

**Interpreting the Frames:
An Analysis of the Implementation of the New South Wales Visual Arts Syllabus, Year 9**
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Abstract (Summary)

This dissertation reviews a State-wide art education curriculum that includes art making, art history, art criticism, and cultural and theoretical critique as it occurs within the classrooms of two State-run schools in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), Australia. NSW divides its art education curriculum into conceptual Frames: the Subjective, the Cultural, the Structural, and the Postmodern, in order to direct the interpretation of artwork. The Frames enable art educators and students to emulate the practices of the artworld by finding connections between artistic forms, practices, their content, and their context. The Frames are meant to be a construct within art education curriculum, grounded in theory, that brings a diversity of values and viewpoints to the creation and study of art.

This research project included a seven week feminist case study, from July 25 until September 8, 2000, of two Year 9 Additional (elective) art classrooms, of two experienced art teachers within two public high schools in Sydney's northern suburbs: Belman Girls' School, a selective school, and Piney Ridge, a coeducational institution. I observed the two teachers' methodologies, their interpretation of subject matter chosen from the NSW Syllabus, and their students' interpretations of these subjects. My question was: How do these two teachers interpret the Frames of the NSW Syllabus within a course of study?

The two teachers used the Frames as communicative tools to ask questions about artworks, using different viewpoints and values. They used the Frames' language the most during Critical and Historical study. They often did not refer to all of the Frames simultaneously, preferring to stress a few Frames at one time within unit plans or assignments. Neither the teachers nor the students frequently referred to the Frames orally within the classroom, but they used them extensively in written material.

The teachers viewed themselves as expert knowers and, following Syllabus Outcomes, devised curricula according to their interests and to the interests, needs, and abilities of their students. Teachers at both schools based units of study on classroom excursions that incorporated Deweyian experiential learning with student research for teacher-directed making assignments defined by the Frames.

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