

## Artist Collaborations

Lewis Fidock & Joshua Petherick and Foster & Berean

This resource examines artistic collaborations, focusing on dual collaborative exhibitions *Weevils in the Flour* by Lewis Fidock and Joshua Petherick and *Fatigue* by Foster & Berean.

This resource covers the topics of identity and authorship, drawing upon famous collaborations: Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Mariana Abromović and Ulay for historical context.



## Artistic collaborations

To be able to discuss artist collaborations, what we need is a clear understanding of *why* people collaborate at all. Artistic collaborations are usually founded upon *mutual interest*. Individuals interact on the basis of calculated and reciprocal gain, where one partner's abilities complement the others abilities, or inabilities. Artistic collaborations can be strategic, fueled by potential financial gains or publicity, or they can be more sincere, meaningful and cooperative expressions fueled by common interest. Collaborations also allow for the division of labour between parties.

Critic and curator, Maria Lind, in her text, *The Collaborative Turn*, identifies that there are four driving factors to collaborative activity: collaboration, cooperation, collective and participation.<sup>1</sup> She also identifies that the genealogy of collaborative practice began with the studio systems of baroque Europe and continues today with the contemporary theory of 'Group Work'.<sup>2</sup> Artistic collaborations have always been characterised by artistic activity, both between artists and at times, those outside of the *art world* - such as architects, designers, writers and activists.

Collaborative arts practice has emerged and flourished under specific art-historical circumstances. Two iconic examples of artist-collaborations are Andy Warhol and Jean Paul Basquiat, and Marina Abramović and Ulay.

Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat met formally for the first time in 1982 through Basquiat's art dealer, Bruno Bischofberger. The two already had mutual respect and awe for each other's practice – which is why they wanted to collaborate. In collaborating, they fused their distinctive style's, challenging each other and making each canvas a conversation between the two. Basquiat's raw, graffiti painting style contrasted Warhol's clean cut, mass produced, prints, and the works they produced was a social, creative and commercial collaboration.

Marina Abramović and Ulay collaborated from 1976 – 1988, which was the duration of their romantic relationship. This relationship ended through a performance piece, the *The Lovers: Great Wall Walk*, which exemplifies the Fluxus-inspired, transcendental nature of their collaboration. Their collaborative performances explored physical and psychic endurance, otherwise known as *Relation Work*. By collaborating, they could use each other to address culturally relevant themes such as co-dependence, patriarchy, ego and identity.

Artistic collaborations blur the 'normal' idea of the artist as an individual, a lone ranger or a solitary creative genius. Collaborations therefore, change our understanding of the term *artistic identity*. A collaboration of two artists implies the existence of a third, phantom body: a combined and unified 'other'.

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Lind, *The Collaborative Turn*, in *Taking The Matter Into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*. Edited by Johanna Billing, Maria Lind and Lars Nilsson, 15-31. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

## Weevils in the Flour

### Lewis Fidock and Joshua Petherick

In parallel with their solo practices, Lewis Fidock and Joshua Petherick have been working in collaboration intermittently since 2016. Working predominantly in sculpture, the artists engage strategies of artifice, to consider and obfuscate the relationship between objects and time, archaeology and preservation, history and future. Presenting objects that question these themes, Fidock and Petherick offer propositions and speculations that entangle the real world with the realm of alternative narratives for how objects might reflect, challenge or disrupt histories and systems and hierarchies of cultural and economic value attribution.

Selected recent collaborative exhibitions include: *U*, Sydney, Sydney (2019); and *A Cut From Occam's Razor*, Punk Café, Melbourne (2016); Selected recent collaborative projects in group exhibitions include: *Auto Body Works*, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne (2018); *Unreal City*, Firstdraft, Sydney (2018); *We Remember It For You Wholesale (Part Two)*, Minerva, Sydney (2017); and *Future Eaters*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2017).

Lewis Fidock is represented by Sydney, Sydney.

Joshua Petherick is alumni artist of the Gertrude Studio Program participating in 2011-2013. He is represented by STATION; and Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington.

An responsive essay by Jack Willet: *Objects Pertaining to the History of Lost Futures* accompanied the exhibition.

