

Born to Concrete

Visual Poetry from the Collections of Heide Museum of Modern Art and
the University of Queensland

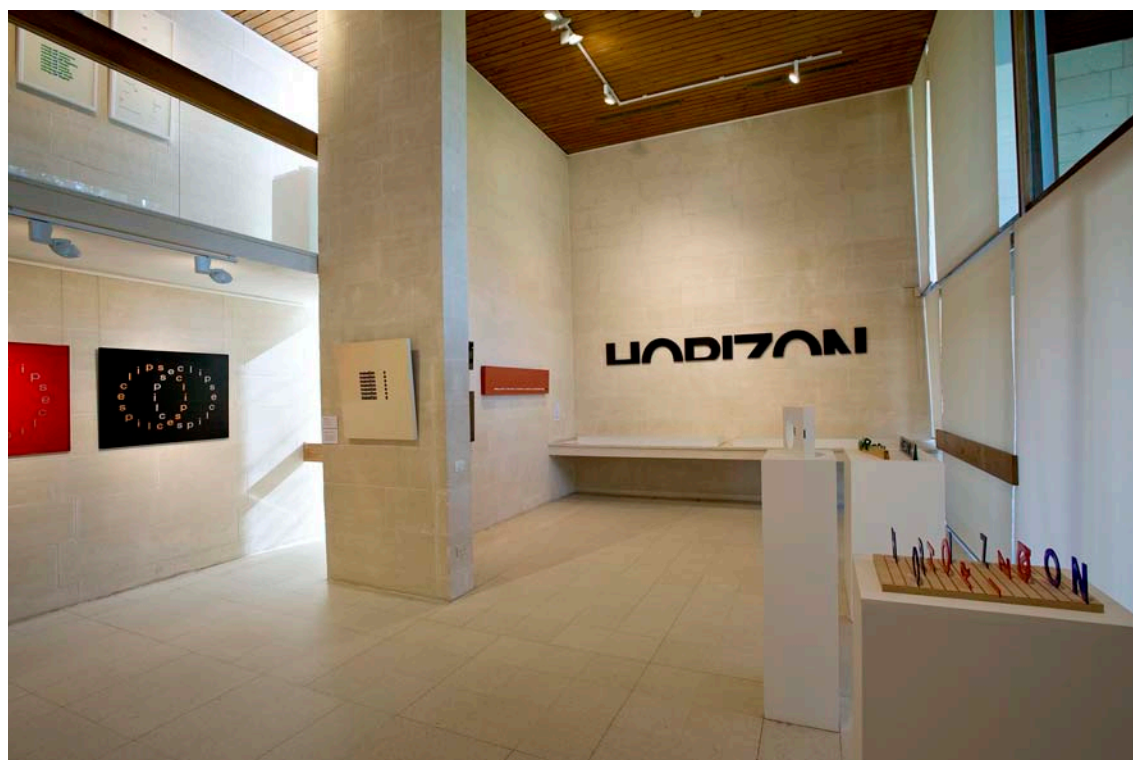
The University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane
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Curated by

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Born to Concrete 2011 installation view
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Photograph: John Brash, 2011

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Introduction

This education kit comprises video and activity resources which introduce students to the genre of concrete poetry. In the process of developing an understanding of concrete poetry students will explore the relationship between the structure of words on the page, focussing on their arrangement, typography and meaning. A number of concrete poets from Heide Museum of Modern Art, including Alex Selenitsch, will inspire students to examine the abstract nature of words and consider their concrete form through shape, space and poetic metaphor.

Students will respond to and reflect on the work of Alex Selenitsch before using these techniques to create their own artwork. They will make their own one-word concrete poems using various materials and processes. Students will experiment with images and objects, develop their art-making skills, share visual artworks and discuss their own and others' works.

Driving inquiry

How can the meaning of words be presented in a visual way?

Most important learning aims

When completing these resources, students:

- Understand the abstract nature of language and the material (concrete) form of art.
- Analyse how artists construct meaning, recognising skills, techniques, materials and forms.
- Use available materials (including digital technologies) to manipulate visual and spatial ideas to make their own one-word concrete poems.
- Share, investigate and respond to ways their own and others' artworks communicate with an audience.

General capabilities addressed in resources

- Literacy
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability
- Ethical behaviour.

Links to other learning area

- English.

Suggestions for assessment and reflection

The following activities provide suggestions that can be developed into assessment and reflection tasks for formative and summative assessments.

- Formative assessment tasks (during a project) include responses to key questions in the Student Activity Sheets, art work in progress, and participation in discussion.
- Summative assessment tasks (end of project) include production and display of one-word concrete poem, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation.
- Reflection methods (individual or group) include participation in small group or class discussion, viewing and responding to key questions at the end of each activity, responding to their own and others' artwork.

Concrete Poetry

Concrete poetry is a cross-pollination between art and literature that takes many forms. These include printmaking, typewriter text, Letraset transfers, sculpture and more. Arising in the 1950s, in separate initiatives by Swiss and Brazilian writers, it soon became an international movement, extending out of the literary sphere and into the art world.

Heide Museum of Modern Art has one of the most extensive national collections of Concrete Poetry. Key Australian concrete poets include Alex Selenitsch, Sweeney Reed and Alan Riddell.

