

Chapter 7

The three Ms: Media, methods and materials

'Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right, or doing it better.'

John Updike

So far, we have focused on traditional design tools such as pencils, markers, the computer and so on. The Visual Communication and Design study offers you the opportunity to experience and experiment with various media, material and image-making methods. In fact, the study encourages the use of a diverse range of visual techniques.

The integration of the 3Ms – media, materials and methods – can lead to creative and varied outcomes throughout the four units, and the information in this chapter is designed to expand your awareness of the variety of Ms available.

7.1 Drawing

Freehand drawing

Freehand drawing has been covered in some detail in earlier chapters but it is worth mentioning again because it lies at the core of visual communication and offers endless possibilities for the exploration of design concepts. Freehand drawing and rendering allows you to express the development of design ideas in a visually meaningful way.

Freehand drawing creates a visual language and can provide detailed information about the construction, workings and appearance of objects. At times you may wish to express complex visual messages through drawing. The integration of freehand drawing techniques, appropriate media and materials can facilitate this.

Coloured pencils

The effect of coloured pencil work is determined by three factors: the angle of use, the pressure of application and the surface texture. Each variable will affect the appearance of coloured pencil illustrations. Pencils are a deceptively simple medium and because they are so familiar to us we sometimes ignore their versatility. Pencils that contain a soft core are most effective for illustrations and freehand drawings.

Materials, Methods and Media as defined by the VCAA Study Design

		Media
Materials Are modified by methods and media, according to design elements and principles to create final presentations.	Paper Card Wood Glass Metal Clay Stone Plastic Textile	
Methods	Drawing Freehand Orthogonal Paraline Perspective	Pencil Paint Ink Dye Marker Pastel Crayon Airbrush
	Printing Monoprint Relief Intaglio Offset Screen	Ink Dye
	Photography Black and white Colour Positive Reversal	Dye Emulsion Digital
	Photocopy Black and white Colour	Toner
	Computer Image Type	Digital information
	3-D Process Construction Moulding	Knife Glue Scissors

Applying turps with a soft brush to high-grade coloured pencil work to create a wash can enhance pencil rendering. The application of watercolour pencils may also soften an image. The pigment contained within watercolour pencils is soft and dissolves easily with water applied with a brush or sprayed from a bottle.

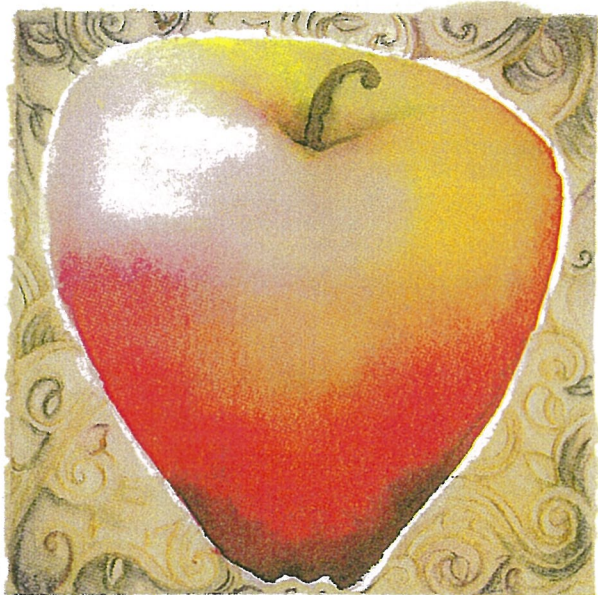
Application ideas for coloured pencil

Sketches, idea development, illustration for packaging, product design, concept drawings, images for print publications, images for the Web, illustrations for posters, brochures, diagrams, maps, charts

Watercolour

Watercolour paints contain a coloured pigment suspended in a water base. They offer soft, transparent effects when applied and are usually used on special watercolour papers. There is a range of special application techniques used when working with watercolour, including washes, glazes and wet-in-wet techniques. Watercolours are often used in combination with drawing and printmaking.

Watercolour pencils and pastels are easier to use than traditional watercolour as they can be applied like a straightforward pencil and then altered with the addition of water. Watercolour pencils are effective when rendering objects and illustrations.



