Planning and making hanging mobile artworks,   
Levels 3 and 4

Visual Arts

Unit of work

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Introduction

Overview of the unit of work

**Title:** Planning and making hanging mobile artworks

**Timing (approximate):** 9 × 60-minute lessons

**Description:** Students explore the art practice of Alexander Calder and the themes of Calder’s artworks. Through the creative process students plan, design and construct their own hanging mobile artwork inspired by the artwork of Alexander Calder.

**Overall learning intentions:** To observe and analyse Alexander Calder’s artworks to understand his art practice

To plan an artwork proposing the ideas and materials that could be used to express their ideas

To construct a hanging mobile artwork by combining various materials and considering visual conventions to create balance

To evaluate their artwork and compare their art practice and artworks to Alexander Calder and his work

**Assessment:** Opportunities for assessment include:

Alexander Calder mind map ([Learning activity 1](#LearnAct1))

mind map for student’s own artwork ([Learning activity 2](#LearnAct2))

preliminary drawings with annotations ([Learning activity 3](#LearnAct3))

final artwork ([Learning activity 4](#LearnAct4))

written self-reflection and evaluation of own artwork ([Learning activity 5](#LearnAct5))

teacher notes from class discussions and teacher conferencing (all learning activities).

Links to the Victorian Curriculum F–10

**Curriculum area and band:** Visual Arts, Levels 3 and 4

**Content descriptions:** Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times as inspiration to create visual artworks ([VCAVAE025](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=a7c2de3a-a47d-4bf1-aa88-174595914a05))

Explore visual conventions and use materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to particular art forms, and to make artworks ([VCAVAV026](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=b540ce49-31a5-460e-bf0d-883c22ed4001))

Explore different ways of displaying artworks to enhance their meaning for an audience ([VCAVAP027](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=17b0c09f-9835-427a-b215-4b6a1523975b))

Identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ([VCAVAR028](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=d4fc963a-d9a9-4cdb-bd75-fe866c6234c7))

**Relevant achievement standard:** By the end of Level 4, students plan and make artworks that are inspired by artworks they experience. They use materials, visual conventions, techniques and processes to express their ideas in artworks.

Students discuss how artists express ideas and use materials, techniques and visual conventions in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures.

They discuss and evaluate the art making processes, materials and techniques they use to express their ideas.

Learning activities

Learning activity 1: Explore and Express Ideas –   
Discussion and mind mapping

**Timing (approximate):** 60 minutes

**Learning intentions:** To observe, analyse and understand Alexander Calder’s artworks and art practice

To use visual arts language and refer to visual conventions

**Content descriptions:** Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times as inspiration to create visual artworks ([VCAVAE025](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=a7c2de3a-a47d-4bf1-aa88-174595914a05))

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**Achievement standard extract:** Students discuss how artists express ideas and use materials, techniques and visual conventions in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures.

They discuss and evaluate the art making processes, materials and techniques …

**Resources required:** A range of Alexander Calder resources, such as images and videos from the following web pages and websites:

['Alexander Calder' school resource, National Gallery of Victoria](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/school_resource/alexander-calder/)

['Who is Alexander Calder?' Tate](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/alexander-calder-848/who-is-alexander-calder)

['Alexander Calder 1898-1976', Tate](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/alexander-calder-848)

['Alexander Calder: Radical Inventor', National Gallery of Victoria](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/alexander-calder/)

['Calder, Mobile (video)', Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/art-between-wars/american-art-wwii/v/motion)

['Alexander Calder: Performing Sculpture / Tate Modern, London' video, YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5J6Qb11UHE)

Student art journals

[‘See / Think / Wonder'](http://pzartfulthinking.org/?page_id=2) at Artful Thinking, Project Zero

1. Show students two or three images of:

* Calder working on an artwork
* Calder in his studio
* Calder’s hanging mobile artworks.

1. Use the thinking routine See, Think, Wonder (see the resource in the list of resources above), and ask students to make observations, pose questions and explain what they think Calder’s artworks are about, the materials he used and how his artworks were constructed. Give students the opportunity to consider what Calder’s art practice and artwork are about before explaining your own thoughts.

Pose the following questions to facilitate students’ thinking:

* What do you think Calder’s artwork about? (Think)
* How was it made? (Wonder)
* What materials did he use? (See)
* What form did his artwork take? (Think)
* What does his work make you think about? (Wonder)
* What does his artwork remind you of? (Wonder)
* Why do you think it was unique? (Wonder)

1. As students give their responses, write their comments on the board as a mind map to record the conversation.
2. Students then create a mind map in their art journal to record their own thinking, wondering and observations about Calder’s artwork. Students can either create their mind map during the class discussion or after the discussion.
3. Students select one of the images viewed during the discussion and paste it into their art journal as a visual reference of Calder’s work.

**Tip:** Students could view videos about Calder’s work for further background information. As a class, discuss the videos and include responses on mind maps.

Assessment

Evidence in practice includes:

* Students identify and analyse Calder’s art practice: the characteristics of his artworks such as the materials and techniques he used and his use of visual conventions.
* Students discuss the ideas, themes and concepts in Calder’s artworks.
* Students discuss and analyse artworks by Calder and give evidence for their opinions.

Learning activity 2: Explore and Express Ideas –   
Mind mapping an artwork

**Timing (approximate):** 60 minutes

**Learning intention:** To plan an artwork, proposing the ideas and materials that they could use to express their ideas

**Content descriptions:** Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times as inspiration to create visual artworks ([VCAVAE025](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=a7c2de3a-a47d-4bf1-aa88-174595914a05))

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**Achievement standard extract:** They use materials, visual conventions, techniques and processes to express their ideas in artworks.

