

Exploring the same art concept 12 different ways

By Karen Elzinga

This lesson is based around exploring the same idea or topic for design but in 12 differing styles or mediums.

I will take you on a journey to open up your mind and thinking on how to work differently on any given topic. This lesson is perfect for beginner artists and students preparing work portfolios for further education purposes, current students or for people who like to explore different ways of working.

I will start with the topic of wildflowers and explore everything about them to produce 12 very different artworks.

Food for thought

Wild floral landscapes have appealed to many over generations for the luscious quality of free flowing flowers.

There is something about the freedom of wild flowers that has a very drawing ability for many. It is beauty at it's finest, they are not planted, they simply arrive, as if from nowhere carried by both wind and birds/insects.

The randomness of their existence, their struggle against raw elements such as rain, wind, to the harshness of various ground surfaces such as differing soil conditions, wild flowers are survivors.



Exploring the birth of wild flowers.....

DIFFERENT WAYS OF ARTWORK EXPLORATION



Now imagine a typical floral field landscape dissected into many parts. It is what will be explored in this lesson covered by 12 different ways of working.

The changing of the sunset, just how can movement be captured to showcase time and space.

How can the sky also be captured to show time difference and period differences.

What makes up the earth core above and below it and how can it be made representational of many different elements at the same time.

Do flowers really have a water proof barrier? If so how would it appear to the naked eye.

Is it possible to show wind in action as it blows flower seeds to a new location or flower seed germination from a transparent view of above and below the grass surface at the same time!

What about the feel of a flower petal, what comes to mind about the softness and feel of the petals, these and more interesting questions will be answered in the discovery of what makes up a bright flowing floral field landscape.

LESSON CONTENT

Work 1. Large scale work depicting contemporary floral landscape setting (Beauty of the land)

Work 2. Large scale re-working of work 1 into abstract styling

Work 3. Sky time and colour study

Work 4. Interpretation of changing sunset

Work 5. Flower petal interpretation

Work 6. Flower pollen and stamens

Work 7. Wind blowing of flower seeds

Work 8. Earth's crust above and below

Work 9. Flower stems

Work 10. Flower seed germination

Work 11. Root system of the
flowers

Work 12. Flowers waterproof
barrier

Resolve your Artwork ideas

Before commencement of an artwork it is important to capture the essence of what that work will entail. By gathering words by association you will start to build a bigger picture and a more concise art concept.

This is an important component to creating art because it provides direction. Without clear direction you can be left sitting at the table wondering where and how to start an idea. It doesn't have to take hours to do, in fact most of the time you will round up several ideas in a few short minutes.

Start by thinking about a topic, and write down words associated to the topic, in my case the topic is wild flowers fields.

So let's have a look at how I have put together my word association list.

Topic Selection

Word Association

Revised Idea

Better ways of working

Concise Artwork

Word Association List

Mother gives birth to Branches – dissection – particles, flow on effect, what makes her tick, what is her essence, she is mother nature, she can be angry (rain, wind) loving (sun, heat) Frivolous (creating the wealth of nations underground – minerals, gold, gems) she is creative (changing skies and sunsets) she is complicated (giving nature means and ways to survive harsh conditions), she is everywhere, in everything, what makes up her existence.

Try not to over think what your doing, write down the first words that come to mind, then you will link other words to those.

Sun, rain, wind, snow, dirt, soil, rock, minerals, gems, gold, sky, flora, colour, breeze, death, short lived, beautiful, free, floating.

What she does – Grows the flowers, disperses seeds through wind, rain, provides means for growth, showers beauty in colour, touch and protects from elements. Trees burn in fire but the strongest survive the burning growing taller and stronger. WHY? Fire retardant barrier perhaps, luck, bark, surrounding dirt, wind.

Depict – wind, sky, sunset, seed dispersal, wind, rain, environmental change, above the surface, below the surface, growth.

Depict how? Unusually –find ways that are different, every work should be very differently portrayed, think broadly, widely, research broadly, find weird things and make a mark on them.

Gather your idea's then break them down to test one artwork

Large scale work depicting contemporary floral landscape setting - Beauty of the land.

Idea – to take an in depth look from a unique perspective of one fully painted contemporary landscape work of flowers in a field, and dissect it into a series of paintings.

Concept – To show the diversity within a selected area, including colour scheme, shapes, textures, to depict a happy, bright and interesting visual experience. To give the work the feeling of grandeur, abundance and life. To utilize a large and varied colour pallet. To use an array of materials to achieve a luscious thick surface with great depth and texture.

Scale – Large 120cmx120cm

Materials – Fabric, gap filler, acrylic paint, wool, sand, impasto gel.

Colours – Pinks, purples, blues, yellow, orange, reds, browns, black, lots of bright colours with darker background colours.

Resolve your word associations list into a concise artwork plan including rough sketches, it's important to visualize what your doing and helps stop creator's block.



Tease out your sketches until your happy you have a good concept idea



The Process of Landscape Painting

Creating landscapes

Step 1 – The first stage of creating a landscape painting comes with the background. Painting landscapes starts with the bottom and works it's way up to the top, not the other way around.

It's a common amateur error to start with the best feature first and then try to fill in the background later.

Try to envisage what your basic background would have in it, sky (what colour) Blue sky, sunset, fire sky, dark sky, clouds in the forefront or the distance, or perhaps no clouds at all.

Start by painting your whole canvas the dominant colour that your sky will be, then add in some darker and lighter combination of the same colour to your canvas allowing your original colour to sneak through in areas. Landscape paintings are about layering upon layering colours until it looks just right.

Think about what layer should be next, you might have to do 5 or 6 or 20 layers to get a rich and textured finish that has depth and bountiful.



Background completed



Background depth and darkness added and stems taking shape

Build your layer with thought and insight

Sometimes you will get a point and really like what you have done, and could stop and call it a completed work.

This is why resolving your sketches earlier is important, stick to your plan, you got there for a reason, it's time to trust yourself and keep going because sometimes an unfinished work to others looks unfinished.

Remember you have seen the finished work, you know what it should have looked like, your viewers don't. And the chances are it will bug you later and you'll probably end up finishing off anyway somewhere down the track as you become more experienced in technique.



Fabric circles added



Petals drizzled around fabric circles



Petals added

So let's see how the first artwork turned out

Work 1 – Beauty of the land – Acrylic on canvas 120x120cm



Work 2 – Re-working of work 1 in abstract styling.

Re-working a previous artwork in a different way is a great way of broadening your portfolio of styles.

Idea – To depict work 1 in an abstract style taking in everything as is in work 1, and changing to abstract style to depict how mankind has tried to replace mother nature with a refined un-natural look.

