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# art learning resource – impressionist and modern art

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# art learning resource – impressionist and modern art

This resource will support visits to the Impressionist and Modern Art galleries at National Museum Cardiff and has been written to help teachers and other group leaders plan a successful visit. These galleries mostly show works of art from 1840s France to 1940s Britain. Each gallery has a theme and displays a range of paintings, drawings, sculpture and applied art.

## Booking a visit

Learning Office – for bookings and general enquires  
Tel: 029 2057 3240  
Email: [education@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:education@museumwales.ac.uk)

All groups, whether visiting independently or on a museum-led visit, must book in advance.

Gallery talks for all key stages are available on selected dates each term. They last about 40 minutes for a maximum of 30 pupils. A museum-led session could be followed by a teacher-led session where pupils draw and make notes in their sketchbooks. Please bring your own materials.

The information in this pack enables you to run your own teacher-led session and has information about key works of art and questions which will encourage your pupils to respond to those works.

## Art Collections Online

Many of the works here and others from the Museum's collection feature on the Museum's web site within a section called Art Collections Online. This can be found under 'explore our collections' at [www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/art/online/](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/art/online/) and includes information and details about the location of the work. You could use this to look at enlarged images of paintings on your interactive whiteboard.

## Will all works of art be on display?

If you are visiting to see specific works, please check beforehand to make sure that they will be on display by contacting the Learning Department. Galleries do sometimes change and works of art are removed from display for conservation and other reasons.

# art learning resource – impressionist and modern art

## How do I plan a successful visit to the art galleries?

- Visit the galleries on your own before the visit.
- Limit the number of artworks to be studied.
- Check that the works you want to study will be on display on the date of your visit. This can be done by phoning the education office or by looking at our Art Online webpage at [www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/art/online/](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/art/online/)
- Limit the amount of time you spend in the galleries (2-2½ hours maximum).
- Leave before the pupils have had enough.
- Divide your pupils into smaller groups.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to work on focused activities in front of individual art works.
- Ensure a good range of activities that involve looking, talking and making.
- Read the 'Drawing in the Galleries' section on pages 61 and 62 to develop activity ideas.





# contents

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## Gallery Map

Page 4

---

## French Art of the Nineteenth Century

(Gallery 11) Pages 5 - 13

---



## French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism

(Gallery 16) Pages 14 - 29

---



## British Art around 1900: Looking to France

(Gallery 15) Pages 30 - 40

---

## Art after Cézanne: The 'Primitive' and the Modern

(Gallery 14) Pages 41 - 52

---



## Modern Art from 1930: Surrealism and Neo-Romanticism

(Gallery 12) Pages 53 - 60

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## Drawing in the Galleries

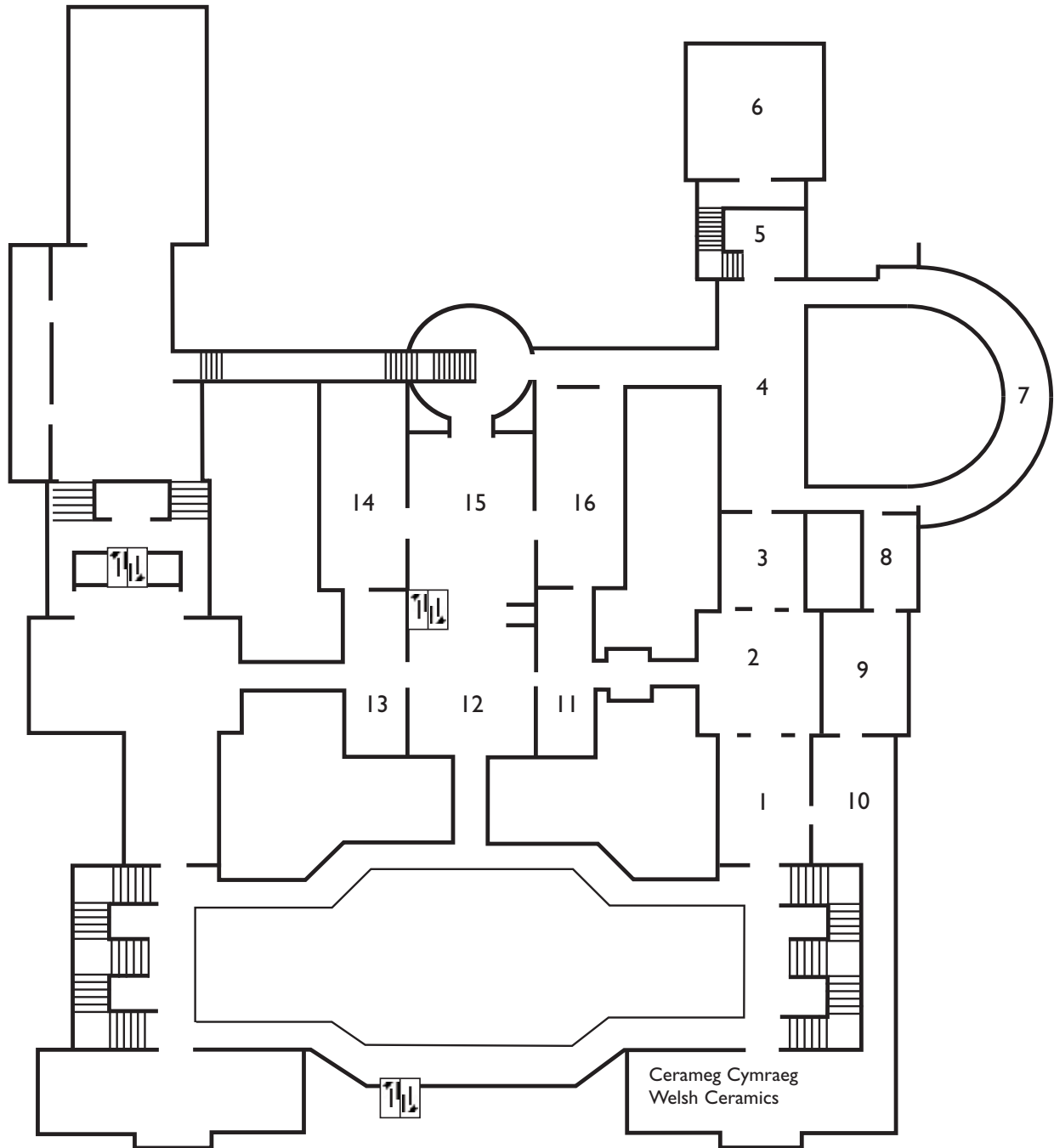
Pages 61 - 62

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# gallery map



## Gallery Key

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 11 French Art of the Nineteenth Century                 | 15 British Art around 1900: Looking to France  |
| 12 Modern Art from 1930: Surrealism and Neo-Romanticism | 16 French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism |
| 14 Art after Cézanne: The 'Primitive' and the Modern    |  |

# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

French landscape painting changed during this period. Artists became interested in nature, not just as a backdrop for religious or historical subjects, but as a subject in its own right. A group of artists made everyday subjects and the natural world important. Ordinary working people, scenes of poverty and social injustice became the subject for much of their work. Their paintings show a real awareness of the world around them.

Previously artists had created sketches and studies outside in the open air but not finished paintings. This changed in the nineteenth century. New railways enabled artists to leave the cities and explore the countryside first hand while tubes of ready-made paints allowed them to leave their studios and work in the open air.

**Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (1796-1875)**

***Castel Gandolfo, Dancing Tyrolean Shepherds by Lake Albano***

**1855-1860**

**Oil on canvas**



# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

- Look at this painting. Let your eye wander through it.
- Can you think of single words to describe what you can see?
- Look at the colours. Can you think of new names for the different greens you can see here?
- How many people are there?
- What are they doing?
- Why do you think Corot has included people here?
- Look closely at the brushmarks and the paint. Can you describe the brushmarks?
- Do you think this is a real or an imagined place?
- What might be real and what might be imagined?
- Describe the mood of this place.

Castel Gandolfo, a papal summer residence is situated next to lake Albano in the Roman countryside. This was the countryside that had inspired Claude Lorrain, a seventeenth-century artist who greatly influenced Corot. Travelling to Italy was considered essential for the career of a landscape artist and Corot had been there during the 1820s and again later. He also travelled extensively throughout Europe filling his notebooks with drawings and painting in the open air.

By the 1850s the style of his work had changed. His paint was thinner, the brushwork was quite feathery and the colours more subtle. He restricted his choice of colour and used muted tones of soft greens and greys. In this painting brighter colour have been confined to the people – the man's red cap and the woman's yellow headscarf, thus drawing attention to them. Dashes of red like this were commonly used in traditional landscape painting, to balance out the greys and the greens. The people here are important in contributing to the mood of the work. The mood and atmosphere created is more important than topographical detail.

