Hyper Real

Visual Arts

Hyper Real: Visual Arts Education Resource

The National Gallery of Australia's *Hyper Real* exhibition held from 20 October 2017 to 18 February 2018 offers rich material for the 21st-century learner.

Hyper Real: Visual Arts is a resource that is adaptable for use with a range of year levels. The development of this resource was informed by the Year 7–10 Australian Curriculum for Visual Arts as well as the Senior Visual Arts curricula of various states and territories.

This resource provides an overview of some of the movements that preceded hyperrealism. This should assist students and teachers to contextualise the exhibition and movement art historically.

Seven *Hyper Real* artists are focused on in this resource: Marc Quinn, Ron Mueck, Patricia Piccinini, Sam Jinks, Duane Hanson, Peter Land and Russian collective AES+F. A complete listing of the artists and works in *Hyper Real* is available on the NGA website at nga.gov.au/hyperreal.

NGA Education

NGA Education offer tours of our major exhibitions, including *Hyper Real*, free of charge to booked groups of Australian students and their teachers. We simply ask that you book four weeks prior to your visit.

We hope you enjoy the *Hyper Real* exhibition and find the resource a rich stimulus for discussion and artmaking activities.

Further information on the NGA Education program, including opportunities to engage in onsite programs, curriculum-aligned resources and information on professional learning for teachers, can be found on the NGA website nga.gov.au/education.

Patricia Piccinini *Eulogy* 2011, silicone, fibreglass, human hair, clothing, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Warwick and Jane Flecknoe Bequest Fund 2015, Courtesy of the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco

Origins of hyperrealism

The human form has been a recurring artistic concern throughout art history. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a significant revival in sculptural depictions of the figure. Adopting newly available synthetic materials and technical processes, artists began producing highly detailed works. This established a new hyperrealistic style, a hyper (beyond) realism (true-to-life).

19th century: Realism

The Realist painters of the late 19th century led by Gustave Courbet forged a path for the depiction of reality in a way that broke with earlier traditions.

The Realist movement took place after the French Revolution at a time of great social change. Artists and writers were looking to replace idealised images, grand narratives and history paintings with real-life events and people. Courbet and other like-minded artists sought to capture the gritty, physical reality of a subject even if it meant revealing the figure as unremarkable, blemished or ordinary.

The philosophy of Realism was to seek the truth and to overturn traditional values and belief systems. Courbet sparked controversy by exhibiting paintings of the lower classes, rural life and prostitutes with a frankness that many of the elite found distasteful.

The Realists were avant-garde, breaking new ground from what had come before and marking what many art historians consider the beginning of the modern period in art history.

Gustave Courbet *Study for Les Demoiselles des bords de la Seine (Été) [Girls on the banks of the Seine (Summer)]* 1856, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1980

