

LOOK GROUPS

TOOLKIT FOR EXISTING
LOOK GROUPS



This toolkit aims to inspire and enable existing Look Groups to thrive. The resources have developed from the experiences of Look Group members and staff at Tate St Ives, incorporating learning from more than a decade of the Look Groups programme. They have been produced thanks to support from The Heritage Fund and research by Jenifer McIndoe from Connect the Dots.

The resources found here are designed to be used in different ways, either as a full resource or as guidance that can be dipped in and out of as needed.

Three versions of the PDF toolkit are available, tailored to three key audiences – existing Look Groups, members of the public who may be interested in starting a Look Group and organisations/community venues who may be interested in starting a Look Group, particularly cultural organisations.

Tate St Ives
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With thanks to all partner organisations who have supported Look Groups in their venues and communities

TOOLKIT FOR EXISTING LOOK GROUPS

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A photograph of an art gallery. In the center, a woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a bright yellow sweater and a black bag, stands looking at a large abstract painting. The painting features bold, organic shapes in orange, blue, and white. To the left, another abstract painting with green, grey, and orange diagonal stripes is visible. In the foreground, the back of a person's head with reddish-brown hair is visible, looking towards the same painting. To the right, a small informational card is posted on the wall. The word 'INTRODUCTION' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

INTRODUCTION

LOOK GROUP PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles, produced by Look Groups, describe how they behave and the unique values of their network.

INCLUSIVE

We have different experiences, knowledge and opinions. All are equally welcome. A diversity of viewpoints makes our meetings interesting; we listen to, and respect, each other.

DEMOCRATIC

We share the authority to decide how we want to structure our time together and all ideas and interests are treated equally. Everyone is invited and encouraged to contribute.

CURIOUS

We have a wide and open view of what art can be and where to find it.

BOLD

We are open to the unexpected and take part even if we think we may not like the topic or artist.

SELF-LED

We take responsibility for organising and leading activities between ourselves.

ACTIVE

We participate in discussions, through research or by bringing materials for the interest and enjoyment of others. We also explore galleries and exhibitions together.

LIGHT-HEARTED

We are relaxed about learning and enjoy ourselves!

AMBASSADORS FOR ART

We share our enthusiasm for art with our communities.



CASE STUDIES LOOK GROUPS IN 2022

BUDE LOOK GROUP

'Your Art was a project made by the community, for the community. We hoped to engage viewers in reflection and discussion about art. We wanted people to experience the fun to be had at Look Group meetings.'

Group size: approximately 17, with around 12 attending each meeting.

Venue: an adult education centre in the town.

OUR MEETINGS

The focus of a meeting is agreed at the previous one. During the month, we then do some research and send information and images to the co-ordinator to collate into a PowerPoint presentation.

In early 2020 we organised our second local exhibition in a local cultural centre, having been supported by Tate St Ives staff to hold our first exhibition some years ago. More than 1,700 people visited the 'Your Art' exhibition over a three-week period, in which we exhibited our own art treasures alongside references to the iconic artworks we have discussed in our meetings – a project made by the community, for the community.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Each member does a little research before the meeting if they can. The co-ordinator collates this into an accessible format for us.
- The co-ordinator, who also acts as meeting facilitator, has established a standard way of guiding each meeting whilst using question prompts, paired discussions, and games to stimulate new thinking and encourage varied conversations.
- Our members have a strong desire to introduce others to art, which has resulted in two local exhibitions.
- We avoid putting stress on people to do more than they can or are comfortable with – people feel they can join in with the exhibition planning only if they want.

CAMELFORD LOOK GROUP

‘When we put a film on, lots of non-members from the community come. Most of the time when we’ve put a film on it’s meant somebody new has joined, it’s our main source of new members.’

Group size: approximately 20, with around 10 attending each meeting.

Venue: Alternates between visits to local galleries and The Old Bank, a community building in the town.

OUR MEETINGS

We hold monthly events, rotating through practical workshops, film nights and day trips to visit galleries and artist studios. Sometimes we will research a particular artist ahead of visiting an exhibition at Tate St Ives or elsewhere. Members are encouraged to lead workshops in their areas of experience such as print-making, batik or watercolours; a workshop on ‘cut-outs’, which followed a Matisse film, was very well received.

Film screenings are a regular part of our programme – members share their personal collections of art films and we make use of the community centre’s licence to screen them.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Alternating activity provides variety. Adapting meeting times attracts a fuller membership e.g. film evenings, daytime workshops and days out to visit exhibitions.
- Screening films in the evening is popular in the broader community and allows working people to attend. It also generates a small profit for the group which is useful for paying for car parking and fuel contributions when the group goes on trips.
- We co-ordinate car-sharing when making visits to cultural venues, meeting in a car park in the middle of town and making a contribution to the driver.
- The co-ordinator has developed informal guidelines for what to charge for each type of event, such as contribution costs for trips, which creates consistency and makes communication and organisation easier.

FALMOUTH LOOK GROUP

'We've had wonderful art conversations over the years. I've learnt so much about art and artists from my friends in the group, in a relaxed and informal environment. It's been wonderful!'

Group size: approximately 30, with around 8 attending each meeting.

Venue: alternates between Falmouth Art Gallery and a local hotel bar.

OUR MEETINGS

Our meetings take place monthly, switching between afternoons in the gallery and evenings in the hotel bar. Usually, the gallery curator will provide a short talk about some part of the displays at each gallery meeting, which is much appreciated by us and stimulates an interesting conversation.

Being a popular tourist town, Falmouth has several hotels with potential meeting spaces, and we have found a suitable 'home' in one. Themes for the hotel-based meetings are chosen by members and we source and bring in materials.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- The use of two different venues allows us to hold meetings in the daytime and evening.
- Neither of the venues charge us to use the space (members usually buy a drink in the hotel bar) which eliminates the need to ask members for financial contributions.
- We have established a good relationship with the gallery. Some members have become members of the gallery or volunteer there.
- Although there is a small but strong core membership, our group is flexible enough to welcome many others occasionally or for short periods. Several art students were active members during their time studying at the nearby university. Members of other Look Groups have occasionally travelled to Falmouth to attend our meetings.

HELSTON LOOK GROUP

‘We’ve always tried very hard to be inclusive of anyone who doesn’t have that level of knowledge and people who come tend to say they feel very included right from the beginning which is good, that’s one of our major aims.’

Group size: usually 6–8 attending each meeting, up to 10 members.

Venue: in the co-ordinator’s home in a village near Helston.

OUR MEETINGS

Many of our members are active visitors to museums and galleries in Cornwall and beyond, so past our future visits often inform our meeting themes. Members can also throw in other ideas – recently we looked at the Benin Heads as one member had an interest in African art. We tend to do some research before meetings and then everyone offers a contribution.

