



Viewfinder

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Viewfinder

~~HERO-IMAGE



~~ ~~HERO-SUBTITLE a simple tool for aspiring visual artists~~

Created by *Michael Byrne* on 2021/05/14 17:43.

contributors

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Warning! this entry is kind of ranty, esoteric and stream of consciousness.

Background

At the commencement of the [Reconciling Histories](#) project, the Creative Leadership team was looking for *low risk* ways to engage participants in mark making and productive conversations about the outcomes they have all created during activities. Its a fairly common and understandable misconception that participants preparing to attend an art workshop, will imagine themselves

expected to paint and draw *pictures*. But drawing and painting a picture (a life-like representation of a subject), is hard work and requires a set of skills that need to be developed and practised. No-one expects to play Beethoven the first time sit down at a piano. But some how people are disappointed or ashamed when they can't draw like da Vinci without practising. Most are so ashamed that they'd rather not even try. And this is partly why the Reconciling Histories project is focussing on **Mark Making** and exploring materials and technique.

Actually the title of this Page should be **“Viewfinder - a simple tool to help nervous drawers focus on what they like about their gradually developing creative skills and faculties for expression and beauty, instead of on the disappointment of not being artist savant”**, but its a bit long 😊.

One of the exercises the Reconciling Histories team decided that it might run during our first session with participants is to make a process oriented group composition with simple materials (butchers or cartridge paper on the roll marked with pencils charcoal, pastels). I liked the idea of using the activity, the reason behind it and using the viewfinders this way so much, that i thought i should document it here.

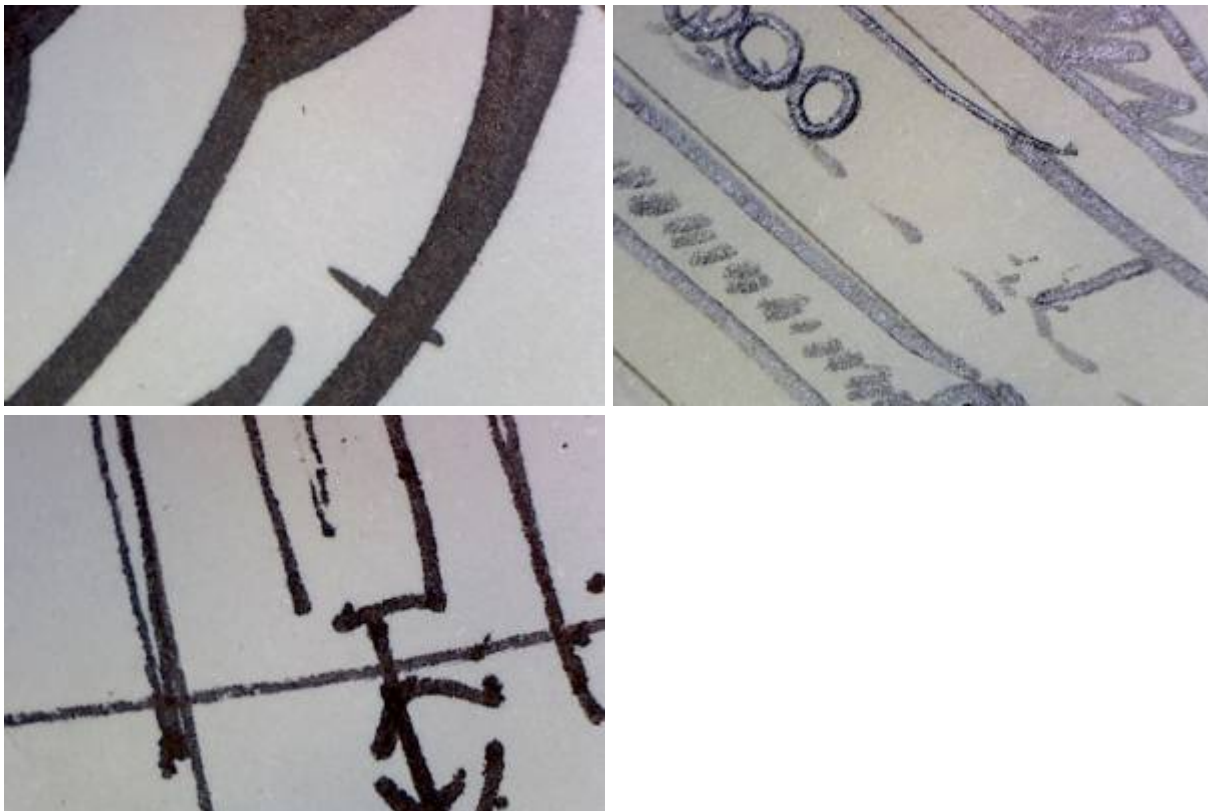
The Activity - Lets call it "Musical Chairs" only without chairs and with drawing instead of music...