This period was a distinctive time in Corot's career. He had gained an admiral reputation and this style of painting became very popular especially after Emperor Napoleon III bought an example in 1855. This work was commissioned, however, it is very similar in style to others from the period. It shows the influence of Italy and especially of Claude Lorrain in his composition, choice of subject matter and the depiction of light. Corot greatly influenced the Impressionists, especially in terms of how he showed light in his work and the idea of working outside in the open air.



# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

**Honoré Daumier (1808-1879)**

***Lunch in the Country***

**1868**

**Oil on board**

- What are these people doing?
- What kind of activity is it? Is it an ordinary everyday activity or an unusual one?
- Do you think it's an imagined activity or a real situation that the artist saw?
- Has it been painted slowly or quickly?
- Can you explain why you think that?
- Why do you think the artist painted such a small work?
- Describe the mood of this painting.
- Would you like to be there? Why?
- Is it a quiet or a noisy painting?
- What kind of noises might you hear?





# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

The subject of this painting – a group of men on a country outing, eating and drinking – became very popular during this period. Daumier depicts the simple joy of eating, not by showing the food on the table but by the gestures of the men and even the dog. He uses a strong line both to suggest movement and to describe much of the detail. The lines draw our attention to the man feeding the dog, suggests the movement of the arm as the cup is raised and even conveys the shuffle of the leaves in the background. The composition is full of spirit as the man in the centre enthusiastically drinks his tea and the cup almost becomes part of his face.



Daumier earned his living drawing cartoons for satirical journals and is known as a graphic artist and sculptor as well as a painter. His lithography, where he drew on small tablets of stone to produce prints influenced his oil painting. As a consequence most of his oil paintings are also small in scale and use line as if he was drawing with his paint.

This oil painting is a finished piece of work and a preparatory sketch exists in another collection. It was composed directly with paint and colour using broad brushstrokes with lines creating very lifelike movement. Warm tones of light and shade add to the relaxed mood of the work while the man on the right is completely in shadow.

# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

**Jean François Millet (1814-1875)**

***The Peasant Family***

**1871-1872**

**Oil on canvas**

- Who do you think these people are? Do you think they are related? Why do you think this?
- What else can you see in the painting?
- What is in the background?
- Do the objects and the background tell us anything about these people?
- Are they a wealthy family? What makes you think this?
- What kind of work can you imagine they do?
- Why do you think the artist painted this picture?
- Is he trying to convey a message?
- Is it a realistic image?
- Do you think the painting has been finished?
- Can you describe the mood of the painting? Do these people look happy or sad? How would you feel if you were standing in this painting?



## french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

This mother, father and child stand together and seem to be united as a family. The father stands solid and upright. The mother also looks strong and monumental while her large stomach suggests that she may be pregnant. The full length figures are arranged squarely directly facing us. She twists her hand around her husband's arm, while the child clings onto both their legs and the mother's apron. The figures look strong and monumental but also display tender and caring qualities.

Their clothes, objects and the background refer to their life and work in the country. They are working clothes, and the spade suggests that the man has been farming. The stick in his wife's hand might be attached to a sack of grain or food although it is not quite clear. The presence of the animals and the farm buildings also suggest a countryside setting.

This painting has been left unfinished. Look closely and you will see the drawing that Millet did before he began to paint, especially in the background where the strange-looking dog sits in front of an open door. The light and shadow that fall on the figures helps to make them look rounded and strong. Other areas have simply been blocked in with earthy, muted colours that echo those of the land.



During the nineteenth century many artists moved away from grand historical and religious subjects and began to paint realistic images of everyday life. Jean-François Millet, who is often described as a 'realist' artist had always been interested in the subject of peasant workers. He closely observed the people he saw around him, and believed that ordinary working people were important subjects for his painting. Millet's paintings show the hardship of these people while at the same time celebrating their unchanging, hardworking lifestyles.



# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

**Jean François Millet (1814-1875)**

***The Gust of Wind***

**1871-1873**

**Oil on canvas**

- What can you see?
- What time of day is it? How can you tell?
- What kind of weather is shown here? How do we know this?
- In which direction is the wind blowing? How do you know?
- How has the artist shown movement?
- What is in the foreground, the middle ground and the background?
- Can you see a man? Who might he be?
- Why is he stooped?
- Where is he going?
- Where has he been?
- What is he doing?



# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

Millet was interested in showing the power of nature demonstrated by the blowing wind here. Look at the brushmarks and the water in the foreground. Look at the shape of the tree – this shape is echoed by the shape of the person to the right of the tree who is trying to protect himself from the storm.

Many of Millet's paintings are made of earthy colours like the ones here. The colours have been painted with very quick brushmarks which help to suggest the force of the wind and the gushing water below.

He painted many landscapes but these usually showed people working the land. During the 1840s Millet was moved by social injustice in France and turned to peasant subjects. He and his family moved from Paris to a village south of the city called Barbizon. A number of other French landscape painters had also moved there. They were interested in creating naturalistic paintings of the landscape and studied it closely. Millet was part of this group. When painting the landscape he attempted to show nature as it really was. He did not believe in making the place look more beautiful and would often look for ways to show the effect of weather on the landscape.

## ● Gallery activities

This activity should be done before a visit to the gallery.

- ▶ Read the description of *The Gust of Wind* by Millet below. Ask the children to draw their own picture from the information given. When they arrive in the gallery they will be able to compare their work with the original.

*The clouds are very dark. There are rocks and water in the front of the painting.*

*In the middle there is a large tree which is being blown sideways by the wind. The roots are sticking out of the ground and branches are falling off. Nearby a shepherd, who is being blown by the wind, tries to protect his sheep on the horizon.*

*In the distance there are small farmhouses. Around the houses the sunlight creeps through the dark sky. The tree appears to be on the verge of falling over.*

After looking and talking about the painting in the gallery ask the pupils to write their own description of the work. Ask them to imagine that they are describing it to someone who will never see it.

# french art of the nineteenth century (gallery 11)

- ▶ Prepare to write poetry.  
Create a word bank of weather words. This could be a whole class activity.
- What are the first words that come into your mind when you look at this work?
- You may wish to work through the alphabet and record your words on an alphabet sheet. This can be used back in the classroom to write a weather poem.

## ● Back at school

- ▶ Write a story. It should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Give the pupils a selection of phrases. They must include one of them in their story.

Suggested phrases

- dragged the tree down
- wandered through the darkness
- made the river flow
- fell with a crash

e.g. It was a dark, gloomy October night. On the windswept peninsula a lowly shepherd, silhouetted against the black sky was trying to save his flock. He was struggling to move when a huge tree uprooted itself and **fell with a crash**. With a gasp, the shepherd ran for safety in a cobbled, old cottage in the distance.

- ▶ Other activities back at school might include some of the following ideas:
  - Write a weather report.
  - Write a newspaper article, including the headlines.
  - Hot seat the man in the painting.



# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

A group of artists working mostly in France from the 1860s became known as the 'Impressionists'. This name came from a painting by Claude Monet called *Impression, Sunrise*. People who disliked the work of Monet and his friends in their first exhibition in 1874 used the word to insult the young artist. Critics said that these artists could not paint properly, only create impressions or unfinished paintings.

The Impressionists chose modern everyday subjects and often painted outside so that they could be closer to nature and natural light. Monet had been introduced to the idea of painting outside in the open air early in his career. He met the artist Eugene Boudin in 1856, who introduced him to open air painting. Monet claimed that "*everything that is painted directly on the spot always has a force, a power, a vivacity of touch that is not to be found in studio work.*"

The Impressionists were interested in real people and real places, not the classical subjects that artists had previously been drawn to. They painted quickly to capture the fleeting 'impression' of a passing moment, and tried to record the changing effect of light and weather. A sketchy, spontaneous style of painting was developed where broken brushstrokes of bright colours were used.

Post-Impressionism was a name used to describe a range of styles that developed after Impressionism.

# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

**Claude Monet (1840-1926)**

***Rouen Cathedral: Setting Sun (Symphony in Grey and Pink)***

**1892-1894**

**Oil on canvas**

- Stand close to this painting. What can you see?
- You may only be able to see lots of different colours, merging in and out of each other.
- Look at the texture of the paint.
- Think of words to describe the different textures.
- Walk away from the painting. Does it look different from the other side of the Gallery?
- Does the image now remind you of a large building, maybe a castle or a cathedral?
- What can you recognise in the painting? Look for windows, towers, doors and shadows.



# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

This is one of about thirty paintings that Monet painted of Rouen Cathedral during the early 1890s. He was working from the window of a room overlooking the façade of the cathedral. He realised that the changing light constantly influenced the colours he could see. He therefore wanted to record how light changed the appearance of the cathedral from hour to hour and from day to day. Monet followed and explored the effect of light from early morning until sunset and saw the façade as a giant textured screen on which light and atmosphere could play.

