

Module 1: Additional Teachers Notes: Information about the Artworks

Slide 2 – What is art?

Left: Damien Hirst, Pharmacy, 1992, © Damien Hirst

Installation

Pharmacy is a room-sized installation created by the artist Damien Hirst. The installation represents a real pharmacy with cabinets containing bottles and packages of prescription drugs. Installation art depends on the presence of the spectator and is made for a specific space. In this artwork the artist is exploring ideas about the power people ascribe to medicine in relation to the power they ascribe to art.

Right: John Everett Millais, Ophelia, 1851-2, © Tate, 2004

Oil on canvas, 762 x 1118 mm

In this painting, the Victorian artist Millais has depicted the death of Ophelia from Shakespeare's tragedy Hamlet. To recreate the scene as vividly as possible, Millais has painted plants, flowers and insects from observation outdoors and used a female model lying in a bath full of water.

If the group would like to find out more about Millais's Ophelia, there is an in-depth exploration of this work in [Tate Learning](#).

Slide 5 – What do I think?

Left: Tony Cragg, Stack, 1975, © The Artist

Mixed media, 2000 x 2000 x 2000 mm.

To make this work Cragg arranged miscellaneous objects and materials, collected at random, into a solid, geometric structure. The layering suggests geological strata, showing how both natural and man-made elements are incorporated into landscapes shaped over time by mankind.

Right: Pablo Picasso, Weeping Woman, 1937, ©Succession Picasso DACS 2004

Oil on canvas 847 x 739mm

This painting depicts the contorted features of the artist Dora Mar, Picasso's lover at the time. The suffering on Dora's face in this painting was primarily a response to political events. Picasso was deeply attached to his Spanish homeland and was disturbed by the civil war in that country (1936-9). Both the anguished face in this painting and Picasso's major work Guernica are responses to the suffering of Spain through the Civil War.

Slide 6 – What can I see?

Roy Lichtenstein, Whaam!, 1963, © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein/DACS

Acrylic and oil on canvas, support: 1727 x 4064 mm

Whaam! is based on an image from All American Men of War published by DC comics in 1962. Throughout the 1960s, Lichtenstein frequently drew on commercial art sources such as comic images or advertisements, attracted by the way highly emotional subject matter could be depicted using detached techniques. Transferring this to a painting context, Lichtenstein could present powerfully charged scenes in an impersonal manner, leaving viewers to decipher meanings for themselves. Although he was careful to retain the character of his source, Lichtenstein also explored the formal qualities of commercial imagery and techniques. In these works as in Whaam!, he adapted and developed the original composition to produce an intensely stylised painting.

Slide 7 – What can I see?

Attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, Queen Elizabeth 1, circa 1575, © The National Portrait Gallery

Oil on wood, 78.7 x 61 cm

When Hilliard painted this portrait of his Queen, she was about forty-one years old. It is impossible to guess her age by looking at the flat white mask of her face. In an age long before photographs, miniature and larger portraits played an important role in producing the awesome goddess-like effect that the Queen required. Queen Elizabeth's identity is here proclaimed by the splendour of her costume and by her elaborate ornamentation with a wealth of jewels. She holds a rose, a symbol of perfection associated not only with England but also with the Virgin Mary (Queen Elizabeth never married and was known as the Virgin Queen).

Slide 8 – What is it about? Part one

John Singleton Copley, The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781, 1783, © Tate

Oil on canvas, support: 2515 x 3658 mm

France invaded Jersey on 5 January 1781 and, following the fall of its capital St Helier, the governor surrendered the island. The twenty-four year old garrison commander, Major Peirson, rejected the surrender and led a successful counter-attack. Peirson was killed shortly before the battle, but the artist combined the moment of British victory with his death, shown below the Union Flag.

The picture is full of movement and colour, but is also carefully orchestrated. Peirson's body in the centre of the picture offers a splash of white against the red of the soldiers' jackets, and appears to topple forward out of the painting. The group of men who support him are crowned by the Union Jack, a symbol of Britain's victory. To their left, the black servant, Pompey, has just shot the French sniper in the background. To the right of the picture, a terrified family attempt to flee from the scene. Many of the officers in the painting are said to be accurate portraits. The setting for the picture is also carefully depicted, looking towards Royal Square in St Helier along what is now Peirson Place, with the statue of George II in the background.

