

Worksheet For AP Concentration Ideas

AP Studio Art- Concentration Development

AP Studio Art enables students to develop a focused body of work investigating a strong underlying visual idea in Drawing, 2D Design, or 3D Design. A strong concentration is a body of related works that:

- grows out of a coherent plan of action or investigation
- is based on individual interest in a particular visual idea
- is unified by an underlying idea that has visual and/or conceptual coherence
- is focused on a process of investigation, growth, and discovery
- shows the development of a visual language appropriate for the subject

Consider combining a concept or subject matter you are interested in exploring, with a material/ media that will both help you express the concept and that you enjoy working with and investigating, with an artistic style or approach

Complete the following steps to narrow down your concentration idea. Use the **“Brainstorming Ideas for AP Art”** on the following page to clarify the steps..

1. Begin by **writing down all** subjects, themes, places, things, activities or issues that are personally relevant and **that matter to you**.
2. **Narrow down topics** that are unusual, challenging, controversial, gritty or inspiring: those that fill you with passion.
3. Think carefully the topics you have written down. **Eliminate those, which are ‘cheesy’** (i.e. involving pink hearts and Brad Pitt), insincere (i.e. a theme of ‘World Peace’, when really this is something you couldn’t care less about) or overly “pretty” or lacking in substance (i.e. bunches of roses).
4. The ideal AP Art subject is one that you can physically return to, whenever you need – to draw, photograph or to experience firsthand. **Eliminate those, which do not meet this criteria**.
5. Next **remove the topics for which the source material is excessively simple**.
6. Then **eliminate those topics for which the source material lacks aesthetic appeal**.
7. The next topics to **eliminate are those, which are common or over-done**.
8. Finally, **ensure that the topic you choose is something that you really care** about: something that can sustain your interest for a year.

Brainstorming Ideas for AP Art

Begin by writing down all subjects, themes, places, things, activities or issues that are personally relevant and that *matter to you*. The purpose of any artwork is to communicate a message – to comment or scream or sing about the world in which we find ourselves. If there is no emotion behind the work, there is no driving force – nothing to direct and shape your decision-making. Write down the things that you care about; that move you.

Photographic study of a sink by Aditi Kulkarni :



AP Art Ideas: Places, spaces or things that have importance to your life, such a messy, paint-filled art room sink, can be excellent sources of inspiration. Think of all the places you work in, live in or pass by: a classroom with a light streaming in the windows; a graffiti covered train station; a milking shed filled with cows; a chicken farm with featherless birds trapped in tiny cages; a hospital waiting room with a plopping water cooler and creased magazines...

Continue to gather ideas, slanting your thought process to include topics that are unusual, challenging, controversial, gritty or inspiring: those that fill you with passion. Students who select substantial, heartfelt issues that they really believe in are more likely to achieve great results than those who choose aesthetically pleasing but superficial subjects. A tried and true subject can still be approached in an individual and innovative way, but choosing a topic that is novel and fresh has certain advantages. Strong, contentious issues are those, which the assessors themselves have a reaction to; they provoke an emotive response. Such topics make the markers and moderators sit up and take notice: it gives them ample opportunity to

see the merit within your work.



AP Art Ideas: This student has used provocative imagery to explore the contentious issues surrounding human consumption of animal flesh.

Painting coursework folio boards by Michaela Coney:



Evaluating AP Art Ideas



Sometimes the most mundane of objects can provide the greatest beauty, as in this A **AP Art** artwork by Amy Thellusson from Notting Hill and Ealing High School.

Think carefully the topics you have written down. Eliminate those, which are 'cheesy' (i.e involving pink hearts and Brad Pitt), insincere (i.e. a theme of 'World Peace', when really this is something you couldn't care less about) or overly "pretty" or lacking in substance (i.e. bunches of roses).





Sometimes even 'pretty' objects can be explored in a contemporary and innovative way, as in this appealing mixed media cupcake work by a student from Sir William Ramsay School (image sourced from Dan China).