## Fatigue

### Foster & Berean

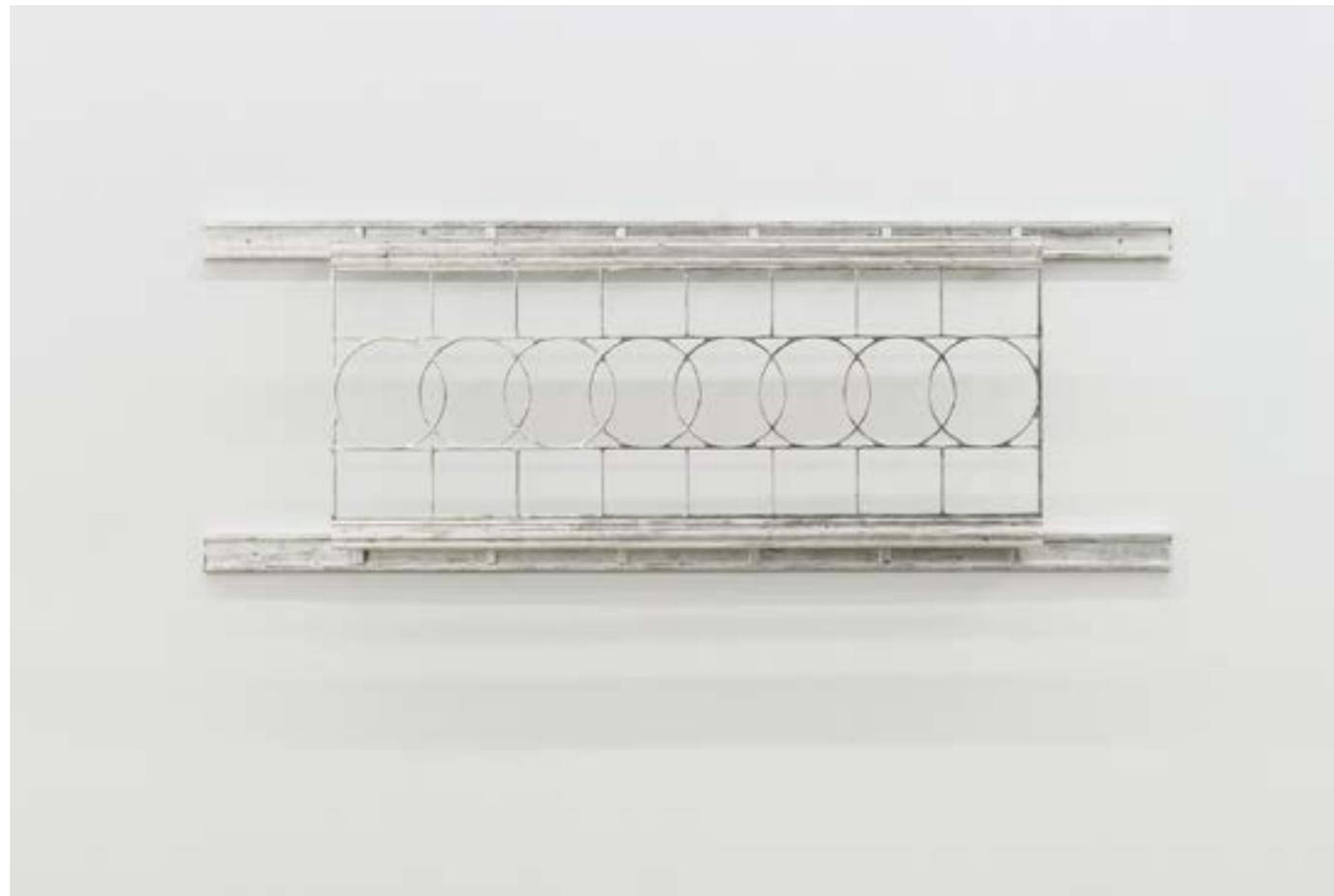
Pat Foster & Jen Berean have been working collaboratively since 2001. Employing a diverse and lateral array of media and processes, their work unpicks the hidden systems that make up the sites and infrastructure that surrounds us. Within such thinking, contemporary architecture is deconstructed to such a degree that it is not solely concerned with the making of functional and utilisable space, but more crucially the determination of how, and by whom, such space is used, and for what purpose.