20th century: Photorealism

Abstraction was the dominant mode of artistic practice throughout the mid-20th century. In the 1960s and 1970s Pop artists expressly stated an aim to bring real life back into art. With this intention, pioneering hyperrealist sculptors George Segal and Duane Hanson emerged.
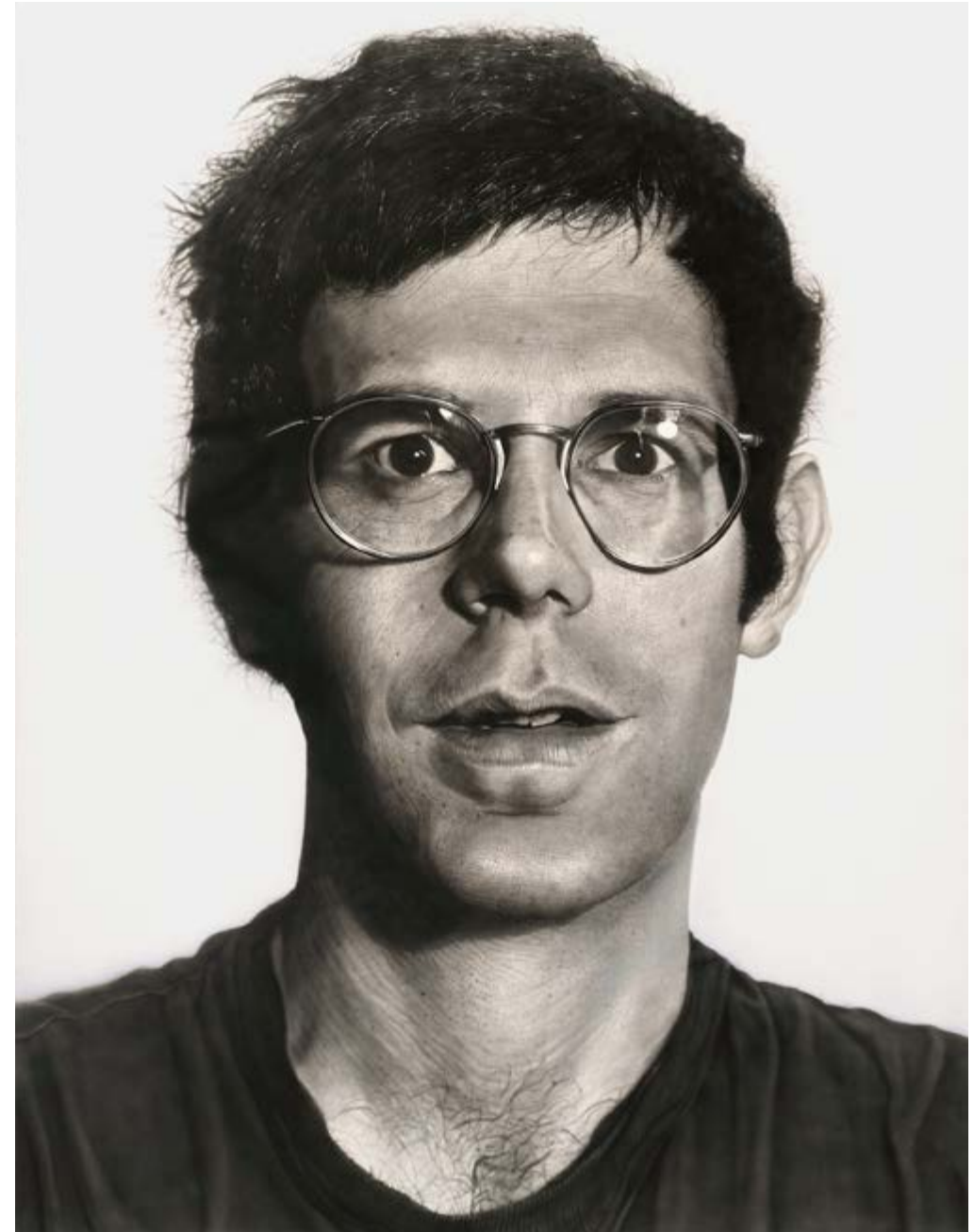
Two works that help us think through this shift in creativity are Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles* 1952 and Andy Warhol's *Mick Jagger* 1975. Created 20 years apart, they are vastly different in intent and aesthetic.

The exhibition Hyper Real explores how the genre has developed since its development in the late 1960s. Hyperrealism gives primacy to the surface- the rendering of form in precise detail has shaped the genre. The contemporary hyperreal resides in the nexus of art, psychology, science, literature, technology and philosophy. Artists are engaged with a wide range of ideas: from the uncanny to the cyborg via biopolitics and posthumanism.

As NGA Senior Curator for Contemporary Art Jaklyn Babington observes

> *By presenting us with a work 'marked not by an unreality but instead by its excess of reality and truth', hyperreal artists deliberately destabilise our ability to distinguish the real from the simulated... By creating human replicas and alternate experiences that transgress the boundaries between inanimate and animate, human and nonhuman, natural and synthetic and real and virtual, hyperreal works seek to affect the contemporary viewer by way of a deep emotional, psychological, spiritual or moral register.*[1]

The works in Hyper Real actively destabilise our ability to distinguish the real from the simulated and, in the process, provide an opportunity to reconsider what it means to be human.

1   Lisa Lyons and Martin Friedman, *Close Portraits,* Minneapolis: Walker Arts Centre, 1980 (exhibition
    catalogue), p. 34

Chuck Close *Bob* 1970, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1975 © Chuck Close

20th–21st centuries: Hyperrealism

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1   Jaklyn Babington, 'The hyperreal figure: from the uncanny to the cyborg', *Hyper Real*, Canberra: NGA Publishing, 2017 (Exhibition catalogue), p. 28

Jackson Pollock *Blue poles* 1952, oil, enamel, aluminium paint, glass on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1973 © Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ARS. Licensed by Viscopy
Andy Warhol *Mick Jagger* 1975, screenprint, printed in coloured inks, photoscreenprint, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1980 © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./ARS. Licensed by Viscopy

Marc Quinn

'I was interested in freezing as a methodology during that period. I felt that while sculpture necessarily existed outside of time, freezing stopped time, and so made this explicit.'