He wanted to capture a small moment in time and therefore developed a technique that would allow him to work quickly. The brushstrokes vary from thick, heavy jabs to quick, thin strokes. He manipulated his paint until it sometimes looks sculptural. It all works together to create the rough weather-beaten surface of the cathedral.

Monet isn't interested in showing us how large and dominant the building is, surrounded by lots of much smaller buildings. This painting does not tell us about the scale or the shape of the cathedral. He has shown a section of the façade. The top and the sides of the building seem to disappear from the edge of the painting. The image has been cropped and suggests the influence of the advent of photography. The first permanent photograph was taken by a French inventor called Niepce in 1822 and the 1830s saw further progress. The development of photography influenced many artists who adopted a more casual and less formal composition such as the one we see here.

## ● Gallery activities

### Draw what you see

- ▶ Select a small area of this painting and make some large coloured drawings. Use thick, soft colouring materials such as crayons or oil pastels. Concentrate on recording the brushmarks, individual colours and the play of light on the surface of the building.

## ● Back at school

### Changing seasons

- ▶ Find a location near your school for the pupils to observe. Ideally this should be somewhere they can see from a window. Groups of pupils could work on photographing, sketching and painting this view at different times of the day, in different weather conditions and at different times of the year.



# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

**Claude Monet (1840-1926)**

***San Giorgio Maggiore by Twilight***

**1908**

**Oil on canvas**

- What can you see here?
- Describe the shapes and colours. How many different colours can you see?
- Do you think the artist really saw these colours?
- Compare the sky and the water. How are the colours and the brush-strokes different?
- What time of day do you think this was painted?
- Do you think this scene was painted from life or has it been made up?
- Where do you think the artist was when he painted it?
- Do you think the painting has been finished?
- Think of words to describe the atmosphere in this painting.
- How would you feel if you were here?
- What do you think Monet could hear and smell when he painted this painting?
- How do you think he was feeling?
- Why do you think he wanted to paint this scene? Was he trying to tell us anything?



## french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

In 1908, Monet visited Venice for three months with his second wife, Alice. Together they travelled along the canals by gondola and watched the sun setting over the city. In *San Giorgio Maggiore*, Monet has painted the Venetian island of San Giorgio as seen from his gondola on one of these trips. To the right is the mouth of the Grand Canal, and the dome of the Santa Maria della Salute Church, which is barely visible through the hazy sunset.

Monet was fascinated by the effects of light on a scene, and would often paint the same subject at different times of the day to record the changes in colour and mood. Here the church stands out in silhouette against vibrant bands of colour which are reflected in the waves of the canal water. Monet has made no attempt to record exact details of the scene. The sky and the canal blend into one another without any clean lines or boundaries separating them. The paint has been applied quickly in dabs and dashes of pure, vibrant colour.

Claude Monet was an important member of the French Impressionists. The Impressionists worked together to change traditional ideas about painting. They preferred to work outside rather than in a studio, and used bright colours and rapid brush-strokes to record fleeting moments from everyday life.

They recorded the essence of a scene rather than individual details. Many critics disliked their style at first. It was considered to be too radical compared to the dark colours and historical scenes of more traditional work. However by the turn of the century public taste in France had changed and Monet became known as a great painter.

# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

**Claude Monet (1840-1926)**

*Waterlilies (three paintings)*

1905-08

Oil on canvas

- Describe what you see here.
- How many flowers can you see
- What kind of flowers are they?
- What kind of water is this? Is it the sea, a lake, a pond, bath water or a puddle? How can you tell?
- Imagine you were to step into this water. Do you think it would be hot or cold? Deep or shallow? What do you think would be underneath the water?
- Can you see any reflections in the water? If so, what are they? Do they give you a clue about what surrounds the water?
- What colours other than blue can you see? Are they mostly cool colours or warm colours? Do they look realistic? What mood is created by these colours?
- Look at the brushstrokes. Try to describe how the paint has been used. How do you think the artist was feeling when he painted these? Was he angry, calm or excited?
- Which painting is your favourite? What do you like the most about this painting?





## french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)



Claude Monet is famous for the part he played in the development of French Impressionism during the late nineteenth century. The Impressionists were a group of artists who wanted to transform traditional ideas about painting. They preferred to work outside rather than in a studio, and used bright colours and rapid brush-strokes to record fleeting moments from everyday life before anything changed. They recorded the essence of a scene rather than individual details. Many critics disliked their style at first. It was considered to be too radical compared to the dark colours and intellectual subjects of traditional work. By the turn of the century public taste had changed.



## french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)



By 1890, Monet had established himself as a successful artist. It was around this time that he bought his house at Giverny, near Paris, and began work on his famous garden. He built an arched Japanese style bridge, and planted water lilies in the ponds. From about 1899 onwards he began to paint his gardens almost obsessively. At first his paintings included the bridge, pond banks and the weeping willows that surrounded the water, but in his later work he omitted the shoreline and concentrated solely on the surface of the water.

Monet painted what he saw looking directly down at the water from his Japanese Bridge. Clusters of lilies surrounded by ripples and reflections sit above glimpses of weeds and rocks beneath the surface. He was captivated by what he saw, and spent years recording the effect of colours and light on water in different seasons and at different times of the day. He used mostly pale shades of paint, with the occasional patch of vivid colour to accentuate details, or to create the impression of depth. The paint has been applied in short dabs, thinly in some areas and heavier in others, while the soft swirl of his brush-strokes has created a slightly textured effect.

# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

**Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919)**

***La Parisienne***

**1874**

**Oil on canvas**

- Look at the dress. Think of words to describe the dress. Do you think these are everyday or best clothes? How are they different to the clothes we wear today?
- Describe the background. Why do you think the artist has painted the background like this? Where do you think she is standing?
- Look at the different blues. Make up some names for the different blues you can see. How do you think the artist has made the different blues?
- Look at the painting from far away and then close-up. How would you describe the brush-strokes?
- What kind of person do you think she is? Is she rich, poor, old, important? Why do you think this?
- Look at the way she's standing and the expression on her face. How do you think she's feeling?
- What mood is created by these colours? Do they suggest anything about the woman?
- If you were to paint this again, what colours would you use? How would using different colours change the mood of the painting?

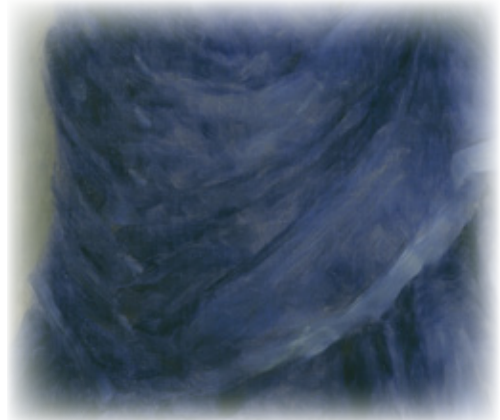


## french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

*La Parisienne*, or 'The Blue Lady' as it is often called is a full-length portrait of Mademoiselle Henriette Henriot, a French actress whom Renoir painted many times. It was exhibited in 1874 at the first Impressionist exhibition in Paris. At that time many artists painted meticulously realistic paintings in dark colours but the Impressionists sought to revolt against this. They wanted to capture the effects of light and movement to create the overall impression of a scene. They used quick brush-strokes and bright colours. Critics at the time disapproved of the bright colours and lack of precision in their paintings, and their work was considered by many to be sloppy and too vibrant.

Here Renoir has painted Henriette standing in a full-length blue dress. She has turned slightly towards her right, with her hands folded at her waist, possibly removing or putting on a glove. She is wearing a fashionable dress. Some of the details such as her matching bonnet, the bow and frill around her neck may show the experience of Renoir's father, who was a tailor. The latest fashions would previously only have been worn by wealthy ladies but by the 1870s they were more widely available.

Renoir has not attempted to define every detail in this painting. His brush-strokes are broken and lines are indistinct, especially in the folds of the dress. The background is a haze of colour, with only the faintest hint of a shadow. Our attention is therefore left to focus on this lady, and on what is revealed to us by her face, clothes and pose.



Renoir was born in Limoges, France, and moved to Paris aged thirteen to begin an apprenticeship as a porcelain painter.

During this time he learnt to draw and paint and began to study paintings in the Louvre. While attending the studio of the painter Charles Gleyre he met fellow Impressionists Sisley, Bazille and Monet. He then went on to become a leading figure of the Impressionist movement in Paris. Renoir painted many different subjects during his career such as nudes, portraits and still lifes, but he is probably best known for his paintings of women.



# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

**Alfred Sisley (1839-1889)**

***The Cliff at Penarth, Evening, Low Tide***

**1897**

**Oil on canvas**

- Stand up close and look at the painting. What do you see?
- Look for clues that would tell us what kind of day it is. How is the weather and what time is it? How can you tell?
- Describe the water. Is it still or moving, deep or shallow? Are there any ripples, waves or reflections? What colour is it?
- Are there any people here? Where are they? What are they doing? Why do you think the artist has painted them this size?
- How would you describe the colours that the artist has used? What colours are the shadows on the beach? Would it be this colour in real life?
- Try to describe how the artist has used the paint. Are the brush-strokes the same or different all over? Do you think this has been painted quickly or slowly and carefully?
- Where do you think the artist was standing when he painted this? What kind of difficulties might he have experienced painting from here?





## french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

A small figure is walking in the shadow of the cliffs at Penarth, near Cardiff along the coastline of south Wales. He is dwarfed by the surrounding landscape. On one side the cliff tops tower above him, covered in a green tangle of gorse, grass and weed. On the other side is an expanse of sea. The tide is receding, uncovering a beach landscape strewn with rocks, seaweed and pools of water. The sky above is overcast and the landscape is darkening as evening approaches.

*The Cliff of Penarth* was painted by the Impressionist Alfred Sisley. Sisley was born in France but was considered British because his parents were English. He was the only major Impressionist to visit and paint in Wales. He visited south Wales in the summer of 1897 and stayed there nearly four months, first in Penarth and then on the Gower Peninsula. In a letter to a friend, he wrote of Wales *"the countryside is very pretty, and the Roads, with the big ships sailing into and out of Cardiff, is superb."*

Sisley was especially intrigued by the rock structures he found along the Welsh coast, and he began to create a series of oil paintings of cliff-top views and seascapes. Being a lover of nature, Sisley often painted 'en plein-air', or out-of-doors, and found the weather particularly challenging as he attempted to paint on top of the wind-swept cliffs.

# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

**Edgar Degas (1834-1917)**

*Dancer looking at the sole of her right foot*

About 1900

Bronze

- What kind of artwork is this? (Is it a drawing, painting, sculpture...?)
- Describe the colour, weight and texture of this material. Can you guess what it has been made from?
- Look very closely. How do you think it was made? What tools do you think were used? Can you see any marks that may give you a clue?
- Describe how the figure is standing. What is she doing?
- Can you copy the pose? How long could you stand like that for? Do you think the artist had a model posing in front of him when he created this?
- Look at her face. Can you tell what she looks like? Do you think this a portrait of someone in particular?
- Why do you think there is nothing surrounding the figure? Did the artist forget to include a background? What background would you give to this figure?



## french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

This bronze cast shows a woman attempting to balance as she stands on one leg and looks at the sole of her right foot. Her left arm juts out to her side and her body is twisted awkwardly as she tries to steady herself.

Edgar Degas and the French Impressionists transformed the art world in the nineteenth century. Instead of painting traditional historical or mythological subjects, they depicted moments from everyday life. Degas found his inspiration in the theatres and street cafes of Paris. He portrayed opera performers and women at work, but the behind-the-scenes reality of the dance world is what interested him the most. He drew dancers in natural poses as they warmed up, practised or milled around backstage. Capturing a figure's spontaneous pose or movement was more important to Degas than producing an accurate likeness.

Degas used such sculptures almost as sketches, experimenting with three-dimensional form and movement. He only ever exhibited one sculpture, *The Dressed Dancer*. A study for this is in the Museum. His other sculptures, many in a fragile state, were discovered in his studio after he died, and a limited number of bronze casts were made to preserve them. On discovery, this particular sculpture was believed to depict a dancer, and was given its current title. Since then others have suggested that this woman is more likely to be a bather stepping out of a bath and drying her feet.

# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

**Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)**

***Rain – Auvers***

**1890**

**Oil on canvas**

- Look at this painting. Think of words to describe what you can see.
- Lines...wind...rain...blue...yellow...fields...hills...trees...movement...rooftops...
- What do you think is happening here?
- Describe the colours that you can see. What kind of blues and yellows are there?
- If you were standing in this field how would you be feeling?
- Think about the last time you were looking out of a window and it was raining heavily. What could you see? Was the view from your window difficult to see?

This is a painting of Auvers, the village and surrounding fields and hills on a rainy day. It is a cheerless day with the wind blowing the rain which obscures the view of the village. It was painted by Vincent Van Gogh during the last month of his life. He had spent the last two months of his life living in this village in northern France. During this time he produced many paintings. They were mostly dramatic landscapes painted with great spontaneity.

- Have you ever tried to show rain in a painting or drawing? How did you do that?

Van Gogh has decided to show the rain falling heavily through a series of bold blue brushstrokes criss-crossing the canvas. It's believed that the idea for depicting rain in this way came from a Japanese print. He had previously made a copy of Hiroshige's print, *Bridge in the Rain* in 1887. This was his first attempt at depicting rain in such a graphic way.





# french impressionism and post-impressionism (gallery 16)

- Is this painting only an attempt to depict the weather or is van Gogh trying to do something else?

He wrote about his feelings of sadness and loneliness in a letter to his brother. *'They are vast fields of wheat under troubled skies, and I did not need to go out of my way to try and express sadness and extreme loneliness.'*

The colours here are much paler than the colours in his earlier paintings from southern France. They are the colours of a rainy day in northern France. The overall texture may not be as piercing as was originally intended. The brushwork seems to have been flattened as a result of the canvas being placed against another surface before drying. After his death, Van Gogh's paintings were gathered together by his brother Theo. Oil paints take a long time to dry, especially when applied as thickly as this. The paint must have still been soft when this painting was stored.

Vincent van Gogh was a Dutch painter. He began his career as an artist painting quite dark paintings to represent the life of the poor. He became interested in light and colour and was introduced to the language of Impressionism. However, he became dissatisfied with Impressionism. While in Arles, south of France the hot reds and yellows of the Mediterranean were colours used to represent his moods.

Van Gogh would often twist what he could see into an expression for his own feelings. His brushwork became agitated and the swirling, twisting lines were possibly symbolic of his despairing mental state. In 1890 he moved to Auvers in northern France. The last 70 days of his life were spent frantically painting. On July 29th, 1890 he walked into a field and shot himself. He died two days later with his brother Theo by his side.

## ● Back at school

### Mark making and emotions

- ▶ Talk to the pupils about how different lines and marks in a painting, drawing or sculpture can suggest different emotions. This 'rain' painting is a very good example. Give each pupil some plain paper and a range of mark making materials – pencils, crayons, charcoal, oil pastels, paint and brushes. Give each one a word and ask them to mark or to draw a line on their paper that suggests that word. Everyone's interpretation of the words will be different.
- ▶ Many artists have been interested in the effect of the weather on the landscape. Ask the pupils to find examples of paintings, photographs or drawings that show different weather. Choose a place that is easy for your pupil to observe, possibly the view from a window. Over a few weeks ask the pupils to observe and to record the effect of different weather conditions on this place.

# british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

Between 1880 and the First World War many British artists were inspired by French art. They began to paint contemporary subjects and the world around them. They also, like the Impressionists, experimented with technique and colour. The work in this gallery aims to show this influence.

**George Clausen (1852-1944)**

*In the Fields in June*

1914

Oil on canvas



## british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

- What did you notice first when you looked at this?
- What else can you see here?
- What are the men doing?
- Where are they?
- What can you see in the distance?
- Describe the colours.
- Describe the different textures.
- What kind of day is it?
- Would you like to be in this place?

Peasant life and rural scenes inspired the work of George Clausen. Here in a painting dominated by a bright cloudy sky are two figures, one working and the other resting. Originally he had intended to paint six or seven laborers in the landscape but he changed his mind during the planning stage. Light fills this painting illuminating the field and the workers below. The textured strip of land in the foreground contrasts with that in the middle distance and the sky above.

Clausen was an English painter who was influenced by the Impressionists' use of light and their interest in depicting the world and the experiences of ordinary people. His choice of subject matter may also have been influenced by Millet's peasant workers.

Just before the outbreak of the Great War Clausen started to paint on a large scale and this work was shown at the Royal Academy's summer exhibition in 1914. In 1917 he became an official war artist and a number of his prints from this time are in the Tate Gallery collection.

# british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

**Charles Sims (1873-1928)**

***The Kite***

**About 1910**

**Oil on canvas**

- What is happening here?
- Where do you think they are?
- What kind of noise might you hear if you were in this picture?
- Have you ever flown a kite?
- Can you remember that experience? What was it like?
- Describe the weather in this painting.
- Look at the way it has been painted.
- Describe the brushstrokes.

Light, quick brushstrokes convey the atmosphere of a breezy summer's day here. Charles Sims often painted women and children in outdoor, seaside settings during his early career. Like the Impressionists he has captured a small moment in time, as the kite is drawn to the sky and the woman looks on with interest. Sims has chosen a viewpoint looking up to see both the figures and the kite in the sky. The bright light that falls on the sand and the woman's dress is in contrast to the darker areas of shadow within the painting.