1. Participants will stand around a large table covered with paper and have a short amount of time to make some marks on the paper. these marks can be as abstract, gestural or non representational as the participants like.
2. After the short span of time everyone will move one place to their side.
3. From their new place they can be inspired or respond to the last persons marks. (Make sure your response / addition is respectful and does not undermine the other persons work)
4. Carry on doing this while everyone is enjoying themselves or until the paper is filled out or you are about to run out of time. (remember to leave some time for the last 2 steps)
5. At the end everyone spends some time looking at what the group has made. Using a viewfinder - everyone identifies their favourite detail, or maybe a component they found most interesting or surprising section of the greater drawing. (to start with the should be limited to finding 1 detail and it should not be one they've made)
 1. everyone takes a turn to talk about why they like it or why they were drawn to it.
6. if you like you can even have a dialogue about how the person made the the detail.
 1. you can also have a go at copying, translating or making your own interpretation of the detail you selected onto an other piece of paper or in your visual journal.

Trying to come with a name for this I tweaked that we could also use some music to identify the time to change... or not???

and why did we think this will work?

- nervous individuals are just one contributor to the group work so it doesn't have to get personal.
- its sometimes easier to start by being generous about someone else's work (after we are good at that we can start to try and be generous with our own).
- we are not talking about problems or frustrations or what we *can't* do. We are talking about how we made some marks on a page and how they inspire us to maybe make more.
- time is limited, its just simple (inexpensive) materials and no-one is expecting a masterpiece so there no pressure and you can just enjoy yourself.
- no-one has a chance to get too attached or obsessed with their particular part - its a shared learning experience and opportunity to experiment with simple materials and techniques.
- the conversation generated by this type of process allows participants to develop a vocabulary and become comfortable critiquing and analysing their work. This is a skill that is useful beyond their emerging creative practice and can extended into their personal lives also.
- Selecting a detail is a form of abstraction and places value on non-representational marks. Non representational and gestural marks can be valued for their expressive qualities.



I love using a USB microscope to zoom in on what are other wise boring pens scratch, to find the rich abstract figures and textures

Similar ideas for other activities and musings on collaborative design - the pretentious, arty-farty, ranty part

This exercise is kind of like [Exquisite Corpse](#) and reminded me that, at least my own enthusiasm for

this activity, is partly informed by my experience with the rhizomic (living, mutating ideas that assert themselves and follow their own course) and democratised design processes we used in the [Kaiju design process](#) . Exquisite corpse allows a few individuals to take joint credit/ responsibility for their contribution to a group drawing (this is safer for nervous drawers, due to the emotion distance afforded by dividing the credit/ responsibility amongst the group.) and just like the activity above this helps participants to feel comfortable contributing.

But, where the part of fun in an exquisite corpse comes from finding out how the disjointed beastly turns out when individuals can't see what their partners are drawing, in the activity above, participants can get inspired and respond to what the other people are doing. It enables us to make something greater than the sum of it parts. Along the same lines, our activity above also reminds me of the different variations on the "[Pass it on Creative Writing Exercise](#)" where the individual chooses how a story mutates or develops.