We hold our meetings in the co-ordinator’s home, which has worked well in the past as it’s a beautiful setting and sufficient in size for a small group. We wonder if a public space might feel more neutral to newcomers, however, so we are considering a move to a new café which plans to open in the village.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- We try very hard to be inclusive and welcoming. One of our members has autism and has felt excluded from other social groups in the past, we make sure she can attend and contribute.
- Holding meetings on Saturday afternoons suits many people living in rural areas as they prefer to drive during daytimes only. Several single members say that having something to do at the weekend helps with loneliness.
- We used to choose meeting themes a month in advance but decided it would be fairer to pick them three months in advance. That also helps us with advertising.
- We often borrow books from the art library in Penzance.

HELLYS LOOK GROUP

‘None of us would call ourselves artists and are not particularly knowledgeable but enjoy whatever we can get to.’

Group size: approximately 6–8.

Venue: the café of an arts centre and out on trips.

OUR MEETINGS

One of the youngest Look Groups, our group formed initially from a group of friends that shared a common interest in art. *Hellys* is the Cornish language name for the town of Helston.

Our group has a preference for making visits and we enjoy ‘getting out and about’. Taking inspiration from what is happening at galleries around Cornwall, members research options and get together at the café to make a plan for the forthcoming few months. We will often visit several venues in one town, finding out more about the artworks from guided tours and talking to gallery assistants.

We enjoy making creative responses to the artworks we see, for example making these personalised kaftans inspired by a visit to the Hugette Caland show at Tate St Ives.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- There’s a playful feel to this group, who enjoy art for art’s sake and claim not to be too studious. They are confident to visit exhibitions and talk about art without having a lot of prior knowledge. The group has fun creating artistic responses to what they see.
- The arts centre café is a good base – surrounded by arts activity, members say there’s an exciting feel to the place.
- The group’s core members live close to each other in Helston making it easy to organise transport for visits.

LAUNCESTON LOOK GROUP

‘Everybody brings what they can. It works out well, somebody usually has done something. We don’t run out of things to talk about.’

Group size: usually 5 or 6 attending.

Venue: Community Centre.

OUR MEETINGS

Our compact group meets monthly, taking a break in August when attendance has traditionally been low. The co-ordinator role is shared between two members, which provides continuity at meetings. The co-ordinators share tasks, such as publicity and investigating potential places to visit, and recently worked together to devise a constitution.

We choose topics well in advance so that members know what is coming up for the next 6–12 months. We describe ourselves as ‘amateurs’ but we contribute enthusiastically! We feel that researching the topics in advance is important in helping us get the most out of our meetings.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- The co-ordinators find that with a small group, communicating via WhatsApp is easy and straightforward.
- Setting out our list of topics gives the opportunity for members to do some research before the meetings and also allows the group to advertise to potential new members.
- We encourage all members to have a turn at facilitating a meeting, particularly if they have particular knowledge about, or interest, in the theme.
- Deciding that a slight increase in membership would make group outings more viable and add different perspectives to their meetings, we have experimented with local advertising, finding success after writing a short article for a local newsletter.

PORT ISAAC LOOK GROUP

‘One of the things I really like about Look Groups is I love the fact that you can do what you want to do. I think if it was too structured and too set out, you would feel like “are we doing it right? Have we stuck to the guidelines?” It’s important that it has that lovely freedom.’

Group size: around 25–30 people but can be up to 50, depending on the event.

Venue: Village Hall, followed by further discussion in the local pub.

OUR MEETINGS

With an often-large number of people at meetings, we have found that a talk by a guest speaker is the best format for us, followed by the opportunity to talk informally in the pub. There’s a sociable feel to our group, with members enjoying a drink from the village hall bar and a catch up with others on arrival, before notices from the co-ordinator and then the talk.

The talk is often linked to a local gallery or upcoming exhibition, and a group visit to this venue usually takes place a week or two later. An example of this was when a PhD student gave a talk about costume and our group subsequently visited Fursdon House in Devon to view the display of historic fabric and costumes.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Asking for donations, rather than a fixed cost, allows people to give what they can and covers the cost of the venue.
- Our co-ordinator is well-networked within the community and has developed a wide pool of people to call on to give a talk – practicing artists, art historians and academics. In one recent talk, a local resident shared her experiences of the art she encountered in Kosovo whilst working for a charity there. Speakers are motivated to give their time freely in support of the group.
- A mixed approach is taken to letting people know about meetings, from posters around the village and articles in parish newsletters to communicating by text with those living more remotely.
- We access the community minibus from nearby Wadebridge to make group visits. Fostering local support for the group has been beneficial and resulted in a substantial donation from a village resident, which has made financing travel easier.

SALTASH LOOK GROUP

‘There’s no monetary contribution, people can dip in and out of it as they want to, they don’t have to commit to anything, I think that’s really important.’

Group size: around 5–7 people usually.

Venue: local pub.

OUR MEETINGS

Our group was started by a few friends and gradually grew. We choose a topic for the next month and at the meeting, everyone brings an image or two to talk about. We take turns presenting our image and saying why we have selected it – this starts a group discussion. Themes can be anything – for one meeting, held during lockdown, we called ‘uplifting art’ as we needed a boost!

We’ve tried out different venues in the town and have been meeting in a quiet corner of a pub most recently, although we’re aware that this may not suit everyone so are hoping there may be other options available in the town soon. It’s important to us to find a free venue so that the group is open to everyone.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Everyone has the opportunity to be the facilitator – the co-ordinator asks at each meeting who would like to do it. Newcomers can take a turn facilitating when they feel ready.
- We hold our meetings in the evening – when we started the group most people had daytime commitments such as work so this allowed them to attend.
- During lockdown, our group kept in contact by email and continued meeting by video call, giving us the opportunity to try out different ways of organising our discussions.

ST IVES LOOK GROUP

'We don't want to be prescriptive, it's up to people to interpret the theme in whatever way they want. Any link is tenable.'

Group size: usually between 6 and 10 attending each meeting.

