

UQ Art Museum

UQ Art Museum is a site for progressive and contemporary creative inquiry. Our work speaks to the distinct context of the Art Museum's place within the University. We aim to connect each visitor with new ideas in creative practice, and with learning in its many forms.



We collect and exhibit progressive works of art, which stimulate dialogue and debate. We're committed to opening up dialogue with the faculties, research institutes and centres of the University, and to place education at the core of our activities.

Our Work

The World Economic Forum lists creativity as one of the top three skills that workers will need in 2020. (Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>)

UQ Art Museum:

- provides creative, active learning through specialised, curriculum-based experiences to diverse disciplines. These include: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Education, Drama, Linguistics, Art History, Museum Studies, and Economics (see UQ Student Strategy > Authentic assessment);
- produces cross-disciplinary, research-based exhibitions that partner with a variety of academics and disciplines on campus; in doing so, contributing productively to Excellence in Research for Australia outcomes, and the Australian Research Council's Engagement and Impact assessment; and
- provides industry-based training to UQ students to equip them for careers in the arts and humanities. The Art Museum aims to be a national leader in industry-based education.

One of our Tools: Visual Thinking Strategies

Background:

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) was developed 30 years ago by cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen and museum educator Phillip Yenawine. VTS is an educational tool that uses art to teach thinking, communication skills and visual literacy. This is used in university disciplines such as biomedical sciences, medicine, nursing, midwifery, art history, visual arts, business and law. VTS questioning teaches learners to carefully observe, evaluate, synthesise, justify and speculate – all essential aspects for critical thinking (Klugman, 2011) It has been measured as an effective tool to build visual thinking skills, which directly benefits graduate performance, including exam results.

VTS Curriculum:

VTS is taught as part of the Education curriculum at Harvard University, in Medicine at the University of Maryland, US, and at University College Cork, Ireland. It is being used all over the US in healthcare, universities, museums and galleries. In Australia, it is facilitated at Melbourne University, Monash University, Melbourne, the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, and Gippsland Art Gallery, VIC.

VTS Questions:

What is going on in this picture? What about it makes you say that? What more can we find?

Learning Outcomes:

Close looking builds learning objectives such as observation, analysis, interpretation, reflection and evaluation. By focusing on visual evidence, participants challenge prior biases and assumptions. By working in a group, they learn to be accepting of others' ideas.

VTS Program | UQ Art Museum:

In 2019, UQ Art Museum launched the first VTS programming in Queensland. As a university art museum, we have a responsibility to connect with degrees and courses at UQ. The University Art Collection is a valuable resource, which allows us to harness the learning goals of multiple curricula.

In 2019, we led VTS with students from Medicine, Education, Business, Religion Studies, and Art History. In 2020, we will be working with the School of Biomedical Sciences to explore the potential for VTS to improve learning and engagement in students new to the study of histology within a biomedical sciences program. We will also be facilitating visual thinking strategies in introductory courses for the School of Medicine and School of Public Health at UQ. There is increasing interest in embedding this learning method into courses as formal training. All opportunities are tailored to fit the needs of courses.

Our specialists:

Isabella Baker

Curatorial Assistant, UQ Art Museum
Visual Thinking Strategies Facilitator
Training: Brooklyn Museum, New York (2018); Heide Museum, Melbourne (2017)

Dr Holly Arden

Associate Director, UQ Art Museum

PhD in Art History and Theory,
Associate Lecturer in the School of Communication and Arts

Nicola Garrett

Education and Public Programs Officer, UQ Art Museum

Masters of Museum Studies Graduate, former secondary school art teacher, and artist

Feedback from sessions at UQ Art Museum:

- People said that they felt empowered after a session
- It awakened a sense of creativity that they didn't express in daily life
- They found that people saw things that they didn't. They began to appreciate that there are many different perspectives.
- They reported that being a part of a supportive group increased their confidence to speak among others.

Research findings:

- Increases empathy, awareness and sensitivity to the art of medicine (Reilly, Ring & Duke, 2005)
- VTS increases team building as people work together to decipher the artwork, challenging each other along the way (Reilly, Ring & Duke, 2005)
- It challenges bias and assumptions – when asked for evidence, participants start to think critically about observations. They learn to challenge accepted ideas (Gardner, 2017)
- It brings fun and creativity into the classroom (Kelly *et al.*, 2013)
- It results in improvement in observation of painting and photographic details and of reading facial human emotions (Reilly, Ring & Duke, 2005)
- It contributes to language development with students' descriptions of visual material becoming more comprehensive (Klugman, Peel & Beckmann-Mendez, 2011)

Next steps:

Make an enquiry for a VTS session by contacting Isabella Baker: isabella.baker@uq.edu.au

Further resources and support are available through the Institute for Teaching & Learning Innovation for UQ staff considering [embedding entrepreneurial education](#) (including creativity) in the curriculum.

References:

- Gardner, R. P. (2017) 'Discussing Racial Trauma Using Visual Thinking Strategies'. *Language Arts*, 94 (5), pp. 338-345.
- Kelly, M., Bennett, D., O'Flynn, S. & Foley, T. (2013) 'A picture tells 1000 words: learning teamwork in primary care'. *The Clinical Teacher*, 10 (2), pp. 113-117.
- Klugman, C. M., Peel, J. & Beckmann-Mendez, D. (2011) 'Art Rounds: Teaching Interprofessional Students Visual Thinking Strategies at One School'. *Academic Medicine*, 86 (10), pp. 1266-1271.
- Reilly, J., Ring, J. & Duke, L. (2005) 'Visual Thinking Strategies: A new role for art in medical education'. *Family medicine*, 37 pp. 250-252.