Slide 9 – What is it about? Part two

Francis Bacon, Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion, circa 1944, © Tate

Oil on board, three parts, each 94 x 73.7 cm

Three Studies was first exhibited at the Lefevre Art Gallery in London in April 1945 amongst works celebrating the renewal of optimism at the end of the Second World War. John Russell described the reaction of visitors: '[They were brought up short by images so unrelievedly awful that the mind shut up with a snap at the sight of them.]' The public had wanted to turn its back to suffering and instead was forced up against evidence of man's inhumanity to man. The format of the triptych brings to mind Italian Renaissance images of Christ's crucifixion.

Bacon combined many influences in this work, both old and new, from photography and film as well as painting, to create an impact of horror more potent than any directly representational account could have afforded. He used colour as well as form to heighten the effect of pain. The strident orange, which might normally be associated with the warmth of the sun, in this context becomes the unbearable context to the writhing figures.

Slide 10 – When, where, how and why was it made?

Left: Jacob Epstein, Torso in Metal from 'The Rock Drill', 1913-14, © Estate of J Epstein

Bronze, object: 705 x 584 x 445 mm

For this sculpture, Epstein initially set a plaster figure on top of an actual pneumatic rock drill. This 'machine-like robot, visored, menacing and carrying within itself its progeny' became a symbol of the new age. He even considered adding a motor to make the piece move.

Following the carnage of the First World War, Epstein removed the drill, cut the figure down to half-length and changed its arms; this torso was cast in bronze, as shown here. Mutilated and shorn of its virility, the once-threatening figure is now vulnerable and impotent, the victim of the violence of modern life.

Epstein described it as revealing 'No humanity, only the terrible Frankenstein's monster we have made ourselves into....'

Right: John Coplans, Self Portrait (Back with Arms Above), 1984, © John Coplans

Photograph on paper, 121.3 x 93.5 cm

John Coplans originally had a successful career as a painter before working as a critic, editor (of Artforum magazine) and later as a curator in America. In the mid 1960s he began taking photographs of his own ageing naked body. The photographs focus on isolated body parts showing them enlarged and close-up, so that they seem at once familiar and unfamiliar. Coplans' monumental images recall classical sculpture, whilst emphasising the relentless progression of the ageing process. His Self Portraits series from 1984 uses unconventional poses and enlargements to enable us to see the naked body in a different way.

Slide 11 – Seeing the real thing

Andy Warhol, Black Bean, 1968 from Soup Can Series I, 1968 © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc/ARS, NY & DACS London 2004

Screenprint on paper, image: 889 x 587 mm

Warhol painted familiar consumer items such as coca-cola bottles or soup cans throughout the 1960s, the earliest examples first shown in New York in 1962. Asked why he painted soup cans, Warhol replied, 'Because I used to drink it. I used to have the same lunch every day.' Using screenprinting, Warhol could simulate the mechanical effect of his source to the extent that the resulting image appears almost untransformed. Yet, the rich colour, enlargement of scale and unifying black outline are reminders that these are commercial techniques being used in the context of high art, no longer selling products, but presenting them as objects for contemplation. As such, they pose radical questions about the value of art and the way it is consumed.

Slides 14-23 – The Cholmondeley Ladies

British School, 17th Century, The Cholmondeley Ladies, circa 1600-10

Oil on wood, support: 889 x 1727 mm

According to the inscription (bottom left), this painting shows 'Two Ladies of the Cholmondeley Family, Who were born the same day, Married the same day, And brought to Bed [gave birth] the same day'. To mark this family event, they are formally presented in bed, their babies wrapped in red fabric. Identical at a quick glance, the lace, jewellery and eye colours of the ladies and infants are in fact carefully differentiated. The ladies, whose precise identities are unclear, were probably painted by an artist based in Chester, near where the women's families lived.