Alex Selenitsch

In 1966, architecture student Alex Selenitsch came across the visual poetry of German artist Kurt Schwitters in Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's 1947 book *Vision in Motion*. This sparked an interest in experimental poetry that inspired Selenitsch to seek out other international sources. These he found at Sunday Reed's Eastend Booksellers in Melbourne, which stocked recent publications of visual and concrete poetry from London. Recalling his initial reaction to this material, Selenitsch writes: 'I also see that this is the medium for me: all of my interests in space, language, print, and data can be fused on a page.'

By 1969 Selenitsch had produced concrete poetry screenprints, constructions and books that were shown that year at Sweeney Reed's Strines Gallery in Carlton. This was the first exhibition of concrete poetry held in Australia and was soon followed by a second exhibition at leading Melbourne gallery, Pinacotheca, in 1971. Since that time Selenitsch has continued to create and exhibit concrete poetry in diverse forms and forums.

Video: Concrete Poetry

In this video a number of artists who exhibit works at Heide Museum of Modern Art, including Alex Selenitsch, will introduce you to concrete poetry and explore how it combines space, language and print. Alex then shows examples of his artworks and discusses his creative process. The video asks us to look very, very closely and to think about how we will create our own concrete poems.



Video produced by [The Song Room](#) with Heide Museum of Modern Art.
<http://vimeo.com/heidemoma/concrete-poetry>

Teaching strategies referred to in resource

Think, Pair, Share

The Think, Pair, Share strategy is a cooperative learning technique that encourages individual participation and is applicable across all year levels and class sizes. Students think through questions using three distinct steps.

Think: Students think independently about the question that has been posed, forming ideas of their own.

Pair: Students are grouped in pairs to discuss their thoughts. This step allows for all students to articulate their ideas and to consider those of others.

Share: Student pairs share their ideas with a larger group, such as the whole class. Often, students are more comfortable presenting ideas to a group with the support of a partner. In addition, students' ideas have become more refined through this three-step process.

1, 2, 4 brainstorm

This strategy highlights the benefits of collaboration: that is, two brains are better than one, and four brains are better again!

1. Students independently brainstorm a list of words that they consider to be abstract nouns.
2. After a specific time (e.g. 30 seconds), they compare and share, add or delete from their lists with a partner.
3. After a specific time (e.g. 30 seconds), they join up with another pair to compare and share, add or delete from their lists.

Students will now have an extensive list of abstract nouns to select from.

Tips for talking about student artworks

- Artwork for students is about the process just as much as the finished product.
- Encourage everyone to 'have a go' and focus on the positive aspects of their work. Focus on problems solved, and what is similar and different, rather than value judgments like good or bad.
- Aim for expression rather than perfection.
- Stagger the materials for the activity so students don't feel rushed.
- Allow time and space for students to work individually, as well as collaboratively.
- Empathy and understanding for others is fostered by students stepping back and viewing their own artwork alongside others.

Safety with art materials

- The teacher must set a good example when demonstrating proper use of materials and supplies.
- Always include health and safety issues when giving lesson presentations and during general classroom instruction.
- The teacher should also refer to the school policy for using materials and equipment.

Glossary

Abstract: not representing or imitating anything in the visible world

Abstract noun: a word that describes things that do not exist in a physical form. You cannot see, hear, smell, taste or touch an abstract noun e.g. love

Concrete poetry: poetry in which the arrangement of letters and words is an important part of the meaning

Letraset: transferable lettering that came on sheets of plastic. It was used by rubbing on the plastic backing to transfer the letter to your paper. It was a way to get neat and consistent lettering for signs and graphic art before computers.

Printmaking: an art-making process where multiple copies of the same text or image can be made by the use of printing processes such as screenprinting, potato printing, etching, linocuts or engraving

Sculpture: a three-dimensional artwork that can be walked around and looked at from different viewpoints

Alex Selenitsch: Alex Selenitsch is a Melbourne-based architect, poet and sculptor. His first solo show of concrete poetry was in Melbourne in 1969. His work is generally high concept/low tech, and often uses found objects and received systems.

Source: 'Alex Selenitsch', [Grahame Galleries](#)

Heide Museum of Modern Art: Heide Museum of Modern Art began life in 1934 as the home of art patrons John and Sunday Reed, and has since evolved into one of Australia's most important cultural institutions. Heide, as it is affectionately known, has a national reputation based upon the vision of the Reeds and their role in the development and promotion of modern art in Australia. For all who visit, Heide offers an inspiring, educational and thought-provoking experience of modern and contemporary art, architecture, gardens and social history.



Alex Selenitsch
Tree of Knowledge 1989
wood, iron, terracotta, synthetic
polymer paint
214 x 122 x 11 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art,
Melbourne
Bequest of Barrett Reid 2000



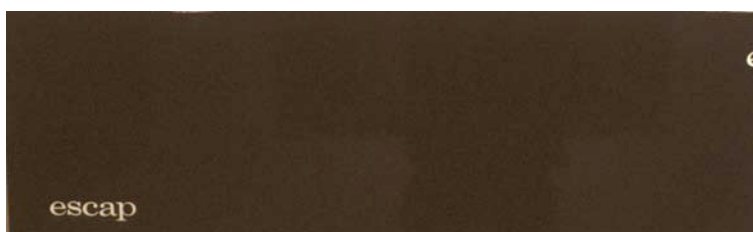
Sweeney Reed
Impounded Illusion (Horizon) 1976
steel
7 parts: 33 x 334 x 1 cm (installation
dimensions)
Heide Museum of Modern Art,
Melbourne
Gift of Ruth Cowen 2000