Application ideas for watercolour

Drawing from observation, diagrams, maps, illustrations for picture books

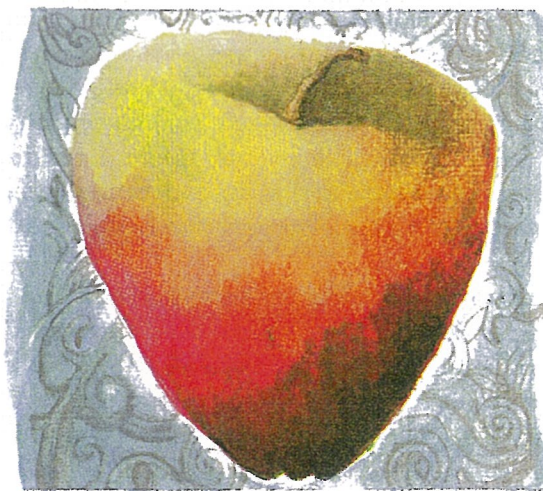
Gouache

Gouache is a water-soluble medium that has similar qualities to watercolour but is thicker and more flexible. Gouache is opaque and offers a richness of colour and a smooth texture. It can be manipulated in a number of ways, diluted and used in washes or superimposed in a series of deep, opaque layers. Gouache is often used by specialist illustrators who appreciate the flat colour.



Acrylic paint

Acrylic paint can vary in quality, so it is important to use paints with deep pigments. Acrylic can be used in its original form to achieve even application and opaque or translucent washes. With the addition of additives such as impasto medium, a thick textured consistency can be achieved, and acrylic can reflect the qualities of media such as oil paint. Unlike oil paint, acrylic does not reflect light when scanned or photographed so is ideal for use in illustrations for posters, books and so on.



Application ideas for gouache and acrylic

Poster design, packaging surface graphics, explanatory diagrams, charts and maps, logo and symbol design, magazine covers, illustrations for editorial content

Pen and ink

The making of marks with pen can create a vast spectrum of visual effects. From closely linked lines



that are crosshatched and interwoven to sparse ink and brush works, the suggestiveness of these two media is endless. Simple black-and-white line drawings can be deeply expressive – in most cases the quality of the line will create the meaning of the drawing. Sweeping organic lines have a different effect from strong, boldly-drawn crosshatched lines.

Pigmented inks are deeply coloured and can be used with a pen nib, brush or airbrush. They offer striking colour coverage and can be mixed and blended on paper for visual effect. Ink line work – using a combination of black Indian ink and pigmented coloured inks – offers many illustrative possibilities and is popular with many illustrators, cartoonists and fine artists.

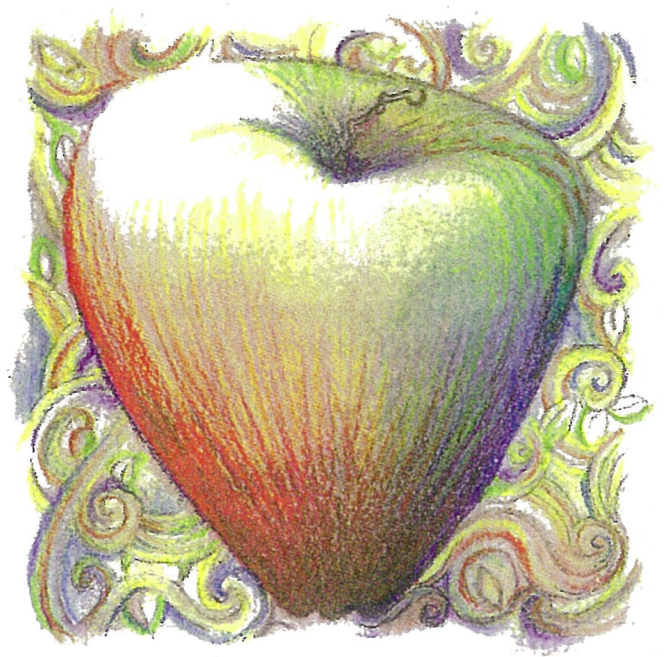
Application ideas for pen and ink

Cartoons, comics, illustrated novels, editorial illustration, book illustration, technical and scientific illustration, maps, diagrams, web content, animation

Oil and chalk pastels

Pastels are ideal for expressive and emotive illustration. The qualities of oil pastels and chalk pastels differ greatly but the application is remarkably similar. Both are often applied in layers, with scraping and blending used to remove or define areas. Pastels can be *feathered*, where long and short lines of colour are used to weave colours into one another. Oil pastel can be used with pure turps as a solvent to create diluted washes.