Concept – To use the same colourings and tones used in work 1 for this work to allow for some similarity. This work should look very unrealistic in appearance.

Materials – Canvas, acrylic paint, permanent marker

This work is about environmental change, work 1 is the original view, this view will take on a fake persona, the world has changed, nature is being lost at an alarming rate, mankind is trying to put back what we have destroyed, but it will never look the same as what mother nature had supplied us with. Yes the colours can be replaced, but the realness is compromised. Man puts structure and arrangement to replanting and the innocence of the wildflowers are lost. Must we destroy all the natural beauty around for this plastic looking existence. This work will look plastic, fake, to show mankind infatuation with being in control of nature.



Work 2 – Re-working of work 1 into an Abstract Styling.



Drew the grey lead outline



Started painting the sky colours



Added sunset colours



Added earth/dirt background colours



Added green weeds



Started on the flowers



Continuing on flowers



Re-did all colours a second time for a better opaque finish

Work 2 - Abstract Re-working of work 1 – Acrylic on canvas 117cmx114cm

The finished worked turned out very colourful, I tried to use the same colours and tones that were used in work 1, the “Normal styled full version” work, so that even though they styles of both are very different, the over colour scheme is similar.

If your just starting as an artist or a art student, working this way and exploring different ways of working the same image or topic will benefit you greatly because it will allow you see what style of working your suited to and what style you enjoy doing most.



Work 3 – Sky time and colour study

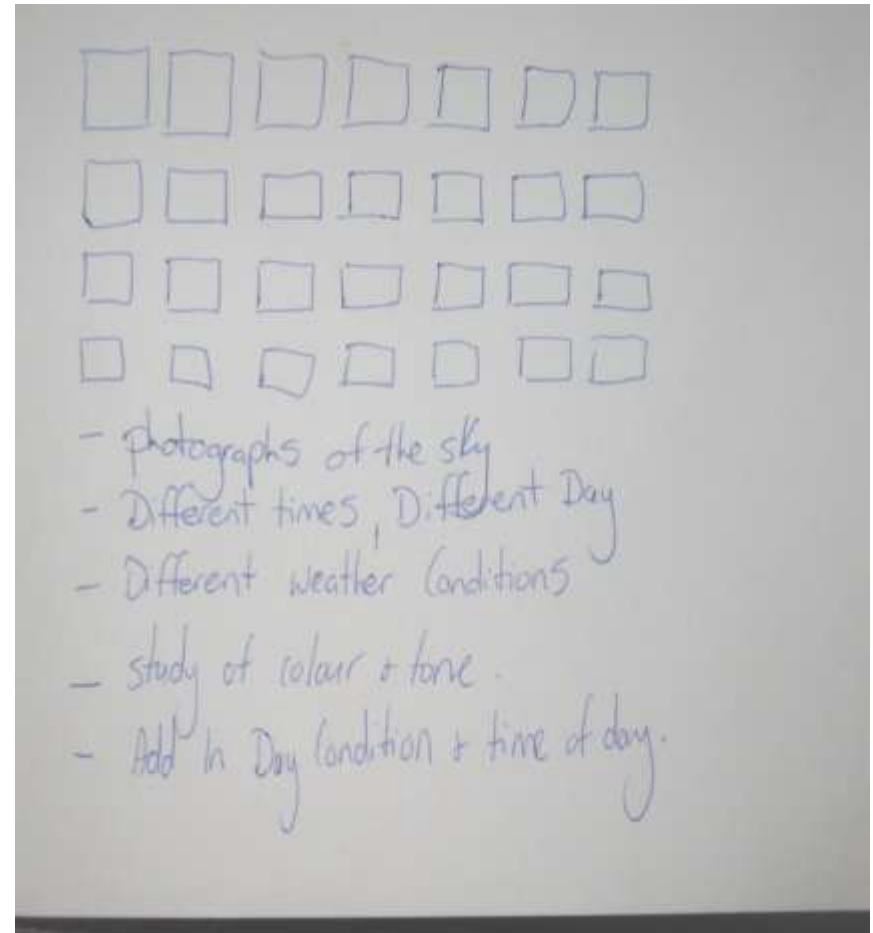
Now let's think for a minute about taking a completely new and digital direction, how could the sky be depicted in colours, layers, mood and depth using a computer. Not all artwork has to be confined to costing money to produce. There are numerous art shop programs capable of doing even the finest impasto paint style replication and apart from an initial outlay for the program there free to do, apart from your time which of course equates to money. Anyhow.....

Let's do the simplest of digital artworks so you get the idea of a basic design and from there it really is limitless.

Idea – To use photography as a medium to capture the essence of the Australian sky at various times of day and over a period of weeks.

Concept – To achieve colour and tonal variations within the same area of sky. Take photographs daily from the same location of the same area of sky over a two week period and place them into an interesting a layered collage of sky photos.

Let's see the basic sky Artwork





Work 4 – Interpretation of the changing sunset (Ephemeral Art)

Idea – Experiment by mixing paint with water in an ice making tray and freeze, arrange and allow to naturally melt into an art work.

Concept – To arrange the frozen ice blocks on a white board and allow nature to work at its finest melting the ice and releasing the captured paint inside to produce a running frame by frame photographic work that showcases the frequently changing landscape sunset. Every second the colours are changing within a sunset, colours mix, blend, make new colours, disperse and disappear, but most important is the change that occurs. By utilizing the melting of the iceblocks you can capture as 'ephemeral art', the essence of the ever changing sunset and highlight the change that presents photographically as an artwork.

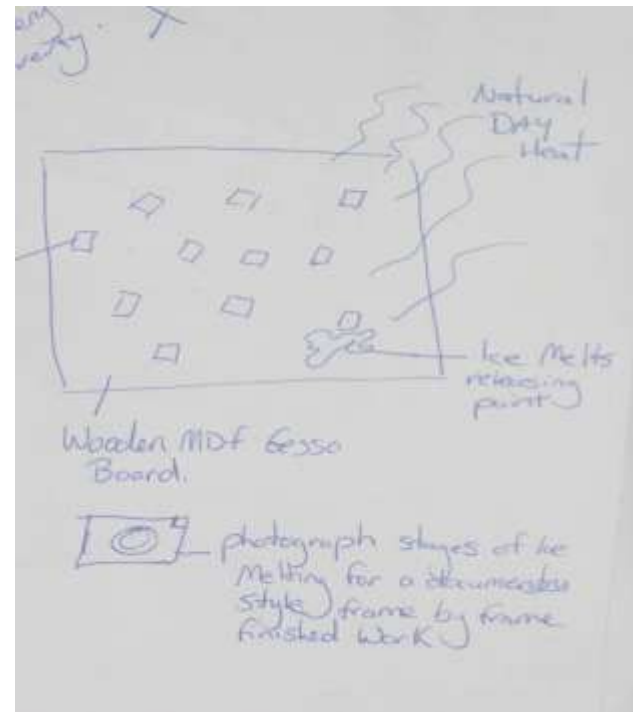
What is EPHEMERAL ART ?