Sweeney Reed
Rosepoema 1975
screenprint
Heide Museum of Modern Art,
Melbourne
Gift of Pamela, Mishka and Danila
McIntosh 1990
© Estate of Sweeney Reed



Sweeney Reed
Flowers 1976
plastic on enamel on composition
board
35.5 x 152.5 x 5.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art,
Melbourne
Bequest of Barrett Reid 2000
© Estate of Sweeney Reed



Sweeney Reed
Reaching 1977
plastic letters on enamel on
composition board
30 x 93 x 6 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art,
Melbourne
Gift of Mishka and Danila McIntosh
1981

Task 1: Understanding Concrete Poetry (teacher notes)

This activity provides students with the opportunity to view and respond to the video Concrete Poetry. Students are introduced to the art genre of concrete poetry through an exploration of Alex Selenitsch's *monoton eeeeeee* (1969). Students begin to understand the abstract nature of language and the techniques concrete artists use to communicate meaning through the graphic arrangement of letters, words, and/or symbols on the page.

Resources required

- Dictionaries
- Example Images of concrete poetry.
- Other versions of Alex Selenitsch's *monoton eeeeeee* can be found through the National Gallery of Australia's website:
[National Gallery of Australia: Monotone. 1970 page 4](#)
[National Gallery of Australia: Monotone. 1970 page 5](#)
[National Gallery of Australia: Monotone. 1970 page 6](#)
[National Gallery of Australia: Monotone. 1970 page 7](#)

Process

Exploring the foundations

1. Watch the video Concrete Poetry with your class
2. Conduct a brief introductory discussion on some of the examples of concrete poetry shown in the video.
 Ask students to think about the Ruth Cowen works *Tie for Phillip* and *Sweet Greetings*.
 What did they 'see' in these images?
 What words or letters were in the images?
 When you saw the images what did you think the artist was trying to communicate?
3. Distribute copies of the Understanding Concrete Poetry activity sheet.
 Ask students to write a response to the following on their activity sheet: In your own words, briefly describe a concrete poem.
 Leave responses aside for comparison at the end of the activity.
 Pause the video on an image of *monoton eeeeeee*. Explain to students that you want them to observe this artwork carefully.
 Give students one minute silent 'thinking time' before using the Think, Pair, Share strategy (see 'Maximising outcomes') to share responses.
 Ask students to find a partner and discuss what they see in the picture

Describing Elements

1. As a class, discuss what students can 'see' in *monoton eeeeeee*.
 Encourage students to describe the artwork.
 Students are also encouraged to discuss such elements as: colour, shape, style or font of the letters; the arrangement of the letters on the page; the white spaces on the page; the repetition of the word 'monoton' and the letter 'e'.
 To encourage breadth in responses teachers can ask the key question: What else do you see?
 Other questions to discuss include: How might you read this poem? Where do your eyes go first? Next?
 Ask if anyone in the class knows what the words 'monotony' and 'monotone' mean.
 If no-one knows, students should look for definitions in the dictionary and write their own definition on their activity sheet.
 Write the words and their dictionary definition on the board for everyone to see.
 'Monotony' means lack of variety and interest, tedious repetition in sound, style, manner or colour.
 'Monotone' means a sameness of pitch or tone in a sound or voice.

Understanding abstract language

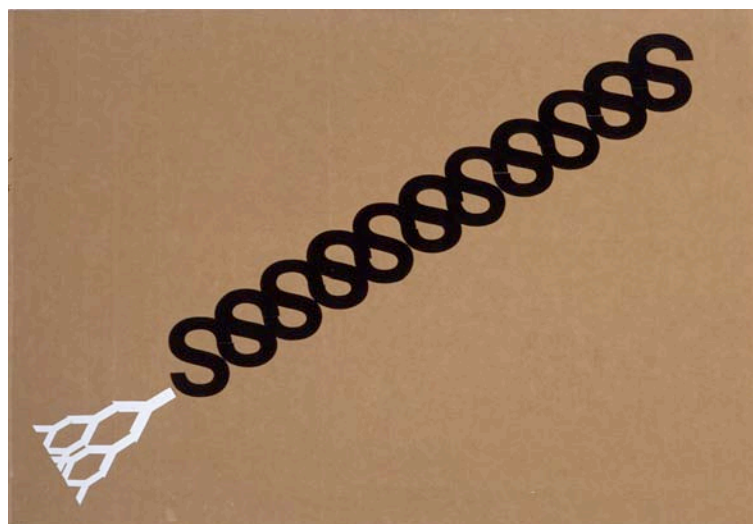
1. Students discuss the relationship between the written language and how the letters have been arranged on a page to reinforce a particular meaning.
 - Use the Think, Pair, Share teaching strategy before asking for whole-class responses.
 - As an example, students might notice that by separating the 'e's into a single column, its sound is emphasised – a monotone.
2. At this point, students should understand that the nature of language is abstract. It uses symbols (i.e. words, letters and punctuation) to create meaning. The words are not reality itself. For example, the word 'dog' is just marks or squiggles on paper and not actually a dog. You can't take it for a walk and give it a pat. On the other hand, if something is 'concrete', it exists in a physical form; it is real and solid and can be detected with your senses. In concrete poetry words are given concrete form as graphic arrangements of letters, words or symbols on the page or canvas, or as sculptures. Concrete poetry is language art, or treating poems as objects.