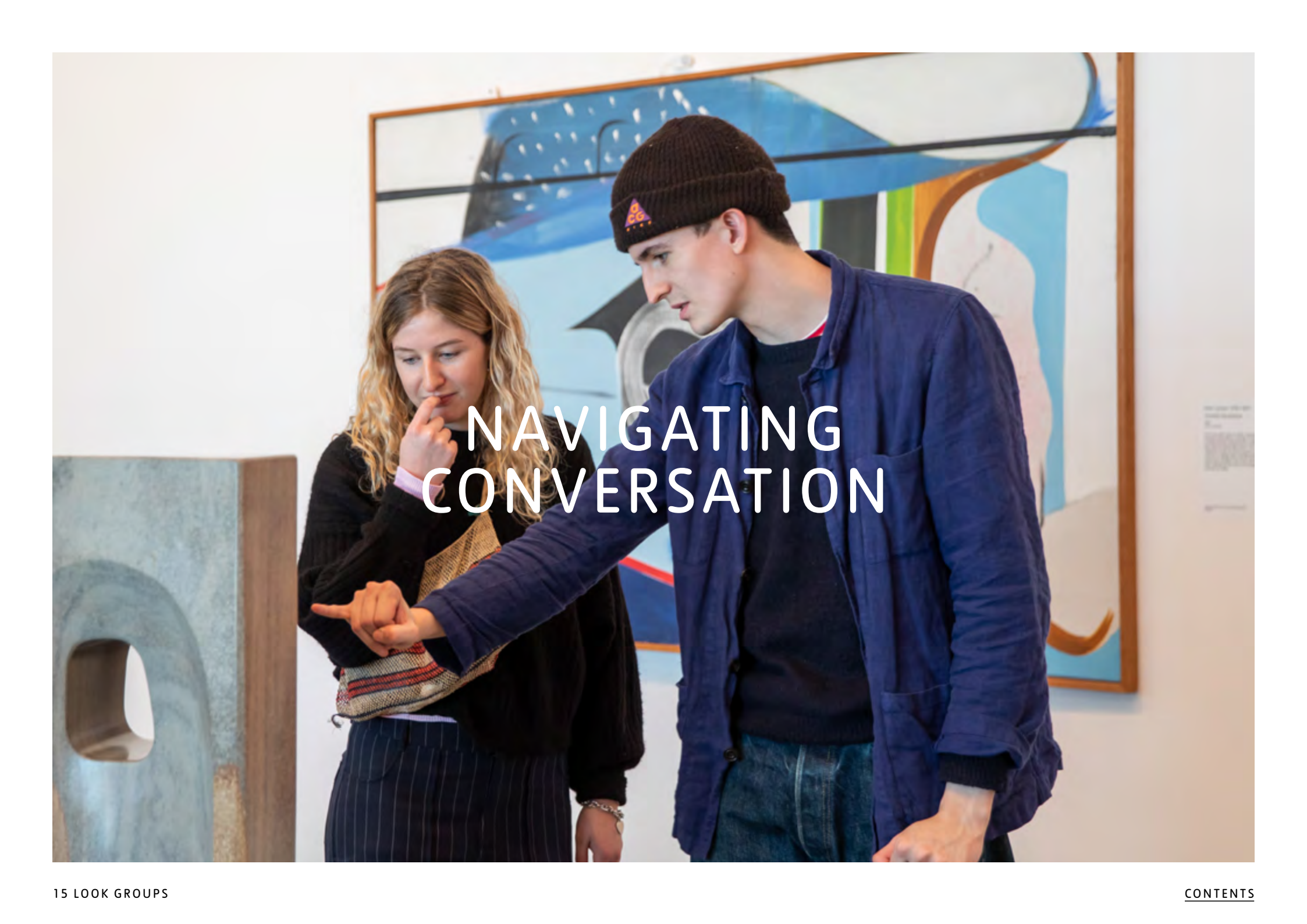
Venue: Learning Studio at Tate St Ives.

OUR MEETINGS

We meet once a month on a Friday afternoon, adjusting our timings throughout the year to take advantage of later summertime opening times at the gallery. Topics are agreed in advance, these usually include the current show at Tate St Ives but also other exhibitions recently attended in venues across the UK. Members bring books and other interpretive materials to refer to and share.

WHAT WORKS WELL

- Meeting at an art gallery means we can have the whole room to ourselves, and the environment is quieter than in previous locations such as pubs. Members can choose to arrive early and visit the gallery first, which is helpful if later talking about the current exhibition.
- We have developed a way of organising our discussions that everyone can buy into. Modelled by the co-ordinator, who opens up the conversation, we take turns to talk and actively listen. The co-ordinator gently manages participation and keeps track of time.
- If time allows, the co-ordinator sometimes makes notes on the discussion and emails these to members after the meeting.



NAVIGATING CONVERSATION

HOW TO FACILITATE A LOOK GROUP CONVERSATION

Getting the tone of your meetings right is key to ensuring that everyone enjoys the group and keeps coming back. Use these top tips from Look Group members to help your discussions run smoothly.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

Although meetings are informal, with everyone encouraged to contribute, it is a good idea to have someone guide the discussion and keep the group on track. In some Look Groups, this is the same person each meeting, other groups operate a 'rolling chair' system. Not everyone may feel comfortable leading the group, so discuss this at the start and with new joiners. In some cases, the facilitator may also be the co-ordinator, although many groups agree it's best to avoid creating an over-reliance on one person.

It's not important for the facilitator to be an expert on art, their job is to establish a trusting environment so that each person in the group can contribute to the discussion in the best way for them. Facilitation is more about asking questions and encouraging active listening than providing answers.

PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION

Look Groups often choose their own meeting topics in advance; this allows people time to research or collate material for the meeting, much like a book group. Although preparation for meetings is encouraged, groups say it's also important not to put pressure or expectation on people, so that members feel they can attend even if they haven't been able to prepare anything. Some groups agree a focus for the subsequent session at the end of their meeting, others set out their topics for 6–12 months at a time. Themes should be chosen democratically, perhaps by taking turns, voting from a list of suggestions, or pulling ideas out from a hat.

STRUCTURING THE MEETING

Thinking about a loose structure for the meeting, with some approximate timings, will help make the meeting enjoyable. A Look Group meeting usually lasts between one and two hours, or longer for a gallery or studio visit.

Some popular formats used by Look Groups are:

- Short introduction to the theme by the facilitator, then each member talking in turn about the research they have done and want to share
- Warm-up or icebreaker, such as members sharing experience of visiting recent exhibitions, leading into the main theme for the meeting
- Small groups or pairs discussing the chosen artworks together, then feeding back to full group, chaired by the facilitator
- Responding to question prompts and talking activities to focus attention on particular aspects of the artwork or artworks
- Practical workshop to explore use of media or to create a creative response to the subject being explored
- Demonstration by an artist or talk by a guest speaker, followed by question-and-answer session
- Visit to an exhibition, followed by discussion in the café

For detailed ideas of meeting themes see [Talking art – how to get your discussion going](#) (p. 22).

Thinking about the seating and furniture in the room may not seem important, but it can have a large impact on how people participate. Arrange the room to reflect the style of your meeting and

enable comfortable interaction. Most groups project images of artworks in some way so this may need to be considered in room arrangements, see [Using technology at your meetings](#) (p.30) for more on this.

The chance for members to get to know each other and build relationships is something that members say they really enjoy, so remember to allow time during the meeting for talking about and sharing things that are unrelated to the theme.

