

NEW WAYS OF SEEING WHAT IS MODERN ART?

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- In this talk I start around 1900 and ask a series of questions about the nature of art. I believe these questions lie at the heart of much of the art of the last 120 years but particularly the last 70 years.
- I don't want to problematise art, that is present it as if it were a problem to be solved. I hope instead that the questions will spark some new thoughts the next time you look at some modern art.

MODERN ART OR MODERNISM

- From around 1900, Western art developed in many directions in a **new spirit of exploration** as artists grappled with fundamental questions such as what is art, what is it for and how should artists approach the process of producing a 'work of art'. It is not clear why this happened at this time but it has been suggested that change, exploration and experimentation became valued in society because of the success of the scientific enterprise, technological improvements and the industrial revolution.
- Some people might think that art is, or should be, about the **skilful representation** of the real world and the **creation of beauty**. Artists, though, have always wanted to explore a wider range of possibilities. Art has also, historically, been associated with a **narrative**. This might be as simple as a portrait or as complex as a story told in pictures, such as Augustus Egg's *Past and Present No. 1, 2 and 3* (1858). In the twentieth century, these basic assumptions were questioned and discarded and a great deal of art was exploring the limits of what might be regarded as art.
- The first half of the twentieth century was a time of **revolution**,

experimentation and innovation but largely within the **confines of the traditional techniques** and media that had been used for hundreds of years. It was a time of massive changes that took place in technology, the understanding of the human mind and our knowledge of the fundamental atomic and cosmic processes. It was also a time of continual conflict, revolution, **civil wars and two world wars**. Artists responded in many different ways giving rise to an ever expanding series of schools and 'isms'.

- Everything **changed in the 1950s** when art became much more radical and some artists rejected the basic assumptions about art and the art market. New forms of expression were tried, such as installations, video and performance art. Art which left no trace, could not be bought and sold and could not be displayed in a gallery.

NOTES

- Note that the awards and titles of artists and others are omitted unless mentioned to make a specific point. This is because many key people have one or more titles awarded at different times of their life and the titles can interfere with the point being made. For example, John Everett Millais had the title 'Sir' for just over a year as he was made a baronet in 1885 and died in 1886. Given names are mentioned the first time a person is mentioned and then only their family name unless their given name is needed to avoid confusion with other family members. The convention for women is that the name by which they were generally known is used. If this is their married name then their birth name is given the first time their name is mentioned.
- The biographies given in these notes only provide what is essential for the talk. For a short but complete biography look on Wikipedia or the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford DNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>) which can be accessed using a UK public library number. As a rough comparison Wikipedia has about 2,000 words describing 'John Everett Millais' life and the Oxford DNB has 6,400 words. The lecture notes are based on information available on the Tate website, Wikipedia, The Art Story and the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Verbatim quotations are enclosed in quotation marks. If it is not one of the references just mentioned then it is listed at the bottom of the relevant slide.

Critics and Theorists who are important to the development of modern art

theory include:

- **Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945)**
 - Swiss art historian who developed formal classifying principles and made German art history pre-eminent.
 - He described how art changed between the 6th and 17th centuries using the contraries 'painterly' versus 'linear, plane to recession, closed to open, multiplicity to unity and absolute clarity to relative clarity.
- **Roger Fry (1866-1934)**
 - Gave name to Post-Impressionism, Omega Workshop (Fitzroy Square), curator Metropolitan Museum, 'discovered' Cezanne, Slade Professor
 - *An Essay in Aesthetics*
 - 1910 *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* Exhibition, Grafton Galleries. 'On or about December 1910 human character changed' Vanessa Bell.
 - 1912 *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition*
- **Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968)**
 - Was a German-Jewish art historian who fled to the US. He developed ideas of the three strata or levels of meaning – primary or natural subject matter, secondary or conventional subject matter (iconography) and the tertiary or intrinsic meaning or content (iconology).
- **Roland Penrose (1900-1984)**
 - 1936 *International Surrealism Exhibition* marked Surrealism's arrival in England
 - Picasso exhibitions in 1938, 1951, 1960 and 1967
 - 1948 *40 Years of Modern Art*
 - 1949 *40,000 Years of Modern Art*
- **Clement Greenberg (1909-1994)**
 - In 1960, Clement Greenberg published *Modernist Painting* in which he argued that the essential and unique element in Modern painting is its flatness. The unique aspect of painting is that it is done on a flat surface and therefore this should be recognised and embraced

by artists. The attempt to represent three-dimensions was therefore misleading or dishonest and the attempt to tell a story was the province of literature.

- **Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001)**

- Austria born art historian who lived most of his life in the UK. He is known for his on the Renaissance and the psychology of perception but is best known for his accessible introduction to the visual arts, *The Story of Art*.

REFERENCES

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 1972
- Will Gompertz, *What Are You Looking At? 150 Years of Modern Art in the Blink of an Eye*
- www.theartstory.org
- For the early part of the twentieth century David Haycock, *A Crisis of Brilliance: Five Young British Artists and the Great War* (2010), currently £9.48 on Amazon, £1.93 s/h.

**NEW WAYS OF SEEING
(AND THINKING):**

Climbing the Mountain
using 15 Steps



- **When Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963)** were worked closely together in Paris developing the style now called Cubism. Braque said afterwards:
 - *It was like being roped together on a mountain.*
- So what was this mountain they were climbing? It was no less than a new way of seeing the world. So how do we see the world in a new way? In 1934 Ezra Pound wrote, '**Make it new!**' which is a call to **reject all forms of past thought, representation and culture**. Innovation and experimentation are the essence of modern art, the art of the twentieth century.
- Let us **climb the mountain** of modern art using fifteen steps based on some of the most difficult art works of the twentieth century. Each step is a question that raises profound issues. My aim is not to answer the questions but encourage you to think about them further.
- What all these art works and questions are concerned with is not really about art at all. Modern art concerns the **human condition** and our ways of responding to it. It is often shocking, sometimes trite and frequently obscure. One wonders who is it produced for, the artist? Everyone? The art elite? Most artists want to reach out to as many people as possible but most works of modern art are dismissed as trivial with phrases such as '**what is it about**', '**it must have taken five minutes**', '**my child could do it**' or '**it's just trying to shock**'.

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- Friedrich Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* wrote, "**Man is a rope stretched between animal and superman—a rope over an abyss.**"
- We are going to take the time to try to understand what the artists were doing. Before I can do this I must ask you to **suspend judgement**. You will see **a lot of shocking work although I have avoided shocking for its own sake**. There is little you can imagine that artists have not done. No matter how trivial, disgusting, puzzling or boring some artist will have done it. Artists feed off other artists so all the art of the twentieth century interlocks. That is why I must ask you to suspend judging it until the end of the course. I am not trying to convert you, but I am trying to show you what has been done and why in order to allow you to form your own view at the end of the course, but not before.
- A final point to bear in mind is that not all, and in fact from 1900 to about 1950 very little art produced in Britain, was shocking or innovative. So, the first ten talks, which cover the period 1900 to 1950, are mostly concerned with fairly conventional British **representational art**.
- **Modernism** is a set of ideas that arose in the nineteenth century (some say in the eighteenth century with Immanuel Kant). Modernism rejects the certainty of the Enlightenment and in every area of art, philosophy, science and politics thinkers believed a **new approach** was needed **to deal with modern industrial society**.
- Modernism in science has been linked to Charles Darwin's 1859 book *Origin of Species*, in politics to Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, in philosophy with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) statement that 'God is dead' of 1882, and in art with Impressionism, particularly Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863, exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1865), Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), and Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary* which were both published in 1857.
- In the first quarter of the twentieth century modernism exploded with Henri Matisse and the birth of **Fauvism**, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque's invention of **Cubism**, with Kasimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky and **abstract painting**, with **German Expressionism**, with F. T. Marinetti's **Futurism** in Italy and **Vorticism** in Britain, and with **Dada** and **Surrealism**. Overlapping all this was Sigmund Freud's new approach to understanding the mind, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, the First World War of 1914-18 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Modernism continued to develop during the

1930s and 40s and I use the term Postmodernism to describe the fundamental re-evaluation of the Western value system that took place from the 1950s onwards and which profoundly affected the arts and culture.

- The ten talks this term cover the development of modernism in the visual arts between 1900 and 1950 with an emphasis on British art. The ten talks next term cover postmodernism from 1950 onwards, again with a focus on British visual arts (expanded to include conceptual art, performance art and installations).
- This week we talk about modernism but there have been many movements and artists that have returned to the past in different ways. For example, the Neo-romantics landscapes of the 1930s to 1950s (see School of London <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/s/school-of-London>), R.B. Kitaj and a return to figurative painting in the face of the avant-garde in the 1970s and the Stuckists.
- The 19th century was a time when artists were exploring new ways in which the world could be represented and in the 20th century many artists **rejected the idea of representation** and questioned **the nature of art** itself.
- Before the twentieth century artists were relatively sure of what they had to do. There was much discussion about how to do it but the subjects were dictated by the purchaser and included history paintings, portraits, landscape, nudes, still life and genre or subject paintings. In Britain the Aesthetic Movement, particularly Whistler, raised questions about the purpose of art but it was not until the decade of the First World War that artists began to question the fundamental question '**What is Art?**' and '**What is Art For?**'
- Artists vary and **figurative art continued**, but the state of art today can only be understood by examining what a wide variety of non-representational artists were trying achieve.
- **THE HISTORY OF MODERNISM: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES**
 - The most influential British art exhibitions of the twentieth century were Roger Fry's *Manet and Post-Impressionism* (1910), *Surrealism* (1936), *This is Tomorrow*, Whitechapel (1956), and *Sensation*, The Saatchi Collection, the Royal Academy (1997).
 - The most influential ideas circulating were:

- Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (1859), and man as animal
- Freud and the unconscious mind, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), 'primitive' art (see <http://io9.gizmodo.com/why-freud-still-matters-when-he-was-wrong-about-almost-1055800815>)
- Einstein and relativity
- Marxism
- Heisenberg and the uncertainty principle
- Turing and artificial intelligence
- The most significant events were:
 - The First World War
 - The Russian Revolution
 - The Spanish Civil War
 - The Second World War
 - The dropping of the atomic bomb and the Cold War
 - For Britain the End of Empire
- Post-modernism, everything is relative
- Pop music and pop culture
- Europe and the great peace project
- Ecology and global warming
- Anti-science
- Multiculturalism
- Globalisation
- Feminism
- Social media
- Security, terrorism and the nation state
- **CONCEPTS AND STYLES**
 - Modernism
 - Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism and Vorticism (Colour Theory and Artistic Revolution)
 - Cubism and Abstraction, Constructivism and Concrete Art (Atomic

Theory, Relativity, Uncertainty and Artistic Revolution)

- Dada, Surrealism and Expressionism (The Subconscious Mind, Dreams and Artistic Revolution)
- Post-Modernism
- Pop Art
- Conceptual Art and Minimalism
- Installations, video and Performance art
- 'Eclecticism'

- **ARTISTS**

- World War I artists
- Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash, Eric Ravilious, LS Lowry
- Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Epstein
- World War II artists, Bomberg, Grant, Moore, Knight
- David Hockney
- Lucien Freud, Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, Gilbert & George and other British figurative artists
- The Turner Prize and other winners, Rachel Whiteread, Damien Hurst, Tracy Emin, Martin Creed
- Today's British artists, Anthony Gormley, Anish Kapoor, Banksy and Grayson Perry

What is Art?



Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), *Fountain*, 1917, replica 1964, 36 x 48 x 61 cm, Tate

Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), *Fountain*, 1917, replica 1964, 36 x 48 x 61 cm, Tate

Alfred Stieglitz, photograph of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*.

• STEP 1: WHAT IS ART?

- My first step and the first question is 'What is art?'
- **This urinal was voted by a poll of 500 art experts as the most influential art work of the twentieth century. Why?**
- Let me tell you a story.
- In order to understand this artwork by Marcel Duchamp I would like you to imagine it is April 1917 and you are a director on the board of the **American Society of Independent Artists** in New York. It's in the middle of World War I in Europe and as a result many European artists have come to New York and you see the opportunity to **overtake Paris** as the leading centre of modern art in the world. To help achieve this you have announced that artists could be certain that if they pay the entry fee **whatever they send would be exhibited**. However, you have just been called to an emergency board meeting as an artist called Richard Mutt has submitted this—a urinal turned 90 degrees with the title *Fountain*. It is signed 'R. Mutt, 1917'.
- (CLICK) This is a photograph of the original urinal, which is now lost.
- You now have to decide whether to exhibit the work. What do you think? Is it worth exhibiting? Is it a joke? Is it obscene? Is it a work of art? The entry fee has been paid but maybe it is just a joke. Remember though that you promised to

exhibit anything properly entered, as you believe the more extreme the art the more likely you are to overtake Paris.

- Would you like to know what the board decided? By a narrow majority they decided to reject it. Some of the board thought it was **indecent**, indicated by newspapers which referred to it as a 'bathroom appliance' as 'urinal' was too shocking for its readers. Some members of the board called it **unoriginal**, I assume this meant that the artist had not used any skill in making it but had simply bought it from a shop. It is, of course, very original if accepted as a work of art.
- What the board didn't know was that the work was submitted by a fellow board director, **Marcel Duchamp** (1887-1968) using the false name 'Richard Mutt'. As a result of the board's decision not to accept *Fountain*, Duchamp **resigned** in protest together with fellow director (Walter Arensberg). They felt that the heart of the matter was that no committee could or should judge whether a new, innovative work was art or not, it was arbitrary censorship.
- Why a urinal? Was Duchamp testing the committee? Undoubtedly. Duchamp told a New York newspaper, '**A great deal of modern art is meant to be amusing**'. There is another possibility. He had already been experimenting with the idea of found items he called '**Readymades**'. He had already mounted a bicycle wheel on a kitchen stool (*Bicycle Wheel*, 1913) and had chosen a bottle dryer (*Bottle Dryer*, 1914) as Readymades. So what is a Readymade? You might think he selected the urinal because the curves of the basin are beautiful or because the shape is similar to a hooded Madonna or a seated Buddha but he told us he did not. It is purely a found object, like a hair comb or a snow shovel, both of which he also selected as Readymades.
- He was making the point that at one level a work of art was created simply by an artist choosing an object and presenting it as a work of art. He was **bypassing** the association of art with **physical skill** and craft and **presenting an idea**, he was **exposing and rejecting the role of institutions in defining what is art**, and was drawing our attention to the **particularity of an otherwise anonymous mass-produced object**.
- In 1959, Duchamp was asked on BBC Radio if he considered the Readymades art and he gave a more profound answer, he said they were '**a form of denying the possibility of defining art**'. It is worth unpacking that. He was saying it is impossible to define art and his urinal

demonstrates that. Whatever you come up with as a definition of art he, a well known artist, will produce something that does not conform to your definition.

- These were and still are controversial ideas, as someone complained at the time, if the urinal was art an artist might just as well put a pile of manure on a canvas and call it art. That is true and an artist has done something similar.
- *Fountain* became one of the most discussed and influential works of the twentieth century. It remains enigmatic and still sits there raising the unanswerable question 'Am I art?'

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Henri-Robert-Marcel Duchamp (28 July 1887 – 2 October 1968)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcel_Duchamp

- Duchamp was a French, naturalized American painter, sculptor, chess player and writer whose work is associated with Cubism, conceptual art and Dada, although he distanced himself from the Dada group. Duchamp was a well-known in New York by 1917, in fact notorious, as the avant-garde French artist who had exhibited *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* at the Armory Show in four years previously (1913) and he arrived in New York in 1915.
- In 2004, Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* came **top of a poll of 500 art experts** as the **most influential modern art work of all time**. **Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1911)** was second, with Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* from 1962 coming third. Picasso's Spanish Civil War painting, *Guernica*, came fourth, while Matisse's *The Red Studio* was fifth.
- Henri-Robert-Marcel Duchamp (28 July 1887 – 2 October 1968) was a French, naturalized American painter, sculptor, chess player and writer whose work is associated with Cubism, conceptual art and Dada, although he distanced himself from the Dada group.
- Duchamp was a well-known in New York by 1917, in fact notorious, as the avant-garde French artist who had exhibited ***Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*** at the Armory Show in four years previously (1913). He arrived in New York in 1915 and became involved in the anti-culture, anti-art, anti-reason movement called Dada. Duchamp said in an interview regarding the photographic motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge and other, ""In 1912 ... the idea of describing the movement of a nude coming

downstairs while still retaining static visual means to do this, particularly interested me. The fact that **I had seen chronophotographs** of fencers in action and horse galloping (what we today call stroboscopic photography) gave me the idea for the *Nude*.”

- **Readymades** came in existence almost accidentally. The first was when he felt like mounting a bicycle wheel upside down on a wooden stool (*Bicycle Wheel*, 1913). Another was a cheap reproduction of a winter evening landscape on which he added two small dots, one red and the other yellow. Another was *Bottle Dryer* (or *Bottlerack*), 1914. Another was a snow shovel on which he wrote, 'In Advance of the Broken Arm'. Another was *Comb* (1916). They were studio objects. The idea of exhibiting them only came later. Two were shown to little effect in 1916, it was only with *Fountain* in 1917 that there was a public reaction. Duchamp recalled that *Fountain* resulted from a discussion with Walter Arensberg and the artist Joseph Stella.
- The titles of the Readymades (that had titles) were not intended to explain, they did not act a signifier to the signified but they clashed with the object and prevented an explanation by surrounding it in a cloud of mystery. Duchamp was aware that history decides the value of an artwork so he limited the number of Readymades each year and selected them in such a way that history is unable to decide. Duchamp was asked in 1959 if a readymade is a work of art. He said it was a difficult question as every age defines art in different ways meaning there is no one essential way of defining it. The readymade is a sort of irony because it says 'here is a thing I call art; I didn't even make it myself'. Etymologically art means to make and instead I take it readymade 'so it was a form of denying the possibility of defining art'.
- Duchamp was working on *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (*the Large Glass*) (1915-1923) at the time.
- The Society of Independent Artists exhibition opened on 10 April 1917 at The Grand Central Palace New York. Walter Conrad Arensberg (1878–1954) was a wealthy American art collector, critic and poet. He was a friend of Duchamp and director of the Society of Independent Artists. He resigned at the same time as Duchamp when *Fountain* was rejected.
- In Europe art had largely ceased and galleries had closed because of the war. Americans thought they could use the opportunity to assume leadership in art. **The Society of Independent Artists** was formed in

December 1916.

- The rules said all art works would be accepted if the artist paid the \$6 fee. The board argued it was not an art work as no physical craft was involved. A secondary argument that it was indecent was not covered by the rules and it is unlikely it would have broken any US laws regarding decency or pornography.
- Photographed by Alfred Stieglitz and published in *The Blind Man*.
- The original urinal was lost. There are now 17 replicas commissioned by Duchamp in the 1960s.
- Duchamp bought a Bedfordshire model urinal from **J. L. Mott Iron Works** and took it to his studio 33 West 67th Street. By some accounts he oriented it ninety degrees to the normal position. In a letter to his sister he said it had been sent by a woman friend ('une de mes amies'). There are two candidates for this mystery woman **Dadaist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven** or **Louise Norton**, whose address at 110 West 88th Street is partially visible the paper entry ticket attached to the object, as seen in Stieglitz's photograph.
- Although Marcel Duchamp's Fountain wasn't displayed in the 1917 Independents Exhibition, news of the controversial artwork still reached the press. Here's how:
 - **Photograph:** A friend of Duchamp, **Alfred Stieglitz**, who was an influential figure in American modern art, photographed the piece and published the image in "The Blind Man," a Dadaist journal in New York. This publication brought the artwork to the attention of the art world and the general public.
 - **Controversy:** The rejected submission itself sparked debate and controversy. The decision by the exhibition committee not to display the work, along with the provocative nature of the piece, generated discussions and articles in the media.
- Duchamp has written that he intended to shift the emphasis with art from physical craft to intellectual interpretation. Also, he wanted to 'de-deify' the artist.
- The title *Fountain* suggests an **outflow** of liquid rather than a receptacle. Duchamp has therefore inverted the normal order and assumptions. It is also likely but not certain that he inverted the orientation by laying it on its back. One effect of this is to disrupt the normal visual recognition of its

function and the protruding water inlet functions as a simulated penis. It is a urinal that is peeing back at us. The original was porcelain but the copies are glazed earthenware painted to look like porcelain.