Chalk pastel can be scraped with a sharp blade and the flakes mixed with fine white talc to create soft backgrounds and effects. The mixture should



be applied with cotton wool or a tissue. Used in combination with masking film or paper, areas can be wiped with the mix to form contrasting background for product designs.

Application ideas for pastel

Illustrations for children's books, illustration for print publications, background effects for the presentation of product designs

Paper and card



Cut and torn paper offers many illustrative possibilities. The array of specialty and handmade papers available provides a variety of weights and textures. Paper lends itself to tearing, crumpling, layering and cutting. Paper exists, of course, as the medium for the basis of our drawings and designs but its qualities offer many other creative possibilities.

Tracing paper can be used not only for tracing but also as a printing surface. Due to its translucent qualities, it can be used as an overlay or divider.

Cotton and fibre papers, also known as *rag paper*, are ideal for printing watercolour and acrylic media, as their absorbent characteristics can create soft washes.

Paper and cards such as pasteboard come in a range of weights (thicknesses) and can be used to construct models, point-of-purchase displays and packaging prototypes.

Application ideas for paper

Illustrations that demand contrast, pattern, texture, colour and shape; layering to develop three-dimensional modelled imagery; development of a logo design; menu design

Collage

Collage is a spontaneous method of arranging visual materials in a unique way. Found objects, clippings, photographs, images and varieties of paper might be used in combination to create thematic presentations or visual contrasts. When used well, collage can create

contemporary, youthful and 'edgy' illustrations for postcards, magazine layouts and book covers.

Collage may contain combinations of letterform, colour and relevant images, and may be used in response to a communication need. Collage can become a rich representation of a theme or idea, whether working with comics, handmade and textured papers, sheet music, stamps, maps, playing cards, wallpaper, postcards or other materials with interesting visual characteristics.

Application ideas for collage

Illustration for a poster or magazine cover; presentation of materials, fabric and design ideas for an interior design; illustration for postcards, packaging or posters

Method 2 Printing

There are many printmaking methods, all of which offer distinctive visual characteristics. Printmaking techniques can be used in Visual Communication and Design to create bold illustrations as part of a design task.

Monoprint

The simplest and most accessible form of printmaking is the monoprint. A monoprint is a one-off impression made by applying printing ink to a surface and then transferring it to paper. Monoprinting excludes the benefit of other printmaking methods in that multiple copies of a single image cannot be made; however, the visual characteristics of a monoprint are distinctive.

A monoprint can be created on acetate, glass or cardboard. Ink is applied, and marks and textures are made on the inked surface. The monoprint 'plate' is then printed onto paper using a press or soft rollers. Although you cannot create multiple prints, you may use the same plate two or three times and achieve an image that fades in intensity with each application.

Application ideas for monoprint

Illustration for a book jacket design, CD cover or poster; background design for a website or multimedia presentation; illustration for children's literature

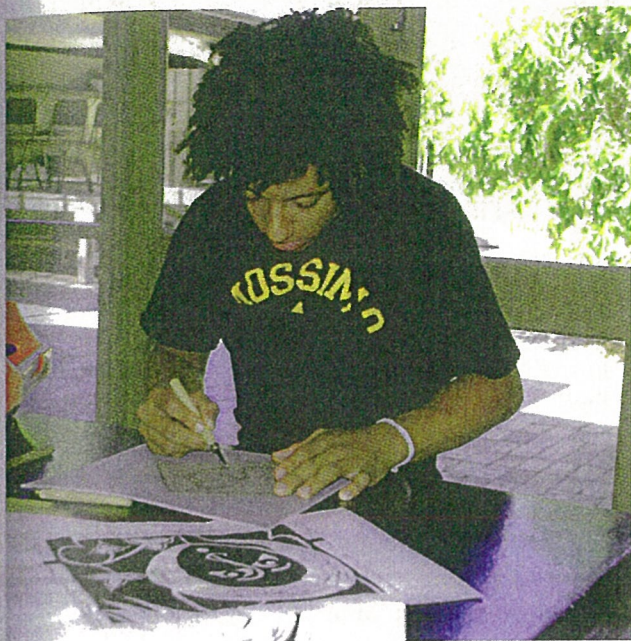
Relief printing

Linocut and woodcut techniques are referred to as *relief printing*. Sharp tools are used to carve the surface of a block or tile. Linocuts are probably the easiest form of relief printing as the surface is usually soft and can be carved without difficulty. Woodcut printing offers quite different surface qualities from smooth lino, as the texture of the wood is often visible in the final prints.