In order to create artworks, you will need access to high quality imagery. For example, if you are exploring the way in which humans kill animals in order to consume their meat, access to the inside of a butchery or abattoir/freezing works is likely to be essential. Reliance on photographs taken by others is unacceptable. No matter how awesome a theme appears, if you are unable to explore any aspect of it firsthand, you will not be able to do the topic justice. Remember also that it is likely you will need to return to your source imagery several times during the AP Art course, so a submission based upon a particular plant that only blooms for a couple of weeks out of the year, or a view of your village during a rare winter snow storm, is very risky. The ideal AP Art subject is one that you can physically return to, whenever you need – to draw, photograph or to experience firsthand. Eliminate those which do not meet this criteria.

Next remove the topics for which the source material is excessively simple, i.e. containing only a few forms, textures and patterns. A small pile of cardboard boxes, for example, might inspire a great drawing, but if this is the starting point for an entire year's AP work, the straight lines, rectangular forms and flat box surfaces do not provide enough visual variety to explore for months on end. Overly busy source material, on the other hand, is not an issue – it is much easier to simplify form and detail than it is to add back in.

Then eliminate those topics for which the source material lacks aesthetic appeal. Do not mistake 'aesthetic appeal' for *pretty*. In fact, some of the 'ugliest' things can be stunningly rendered in an artwork or design. Art teachers (and artists in general) often speak of finding the beauty in the ordinary or mundane: seeing the magic in

that which others have discarded or forgotten. This does not mean, of course, that any old thing is suitable for your AP Art topic. Some scenes are genuinely unattractive and unsuitable visually. Certain object combinations (due to their particular shapes, colors or textures) are extremely difficult to compose in a pleasing way. Similarly, some items – particularly disproportionate drawings or designs by others – are very challenging for a high school student to replicate. A drawing, for example, of a doll that is proportioned unusually, may appear to be an inaccurate, badly proportioned drawing of an ordinary doll. In other words, the examiner may not realize that the doll is proportioned badly – they may think you simply cannot draw. (If you find ascertaining the aesthetic potential of your ideas difficult, discuss this further with your art teacher.



AP Art: This final piece of empty colored bottles illustrates the beauty of ordinary, discarded objects.



AP Art Ideas: This accidental swirl of butter creates the immediate potential for aesthetic exploration: a moment found in what seems to be the ordinary and mundane.

The next topics to eliminate are those, which are common or over-done. It doesn't matter if some other people have explored the same topic before you... With the millions of people in the world, it is highly unlikely that you will be the *only* one to explore a particular theme (this doesn't matter – you can learn from them...and no one will make art exactly like you), but, as mentioned above, if EVERYONE is doing it – if it is a topic that the examiners have seen a hundred times before, you should think carefully about whether you have something sufficiently new and original to say about it.



AP Art Ideas: This is an example of a tried and true portraiture theme being approached in a highly original and innovative way, exploring the interaction between artist and viewer.

Finally, ensure that the topic you choose is something that you *really* care about: something that can sustain your interest for a year. If you have more than one topic left on your list, pick the thing that you care about the most.

SUMMARY

A good concentration topic keeps you enthusiastic, creative and eager to create more. It eliminates the need for slavish self-discipline. It opens the door for you become a *real* artist – making art about what matters to you.

What Is Your Concentration?

"My interpretation of the concentration is that it explores a concept/theme and evolves and grows. I think the value is, that sometime during foundation year in college, the student needs to make some decisions about a path. Our job (as AP Art Teachers) is to start that process even if it results in an entirely different turn later on. The focus will change, but starting the focus is good for the rigor." Patti Knott AP Art Teacher

2- D and Drawing Concentrations that have been successful

From: Melissa Walker

- Self-portraits with grid overlays/ variations within each grid.
- Hands in various positions and media
- Old barns in pastel
- Reflections on a variety of surfaces
- Digital collages combining old letters, polaroids and "dark" images
- Insects with a colorful and humorous viewpoint
- Expressive landscapes painted using specific color schemes
- Eyes, a window to your soul
- Flowers, from realistic evolving to abstract multi-media