- The name 'R. Mutt' may refer to the German word 'armut' ('poverty') or 'urmutter' ('great mother'). If we separate the capital and lowercase letters we get 'R.M' and 'utt', 'R.M' would stand for Readymade which is the fountain itself and 'utt' when read out loud sounds like 'eut été' ('had been'). Duchamp used puns, as in his modified Mona Lisa, titled L.H.O.O.Q. a pun on 'Elle a chaud au cul', 'She is hot in the arse' or as Duchamp translated it 'there is fire down below'. The name R. Mutt is a play on its commercial origins and also on the famous comic strip of the time, Mutt and Jeff (making the urinal perhaps the first work of art based on a comic). In German, Armut means poverty, although Duchamp said the R stood for Richard, French slang for 'moneybags', which makes *Fountain*, a kind of scatological golden calf.
- The American Society of Independent Artists was, to some extent, derived from the Eight, the 1910 Independents Group and the **Armory Show** (1913, introduced astonished Americans to Fauvism, Cubism and Futurism for the first time), but it was, from the beginning, based on the French Société des Artistes Indépendants. Duchamp and Francis Picabia (1879-1953) arrived in New York in 1915. The board consisted of 14 members, William Glackens (president), George Bellows, Rockwell Kent, Maurice Prendergast, three women Katherine Dreier, Regina Farrelly and Mary Rogers, Walter Pach, Duchamp, Man Ray, John Covert, Joseph Stella, Morton Schamberg and Walter Arensberg. The Society's announcement said **artists could be 'certain that whatever they send would be hung'**.
- Duchamp adopted the female identity Rose Sélavy in 1920. Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* was exhibited at the Armory Show in 1913 and became one of the most notorious exhibits.
- Philosopher J. L. Austin defined statements that accomplish an action 'performative' and the word could be applied to what Duchamp was doing. However, he was not elevating to the status of 'art object' but separating them from their surroundings in order to raise the question 'What is art?'
- Duchamp was challenging conventional assumptions, especially regarding physical craft or skill, he was exposing the role of institutions in defining what counts as art and he was making us aware of the intrinsic otherness of each mass-produced, otherwise anonymous, object. From the Renaissance

onwards there has been a gradual shift from the value of craft and manual skill to the value of conception and inspiration. Arguably, the late eighteenth-century Romantic movement valued creative genius more than skill. During the nineteenth century the criteria for valuing art were challenged by many artists but Duchamp was sceptical and saw that artists were still producing art to satisfy a market. A work entered into a 1910 exhibition was produced by an art critic as a way of playing a joke on his Impressionist friends. He tied a brush to the tail of a donkey called Lolo and entered the work using the pseudonym Joachim-Raphaël Boronali from Genoa. One collector offered to buy it for 400 francs. The painting was literally Fauvist ('wild beast'). Rather than compete with 'even a child (or a donkey) could do it' Duchamp produced no work at all.

- Duchamp firmly rejected the idea that he chose Readymades because of their beauty. Selection was never made on the basis of 'aesthetic delectation', as he put it. They were chosen by of their 'visual indifference'. The creation of a readymade is a kind of event that takes place at a particular instant of time that can be recorded.
- Duchamp's concept of the '**infra-thin**' is the subtle yet real difference between seemingly identical objects or events in either time or space. An object at one time then a second later is infra-thin. The warmth of a seat that has just been left, a stare and twins are infra-thin objects; they are identical but separated in space or time. Infra-thin smoke exhaled from a mouth takes on its own three-dimensional form.
- Walter Benjamin in '**The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction**' (1936) discusses the way people perceive is determined by their cultural and history. Historically, works of art had an '**aura**' – an appearance of magical or supernatural force arising from their **uniqueness**. The aura includes a sensory experience of distance between the reader and the work of art. The aura has disappeared in the modern age because art has become reproducible. Think of the way a work of classic literature can be bought cheaply in paperback, or a painting bought as a poster. Think also of newer forms of art, such as TV shows and adverts. Then compare these to the experience of staring at an original work of art in a gallery, or visiting a unique historic building. This is the difference Benjamin is trying to capture. The aura is an effect of a work of art being uniquely present in time and space. It is connected to the idea of **authenticity**. A reproduced artwork is never fully present. If there is no original, it is never fully present

anywhere. Authenticity cannot be reproduced, and disappears when everything is reproduced. Benjamin thinks that even the original is depreciated, because it is no longer unique. Along with their authenticity, objects also lose their authority. **Contemplation of art is replaced by distraction** which replaces thought by moving images.

- As an extra twist this urinal at the Tate is not the original which was lost, it is one of 17 copies produced in the 1950s and 60s and authenticated by Duchamp thus further removing the aura associated with works of art.
- An artist I find helpful in discussing the question 'What is art?' is **Amalia Ulman**. In 2014 she started to upload preening selfies on Instagram that seemed to document her attempt to make it in Los Angeles. She had studied fine art at Central Saint Martins in London from 2008 to 2011 and now simply seemed to be bragging about her pole-dancing classes and breast-enlargement surgery. Galleries complained she was wrecking her career and people stopped taking her seriously. Almost five months later, Ulman announced that she had been staging an elaborate performance and all those half-naked, "dumb" pictures were a joke or rather an artistic performance. Almost all of the 89,244 followers she had amassed by the end of the performance had been fooled. The 175 photos she took are now being shown at the Whitechapel Gallery. What is the difference between all those people trying to become known on social media and this performance? Were her followers fooled, well in one sense they were but if meaning is in the eye of the viewer they were not. At the theatre or during most (but not all) artistic performances the viewer knows it is an art work but is this important. In fact, is it more of an art work, more of a profound comment if the audience does not know?
- One final point, the French philosopher Roland Barthes (1915-1980), in his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) argued that the essential meaning of a work depends on the impressions of the reader or in this case viewer, rather than the intentions of the author or artist. So whether this is art is determined not by the artist but by you.

REFERENCES

- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/photography/what-to-see/is-this-the-first-instagram-masterpiece/>



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *The Old Fisherman*, 1895, Abadia de Montserrat, Spain

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *First Communion*, 1896, Museu Picasso, Barcelona

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *The Tragedy*, 1903, 105.3 x 69 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (The Young Ladies of Avignon, and originally titled *The Brothel of Avignon*), 1907, 243.9 × 233.7 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

STEP 2: ARE THERE OTHER WAYS IN WHICH THE WORLD CAN BE REPRESENTED?

- These were painted by Pablo Picasso when he was fourteen/fifteen. Needless to say he was a child prodigy.
 - **First Communion** – was his first large-scale painting. He produced while attending La Lonja School of Art and it was exhibited at a major exhibition in Barcelona and attracted the attention of the local press. It conforms to many of the expectations of academic painting at the end of the nineteenth century, emphasising a dramatic moment in the youth of a Catholic girl as she kneels before the altar.
- (CLICK) The question here is "Are there other ways the world can be represented?"
- In February 1901 a tragedy occurred in his life. He had been in Paris but returned to Madrid when he heard **his close friend Carlos Casagemas had**

died in Paris. He was in love with a woman called Germaine but she rejected him and he took a revolver to the cafe where she was drinking with friends, shot at her and then shot himself. She had a minor wound but he died. Picasso returned and stayed Casagemas's room where he had spent his last days and Picasso began an affair with **Germaine**. The woman that **Casagemas had loved and for whom he committed suicide.**

- (CLICK) Picasso later wrote, "**I started painting in blue when I learned of Casagemas's death**". This is one painting from his Blue Period, ***The Tragedy***. Picasso, worked and reworked this painting at least four times, painting over the top of what he had painted. The man's shoulders, for example, are based on the head of a horse in a bull ring. Picasso believed that what comes out is what he called the '**sum of destructions**'.
- (CLICK) Later, Picasso spent six months preparing for this painting and produced hundreds of sketches, drawings and paintings, '**without parallel, for a single picture, in the entire history of art**', according to one historian. Originally, there was a sailor and a medical student but this is not a conventional painting with a narrative, it is an exploration of the nature of painting.
- When ***Les Femmes d'Alger*** was first shown in 1916 even his supporters, friends and collectors, were dismayed. One said, 'What a loss to French art'. Henri Matisse was angry because he thought Picasso was **ridiculing modern art**. Even Georges Braque was dismayed by this painting and said that Picasso must have **drunk petrol to spit fire onto the canvas**. Even one hundred years later *The Guardian's* art critic wrote that it '**is still so new, so troubling, it would be an insult to call it a masterpiece.**' He meant that as praise, in the sense that a masterpiece has been assimilated, accepted and become conventional. He also wrote, '**There's something anarchist and ruthless about it that contains Dada and Marcel Duchamp and punk.**'
- One characteristic of **modern art** is that the artist **draws attention to the fact we are viewing a work of art**. Prior to the twentieth century artists celebrated figurative forms and **accurately depicted things that had a basis in reality**. This is not an accurate representation.
- There is no depth, it is flat like a child's painting. The motivation for flatness is less clear, it might be an honesty to the materials used, an exploration of new effects, a way to try to depict the spiritual realm or a rejection of any representational element that is better handled by photography.

- In 1960, the art historian Clement Greenberg published *Modernist Painting* in which he argued that the essential and unique element in modern painting is its flatness. The unique aspect of painting is that it is done on a flat surface and therefore this should be recognised and embraced by artists.
- In July 2007, *Newsweek* published a two-page article about *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* describing it as the "**most influential work of art of the last 100 years**".

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

- The work portrays five nude female prostitutes from a brothel (on Carrer d'Avinyó) in Barcelona.
- Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) worked closely together between 1907 and 1914. Braque wrote, 'We were like mountain-climbers roped together'. Picasso said, 'Almost every evening either I went to Braque's studio or Braque came to mine. Each of us had to see what the other had done during the day.'
- 'The pioneering of Cubism by Picasso and Braque is the most passionate adventure in our century's art.' (William Rubin)
- This period was when they invented a new way of painting called Cubism. It arose from their close friendship and their different approaches to art. Picasso suppressed his natural virtuosity and love of narrative imagery and became committed to finding new ways of expressing himself. Braque was not a child prodigy like Picasso but was inventive in regard to materials and textures and he had an outstanding appreciation of space and light. It was Braque's technical innovations that formed the basis of Cubism's most important breakthroughs but it was Picasso's flare that exploited their full potential.
- By 1910, Picasso and Braque had developed Cubism into a new way of representing the world. The first stage, known as Analytical Cubism (1910-1912), was concerned with producing a conceptual image of the object rather than a visual one. Objects were deconstructed into their components. In some cases, different viewpoints were shown alongside each other. The aim was not a mimetic representation but to provide a summary of the facts concerning the object.
- 'The period from 1910 to 1912 is referred to as Analytical Cubism. Paintings executed during this period showed the breaking down, or

analysis, of form. Right-angle and straight-line construction were favoured, though occasionally some areas of the painting appeared sculptural ... Colour schemes were simplified, tending to be nearly monochromatic (hues of tan, brown, grey, cream, green, or blue preferred) in order not to distract the viewer from the artist's primary interest--the structure of form itself. The monochromatic colour scheme was suited to the presentation of complex, multiple views of the object, which was now reduced to overlapping opaque and transparent planes. These planes appear to ascend the surface of the canvas rather than to recede in depth.'