Most of the principles above, centre around how *the individual* feels about their own their own artistic skills and how *they* personally are situated within a peer group which is not necessarily particularly collaborative. But just like many of the Community engagement projects run at the edge, the Reconciling Histories is purposely designed to be a collaborative and use democratising processes. The democratic nature of this creative process isn't about voting or really anything about how decisions are made. The focus in this project is on collaboration is about ensuring survivors are empowered and deeply involved (enfranchised) in the greater project. The long term goal (5 years) for Reconciling History project is to create a major sculptural and interactive piece of public art that will raise awareness of the Forgotten Australians and celebrate the resilience of survivors. But unlike other monuments, this is focused on the individuals in the group, contributing their diverse experiences and ensuring that the final public art is informed by their distinctive artistic interests, stories and aesthetic output. These previously marginalised people will be empowered and their contributions will directly effect the final public art outcome.

Instead commissioning a talented outsider like memorial monuments The art acknowledging survivors of abuse will be made and directed by skilled and aesthetically articulate survivors.

Umm whats this got to do with Viewfinders?

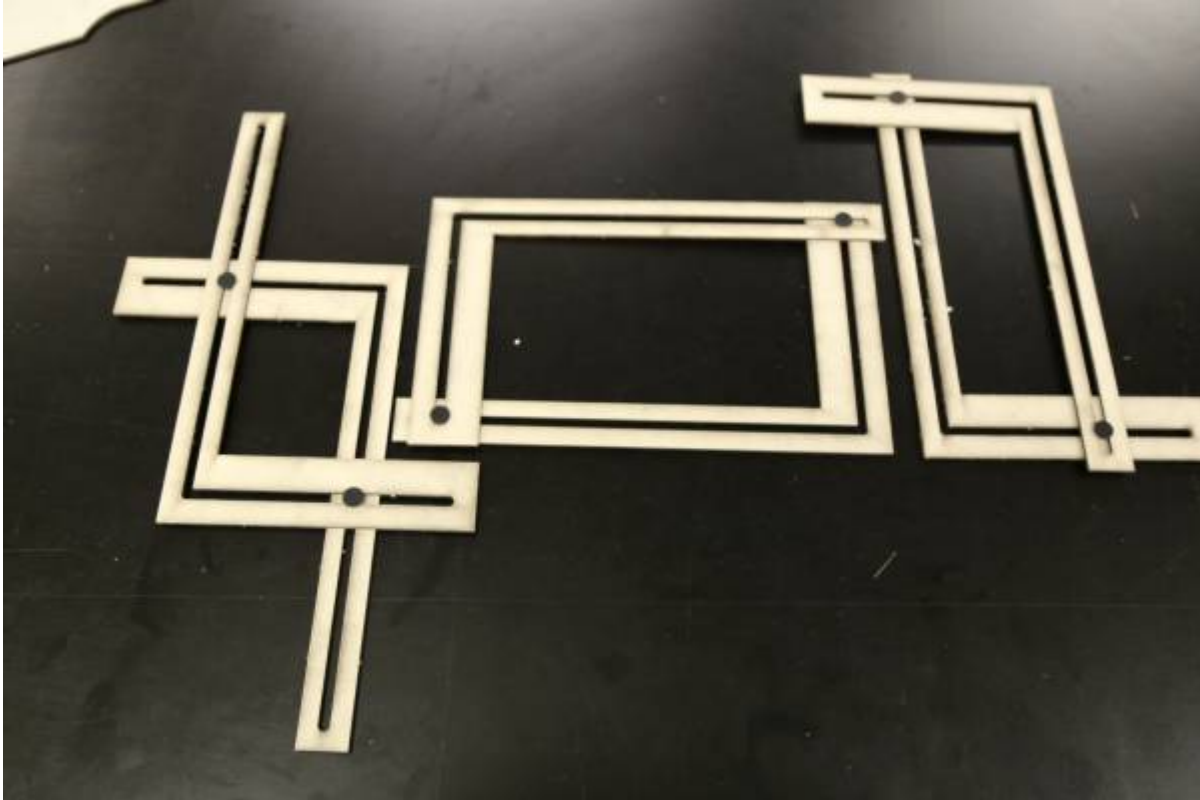
Viewfinders



The viewfinder is a practical training aid used choose a specific detail or to filter out unwanted visual noise.

