

Portable Worlds



Education Pack

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Introduction to Exercises

The activities in this education pack invite students to critically engage with the art works that make up the Portable Worlds exhibition as well as the use of the mobile phone as a platform to create and exhibit art.

Most people think of their mobile phone as a useful communication device for phone calls text messages and increasingly; to store pictures of their friends. However, thinking and talking about mobile phones in relation to contemporary art practice encourages students to question and explore a ubiquitous device that many use daily.

These activities are designed to facilitate the development of small screen literacy skills, technical skills and creative practice with an emphasis on demystifying and engaging with available technology.

While designed to accompany an excursion to the Portable Worlds exhibition, these exercises can be easily adapted to be incorporated into other learning situations. Most exercises can be extended upon or modified depending on the student's age and abilities and the technology available.

We hope this education pack will help young people to have a positive arts experience with the Portable Worlds Exhibition. Being active and creative contributes to positive mental health and the Portable Worlds program supports the *positive minds attract* mental health message. For more information about positive mental health visit the headroom website www.headroom.net.au

Exercise 1: Three Part Discussion

Part One:

Before visiting the Portable Worlds exhibition discuss what students think about the idea of art created to be viewed on mobile phones.

- Have any students seen artwork on a mobile phone?
- Have any students made artwork for a mobile phone?
- Have any students seen an exhibition that is portable?
- If so create a list of artworks that are portable or could be portable.
- What do students think about the idea that their own mobile could be a gallery space for exhibiting artworks by themselves or others?
- Discuss expectations regarding how viewing a mobile exhibition might be different from viewing an exhibition of paintings, sculptures, installations or video.

If you wish you can create a list of the different suggestions to look back on and discuss after the students have viewed the Portable Worlds exhibition.

Part Two:

Whilst at the Portable Worlds exhibition, ask students to be aware of how they interact with the artworks and if and how it differs from their previous interactions with artworks in a gallery setting.

Ask each student to choose an artwork to investigate. Ask students to avoid reading any material that may explain the artist's intentions or provide background information about the art work if they can. Frame discussion around the following questions:

- What are your first impressions of the artwork you chose?
- Do you like it?
- How does it make you feel?
- Did you feel connected to the art work?
- What do you think the art work is about? (Do you think it is about anything)?
- Does the artwork have a clear narrative or a theme?
- How does it compare to other art you have seen that has a similar narrative or theme?
- How does viewing the art work on a mobile phone affect your engagement with it?
- Holding the artwork in your hand whilst viewing it and moving it closer to or further from your eyes to meet your specific viewing needs is a unique experience. How did this effect your engagement with the artwork? Was it a more or less personal experience?
- Did you view the artwork with others or in isolation?
- Given that the artwork is portable, what do you think the ideal environment would be for you to view this artwork outside of the Portable Worlds exhibition space?

Part Three:

If you created a list from the discussion in part one, revisit it in this discussion. If a list was not created ask students to recall the first discussion.

- Have your perceptions about artwork created for mobile changed since viewing the Portable World exhibition?
- What were your favourite artworks and why?
- What was it about these that worked on the mobile platform?
- Were there artworks that did not work as well? If so, discuss why.
- Did you enjoy viewing artworks on mobile phones? Discuss what was unique about this experience and how it affected your interaction with the art.
- Discuss the idea of the mobile phone as a portable art gallery. How does it compare to a typical gallery setting? Include in your discussion the idea of the mobile phone as a creation tool and a personalized viewing space.

Exercise 2: Text Based

Background

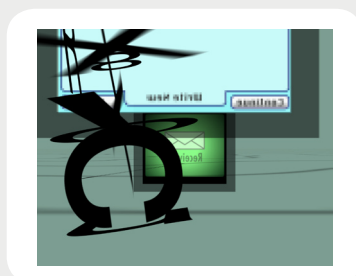
This exercise is designed to facilitate critical analysis of language, in particular short-form narratives, through a comparison between Shakespearean sonnets, Japanese haiku, and SMS.

Every mobile phone in operation in the world today is capable of sending and receiving text messages. As a result, short-form narratives are sent between people more frequently and faster than ever before. Unlike in Shakespeare's day where people had letters hand delivered to each other via messengers, today we can send and receive written messages immediately.

Modern Narrative Exercise

Ask students to reflect on lycettebros' made for mobile artwork cul8r which plays with ideas of communication, portability and shifts in context. The work shifts between reality and non-reality, mobile phone and landline, SMS abbreviations and the absent voice. The SMS message cu l8R xxoo reconfigures to become simultaneously the message and the mode of message transportation passing through various mobile message screens suspended in space, past a bicycle and finally delivers itself, interrupting the message receiver who is busy using a landline.

Exercise



- Read the message cu l8R xxoo out loud literally and then as it is intended to be read.
- Discuss SMS abbreviations and context.
- Many people feel that SMS abbreviations will lead to illiteracy and the death of language. What do you think?
- Discuss the helicopter in the lycettebros' work in relation to the development of SMS language. Think about the speed of communication and the limit of 160 characters per message.
- Include in this discussion the work's short narrative form and the times and places that people engage with their mobiles i.e. short bus rides, waiting in line at the shops etc.

