

INVESTIGATE! Material Gestures

Secondary: Key Stages 3 & 4

WHERE TO GO:

Room 2:
'Material Gestures'
in the **Material Gestures** wing

Find *Standing Woman* by
Alberto Giacometti

WHAT TO DO

Look carefully at the surfaces of these sculptures and ask your students if they can identify how these sculptures were made. The *Standing Women* would have been sculpted in clay and then cast in bronze. Giacometti would spend days heavily working on the surfaces of the sculptures until they resembled fragmentary figures. A wire armature within the clay would have stopped the figures from collapsing.

Discuss what role gesture has played in making this artwork.

Look at Jean Dubuffet's painting *The Busy Life*, which is located near-by. What are the similarities and differences of the figures in this painting and its surface compared with Alberto Giacometti's *Standing Women*?

WHERE TO GO:

Stay in Room 2:
'Material Gestures'
in the **Material Gestures** wing

WHAT TO DO

Divide students into five small groups, and allocate one artist's artwork to each group. Allow students time to look at the artworks they have been assigned and to consider 'gesture' in those artworks.

Together as a whole group, discuss your students' responses to the artworks. Do these artworks have anything in common?

Discuss how have the figures represented in these artworks have been affected by gesture? What are the artists expressing through the figures? Consider artistic style, composition, distortion, and expression. What view of humanity is being put forward by these artworks?

Consider the historical context. In the aftermath of WW2, artists in Europe and America presented the figure as distorted and dislocated. CoBrA artists (Asger Jorn) were inspired by non-Western art, children's art and graffiti.

WHERE TO GO:

Room 6:
'Contemporary Painting'

WHAT TO DO

Before going into the **Contemporary Painting** room, discuss the 'contemporary situation'. What political, social or personal issues affect your students now, and which might form the basis for a contemporary view of humanity?

What kind of artwork do your students expect to see in this room? Will it address these issues through representation, through gesture, or abstraction? Will it address 'issues' at all?

Move to the 'Contemporary Painting' room, and allow students time to look at all of the work. Is it what they expected? Do the paintings in this room seem contemporary to your students? Consider subject, style, and processes. What references are being made to contemporary culture?

How do the paintings in this room relate to the previous artworks discussed?

WHERE TO GO:

Activity for any room in the
Material Gestures wing

WHAT TO DO

Were your students surprised by anything they have seen during this session? How do they feel 'gesture' in art relates to 'gestures' in life?

Teacher's notes

Introduction

Investigate is an information sheet for teachers which provides a substitute for an artist-led workshop. It provides an introduction to key ideas in the 'Idea and Object' display along with a set of gallery activities which you will easily be able to explain to your students. The emphasis is on focused looking and thoughtful responses to the artworks. For further information students can read captions and information texts in the galleries. Small groups of students can also carry out further research in the Clore Information Room on level 1.

Background

Before starting the session, make sure students know that the permanent Collection at Tate Modern is displayed in four wings that are titled 'Poetry and Dream', 'Material Gestures', 'States of Flux' and 'Idea and Object', and that this is not potted history of modern and contemporary art.

All the activities are designed to promote talking, looking and discussing, either in pairs or as a group. In most of the activities there are no hard and fast answers: the answers are related to interpretation of what is being seen, in combination with imaginative responses.

Materials and group management

Students will need a pencil and sketchbook, or paper and a clipboard.

Although students will make their own notes and drawings in their sketchbooks, encourage discussion in pairs or threes. Before each activity, ensure the group has enough time to look at the artwork. Don't rush this. Bring the group together for speaking and listening after each of the activities.

It will be helpful for you to collect a gallery plan from the Clore Education Centre or from the Information desk on level 1.

Idea and Object: Key Themes

- Rules
- Shape
- Form
- Symmetry
- Communication
- Idea
- Representation

WHERE TO GO
Level 3 concourse:
outside the
Material Gestures wing

WHAT TO DO:

Discuss 'gesture'.

- What gestures are your students familiar with?
- How are gestures used, what effect do they have and what purpose are gestures put to?
- How does this kind of gestural expression in life, relate to expression in art?