Foster & Berean and Petherick are alumni of the Gertrude Studio Program, with Foster & Berean participating in the program from 2007-2009

Selected recent collaborative exhibitions include: *Loss Adjustment*, TCB, Melbourne (2017); *Evelyn Yard booth*, NADA NY, Basketball City, New York (2016); *Shadow of a Doubt*, Evelyn Yard, London (2015); *Nuove Tendenze*, Neon Parc, Melbourne (2014); *Ian Potter Sculpture Garden Commission*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2013); *Double Negatives*, Centre For Contemporary Photography and Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne (2011); *Can't Stand Up For Falling Down*, Murray White Room, Melbourne (2010); *There is No Alternative*, db projects, Sydney (2010); and *The Problem with Stability*, Pallas Contemporary Projects, Dublin (2010). Selected recent group exhibitions include: *Enterprise House*, London (2017); *Support Material, Soft Furnishings*, RMIT Project Space, Melbourne (2016); *Yesterday Night*, Rowhill Mansions, London (2015); *The White Hotel*, Gimpel Fils, London (2014); *Sequester*, Embassy of Australia, Washington DC (2014); *2012 Adelaide Biennial of Art: Parallel Collisions*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (2012); *NEW 09*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2009); *SCAPE 2008 Christchurch Biennial*, Christchurch Art Gallery, Christchurch; *Structural Decline*, Melbourne Art Fair 2008 Project Rooms; Neo Goth, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane (2008).

Patrick Foster was in residence at the Norma Redpath Studio, the Gertrude Contemporary Studio Residency Program is organised in conjunction with the Norma Redpath Studio, which is facilitated by the Centre of Visual Art (CoVA), The University of Melbourne.

Joshua Petherick and Lewis Fidock's *Weevils in the Flour*, and Foster & Berean's *Fatigue* were supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.



The works presented in *Fatigue*, were inspired by security systems put on the outside of windows and gates - from both domestic and industrial settings. Constructed using a wooden compound board, cut via laser cutting technique, these structures were gilded in silver foil, a long and tedious process - hence the title *Fatigue*, which reflects in the labour process and it's subsequent feeling of exhaustion.

In an interview with Megan Blackhouse for *The Age*, March 2019, Pat Foster of Foster & Berean says partnerships requires:

‘Trust, understanding and respect...It’s just a nice way to work. It takes away the autonomy of the artist and this idea of being the individual coming up with great ideas. It feels a little bit more like two people working out problems, which I think is more of a design way. There’s none of that thing of having an idea that you are not so sure about and starting work on it and then taking quite a while to admit to yourself that it’s not working. When you’ve got two of you, you can really get to that stage pretty quickly.’<sup>3</sup>

Living now in separate cities, the collaboration relies upon the digital technologies to communicate and produce works. Jen, who works as an architect explains how their method of working has had to adapt:

‘This way of working has always existed in our practice to some extent, but over time it has developed and become more significant in our working methods. Our work has always used a language of architecture and because fabricators other than ourselves produce much of it, we often rely on architectural drawings to communicate the intent of the work to be produced. When we lived and worked in the same city as each other we would go through this process together in the studio. Now that we are in different cities we use the virtual space of computers to communicate with not only with the fabricators, but also with each other. We work together in real time by sharing screens, and we also email/text drawings back and forth in conversation, editing at each end. With that said, the virtual realms we work in are only part of our process and are a means to an end, the work itself is never virtual.’<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Megan Blackhouse, *Smashing their own glass ceiling*, *The Age*, March 18, 2019

<sup>4</sup> *5 Questions with Foster & Berean*, Elephant Art, 2015



At first glance the installation work *Weevils in the Flour* by Lewis Fidock and Joshua Petherick is absurd and confusing. However, upon closer inspection you can start to break down the exhibition in parts.

There are a few elements that speak to video gaming: the room itself, with lights off and dimly, artificially lit lanterns (*Weevils*, 2020) references a video-game. It could be *Dungeons-and-Dragons*, *Bowsers Castle* or similar. The viewer soon notices a doll, what looks like a small troll - the roomsheet tells us it is simply named *Character*, 2017. There is also a video work (*Destiny*, 2020) projected onto the wall at a domestic scale that references a TV or computer monitor. The point of view in this video work references the view of a player in a video game - with a sword protrudes out it front of them, from the bottom of the screen, signifying a 'character' holding the sword as they travel through the landscape.

# VISUAL ARTS 7 - 10

## Explore and Express

Levels 7 - 8 (VCAVAE033)

Explore visual arts practices as inspiration to explore and develop themes, concepts or ideas in artworks

Levels 7 - 8 (VCAVAE034)

Explore how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes to realise their intentions in artworks

Levels 9 - 10 (VCAVAE040)

Explore the visual arts practices and styles as inspiration to develop a personal style, explore, express ideas, concepts, and themes in artworks

Levels 9-10 (VCAVAE041)

Explore how artists manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and express their intentions in art works

## Respond and Interpret

Levels 7 - 8 (VCAVAR038)

Analyse how ideas and viewpoints are expressed in artworks and how they are viewed by audiences.