STYLE OF FACILITATION

The style of facilitation will reflect the maturity of the group. At first, facilitators may need to be more directive in guiding the discussion, asking questions, and providing prompts, choosing the format of the meeting and moving the group between tasks. Over time, the group should be able to move to a model where the facilitator provides assistance only when needed, with suggestions and observations rather than direction. A good analogy is for the facilitator to think of themselves as the Air Traffic Controller, rather than the Pilot.

TIPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

- Keep in mind the [Look Group Principles](#) (p.04). Observe and critically consider how the meeting is achieving these
- Model the behaviour and attitudes you want to see from the Look Group Principles. Don't be afraid to admit when you don't know or understand something
- Be encouraging – with what you say but also think about your body language and tone of voice
- Be aware of unconscious bias – stereotypes and attitudes we form without being aware. Remember that the role of the facilitator is neutral
- Avoid assuming that members will all have had the same experiences. Make sure language is accessible to all – refer to Tate's online glossary here – tate.org.uk/art/art-terms avoid abbreviations and ask people to clarify their statements if needed
- Keep discussions positive and constructive – request that if members challenge others' ideas, they back it up with evidence, appropriate experiences, or appropriate logic. When things aren't going well, acknowledge, redirect, or suggest alternatives
- Step back when the discussion is going well, let members own the discussion.

'We choose a theme for the following 2–3 months. Everyone brings an image or two to discuss. A very lively and interesting discussion ensues!'

Saltash Look Group co-ordinator

'Although I have no background in Art, and don't always have time to contribute, the other members are ok with this, and I enjoy their views and opinions on the said artwork/s'

Look Group member

'Good to have a meeting deadline to get thoughts together and makes thinking about art issues much easier when there is a structure – no matter how informal'

Look Group member

'I allow everyone their freedom but at the same time, I want everyone to have their chance to talk. I'm looking out for the ones who haven't quite got the point and bring them in, I'm very aware of it and people's level of knowledge, ask them a question I know they'll be able to answer.'

Helston Look Group Facilitator

TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON CHALLENGES

Some strategies to try when the discussion needs a helping hand.

Individuals reluctant to participate in the discussion

- Allow some time for reflection of the artwork or question posed and wait for someone to start – some amount of silence is fine
- Don't be tempted to answer your own question if no-one responds. Try the 8 second rule – allow 8 seconds of silence before asking a different question
- Ensure members feel at ease by checking the environment, format of the meeting, language used. Refreshments can create a more relaxed environment as well as a short time at the start or end just to chat
- Build on comments made, ask the contributor to elaborate – 'How so?', 'Tell me more' – or encourage others to add their reactions or ideas
- Maintain eye contact with quieter members so they know they are not forgotten and welcome to add their views, thank them when they do contribute
- Notice if the body language of quieter people – eye-contact, facial expressions, subtle movements – indicates they have something to say and invite them to speak. Consider how people can signal they want to contribute if the conversation is lively
- Ask opinion questions to reduce fear of answering incorrectly e.g. 'how do you feel about this?' or have the group collectively experience an artwork by describing what they see
- Try setting out a broad expectation e.g. 'let's hear perspectives from three different people on this'
- Members could write down their comments if they don't want to say them or interact in other ways

	e.g. holding up score cards, responding with two or three words only – If members are politely agreeing with everything said, ask some 'devil's advocate' questions. Stress that disagreement can be valuable within the discussion	
Over-reliance on facilitator to lead	– Consider if people are unclear about the theme and how to prepare or guide them – Appoint two people as co-facilitators and alternate facilitating meetings – Find a deputy or number of deputies to share in the tasks e.g. one person to time-keep, another to maintain a positive tone during the discussions – Ensure that topics for discussion come from members – Good communication in advance is necessary e.g. co-ordinator sending out emails – See strategies above for encouraging members to participate	– Help over-talkers correct themselves e.g. 'You've given us a lot of detail about X, so that we can keep on track could you refocus on the question that we're discussing...' It can also be helpful to repeat the question – Observe body language of the rest of the group and stop the over-talking when needed e.g. 'I'm going to stop you here as I'd like to make sure we have time to hear from everyone' or 'hear a variety of perspectives'
Individuals dominating the discussion	– Redirect the discussion to another person – Structure the discussion so that every member talks in turn or for a set amount of time – Establish ground rules together about how everyone contributes, set clear time limits – Break the group down into smaller discussion groups and observe	Negativity or tension in the group – Expect disagreement and welcome it for the purpose of increasing understanding. Recognise that conflict arises when the purpose becomes more about convincing others. Select topics democratically to encourage mutual respect and give ownership to members – Actively moderate heated discussions in order to prevent participants from interrupting each other, remind members of the need to be open and depersonalise their comments – Explore the context behind the negativity (listen for underlying issues or emotions) and clarify assumptions made. Politely invite the contributor to see alternative possibilities – Close down a persistent argument by summarising both sides – framing disagreements in a positive manner – and move on – Disrespectful behaviour or discriminatory comments may need to be confronted directly e.g. 'I'm uncomfortable with the tone of your comments, what I hear you saying is...'

- The Look Group Principles (p.04) exist to support you, draw attention to these when needed e.g. ‘Are we being inclusive in this conversation?’ Co-ordinators could refer to these at the start of every meeting or display them on the wall

Discussion that goes off track or drifts

- Ensure everyone is clear about the theme of the discussion and what is expected of the meeting
- Nominate a facilitator to guide or ‘chair’ the discussion, note any new avenues and bring them up again later
- Encourage preparation by members – identify at the start who has brought what and assess how much time to proportion to each area
- Establish a flexible structure for the discussion e.g. write a list of key points or questions the group wants to discuss on a board or piece of paper on the table. You might find a similar structure works for every meeting, but you may need to adapt it
- If members are happy to – relax and enjoy where the conversation takes you! It’s fine if things occasionally don’t go to plan

Not having enough to talk about

- Look and describe what you see in an artwork. Can you build up a story or identify connections just by looking?
- Take turns to ask, ‘What do you see?’ and ‘Why do you say that?’ You’ll be amazed at what you can find out by just asking those two questions!
- Invite members to find out if what they discovered



from looking is true after the session. Pick up the conversation again at the next meeting

- Encourage preparation by members – delegate areas to research amongst yourselves and be clear about what is expected of them before the next meeting
- Bring up ideas and contributions from previous meetings to incorporate
- Invite an art historian, or volunteer from a gallery or make a visit – plan as a group what you'd like to ask
- Ask another Look Group to share their materials

Over-organisation 'too much like school'

- Ensure the group is run co-operatively, make decisions together
- Agree on a meeting format and stick to it, but regularly check members are satisfied with it and be responsive. With practice, this will become a natural part of facilitating meetings
- Be sensitive to the dynamics of the group – consider how differences in the room layout or activity impact this
- Play occasional games – try adapting a popular game e.g. dominoes matching artist to artworks, bingo with different media

Members not focussed on the group conversation

- Set ground rules to control side-chatting
- Address the situation politely but firmly by saying things like 'Your ideas are valuable, so we need you back in the conversation'
- Try more pair-talk if people feel they have lots to say
- Offer feedback in private to persistent side chatters
- Make time at the start or end of meetings for general chat and catching up

TALKING ART – HOW TO GET YOUR DISCUSSION GOING

There's no set way of talking about art, you can approach it as informally or as studiously as you like. Try following this step-by-step guide to discover meaning and enjoyment from art.