Discussion questions

- *Self* does not engage with the viewer by means of eye contact. How does this effect your experience of the work?

- What are the ethical implications of using human blood as an artistic medium?

- Quinn's *Self* seems to embody life and death simultaneously, how do you think he has achieved this?

- Without refrigeration, what do you think would happen to Quinn's artwork *Self* 2011?

Art making

- Create a hand sculpture by using a latex or rubber glove as a mould and filling it with a liquid gelatine mix. Colour it using food dye if you like and allow it to set in a refrigerator. Carefully remove the glove moulding and display your sculptured hand to an audience. Photographically document the effect time and atmosphere has on your work.

- Create a 3D self-portrait. Firstly photograph yourself or a friend with your eyes closed, including side and rear views. Print or photocopy these as close to actual size as you can. Use a support like cardboard or foam to build your 3D self-portrait, folding and fitting your image to the support. Colour and decorate your sculpture to express your emotions.

Marc Quinn *Self* 2011, blood (artist's), liquid silicone, stainless steel, glass, acrylic, refrigeration equipment, Collection of the artist, Image courtesy Marc Quinn Studio. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates

Case study:

Self-portraiture and the ego

- Quinn has described *Self* as an act of 'pure' self-portraiture devoid of ego. Explore what he might mean by this with reference to the materials he used and the type of representation he employed.

- Compare and analyse the three forms of sculpted portraiture illustrated here: Quinn's *Self*, Ah Xian's *China China bust 15* 1999 and the Papua New Guinean *Nausang [mask]* c1970–71 from a cultural framework. How has the artists' social and cultural background influenced their artmaking and contemporary representations of portraiture?

Research links

marcquinn.com/assets/downloads/Bring_me_the_Head_of_Marc_Quinn_Will_Self_FULL.pdf

marcquinn.com/studio/studio-diaries/the-making-of-self

imagejournal.org/article/marc-quinn-matter-life-death/

Ah Xian *China China bust 15* 1999, cast porcelain with hand-painted underglaze decoration, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2000

Nake *Nausung [mask]* c1970–71, wood, ochres, shells, feathers, fibre, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1971

Ron Mueck

*'I wanted to make something that a photograph wouldn't do justice to …
although I spend a lot of time on the surface, it's the life inside that I want
to capture.'*

Discussion questions

- *Pregnant* woman 2002 towers over the viewer at 2.5 metres tall. How
  does Mueck's manipulation of scale impact the viewer's experience?

- What might the artist be commenting on through this work?

- How does this work fit within Mueck's broader oeuvre? Are there any
  overlapping themes or ideas in his other works?

- How do you read the pregnant woman's posture and facial expression?
  If you could read her thoughts what would she be thinking?

Art making

- Create a life drawing based on Mueck's sculpture. Focus first on the
  outline of her body, the scale and proportion of the body as a whole
  and the negative space surrounding the figure. Limit the amount of
  time per drawing, for example to 30 seconds, then one minute, then
  two minutes.

- Photograph someone with their eyes closed. See if you can capture a
  variety of moods and effects through the angles you choose.

- Create a whole body portrait by tracing the outline of your subject on
  paper, cardboard or pavement. Experiment with positions for greatest
  effect. Upscale your portrait by increasing the dimensions of the
  outline and decorate it to create emotion or intent. If possible cut out
  your figure and display it on a wall or in a space that will give emphasis
  to the size.

Case study:

Representations of the female nude throughout art history

- How does Mueck's Hyperreal portrayal compare with other representations of the female nude throughout art history?

- Apply the cultural or contemporary interpretive framework to compare *Pregnant woman* with Pierre Bonnard's *Woman in front of a mirror [Femme devant un miroir]* c1908 and Yirawala's *Maralaitj, mother of the tribes* c1965. Analyse how the values, beliefs and attitudes of the time impact their meaning.