The art of the short lived, short term, transient, and disappearing.

Ephemeral Art is lost quickly, it may last mere seconds before changing or being lost to time, it could be art that can only be photographed once, before it is gone, or a desert flower that opens and blooms for an hour before dying.

Ephemeral art is fleeting art that is often captured photographically otherwise there would be no record of it ever existing at all.

Think broadly and research other artists work to gain an appreciation of varying ways of producing artwork with the same topic as you.



Some great EPHEMERAL Artists to check out

[Andy Goldsworthy](#) - Environmental Artist

[Nicole Dextras](#) - Ice Artist

The ephemeral process, is to be enjoyed, I think to a certain degree the fluidity is what I like most, and the accidental markings that can be so beautifully captured on film. The fact that it is so fragile, here only for a few minutes makes it very intriguing to do and really exciting to watch as nature takes it back or is dismantled.

Its like watching the full cycle of life but in minutes. It makes very interesting one off art works by showing all the changes in progress as a part of the actual finished work. An experiment that worked its way to a very interesting artwork.

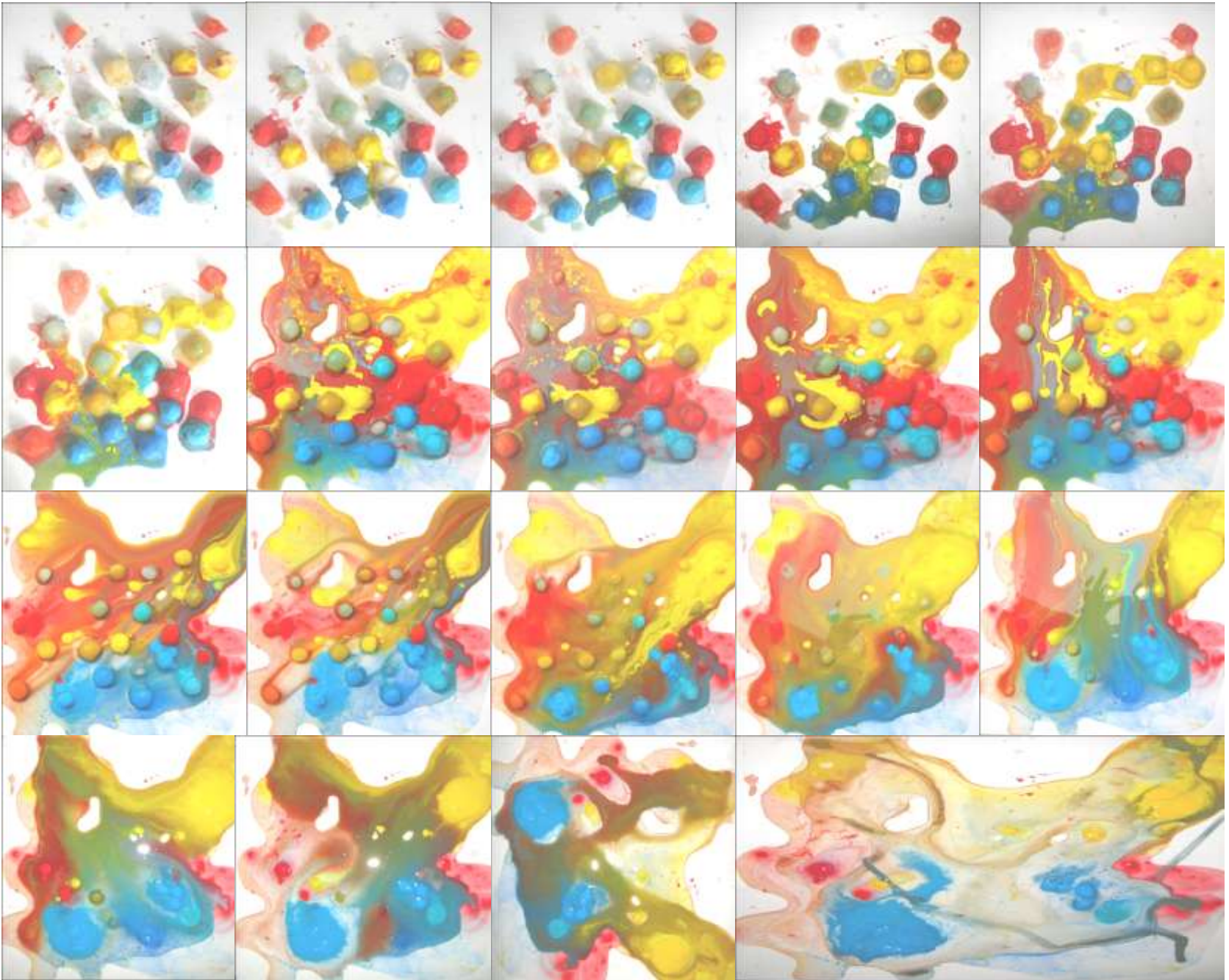
Process Art or Conceptual Art is art is that showcases the process of creation, how was it made, how was the idea born, it is often more important than the finished Artwork because it is the process of discovery that is more important to the artist and the viewer.



Next Artwork Process

- : Mix paint within ice cube trays filled with water and freeze.
- : Sand and Paint MDF board with gesso if you wish to have a permanent work imprint left.
- : Arrange ice blocks onto board
- : Allow for nature to melt the ice blocks
- : Capture every single change photographically.