Charles Sims was an English painter of landscapes and portraits. His paintings before the First World War such as this were very different to his post-war work. His experience as an official war artist and the loss of his son influenced him greatly, resulting in this change.



# british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

**Dorothea Sharp (1874-1955)**

*At the Seaside*

Oil on canvas

- What are these children doing?
- Can you remember the last time you played at the seaside?
- How was your experience different to what you can see here?
- Did you wear similar clothes to these children?
- Did you play with the same things?
- What can you see in the water?
- Describe the weather in this picture.
- What kind of colours has the artist used?
- How much of the sky can you see?
- Why do you think the artist has painted this? What interested her?

Dorothea Sharp was drawn to idyllic, sunlit scenes and her paintings often show children playing on the seaside and in gardens. She also painted landscapes and flowers. While training in London and Paris she was inspired by the work of the Impressionist painter, Claude Monet.

His influence can be seen here where she captures the effect of light falling on the surface of the water and depicts a group of children involved in an everyday activity. Her use of bright contrasting

colours and spontaneous brushwork also reminds us of the Impressionists' painting technique. The cropped composition, where the boats in the far distance disappear over the edge of the painting, focuses our attention on the children's play activity.

This seaside scene was probably painted in St Ives in Cornwall, where she lived during the 1940s.



# british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

## Augustus John (1878-1961)

Augustus John was a portrait painter. He painted many portraits of his own family: his wife, his mistress, his sister and his children. Many of these works from the Museum's collection are on display in this gallery.

### *Self Portrait*

1913

Oil on canvas

- What does this portrait tell us about Augustus John?
- Look at the expression on his face.
- Does he look happy, sad or serious?
- How do you think he is feeling?
- What is he wearing?
- Describe his hair.
- We can see how he has used his paints very freely in this work.
- Do you think he took a long time to paint this work?
- Do parts of the work look unfinished?

Augustus John painted this self-portrait when he was 35 years old. By this time he was an established portrait painter and here he depicts himself in a painter's smock. The work is painted freely with the coarse-weave canvas still showing in some areas. John was born in Tenby, Pembrokeshire and was the sister of the artist Gwen John.



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# british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

**Edwin John**  
About 1911  
Oil on panel

- How old do you think the little boy was when this was painted?
- What do you think he is doing here?
- What is he holding in his hand?
- Describe the clothes he is wearing.

Edwin John (1905-78) was the fourth child of Augustus and Ida John. He was a boxer then a watercolour painter. This oil sketch was painted in about 1911 when he was 6 years old.



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**Pyramus John**  
About 1914  
Oil on canvas

- What do you notice first when you look at this portrait?
- How old do you think this child was?
- Describe any feelings suggested here.
- Look at the brush marks.
- How has it has been painted?

Pyramus John (1905-1913) was the eldest child of Augustus and Dorelia McNeill. He was born in a caravan on Dartmoor. He died of meningitis when he was 7 years old. This portrait was painted a year after his death and was based on an earlier drawing, also in the Museum's collection. He is painted here sitting on a chair looking directly at the artist.



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## british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

**Gwen John (1876-1939)**

***Mère Poussepin Seated at a Table***

**Mid 1910s**

**Oil on canvas**

- What can you see in this painting?
- Describe the woman – her face, her clothes.
- Can you think of words to describe the feeling conveyed by this painting?
- Describe the setting for this portrait.
- Talk about the kind of colours used – pale, subdued, tonal ...
- Look at the surface of the painting. Describe the paint marks.

Gwen John moved to the village of Meudon in the suburbs of Paris in 1910. She converted to Catholicism in 1913 and became very friendly with the nuns who lived at the convent in Meudon. From then onwards church interiors, nuns and orphans appeared prominently in many of her drawings and watercolours.

In 1913 she was commissioned by the nuns to paint a portrait of their founder, Mère Marie Poussepin (1653-1744). This portrait was based on a prayer card from 1911 which itself came from an 18th century oil painting.

The nuns commissioned a portrait for every room in the convent. Gwen John found this very difficult. In a letter to John Quinn, one of her patrons in 1916 she talks about her worries.

*"I am troubled now by a picture I promised 2 years ago to a convent. The nuns have suddenly lost patience. They don't understand why it is not done. It has become quite a trouble but I think it will soon be over... Another reason for being so long is that the nuns wanted so many, one for every room in the convent, and I tried to do them all at the same time."*





## british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

The work continued throughout the decade. Six portraits were eventually made and they show two different compositions. Three of the portraits are more elaborate and follow the prayer card illustration. However Gwen John has added the picture on the wall and the blossom on the table. These are like the one in the Museum's collection. The other three follow a much simpler composition. The pose of the nun follows the pose that Gwen John chose for most of her paintings of women. Many show a single female figure, seated at a slight angle with hands clasped.

The painting has been painted with oil paints onto a chalk-textured ground on canvas. This was the surface which Gwen John usually used. The paint has been applied in a dab-like fashion which was her usual method when painting. Her palette was usually limited in colour and she worked on achieving subtle gradations of tone. All of this enabled her to show areas of light falling on her subject.

Gwen John was the elder sister of the artist Augustus John. She was born in Pembrokeshire in 1876 and studied art in London before heading to Paris, where she lived until her death in 1939. Paris was the place to be for artists, and Gwen John brushed shoulders with some of the great artistic figures of her time, most famously becoming a model and lover of the sculptor, Auguste Rodin. Quiet, subtle and private are words often used to describe her art and her life.

### ● Gallery Activity and Back at School

#### A conversation with Mère Poussepin

- ▶ Writing imaginatively in response to a painting allows pupils to step into works of art. Use this painting as a stimulus to write poetry.
- ▶ Work with your pupils to write a dialogue poem. You walk into a room and meet this lady. Think of questions you would like to ask her e.g. Who are you? What are you reading? Why are you wearing those clothes? Why do you look upset? Do you have a secret? Make a note of all the questions. Write a poem in the voice of this lady, possibly answering the questions.
- ▶ Alliteration, with its repetition of particular sounds, is a good tool for poets and helps to create a flowing rhythm. Why not ask your pupils to think of words to describe this portrait e.g. quiet, sad, black. List the words. Add extra words which start with the same letters to build up your poem e.g.

...A quiet queen  
On a sad Sunday  
Holding a black book...

# british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

## Tone and colour

- ▶ Explore Gwen John's painting technique with your pupils. She used a limited palette but was interested in creating different tones. Give your pupils one or two colours plus black and white, together with some objects such as pots, cups, flowers and fruit. Ask them to make painted studies of these objects looking at how dark or light they are. Where does the light fall on these objects? Where are the shadows? The pupils could even use their paints thickly, dabbing the colours onto the surface of their work.
- ▶ Look for other paintings by Gwen John in this gallery. The ideas above could be applied to some of her other portraits e.g. *Girl in Profile*, *Girl in a Green Dress*.

# british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

**Gwen John (1876-1939)**

***A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris***

**1907-09**

**Oil on canvas**

- What can you see here?
- Can you think of words to describe this painting?
- What does the room tell us about Gwen John?
- Does the painting give us any clues about her life?
- Describe the colours and texture of the paint.
- What mood is suggested by the painting?
- Would you like to live in a room like this?
- How is it like or not like your room at home?



## british art around 1900: looking to france (gallery 15)

This is the attic room where Gwen John lived from spring 1907 until 1909. She had settled in Paris in 1904 and became a model for the sculptor, Auguste Rodin. She fell in love with him but the relationship was waning by the time this was painted.

Her sparsely furnished room was the subject for many of her paintings and it often appeared as a background for her female figures. The room is deserted however the empty chair, the clothes and the open window all suggest a human presence. She does not either exclude the world outside as the light floods through window and we are drawn to the light blue sky and trees beyond.

This painting could be described as a self portrait. The room appears ordered, calm and quiet – qualities which have often been used to describe Gwen John's personality. She may have been waiting in this room for Rodin's visits and the empty chair could be symbolic of his absence.

### ● Gallery Activity and Back at School

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- ▶ Look for paintings of other interiors in the Museum. Compare them with this empty room. Think about your own bedroom. Does it give any clues about your personality? What could you change in your bedroom so that it reflects your personality?



# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

Modern art in Europe was influenced by the work of Paul Cézanne. He believed that the formal qualities of art such as colour, line, texture and shape were important in their own right. Art did not have to tell a story or represent the real world. Many artists were inspired by primitive art such as African sculpture and European folk art. This led to some innovative ways of working, such as cubism.

**Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)**  
***Still Life with Teapot***  
**1902-06**  
**Oil on canvas**



## art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

- What did you notice first when you looked at this?
- What kind of objects are they?
- Are they special or everyday objects?
- Did you notice anything unusual?
- Look at the surface of the table.
- What is happening to it?
- Look closely at the painting and the way it has been painted.
- Describe the brushmarks that Cézanne has used.
- Do they look like flat objects or 3-dimensional ones?
- What do you think Cézanne is interested in here?

Cézanne was an artist who at one time associated himself with the Impressionists. He however had an ambition, to create work that had more structure *“to make of Impressionism something solid and durable like the art of museums”*.

He was interested in still life as a subject and painted the same group of objects again and again. He chose simple everyday objects that he could study for a very long time. He liked still life because he could control exactly what was in front of him, moving things around until they were exactly as he wanted. Here he has chosen a teapot and some fruit on a plate, with what looks like a heavy tablecloth as a backdrop. Some of the items sit within the creases of the tablecloth and we can imagine that each bend and fold has been positioned carefully in relation to the objects.

In this still life, the tabletop tips up towards us. We can see the side of the table as well as the top. Showing different viewpoints within one picture was one way that Cézanne explored ways of showing a 3-dimensional world on a 2-dimensional surface. He also introduced depth by placing patches of colour side by side. Look at the colours chosen for the fruit here. Some colours seem to recede while others move forward.

Cézanne chose simple everyday objects for his still life paintings so that he could use them to explore the more formal qualities of picture making such as use of colour and depictions of space. The knob of the teapot lid for example has been left out, perhaps so that the teapot mirrors the circular forms of the apples. Accuracy is less important than the balance and harmony between the elements in the painting. Shape and colour are not only used to describe the visible world but have an expressive function in their own right. Cézanne's painting was critical to the subsequent development of modern art and was greatly admired by artists such as Picasso.

# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

**Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)**

***Still Life with Poron***

**1948**

**Oil on canvas**

- Look at the shapes, lines and colours.
- What can you recognise?
- Some of the shapes might remind you of things you have seen before.
- Describe the lines in this painting.
- Describe the colours Picasso has used.
- What do you think inspired Picasso to paint this?

Still life was one of the subjects that Picasso painted at a time when he was mostly focusing on ceramics. During the war when Picasso was in Paris, still life was a popular subject matter especially at a time when food was scarce. This work is a continuation of this theme. The domestic theme might also be due to the young family that Picasso had at this time.



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## art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

In this arrangement a lemon, a lobster and a poron has been placed on a table which tilts towards us and the picture plane. These were objects that appeared in other paintings, especially the 'poron', a traditional Spanish wine pitcher.

In this painting Picasso uses flat, vibrant colours and angular lines and the tilting table is a cubist device. The floor also tilts forward and the blue hexagonal tiles are identical to those in Picasso's studio in Paris. He has also borrowed shapes and lines from other works especially the stylised black lines in the background. This still life is one of three that he painted of the same group of objects on the 26th December 1948.

In 1907-14 Picasso together with George Braque painted some radical pictures. They were influenced by Cézanne's innovations and explored ways of representing a 3-dimensional world on a flat surface. They rejected the use of a single viewpoint and often combined viewpoints in a single work. Shapes were often simplified and distorted and sometimes the actual subject of the work is hard to distinguish. *Still Life with Poron* is dated later but shows Picasso's enduring interest in Cubism and the work of Cézanne.



# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

**Augustus John (1878-1961)**

***A French Fisherboy***

**1907**

**Oil on canvas**

- What can you see in this painting?
- What can you see in the foreground and the background?
- What is the boy doing?
- Describe his clothes.
- How old do you think he is?
- Describe his face and expression.
- What can you learn about this boy from looking at this portrait?

**Let's Imagine...**

- What can the boy see from where he is standing?
- What noises can he hear?
- What do you think the young boy can smell?
- Describe how he might be feeling.
- If this picture could be extended, what else might you find in this scene?
- Describe the colours in this painting.
- Why do you think the artist has used colours like these?
- How do these colours make you feel?
- Do you think this painting was painted quickly? Look at the brush marks.

*A French Fisherboy* was painted while Augustus John was travelling along the north coast of France. The subject and style of this work shows the influence of Pablo Picasso. John visited Picasso's studio in Paris in 1907. In Picasso's 'Blue Period' (1901-1904) he often painted figures on the margins of society in sombre blue tones.



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# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

## ● Gallery Activity and Back in the Classroom

### Fact/Opinion

- ▶ Use facts and opinions about the work to stimulate a discussion. Print the statements below, or write your own and cut up individually.

Ask each pupil to take a card, to read it aloud and decided whether it is a fact or an opinion.

Talk to your pupils about the difference between a fact and an opinion. Everyone in the group will have to agree with the statement if it is a fact. The opinions will generate a degree of disagreement which can lead to a discussion.

- Augustus John is the name of the artist who painted this work.
- The painting shows a young man standing.
- The young man is not wearing any shoes.
- There are blue patches on his trousers
- The painting is long and narrow
- The work has been painted with oil paints.
- He is holding something in his left hand.
- The artist has used many different blues in this painting
- His hands are very big.
- The painting is set in a warm country.
- The young man looks miserable.
- The young man is feeling unhappy.
- He looks very poor and hungry.
- He must work very hard with his hands.
- The young man looks very hot.

### Use the painting as inspiration for writing poetry.

- ▶ Answering the following questions could form the starting point for writing a piece of poetry.
- Where is he?
- What is he wearing?
- What can he see?
- What can he smell?
- What can he hear?
- How does he feel?

# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

e.g.

## **The Fisher Boy**

He stands on the shore by the bright blue sea.

Clothes are ragged and old.

He sees the sun shining on the water.

Smells the strong scent of fish.

He hears the seagulls crying.

Feels sad, alone and hungry.

Starting each line for the pupils could generate very different responses.

## **The Fisher Boy**

He stands...

Clothes are...

He sees...

He smells...

He hears...

He feels...

# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

**Augustus John (1878-1961)**

***Dorelia McNeill in the Garden of Alderney Manor***  
**1911**

**Oil on canvas**

- What do you notice first when you look at this portrait?
- Where is she standing?
- What is she doing here?
- Talk about her clothes.
- What kind of clothes are they – best... working... old... new...?
- What can we learn about this woman from looking at this painting?
- Describe the way Augustus John has painted this picture.
- Has it been painted carefully, detailed, with blocks of colour...?

Augustus John married Ida Nettleship in 1901. Two years later he met Dorelia McNeill who was a friend of his sister, Gwen John. She became his mistress. They all lived together in London, Paris and then in a Gypsy caravan until Ida's death in 1907. Dorelia and Augustus moved to Alderney Manor a few years later. She led a stylish, bohemian lifestyle. John chose to emphasise these characteristics in this painting.

They were living at Alderney Manor when this painting was painted. The house had a large garden and this was where Dorelia spent much of her time. Augustus John worked out his ideas with a brush on the canvas. With time, some of the layers of paint covering the brushwork became thinner. Can you see a second pair of ghostly eyes on her cheeks? The portrait's even areas of colour, sharp contours, flattened background and exaggerated perspective all indicate the influence of post-impressionist painting and the work of Henri Matisse.



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# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

Augustus John was born in Tenby. He was the brother of Gwen John, who was eighteen months older than him. They both attended the Slade School of Art in London. He was successful as an artist by the time he was 21 years old and became a well-respected portrait painter. He painted many society portraits and portraits of his family and friends.

He became friendly with fellow Welshman and artist James Dickson Innes and they travelled around Wales and France painting small colourful landscapes. Between 1911 and 1913 he made several trips to north Wales, some with Innes. John encouraged him to explore landscape painting and to develop a more contemporary, free and colourful style.

While travelling he met and befriended many Gypsies. They became an important subject for his work. He was so inspired by the Gypsies that he spent time travelling across Wales and England in a Gypsy caravan. After the war family commitments meant that he was forced to concentrate on portraiture as a means of income. He became one of the most known British painters of his generation and painted some of the most famous faces of the day.

## ● Back at school

### Me and my family

- ▶ Work with your pupils to create a visual study of their family. Who are the members of the family, where do they live, what do they like / not like etc. Ask them to draw from real life. The drawing work could be 2 minute sketches or more detailed studies. Photographs could be taken or old ones could be collected. Ask your pupils to write notes to describe their family. Collect the work together and present in a small book. The pupils could even make the books themselves.

# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

**Stanley Spencer (1891-1959)**

***Souvenir of Switzerland***

**1935**

**Oil on canvas**

- Think about the title.
- What does it suggest?
- When and why would you buy a souvenir?