STEP ONE CHOOSE A FOCUS

Look Groups choose their own themes for meetings and their own ways to explore them. In over a decade, Look Groups in Cornwall have yet to run out of ideas for discussions!

Have fun with your theme. Here's a selection of Look Groups choices to whet your appetite:

- Show and tell of members' favourite artworks. Which work of art would you like to receive as a gift? (Potential theme for a Christmas session)
- What is art for?
- Anything blue/green/colour of your choice
- Women artists, marginalised/outsider artists, artists from different locations
- Text in art, time, artist sketchbooks
- Bring an artwork from home to talk about. Pick an artwork from an exhibition and say why it interests you
- Choose a painting you think has been influenced by another artist
- Exhibitions recently attended by members or planning to be visited by your group
- Focus on a particular movement e.g. political or environmental art, Modern Art
- Focus on a particular medium e.g. sculpture, photography, performance

STEP TWO TAKE TIME TO LOOK AT THE ARTWORKS YOU HAVE CHOSEN

This is an active process of observing and noticing. This guide and podcast introduce you to the art of slow looking: tate.org.uk/art/guide-slow-looking

What do you see? Try to describe it in detail to each other, taking turns to build the description together. You may be surprised at what other people notice and make broader connections across the group.

Try going a little deeper with your observations. Can you identify how the artist has used colour, line, shape, space, texture, tone, form, balance, emphasis, harmony, movement, scale, rhythm, unity, variety. These are known as the Elements of Art and Principles of Design and various resources to explain these can be found online.

STEP THREE QUESTION WHAT YOU SEE

Consider and question what the different elements of the artwork communicate to the viewer, why and how that is achieved. What difference do these factors make to the way you think and feel about the artwork? What message or ideas does the artist communicate? What's the story?

STEP FOUR FORM YOUR OPINIONS

Share additional information e.g. from books, film, blogs, if you want to – some Look Groups do this right at the start of the process, others choose not to refer to any sources but the work itself – both approaches lead to new discoveries! Information could be about the artist or the context in which the artwork was created.

Combine your research with your own observations and analysis. What do you now have to say about this artwork? Do you see it differently? Welcome

all arguments that can be justified, remember that judgements are subjective – enjoy seeing things through others' eyes!

STEP FIVE PLAY WITH YOUR IMAGINATION

Responding creatively to the artworks can be fun and liberating! If your group is up for it, why not try out some of these ideas?

- Play music which influenced the artist or was key to the time the work was made
- Go a step further and pick a location or environment as well
- Prepare food or drink inspired by the artist or artwork
- Take a household object or item of clothing and refashion it in the style of the artist
- Experiment with using the artist's technique to create something original
- Make a short film of members sharing why they like an artwork
- Document a gallery visit with photos
- Become an object or person in the artwork and tell their story – what would they have to say? What has happened and what will happen next?
- Play 'Art Charades' or describe an artwork without words e.g. using only body movements!

Inspired to take things further? Why not share your interest with others by planning a special event e.g. an exhibition for a local school or a public presentation in a community venue?

What do you enjoy about Look Groups?
'Learning from each other as 'ordinary mortals' with perhaps no artistic talent'
Falmouth Look Group member

'Look Group sessions are always about dynamic conversations and passions shared. They are also about friendship and trust and the power of art to inform our everyday lives.'

Exhibitions & Displays Curator, Tate St Ives

MAKING YOUR LOOK GROUP OPEN TO ALL

Bringing together people with a variety of experiences is guaranteed to energise discussions so don't be afraid to invite people who aren't immediately known to you. A diversity of lived experiences in your group will create more opportunities to learn from each other.

Consider these tips on being welcoming and inviting.

TIME

Consider the timings of meetings – daytime may preclude people in full-time work, whilst evening meetings might not appeal to older people who may rely on public transport. Some groups rotate meetings between daytime and evening to enable different people to attend.

LOCATION

Choose the location carefully to make sure people can reach it easily. Is there parking nearby? Is it fully accessible for disabled or less mobile drivers? Are there public transport options? Some groups alternate venues each month to accommodate different preferences.

VENUE

Make sure the venue is suitable – if it's a public space like a gallery or community centre, it will likely have adaptations for disabled people to access it. Ask your members if they have specific needs to consider. Cafes and pubs can often be more crowded so choose quieter times to meet.

PRINCIPLES

Stick to the Look Group Principles (p.04) as listed on the Tate Website – be democratic in choosing what to talk about, encourage all contributions, respect and welcome different perspectives. Reassure people they are welcome even if they don't have time to prepare for the meetings.

TECHNOLOGY

Choose appropriate technology – some groups use personal devices to look at artworks together, but if some members don't have their own device you may need to consider a venue with projection equipment. See Using technology in your meetings (p.30) for more on this.

LANGUAGE

Check the language you use, in your advertising and in the meetings, is easy to understand. Avoid abbreviations, make use of Tate's glossary of Art Terms (see tate.org.uk/art/art-terms) and let new members know about it. Remind members of the need to respect the thoughts and opinions of others and use language appropriately. See How to facilitate a Look Group conversation (p.16) for tips on managing conflict.

INCLUSIVITY

Be as open and inclusive about who might want to attend. If you choose to limit membership to a specific group e.g. work colleagues, be clear about the reasons for doing so and ensure this is clearly communicated in any advertising.

BALANCE

Evaluate and actively rebalance your membership when needed. Many groups find that they need to attract new members from time to time so you could choose to focus on a particular characteristic to achieve a better balance e.g. more male members, more younger members. Adapt your advertising methods accordingly so that you target those that will increase the diversity of the group, without excluding other potential new members.

HOW TO REVITALISE YOUR LOOK GROUP MEETINGS

Has your Look Group lost momentum? Look Groups share their tips to ensure meetings keep members coming back for more.

FEEDBACK

Invite honest feedback from members, and former members, to identify the cause of any problems and encourage suggestions for improvements. Act on ideas put forward.