Work 4 - Final work All as one work – Interpretation of changing sunset- Acrylic and Ice on MDF board 300x300mm



Work 5 – Flower Petal Interpretation

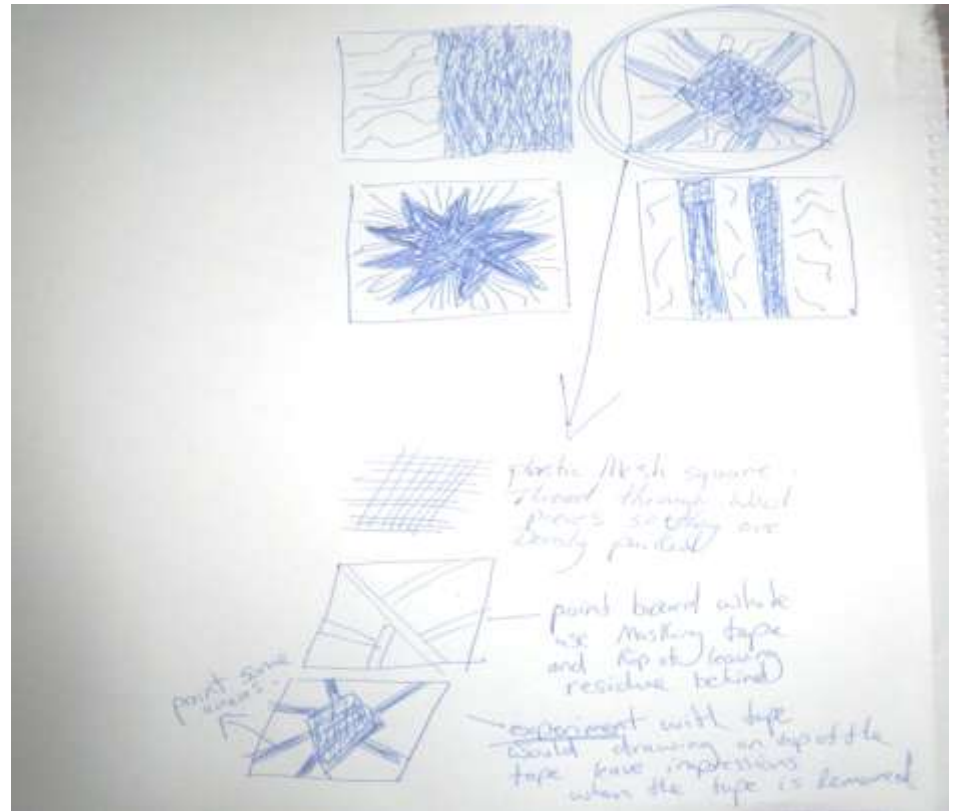
Idea- To depict the softness, texture and colours of the flower petals.

Concept- Flower petals have a soft, silty texture, I will convey that feeling with the use of soft silky fluffy wools within an abstract outer appearance of paint to represent the flower stem supports.

Experiment – paint the base board, then add packing tape whilst the paint is still slightly damp, draw lines over the packing tape, peel packing tape away and residue should remain giving a more rustic look to the board.

Remember do some artist research to broaden your thinking and understanding of how your topic has been depicted by other artist works.

Use other artworks to give you inspiration.



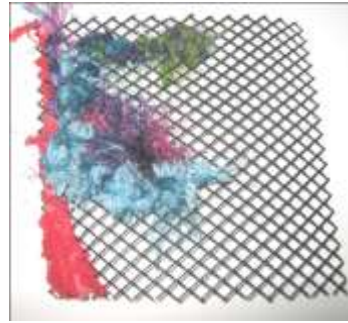
Work 5 - Flower petal interpretation – Here's the process



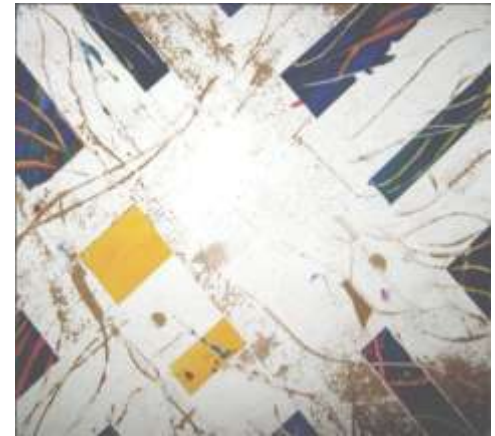
Painted MDF with 100% acrylic flat ceiling paint as gesso



Cut out a plastic grid



Used selected soft and fluffy wools of different colours similar to the flower petal colours of work 1 and threaded them in and out of the grid holes, until wool covered the whole grid completely.



I added packing pack to the slightly still damp white board, (normally you would add masking tape to a dry board but I knew that the packing tape glue would stick to my wet paint and provide an interesting effect when removed) I then painted sections pink and allowed to dry before adding yellow over the top of the pink and then like wise for the blue. Whilst the blue was still wet I scrapped back lines using a knife edge, I also used the knife edge to apply pressure to the packing tape that was attached to the board so that marks were left in those areas from the pressure and because of the tacky nature of packing tape.

Here you can see the subtle markings that were left after the masking tape was pulled away. A great effect.

Work 5 – Flower Petal Interpretation - Acrylic, plastic mesh, wool, packing tape, MDF board. 300mmx300mm



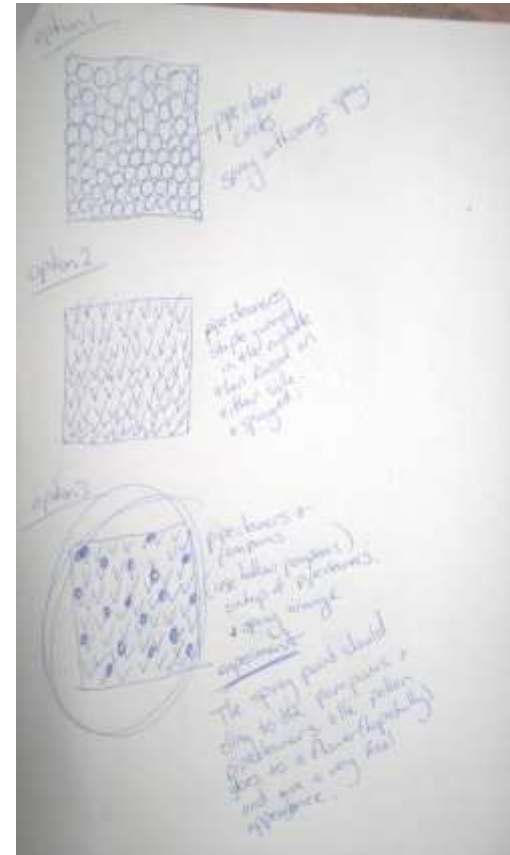
Work 6 - Flower pollen and stamin Interpretation

Idea – To depict the very inner magnification of the flower stamin and pollen within the heart of a flower.

Experiment – To depict what the stamin of a flower and the pollen looks like under a microscope using chenille sticks (pipe cleaners) pom poms, staple gun and spray paint. I am going to use different colours to get some variation and depth when sprayed and also to have filtering colours coming through.