**Resources required:** Student art journals

Drawing materials, such as coloured pencils

1. Students plan an artwork in their art journal by brainstorming ideas for their own hanging mobile artwork based on their investigation of Calder’s artworks. Students can either create a mind map or write sentences about their proposed artwork. Students could write or draw thumbnail sketches and use coloured pencils to document their ideas.
2. Ask students to consider these questions when planning their artwork:

* What will your artwork represent?
* What will your artwork be about?
* Can you see some ideas about your planned artwork that you got from Alexander Calder’s work?
* What shapes and colours will you use in your artwork?
* What material could you use to create your artwork? What do you need to consider when choosing materials?

Assessment

Evidence in practice includes:

* Students make decisions about their artwork by considering the ideas and themes of their artwork and the materials they will use to construct their artwork.

Learning activity 3: Visual Arts Practices –   
Planning a Calder mobile

**Timing (approximate):** 60 minutes

**Learning intention:** To design a hanging mobile artwork and evaluate the design by writing reflective notes

**Content descriptions:** Explore visual conventions and use materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to particular art forms, and to make artworks ([VCAVAV026](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=b540ce49-31a5-460e-bf0d-883c22ed4001))

Identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ([VCAVAR028](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=d4fc963a-d9a9-4cdb-bd75-fe866c6234c7))

**Achievement standard extract:** By the end of Level 4, students plan and make artworks that are inspired by artworks they experience. They use materials, visual conventions, techniques and processes to express their ideas in artworks.

**Resources required:** Student art journals

Drawing materials, such as coloured pencils

1. Students draw two or three designs for their hanging mobile artwork in their art journal, with one drawing per page. Students annotate their design to explain their thinking. Ask students to:

* label the different materials they are going to use for the different parts of their artwork
* label what the different parts of their artwork represent in relation to their idea or theme
* describe what their artwork will look like
* annotate how they can make improvements to their design.

1. Explain to students that planning and designing their artwork before making it will enable them to focus on just making their mobile artwork in the next learning activity.
2. Walk around the class looking at students’ designs. Discuss with them any potential problems with their design. If there is a possible design flaw, students should alter their drawing or redesign and redraw their design.

Assessment

Evidence in practice includes:

* Students explore and experiment with their ideas to plan their hanging mobile artwork.
* Students explain their design choices by identifying the materials and the visual conventions used to represent their ideas.

Learning activity 4: Visual Arts Practices –   
Exploring materials and creating a Calder mobile

**Timing (approximate):** 4 × 60 minutes

**Learning intention:** To construct a hanging mobile artwork by combining various materials and considering visual conventions to create balance

**Content descriptions:** Explore visual conventions and use materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to particular art forms, and to make artworks ([VCAVAV026](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=b540ce49-31a5-460e-bf0d-883c22ed4001))

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**Achievement standard extract:** By the end of Level 4, students plan and make artworks that are inspired by artworks they experience. They use materials, visual conventions, techniques and processes to express their ideas in artworks.

**Resources required:** Student art journals

Construction materials, such as cardboard, printing foam, embossing foil, string (lightweight), skewers or sticks, wire, icypole sticks, Paper ‘Magiclay’

1. Lay out a range of different materials so all students can access and select the materials they require.
2. As a class, discuss some challenges students might face and what they should consider when constructing their mobile artwork, such as:

* weight – elements should be of similar weight
* balance – the elements need to hang evenly
* how they will construct and balance their mobile.

1. Instruct students to follow these steps when making their mobiles:

* Starting with the elements that will hang, attach string to the elements.
* Tie this string to skewers or sticks.
* Tie the skewers or sticks together with string.
* Stick the sculpture to a table edge so that the sculpture hangs.
* Move the strings along the skewers or sticks so that the elements are balanced.

1. Students should test materials before deciding which materials are most suitable for their design. Students stick material samples in their art journal and write a reflective comment explaining which sample worked well and why, and/or which sample did not work well and why.
2. Explain to students what a *maquette* is (a small model). Ask students to create a small-scale sample or section of their sculpture. This stage of the process enables students to problem solve the construction of their sculpture and make decisions about what their sculpture will look like.

Assessment

Evidence in practice includes:

* Students use a range of materials and techniques to construct their hanging mobile artwork.
* Students experiment and manipulate the materials to find the most effective way to construct their hanging mobile artwork.
* Students construct a hanging mobile artwork according to their design, to express or represent their idea or theme.

Learning activity 5: Respond and Interpret, Present and Perform – Reflection and evaluation

**Timing (approximate):** 60 minutes

**Learning intention:** To evaluate their artwork and compare their art practice and artworks to Calder’s work

**Content descriptions:** Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times as inspiration to create visual artworks ([VCAVAE025](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/curriculum/f-10#level=3-4&search=a7c2de3a-a47d-4bf1-aa88-174595914a05))

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**Achievement standard extract:** They discuss and evaluate the art making processes, materials and techniques they use to express their ideas.

**Resources required:** Student art journals

1. Students write a reflection and evaluation of their artwork in their art journal. Write sentence starters on the board to prompt students:

* My artwork is like Calder’s because …
* The most successful part of my artwork is …
* The most challenging part of my artwork was …
* I think my artwork expresses my ideas because …

1. As a class, discuss how the mobile artworks could be displayed for a school art show. Issues and limitations to consider include:

* What would be needed to hang the artwork? (materials and equipment)
* How will the audience walk around the artworks?
* What would be a suitable height to hang the artworks for viewing?

1. Students discuss how they would display their mobile artworks in a school art show.

Assessment

Evidence in practice includes:

* Students explain and reflect on their artwork and the art making process.