NOTES

- **Pablo Ruiz y Picasso (Málaga 25 Oct 1881 - April 1973)**
 - Picasso first went to Paris in 1900. His friend Carlos Casagemas (1881-1901) shot himself after failing to kill Germaine, the girl he loved. His Blue Period (1901–1904), was followed by his Rose Period (1904–1906), his African-influenced Period (1907–1909), Analytic Cubism (1909–1912), and Synthetic Cubism or Crystal Period (1912–1919). Picasso met Fernande Olivier, a bohemian artist who became his mistress, in Paris in 1904. Picasso left Olivier for the frail and enigmatic Eva Gouel, who called herself Marcelle Humbert when she arrived in Paris, and he was devastated when she died of tuberculosis or cancer in 1915 aged 30. After the loss of Eva Gouel, Picasso had an affair with Gaby Depeyre (later Lespinasse) and, in 1918, he married the respectable and elitist Ukrainian ballet dancer Olga Khokhlova and they had a child Paulo. In 1927 Picasso met 17-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter and began a long affair and fathered a daughter Maya. To avoid splitting his estate he never divorced and was married to Khokhlova until her death in 1955. In the 1930s and 40s the artist Dora Maar (born Theodora Marković) was a constant companion and lover and she documented *Guernica*. In 1944, aged 63, he began an affair with Françoise Gilot aged 23. Dora Maar famously said, 'After Picasso, only God' and when he left her in 1946 she became a Roman Catholic. Their split was painful and Picasso found ways to inflict pain but she outlived Picasso and continued to paint into the 1990s and was still exhibiting two years before she died aged 89. When Picasso grew tired of Dora Maar he and Gilot began to live together. They had two children: Claude,

born in 1947 and Paloma, born in 1949. She described his abusive treatment and many affairs including Geneviève Laporte. He met Jacqueline Roque in 1953 and she became his second wife in 1961 until 1973 when she killed herself by gunshot aged 59. He created over 400 portraits of her, more than any of his other loves.

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Suprematist works by Kazimir Malevich exhibited at the 0.10 Exhibition, Petrograd, 1915



Kasimir Malevich (1879-1935), *Dynamic Suprematism*, 1915-16, 80.3 × 80 cm, Tate

Can art represent a spiritual world?

Kasimir Malevich (1879-1935), *Black Square*, 1915, 79.5 x 79.5 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

A selection of the Suprematist works by Kazimir Malevich exhibited at the 0.10 Exhibition, Petrograd, 1915

Kasimir Malevich (1879-1935), *Dynamic Suprematism*, 1915-16, 80.3 × 80 cm, Tate

• **STEP 3: CAN ART REPRESENT A SPIRITUAL WORLD?**

- This is Kasimir Malevich's *Black Square*. By the way, the craquelure you see is a result of its age it was originally absolutely flat black with no texture or variation in tone.
- The question many artists were asking during the First World War was "Can Art Represent a Spiritual World?"
- (CLICK) Malevich believed it could and to do that he first had to reduce art to its basic components and then built from there.
- Malevich was born in Ukraine but was working in Russia at the time of the Russian Revolution and he and other artists wanted to discover a new form of art that was free from what he called '**the dead weight of the material world**'. He rejected capitalist art, such as **portraits of wealthy people** and what he called **bits of nature, Madonnas and shameless nudes**. He thought that art should represent the spiritual, the higher realms.
- (CLICK) In this exhibition of his work you can see the black square in the top corner in the same position a household would place a religious icon. You can

also see the black square was the starting point and he varied it to create increasingly complex shapes and patterns, later in colour.

- (CLICK) Like this piece at Tate Modern. Suprematism was the art movement founded by Malevich and he wrote, '**By Suprematism I mean the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art**' rather than the visual depiction of objects.
- He was one of the founders of abstract art though a Swedish artist called Hilma af Klint (1862-1944) started painting abstract paintings in 1906. Her source of inspiration was also the spiritual world based on the theosophical teachings of Helena Blavatsky.

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- This is his *Black Square* (1915). Altered reality (e.g. Fauvism) and abstraction (e.g. Kasimir Malevitch, Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian), what is it trying to achieve? The first exhibition of British abstract art was held in England in 1935. The following year the more international Abstract and Concrete exhibition included work by Piet Mondrian, Joan Miró, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson. Hepworth, Nicholson and Gabo moved to the St. Ives group in Cornwall to continue their 'constructivist' work. Some link the prevalence of abstract art with the growing abstraction of social relations in an industrial society, others link it to the abstract power of money that reduces everything to exchange-value, others to the abstract nature of our increasingly bureaucratic society and Post-Jungians to the way in which scientific theories, such as quantum theory, disintegrate the apparent solidity of matter into abstract energy. Abstract expressionism, action painting and colour field painting.
- The diagonal lines give a feeling of dynamism but what about the other part of the title, 'Suprematism'? It was an art movement founded by Malevich two years before he painted this work. He wrote, '**By Suprematism I mean the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art**' rather than the visual depiction of objects. He created a type of language or grammar of abstract objects, such as triangles, squares and circles and he was reacting against both academic art and the utilitarian art that had come before [called Constructivism]. This was the time of revolutions in Russia and Malevich wanted a complete break from the old world of bourgeois art and imagined a world of pure feeling where people would live in harmony with nature.

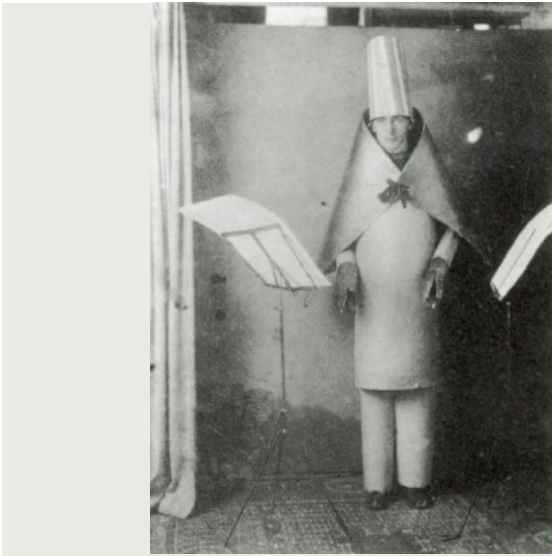
- It was a revolutionary time in art. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque had developed Cubism in Paris a few years earlier and in Italy, the Futurists were excited by modernity as represented by mechanical power and speed. Malevich believed he had gone beyond both Cubism and Futurism by developing a world of pure abstraction. He believed only the cowardly base their art on the forms of nature and that reproducing little corners of nature was like a thief being enraptured by his leg irons. Malevich thought that **'pure painting'** required the rejection of what he called **'bits of nature, Madonnas and shameless nudes'**.
- His most famous work was a white canvas which was largely occupied by a black square. This work was exhibited in the corner of the room, high up, in a position typical of religious icons in many Russian homes. The implication being that the works should be considered as the secular equivalent of a religious icon—worthy of meditative contemplation.
- This form of abstract art did not last long in Russia as by the mid-1920s Stalin had taken absolute control and abstract art was denounced as bourgeoisie. Artists had to produce art that glorified Russian history and its working-class heroes (see example). The style was called Socialist Realism.
- **KAZIMIR SEVERINOVICH MALEVICH (PRONOUNCED 'MALAYVITCH', 1879 1935)**
 - He was born Kazimierz Malewicz to a Polish family who moved to Ukraine and Russified their Polish names. Kazimir was born in a sugar beet growing region close to Kiev and his father was the manager of a sugar processing factory. Malevich studied drawing in Kiev (1895) and from 1904 at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. His father died in 1904. Malevich, up to his mid-thirties was interested in peasant art and became a member of the Moscow avant-garde, although he was not at the leading edge, and he collaborated in a successful cubofuturist opera called 'Victory Over the Sun' in 1913. In 1915, Malevich published his manifesto 'From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism' and he participated in an exhibition entitled the 'Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10' (Zero-Ten) in St Petersburg. He declared the Suprematist experiment was finished in 1919 but published 'The Non-Objective World' in 1927. His career languished following Stalin's rise to power after Lenin's death in 1924. Stalin promoted Socialist Realism as the only

permitted form of art. The Agitprop movement started in the 1920s in communist countries and it urged (agitated) people through propaganda to do what their leaders expected them to do. Malevich prudently left his works in Switzerland after an exhibition there, possibly saving them from obscurity or destruction. Allegedly a handsome man who had a wide, popular following. When he died he was exhibited with *Black Square* above his grave.

- Communist critics derided abstract art as bourgeois as they felt it could not express social realities. Malevich was derided [by Western critic Alexandre Benois] for negating everything good and pure: love of life and love of nature. Malevich responded that art can advance for art's sake alone, regardless of its pleasure: art does not need us, and it has never needed us since stars first shone in the sky.
- Malevich contemporaneously influenced major artists such as El Lissitzky and Olga Rozanova. She in turn is thought to have influenced Mark Rothko, eight of whose works have a room to themselves on the other side of this level. His legacy continues with the Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica. On the wall over there we can see his *Metaesquema* (1958) which was inspired by Malevich.
- Malevich wrote, '**To the Suprematist the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless: the significant thing is feeling**' and '**I transformed myself in the zero of form and emerged from nothing to creation, that is to Suprematism**'.
- Constructivism was an artistic philosophy that originated in Russia in 1919 and it rejected the idea that art is independent from society. Constructivism influenced many modern art movements such as the Bauhaus and De Stijl. The term Construction Art was first used as a derisive term by Malevich to describe the work of Alexander Rodchenko in 1917. Constructivism first appears as a positive term in Naum Gabo's Realistic Manifesto of 1920. Constructivism was a post-World War I development of Russian Futurism
- Malevich, Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky are regarded as the fathers of abstraction and competed to show they were first. It is believed Malevich backdated some 1915 works to 1913 in order to establish his primacy. However, the earliest abstract artist was **Hilma af Klint** (1862-1944) a previously unknown Swedish artist who started painting abstract art in 1905.

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Hugo Ball performing at Cabaret Voltaire in 1916

Is a society that engaged in a war in which 16 Million died fundamentally wrong?

Galerie Otto Burchard, Berlin, 30 June-25 August 1920



Hugo Ball performing at Cabaret Voltaire in 1916

Galerie Otto Burchard, Berlin, 30 June-25 August 1920

STEP 4: IS A SOCIETY THAT ENGAGED IN A WAR IN WHICH 16 MILLION DIED FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG?