This will be both an experiment and hopefully resolved into an actual work. What I am hoping for is that the spray paint will not entirely cover the pom and pipe cleaners due to their fluffy consistency and instead that it just clings to the outer fibres just like pollen does to flowers. (Fingers crossed)

Art when explored can send you in numerous directions, you may not like them all but you'll definitely have a lot of fun exploring the potential, and you will also learn extensively about how to work with numerous materials, what worked, what didn't, every time you create something different or outside of your comfort zone your adding to your reference bank of materials your familiar with and their limitations.



Work 6. Flower pollen and stamens – Wood board, pipe cleaners, pom poms, staples, spray paint orange.



Cut pipe cleaners/chenille sticks into smaller parts



Attach pipe cleaners to the board with a staple gun in the middle and stick both ends upward like a V



Attach pipe cleaners side by side, using different sizes and widths



Attach hollowed pom poms to the ends of the pipe cleaners intermittently



Spray with orange spray paint

Work 6. Flower pollen and stamens – Wood board, pipe cleaners, pom poms, staples, spray paint orange on MDF board. 300mmx300mm



Close up views

I really liked the finished work, I really think it does resemble pollen and flower stamens and the way the spray adhered to the pom poms and pipe cleaners really gave the look of sticky pollen.

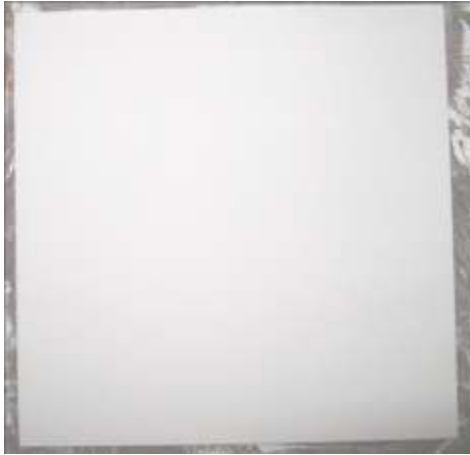
Work 7. Wind Blowing of the Flower Seeds

Idea – To portray the winds powerful gusts as it captures the flowers seeds for dispersal.

Concept – The flowers need the wind just as much as they require sun and water, without the wind the flowers would be purely reliant of animals to disperse the seeds and pollen. Wind gusts carry flower seeds/pollen to new locations and often far from the original collected locations allowing the formation of new ecosystems. The concept is to portray the intensity of the wind gusts as it captures the seeds. I want it to have the appearance of movement, thus I will add paint all at once and blend with a large paint scraper in a circular movement, hopefully the paint will blur and not leave clean lines to give the movement appearance. I will then scrape back the wet paint to form the appearance of giant fan blades subtly in the background. And finally I will scrape back more paint on half the board covering the seeds in order to give the viewer a greater level of importance and focus, to what is happening within the work.



Art Work 7 - Wind blowing of the flower seeds



Painted gesso MDF Board



I placed blobs of paint beside each other



Using a large paint scraper I pushed the paint all over the board in a circular motion so it would give the look of speed as the colours self blended together and blurred.



Using a knife I scaped back sections of paint to reveal the white board beneath to represent the direction of the wind. The fabric particles representing the flower seeds were then added

Work 7. Wind Blowing of the Flower Seeds – Fabric, Acrylic on MDF board -300mmx300mm

The wind that takes the flowers seeds is representational of the force and the role of nature in seed dispersal. Survival of the species is dependent on the wind, as well as bird and insect life to disperse seeds, and carry them to wider areas so germination can occur.

This works shows how the wind sweeps up the flower pod of seeds and carries them far and wide in a strong gust of wind.

I wouldn't call this a great work, in fact it's terrible but again it's good knowledge, because it means your not suited to that style of working with out a lot more practice and resolving of your work concept to make it better next time.



Work 8. Earth's crust above and below

Idea – To depict what is above and beneath the open landscape

Concept – To show a combination of representative colours and textures that depict and define the earth's landscape both above and below the surface. Use a combination of material fabric and paint to create a complex and interesting abstract view taking in some of the most important aspects of the landscape, such as water, mined materials, land clearing, soil, and structure that makes up the land such as a rocks, caves.

Colours to use:

Red- warming of the earth's crust – The earth's core heat can vary everyday

Turquoise- trapped water

Metallic gold – mining reliance

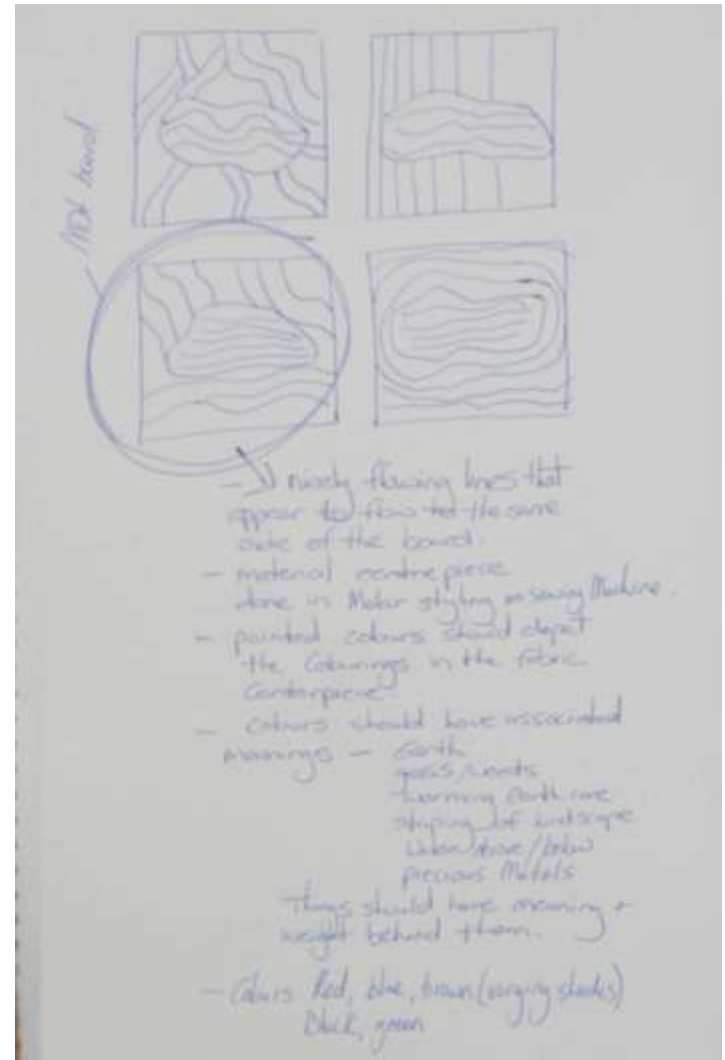
Black – land clearance

Rich red brown – soil

Light brown – weeds

Dark brown – rocks and caves

Budding Artist's should be artist researching, sketching and working on your concept before starting any art work.