Ink is applied to the surface of the lino tile or wood block and the tile is printed onto paper using a printing press. The areas cut away from the original material remain white.

A similar but more 'sketched' and illustrative effect can be obtained through the use of *scrapboard*. This heavyweight paper is coated with a black surface that can be scraped away with a sharp tool to reveal the white surface beneath.



Relief printing

Application ideas for relief printing

Logos; surface graphics for packaging; pattern and imagery for textiles and surface designs; signage; editorial illustrations for magazine articles; cartoons or comic strips

Intaglio printing

Intaglio printing is the name for the processes of etching, mezzotint, engraving and dry point etching, where the pressure of printing forces the paper into the grooves of the plate to pick up the image. The intaglio plate has lines 'bitten' into it and these form the lines of the print. The plate is initially covered with a protective coating of 'ground' such as bituminous paint, which is then drawn into with a needle-like etching tool. The plate is placed in acid and the acid etches the areas drawn into and not covered with ground.

The plate is inked so that ink rests in the etched areas of the plate, and the remainder of the plate is wiped clean. Intaglio prints such as etching are printed using dampened rag paper. There are many techniques used in etching to create fine, soft finishes, sharp line drawings and dark, moody tones.

Application ideas for intaglio prints

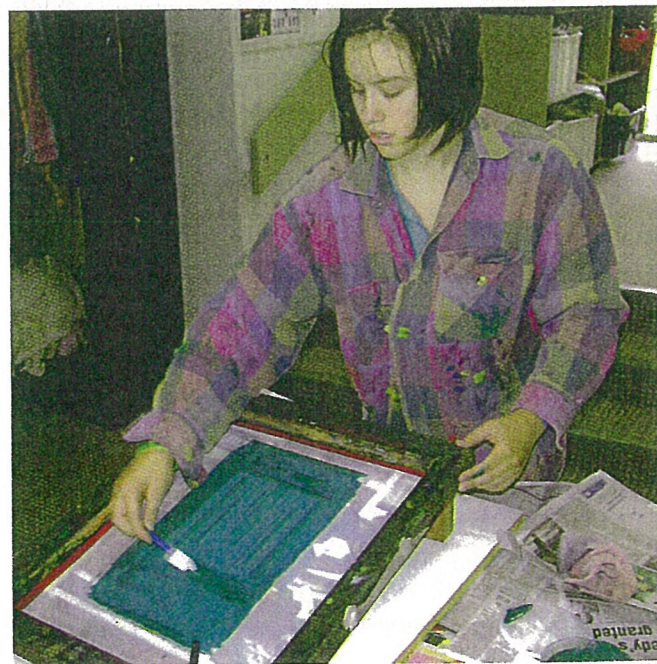
Surface graphics for packaging, illustration for books, posters, drawings made from direct observation, book jacket design, movie posters, basis of animation for film titles



Intaglio printing

Screenprinting

Screenprinting differs from other printmaking processes because the print is not the result of the direct impression of one surface upon another. Instead, a screenprint is formed by printing through a secondary surface,



Screenprinting

Do you have a clear idea of the target audience as you design? If so, how does your understanding of the market influence your work?

Yes. A quiz game aimed at, for example, seven- to eleven-year-old boys (which I am working on now) brings with it a whole lot of intuitive choices about the kookiness of characters, the role of humour (and my idea of what I would laugh at if I was about nine), the colours, the complexity of ideas. If your audience was to be young adult women, that would be different in every way. I think you always animate for yourself to an extent, but you need to be aware of who you really want to entertain. You can usually appeal to both!

What inspires and influences your work? What do you watch, read and experience to gather resources for your illustration and animation work?

Whatever catches my eye. I love strong and quirky imagery. It might be a great kids' cartoon show on TV, a T-shirt or a piece of graffiti. I go to art galleries, watch quite a few TV animated series, and love book stores and looking for interesting stuff on the Internet. Usually I am inspired [in my work] by human-made imagery, and not by direct experience of the visual world. I am interested in how creative people filter and select images from their experience.

7.4 Three-dimensional techniques

Modelling

At various stages throughout the Visual Communication and Design study, you may choose to construct scale models and realistic prototypes of a product. The effective use of three-dimensional materials can lead to the production of models that communicate the form (and perhaps the function) of an object more clearly than a drawing or diagram.