Levels 9-10 (VCAVAR045)

Analyse and interpret artworks to explore the different forms of expression, intentions and viewpoints of artists and how they are viewed by audiences.

## Visual Arts Practices

Levels 7 - 8 (VCAVAV035)

Experiment with materials, techniques, technologies and processes in a range of art forms to express ideas, concepts and themes in artworks

Levels 9-10 (VCAVAE040)

Select and manipulate materials, techniques, and technologies and processes in a range of art forms to express ideas, concepts and themes

# VISUAL ARTS 7 - 10

## Questions

Pick one of the images above and write down a short description of what you see - colours, shapes, materials. What medium and materials you see? After you've done this, look at the roomsheet and see what materials were used by the artists. Are they the same as what you observed?

Look at the works in *Fatigue* - What do the forms remind you of? Can you liken them to any features on the houses on the street where you live? Write a list of all the things you can find. e.g. Your neighbours fence

Look at the works in *Weevils in the Flour* - Many of them are found objects that in this context take on new meaning. Where do you think each of the objects was found? What do you think their original use / purpose was?

## Activity

### Option 1

Look at your own and your neighbours houses and the materials they are made of - brick, wood, cement, steel, glass and all the other metal fixtures and fittings. Draw one architectural feature you like - this could be your front gate, a window or mailbox. It can be as detailed or as simple as you like - you can make it look flat and two-dimensional or you can add more line and shadow to make it look three-dimensional.

Write a paragraph that explains why you choose this architectural feature to draw and why.

Swap your work with a friend, and discuss your drawing. Then brainstorm project you could do together - using your drawings as a starting point.

**OR**

### Option 2

Make your own video game room. Using pencils, pens and collaging images you've found online, in magazines, newspapers construct your own video game style room in the template provided. You can model it off a game you like or come up something new from your imagination.

Write a paragraph that explains your game - is it an adventure game? Are you trying to find treasure? Or rescue a princess? What do you win at the end?

Show your work to a friend, and discuss your drawing and ideas. Then brainstorm how your two rooms could fit together in a game.

## VCE Studio Art

Unit 3, Area of Study 3: Artists and Studio Practices

Students analyse how specific artworks are presented and demonstrate their understanding of the artists' and curators' consideration of how artworks are displayed within the art exhibitions. They consider the artists' use of materials, techniques and processes, and the use of art elements and art principles to demonstrate aesthetic qualities and styles in artworks.

Unit 4, Area of Study 3: Art Industry Contexts

Students examine a variety of art exhibitions and review the methods and considerations involved in the preparation, presentation and conservation of artworks. Students analyse how specific artworks are presented and demonstrate their understanding of the artists' and curators' consideration of how artworks are displayed within the art exhibitions.

## VCE Art

Unit 3, Area of Study 1: Interpreting Art

In this area of study students respond to and critically interpret the meanings and messages of artworks. They develop, examine and analyse their own and others' opinions and use evidence to support different points of view. Students undertake research to support their analysis and critique. Using appropriate terminology, they compare artworks produced before 1990 with artworks produced since 1990.

Unit 4, Area of Study 1: Discussing Art

In this area of study, students discuss art ideas and issues and the varying interpretations about the role of art in society. Students select a statement about an art idea and related issues that they research, analyse and interpret.

## Question

What art elements or principals within the exhibition can you see in *Fatigue* and/or *Weevils in the Flour*?

What visual or spatial considerations can you identify within the installation of *Fatigue* and *Weevils in the Flour*?

## Activity

A key outcome for Studio Art and Art is the ability to research and draw connections between at least artists and their artworks from different historical and cultural contexts. In this activity you will continue to consolidate this process.