- The First World War had a profound impact on artists. Many raised the question:
- (CLICK) "**Is a society that engaged in a war in which 16 Million died fundamentally wrong?**"
- A group of artists who called themselves Dada thought the answer was a definite 'Yes'. They felt the war called into question every aspect of a society capable of starting and then prolonging such a war. Their aim was to **destroy traditional values using a new art** that would replace the old.
- As the artist Hans Arp later wrote:
 - ***Revolted by the butchery of the 1914 World War, we in Zurich devoted ourselves to the arts. While the guns rumbled in the distance, we sang, painted, made collages and wrote poems with all our might.***
- Dada began in Switzerland at the Cabaret Voltaire and spread to Berlin, New York and Paris. They rejected logic and reason and instead expressed nonsense and irrationality.
- They believed that the war resulted from the apathy of the middle class and its failure to question its fundamental beliefs that had led to such carnage.

- Marcel Janco wrote,
 - ***We had lost confidence in our culture. Everything had to be demolished. ... At the Cabaret Voltaire we began by shocking common sense, public opinion, education, institutions, museums, good taste, in short, the whole prevailing order.***

NOTES

- Galerie Otto Burchard, Berlin, 30 June-25 August 1920. Right to left, Raoul Hausmann, (seated) Hannah Hoch, Otto Burchard, Johannes Baader, Wieland Herzfelde, Mrs Herzfelde, (seated) Otto Schmalhausen, George Grosz and John Heartfield. Hanging from the ceiling is John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter's *Prussian Archangel*. On the back wall George Grosz's painting *Germany. A Winter's Tale*. Photograph Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. The walls were covered with slogans like "Nieder die Kunst" [= Down with Art] and "Dilettanten, erhebt euch gegen die Kunst" [= Dilettantes, revolt against Art]. The Fair was nihilist, communist, anticlerical and anti-bourgeois
- The total number of military and civilian casualties in World War I was about 40 **million**: there were about 20 **million** deaths and **21 million** wounded, ranking it among the deadliest conflicts in human history. The total number of deaths includes about 9.7 million military personnel and about 10 million civilians.
- **Death tolls** (estimates vary but the following are the average of figures taken from many expert sources):
 - Congo Free State killed 8 million people
 - First World War, 8.5 million military deaths and 7.5 million civilian deaths.
 - Russian Civil War, 9 million deaths
 - Stalin's regime (1924-53) killed 20 million
 - Stalin's Ukrainian genocide (the Holodomor) resulted in 3.9 million deaths (some say 7 million or more)
 - Second World War resulted in 66 million deaths (many sources say 50 million)
 - Mao Zedong's regime (1949-1975) killed 40 million (mostly of starvation during the 'Great Leap Forward', 1958-61)

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Is our subconscious mind the most important and fundamental aspect of our everyday lives?



Salvador Dalí (1904-1989),
Autumnal Cannibalism, 1936, Tate
Modern

Salvador Dalí (1904-1989), *Autumnal Cannibalism*, 1936, Tate Modern

STEP 5: IS OUR SUBCONSCIOUS MIND THE MOST IMPORTANT AND FUNDAMENTAL ASPECT OF OUR EVERYDAY LIVES?

- Surrealism began in the early 1920s and developed out of Dada.
- This is Salvador Dali, *Autumnal Cannibalism* (1936) one of Salvador Dalí's greatest works.
- (CLICK) "**Is our subconscious mind the most important and fundamental aspect of our everyday lives?**" Dali, Sigmund Freud and many other thought it was.
- What do we see in the painting? There is what could be a beach on which we see a chest of drawers and on top two torsos. If you look closely you can see that the two figures are eating each other using bright silver cutlery. The one on the left looks female with soft milky skin and the one on the right wearing a suit could be male. The female figure has her right arm round the neck of the male and is slicing what at first looks like his flesh with a knife. However, if you look more closely you can see it is her own breast she is cutting. Her elongated breast flows across the other figure and over its shoulder and she is carving a slice from it. Sadism and masochism are combined with cannibalism and self-cannibalism. The painting is about unrestrained consumption and Dalí draws us into the horror by adding detail upon detail, encouraging our eyes to penetrate further and further until we find ourselves visually consuming the painting.
- **So what is going on?** It was painted in 1936, the year the Spanish Civil War

started. There were atrocities on both sides—half a million people died and a similar number fled the country but Dalí took little interest in politics. Here, he is representing the civil war as an orgy of consumption, the Spanish people are eating themselves. Dalí wrote about, '**These Iberian beings mutually devouring each other**' and saw it as a '**pure phenomenon of natural history**'. He compared his view with '**Picasso who considered it a political phenomenon**'. In other words, he observed it as a scientist might observe the behaviour of ants and in the painting you can see a group of ants surrounding a hole in the skin of the female figure. She has a flap of skin hanging off but her flesh looks like the inside of a fruit.

- Dalí though was not an objective observer, for from it, as a child he was fascinated and repulsed by watching ants consume his still living, pet bat, so for him ants represented decay and decomposition and he also said they refer to enormous sexual desire. So, for Dalí, it could be death and decay or two lovers destroying themselves through their overwhelming sexual attraction.
- Surrealism taps into the power of the unconscious mind and **Sigmund Freud was profoundly influential** for Surrealists, particularly his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Freud legitimised the importance of dreams and the unconscious as valid revelations of human emotion and desires; his exposure of the complex and repressed **inner worlds of sexuality, desire, and violence provided a theoretical basis for much of Surrealism**. Surrealists believe their art arises from their subconscious mind and represents a more real and more important representation of the world that only they can access and make visible.

NOTES

- **Symbols.** Ants are just one of the many symbols Dalí used. The drawers in the table, for example, store sins, unconscious and secret, often sexual desires. The apple on the figures head could represent the apple used by William Tell. Tell was a Swiss hero who resisted Austrian rule and was made to fire a crossbow bolt at an apple resting on his son's head. This was relevant to Dalí as in 1930 his father had broken off their relationship and Dalí described William Tell as '**the man whose success depends on his son's heroism**'. William Tell represents a dangerous family conflict which in Freudian terms represents a father castrating his son.
- **Can art change the world?** For Dalí the war was a lesson in natural history

and so was unavoidable; for his countryman Picasso, by contrast, it was a terrible political reality and Fascism could only be resolved through conflict.

- Salvador Dalí i Domènech (Figueres, Catalonia 11 May 1904-23 January 1989). Dalí had an elder brother also called Salvador who had died the year before he was born. His parents saw him as a reincarnation of his dead brother and dressed him in the same clothes and gave him the same toys. Dalí believed his father had been responsible for his brother's death and Dalí rejected and provoked his father by deliberate bed-wetting, simulated convulsions, prolonged screaming, feigned muteness and acts of random aggressiveness towards other children. Dalí first exhibited when he was 14 and even then was recognised as someone who could become a great painter. Dalí's mother died when he was 16 leaving him devastated. The following year his father remarried his aunt and Dalí was accepted as a student at the prestigious San Fernando Academy. He disagreed with a lot of the teaching but established a relationship with Luis Buñuel and Federico García Lorca. Lorca adored Salvador Dali, and wanted a physical relationship that Dalí was too frightened to consummate.
- In 1925 (aged 21) Dalí held his first one-man exhibition and in 1929 (aged 25) he met his muse Gala (1894-1982), a Russian immigrant who was married to the Surrealist Paul Éluard. Dalí is most often associated with the Surrealists but he was formally expelled in 1934 for his reactionary political views. She divorced and married Dalí in 1934. Because of Dalí's purported fear of venereal disease and female genitalia he was said to have been a virgin when they met and he appears to have preferred masturbation to sexual intercourse. Gala was a nymphomaniac and shared Dalí's love of money, power and notoriety. Dalí was a candaulist, that is he liked to watch Gali make love to other men (the word is based on King Candaules, pronounced can-doe-lees, who exposed his wife to one of his Ministers). Dalí was also an enthusiastic masturbator who was aroused not just by women but by objects such as church towers. He was worried about the small size of his sexual organ which he claimed gave rise to '**inextinguishable laughter**' and he was also worried about the sexuality of women and he admitted to being a premature ejaculator who could achieve an orgasm just by looking.
- *Autumnal Cannibalism* was painted the year before *Guernica*. The Spanish Civil War had, on one side, General Franco's Nationalist army fighting the

evils of communism and on the other the Republicans were fighting the evils of fascism. The Spanish Civil War was won by General Franco and the Nationalists and he became a dictator of a one-party state in which the only legal party was the Falangist, a form of fascism that was anti-communist, nationalistic and supported the Roman Catholic Church. Franco remained in power until his death in 1975 when Juan Carlos became King.

- Dalí said, **'My entire ambition in the pictorial domain consists in materializing the images of concrete irrationality with the most imperialistic rage of precision.'** In other words, Dalí's aim is to turn his fantasies and dreams into a real physical landscape by making them submit to his will through precise, detailed painting. Freudian theory underpins all of his interpretations of dreams and hallucinations. Dalí draws upon autobiographical material, childhood memories and his fetishes and animal symbolism. Dalí subscribed to André Breton's theory of automatism, but he opted for a method he called **'critical paranoia'**, a state in which one can cultivate delusions while maintaining one's sanity.
- What is Surrealism? André Breton defined it as **'Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations'**. Surrealism seeks to subvert the rational basis of society and Dalí uses surrealism to attack and undermine sexual and social conventions. He had a number of personal symbols he used to represent his ideas, such as soft watches (eternity), burning giraffes (a monster of the Apocalypse), thin-legged elephants (man shackled to the earth but reaching for higher things), open drawers (the secret, hidden sins and complexes described by Freud), crutches (weaknesses but also instruments enabling superhuman performance), eggs (hope and love), ants (death, decay and immense sexual desire), snails (the human head), grasshoppers (fear, as Dalí was very scared of grasshoppers), butterflies (the soul), silhouettes (imagination, dreams, good thoughts and motivational power as well as evil inner conflicts and inhibitions) and lion's heads (sexual savagery).
- In this painting we see the Spanish countryside in the background but with disturbing changes. The mountain on the horizon looks like a sleeping dog and a gnarled tree looks like a man with branches for arms and legs. The long shadows of the setting sun suggest an end is coming and the end is also suggested by the title, 'autumnal'. But we don't know what is coming

to an end is it the war or is it the lives of everyone involved?

- There is an apple on the head of the male figure and another half-peeled apple on the table top perhaps representing William Tell's son's feelings after his father had fired a bolt at him—emotionally stripped. It could also represent the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the garden of Eden and its consumption as the beginning of sin.
- The merging of the male and female heads could relate to Dalí's description of when he first kissed Gala. He wrote, **'And this first kiss, mixed with tears and saliva, punctuated by the audible contact of our teeth and furiously working tongues, touched only the fringe of the libidinous famine that made us bite and eat everything to the last! Meanwhile I was eating that mouth, whose blood already mingled with mine'** (see John Richardson, *Sacred Monsters, Sacred Masters*).
- Dalí made two films with Luis Buñuel, *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or*. In *Un Chien Andalou* there is a man's hand coming round the edge of a door that a woman is pushing closed. The hand has a hole in the palm and is covered in ants. The hand could be linked to masturbation and the door edge to the 'castration' of the hand. The French phrase for pins and needles is to have ants in the hand ('avoir des fourmis dans la main') and 'ants in the pants' ('avoir des fourmis dans son pantalon') means to be excited or agitated. The repeated close-ups in which the frame cuts off a hand at the wrist evokes the age-old paternal threat to sons found masturbating. Fingers are often bandaged in the film and the French word for bandage ('bander') also means 'to have an erection'.