Shakespearean sonnet

Discuss

Discuss short narrative form throughout history. Due to readily available resources, this exercise will focus on Shakespearean sonnets and Japanese haiku. You can adapt the exercises and use other short form narratives appropriate to your student's curriculum.

Ask each student to choose a Shakespearean sonnet. Discuss the short form narrative in this context. Relate Shakespeare's ground breaking use of language- his playfulness and his creation of new words to the ground breaking use of language and the creation of new words and emoticons that have emerged through contemporary SMS practices. (You may want to mention that words like texting are being added to dictionaries around the world). SMS abbreviation dictionaries are readily available online if you require one.

Exercise

Ask each student count the number of characters including spaces in the sonnet. Then ask each student to translate the sonnets they have chosen into SMS abbreviations and emotions and write them down on paper.

Discuss

What is lost and what is gained in the translation?

What is it like seeing the language of SMS out of context (i.e. hand written on paper instead of on a mobile phone)? Discuss language and context.

The number of characters in a text message is 160 including spaces. Whilst the sonnet was considered short-form narrative in Shakespearean times, how does it hold up today in relation to the restrictions of SMS?

Japanese Haiku

Another popular short-form narrative is Japanese Haiku which pre-dates Shakespeare by centuries. Often referred to as the shortest form of poetry with the greatest number of rules, haiku is an ideal short-form narrative for mobile phones.

Haiku has been integrated into new technologies for some time now. Haiku generators can be found online and in various games and gaming communities. They have also been featured in television series like South Park and Charmed. Gamers playing Quake developed Quaiku, which usually focused on ideas and events from Quake player's lives and science fiction fans enjoy scifaiku.

Use this haiku from the character Bowser in the Super Nintendo game *Super Mario RPG: Legend of Seven Stars* to introduce or remind students of the commonly applied rules of haiku.

Like the moon over
the day, my genius and brawn
are lost on these fools. ~haiku (Bowser)

- Use of three (or fewer) lines of no more than 17 syllables in total;
- Use of metrical feet rather than syllables. A haiku then becomes three lines of 2, 3, and 2 metrical feet, with a pause after the second or fifth;
- Use of a caesura to implicitly contrast and compare two events or situations.

Ask each student to write a moku (mobile haiku) about one of the artworks from the Portable Worlds exhibition.

Once mokus are completed ask students to Bluetooth* their mokus to each other. If their handsets are not equipped with Bluetooth you can SMS them to each other (this will incur a cost of about 25 cents per SMS depending on the students mobile plan). Each student will now have the equivalent of a poetry book on their mobile that they can take with them and continue to share wherever they go.

*Students will need to activate their Bluetooth before this can be done. Set up requirements differ between handsets but generally can be found in the *connectivity* or *settings* menu. Once found the student will need to activate the Bluetooth function by making it *discoverable*. Once the student has done this they can then go to their moku and select to send it via Bluetooth. The mobile will ask each person for a *passkey*. A *passkey* is different from a password and should be set to 1 to keep it simple. If there are too many Bluetooth devices in a small space the process may be slower as signals compete with each other. If this is the case send some people to different areas to Bluetooth amongst them selves in small groups.

Exercise 3: Personalisation and mobile phones

Background

This exercise focuses on personalisation of mobile phones. Australians spend more money on personalisation than any other type of mobile content. This exercise will provide students with the skills they need to make their own personalisation content.

Discuss

Ask students to discuss the various personalization content and embellishments available. Include wallpapers, ringtones, covers, toys, stick on diamonte designs etc.

Ask students to discuss what their mobiles reveal about them.

This exercise will require the following items: paper, cardboard, plasticine, found objects, Anasazi Stop Motion Animation Software (see resource sheet for download instructions), a webcam or digital stills or video camera, a Bluetooth equipped computer or Bluetooth dongle with software, a multimedia converter (see resource sheet for download instructions), and at least one Bluetooth capable mobile phone. Install and try out the software prior to class to save time and pre-empt any trouble shooting that may be required.

This exercise is written assuming all students will have a Bluetooth equipped mobile phone. Understandably this is unlikely. Adjust the exercise accordingly. It will still work and be of value even if there is only one Bluetooth or infra red equipped mobile available.

Exercise

Ask students to pair up, preferably with somebody they do not know very well.

Spend fifteen minutes getting to know each other by asking each other questions about your likes and dislikes, hobbies, favourite sports, music and whether you identify as being part of any particular sub culture.

Taking into account what you learnt during your conversations, you will create a stop motion animation for your partner to be used as their mobile phone wallpaper. The stop motion animation will be 10 seconds in length and will feature one character designed to be representative of your partner's tastes and interests.

Stop motion animation is a simple and very hands on animation style. This technique was used to create Natalie Woodlock and Anita Bacic's artwork *Sweet Suite* in which hand made kitchen furniture made out of cakes, icing, biscuits and sweets dance.