After our planning session I was tasked with preparing viewfinders for our first session. But when I googled "art viewfinder" I was struck by the variety. Golden Ratio viewfinders, Rule of Thirds viewfinders, plain black frames and of course the viewfinder you make by inverting the thumb and index fingers on your two hands. And while we probably didn't need all of the above I thought that some different kinds would offer a choice and might encourage people to use them.

The first I made was an adjustable one in a few different sizes



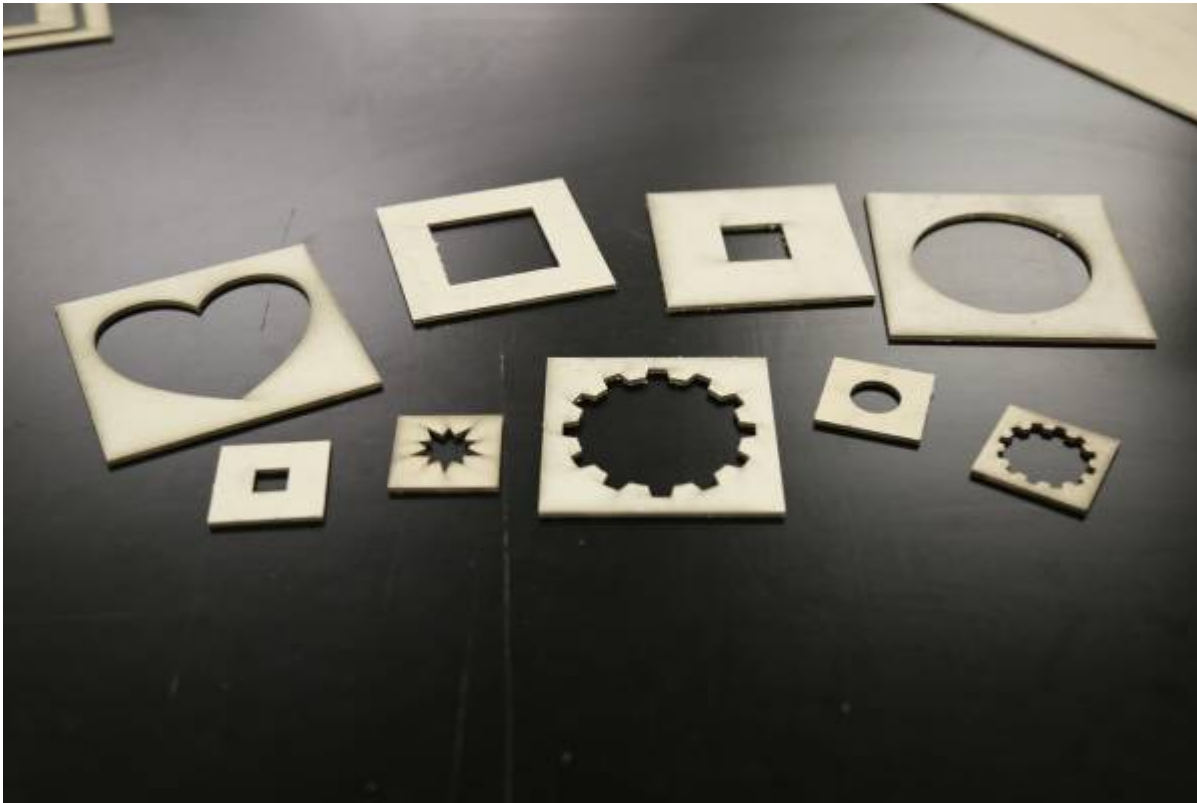
designed some little 3D printed plugs to go with these



