These teacher notes provide a summary of the major themes addressed in ‘The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art’ (APT6):

> Drawing
> Architecture
> Collaboration
> Urbanisation / influence of modernity
> Interest in popular culture and the everyday

They aim to assist secondary teachers to: (1) prepare their students for a visit to APT6, (2) guide their students through the exhibition, and (3) conduct relevant follow-up activities. Copies of these notes can be made for students to read in the Gallery or classroom.

The content included has been adapted from selected essays featured in The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (exhibition catalogue), Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2009. Curriculum information is also outlined on the last page of this document.
Although I live in India there is nothing in my work that may be seen as being distinctly Indian or Adi (the tribe which my family belongs to in Arundchal Pradesh), nor do I feel like I’m part of any one identity but maybe a part of the many spaces/identities that I have come to occupy.

Minam Apang

To me the white buildings decorated with layers of baroque, Roman and Iranian carving look like cakes. The idea of people living in a huge wedding cake and their ostentatious lifestyle, especially the extravagant weddings, was the starting point for a cake series that took a tongue-in-cheek look at high society and the hybridisation of cultures.

Farhad Moshiri

When we think of the term ‘drawing’, we usually associate it with something undertaken with pencils, ink or charcoal on a two-dimensional surface. In viewing some of the works in APT6, consider how some of the primary visual principles of drawing (i.e. line, shading and depth) can be translated into other forms, including three dimensions.

Many of the works in the exhibition prompt the viewer to think about drawing as a cross-disciplinary practice. Today, the principles of drawing crossover into other realms and become somewhat of a hybrid.

How can we think about ‘drawing’ as a set of scientific and aesthetic principles which sit within other mediums to create a hybrid?

Before viewing

- How would you define the term ‘drawing’?
  Is it limited to only a two-dimensional surface?
- Write down the different examples of drawing you see every day. Even spaces like your classroom have been designed from an initial architectural drawing. Think about ways you might be able to ‘draw’ in three dimensions.
- Study these images by Minam Apang and Farhad Moshiri before you visit the Gallery, and write down how you think their works use ‘drawing’ principles.

After viewing

- Now that you have seen the focus works, how do Minam Apang, Farhad Moshiri and other artists in APT6 take drawing further, into a hybrid realm?
- How do the sculptural and textural aspects of Apang’s work influence the atmosphere of her work?
- Draw something, then ‘translate’ your drawing into another medium (i.e. sculpture, painting or sewing). Write down some of the differences and similarities you’ve discovered about drawing and the other medium.
- Can you ‘translate’ something else into a drawing (an item of clothing, a building or photograph)? In your opinion, which medium works best? Why?

For further consideration

You might like to consider the ways the following artists explore principles of drawing:

- Shirana Shahbazi Gallery 1.2, GoMA
- Gonkar Gyatso Gallery 1.3, GoMA
- Raafat Ishak Watermall, QAG
A thousand doors and windows too,
The palace has . . . but still,
Wherever I might go or be
Master confronts me there.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai

Wit Pimkanchanapong’s works involve astonishing physical and visual transformations of materials, objects or places. The artist exposes the mechanics and artifice of technology and, in doing so, brings his viewers closer to the reality of their surroundings, creating new spaces and means for shared interaction.

Donna McColm, APT6 exhibition catalogue

Some of the artists in APT6 explore elements of architecture in their work. Ayaz Jokhio’s soaring structure in the Queensland Art Gallery’s Watermall takes its inspiration from the verse by Bhittai, the great Sindhi Sufi poet of the late Mughal era. Jokhio considers the work a piece of ‘conceptual architecture’, a physical translation of Bhittai’s expression of the omnipresence of God.1 As in the Islamic tradition of ‘hidden architecture’, its focus is on an internal, enclosed space, in which the work truly exists ‘only when entered, penetrated and experienced from within’.2

Cloud 2009 — Wit Pimkanchanapong’s commission for APT6 installed in the Gallery of Modern Art is made from thousands of sheets of standard white A3 printing paper, wire and bulldog clips. Cloud 2009 partially obscures the building’s interior architecture, focusing our attention instead on the often unnoticed beauty of this ordinary material. The work also enhances the features of the building by accentuating the long lines of the grand interior space. As visitors ascend the Gallery’s stairs and escalators, there is a sense of soaring through clouds.

1 Ayaz Jokhio, email to curator Russell Storer, 7 May 2009.

Before viewing
• Conduct an internet search on the term ‘conceptual architecture’. How would you apply this definition to Ayaz Jokhio’s work?
• Can you find two examples where artists have used space in their installations? Do these installations encourage audiences to experience notions of interior or exterior space? How?