From: Emily Faxon

- Photos about human gesture and the expression of emotion
- Anime-style self-portrait drawings
- Street photography emphasizing composition with geometric forms
- Photomontage to portray events of short duration
- Painted abstractions derived from microscopic cellular structures
- Photos inspired by a story about the first flower blooming on the site of the Cambodian "killing fields".
- Oil pastel drawings of plant material juxtaposed with manmade objects.
- Abstractions derived from still lifes (lives?) of household objects.
- Ink drawings based on photographic portraits

From: Patti Knott

- The body as landscape
- Ugly (wasn't so ugly at all - lots of mixed media and inspiration from Banksy)
- Hands and feet
- The skeleton/bones put into before/after situations
- Social/political issues
- Unusual environments
- Masks (interpreted - how do we hide?)
- War (inspired by a Viet Nam Vet, but grew to all conflicts)
- Large close-ups of insects that evolved into very graphic interpretations
- Light ---what is light?
- Wings - how do we fly?
- Music -- interpreted patterns and rhythms to graphic images
- "Homeless" This student really went beyond in interpretation – not just how we usually think about homeless but, - an empty shell, an empty box, parts removed from a "whole" and what do we cherish or miss about calling something "home."

From: Jill Webber

Coffee, simply based off the fact that her (student) whole life revolves around coffee. I was leery at first thinking it would become boring and told her so but also told her it could be a fun challenge if she could think outside the box. It began with the expected and simple compositions but evolved into very different and beautiful drawings/paintings in which she found herself drinking coffee. I definitely think she could sell most of them to coffee houses!

Another student, who is going into animation, chose to do playground equipment. She sometimes took parts of or whole segments of playground equipment and animated them. They each took on a life of their own! They were incredibly interesting and really drew the class into her world of imagination! I will never look at playground equipment the same!

A few concentrations by my students that stand out to me. From: Monica Bryant
Student did a series of work based on places she visited that her deceased father had visited. Sometimes she photo shopped herself in sometimes her father. She used mixed media...photography, collage, painting for a drawing portfolio.

Water theme. Water as metaphor.

Documentary style photography of local veterans who fought in Afghanistan--2D Design.

Tattoo drawings

Animal shelter drawings

Here are a few that I have to add that can work out well...Shari Williams, Benton High School

Light and Shadow in Cityscapes - This one worked well because the student started with photos that he took on a trip to NYC. In his concentration, he used actual photos; he altered photos (transfers, layered with paint); he did a watercolour and a pastel of a couple of photos; he did a couple of works where he played with abstraction and arbitrary color...I just felt this concentration really allowed him to explore the used of value and color as well as composition and he had many pieces to chose from to send in.

Altered Art - In this one, the student took apart her own works of art and combined pieces to make new pieces incorporating various types of paper as well as media. She grew so much as an artist through this concentration because she started to see possibilities and work outside her comfort zone. She also ended up with more than enough work to be selective on what she sent in.

Expression and Gesture - I was not really happy with this student's effort, but thought it was a great idea. It started out well, but she blew it at the end by waiting to the last minute and trying to force work created outside the concentration into the concentration and by rushing other work. She wanted to study how artists convey personal feeling through color and gesture.....kind of answering the question ,what visual clues does a viewer pick up on to get the feeling or emotion the artist wants to elicit?

1. Crushed objects that have been altered by the effect of gravity or human intervention.
2. Things forgotten. Abandoned buildings, old train tracks, etc...
3. Hands as an expression of feeling. Young to old...
4. Surrealism and Dreams.
5. Non-objective, or abstract designs based on different cultures and their mythology such as the Austrian Aborigines, etc.
6. Evolution and or disintegration on an object.
7. A close up view or extreme perspective.
8. Seasonal changes.
9. Inner landscapes
10. Useless objectives
11. Narrative self- portraits (illustrating a headache).
12. Illustrating fears and other emotions.
13. Duality and relationships; a comparison Man/woman, mother/child, light/dark.
14. Generation gap
15. Illustrating folds and fabric with patterns.
16. Human form in motion.
17. Modern day fairy Tales - original story with illustrations.
18. Original Comic book
19. Making your own creative book.
20. Structure in nature -insects.
21. Circus - color, movement, excitement, etc.
22. Time travel
23. Transformation.
24. Juxtaposition of objects.
25. Reflections - metal, water, etc.
26. Medical/scientific illustrations.
27. Household appliances.
27. Household appliances.
28. Different kinds of shoes from different points of views.
29. Types of costumes from different places - textiles from Indonesia.
30. Nightmares.