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Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), *Summertime 9A*, 1948, 84.8 x 555 cm, Tate

If we react spontaneously will we obtain a more truthful art?



Jackson Pollock 'action painting'

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), *Summertime 9A*, 1948, 84.8 x 555 cm, Tate

- **STEP 6: IF WE REACT SPONTANEOUSLY WILL WE OBTAIN A MORE TRUTHFUL ART?**
- There were two ways that artists **tapped into their unconscious minds**—through dreams and through automatism or automatic painting.
- In the 1940s and 50s the **Abstract Expressionists fell into two camps**, the **action painters**, exemplified by Jackson Pollock shown here and the **colour-field painters** such as Mark Rothko.
- (CLICK) The action painters asked the question "**If we react spontaneously will we obtain a more truthful art?**"
- (CLICK) Pollock painted spontaneously, without planning and forethought. Recently a science research team found his seemingly random patterns are, in fact, fractal and therefore difficult to copy. By fractal I mean self-similar at different levels of magnification.
- Many abstract expressionists saw their work as having an underlining **mystical and spiritual significance**.

BIO:POLLOCK

- **Jackson Pollock** (1912-1956) had a tough upbringing in the American West and his father left home when he was nine. He attended art school where he met Philip Guston and was introduced to theosophy. Two of his brothers also studied art and encouraged him to New York where he studied mural painting. He observed Diego Rivera paint murals at the New Workers School, and in

1936 he joined the Experimental Workshop of David Alfaro Siqueiros, where he learned unorthodox painting techniques. In the 1930s he spent many years painting large murals. He became an alcoholic and visited an analyst in the 1939 who encouraged him to draw. His drawing became a route into his mind as well as a universal route into the angst and terror of modern living, particular in the post-war cold war era with the threat of instant nuclear annihilation. Pollock's achievement was to discover a new way to apply paint to canvas that freed the creator from the constraints of conventional concerns about colour and representation.

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Andy Warhol (1928-1987), *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962, Tate

• **STEP 7: IS ART PART OF ONE WORLD OF IMAGES?**

POP ART

- Pop art is an art movement that emerged in the mid-1950s in Britain and the late 1950s in the United States and was strongly influenced by Dada.
- The Western world was increasingly filled with commercial images, in newspapers, on billboards and on television. How did these differ from art? Some artists began to ask if there is actually only one world of images and artists are part of one enormous business. Andy Warhol became a central figure. He was a commercial artist and used commercial images to create his art.
- (CLICK) On the left we see 25 images of Marilyn Monroe in garish colours and 25 on the right in black and white. These silkscreen prints are based on **a still from the film *Niagara* made in 1953 the year Marilyn died from an overdose of sleeping pills.** Although they initially look the same they are all slightly different as Warhol hand printed the images and changed the registration of each colour. In the right panel he has blurred and faded the images suggesting the star's death. The contrast between the bright colours and the monochrome also suggests life and death and the title, 'Diptych' suggest a religious altar piece in two parts. It is a secular altar to the popular star Marilyn Monroe.
- In other words he has taken an image from the commercial world and manipulated it to create something with another level of meaning. Or is it all,

as Warhol thought, just different forms of doing business.

NOTES

- Among the early artists that shaped the pop art movement were Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton in Britain, and Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns in the United States.
- In the *Marilyn Diptych* the image is repeated 25 times in each panel which both reinforces the effect and negates the effect by creating an all-over abstract pattern.
- Tate caption: Marilyn Monroe died in August 1962, having overdosed on barbiturates. In the following four months, Warhol made more than twenty silkscreen paintings of her, all based on the same publicity photograph from the 1953 film *Niagara*. Warhol found in Monroe a fusion of two of his consistent themes: death and the cult of celebrity. By repeating the image, he evokes her ubiquitous presence in the media. The contrast of vivid colour with black and white, and the effect of fading in the right panel are suggestive of the star's mortality.
- Andy Warhol (1928-1987) was born in Pittsburgh and his name was originally 'Warhola'. As a child he developed St. Vitus' Dance and he became a hypochondriac and a fear of hospitals and doctors. He was often bedridden and was an outcast at school. In bed he drew and collected pictures of movie stars which helped establish his personality and preferences. When he was 13 his father died in an accident.
- He moved to New York in 1949 and became a successful commercial artist working for titles such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Glamour*. He was awarded the Art Directors' Club Medal in 1957 for his shoe advertisements. His first one-man exhibition of drawings was in 1952 and he started create paintings based on newspaper title pages in 1960. In 1962 he started to use silkscreen printing to produce 'Campbell's Soup Cans', 'Coca-Cola Bottles', portraits of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Elvis Presley, Jackie Kennedy, and later also car crashes, the electric chair, flowers and so on, sometimes with rows of repeated images.
- Warhol appreciated intense Hollywood glamour. He once said: **'I love Los Angeles. I love Hollywood. They're so beautiful. Everything's plastic, but I love plastic. I want to be plastic.'**
- He is one of the most influential artists of the post-war period and has produced 232 works. He is the most famous proponent of Pop-Art which

he used to depict consumer goods and iconic people in order to explore his fascination with celebrity and mortality. Although most famous for his silkscreen prints he often used photography and created some groundbreaking films. The highest price ever paid for a Warhol painting is \$105 million for a 1963 canvas titled *Silver Car Crash (Double Disaster)*. In his will Warhol said that his entire estate — with the exception of a few modest legacies to family members — would go to create a foundation dedicated to the 'advancement of the visual arts'. Warhol had so many possessions that it took Sotheby's nine days to auction his estate after his death; the auction grossed more than \$20 million.

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How far can art be simplified and still be art?



Carl Andre (b. 1935), *Equivalent VIII*, 1966, firebricks, 12.7 x 68.6 x 229.2 cm, Tate Modern

Carl Andre (b. 1935), *Equivalent VIII*, 1966, firebricks, 12.7 x 68.6 x 229.2 cm, Tate Modern

Carl Andre, *Stone Field Sculpture*, 1977

STEP 8: HOW FAR CAN AN ARTWORK BE SIMPLIFIED AND STILL BE ART?

MINIMALISM

- "How far can an artwork be simplified and still be art?"
- In the 1960s and 70s some artists, such as Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Frank Stella **rejected Abstract Expressionism** because of its focus on self-expression and spiritual meaning. They wanted an art that was **anonymous** and **stripped away distractions**. Their work is called Minimalist and Minimalism is **challenging** and at the time **controversial** particularly this work which became known as the "**pile of bricks**".
- There is actually more to it than appears from this single pile of bricks. The work consists of 120 fire bricks and was originally one of eight shapes in two combinations. All of the shapes were placed on the floor not a plinth so they became part of the environment and as they were all 120 bricks they all have the same volume and so were Equivalent. This one is Equivalent VIII.
- Andre chose 120 as the number has many factors, it can be divided exactly by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 20, 24, 30, 40, 60 and 120. The bricks had to be stacked in two layers to prevent them drifting apart and to give the pieces sufficient mass. Thus the top layer of each mound had only 60 bricks. The bricks were assembled in only four out of six possible combinations: 3 x 20, 4 x

15, 5 x 12 and. As here, 6 x 10. He did not use the 2 x 30 or the 1 x 60 as, I guess he thought they were too narrow and unstable.

- In bricklaying, bricks laid end to end are called a stretcher course and bricks laid side by side are called a header course. So each of the four combinations has two orientations, for example 3 header x 20 stretcher and 3 stretcher x 20 header. So there are eight arrangements and this is arrangement eight or, as Andre called it *Equivalent VIII*.
- All of these mathematical arrangements are part of what makes this apparently simple work interesting but there is no spiritual or aesthetic intend or personal self-expression.

NOTES

- Other prominent artists associated with minimalism include Dan Flavin, Robert Morris, Anne Truitt, and Frank Stella.
- Minimalism in music often features repetition and iteration such as those of the compositions of La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and John Adams. The term minimalist often colloquially refers to anything that is spare or stripped to its essentials. It has also been used to describe the plays and novels of Samuel Beckett, the films of Robert Bresson, the stories of Raymond Carver, and the automobile designs of Colin Chapman. The word was first used in English in the early 20th century to describe "a 1913 composition by the Russian painter Kasimir Malevich of a black square on a white ground".

BIO:ANDRE

- **Carl Andre** (b. 1935) was born in Massachusetts and is well known for his large public artworks as well as his intimate tile patterns. He served in the US army and moved to New York in 1956 where he met Constantin Brâncuși. From 1960-64 he worked on the railways and his contact with blue collar workers influenced his work and his approach. He would later sometimes wear overalls and a blue shirt to formal events. In 1970 he had a solo exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum and other major museums in America and Europe. In 1972, the Tate acquired his *Equivalent VIII*, an arrangement of fireplace bricks. The piece was exhibited several times without incident, but became the centre of controversy in 1976 after being featured in an article in *The Sunday Times* and later being defaced with paint. The "Bricks controversy" became one of the most famous public

debates in Britain about contemporary art.

- **He was tried for his wife's murder** but found not guilty. He married Mendieta in 1985 but she fell from their 34th story window the same year after an argument with Andre. There were no eyewitnesses but the doorman heard her screaming 'No, no, no, no' before she landed. Andre had scratches on his nose and arm and his story to the police differed from his recorded phone conversation with the emergency services. He elected to be tried before a judge with no jury.

STONE FIELD SCULPTURE

- Another work by Carl Andre was 36 Rocks Sitting on the triangular lawn on Gold Street Near Main, Hartford. There was a massive public outcry after the installation and sarcastic comments in the press. Hartford agreed to pay \$100,000 for the work (of which \$87,000 went to Andre after expenses) but after the public outcry they tried to avoid paying until Andre involved his lawyers. It consists of eight rows of boulders in the sequence 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. They are local rock and reflect the rock in the area. They have been compared to tombstone and the land is adjacent to a cemetery. The mayor said, 'It's just a bunch of rocks. Little kids could do that'. Art critics mocked its supposed link to Stonehenge. Some were concerned that no craft was involved. However, twenty years later Andre is an international celebrity and one curator said, 'With more information, people could realize that this was not a casual joke, that this was not something done out of laziness, or that Andre thumbed his nose at Hartford, took the money and ran. It's a brilliant piece of public art.' Andre is still pleased with the work, '**I really felt very strongly about the work being a socially useful sculpture.** There was just a plot of grass there. It was good for walking the dog. I wanted to put something there that people would find **useful for picnicking**, or for **sitting in the sunshine** during the lunch hour or whatever ... It was definitely supposed to be people-friendly and people-useful. And I think it is. When I go there, people are doing exactly those things.'