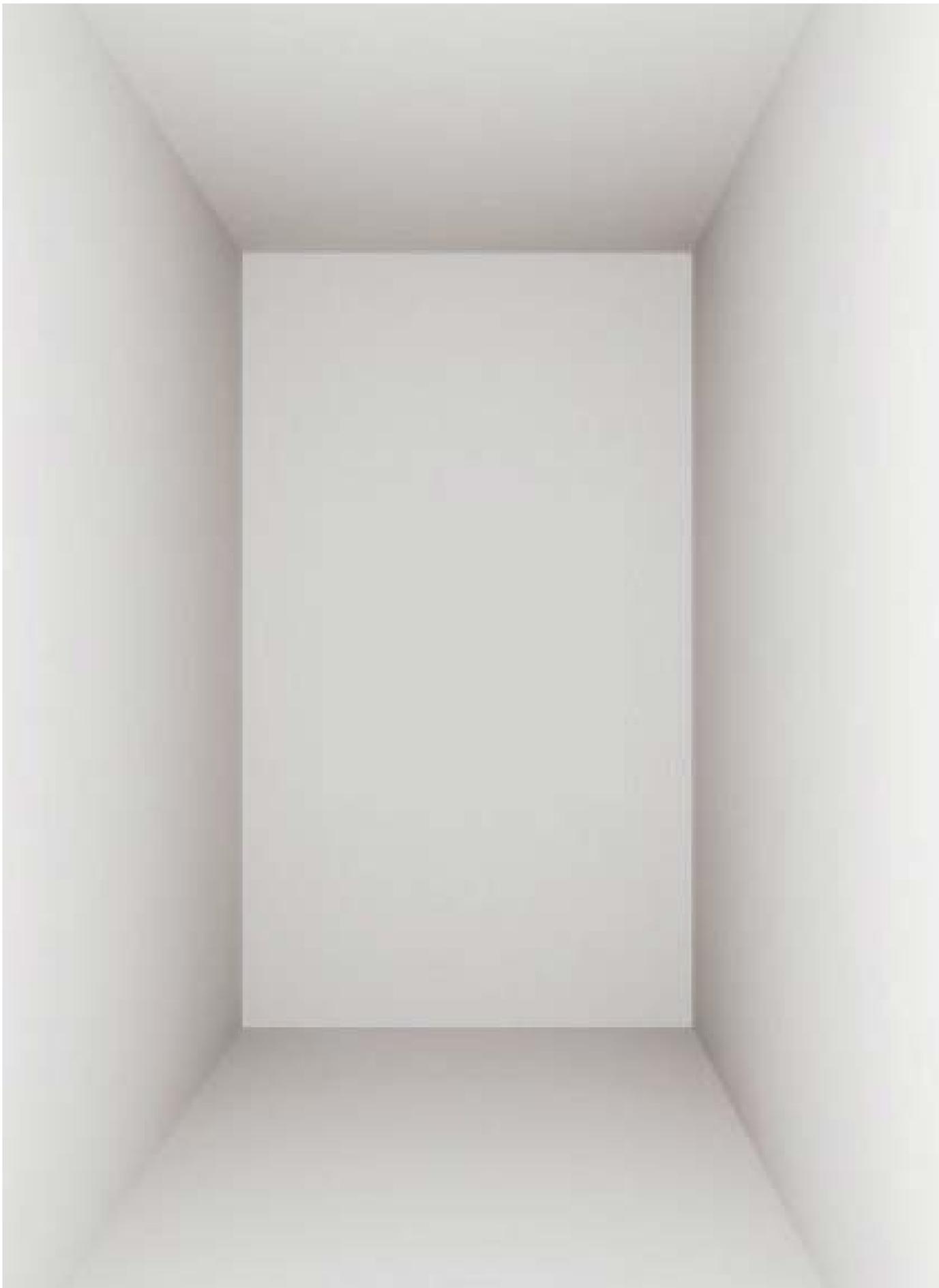
Using an artworks by Foster & Berean or Lewis Fidock and Joshua Petherick as a foundation, choose artwork created before 1990 by another artist collaboration - some example are: Mariana Abromović and Ulay, Andy Warhol and Jean Michel Basquiat, and Gilbert and George.

Compare the artwork and the process of making it. Your research should focus on comparing the historical and cultural contexts in which both these artists were working and the artworks themselves. You will do this through an investigation of how personal and historical influences have affected these collaborations.

Art students: Consider the view point of the person who has written the articles and documents you look at. Is the artist/s quoted? Is it an interview with the artist/s? Or is this a secondary source? Is the tone of the document critical?

In this activity you should create both a written comparison of their cultural and historical influences and contexts as well as visual analysis where you annotate each artwork and draw connections between the two.

Your written response should be a maximum of 1 page.



## RESOURCES

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