Stanley Spencer was asked by his friend Sir Edward Beddington-Behrens if he would accompany him and his guests on a holiday to Switzerland. It was the summer of 1933 and they stayed in a village called Saas Fee, high in the Swiss Alps. Behrens wanted Spencer to record the holiday. He wanted a souvenir of his time there. *"It might be a source of inspiration for him to see life in the mountains where religion plays such a vital and dominant part in the life of people."*

Spencer made lots of drawings of people, costumes, chapels and wayside shrines while he was there. This large oil painting however was painted on his return to England. *"While we were there he made some beautiful drawings of these women and on his return painted a large picture with scenes of Saas-Fee called Souvenir of Switzerland."* (Beddington-Behrens)

- The painting is full of people, each one involved in some kind of activity. What are they all doing?

The painting is divided into three sections. Each canvas has been placed side by side. This is called a triptych which is normally a name given to a religious painting which would be placed over the altar in a church. Each section represents a different aspect of village life, however there are also some religious references here.



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## art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

Mothers and children are shown praying in the left panel. The woman on the left is wearing a patterned headscarf. This is the normal workday head-dress worn by women in the Saas valley. The other woman in this panel is wearing a more elaborate head-dress. The Allalinhorn mountain, south of Saas Fee, can be seen in the background.

The central panel is more complex. There are five distinct groups, each one involved in their own activity. The two women in the foreground are in workday costume. The baskets on their backs would normally have been used for agricultural purposes. Here they are being used to carry French loaves and children. The two women in the background are wearing the traditional costume of the area. The white and gold embroidered head bands were normally worn by godmothers at christenings and children's funerals. The long stiff folds of blankets before them may have been christening blankets. The rosettes worn by the men in the background also have a religious significance. They were normally worn by a group of religious men on the 3rd Sunday of each month.

Two of the figures in the group to the right praying are wearing 1930s clothes, not the regional costume. This makes them stand out from the others. The inclusion of a self portrait and portraits of friends was characteristic of Spencer's larger oil paintings. The lady in 1930s costume is believed to be a portrait of Spencer's partner, Patricia Preece. There is uncertainty over which figure is a self portrait of Spencer. Beddington Behrens thought it was the figure third from the right in this group. However his own daughters thought the man sitting down, wearing a bowler hat next to the priest in the centre looked more like their father.

There is a combination of the religious and secular in the right panel. Women are praying but there is also harvesting and digging taking place.

Beddington-Behrens was not entirely happy with this work when he saw it unfinished. He had told Spencer during their stay in Switzerland that he wanted 'to buy everything you do out here.' He tried to get out of buying the work and told Spencer that he could keep the £100 deposit he had already paid. However, he did buy the work when it was completed and was Spencer's most faithful patron during the 1930s.

Sir Stanley Spencer was one of the finest figurative painters working in Britain during the first half of the 20th century. Many of his works explored religious themes placed in contemporary settings. Most of his large narrative paintings are full of people, all involved in some kind of activity. *"I need people in my pictures as much as I need them in my life."* They are ordinary, rather clumsy looking people painted with pale colours in even lighting. He often abandoned traditional perspective and adopted a more naïve composition for his work. He was fascinated by the oddness of everyday life while being a great observer of it.

# art after cézanne: the 'primitive' and the modern (gallery 14)

## ● Back at school

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### 3-Dimensional Models

- ▶ This activity will give pupils an opportunity to look at 2-dimensional images and to represent them as 3-dimensional models. Ask each child to select one figure from the painting and to make some drawings of it. Give them some soft wire and a block of wood with some holes drilled into it. They can then manipulate the wire to recreate the shape and form of their chosen figure. Encourage your pupils to constantly move their sculptures around, to look at them from different viewpoints. Once the wire structure is complete they may choose to cover it with *papier mache* or 'mod roc' to build out the form.



# modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

Surrealist artists explore dream imagery and the subconscious world in their work. Some Surrealist works can be eerie and disturbing while others can be amusing, especially when unlikely or unrelated objects come together. The artists also often experimented with different techniques.

Surrealism was linked to the emergence of a new style in Britain called Neo-Romanticism. The artists who identified with this movement produced imaginative often abstract landscapes and their work sometimes included figures. Many Neo-Romantic artists, including Graham Sutherland, chose to work in Wales.

**Graham Sutherland (1903-1980)**

***Trees with G-shaped Form I***

**1972**

**Oil on canvas**



© Estate of Graham Sutherland.

## modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

- What did you notice first when you looked at this work?
- Is it a landscape?
- Say why you do or do not think it is a landscape.
- What shapes can you recognise here?
- Describe the colours you can see.
- Describe the different textures.
- Describe the shapes.
- Where do you think the artist gathered his ideas for making this painting?

Graham Sutherland visited Wales for the first time in spring 1934. He was immediately drawn to the landscape and coastline of Pembrokeshire.

The title *Trees with a G-shaped Form* immediately gives us a clue about the subject of the work. There is a photograph of Sutherland drawing a tree like the one in this painting. The photograph, which was taken in 1970, shows him sitting on a chair outside, facing the tree. The tree forms in this painting look formal and monumental. Is he trying to give the humble tree a higher status by showing it as a towering form?

Many of the recognisable items here, such as trees, bushes, leaves, walls, stones and animals can be found in nature. We know that Sutherland collected ideas for his paintings while walking in the countryside and along riverbanks and the coastline. The knotted form of the tree roots overhanging and breaking through a wall at Picton was one of his favorite subjects, and appeared in many of his works. Could this have inspired the knotted shape in the centre of this painting?

Very often such organic forms seem to take on other qualities. Colours, textures and shapes take on the look of human faces or animals. Leaves become faces and stonewalls become animals. It is impossible to know if this was Sutherland's intention.

On closer examination of the painting a grid can be seen drawn underneath the oil paint. This shows Sutherland's method for transferring information from his small drawings and photographs onto his large oil paintings. Many of his drawings and photographs also have grids drawn over them.

This dark and mysterious image is full of references to the natural world and is a testimony to the inspiration that the Pembrokeshire landscape gave Sutherland. He has drawn upon his memory, his imagination and the visual information collected as sketches, photographs and more detailed drawings.

Graham Sutherland started his career as a printmaker after specialising at Goldsmith's College School of Art, London. He earned his living as a printmaker

## modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

until the Wall Street crash of 1929, which reduced the American market for prints. As a result he diversified and worked as a commercial designer, designing posters, postage stamps, tapestries and wallpaper. In 1940 he was appointed an official war artist and worked in Swansea and Cardiff recording the bomb damage. As well as the landscape he also painted portraits. His most famous portrait was that of Winston Churchill. Churchill's wife had destroyed it because her husband disliked it so much.

### ● Gallery Activity and Back at School

- ▶ Use this painting as a stimulus for talking about an imagined world. Ask the pupils to imagine themselves in this place. How would you feel if you were standing here? What noises could you hear? What could you smell? What could you see? Collect all of the responses and use these to write a class poem.
- ▶ Go for a class walk where you are likely to see interesting natural forms. Ask your pupils to make a list of anything they see which is visually interesting. Choose a few of these things and make quick sketches, some detailed drawings and written notes. Talk about the colours and different textures. Take rubbings of interesting surfaces. Back in the classroom pupils can work on selecting and placing parts of their drawings into an imaginary landscape. They may want to enlarge parts of their drawings either through scanning into the computer or using the photocopier. Encourage the pupils to experiment with a range of papers and materials to create different textures.



# modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

**Ceri Richards (1903-1971)**

***Cycle of Nature***

**1944**

**Oil on canvas**

- What was the first word that entered your mind when you looked at this painting?
- Are there any shapes that you can recognise?
- Do the different shapes remind you of anything? Arms, legs, wings, leaves, petals, flames, feet, a bunch of grapes or maybe an eye?
- Think about the whole work.
- Is there one theme that links everything together?
- Describe the colours and textures in this work. Some stand out while others disappear and merge together. Find examples of contrasting colours and textures.



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## modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

This painting is one of a number of works that Ceri Richards made between 1943 and 1969, which explores the theme of nature. It relates to the poetry of Dylan Thomas. His poem *"The force that through the green fuse drives the flower"* was the source of inspiration.

The change from day into night, from one season to the other and the journey through life from birth to death all influenced this work and informed his choice of images. The same images appeared time and time again in his paintings, prints and sketchbooks from this period.

There is real contrast between the gritty texture of the lower half and the smooth surface of the top. The blurred, out of focus images of the left side of the work is quite different to the sharp edged shapes and the dominant reds and greens to the right. The whole composition sways with movement. The little spot at the bottom of the work suggests a tiny seed which has been planted, out of which we see an explosion of images all melting and weaving in and out of each other.