Work 8. Earth's crust above and below – Work process



Firstly I sewed together various pieces of fabric and wool representative of the crusts core, then I painted a MFD board in acrylic paints also representative of those same colours represented by the fabric inner core. The fabric was then attached to the painted board. Every colour used is symbolic of something either above or below the ground in the region of viewing from the surface of the ground and under.



Work 8. Earth's crust above and below – Acrylic, fabric on MDF board. 300mmx300mm

Colour indicators

Red- represents the warming of the earth's crust

Turquoise- Represents the water trapped below the surface and the water on the top of the surface such as creeks and naturally occurring water ways.

Metallic gold – Represents the earth's reliance on the value of precious metals (gold, diamonds, silver, gems stones, opals)

Black – Represents the degradation and stripping of the land, land clearance for farming, housing, roads.
Rich red brown – Represents the complexity of the soil.

Light brown – Represents the natural occurring weeds and dried grasses that sweep across the landscape.

Dark brown – Represents the rocks and caves above and below the ground



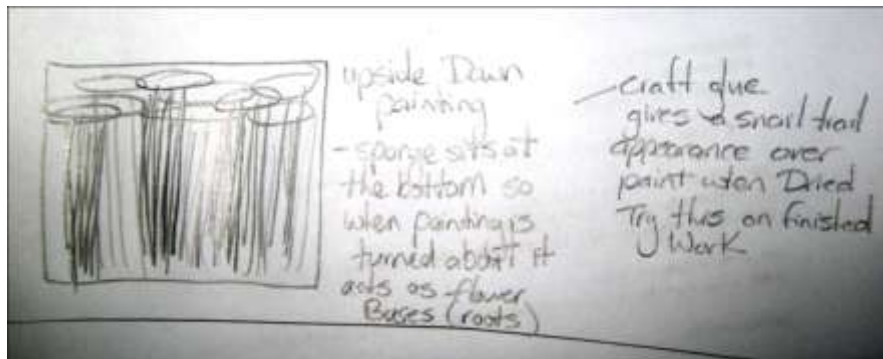
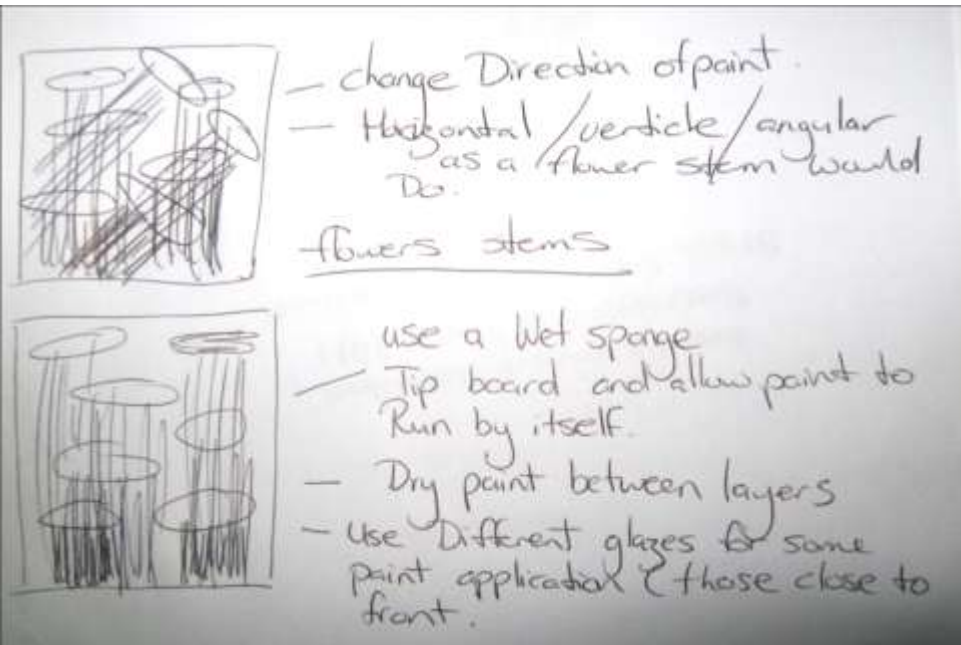
Work 9. - Flower stems

Don't forget to do simple sketches and give yourself a guidance map

Idea – To use a painting style to depict the flowers stems, the length and fragility of the paint style should give a great effect in acknowledging how simple a flower stem is, but also how many together provide strength in numbers.

Concept – Use acrylic paint (water added), and a sponge to get a layered effect of the paint, should be fun! Try different directions rather than just down, and different colours, earthy colours, green, black, brown, gold, rich red. In essence this is up side down painting because when I'm finished the bottom will become the top, where the sponge makes its marks will become the roots and essence of the base of the flower stems.

Let's take a look



Work 9. Flower stems (MDF board, acrylic paint, sponge and water application)



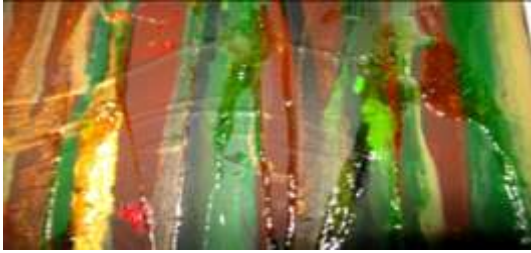
After the base coats were applied, which was a mixture of two brown colours, I then used the rectangular sponge, filled it to 80% water capacity before adding acrylic paint directly over the sponge outer, I then placed the sponge onto the board whilst the board was up right, and squeezed the sponge so the paint and water spilled out of it and dripped down the board, the process was repeated with each individual colour.



At this final stage I wanted to capture the essence of the silkiness of the stems so I applied craft glue in drips, this is an experiment, I want to see if I am right in that when the glue dries it will have a “snail trail” appearance which is similar to some flower stems.

Work 9. Flower stems – Final work- Acrylic, water, sponge application, craft glue on MDF board. 300mmx300mm

Close ups



This proved a great way to work, the paint dried really luscious, it was very easy to achieve great depth and layering, the accidental markings worked well as they dripped down the board and the colour choices just worked fantastically together. I especially liked the finished look of the craft glue, although the photography does not capture it in different lights, it looks amazing in its complexity, height, sheen and the way it captures the light is very exciting, I would really be interesting in experimenting more with craft glue you should try it.