Communicating meaning

1. Show students some other versions of Selenitsch's *monoton eeeeeee* and ask them to compare the different ways the word 'monotone' has been arranged on the page and how the artist has conveyed meaning.
2. Ask students to revisit their response to: What is a concrete poem?
As a group, discuss:
How do artists communicate meaning in a concrete poem?
Can they add to their initial response?

Reflection

How might these works be interpreted in a different way?
 What is similar about the artworks you have looked at?
 What is different about the artworks you have looked at?
 Does the use of colour change what we think about these artworks? Imagine if it was a vivid green, for example.
 Does the font chosen for these artworks add to our understanding of them? Imagine if it was a curly or decorative font, for example.



Alex Selenitsch
Rainbow Snake 1988-1989
 vinyl on cardboard
 51.5 x 75.5 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art,
 Melbourne
 Bequest of Barrett Reid, 2000

Task 2: Communal Concrete Poetry (teacher notes)

In this activity students work in a group to construct a one-word concrete poem using the word 'absurd'. Through this process, they consider the meaning of the word before exploring its physical properties (the shape, colour and size of the letters, etc). Students collaboratively experiment with how they might convey the meaning of the word through visual means.

Resources required

- Communal Concrete Poetry Student Activity Sheet
- dictionaries
- A4 or A3 (preferable) drawing paper (enough for 3 to 4 sheets per group)
- coloured felt-tip markers

Process

Consolidating understanding

1. Briefly discuss concrete poetry to revise and consolidate students' understanding. Some points to consider are the:
 - abstract nature of language
 - concrete nature of words, letters, symbols, colour, line, texture, space
 - relationship between the physical structure and arrangement of the word/s on the page and meaning
 - notion of treating a poem as an object
2. Ask students to form groups of three or four.
Each group will need three to four sheets of A3 paper (use A4 if not available), a dictionary, coloured markers and copies of the Communal Concrete Poetry activity sheet.
3. Advise students that in this activity they will have the opportunity to jointly construct a one-word concrete poem using the word 'absurd'. Ask students if anyone knows the meaning of the word 'absurd'.
4. In groups, ask students to begin by looking up the word 'absurd' in the dictionary and writing a definition in their own words on their activity sheet.
Absurd: If something is absurd, it means it is impossible and completely ridiculous. For instance, the idea that a dog wrote and illustrated a storybook is not to be believed. Other words with a similar meaning include laughable, ludicrous, nonsensical and preposterous.
5. Next, ask students to find other words that have a similar meaning (synonyms) and write them on their activity sheet.
This will help students to develop a better understanding of what the word means, and build their vocabulary skills.

Exploring the physical forms of words

1. Ask each group to explore how the meaning of the word 'absurd' might be conveyed in physical form by responding to the following questions on their activity sheet.
 - If the word was a colour, what might it be? (e.g. black, white, blue, rainbow, golden, transparent)
 - If the word had a texture, what might it be? (e.g. rough, fluffy, hairy, scratchy, matted, spikey, leathery, hard)
 - If the word had a shape, what might it look like? (e.g. tall, short, curly, angular, round etc.)
 - If the word was a line, what might it look like? (e.g. straight, thick, thin, squiggly, dotted)
 - If the word had a movement, how would it move? (e.g. slow, fast, jumpy)
 - If the word had a sound, what would it sound like? (e.g. screechy, a hum, a buzz)

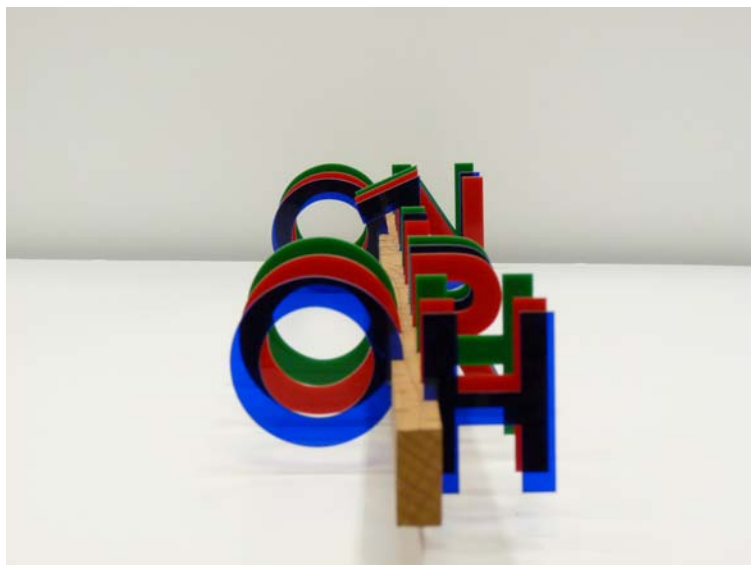
2. Encourage students to experiment with these ideas and think about how they might arrange the word on the A3 sheet of paper in a way that relates to the word's meaning (i.e. makes it look absurd).
3. Ask each group to use the A3 paper and coloured markers to draw their 'absurd' concrete poem.
Emphasise that they can change the sizes, colours, and (to some extent) shapes of the letters as well as arranging them in different patterns on the page.