Research links

Pierre Bonnard *Woman in front of a mirror [Femme devant un miroir]* c1908, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1998

Yirawala *Maralitji, mother of the tribes* c1965, natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1976, collected by Sandra Le Brun Holmes, Sydney
© the artist, licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency Pty Ltd

Patricia Piccinini

'As a lover of diversity and unusualness of every kind, I see a wonderful possibility in the unexpected.'

Discussion questions

- How would you describe Piccinini's *Bootflower* and *Meadow* 2015?

- The Meadow and darkened room is part of the way this work is presented. How does your experience of an artwork differ when you are able to traverse through it?

- How does the existence of Bootflower, a hybrid human/botanical creature, contradict with your own reality, and how does that make you feel?

Art making

- Create an outdoor sculpture with found objects and recycled materials that includes a pathway through which your viewers engage with the work. Build it in teams of 3–4 students, remembering to make your artwork a safe place to visit.

- Transform a room into an artwork using light, sound and 3D objects that surprise or create a sense of unease. It will help the transformation of space if you block out natural light from the windows with black plastic. You can even cut shapes in the plastic to use this light as part of your artwork.

Patricia Piccinini *Bootflower and Meadow* 2015, silicone, fibreglass, human hair, Collection of Detached Cultural Organisation and the artist, Hobart, Courtesy of the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco

Case study:

Art as experience

- Space, as the immersion of the viewer within a work of art, is an important element in the structural composition of *Bootflower and Meadow*. Discuss how Piccinini has manipulated space to enhance the experience of the work. Consider how other artists, including James Turrell, design the viewer's experience of space in their works.

- Piccinini employs elements of the surreal and the uncanny in many of her works, particularly *Bootflower*. The notion of the Uncanny is theorised by psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Consider the a continued interest in the surreal in Piccinini's works.

Research links

Ramingining Artists *The Aboriginal Memorial* 1987–88, natural earth pigments on hollow logs, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased with the assistance of funds from National Gallery admission charges and commissioned in 1987

James Turrell *Within without* 2010, purchased with the support of visitors to the *Masterpieces from Paris* exhibition 2010 © James Turrell

Sam Jinks

'I don't like realism for realism's sake. Instead engaging someone, causing a physical reaction, is enough.'

Discussion questions

- What emotional reaction do you have when looking at Jinks' *Woman and Child* 2010?

- What relationship is shown between the woman and child in this work of art?

- How do the artist's choices to reduce the human scale and the realism of the technique affect your response to this work?

- What historical imagery and artworks do you think Jinks was influenced by when creating this and many of his other sculpted works?

Art making

- Create a series of four drawings as a plan for a figurative sculpture. These four drawings must illustrate front, rear and side views for a three-dimensional sculpture. Create a diagrammatic drawing, with measurements that detail the intended scale of your sculpture to accompany your drawings.

- Create a maquette sculpture from air-dry clay that embodies the idea of maternal love. Your work can range from the realistic to the abstract but attempt to imbue the work with emotion.

Sam Jinks *Woman and child* (detail) 2010, silicone, pigment, resin, silk, human hair, Collection of the artist, © Sam Jinks, Image courtesy of the artist, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney and Institute for Cultural Exchange, Tübingen

Case study:

The female as mother and nurturer

- In the Western Christian art tradition the depiction of Madonna and child has been a prominent motif since the 14th century. The theme of motherhood spans millennia and across cultures. Discuss this motif in regards to Jinks' *Woman and child*. Consider how modern and contemporary artists in the 20th and 21st centuries represent motherhood.

- Compare and analyse the intimate and transient moment captured by *Woman and child* with *The Bronze Weaver* 6th century and *Female form* c1952. Pay particular attention to the materials used as well as the time period and cultural contexts of the artists.

