

The Design Process

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This article was devised and written by Max Darby in June 2009.

This Design Process is but one of many and reflects ideas that are not new. Teachers could provide their students with a range of Design models for use in different circumstances and to meet different needs and purposes. Design processes are usually used by students when particular artistic problems or artistic challenges arise. Some of these are solved quickly and spontaneously and some require committed consideration. Many students like to solve artistic problems themselves, while others use the thoughts of other people as a part of their research and consolidation of their ideas.

Sometimes problems or challenges need to be faced during the making of an artwork (in most case these are solved quickly and often intuitively because the nature of the artwork has already been determined and the work is under way). Sometimes problems or challenges need to be faced before a project has begun (in many cases these require greater thought and consideration because they impact on the total direction the artwork is likely to take).

The Visual Workbook, or Visual Diary, or Work Journal is a good place for the Design process to be employed, trialed and recorded. Documentation varies in importance with different

tasks and at different year levels. Sometimes evidence of the design process is required for assessment, and sometimes it is just a useful tool to assist the production of better artworks. A good visual record of the whole design and production process of the artwork can be maintained and retained with annotations. This might be done with drawings and sketches or by using digital photography.

The following 10 step approach is a good model for students to use in class.

The Design Process Model

Step 1. Establish the design task, challenge or problem to be solve.

For example, creating a cast sculpture of a life-like figure

Step 2. Establish the acceptable parameters, boundaries or limitations.

For example, life size using clay and plaster etc.

Step 3. Brainstorm possible solutions to the design problem.

For example, casting straight from a real person's body; creating a mould and pouring plaster into the empty spaces; working from memory etc.

Step 4. Chose the preferred solution to the design problem.

For example, working with clay from memory.

Step 5. Trial the chosen solution to the design problem.
For example, working from memory to produce a moulded clay figure form which a cast could be made.

Step 6. Evaluate the trial and make adjustments as necessary.

For example, consider how easily and well the clay moulded to the desired forms.

Step 7. Evaluate the completed trial.

For example, deciding whether the finished trial meets the original intentions and expectations.

Step 8. Accept or reject the solution.

Decide to proceed on the final work using the same method and approach as was taken in the trial, or deciding to use another approach (in which case another trial might be considered appropriate)

Step 9. Undertake and complete the task using the selected solution

Make the artwork in the form, shape and style that was trialed but using it as a guide rather than as a template. It is a good fall-back reference point should dissatisfaction with the unfolding work become evident

Step 10. Evaluate the completed task

Consider the quality of the completed artwork in light of the original expectations and original idea that was imagined. Determining whether the work has been successful. Deciding what was good and what was, perhaps, not so good about the completed artwork. Recording all of these evaluations. Determining whether to make additional works on the same or a similar theme.