Display and discuss

1. Have students display their group work around the room for others to see.
2. As a whole class, discuss the various ways students manipulated the physical (concrete) properties of the word 'absurd' to convey meaning in their concrete poems.
Ask students to describe and explain their group choices and decisions.
What has worked well?
How might they do it differently next time?
What do they like/find interesting about other group's poems?



Alex Selenitsch
Horizon hookey 2008
perspex and wood
Courtesy of the artist and Place
Gallery, Melbourne
© the artist



Alex Selenitsch
Horizon telescope 2009
perspex and wood
Courtesy of the artist and Place
Gallery, Melbourne
© the artist

Task 3: Constructing Concrete Poetry (teacher notes)

In this activity students continue exploring the relationship between language and art, and the fusion of abstract with concrete, by individually constructing one-word concrete poems using abstract nouns. There is opportunity here to consider the possibility of word play and the optional use of digital media. Students will use a variety of art materials and will create their own unique physical representation of their chosen word. They will reflect on their own and others' artworks and consider the question: How can the meaning of words be presented in a visual way?

Resources required

- Dictionaries
- A3 drawing paper (at least 2 sheets per student)
- coloured felt-tip markers of varying thicknesses
- a variety of materials (depending on what is available) that might include different textured and patterned papers and fabrics, paints, pastels or charcoal
- scissors
- glue stick.

Optional Resource

Computers with word processing software.

Process

Lesson 1: Design a Poem

1. Explain to students that unlike concrete nouns (puppy, tree, chair), abstract nouns cannot be detected directly with any of your five senses. You cannot see, hear, smell, taste or touch an abstract noun. Using the 1, 2, 4 teaching strategy (see 'Teaching strategies referred to in resource') ask students to brainstorm as many abstract nouns as possible and write them on their activity sheet.
Examples may include: speed, luck, knowledge, power, peace, memory, awe, evil, kindness, loss, love, imagination, curiosity, courage, strength, despair, fragility, belief, energy.
2. Ask students to select a word from their list that they would like to explore as a concrete poem. Students should use a word they find interesting and fun.
3. Ask students to look up a definition of their chosen word in a dictionary
Encourage students to explore the sound of their abstract noun:
How does the word sound when you say it aloud? (i.e. strong, weak, happy, fast, etc
Does the word have a similar sound to another word (or words)? (eg 'appeal' sounds like 'a peel')
Does the word have more than one meaning?
Now ask your students to think about how their abstract noun could be visually represented as:
 - a colour
 - a texture
 - a shape
 - a line
 - a movement
 - a sound

Typography

Typography is the art of arranging type in order to make language visible. This includes the selection of:

- Typeface
- Point size
- Line length
- Line spacing

Students are encouraged to consider how they could incorporate typography in their concrete poetry.

Lesson 2: Poetry Antics

1. Now that students have explored their abstract noun, encourage them to experiment with these ideas and how they might place the word visually using the following prompting questions:

Does it need to be altogether in a line?

Is there a particular aspect about the word that you would like to explore?

Concrete Poetry can be displayed in a number of different formats. Ask students to spend some time thinking about how they would like to represent their word physically. Some options to explore are:

- a 3D object or sculpture
- a banner
- Visual display
- Mobile
- Wall hanging
- 2D drawing

They will need to consider:

- font, spacing, scale, shape, colour and tone of letters, as well as the potential addition of symbols and punctuation.
- different textured or patterned papers and fabrics which could be used to introduce texture to the poem
- painting or colouring-in the letters or, if available, exploring different fonts and sizes on a computer word-processing program to create a digital version of their concrete poem.

Using A3 paper, students create their own concrete poetry exploring the different aspects of their abstract noun and how these aspects can be visually represented.

2. Have students display their work for the remainder of the class. While you are looking at each piece, focus on the question:
How did the artist show what the poem is about?
3. As a class, discuss:
 - How can the meaning of words be presented in a visual way?
 - What techniques and materials did each student choose when creating their artwork? Why?
 - How successful were these choices when presenting their work?
 - How might they do it differently next time?
4. Ask students to reflect on this activity by selecting a poem (other than their own) and writing a short piece reflecting on:
 - What they find interesting about the artwork
 - How has the meaning of the word been communicated in a visual way?

Suggestions for extension activities in other learning areas

English

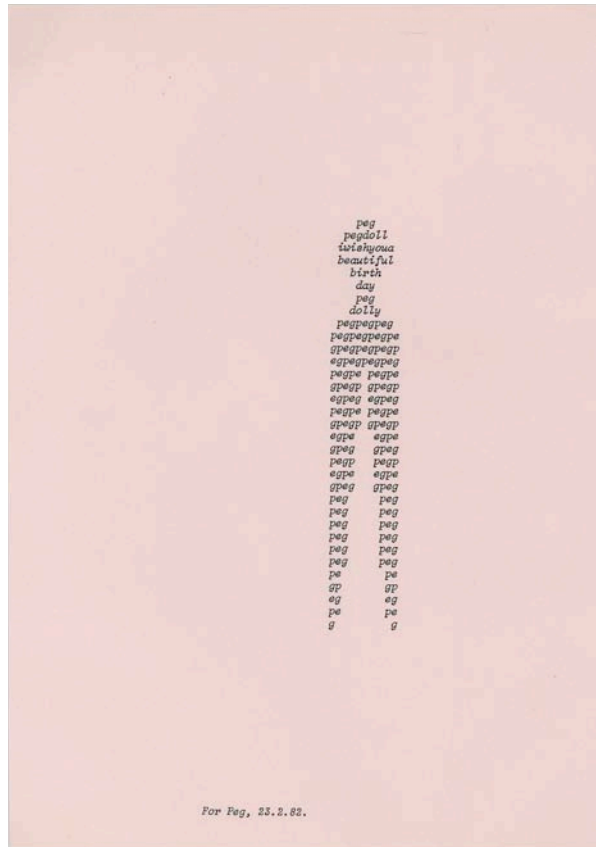
There is an opportunity to explore a variety of poetic forms:

