

### Teacher notes

* Consider providing a theme or other restrictions relating to image choice in the artmaking activity such as a personal narrative focused on friends or family members or a cultural narrative investigating an artist or public /historic figure.
* For artmaking task 1, Photoshop is recommended, but other programs could be used.
* Consider providing a style guide for design features like font and size and spacing of text, a standard line thickness, or a particular palette.
* In the [Finding the form (09:02)](https://vimeo.com/434581578/9a249e054a) video resource, discussion of PolesApart begins at 03:17.
* Use video editing software as appropriate for silent films – the instructions given are an example of a workflow in Adobe Premiere Pro CC 2018.
* In addition to the linked resources, consider use of the [stem.T4L Filming](https://schoolsnsw.sharepoint.com/sites/STEMShareLibrary/SitePages/Filming-Kit.aspx) kit and associated resources.

### Differentiation

* Teacher developed writing scaffolds could be used to suit school specific literacy strategies.
* An extension task could be developed using resources from the Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation – an organisation that supports former residents, families, and descendants of the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls. r e a has used archival images of former residents (including her own family members) in ‘Look Who’s Calling the Kettle Black.’ The [Coota Girls](https://www.cootagirls.org.au/) website includes background information on the Stolen Generations and records personal stories of survivors.
* The silent film artmaking activity could be reinterpreted as a series of stills rather than a video.
* The scope of the silent film artwork could be simplified (a single short video clip of a few seconds or a single still image), or extended (a longer video or series of still images that further explores a narrative).
* DSLR cameras with video recording mode are recommended.

#### Ongoing assessment/feedback

* Formative assessment collected throughout artmaking and critical and historical activities, to be recorded in students’ visual art diaries or journals.
* Summative assessment activities (completed artworks, paragraph response) could be developed into formal assessment tasks.

