

Transurban

Canal to Creek

TRANSURBAN PUBLIC ART PROGRAM



VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

NICO NICOSON & KIM SIEW

A PERFECT SETTING | STAGE 5 WORKSHEET

A Perfect Setting is a joyful celebration of the craft of ornate plasterwork and its presence in the homes of Inner West residents. Located on the façade of the Unique Plaster workshop in St Peters, the mural's playful motifs transform the building with references to plasterwork traditions. With its exciting design, the artwork reconnects the community to its urban and domestic environments.



Nico Nicoson & Kim Siew, *A Perfect Setting*

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

VOCABULARY - mural, stylised, motifs, decorative plasterwork, ornamental, domestic architecture, collaboration, partnerships

STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

1. Research and write your own definition for the following terms:

a) Stylise

Definition:

b) Motif

Definition:

2. **A Perfect Setting** features references to motifs that commonly feature in decorative plasterwork. What techniques have been used by the artists to stylise these motifs?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – AUDIENCE

3. **A Perfect Setting** is a public artwork that was created through a series of collaborations and partnerships. Visit the [Canal to Creek website](#) to research who was involved. Use your research to complete the table below.

Partners/Collaborators	What impact did they have on the artwork?

4. Using your ideas from the table above, discuss the following question with a peer.

How do public artworks challenge traditional definitions and purposes of artworks?

Record notes from your discussion below.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – WORLD/AUDIENCE

5. Read the quotes from artists Nico Nicoson and Kim Siew.

“Victorian, Federation and Italianate homes are synonymous with the Inner West landscape and both of us live in old houses. The charm and character that exists in these homes as a result of the careful attention paid to detail and beauty in the [plasterwork] is absolutely visceral, and this comprises a large part of the Inner West’s unique and recognisable character that we love so much.” - Nico Nicoson

“...you could walk down a really busy intersection like this and not pay any attention. But once you have a huge public work you notice that, and then you start to look around a bit more and you notice all the little houses and heritage buildings and industrial buildings that are around here too.” - Kim Siew

- How does **A Perfect Setting** reflect aspects of the local built environment?

- How might **A Perfect Setting** transform the audiences’ relationship to the local built environment?


ARTMAKING TASK

Domestic Designs

In *A Perfect Setting*, Nico Nicoson and Kim Siew have based their mural design on the plasterwork motifs found in the houses of Sydney's Inner West. Explore their practice by creating your own design based on the architectural heritage of your local built environment.

- Investigate your local built environment by conducting online research, exploring it physically, photographing and/or sketching its features and writing notes in response to the following questions. (Tip: Use Street View on Google Maps if you can't explore your environment physically. You might focus on a particular street or area).
 - What are some of the main architectural styles used in your local area (e.g. Art Deco, Victorian, Federation)?
 - What are some of the design features and colours that dominate the buildings?
 - Are there distinctive natural features existing within the built environment, such as certain trees, plants or birds?
 - What aspects of the built environment interest you? (E.g. the shapes of the buildings or particular decorative features).
- Explore the sketches and photographs you have collected. Identify your favourite images and use these to select three to five features or objects that you could use to create a design inspired by ***A Perfect Setting***. Example of features or objects could include:
 - A distinctive feature of a building, such as a decorative door or window
 - The overall shape of a whole building
 - Letters or numbers seen on buildings
 - Natural features found within the built environment, such as trees, plants or birds
- In your Visual Arts Diary, start to sketch and experiment with different ways of stylising the features or objects you have selected. Look to the ways Nico Nicoson and Kim Siew stylised their design to support your ideas. Tip: focusing on the silhouette or outline of an object can be a good way to simplify it.
- Create a pattern from your stylised sketches by experimenting with repeating and arranging the objects you have drawn. You might try some of the following:
 - Change the scale of your objects, making some smaller and some larger
 - Overlap your objects
 - Rotate your objects
 - Multiply or repeat some of your objects more than others
- Experiment with and select a limited colour palette for your design based on the colours you identified in your local built environment. Choose no more than three colours, plus tints and shades of each (e.g. use both a light and dark blue).
- Once you have decided on your pattern and colour palette, work digitally or with drawing or painting materials to create a final, coloured version of your design on an A3-A2 scale. Your final design could be created using coloured paper cut-outs, acrylic paint, coloured pencil or watercolour.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

-  **Extension:** Transform your design into a poster that celebrates your local environment. Digitally or by hand, add text featuring the name of the area and any other additional information or ideas. You might consider cropping or altering the orientation of your design to suit the needs of your poster.