Research links

The Bronze Weaver 6th century, bronze, lost wax casting, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2006
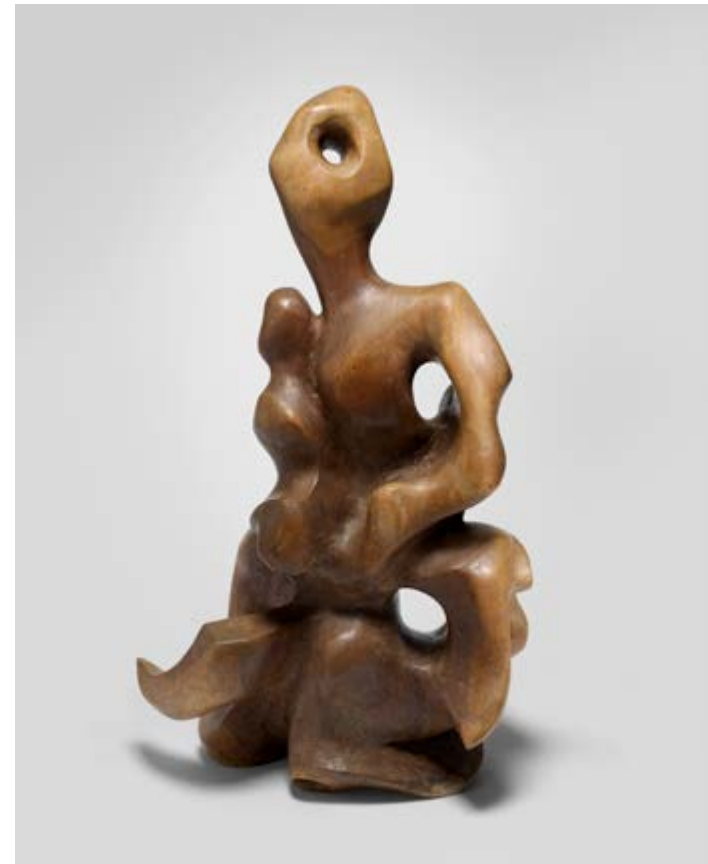

Danila Vassilieff *Female form* c1952, carved wood, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Gift of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007

Duane Hanson

'My art is not about fooling people, it's the human attitude I'm after—fatigue, a bit of frustration, rejection. To me there is a kind of beauty in all this.'

Discussion questions

- What is the beauty that Hanson is talking about in his statement?

- What is the narrative of *Woman with a laundry basket* 1974?

- Does Hanson's sculpture exhibit elements of caricature and if so how has Hanson achieved this?

- How does the raw realism of Hanson's sculptures make social comment on American life?

- Why might the artist have included a laundry powder box?

Art making

- Create a series of photographs of the everyday. You might also look to Duane Hanson's *Two workers* 1993 for inspiration. Ask family members or friends to pose in a tableau of a day to day task or chore. See if you can emulate the deadpan facial expressions and body language of Hanson's subjects.

- Experiment with the Pop Art aesthetic of finding beauty in everyday objects and the banal, that even mass-produced soup cans or laundry powder boxes can be a valid subject of fine art. Collect advertisements and packaging that make use of bold colour, composition and shape. Investigate ways that you can capture the beauty of these materials, perhaps through photography, collage or installation.

Duane Hanson *Woman with a laundry basket* 1974, oil paint, cardboard, resin, talc, fibreglass, fabric, plastic, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australian Government Grant, 1975 © Duane Hanson/VAGA. Licensed by Viscopy

Case study:

The portrayal of women's work in art and media

- Use the personal, subjective or historical framework to analyse how women's work is portrayed in *Woman with a laundry basket* as compared with Max Dupain's *Meat queue* 1946 and Tracey Moffat's *Meat packing* 1978.

- Investigate how class and gender intersect in these works. Think about how social norms have changed to enable a greater number of women to enter the workforce, yet how *Woman with laundry basket* depicts a woman in the domestic role. Is it significant that the artist is a male depicting a female as subject?

- Access enlarged images of the works below by looking at them in the NGA Collection Search. Compare the facial expressions of the women and consider what tone the artist is seeking to convey.

Research links

Max Dupain *Meat queue* 1946, gelatin silver photograph, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Gift of the Philip Morris Arts Grant 198

Tracey Moffatt *Meat packing* 1978, pigment print, gel medium, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Gift of Rupert and Annabel Myer 2008

Peter Land

'The aim of the artist should be to engage the spectator actively in taking a stand by way of the artistic product … art should not be pacifying entertainment or pure decoration, which is not to say that art cannot be both entertaining and decorative.'

Discussion questions

- Land's *Back to square one* 2015 is a one-to-one cast of the artist in his own clothes portrayed as if homeless. Does this change the work compared to if it portrayed someone else as subject?

- How do you think the ephemeral quality of the cardboard material alters the impact of the work? How has it constrained and influenced his construction?

- What kind of social commentary could the artist be making through this work?