- Acrostic poem:** uses the letters in the topic word to begin each line. Each line of the poem should relate to or describe the topic word. Students could write an absurd acrostic poem.
- Calligram:** a poem, phrase or word in which the typeface, calligraphy or handwriting is arranged to create a visual image. The image created by the words expresses visually what the word, or words, say.
- Haiku:** a traditional form of Japanese poetry. Haiku poems consist of three lines. The first and last lines of a Haiku have five syllables and the middle line has seven syllables. The lines rarely rhyme. Haikus are usually written about things that are recognisable to the reader. Animals, seasons, sports and hobbies are examples of topics students might enjoy exploring.
- Onomatopoeia:** refers to a word that imitates the sound associated with the thing that the word refers to. Examples include: hiccup, zoom, bang, beep, splash and zap. Animal sounds are also often onomatopoeic: quack, woof, chirp, baa and moo. Alex Selenitsch made visual the onomatopoeia in *monoton eeeeeee*.
Design a comic strip! Students could compose a brief comic-book story (with a beginning, middle and end) told only in onomatopoeia.

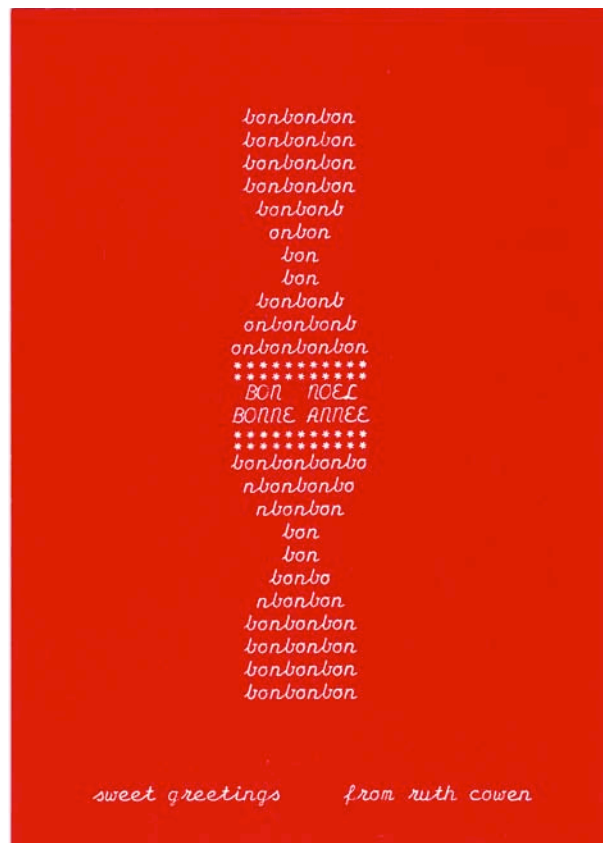
Other activities could examine how writers often innovate with words include word puns, simile and metaphor.



Alan Riddell
Radial Plea (b) 1969
 screenprint
 Heide Museum of Modern Art,
 Melbourne
 Gift of Alex Selenitsch 1989
 © Ann Barr



Ruth Cowen
For Peg 1982
typewriter text
29.7 x 21 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Gift of the Ruth Cowen Literary Estate 2011
© Ruth Cowen Literary Estate



Ruth Cowen
Sweet Greetings (Bon Bon) 1982
offset print on card
15 x 11 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Gift of the Ruth Cowen Literary Estate 2011
© Ruth Cowen Literary Estate

Task 1: Understanding Concrete Poetry (student worksheet)

Learn about the art form concrete poetry by looking carefully at and responding to Alex Selenitsch's *monoton eeeeeee* (1969).



Alex Selenitsch
monoton eeeeeee 1969
plastic on enamel on composition
board
71.5 x 59 x 4 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art,
Melbourne
Gift of Alex and Merron Selenitsch
2011



1. Now you have seen Alex Selenitsch talk about his art practice and various examples of concrete poetry. In your own words, briefly describe in your visual diary what concrete poetry is.



2. Look at the image of Alex Selenitsch's *monoton eeeeeee*. Write down what you see in this picture and then share it with a partner.



3. Look up the words 'monotony' and 'monotone' in the dictionary. Write down the meanings in your own words.



4. Look at the artwork again. Think about the relationship between the meaning of the words 'monotone' and 'monotony'. Can you describe how the artwork *monoton eeeeeee* visually shows the meaning of these words?



5. Do a search on the [National Gallery of Australia](http://www.nationalgallery.org.au)'s website for 'Alex Selenitsch'. You will find some other versions of *monoton eeeeeee*. Choose two works. Describe how the artist has arranged the word on the page?