PRINCIPLES

Reflect on how your group has adopted the Look Group Principles (p.04). Is there something at odds which needs to be addressed?

QUALITY

Think critically about the quality of the discussion. In section How to facilitate a Look Group conversation (p.16), you'll find strategies to support lively discussions. Be sensitive to the dynamics of the group and everyone contributing equally.

LESS IS MORE

Ask members what they want to get out of attending and what contribution they want to make. Simplify your approach to focus on what matters most to members.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Do something different and see what happens. Experiment with different meeting formats, use section Talking art – how to get your discussion going (p.22) for ideas. Changes could be temporary or permanent.

IN REAL LIFE

Make a plan to visit some artworks 'in the flesh', perhaps ask for a talk from the Curator or Gallery Assistant; many groups find this gives authenticity to their conversations.

COLLABORATION

Invite other people to join the conversation on occasions – an artist or guest speaker, friends or family, for example. You could collaborate with another Look Group to split any additional costs required. Use the ideas suggested in Advertising your Look Group to others (p.27) to recruit new members when needed.

GIVE SOMETHING BACK

Consider holding a special event or doing something to support your host venue or a local project. Give a presentation to another community group or share with your community digitally.



PRACTICALITIES

ADVERTISING YOUR LOOK GROUP TO OTHERS

Most Look Groups will need to advertise their meetings to ensure a good level of membership. When planning how to advertise, it helps to think about who you want to attract and why they will add value to your group. Learn more about how to reach a broad spectrum of potential members in section Making your Look Group open to all (p.24).

Take a look at these marketing tools, some you may choose to have in place all the time, supplementing these with additional efforts when there is a need to actively increase membership.

SPREAD THE WORD

One of the most successful advertising tools, some groups find word of mouth alone is sufficient to bring in new members. Current members who enjoy the group will be good advocates in their personal and professional circles. You could encourage members to bring a friend at any time or even hold a special event for friends and family.

START A MAILING LIST

Gather email addresses from potential members. Although some people might sign up to your mailing list but not regularly attend, emailing advance details of meetings and occasional prompts reminds them you are there. Encourage recipients to forward on emails or post details in their social media networks; this online equivalent of word-of-mouth advertising can be very effective. If you'd prefer not to use your own personal email address, you can set up a dedicated one just for Look Group communications.

Be mindful of how to look after people's personal information. Here are some good practice tips:

- Make sure people know they are joining a mailing list and agree to this – it's a good idea to state approximately how often you will be in touch.
- Tell people how their email address will be stored and who will have access to it – typically stored electronically by the co-ordinator in their contacts list
- Let members know how they can be removed from the list, should they wish.
- Send all emails 'bcc' so that members cannot see each other's email addresses.

Some Look Groups also communicate by text message or create a WhatsApp group to keep in touch and the same principles should be applied.

PUT UP POSTERS, FLYERS, AND BANNERS

Use the Look Group poster template in this toolkit or make your own. Remember that many people won't know what a Look Group is, so include text to describe what you do at your meetings and let them know what they'll get out of joining. Think about your wording so that it is inviting to everyone, not just those who are knowledgeable about art. You could direct people here to find out more about Look Groups tate.org.uk/visit/tate-st-ives/look-groups. Include the essentials: venue, date, start and end time, if booking is needed. Provide clear contact information to make it easy for people to express an interest right there and then.

Use colour on your materials. Is there someone you know who could produce an eye-catching design or logo? You could include images, perhaps of your Look Group in action; remember to ask permission from members first. Be careful of copyright if using images of artworks in your design. You could print posters at home or professionally. It's a good idea to create different digital formats of the poster e.g. pdf, photo, so they can be shared via email, through social media platforms, or on websites.

If your venue gets good footfall e.g. in the centre of the town or a centre where lots of other groups meet, ask to put a poster up in the window or on the noticeboard. Identify other busy places, such as libraries, coffee shops or schools. Most groups try to do this at least a few weeks before meetings. For events where you want to attract a larger crowd,



consider having a banner produced. Choose details that will stay the same e.g. 'Artist talk here tonight', 'Look Group meeting here this Tuesday' or include a space where you can add and change specific details of your event.

COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE THROUGH THE PRESS

Many Look Groups find that advertising in local newsletters is simple and effective. Use photos to show what you've been doing e.g. visits, discussions, making art, and let people know your plans for forthcoming meetings. Organisations such as universities, faith groups or workplaces may have their own internal e-newsletters that you could advertise in – ask your members about any potential connections.

For larger publications, TV and radio, you may want to write a press release, there's lots of information online about how to do this. The press release needs to tell a story – this could be the launch of your group, celebrating the group's 1st birthday or announcing an exhibition you've organised. Listen out for opportunities to contact the press which are timely or topical.

'What's on' columns in community magazines, as well as online portals, are also good places to advertise as people reading these sections are actively looking for things to do. Organisations may charge for the service, but this is usually much cheaper than an advert and often free for community groups.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Social media platforms e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter can help you reach lots of people quickly with none to little cost. Members can use their own accounts or why not create your own account for your group? Be aware that different age groups tend to have preferences for different social media platforms so do some research before choosing which channel to communicate through.

Post what you've been talking about and share photos; reveal interesting debates that arose. Make it a two-way conversation by inviting people to respond with their thoughts. Show potential members what your group is about.

Social media can be particularly effective in reaching young adults, so if you feel your group would benefit from more young voices, you could choose to invest more of your marketing efforts in digital communications.

ASK YOUR HOST VENUE TO HELP

If you meet in an arts venue, there's a good likelihood that other people visiting the venue will be interested in art too. Put up posters and leave flyers in the building, share details of your future meetings with your host organisation so that they can include them in their events programme. If you meet in a community venue, you may find the opportunity to join your Look Group appeals to other users who are curious about art or just interested in broadening their knowledge.

HOLD SPECIAL EVENTS AND GROUP OUTINGS

Many Look Groups find that holding a public event such as a film screening or organising an artist studio visit can be a good source of new members.

ATTEND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Raise awareness of your Look Group and talk to potential members by having a presence at a local festival or fete. You could offer to give a talk about art to other community groups. Some groups get involved with supporting schools or charity art displays, which raises awareness in their locality.

'The meetings of Look Groups are always enjoyable and informative, new members always welcome, if you love art you will love Look Groups.'

Facebook post by Look Group member

USING TECHNOLOGY AT MEETINGS

Although Look Groups generally agree that nothing beats seeing artwork 'in the flesh', most groups also make use of digital technology to view images during their meetings and access the variety of resources many galleries have made available online.

Equipment can vary, from using personal devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops, to projectors and smartboards installed in the meeting space.

With the right knowledge and confidence, digital technology can open up lots of opportunities to access and enjoy art. Here are some suggestions for making the most of it in your meetings.