After viewing
• How is the public encouraged to interact with the art works?
• Cloud 2009 can be viewed from multiple levels within the Gallery. Why is this crucial to the experience of the work?
• Both works employ repetition and spatial interplay as a means to invite contemplation. What do you think about when you engage with these works? For example, how does Jokhio’s installation echo Bhittai’s words from the quote above?
• Usually artists who explore elements of architecture need to collaborate with others to install their works. List the different kinds of professionals and designers needed to create these art works.

For further consideration
You might like to consider the ways the following artists explore architecture:
• DAMP Fairfax Gallery (Gallery 1.1), GoMA
• Shinji Ohmaki Gallery 3.3, GoMA
Collaboration

Focus artists

Shirana Shahbazi  Gallery 1.2, GoMA
Mataso Printmakers  Gallery 1.3, GoMA

[Shirana Shahbazi] takes a bowerbird approach to image-making, and seamlessly intermingles visual cues.

Bree Richards, APT6 exhibition catalogue

These freely adopted and adapted images represent the visual language of a generation born into a more commercialised culture than their parents. The strength and vitality of the works resides in the individual artists' intuitive and unique views of their world in transition.

David Burnett, APT6 exhibition catalogue

One of the overarching themes of APT6 is collaboration: artist duos, collectives, artist groups, art societies and artist-run initiatives. Collaboration can also include the teamwork of art-making itself, that is, working with technicians, assistants, fabricators and/or artisans in the production process.

What these collaborations share is the acknowledgment that art is a fundamentally social activity, rather than the production of objects by an individual ‘genius’, an idea which has long been the basis for artistic value.

In her photographic reinterpretations of the still-life tradition, Shirana Shahbazi has commissioned a group of Iranian billboard painters to translate her precise studio photographs onto black painted canvases. These paintings employ the reductive style typically used in advertising, or to celebrate religious leaders in Iran today.

The Mataso Printmakers from Ohlen Village, Port Vila, Vanuatu, emerged following collaboration with Australian artists Newell Harry, Carl Amnue and Jack Sivi Martau, through a series of workshops. As a medium, printmaking is often a technique of choice for collective workshops. The ability to generate multiple prints marks it as a cost and time effective way of exploring creative solutions in a group context. The majority of the artists involved — aged between 16 and 25 years — merge television, advertising, reggae and soul music, and other influences from popular culture, with local and traditional beliefs.

Before viewing
• Which do you think is more important in collaborative art works – the final art work or the art of making?
• Do you think a finished work of art made by a collective has a single ‘voice’, or do you think multiple voices and ideas may be identified? Explain.

After viewing
• What were the differences in the collaboration processes between these two artists? Were there any similarities?

For further consideration
You might like to consider the ways the following artists explore collaboration:
• Tun Win Aung & Wah Nu  Gallery 3.5, GoMA
• Charwei Tsai  Gallery 1.3, GoMA
• The One Year Drawing Project  Gallery 1.3, GoMA
• Robin White, Bale Jione & Leba Toki  Gallery 3.4, GoMA
... I believe it is not a matter of defining what the Mekong essentially is, but where it is now. The river will always reinvent new paths, and the communities in turn must adapt to ever-changing conditions ... Some of the artists have been witness to generations of change and, in certain cases, the formation of the modern states that exist today.

Rich Streitmatter-Tran, co-curator

Chinese artist Chen Qiulin established her artistic language to formulate juxtapositions of the new with the old. These tensions and polarities sustain her practice and, in keeping with this approach, for APT6, Chen exhibits both a reconstruction and a study of ruins.

Angela Goddard, APT6 exhibition catalogue

In countries that have a long history and established traditions, change can often be a frightening thing. Histories and traditions can be forgotten or demolished because the apparent need for new technology and modern infrastructure is so strong. Though these artists’ works highlight the struggle between the past and the future, they also highlight the importance of the artists’ message — to acknowledge and confront increasing urbanisation and the influence of modernity through their artistic practice.

Before viewing

• What is urbanisation? In what ways does urbanisation affect traditions and cultures in general? Choose a town in China and consider this question in relation to the architecture, memory and population of this town.

• What are some positive outcomes of urbanisation? How are societies improved by technology?

After viewing

• How does Chen Qiulin’s work Xinsheng Town 275-277 2009 comment on urbanisation? How does the scale of this work assist audiences in thinking about the loss of and/or remembering traditions?