Art making

- Use discarded materials like cardboard, tin cans, plastic bottles etc to create an artwork/sculpture that makes a visual statement about a social, political or environmental issue you are interested in or passionate about. Present this work to your peers and discuss what inspired you.

- Construct small paper sculptures exploring the methodology of extension and compression of materials. Build tunnels and towers, contort shape and explore layering through folding. Use spray adhesive to assist with solidifying form and think about the limitation and an advantages of paper as a material for making art.

Peter Land *Back to square one* 2015, silicon, human hair, fabric, cardboard, leather, C/O- Institute for Cultural Exchange, Germany / Courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner and Peter Land

Case study: Social issues in art

- The artist developed the idea for *Back to square one* after the global financial crisis of 2008. Interpret Land's work through a cultural or historical framework. Prepare and present a three-minute presentation to your class that explains your interpretation.

- Consider how the artist has planned the materials, scale and placement of this work to shape the viewer's experience. You may compare how Land uses these elements to the work of César. Apply a structural or formal framework to identify how the physical qualities of the work impact the viewer's experience.

Research links

peterland.dk/index.html

channel.louisiana.dk/video/peter-land-self-portrait-homeless

César *Compression* 1960, steel, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1978
© César/ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy

AES+F

'The title of the work, inverso – both an Italian "reverse, the opposite" and the Old Italian "poetry", and mundus – the Latin "world", hints at a reinterpretation of reality, a poetic vision … inverso mundus is a world where chimeras are pets and the Apocalypse is entertainment.'

Discussion questions

- How does the music and visual pace of AES+F's *Inverso Mundus* 2015 affect your experience of it?

- How does the idea of the 'world upside down' affect your view of the future?

- Does the exchanging of roles and dress throughout the video make the Apocalypse more or less appealing?

- What kind of commentary are AES+F making by creating characters that are at once unpleasant and beautiful?

Art making

- Create a storyboard for your own sci-fi short film that depicts people and creatures from your imagined future. Visually plan the beginning, middle and end of your film with at least three images in each stage of the visual narrative. Refer to the AES+F website at aesf.art/projects/inverso_mundus/ to see how the professionals use story boards.

- Draw your own genetically engineered apocalyptic creature using images from the AES+F website for inspiration. Create your own combination of real or imagined creatures. Extend your artwork by photographing it and apply a readily available digital animation app to bring your creature to life.
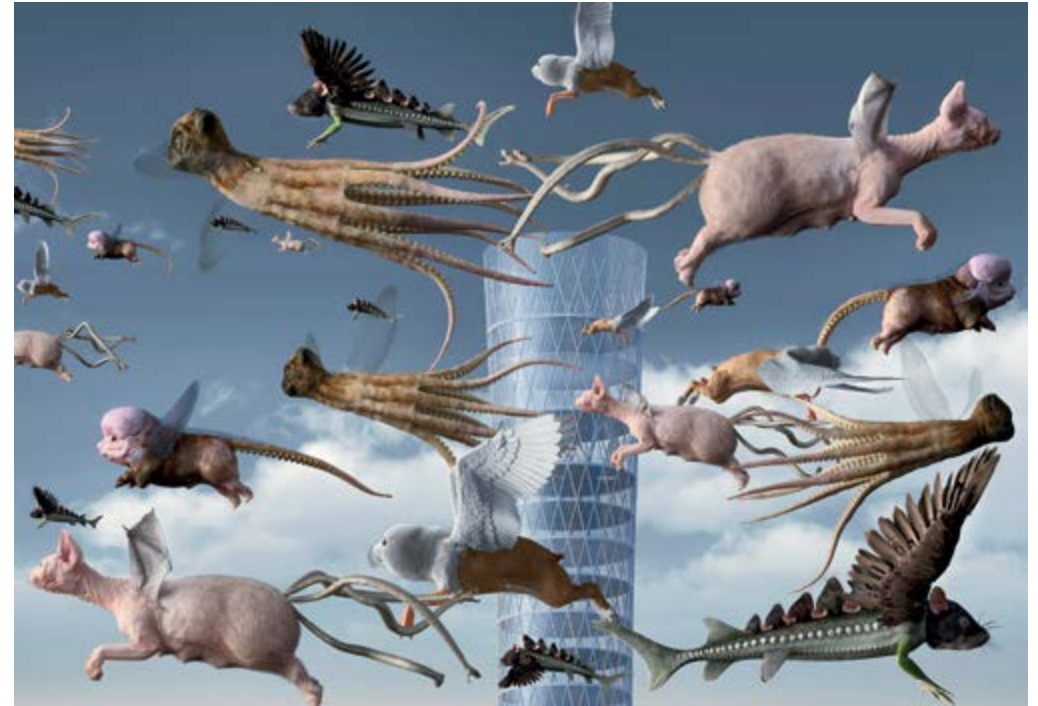
AES+F *Inverso mundus* 2015 (detail), seven-channel HD video installation: animation of photographs and computer graphics, sound, colour, ratio 112:9, Courtesy of the artists, MAMM, Anna Schwartz Gallery and Triumph Gallery