DISCOVER ART ONLINE

- Browse online collections of artworks, either directly through galleries' websites – see this Tate example: tate.org.uk/about-us/collection or through sites with catalogues such as Art UK
- View digital exhibitions, curated specifically for online audiences by galleries and museums
- Explore virtual tours of exhibitions and gallery spaces – see this Tate example: tate.org.uk/art/360-video/grimshaw
- Listen to artist podcasts, artists talking about their work – see Tate examples here: tate.org.uk/art/podcasts
- Watch curator talks or panel discussions, viewing art documentaries on DVD or online – see Tate examples here: youtube.com/user/tate. For more on films, see section [Watching and screening films at your meeting](#) (p.33).

SHARE IDEAS ONLINE

- Write a group review from an exhibition visited or contributing to an online blog.
- Share photos taken by members during trips to galleries as a group
- Take part in a live digital event – look at what is available online or try approaching your local gallery for help with video calls with specialists or artists
- Hold a group discussion by video call when it's not possible to meet in person

TECH TROUBLESHOOTING

Technology can be a valuable tool but can present challenges. Here are some troubleshooting tips to resolve common issues.

Unfamiliarity with technology in the venue, incompatibility with own equipment e.g. using own laptop to connect with projector

- Ask for support or demonstration from host venue
- Spend time outside of meetings getting to know the equipment
- Bring alternative e.g. data stick to plug directly into venue's own system or DVD
- Note make and model of unfamiliar equipment e.g. smartboard and search for online 'how to' guides

Poor or no internet connection at the venue

- Members could download to own device or view content in advance of the meeting
- The co-ordinator could print a copy of the image(s) to display or pass around the group
- The co-ordinator could download the image(s) and embed into an offline programme such as Word or PowerPoint
- Explore if mobile signal is strong enough to view images or watch film on a member's phone or 4G tablet – note potential cost attached
- Consider an alternative venue
- Find other ways to view art, including books, magazines, and journals

Lack of suitable equipment/furniture in the venue e.g. would like to view films but no wall space or projector/screen

- It may be possible to view some films on laptops if enough can be sourced for people to see adequately
- Consider renting alternative space occasionally for film screenings. If cost is higher, this could be compensated for by inviting a larger audience and charging a fee

Lack of personal equipment	– Find a venue with equipment to project images to the whole group – Gather members round a table so that one device can be shared	Unsure where to look for suitable online material	– Use the list of suggestions in this resource to access relevant parts of the Tate website or YouTube channel – Google search or search on Tate online with key words – follow the trail and see where you end up after a few clicks! – Ask all members in your group to spend some time researching possible sites and make a reference list to use in future – Follow different galleries and museums on social media to explore interesting connections
Noisy public venue	– Encourage members to access any audio/video materials at home before the meeting – If using personal devices, members could bring earphones to use when accessing audio/video materials during the meeting		
Lack of member experience/confidence	– Have one or more confident members manage and co-ordinate technology alongside the co-ordinator or facilitator – Practice accessing websites and images at home first. The co-ordinator could send links in advance, so members and the facilitator have the opportunity to explore at their own pace – Unconfident members could ‘buddy up’ with a more experienced member to support them – Hold a session together exploring online resources to build confidence and learn new skills		

WATCHING AND SCREENING FILMS AT YOUR MEETING

Showing art films during meetings can be a popular choice with members and can even attract new ones.

Some Look Groups stage film nights for their community, picking an art documentary or movie and creating a cinematic experience. Other groups mix up their discussions with short clips or pause longer films to pose questions and open up conversation. Alternatively, you might want to watch a film independently and then have a group discussion about it when you meet.

Disclaimer – this is a general guide and not legal advice from Tate Gallery. Information is correct at time of writing May 2022.

FINDING FILMS TO VIEW DURING YOUR MEETINGS

- Tate Channel on YouTube youtube.com/user/tate offers a weekly series of films. They include interviews with artists, exhibition walkthroughs, celebrity art fans, live performance art and more. Other museums and galleries in the UK and beyond may have similar channels or film content on their websites.
- Many galleries and museums also share live broadcasts via social media platforms, talking directly to viewers and answering their live questions. Check out: twitter.com/tate, facebook.com/tategallery, instagram.com/tate
- Public and academic libraries may hold copies of films. Some members have their own personal collection of art DVDs that can be shared
- There are plenty of ‘Top 10’ articles online to guide you to some of the most popular art documentaries and films – these can be a good starting point
- Many TV and film streaming services feature art films to rent or buy, including free-to-join services. Content downloaded from streaming services is usually only permitted for personal viewing, however. The British Film Institute hires out films to cinemas, film societies and community venues

CHOOSING EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

If film will be a big part of your activity, it's a good idea to search for a venue with the right facilities, including DVD and live streaming from the internet. The cost of these facilities may be higher than a regular meeting room so factor that into what members will contribute. Consider if a smartboard, screen, or projector are necessary for the size of your audience.

For smaller audiences, or if you plan just to watch the odd clip occasionally, accessing the film via one or more personal devices should be sufficient. You could watch film clips during your meeting or during gallery visits.

A WORD ABOUT LICENCES AND COPYRIGHT

There are different rules which determine if you need to obtain permissions and licences viewing films with your Look Group. The main factor to consider is whether the situation constitutes a private viewing or a public screening

Private viewing no action required if all of these are met:	Public screening action required if all of these are met:
A small, non-commercial study group getting together to watch a film is considered a 'private audience'	Projecting a film onto a screen for an audience larger than a typical family group
Members viewing film clips on own devices would be considered personal use	Showing film in a public place e.g. community centre, hall, pub
No charge is made to attend	Making a charge for people to attend
The viewing is in private accommodation	

If you determine that your situation falls into the 'public screening' category, then the possible scenarios below indicate what Look Groups need to do in each case.

Q Has the film been made and shared in the public domain by a museum, gallery or arts organisation e.g. interviews with artists, curator talks, on social media, YouTube or own website?

A Technically, you should request permission to use it from the organisation. This could be a quick email or by commenting on a post; it's unlikely the request would be refused. If you plan to live stream a film from the internet, you will need a licence from the film's copyright holders.

Q Have you sourced the film on DVD or via a streaming service such as Netflix or Amazon Film? (either as part of a subscription, rented or purchased?)

A Usage rules for downloads, DVDs and Blu-ray usually only permit personal use; permission to screen it for a group may be granted in the form of a licence or a film booking. Check with your host venue to see if they already hold an annual licence that will cover your screening. You can find out more about obtaining a licence from the Independent Cinema Office. independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/advice-support/what-licences-do-i-need.

Q Is the content a television programme?