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Is the idea behind a work of art its most important aspect?



Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945), *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, wood folding chair, mounted photograph of a chair, and mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of "chair", chair 82 x 37.8 x 53 cm, photographic panel 91.5 x 61.1 cm, text panel 61 x 76.2 cm

Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945), *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, wood folding chair, mounted photograph of a chair, and mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of "chair", chair 82 x 37.8 x 53 cm, photographic panel 91.5 x 61.1 cm, text panel 61 x 76.2 cm

STEP 9: IS THE IDEA BEHIND A WORK OF ART ITS MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT?

CONCEPTUAL ART

- Conceptual artists believe that what is important is not the way a work of art is represented but the idea behind it.
- (CLICK) **"Is the idea behind a work of art its most important aspect?"**
- Conceptual art, sometimes simply called Conceptualism, is art in which the concepts or ideas involved in the work take precedence over traditional aesthetic and material concerns.
 - One Conceptual artist (Sol LeWitt) wrote, **'In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.'**
- In *One and Three Chairs*, Joseph Kosuth (pronounced 'KOO-suth') represents one chair three ways: as a manufactured chair, as a photograph of a chair, and as a copy of a dictionary entry for the word "chair." The installation is thus

composed of an object, an image, and words.

- Kosuth didn't make the chair, take the photograph, or write the definition; he selected and assembled them together. But is this art? And which representation of the chair is most "accurate"? These open-ended questions are exactly what Kosuth wanted us to think about when he said that "**art is making meaning.**" By assembling these three alternative representations, Kosuth turns a simple wooden chair into an object of debate.
- What is a chair, we see many chair-like objects, stools, armchairs, deck chairs, low tables. What is it about them that enables us all to agree on the use of the word? The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein described language as a game to bring into prominence the fact that speaking is part of an activity. A chair has no simple definition, it refers to objects that native speakers agree to call a 'chair'.

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Michael Craig-Martin (b. 1941). *An Oak Tree*, 1973, Tate

Is the idea behind a work of art
the most important aspect?

Michael Craig-Martin (b. 1941). *An Oak Tree*, 1973, Tate

- **Question raised: Is the idea behind a work of art the most important aspect?**
- **Craig-Martin taught many of the Young British Artists (YBA) and he is best known for this work, *An Oak Tree*.**
- He was born in Dublin and brought up as a Roman Catholic and he studied religious imagery and stained glass windows. He was sent to a college in Colombia where his father had worked and started drawing. He continued to draw and then paint when he moved to Washington and then New York. He went on to study art in Paris and then at Yale University where he was influenced by the minimalist theories of Joseph Albers. He has lived and worked in London since 1966. He produced line drawings of everyday objects and in the 1990s switched to painting.
- He produced and exhibited *An Oak Tree* in 1973. On one occasion the artwork was banned from Australia by customs officials as illegal vegetation and Craig-Martin had to explain it was really a glass of water. It was bought by the National Gallery of Australia and the Tate has an artist's copy.
- In the 1980s Craig-Martin was a tutor at Goldsmiths College, Department of Art, and was a significant influence on the emerging YBA generation, including Damien Hirst. He was also helpful in promoting the Freeze show to established art-world figures. Craig-Martin has been a trustee of the Tate Gallery and is a trustee of the National Art Collections Fund.

- *An Oak Tree* consists of 'an ordinary glass of water on an equally plain shelf, accompanied by a text in which Craig-Martin asserts the supremacy of the artist's intention over the object itself ... is now widely regarded as a turning point in the development of conceptual art'.
- Craig-Martin was knighted in the 2016 Birthday Honours for services to art.

Notes

Next to the glass of water is the following text:

Q. To begin with, could you describe this work?

A. Yes, of course. What I've done is change a glass of water into a full-grown oak tree without altering the accidents of the glass of water.

Q. The accidents?

A. Yes. The colour, feel, weight, size ...

Q. Do you mean that the glass of water is a symbol of an oak tree?

A. No. It's not a symbol. I've changed the physical substance of the glass of water into that of an oak tree.

Q. It looks like a glass of water.

A. Of course it does. I didn't change its appearance. But it's not a glass of water, it's an oak tree.

Q. Can you prove what you've claimed to have done?

A. Well, yes and no. I claim to have maintained the physical form of the glass of water and, as you can see, I have. However, as one normally looks for evidence of physical change in terms of altered form, no such proof exists.

Q. Haven't you simply called this glass of water an oak tree?

A. Absolutely not. It is not a glass of water anymore. I have changed its actual substance. It would no longer be accurate to call it a glass of water. One could call it anything one wished but that would not alter the fact that it is an oak tree.

Q. Isn't this just a case of the emperor's new clothes?

A. No. With the emperor's new clothes people claimed to see something that wasn't there because they felt they should. I would be very surprised if anyone told me they saw an oak tree.

Q. Was it difficult to effect the change?

A. No effort at all. But it took me years of work before I realised I could do it.

Q. When precisely did the glass of water become an oak tree?

A. When I put the water in the glass.

Q. Does this happen every time you fill a glass with water?

A. No, of course not. Only when I intend to change it into an oak tree.

Q. Then intention causes the change?

A. I would say it precipitates the change.

Q. You don't know how you do it?

A. It contradicts what I feel I know about cause and effect.

Q. It seems to me that you are claiming to have worked a miracle. Isn't that the case?

A. I'm flattered that you think so.

Q. But aren't you the only person who can do something like this?

A. How could I know?

Q. Could you teach others to do it?

A. No, it's not something one can teach.

Q. Do you consider that changing the glass of water into an oak tree constitutes an art work?

A. Yes.

Q. What precisely is the art work? The glass of water?

A. There is no glass of water anymore.

Q. The process of change?

A. There is no process involved in the change.

Q. The oak tree?

A. Yes. The oak tree.

Q. But the oak tree only exists in the mind.

A. No. The actual oak tree is physically present but in the form of the glass of water. As the glass of water was a particular glass of water, the oak tree is also a particular oak tree. To conceive the category 'oak tree' or to picture a particular oak tree is not to understand and experience what appears to be a glass of water as an oak tree. Just as it is imperceivable it also inconceivable.

Q. Did the particular oak tree exist somewhere else before it took the form of

a glass of water?

A. No. This particular oak tree did not exist previously. I should also point out that it does not and will not ever have any other form than that of a glass of water.

Q. How long will it continue to be an oak tree?

A. Until I change it

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Rachel Whiteread (b. 1963), *House*, 1993

Can an artwork change the way we see the world?

Rachel Whiteread (b. 1963), *House*, 1993

STEP 10: CAN AN ARTWORK CHANGE THE WAY WE SEE THE WORLD?

- This is *House* by Rachel WHiteread.
- (CLICK) The question is "Can an artwork change the way we see the world?"
- Whiteread was the first woman to win the Turner Prize in November 1993 for this work *House* a life-sized replica of the interior of a condemned terraced house in Bow in London's East End. It took two years to plan and was made by spraying liquid concrete into the building's empty shell before its external walls were removed. *House* was completed on 25 October 1993 and demolished eleven weeks later on 11 January 1994.
- *House* also won the K Foundation award of £40,000 for the worst work of art of the year. K Foundation threatened to burn the money unless it was accepted so she gave it to charity. K Foundation burned £1 million the following year.
- Whiteread makes sculptures of the spaces within, around and under everyday objects from baths and sinks to houses, so called 'negative spaces'. This draws our attention to the forgotten spaces around and within our everyday world and fixes them in time as public monuments. The spaces around objects are normally occupied by human beings and so the solidified spaces become symbols for our human presence while refusing us entry. By removing the object and refusing its function the shapes express absence and loss.
- Whiteread is a pragmatic artist and she has answered the question. She said, '**I don't think art changes the world in terms of stopping people dying of Aids or of**

starvation or being homeless. But for an individual ... it can enhance daily life, reflect our times and, in that sense, change the way you think and are.'

NOTES

- Whiteread employs casting methods using plaster, rubber and resin which are typically used as part of the process of making sculptures rather than in the finished work. Her early work was personal and biographical but her later works have become universal and their titles have become straightforward, down-to-earth and descriptive. For Whiteread her sculptures are metaphors for neglect of people and their environment in Thatcher's Britain (Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister, 1979-90, John Major was Prime Minister from 1990 to 1997, followed by Tony Blair from 1997 to 2007).
- Rachel Whiteread (b. 1963) was born in Ilford, Essex and studied at Brighton Polytechnic and the Slade. She is lives with the sculptor Marcus Taylor and they have two sons.

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Can a work of art change the world?



Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), *Lightning with Stag in its Glare*, 1958-85

Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), *Lightning with Stag in its Glare*, 1958-85

STEP 11: CAN A WORK OF ART CHANGE THE WORLD?

- More fundamentally the bigger question is:
- **(CLICK) "Can a work of art change the world?"**
- This is called *Lightning with Stag in its Glare* by Joseph Beuys. Beuys toured the world lecturing on art. Beuys is now regarded as one of the most influential artists of the second half of the twentieth century.
- He said that '**Everybody is an artist**' and what he meant was that the way we choose to live our lives is our artistic statement. He felt that all art is intrinsically revolutionary and he wrote '**The revolution is us**'. If we could pay attention to our relationship with nature, then it would transform society. Our lives all depend on vast forces of nature that are completely outside our control. If a tsunami hits our shores, or an earthquake destroys our buildings or a volcano erupts then we are powerless to control or resist it.
- Look at this work. The first thing to say is that he was not interested in the materials or the exact form of the work. He made it to convey ideas.
- The title is slightly misleading as it suggests we should find a realistic stag with antlers lit by a bolt of lightning. However, as I said, **objects were not important to Beuys** who wanted to represent the elemental forces of nature and our relationship to them. The large bronze object at the back is the lightning strike and, like lightning, it is powerful and potentially dangerous. The lightning is an elemental force and illuminates a group of creatures. The stag is

the silver object which was originally made from an ironing board but Beuys remade it using cast aluminium to suggest the glare.