• How are the traditions of the Mekong River region communicated by the artists? Consider the content of the works and the mediums used to express the artists’ concerns.

For further consideration

You might like to consider the ways the following artists explore this theme:

• Subodh Gupta Fairfax Gallery (Gallery 1.1), GoMA
• Mansudae Art Studio Gallery 3.1 & 3.2, GoMA
apt6

Interest in popular culture and the everyday

Focus artists

Thukral & Tagra  Gallery 1.2, GoMA
YNG (Yoshitomo Nara and graf)  Fairfax Gallery

*Thukral and Tagra . . . [create] elaborate works which utilise the highly polished look of advertising to explore social aspiration and wealth in contemporary India. Glossy paintings, fashionable clothing and shelves bursting with packaging fill their installations, which are often configured as retail or domestic environments.*

Russell Storer, APT6 exhibition catalogue

I believe an environment has an essential impact on how one creates work. Various factors such as the music playing in the room, the colour on the wall and surrounding objects all affect my painting. I want to bring those elements to the exhibition space, which then becomes a ‘hut’.

Yoshitomo Nara

Consumerism and mass media have become large parts of contemporary popular culture and the everyday life of those living in the Asia Pacific region. A number of artists included in APT6 draw from the elements of their everyday lives for the content of their work. Through objects, and common motifs or imagery from advertisements and TV, they open up elements of popular culture for questioning and consideration.

Before viewing

• What is popular culture? Define what the terms ‘popular culture’ and ‘consumer culture’ mean to you.
• Discuss how popular culture might be different from country to country, and what factors might contribute to these differences.
• Do you think a work of art can be considered part of popular culture? Can elements of popular culture be considered an art work?

After viewing

• Compare and contrast the work of Nara and graf, and Thukral and Tagra. What are the similarities and differences of popular culture in Japan and India? How do these compare to popular culture in Australia? How do you think these artists feel about the popular culture in their own countries?
• Thukral and Tagra come from a design background and graf is a design firm. How do you think this influences the work they have displayed in APT6?

For further consideration

You might like to consider the ways the following artists explore the everyday:

• Gonkar Gyatso  Gallery 1.3, GoMA
• Cheo Chai-Hiang  Foyer Cabinet, GoMA

*GALLERY 1.3, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, BRISBANE, 2009 / Commissioned for APT6. Photograph by Natasha Hart*
Curriculum summary: Secondary

Visual arts

Students will:
• analyse, interpret and reflect on contemporary visual arts practices and emerging technologies used by artists from the Asia Pacific region today
• critically reflect on meanings, purposes and approaches of contemporary artists
• affirm and value the contributions of visual artists, designers and craftspeople, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, from Australia and the Asia Pacific region
• examine and affirm personal and community perspectives relating to past and present, social, cultural, spiritual, economic, political, environmental and vocational contexts
• research and analyse the stylistic, technical and aesthetic features of contemporary art created within or influenced by cultures in the Asia Pacific region
• design, create and exhibit art works that explore the styles and conventions used by contemporary artists from Asia and the Pacific

Studies of society and the environment

Time, continuity and change

Students will:
• discuss how social, political, economic and cultural changes and continuities are connected to particular events, ideas and contributions, and can be interpreted from different perspectives

Culture and identity

Students will:
• observe how cultures and identities are shaped by a range of factors, and how societies promote cohesion and diversity in different ways
• consider how group identities are influenced by different factors, including family, communities, nationality, socioeconomic factors and religious beliefs
• develop social and personal skills that promote working independently and with others in groups and communities
• discuss the value of diversity in forms of visual art from different cultures and contexts

Media

Students will:
• analyse the ways media languages and technologies are used to shape representations
• consider how media techniques and practices are used to market, promote, deliver and exhibit media texts (e.g. advertising, films and fashion)
• use still and moving images, sounds and words to construct and reconstruct meaning in media texts

Film, television and new media

Students will:
• appreciate that diverse and changing moving-image media provide different experiences for people in different cultural contexts (e.g. animations, films, large-scale projections and small monitor displays)

English

Students will:
• demonstrate and analyse the relationship between audience, subject matter, purpose and text type
• consider how texts can reflect an author’s point of view, beliefs and cultural understandings
• examine the way non-literary texts entertain, evoke emotion and develop themes

Music

Students will:
• listen to reggae music produced in the Pacific, considering its specific audiences and specific purposes
• consider the ways artists sing, play instruments, move and compose music by manipulating musical elements to express ideas