A The premises where you are meeting must hold a television licence. In some cases a copyright licence will also be necessary – as above, check with your host venue whether they have this already.

Q Do you intend to charge people to attend the screening?

A If you intend to make a charge, however small, the host venue will need a premises licence, obtainable from your local authority. Many public-facing venues such as galleries and community centres will already have this in place. Find out more here gov.uk/showing-films-in-public.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The websites below contain general advice based on current UK law that may be useful in finding further guidance. Please note they do not constitute 'legal advice', for which specialist professional advice should always be sought and Tate is not responsible for other organisations website content.

[gov.uk/government/organisations/
intellectual-property-office](https://gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office)

The Intellectual Property Office is the official UK government body responsible for intellectual property rights including patents, designs, trademarks, and copyright.

copyrightuser.org

An independent online resource aimed at making UK Copyright Law accessible to creators, media professionals, entrepreneurs, students, and members of the public.

[tate.org.uk/about-us/policies-and-
procedures/website-terms-use](https://tate.org.uk/about-us/policies-and-procedures/website-terms-use)

Tate guidance includes a free copyright guide to download.



ORGANISING GALLERY AND ARTIST STUDIO VISITS

Many Look Groups make trips together to visit a gallery, exhibition or artist studio – for some this is a regular part of their activity, for others the visits are more occasional.

Members find that opportunities to meet practicing artists or experience artworks can provide stimulus for discussion. Many say they value being able to access gallery staff or volunteers' opinions and knowledge, taking part in a guided tour or specialist talk or seeing artists working with different media, adds to their enjoyment.

WHERE COULD YOUR LOOK GROUP VISIT?

- Public art galleries – many will have changing exhibitions and present different artists. Look Groups in Cornwall have visited well-known galleries and have also explored some smaller galleries such as rural arts centres and university arts spaces. Consider the diversity of artwork you could experience, from historic, Modern and Contemporary – art made in different places and from different cultures. An in-depth focus on one genre could also be an interesting approach.
- Museums, archives, and heritage sites – many have art collections on permanent or temporary display, and some may also be able to provide viewings of artworks in their stores
- Commercial art galleries – visits to several galleries could be combined in a visit to one particular town or area
- Artist studios – many artists welcome visits to their studios and may be willing to give a talk, demonstration or even a workshop. Look Groups in Cornwall have visited a range of artists, including printmakers, fine artists, glassmakers, and sculptors. Some members are artists themselves and may be able to give a talk for other groups in the network. Some artists take part in annual 'open studio' initiatives, organised locally.

- Churches, cathedrals, abbeys and other religious buildings – these can be good places to find paintings, sculpture and stained glass. Gardens, concert halls, theatres and other public spaces may be alternative sources of art, as well as the architecture itself. In many instances, artists have created interventions with buildings around the world – there may be one near you.
- Public arts initiatives such as sculpture trails and community-created displays. Some galleries have created audio trails or walks, such as this one: tate.org.uk/visit/tate-st-ives/ben-nicholson-walking-tour-st-ives

LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Members will need to agree what their policy for making trips will be, according to their own circumstances. Location, affordability of travel and entry costs, transport options, free time available and confidence of members are all factors that will affect decision-making.

Distance can be an issue, particularly when travelling from rural locations. Some members may be reliant on public transport or have health or mobility considerations. Arranging to borrow a minibus from a local organisation may also be a possibility.

Being aware of places to visit or artists who can give talks or demonstrations will make visits easier to plan; in some Look Groups, one or more people take on an informal role to research local opportunities.

What do you enjoy about your Look Group?

'Extending our horizons through visits and exhibitions and outings'

Look Group member

'We prefer making visits. We look at what's on around ... one or two people are very good at doing a bit of research on what is coming up. Some take a very studious approach – they pick a topic and research the artist – that's just not the way we behave.'

Hellys Look Group Co-ordinator



MEETING WITH YOUR LOOK GROUP ONLINE

When it's not possible to meet face-to-face, there are still ways for Look Groups to connect and share conversations about art. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some Look Groups held their meetings online and others used email and messaging platforms to update each other and suggest things to look at online.

Why not try out some of these suggestions, either as a short-term solution or to see if they might complement your regular programme?

Ways of enjoying art together digitally	How to get started
Hold a Look Group meeting online	Choose a video call platform e.g. Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Teams and set up a meeting. Send the details to members and advise them to use a device with microphone and speaker. Join at the arranged time. It's a good idea to have a practice run in advance and be aware that it may take time to develop a fluid style of discussion. You could ask guest speakers to join you on occasions.
Access online content produced by galleries, museums and artists, such as online collections, exhibitions, podcasts or films	Locate the webpage in a browser, set up an online meeting using the same device and screenshare the webpage.
Invite members to share their own visual content e.g. photographs of exhibitions they have visited, artworks or objects from home	Hold artworks up to the device camera or take your device on a tour of your artwork! Screen share photographs saved on your device. The member may need to be made a co-host or send photos in advance to the co-ordinator.
Take part in a live digital event together, such as a curator's talk, panel discussion or special documentary screening.	Choose an event and let members know how to join. Set up a group chat on a messaging platform so that members can interact whilst watching. Or arrange a group video call for after the event.

There are examples of online content your Look Group could access in section Using technology at meetings (p.30). Remember that meeting online may not be possible for some members, so consider how they could still be included. Could you keep in touch by phone, text or occasionally send something in the post?

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR MEETING SAFELY AND COMFORTABLY ONLINE:

- Remember the Look Group Principles (p.04) apply however you meet or communicate.
- Encourage people to switch their cameras on during meetings but leave this decision up to them. Ensure you are happy with what people can see in your background!
- For groups larger than 7 or 8, consider asking everyone to set their microphone to mute to avoid people talking over each other. Raise a hand to speak and let people know they can also use the chat box to make comments as people are talking.
- If you are screen-sharing, close any emails or messages first, to avoid showing personal information
- Ask permission from members if you plan to take any screenshots or record.

LOOK GROUP POSTERS

POSTER TEMPLATES

Personalise these poster templates with details of your Look Group and display in your local area to reach new members.

Please print on A4 paper at 100% scale (without cropping).



YOUR LOCAL
LOOK GROUP

where

when

contact

LOOK GROUPS

A FUN AND INFORMAL WAY TO
MEET NEW PEOPLE AND TALK
ABOUT ART, ARTISTS AND IDEAS

You don't need any knowledge of art to
get involved and enjoy exhibitions and
events. Your local Look Group is open to
new members. Why not give it a try?

bit.ly/LookGroups



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Frances Hodgkins *Loveday and Ann: Two Women with a Basket of Flowers* 1915 © Tate



Wilhelmina Barns-Graham *White Black and Yellow (Composition February)* 1957
© Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Trust



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