

Areas of Inspiration in the National Gallery of Victoria

The National Gallery of Victoria offers you a treasure-trove of objects, and ideas for inspiration. Today you have the unique opportunity to search the gallery for some of those gems of inspiration. As well as the expected, look for the unexpected as you move up through the gallery spaces.

Find at least four artworks that you consider would be a source of inspiration for you. Use the questions on inspiration at the end of this sheet for each of the artworks you have selected. Remember, do not touch the artworks and only pencils are to be used in the gallery.

Here are a few ideas to start you on your Journey of inspiration.

“You must plan to be spontaneous”
– David Hockney

SECOND FLOOR **17th and 18th Century European Art and Design** – Turn left at the top of the escalator
The art of portraiture continues to flourish into the 21st Century. Currently, for example, the Saatchi Gallery in London is running a self-portrait competition titled “Selfies”. Have a look at the great variety of competition entries on <http://www.saatchigallery.com/selfie/>

As you enter the 17th and 18th Century gallery, you will see many portraits and self-portraits. Find one that inspires you to research further. Compare it with the self-portraits on the Saatchi website. How did people want to show themselves 200 years ago compared with how people choose to show themselves today? What part does wealth or social status play in a portrait today compared with those in this gallery?

Other possible sources of inspiration in this gallery include dramatic historic events. Can you find two different artists who painted “The Crossing of the Red Sea”? Both these paintings show how the Israelites, led by Moses, journeyed out of captivity in Egypt to the Promised Land. Pursued by the Egyptians to the red sea, Moses miraculously parted the waters, allowing his people to cross safely. How might these images relate to the current refugee crisis in Syria and other parts of the world. Like the artists of old, how can you use current political events to make dynamic artworks?

19th and 20th Century European Arts and Design – Turn right at the top of the escalator
During these two decades, there was a fast-changing pace of styles and concepts in art.
Look carefully for two works that inspire you and write down answers to the list of questions that can be found below.

FIRST FLOOR

Medieval and Renaissance sacred art – Turn left at the top of the escalator.

Here you will find Christian sculptures from the 15th and 16th Century.

These works might be excellent examples for a study of human emotions. Take, for example, the early 16th century German limewood sculpture of the Pieta or Pity. In this gallery, you may also find the sculpture of an adoring mother holding a laughing child.

Asian Arts of China and Japan – Turn right at the top of the escalator.

Also on this floor are the examples of Chinese and Japanese art and design.

Look for the Japanese warrior Armour (Yoroi) and note the materials it has been made from. Also, find Samurai costumes (Bushido) and read about their strong virtues and code of ethics. In this gallery, you might also find examples of contemporary Japanese designer bags and jewellery that use colours and portraits of actors from Japanese woodblock prints from earlier times.

Introduction to conservation practice

While you are in the gallery begin to become aware of the way the lighting is used. What works have strong lighting and which have low lighting? Are different styles of lights used for different types of mediums. What has the exhibition designer done to protect all the artworks from damage by the public?

Introduction to curatorial practice

In the 17th and 18th Century European Art and Design collection, you will find furniture and paintings placed next to, or close to, each other. Why has the curator done this?

**“I spent my time drawing copies of all the Italian Primitives...
and I finally told my father that I couldn't go on [studying law]”**
– Henri Matisse

Questions on Inspiration

1. Write down the name of the artist, the name of the artwork, the birthplace of the artist, the date or period of this artwork, the materials it is made from.
2. Write a description of as many things you can see in the work.
List the main art elements used –
And the art principles used –
3. What techniques have been used to make this artwork?
4. What style is this artwork?
Describe the characteristic ideas or elements and principles that give this work the style you have called it.
5. How have you been inspired by the work?
6. How does this artwork link to your personal interest?
7. What can you use from this artwork?
What conceptual idea could you personally develop from it?