Ceri Richards was once asked if he worked from nature and whether he had a clear conception in his mind before he began to paint. His reply helps to explain his method of working. *"I have to refer directly to nature for stimulus before I can start my painting. Once I have transferred to the canvas an expression of this stimulus, the painting grows on its own as an entity."*

Ceri Richards was born near Swansea in 1903. Music, poetry and nature were the source of inspiration for his painting, drawing, printmaking and constructions throughout his life. While studying at the Royal College he became increasingly interested in the work of Picasso and Matisse. By the 1930s he was interested in the work of the Surrealists especially their automatic techniques and the use of chance. Richards himself experimented with style and technique.

# modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

## ● Back at school

- ▶ Printmaking could be considered as a technique to further explore the theme of nature. Collect a range of natural forms for the pupils to work from. Remember the words of Ceri Richards *"I have to refer directly to nature for stimulus before I can start my painting."* Ask the pupils to take rubbings and to make drawings of some of the objects.
- ▶ Once a range of visual information has been collected ask the pupils to consider designs for their printmaking work.
- ▶ Some of the actual objects could be used for printmaking. Alternatively the design could be built on a piece of card. Glue card shapes onto a base piece of card using pva glue. Old cereal packs work really well. Take a rubbing of the printing block before it is used for printmaking. For the technique of collograph printmaking the block is built up from a range of different textured surfaces. Each shape is glued onto the block. Once the block is completed the surface should be sealed with a mixture of pva and water. When dry the block can be used for printmaking. A rubbing could also be taken.
- ▶ The words of Dylan Thomas directly inspired Ceri Richards in his *Cycle of Nature* work. Language can provide the inspiration for visual images e.g. cold, wet, tired, fun, loud, sad, mad, quiet... Present the children with individual words or sentences. They could be descriptive words or even words that evoke a mood. Ask the pupils to think about and to draw shapes, which are suggested by the words. Present the children with a range of transparent materials e.g. tissue paper, net fabric, tea bag paper, tracing paper. Cut out some of the shapes and trap them behind the transparent materials. You may even wish to trap some words with the shapes and to flood the work with areas of colour.

# modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

**René Magritte (1898-1967)**

*The Empty Mask*

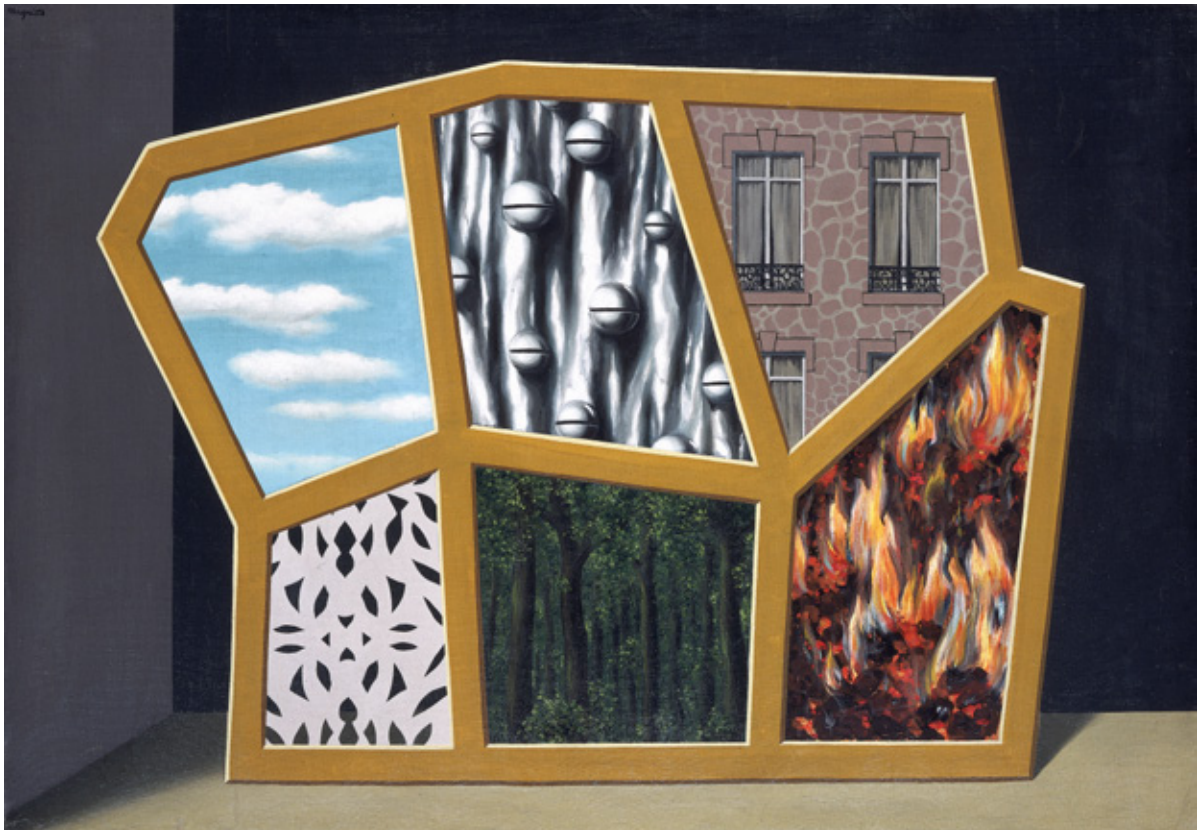
1928

Oil on canvas

- What can you see in this painting?
- How has the work been painted?
- Do you think Magritte is trying to make these items look like real objects?
- Would you expect to see these within a frame?
- Do you think something is hiding behind this frame?

Each of the six images here are familiar things but placed in an unfamiliar context. Magritte often removed objects from their normal place and introduced them in an unfamiliar environment. He is combining things here which are unrelated. Magritte somehow wants to challenge our ideas about reality.

By placing them together within a frame Magritte is inviting us to make sense of that which we are looking at, possibly asking us to find a reason for these objects being placed together in this way. You might expect to find a forest within a landscape but not within a frame like this. It is impossible to make sense of this collection of objects and that is what Magritte intended.



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# modern art from 1930: surrealism and neo-romanticism (gallery 12)

- Think about the title of this work – *The Empty Mask*.
- When and why would you be wearing a mask?

Disappearance and concealment were themes which appeared time and time again in Magritte's work. The idea of a frame within a frame like in this painting was also a recurring idea in his work.

Each item within the frame has been painted in a very realistic way. Magritte believed that images should speak for themselves and he was possibly influenced by his early work in advertising and publicity. His painting technique and smooth modeling makes us think that we're looking at real things.

Magritte was a Belgian artist and an important Surrealist. His mother drowned herself in 1912 and this traumatic incident is believed to have influenced some of the images that we see in his paintings. He worked as a freelance designer of posters and advertisements before embarking on his career as a painter. He developed a painting technique which allowed him to represent objects realistically. These were often bizarre subjects placed in unfamiliar surroundings.

## ● Back at school

### A strange object

- ▶ Choose some objects that can be placed in front of your pupils. Ask them to choose two that they would never expect to see together. Ask them to make some observational drawings and to think of ways to bring these two objects together. Show the pupils other examples of work by Magritte and other Surrealist artists e.g. Salvador Dali. The final work could be a painting, a drawing or a collage.

### The real and the Imaginary

- ▶ This project could be worked on a simple paint programme on the computer or alternatively as a collage project using more conventional materials. Choose two or three realistically looking images. They could be the pupil's own photographs or images from a magazine. Scan these images, cut them out and paste them onto a different and unexpected background. This will make the pupils question what they are looking at in the same way that *The Empty Mask* by Magritte invites the viewer to question and make sense of the objects within the frame.



# drawing in the galleries



Many children, young people and adults have and continue to be inspired by works of art in the galleries. The Museum welcomes individuals and groups who wish to draw and sketch. However works of art can easily be damaged. To minimize this happening please follow these guidelines.

- Please don't touch any of the paintings or objects.
- Keep all drawing boards and art materials away from the walls, objects and the works of art.
- Do not use fixatives or spray adhesives in any of the galleries.
- The following materials can be used in the galleries – colouring pencils, wax crayons, oil pastels, drawing pencils, graphite sticks, glue sticks (e.g. pritt) and collage materials (e.g. coloured papers, scissors, string etc.)
- If you are using paints, charcoal and pastels please provide your own floor protection. We suggest that only art students and adults use these materials in the galleries.

# drawing in the galleries



## Ideas

- Look at individual shapes within a work of art. Draw the shapes and leave out any detail.
- Draw around a part of the original detail. Provide pupils with a copy of a part of the work. A cut piece of postcard could be used or part of an image from the Museum's art on-line.
- Choose a part of the work and make a detailed study.
- Look at and record brushmarks.
- Make a quick study of the composition.
- Record the pattern on a dress or a piece of porcelain.
- Make an annotated drawing. Write some notes on your drawing, maybe about aspects of the work that you can't easily draw.
- If exploring 3-dimensional work, draw from a range of different viewpoints. Look at the work closely and from a distance.