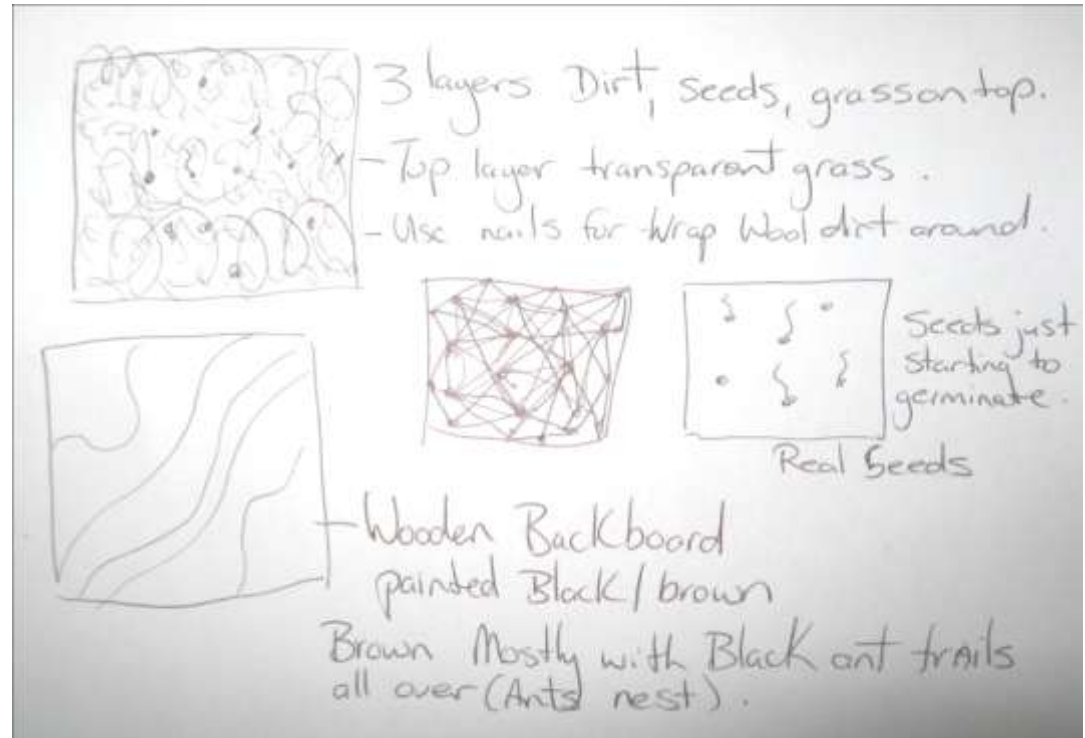
Work 10. Flower Seed Germination

Idea – When the wind or nature transports the flower seeds to a new ground location, the seeds settle and germination begins.

Concept – To depict the seed germination between the dirt and the grassy top layer by allowing the same transparent look beneath the grass that you would see if you placed your head to the ground and took a close up look to what was happening under the grass.

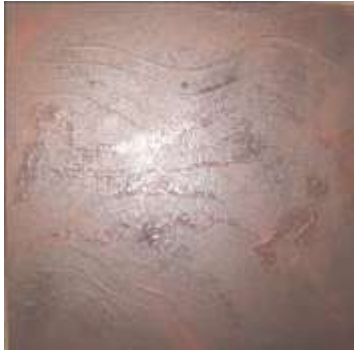
Materials – Plastic coated wire, flower seeds, wool.
Process – knitted and threaded wire and wool

Try to explore different mediums to add to your reference bank – Create a visual diary of materials and what you liked and disliked about working with them.....



Let's check out the next material investigation.

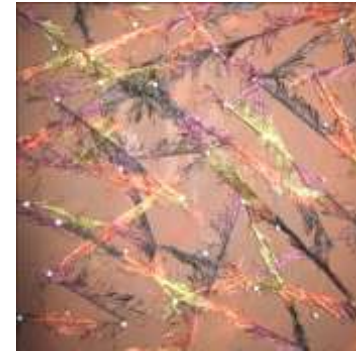
Work 10. Flower seed germination



Painted MDF board with brown acrylic.



Hammered in flat head nails



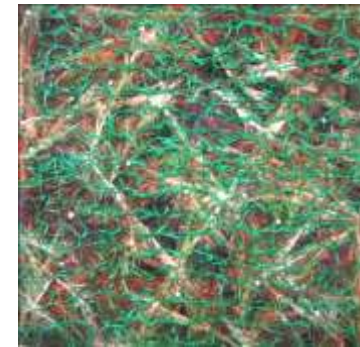
Wrapped around fluffy based wool in a random fashion



Wrapped around lighter high lighting wool to thicken and add height.



Using plastic coated wire, I knitted a square large enough to cover the board



Attached knitted square to nails on the wood covered board ready to add string to random nails to give the look of certain seeds sprouting.

Work 10. Flower seed germination



Seeds have embedded under the grass and some have sprouted and starting shooting above the grass.