Case study: Apocalypse, Utopia and Dystopia in art

- History has provided artists many opportunities to show us their apocalyptic, utopian and dystopian visions of what the world might look like in the future or some parallel universe. Prepare a statement of 300–500 words that applies the conceptual framework to *Inverso Mundus.*

- Discuss as a class what might be unveiled socially, politically or economically at the time of an apocalyptic or global crisis. You may draw upon the following to inform your discussion: Anselm Kiefer's *Abendland [Twilight of the West]* 1989, Albrecht Durer's *The Four Horsemen* 1948 as well as the *Fallout* game series by Interplay Entertainment 1997 and *The Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins 2008– 2015.

Research links

aesf.art/projects/inverso_mundus/

youtube.com/watch?time_continue=14&v=Z3BGHE-iKRw

barogaleria.com/artist/aesf-2/

Anselm Kiefer *Abendland [Twilight of the West]* 1989, synthetic polymer paint, lead sheet, ash, plaster, cement, earth, varnish on canvas and wood, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1989

Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum identifies that all students should be developing general capabilities in the areas of **ethical and intercultural understanding** as well as **critical and creative thinking** across all of their learning areas.

The *Hyper Real* exhibition and the supporting education resources offer opportunities for students to think creatively and critically, consider questions of ethical importance and reflect on human culture as stimulated by works in the exhibition.

The Melbourne Declaration, a key document in orienting and setting out goals for education in Australia, states in its preamble:

> *In the 21st century Australia's capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation.*[MCEETYA, 2008](#)

This document makes it evident that an emphasis on preparing young people for the world of the future is imminent and that the 21st century skills of thinking creatively and critically will be of crucial importance.

By embedding learning activities within the website and providing this resource online we hope this will lend itself to inquiry learning by students in schools and classrooms with a 'bring your own device' policy and enrich the use of **ICT** in the classroom.

Visual Arts

Years 7–8

Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork [ACAVAM118](#)

Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes [ACAVAM119](#)

Years 9–10

Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists [ACAVAM125](#)

Evaluate how representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view to inform their future art making [ACAVAR130](#)

Analyse a range of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their visual art-making, starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and consider international artworks [ACAVAR131](#)

Senior Visual Arts:

We have endeavoured to address all Australian state and territory senior visual arts curriculums particularly to inform the case study components.

Glossary

Aesthetic   a set of principles underlying the work of a particular artist or artistic movement

Apocalypse   a prophesised doomsday that brings about the end of the world

Caricature   a drawing, description or performance that exaggerates somebody's or something's characteristics for humorous or satirical effect.

Chimera   an imaginary monster whose body is a grotesque combination of mismatched animal parts

Dystopian   an imaginary place where everything is as bad as it possibly can be

Ephemeral   lasting for only a short period of time and leaving no permanent trace

Ego   somebody's idea of his or her own importance or worth

Figurative   relating to or representing form in art by means of human or animal figures

Imbue   to make somebody or something rich with a particular quality

Maquette   a small-scale model or rough draft of a planned larger sculpture

Methodology   the methods or organising principles underlying a particular art, science or other area of study

Motif   a dominant or recurring idea in an artistic work

Narrative   the art or process of telling a story or giving an account of something

Oeuvre   a work of art or literature, or such works considered as a unit, especially the complete work of a single artist

Storyboard   a set of drawn images that illustrate scenes from a movie intended to be filmed

Surrealism   an early 20th-century movement in art and literature that tried to represent the subconscious mind by creating fantastic imagery

Synopsis   a condensed version of a text, such as a summary of the plot of a book, play or movie

Utopian   belonging to or characteristic of an ideal perfect state or place