STL File

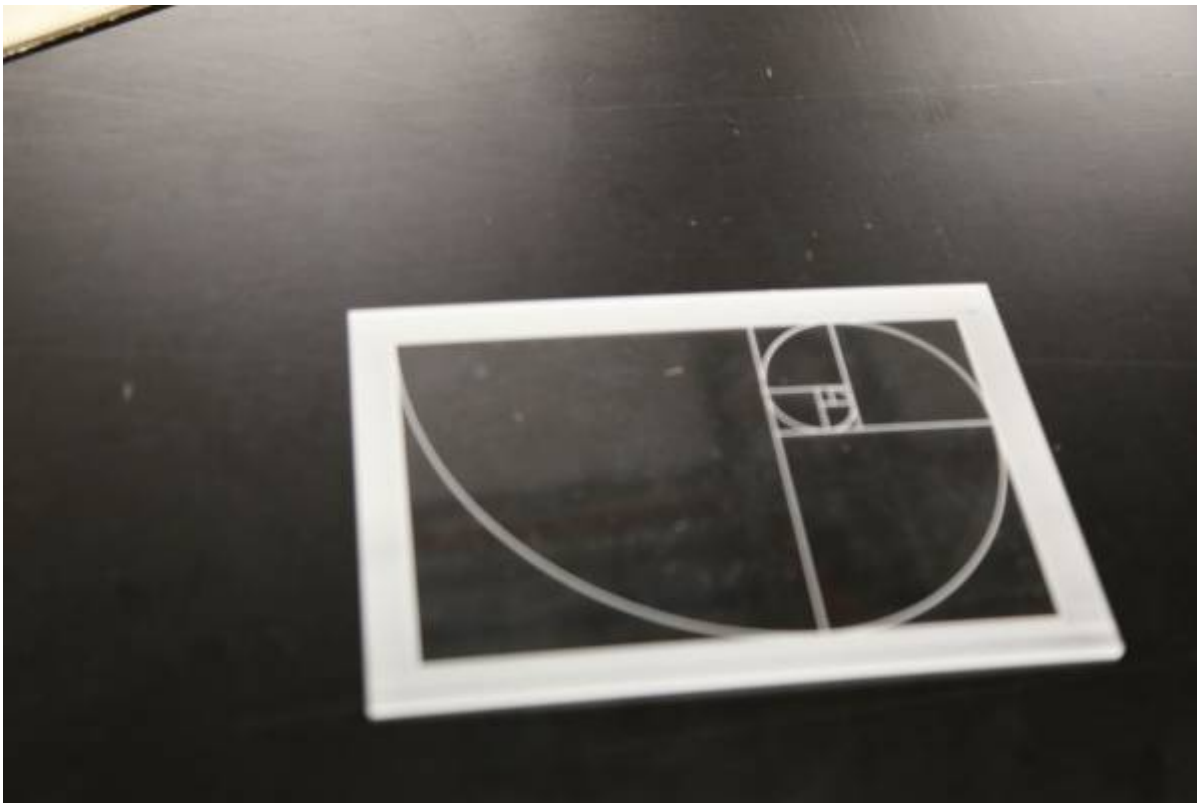
These allow you change the size of the frame you're making and are most suitable for the application identified above.

I made some plain square and some novelty shapes



maybe these will encourage anybody who struggling to engage.

Billie also made us some Golden Ratio and Rule of Thirds viewfinders out of acrylic