I think the knitted wire really worked to achieve a grass like appearance

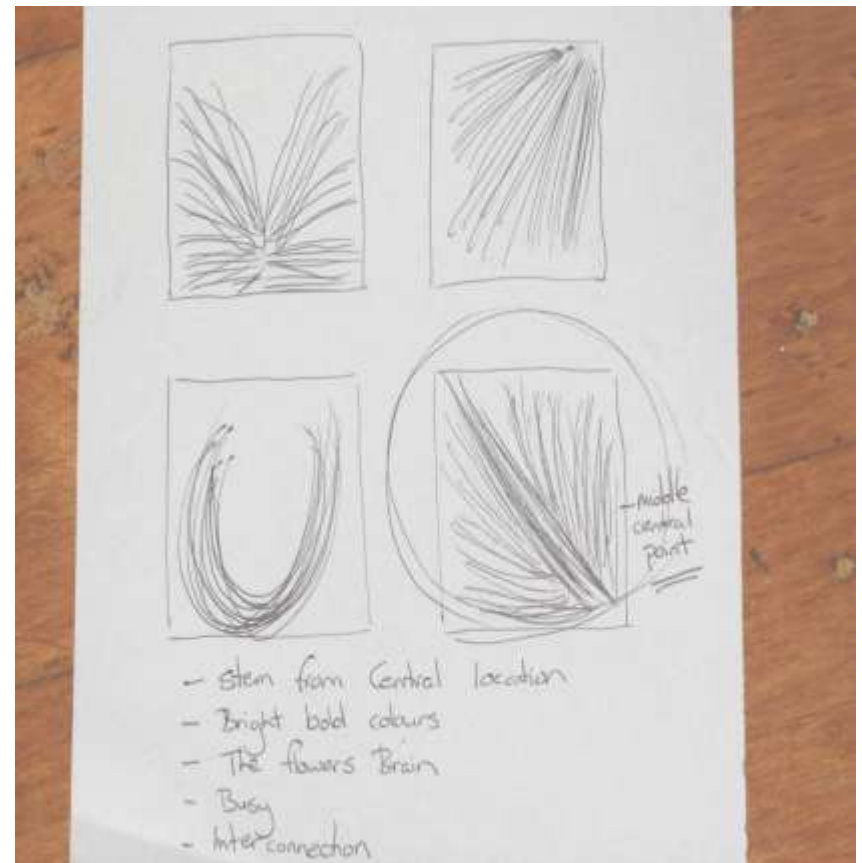
Work 11. Root system of the flowers

Idea – Use ephemeral water art to depict the root system of the flowers

Concept – Use paint on water to get the feeling of a busy underground root system of a plot of ground where a load of flowers grow. Instead of darkness, reverse it with bold bright colours to show case the abundance of life and the busy nature as they extend and grow foraging for nutrients. They are the stars of the show, without a root system the flowers would not grow beautiful. Imagine if a fluoro dye was injected into the root system to discover how advanced it was, this is how it will appear. Very bright colours, very busy, with lines going in every direction, like branches, but stem from a central location.

Be sure to use oil based enamel paint, water based paint will not work, remember the saying oil and water don't mix – that's perfect here because we want the paint to sit on top of the water and not mix into it.

I thought for this work we would go back and explore Ephemeral Art again because of the fluidity and beauty of the work. I am going to use paint, oil based enamel pored into a borax and water mix, I really enjoy doing this style of art so I wanted to showcase it for you.



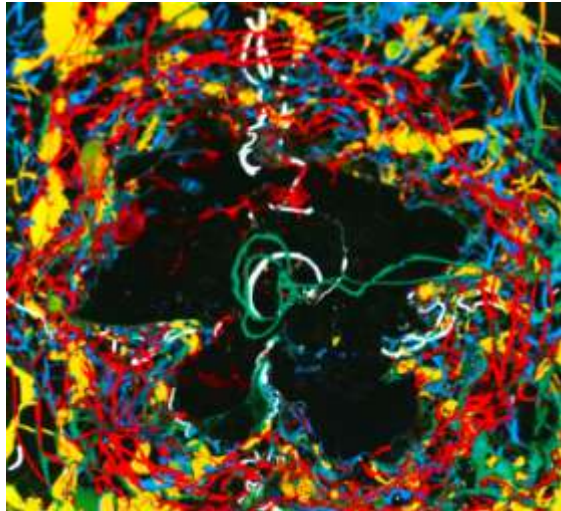
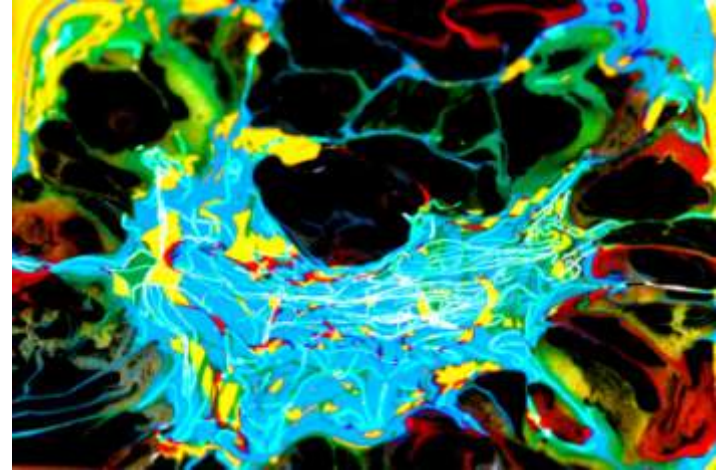
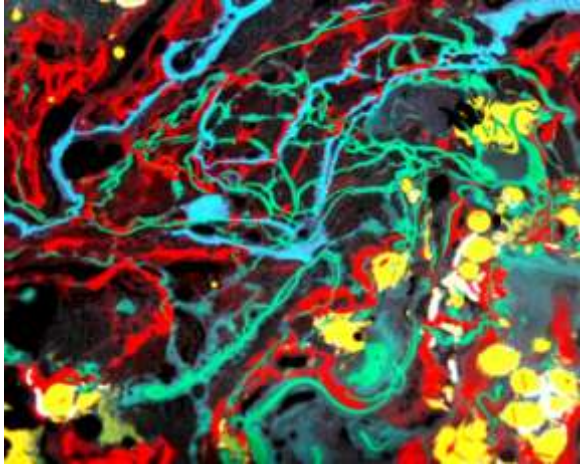
Work 11 – Root system of the flowers. Oil based enamel on water and photography

The intricacy of the root system is discovered when fluoro dye is injected. The complexity and beauty of the network of workers, produces a hive of activity as they search for nutrients, and strive for one sole purpose, survival!

Whilst we are here let's just take a quick look at other Ephemeral Water Art Works



Ephemeral Water Art – Is so Much Fun



This is a great work process and the results can be stunning, you can get so many artworks done in as little as ten minutes

Work 12. Flowers waterproof barrier

Idea – The flowers protective water proof barrier to the effects of water.

-Does it have a barrier, like sunscreen to protect itself from filling up with water. We know they need water to survive and without it they wilt and die, but do the flowers have there own brand of water protective covering and if so what would it look like.

Concept- To depict the water protective barrier of the flower. The work will be made completely from utilizing the inner side of soda pop cans.

The tin is bland, tough, water proof, shiny, and can be cut to shape. Metal personifies water proof, placed in the rain or under running water, the water will run off giving the ideal surface to depict the water proof barrier produced by a flower.

Flowers should be grouped like they would be in a field. The concept is to simply depict just what the water proof barrier would look like if the flower turned on a switch and it was covered by its outer rain coat.



It's time to recycle and take a little peek into 'RECYCLED ART'

Work 12. Flowers waterproof barrier



A simple pepsi can



Cut the top off and cut with scissor triangular points



Turn your flower design over and draw imprints with a pen, when you turn your flower back over the pen if pressed hard enough will have imprinted your correct side

Work 12. Flowers waterproof barrier – Soda pop cans on grass in the rain



Simple idea but it could go much further in your exploration than my simple work..... try it out.

Thanks for joining me in this Fine Art lesson on how to explore art concepts 12 ways

I really hope that you now see how to go about your process a little differently.

This has been another Karen Elzinga Fine Art Lesson for more lessons [click here](#)



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FINE ART LESSONS * ART BLOGS * CRAFT LESSON'S FOR KID'S

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