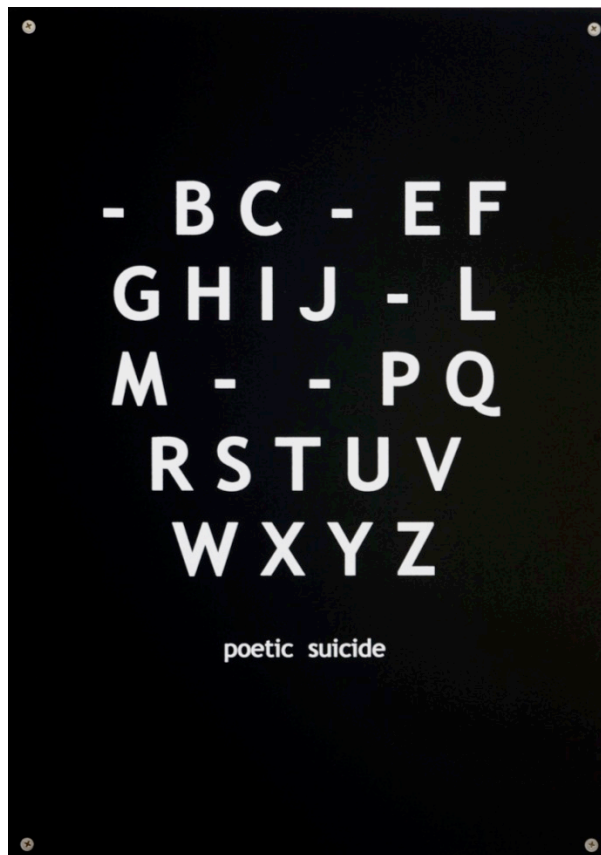
6. Which one do you like best? Give reasons for your answer.



7. Now that you have thought carefully about *monoton eeeeeee*, go back and re-read your response to the activity in step 1: 'briefly describe what concrete poetry is'. Can you add to or improve on your answer to this?

By now, you should have a good understanding of what concrete poetry is and how artists use it to make artworks.

- How could these works be interpreted in a different way?
- What is similar about the artworks you have looked at?
- What is different about the artworks you have looked at?
- Does the use of colour change what we think about this artwork? For example, imagine if it was a vivid green.
- Does the font chosen for this artwork add to our understanding of them? For example, imagine if it used a curly or decorative font.



Aleks Danko
Poetic Suicide 2008-09
engraving on gravoply, stainless steel screws
59 x 42 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery,
Melbourne
© the artist

Task 2: Communal Concrete Poetry (student worksheet)

1. Get into groups of three or four students.
2. In your groups, collect a dictionary, three or four sheets of A3 paper and a selection of coloured markers.
3. Look up the word 'absurd' in the dictionary. In your own words, briefly write down the meaning of the word.
4. Write down some other words that have a similar meaning to 'absurd' (synonyms).
5. In your group, discuss what the word 'absurd' might look like. Write down some ideas for the following questions:
 - If the word 'absurd' was a colour, what might it be (e.g. black, white, blue, rainbow, golden, clear)?
 - If the word had texture, what might it be (e.g. rough, fluffy, hairy, scratchy, matted, spiky, leathery, hard)?
 - If the word had a shape, what might it look like (e.g. tall, short, curly, flat)?
 - If the word was a line, what might it look like (e.g. straight, thick, thin, squiggly, dotted)? Draw the line in the space below.
 - If the word had a movement, how would it move (e.g. slow, fast, jumpily)?
 - If the word had a sound, what would it sound like? (e.g. screechy, a hum, a buzz.)
 - How might you place the word on the page? Do the letters need to be all together in a line?
 - How absurd is your word looking? Now it's time to turn it into a concrete poem.
 - Use the A3 drawing paper and coloured markers to create your artwork.

Display your concrete poem where it can be shared with your whole class.

Move around the room and look carefully at other students' work.

Describe and explain choices and decisions you made when creating your concrete poem.

- What has worked well?
- How might you do it differently next time?

Look at the other groups' concrete poems.

- What do you find to be interesting about their concrete poems?



Alex Selenitsch
daisy - train 1969
 screenprint on card
 37.5 x 50 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art,
 Melbourne
 Bequest of Barrett Reid 2000

Task 3: Constructing Concrete Poetry (student worksheet)

Continue to explore the relationship between language and art by making your own one-word concrete poem using an abstract noun.



1. In your visual diary write down some abstract nouns.



2. Select one abstract noun from your list that you would like to explore to create a concrete poem.



3. Look up the meaning of your word in a dictionary. Write it down.



4. Think about the sound of your abstract noun.

- How does the word sound when you say it aloud (e.g. strong, weak, happy or fast)?
- Does the word have a similar sound to any other words (e.g. appeal sounds like a peel)?
- Does the word have more than one meaning?



5. Now think about how your abstract noun could be visually represented as:

- a colour
- a texture
- a shape
- a line
- a movement
- a sound.

Typography

Typography is the art of arranging type in order to make language visible. This includes:

- Typeface
- Point size
- Line length
- Line spacing.

How could you incorporate typography in your concrete poetry?