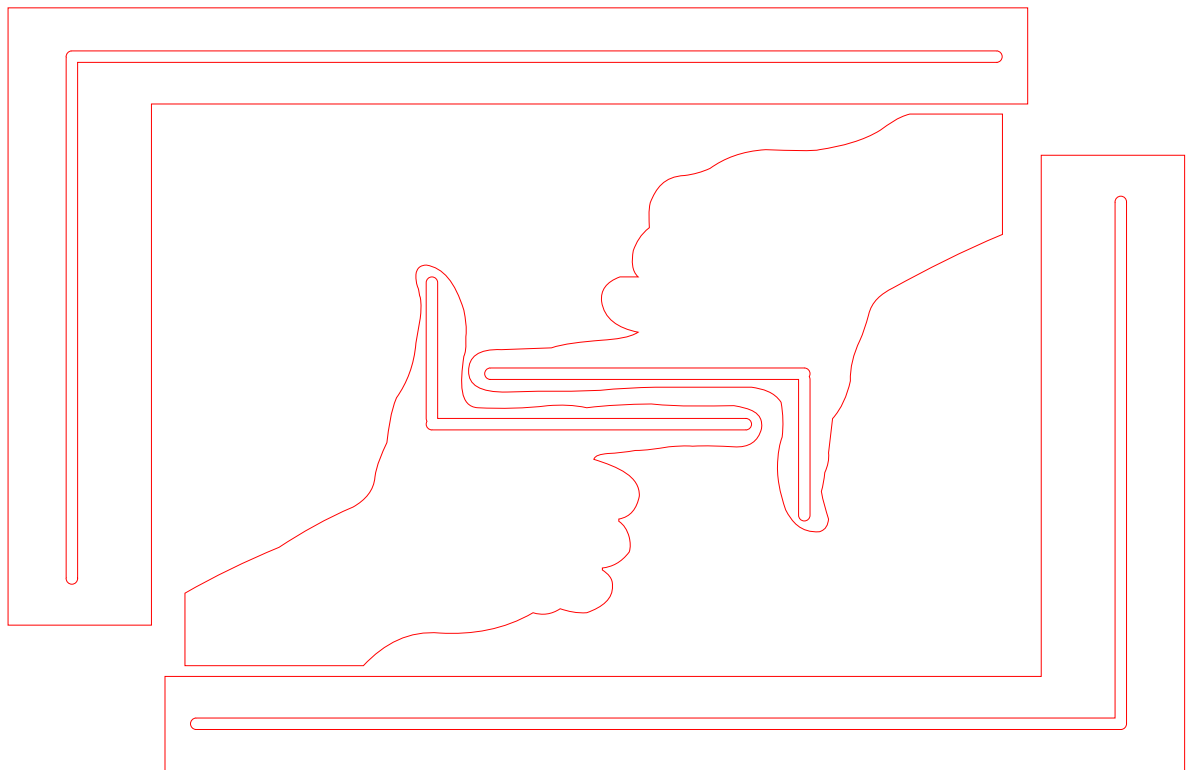
reflections on the first testing of workshop

Gav suggested making silhouette of human figure frames - maybe the participants would be interested in making these.

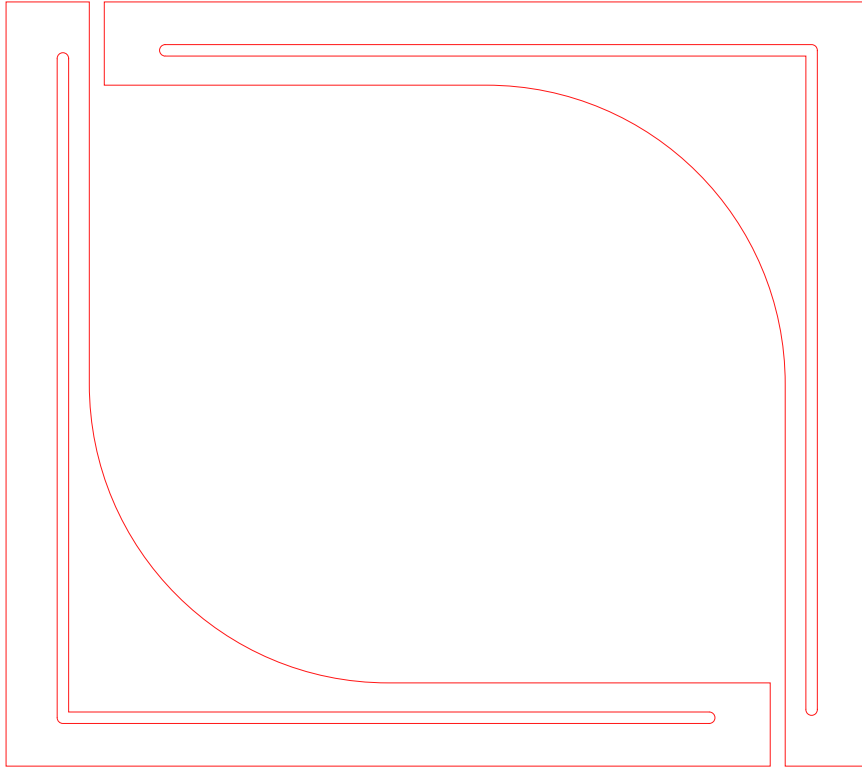


Cut Files

Novelty Viewfinders CorelDraw



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