From Eileen Mandell

From Digital Arts/Illustration:

- Dance
- Movement
- Design from Nature/Nature as Design
- Music
- Packaging designs
- Creating Design from Man-made Objects

Photography Concentrations:

- Design in Architecture to Creation of Design from Architecture
- Nature Close-ups/Abstractions from Nature
- The Body as Shape
- Lines/Creating Depth through Lines
- Multiple Views/Hockney style

Jeanne Bjork, Art Educator- Pewaukee High School

Abandonment both places and people. Student works at a nursing home so some of the images had to do with that idea and some were of abandoned places. (2D Design: Photography)

Evolution of Illness: Student's grandma had Parkinson's disease and so she illustrated through photographic collage, stitching and writing the process of that illness on her grandma's memory, physical ability. Each image (portrait of grandma) had a poem she'd written about the grandma interspersed. She printed images on silk organza and layered them with drawings that depicted anatomical body parts effected by the disease. The portrait became blurrier and blurrier with each image. (2D Design mixed media)

Identity: Hiding behind masks and other roles that we play, specifically women. The student started out photographing people wearing masks, but eventually move away from this and developed a broader interpretation of how we hide behind our roles as women "masking" who we are. (2D Design Photography)

Ruth Wilson

- Illustrating a field trip to a historical farm emphasizing the antiques, tools, etc of the historical period.
- Painting their friends in different historical time periods through costumes and settings. Each friend was illustrated in an era and costume that was their current passion like dance, acting, etc.
- Illustrating a story using an artistic style like fauvism

Beth Heisey

- an examination of what is real or mirage using faces and masks
- illustration of a story about a girl building a sailboat, losing it, and buying it back
- freedom of expression: what it looks like
- portraits of the everyday moods of my dog

- overcoming depression
- athletic trophy as empty compared to the fulfillment of running and playing soccer
- resistance

Susan Kidera

- Stillness (from a kid who was adhd)
- Motion (from a kid who well...kind of a slug)
- Seven deadly sins with the addition of her own 5
- Textile design
- The human figure as shape (graphic design)
- bareness (both literal and metaphorical)
- vegetables
- the dramatic figure (figures with theatrical lighting)
- dance movements from different cultures
- Idiosyncrasies (portraits revealing this in her friends)

Elaine Stropoulos

- cultures - began with ethnic cultures expanded to includes tourists, homeless, etc
- feather
- loneliness/estrangement
- Little Red Riding Hood illustrations
- interpretations of famous Fairy Tales
- micro views - which become abstraction
- body language
- white Tshirt and a cap
- loss of father - the missing person at seminal events
- environmental consciousness
- capturing the mood of music
- capturing the rhythm of music
- fabric textures

Judie Jacobs

- a cross country meet
- construction
- road trip across the United States
- rear view mirrors
- glamorized 1940s jewelry
- barriers
- bras
- members of my family through portraits of their feet
- old fashioned circus
- porches in my neighborhood
- fashion and heavy machinery in rural Vermont
- smaller than normal size

Chris Mason

- Alice in Wonderland theme comparing parts of the story to a teenagers' life;

- Items in nature and looking at the cell life and incorporating that as a patterned background;
- Roller coasters and their structure turning it into abstract design
- The jungle and concrete jungle-starting with the jungle and inserting
- Elements of the city life taking over the jungle.

Audrey Brown

- Flight (these were extremely technical drawings and paintings which included sinking helicopters in the jungle as well as birds on a wire, ufo's over the southwest.
- Winged Creatures- drawn in high detail-moths , bats, bees
- Longboards -seen from 1 pt, 2pt 3 pt and 5 pt perspective
- Color and Form in manmade play structures (digital photography)
- Landscapes from my route home from school.
- Bottles
- Groups of Friends
- Telephone Poles