Hand modelling

Hand modelling of objects is a quick way of creating three-dimensional forms. Commercial modelling or sculpting mediums, including Sculpey and Fimo, can be used to create small forms by hand or with pottery tools. Modelling media come in a range of colours and are often used for character designs, for animation and as prototypes for products with a predominantly organic form.

Paper and card

Papers and lightweight card can be used to construct packaging and small-scale models. There are many packaging templates or flat plans available in books and on the Internet to assist in the construction of common and complex packaging designs. Like a fabric pattern, these templates indicate folds and outlines.

Pasteboard, which is available in a range of thicknesses, is ideal for the representation of packaging concepts.

Other cheap and readily available materials such as *strawboard* (which is commonly used as a base in architectural models) and lightweight corrugated cardboard can be used to construct models of buildings. The properties of lighter weight, flexible cardboards allow for the depiction of contours, curves and details such as ground surfaces, roofs and walls. The scoring of card (by cutting grooves into the material without severing the fibres completely) also allows for effective folds and angles.

Foamcore

Foamcore is a versatile product that is used in both model making and two-dimensional presentations. It consists of a lightweight foam centre encased on two sides by a paper surface. The foam centre can be brittle if cut incorrectly and should be sliced with a very sharp blade. Use blades only under supervision.

Foamcore is available in several thicknesses and is ideal for models and structures that require solid modelling. Foamcore is also ideal for raising features on a presentation board. It can be placed as a support behind images and text panels to alter the surface of a presentation and draw attention to one or more visual features.

Polypropylene

Polypropylene is a firm plastic material that lends itself to packaging. It is available in transparent and semi-opaque colours and is often used in the construction of gift boxes and packaging where visible contents are required. Polypropylene can be scored and folded like card.

Polystyrene

Polystyrene is a coarse-grained foam-like material that is commonly used in the packing of goods and products for transportation. It crumbles easily when cut with a knife and is best cut with a hot-wire cutter. A smooth, coloured finish can be achieved on polystyrene with the application of water-based paint.

Styrofoam

Compared to polystyrene, Styrofoam has a finer texture that lends itself to more precise cutting and modelling. It can also be painted with water-based paints for effect. Styrofoam is available in a range of densities and can be cut with a hot-wire cutter.



When cutting Styrofoam or polystyrene you should wear a mask and goggles. Any cutting should be done under supervision in a well-ventilated area.

Wood

Any sanding or machining of wood and wood products should be done in a controlled, safe and supervised environment. You should always wear a mask when sanding, and if you are required to machine wood, you must wear safety glasses. You should only use power tools under supervision and work in a well-ventilated area.

Balsa wood

Commonly used in model making, balsa wood is a soft, lightweight material with a fine texture and neutral colour. Flat, square and cylindrical rods of balsa are available and can be sanded, carved or glued to form a variety of shapes. Balsa can be bent slightly and steamed to form lightly curved shapes. Balsa wood can be brittle, so may need to be combined with a more flexible product such as card. Like many other woods, balsa can be sanded and painted repeatedly to give the appearance of another material such as metal or plastic.

MDF

Medium-density fibreboard or MDF is made from tightly-compressed wood fibres that are bonded into sheets of varying thicknesses. MDF is relatively soft, flexible and does not split; it can be easily shaped with hand tools or machinery. A high-gloss finish that simulates the appearance of moulded plastic is achievable through a laborious but effective process of repeatedly sanding your MDF model and painting it with gloss or automotive enamel.



MDF contains traces of toxic chemicals and should only be sanded, formed and cut in a well-ventilated area. Wear a dust mask.

Casting

Models that are required to show the form of an object alone can be created with simple casting techniques. After carefully and smoothly forming an object in clay or similar modelling material, a plaster cast can be made and used as the mould for objects to be made with resin, latex or plaster.

Moulding

Vacuum moulding facilities are not common in schools but offer great opportunities for the development of effective scale models. In vacuum moulding, also known as *vacforming*, a sheet of plastic is heated to a high temperature, stretched onto a mould, and held against the mould by applying a vacuum between the mould surface and the sheet. This provides a lightweight hollow form. Vacuum moulding is a technique widely used in manufacturing of plastic products.

Injection moulding is a technique where plastics are injected into a mould to form a product. Injection moulding is very commonly used in manufacturing but is uncommon in schools. Sometimes it is possible for student models and prototypes to be created by external providers of these systems.