Ask students to think about what materials they will use for their stop motion animation in the context of how it will help them create a wallpaper designed to personalize their partner's mobile. Plasticine, paper or card board (think South Park) and found objects are all excellent choices.

Process:

Install webcam or digital stills or digital video camera. (This may require you to install the appropriate software for the camera you use if it is not usually used on this computer. You may require permission to do this so always ask your IT support staff ahead of time).

Capturing

Open Anasazi stop motion animation software.

Go to the *Options* menu, click on *Capture Options* and select *Video Format*.

Change the *Video Format* to *176 x 144*. Click **Okay**. (Generally this is a good size for mobile).

Adjust the *Movie will run at _ fps* (frames per second) to 15. Click Okay. This is a good frame rate for mobile, an easy rate for students to calculate and it is a setting option in the Super multimedia converter software.

Make it very clear that students will be grabbing 15 frames for every second so for a 10 second animated mobile film they will need to grab 150 frames in total.

Click *Start* to commence animation. The *Start* button will change to a *Grab* button.

Emphasize that each frame is only one tenth of a second so they may want to grab a few frames of each position in order to avoid the movement looking too fast.

Remind students not to click *Grab* until their hands are out of shot and to be aware of changes in the lighting conditions between each grab.

The *Onion Skinning* tool (bottom left hand corner of the application- a symbol resembling an onion), is useful as it enables students to see the position of their model in the last frame they grabbed. Avoid using it all the time as it can cause the application to crash and work will be lost.

When creating longer projects students should click *Done* after approximately each 50 frames have been grabbed to avoid losing work. These clips will need to be saved to an appropriate folder, named and numbered clearly and then imported to a time line in the available editing software such as *Windows Movie Maker*. If there is time you can add this step to this exercise. If there is not time then students can click *Done* and save the 150 frames as a single clip.

Once 150 frames have been grabbed click *Done* and save the file to an appropriate folder, remembering to name it clearly.

The file will automatically be saved as an .avi file.

Encoding

The next step is Encoding. The encoding process converts the .avi file to a .3gp file, which is the most commonly accepted file type for Australian mobile phones. The encoding process also dramatically reduces the size of the file.

Open the Super multimedia converter software. (See list of software downloads for further information).

Drag the .avi file onto the Super application. Check that the box appearing in front of the .avi file is ticked.

Select the *Output Container*. If the mobile is a Nokia, NEC, Motorola or Siemens select 3gp (Nokia/NEC/Siemens). If the mobile is a Sony Ericsson select 3gp (Sony Ericsson). Be careful not to select 3g2- this is an American mobile file format and will not play on Australian mobiles.

Select the *Video Scale Size: 176 x 144*.

Select the *frame rate: 15 fps* to match the frame rate the content was created at.

Next adjust the Bitrate kpbs. More than any other feature, the bitrate kpbs setting effects the quality of the outputted file. A bitrate kpbs set too low will result in a low quality end product. A bitrate that is too high will result in a file size that is too large. Try starting at a bitrate of 128 kpbs. You can re-encode the same .avi file as many times as you like to experiment with the effects of bitrate adjustment and discover which setting is best for your project.

Click *Disable Audio*. As there is no audio associated with the .avi file these settings are not required.

Right click on the .avi file and select *Specify the Output Folder Destination*. This is very important because if you do not specify the output folder destination the outputted file will get lost in system folders and the process will have to be repeated from the start. Select the appropriate folder in My Documents or the Desktop where you saved your .avi file. *Click on Save Changes*.

Click on *Encode (Active Job-List Files)*.

Note the original .avi file size and the outputted .3gp file size. How different are they?

Bluetoothing

The next step is to Bluetooth the .3gp file to your partner's mobile phone (or to any

available mobile phone that is equipped with Bluetooth).

If the computer you are using has Bluetooth built in, complete the following process:

Right click on your .3gp file.

Click on *Send To*.

Click on *Bluetooth*.

Either click on the name of the mobile you wish to send your file to or if you do not see it listed click on *Other*.

If you clicked directly on the name of the mobile you wish to send your .3gp file to it will commence sending the file but at some stage in the process it will ask you for a *passkey*. Make this 1 and ask the person you are sending the file to, to do the same. Make sure the person you are sending the file to *accepts* the file you are sending otherwise the file transfer will not be successful.

If the computer you are using requires a Bluetooth USB Dongle, install it now. (This may also require that you install the software if the Bluetooth USB Dongle has not been used on this computer before. You may require permission to do this so always ask your IT support staff ahead of time.

Once the Bluetooth USB Dongle has been installed; open up the Blue Soleil software. (See list of software downloads for further information).

Remember that once you have the file on the mobile phone, you can Bluetooth it between mobiles and see what it looks like on different models. It always varies slightly.

Once you have the right animated wallpaper on your phone save it as your wallpaper. This process will differ from mobile to mobile.

When everyone has completed the exercise, have an exhibition of the class's work and ask each student to briefly talk about the animated wallpaper they made for their classmate. Ask them to explain the stylistic choices they made in relation to the information they found out about their classmate's tastes and interests.