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| Lesson | Teaching strategies | Assessment | Resources |
| Lesson 1 | **Critical and historical studies – ‘Look who’s calling the kettle black’**  **Learning intention**  Identify and explain key aspects of r e a’s artmaking practice and analyse her artworks in the series ‘Look Who’s Calling the Kettle Black.’  **Lesson steps**  Refer to the r e a [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-rea-resourcebooklet-s5.docx).  Teacher directs students complete activities 1 – 3 using the video resource [r e a - Finding the form (9:02)](https://vimeo.com/434581578/9a249e054a), and r e a’s artist statement and artwork images from the series ‘Look Who’s Calling the Kettle Black’.  Students create a set of notes responding to these sources, and then use their notes to analyse the artwork series.  The teacher might choose to break up these activities and to intersperse them with artmaking over several lessons. | Formative assessment – student notes recorded in visual arts diary.  Summative assessment – students complete paragraph response. | r e a [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-rea-resourcebooklet-s5.docx)  [r e a - Finding the form](https://vimeo.com/434581578/9a249e054a) (09:02) video resource |
| Lesson 2 - 3 | **Artmaking – Signs and symbols in our own narratives**  **Learning intention**  Students create a series of digital artworks that combine found images and simple graphic design tools to communicate a personal or cultural narrative. Students are challenged to only use older tools in Photoshop that would have been available to artists working in the early 90s and to appropriate the look of r e a’s work. Artmaking is focused on the selection of images and text and on developing signs and symbols that carry meaning.  **Lesson steps**  Teacher leads a review of the series ‘Look Who’s Calling the Kettle Black’ and asks students to identify key aesthetic features and material choices used by r e a. These include simple flat shapes with heavy outlines, saturated colours filling the objects and backgrounds, isometric projection, hand-drawn pixelated elements, the dictionary definition excerpt in plain text at the top of each frame. Make a list of these features.  Teacher might lead a discussion of the technological limitations of early versions of Photoshop – students could compare screenshots of the Photoshop 1.0 workspace with the current Photoshop workspace. Some sample questions might include:   * What tools were available in version 1.0 that are still available now? * What tools do students use now that were not available then? (e.g., layers were not introduced until version 3.0 in 1994).   Students are guided to consider r e a’s use of the idiom ‘Look Who’s Calling the Kettle Black’ – what might she be referring to here?  This is a phrase that typically refers to a degree of hypocrisy – what institutions or patterns of authority might r e a be seeking to challenge or undermine?  This postmodern challenge might be something students explore further in their own works. Teacher refers to responses from last lesson.  Artmaking instructions:   1. Students use a simple head and shoulders photograph of themselves for this task. They might use their school photo or one that they can upload. An alternative to using images of themselves might be to use an image of a celebrity or politician. 2. They then need to think about a common household object that has a link or relevance to their identity. They can be playful here and use their sense of humour. 3. Students select an adjective or noun that describes or refers to the person/object and look up a dictionary definition for that word. 4. Students then create a bold computer-generated image that combines these three elements and appropriates the style of r e a.   Students complete the artmaking activity in Photoshop (or another image editor).  This workflow is recommended for Adobe Photoshop CC 2018:   * Set up a file in Photoshop by creating a new blank A4 document, landscape orientation. * Use the swatches panel to select a limited palette of black, white, and no more than 5 other colours. Tip – the swatches panel will display the last 12 colours they selected, including colours from the colour panel or the eyedropper tool. * Use the shape tool group to create a simple representation of their object. Tip – use the fill and stroke options to modify the colour and line thickness of shapes. The paint bucket tool can also be used to fill shapes and backgrounds. * Place or copy the found image into the desired location. Tip – to fit into a particular shape as in ‘Lubra’ and ‘Domestic,’ use the magic eraser tool or a transparent fill to remove the shape you want to fill with the photo, then move the found photograph to a layer below the shape to mask it. Students might choose to make the person black and white. * Add the dictionary definition using the horizontal type tool. * Resolve the work, carefully arranging all elements of the composition and considering use of a limited but vibrant colour palette. * Export the final image for storage and exhibition.   Consider exhibiting these as prints in a school gallery context, or online as a virtual exhibition. | Formative assessment – students record their image and text selections in their visual arts diary.  Summative assessment – completed photomedia artwork. | r e a – ‘Look Who’s Calling the Kettle Black’ (1992) - [Lubra](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16515) [Domestic](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16517) [Woman](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16519) [Slave](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16516) [Gin](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16518)  [History of Photoshop: Journey from Photoshop 1.0 to Photoshop CS5](https://creativeoverflow.net/history-of-photoshop-journey-from-photoshop-1-0-to-photoshop-cs5/)  [30 Years of Adobe Photoshop](https://www.versionmuseum.com/history-of/adobe-photoshop) |
| Lesson 4 - 5 | **Critical and Historical Studies – PolesApart**  **Learning intention**  Students analyse and interpret the personal and cultural narratives explored in PolesApart, and the way intentions, choices and actions in r e a’s artmaking practice are used to construct meaning.  **Lesson steps**  Students watch the video [r e a - Finding the form (09:02)](https://vimeo.com/434581578/9a249e054a), focusing on the discussion of PolesApart (from 00:03:17).  Refer to the r e a [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-rea-resourcebooklet-s5.docx) and complete the PolesApart activities:  Students use a narrative format to re-tell the story of PolesApart.  Students read and summarise two critical/historical accounts of PolesApart.  Students identify codes, signs, and symbols that are used to communicate meaning in PolesApart.  Students analyse aspects of r e a’s practice in an extended response.  Note – teachers might choose to break up these activities over several lessons and intersperse them with artmaking. | Formative assessment – student notes recorded in visual arts diary.  Summative assessment – students complete paragraph response. | r e a [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-rea-resourcebooklet-s5.docx)  [r e a - Finding the form](https://vimeo.com/434581578/9a249e054a) (09:02) video resource |
| Lesson 6 - 7 | **Artmaking – Deafening silent voices.**  **Learning intention**  Create a silent video artwork that relies on *mise en scène*, rather than sound, to communicate an intense emotional response.  **Lesson steps**  Students develop their artmaking intention and plan their video shoot. They should plan for a 20-30 second scene, with 6 separate shots used, making sure they use a variety of camera angles and shot types for coverage in their scene. Students should plan to work in pairs to share the acting and camera roles.  Students select an emotion or response they want to convey. This could be something general like ‘grief’ or ‘overwhelming joy,’ or a response to something specific like ‘winning an art prize’ or ‘the last step onto the top of a mountain’.  Students consider how are these emotions can be expressed visually and create a mood board in their diaries or journals using found images that relate to their chosen emotion.  Students make preproduction planning notes documenting the following elements of *mise en scène*:   * Setting and props * Costume, hair, makeup, characters * Lighting and atmosphere * Point of view, perspective and elements of characterisation. * Body language and facial expression * Pose, gesture and movement.   Students develop a simple script, shot list, and/or storyboard to plan their film. The [Cinematography](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/school-program-and-resources/film-it-cinematography/) lesson from ACMI’s [Film It](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/film-it/) education resource gives an overview of shot types, camera angles and camera movement. The [Storyboards](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/school-program-and-resources/film-it-storyboards/) lesson has some templates (both printable sheets and digital tools) and tips for effecting storyboarding. Storyboards must be detailed enough for another student to follow instructions and act as camera operator. | Formative assessment –student plans recorded in visual arts diary. | [Mise en scène: contemporary photography and film](https://sites.google.com/education.nsw.gov.au/mise-en-scne/home)  Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI)’s [Film It](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/film-it/)education resource:  [Cinematography](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/school-program-and-resources/film-it-cinematography/)  [Storyboards](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/school-program-and-resources/film-it-storyboards/) |
| Lesson 8 – 10 | **Artmaking – Deafening silent voices**  **Learning intention**  Students resolve their silent video artwork using video editing software.  **Lesson steps**  Students use video editing software to cut together their scene and remove the audio track. This workflow is recommended for Adobe Premiere Pro CC 2018:   * Organise the footage into a single working folder. * Launch Premiere Pro and start a New Project – change the file name to the title of the work and set the Location to the working folder. Use the Editing workspace – change workspaces by going to Window, selecting Workspaces and then Editing. * Import media by selecting File then Import, or using the drag and drop method to place the video files in the Project window in Premiere Pro. * Drag clips onto the timeline. Trim and order them using the Selection tool. * To mute the audio, press the M button in the track header for all audio tracks. * Once finished, export the video for storage and exhibition by selecting File, then Export, and then Media. Select the desired output settings – the Vimeo preset offers a good balance between file size and quality.   Teacher organises silent film festival to exhibit these works – consider hosting a screening event during a lunchtime or after school or using an online platform to host and screen the films. | Summative assessment – students complete and exhibit silent films. |  |

# References

[‘r e a – Finding the form’ (00:09:02)](https://vimeo.com/434581578/9a249e054a) video resource, date accessed 17/12/2020

[Visual Arts 7-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/creative-arts/visual-arts-7-10) © 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

[r e a - Lubra](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16515) date accessed 17/12/2020

[r e a - Domestic](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16517) date accessed 17/12/2020

[r e a - Woman](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16519) date accessed 17/12/2020

[r e a - Slave](https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=16516) date accessed 17/12/2020

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[ACMI - Film It](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/film-it/) date accessed 17/12/2020

[ACMI – Film It - Cinematography](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/school-program-and-resources/film-it-cinematography/) date accessed 17/12/2020

[ACMI – Film It - Storyboards](https://www.acmi.net.au/education/school-program-and-resources/film-it-storyboards/) date accessed 17/12/2020