Create Your Concrete Poem

1. Now that you have explored your abstract noun, experiment with these ideas and explore how you might place the word visually.
 - Do the letters need to be all together in a line?
 - Is there a particular aspect about the word that you would like to explore?
2. How would you like to represent your word physically?
 - As a 3D object or sculpture
 - A banner
 - Visual display
 - Mobile
 - Wall hanging
 - 2D drawing.
3. Using the A3 piece of paper, get creative and make your own concrete poem. Explore some of the elements you have discovered.

What's next?

1. Display your concrete poem where it can be shared with your whole class.
2. Move around the room and look carefully at other students' work.

What have you learned?

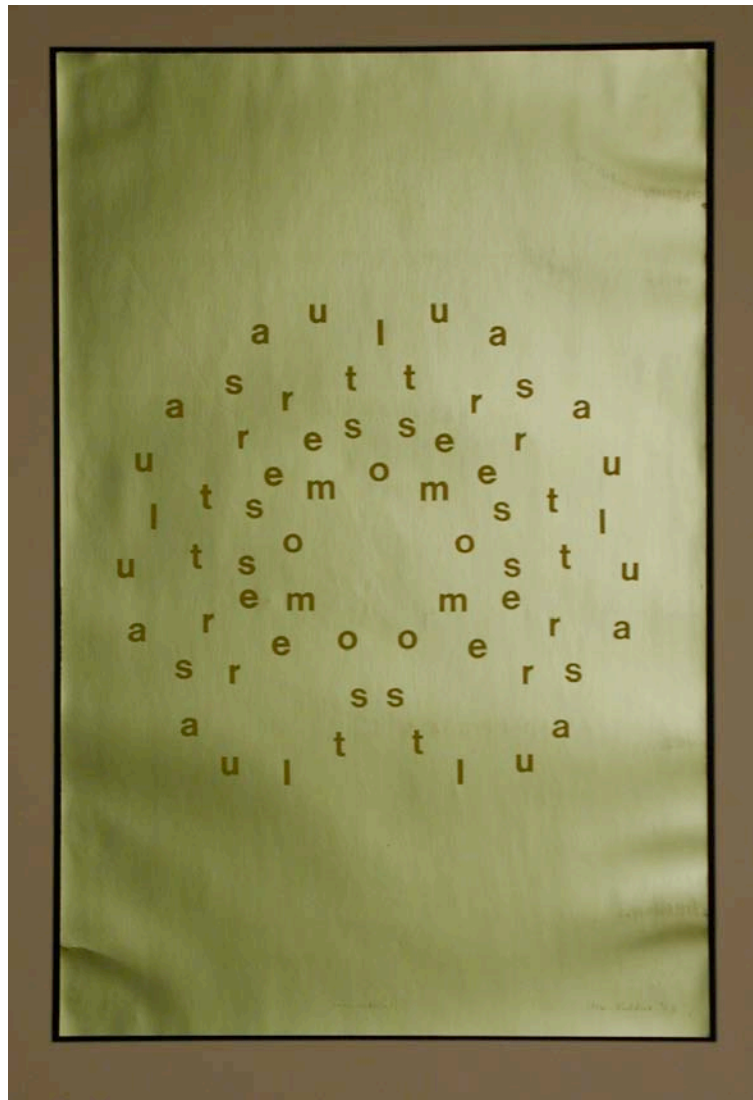
How can the meaning of words be presented in a visual way?
 What techniques and materials did you use when creating your concrete poem?
 How successful were these choices?
 How might you do it differently next time?

Extension activity

Write a short reflective piece on one other student's concrete poem:
 What do you find to be interesting about their work?
 How has the meaning of the word been communicated in a visual way?



Alan Riddell
Olympic Cycle 1969
 screenprint
 Heide Museum of Modern Art,
 Melbourne
 Gift of Alex Selenitsch 1989
 © Ann Barr



Alan Riddell
Somersault (a) 1969
screenprint
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Alan Riddell
Eclipse I 1969
screenprint
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This education resource was produced in collaboration with [The Song Room](#) as part of the [Arts:Live](#) suite of arts education resources.

Heide Education

Heide's offers a range of education programs that draw on its unique mix of exhibitions, architecture and landscape to provide a rich learning experience that goes beyond the classroom.

A visit to Heide:

- provides a stimulating environment which helps to put learning into context, and promotes an understanding and appreciation of our rich, cultural heritage
- encourages motivation, by stirring curiosity and developing an intrinsic fascination for art that can only be satisfied by firsthand experience
- nurtures creativity and enables social learning
- is a cultural experience that all pupils can enjoy

Looking at original works of art with a suitably trained educator also encourages the development of the following skills:

- **literacy:** by encouraging discussion and extending vocabulary
- **observation:** by focusing concentration on detail
- **critical thinking:** by demanding questions and informed conclusions
- **reflection:** by considering rationales behind thinking processes

Programs for teachers

Heide offers a range of professional development programs for teachers of all year levels, including lectures, guided tours and workshops. Programs are designed to meet the VIT Standards of Professional Practice and Principles for Effective Professional Learning.

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Bookings

Bookings are essential for all programs. For more information or a booking form visit Heide.com.au/education or contact Heide Education: (03) 9850 1500 education@heide.com.au

- Teachers are encouraged to visit Heide prior to a booked school visit (complimentary ticket available) to familiarise themselves with the exhibitions and facilities.
- Heide is committed to ensuring its programs and activities are accessible to all. Schools recognised as having a low overall socio-economic profile on the Government School Performance Summary are eligible to apply for a reduced fee. Please contact Heide Education for more information.

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