

**Children's Intuitive Understandings of Pictures**  
**N.H. Freeman & M.J. Parsons**

Freeman and Parsons state the rational argument still lies about whether the significant qualities of an artwork lie more within the intentions of the artist, the work, or the mind of the viewer. These various viewpoints pose a problem for us teachers, as we have to gain how each child will interpret a particular artwork. These individual artworks are then seen as extremely ambiguous, and interpretations of them can differ greatly within variation for example of culture, age, or education.

The article illustrates to readers that this presents a complex problem to us as teachers. The development of this intuitive theory upon art develops within the student as they mature. The article highlights the intuitive theories of art by learners is that it is difficult to construct for several reasons, one being that art is complex and the other is that artworks can trigger emotional responses even if the view is unable to explain why.

Norman Freeman revealed the critical debate of the extensiveness of an artwork that exists within the world today and the problem that it creates with its diversity. Children begin to categorise certain artworks that attribute value to different art forms with a basis of their own education and culture.

Such dimensions build on cultural understanding, creative thinking. Freeman and Parsons state the general capabilities for provision of learning underline and cross with literacy skills and critically thinking an artworks with certain activities constructed within the art classroom such as VTS, to incorporate art production or art criticism, therefore incorporating the children's ability to interpret and respond to artworks with a critical and intellectual thought process.

Theories of Visual Art need to account for four different elements; the picture, what it pictures, the artist and the viewer, with an organisation among the four. Young Children were asked to identify the properties.

**Freeman and Parsons Age Study -**

- Children around the age of 10 – 11: Value is placed on qualities of realism, beauty as the subject matter. It is noted that the most sophisticated answers were from primary school students; this age of students don't over intellectualise things.
- Age 14: Recognition of the role of an artist, intentions of the artist, and significance of a final image
- Age 16: Establishment of understanding the importance of artists intentions and become aware of the cultural and historical aspects that may have had significant impact on the artists finished body of work.
- Young adulthood: eventually come to understand their role as the viewer, the involvements and cultural factors that effect their interpretations of an artwork.

The article highlights dimensions of art education within Australian Curriculum. It declares that students are making and creating and exploring and responding to a range of artworks that include analysing at artworks within historical contexts, such as getting students to respond and critically think about Asian and Aboriginal artworks. This too is getting students to gain ethical understanding even if they have no preceding knowledge. In the state and national curriculums, prominence is being placed on visual thinking; problem solving and increasing the ability to think critically about an artwork and to; their own created body of works.

Visual Thinking Strategies' is identified and recognised within Freeman and Parsons reading. The use of Visual Thinking Strategies' with children is a facilitation technique for open ended group discussions in relation to the artworks, for students to discover with provoking discussion about their responses within themselves, in relation an artwork and encourages the use of art resources within a classroom. The main viewpoints raised within this reading is that it is certainly valuable for students to discuss and engage in discussion with the teacher and other students about artworks because it provokes thought and understanding of the intentions of the artist. Engaging all students who can present multiple viewpoints and to question the interpretations and qualities of an artwork.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Is VTS an effective strategy at the beginning of a class, discuss.
2. Does speaking out loud in regards to analyzing an artwork help you retain information about that piece?
3. What do people within this tutorial group consider 'Art'? e.g. is performance art, art?  
(An artists steps into an artwork, leaving the medium itself invisible to the viewer)
4. With age and maturity, do we become close-minded when we analyzing an artwork? Discuss.

Freeman, N. H., & Parsons, M. J. (2001). Children's intuitive understanding of pictures. In B. T., & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *Understanding and teaching the intuitive mind*. London: Erlbaum Associates.