- Since childhood, Beuys had been interested in northern European folklore, in which certain animals are endowed with mystical power. The stag had particular significance for him as a spiritual guide that appears in times of distress and danger. Its annual shedding and regrowth of its antlers made it a symbol of rebirth and renewal. The cart at the back represents a humble goat, one of the first animals to be domesticated and the lumps of bronze on the floor are primordial, blind worm-like creatures. The box on a tripod has a small compass on top and is called '**Boothia Felix**'. This is the northern most part of Canada as was named after Felix Booth and was the location of magnetic north – another reference, with the lightning flash itself, to the natural energies of the earth
- The work is to make us aware and consider the primordial forces of nature and our relationship to them. Beuys was one of the founders of the Green Party in Germany and he wants us to appreciate the interconnectedness between all life forms and so create a path towards an ecologically sustainable future.

NOTES

- In 1982, Beuys took part in an exhibition in Berlin, where he installed a huge mound of clay and surrounded it with sculptures as well as furniture and tools from his studio. Afterwards he made casts of some of the elements to create *Lightning with Stag in its Glare* 1958-85. The bolt of lightning itself was a bronze cast from a section of the clay mound, while the stag was cast in aluminium as if illuminated by a sudden flash of light. Made towards the end of Beuys's life, this major installation could be a scene from a primordial jungle or a nightmare future world. It addresses themes of finality and death, but also ideas of regeneration and the transformative power of nature.

BIO:BEUYS

- **Joseph Beuys** (1921-1986, pronounced like 'Boyce') was born in Germany in 1921 and so his teenage years were overshadowed by the rise of the National Socialist Party and Hitler youth. According to Beuys, when the Nazis burned books in his schoolyard he rescued Carl Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*. In 1941 Beuys volunteered for the Luftwaffe as a radio operator and he later became a rear gunner and was shot down over the Crimea.

This became a defining moment in his life as he claimed he almost died and was saved by the nomadic Tartars who covered him in fat and wrapped him in felt. Some people claim that although the pilot died shortly after the crash, Beuys was conscious, recovered by a German search team, and there were no Tatars in the village at that time. Nevertheless, the incident was traumatic for Beuys and was a defining moment in his life.

- After the war he had a nervous breakdown and dedicated his life to healing society as he had been healed. He turned himself into a work of art and was one of the earliest performance artists. He always wore blue jeans, a white shirt, a fishing vest covered in useful pockets and a felt trilby hat from Lock & Co of St James to insulate the two metal plates in his skull from extremes of temperature.
- From 1947 to 1951 he studied at the Düsseldorf Academy and was interested in Rudolf Steiner, Christianity, mythology, botany and zoology. This led him to evolve a rich and complex symbolism, including archetypal animal images of hares, sheep, swans, and bees. His first one-man exhibition was at the Städtisches Museum, Kleve in 1961. He moved from Kleve to Düsseldorf in 1961 and became professor of sculpture at Düsseldorf Academy. He participated in the Fluxus movement from 1962 and started in 1963 to give action-performances using such elements as dead hares, fat and felt. A conflict developed over his teaching methods and he was dismissed in 1972 leading to student strikes and widespread protests. Beuys said, **'teaching is my greatest work of art'** and **'Objects aren't very important any more. I want to get to the origin of matter, to the thought behind it'**.
- Beuys was a member of Fluxus, an international network of artists, composers and designers in the 1960s. It was anti-commercial and anti-art and was influenced by John Cage. Cage said that the process of creating was more important than the finished product. Another important influence was Marcel Duchamp, a French artist who was active within Dada and whose 'ready-mades' influenced Fluxus.
- Beuys first public performance in 1965 was **'How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare'**. He spent three hours explaining his art to a dead hare that he carried round the exhibition. Beuys wrote, **'everyone consciously or unconsciously recognizes the problem of explaining things, particularly where art and creative work are concerned ... even a dead animal preserves more powers of intuition than some human beings with their**

stubborn rationality. The problem lies in the word “understanding” and its many levels which cannot be restricted to rational analysis.

Imagination, inspiration, and longing all lead people to sense that these other levels also play a part in understanding ... my technique has been to try and seek out the energy points in the human power field, rather than demanding specific knowledge or reactions on the part of the public. I try to bring to light the complexity of creative areas’. Beuys argued that social decision-making should be made by the people through referendums rather than elected political parties. It was this concept of ‘direct democracy’ that he explored in his Information Action at the Tate in 1972, from which three of the blackboards shown here are taken.

- Antony Gormley said, **‘he realized that art was about in a way understanding who we are, by understanding our roots’** and **‘we only understand who we are through the making of these otherwise useless objects that in someone chart our passage through time’**.
- The long date range of the piece is because it is based on ideas he started to develop in 1958. It is based on a work he produced for the 1982 exhibition *Zeitgeist* but in that exhibition he used a mound of clay and furniture from his studio. He cast the bronze representation of lightning from the clay he used and the rough texture of the clay can still be seen. The work is suspended from a girder and just touches the floor but is not resting on it. It represents elemental forces and energy. The aluminium structure represents the stag and was originally an ironing board. The stag is a symbol from Christian mythology and from shamanism, both areas of deep interest to Beuys. It represents the initiation of the hunter/gatherer, life itself and stag act as guides through the spirit world. The stag was also used as a symbol for Christ. Beuys said that when he was in trouble he was visited by a stag which gave him hope and inspiration. The lumps of clay represent primordial creatures, tools and the earth and civilization. Beuys wrote that the stag appeared **‘in times of distress and danger’** bringing **‘the warm positive element of life.’** He concurred with earlier Christian myths that it was **‘endowed with spiritual powers and insight.’**
- On the left is a cart with a pick axe on top that is referred to by Beuys as a goat, one of our oldest companions and a source of food and clothing. The goat, for Beuys, represents technology and nature, which he believed must be balanced.
- On the far left is the Boothian Felix, a pile of earth on a tripod with a small

compass on top. This represents elemental forces and the human part of the artist. Boothia Felix was named in honour of Sir Felix Booth the financier of an exhibition headed by James Ross in 1829. In 1831 Ross charted the location of the magnetic north pole on the west coast. It is now called the Boothia Peninsular and the magnetic pole has moved further north.

- Beuys was part of the Fluxus movement that involved the inter-relationship of music, art and literature with daily life.
- The Ja/Nein poster rejects the party state (he grew up in Nazi Germany) in favour of democracy through referendums. Another poster shows he stood as candidate for a political party, the Organisation for Direct Democracy.
- One of his last projects was the planting of 7,000 oak trees and there is a photo at the end of a pile of 7,000 stones which were moved when each tree was planted. The project took five years and the idea spread around the world. The myths associated with the artist, such as the Crimea/Tartar fat and felt myth should be treated as part of the identity of the artist rather than factual stories.

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Vic Harris, a time lapse oil portrait of my son, see <https://www.vicharris.co.uk/>

Should we return to the power of the image and the skill of the artist?

Vic Harris, a time lapse oil portrait of my son, see <https://www.vicharris.co.uk/>

STEP 12: SHOULD WE RETURN TO THE POWER OF THE IMAGE AND THE SKILL OF THE ARTIST?

- (WAIT for video to finish)
- (CLICK) Should we return to the power of the image and the skill of the artist?
There are artists who think we should and I will show you a few.

NOTES

- Also known as Super-Realism, New Realism, or Hyper-Realism.



Vic Harris, a time lapse oil portrait of my son, see <https://www.vicharris.co.uk/>

- **Photorealism and hyperrealism** aim to reproduce a photograph to draw attention both to the fact it is a painting (unlike *trompe l'oeil* which attempts to hide it) and to reclaim the image in a world flooded with images through the time and effort expended by the artist.
- Photorealism was a reaction against Minimalism, Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism and there were a small number of artists that started the trend. They produced detailed and unidealised representation in art, initially of banal, mundane, or sordid aspects of life and later portraits like this.
- Photorealists typically use a photograph or several photographs to gather the information to create their paintings. The **use of photographs in Photorealism was met with intense criticism** when the movement began to gain momentum in the late 1960s, despite the fact that visual devices had been used since the fifteenth century to aid artists with their work.
- Two more examples...



Richard Estes
(b. 1932),
Jone's Diner,
1979, private
collection

Richard Estes (b. 1932), *Jone's Diner*, 1979, private collection

- Photorealism emerged in the late 1960s. **Richard Estes, Chuck Close, and Ralph Goings** were some of the first to attempt exact replication of photographic imagery, and as a result, are often thought of as the founders of the movement.
- Richard Estes studied fine art in Chicago and was interested in the work of realist painters such as Edgar Degas, Edward Hopper and Thomas Eakins. He then moved to New York where he worked as a graphic artist. By 1966 he was financially independent and was able to paint full-time. He used photographs and typically painted buildings in daylight suggesting a "vacant and quiet Sunday morning".

REFERENCES

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Estes



Diego Fazio, *Sensazioni*, pencil and paper

Diego Fazio, *Sensazioni*, pencil and paper

- This is by the Italian artist Diego Fazio.



David J. Eichenberg
(b. 1972), *Aimee in a Hoodie I*,
2014, 38.1 x 30.48 cm

David J. Eichenberg (b. 1972), *Aimee in a Hoodie I*, 2014, 38.1 x 30.48 cm

- This is by David Eichenberg, an American artist born in Toledo, Ohio who still continues to paint photorealistic portraits and cityscapes. He won third place in 2010 at the BP Portrait Awards at the National Portrait Gallery.
- The question is "Should we return to the power of the image and the skill of the artist?" One wonders what interest there is in a painting that is so close to a photograph as to be indistinguishable. The answer seems to be that many people are amazed by and value the sheer skill of the artist.

Can new technologies be used to expand the range of artistic expression?



Bill Viola (b. 1951), *The Quintet of the Astonished*, 2000



Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1450–1516), *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, between 1479 and 1516, 73.5 x 59.1 cm, National Gallery

Bill Viola (b. 1951), *The Quintet of the Astonished*, 2000

Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1450–1516), *Christ Crowned with Thorns*, between 1479 and 1516, 73.5 x 59.1 cm, National Gallery

STEP 13: CAN NEW TECHNOLOGIES BE USED TO EXPAND THE RANGE OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION?

- Modern art has expanded to include the use of modern technology.
- (CLICK) The question is "Can new technologies be used to expand the range of artistic expression?"
- (CLICK) This is *The Quintet of the Astonished* by Bill Viola. Video art, unlike conventional film, tends not to employ actors, may contain no dialogue, may have no discernible narrative or plot, or adhere to any of the other conventions that generally define motion pictures as entertainment.
- Since the 1970s Bill Viola's videos and installations have dealt with themes of perception, memory and self-awareness. Emotions are the subject of *The Passions*, an ongoing series begun in 2000. In these works Viola grapples with one of the oldest problems in art: **how to convey the power and complexity of emotion.**
- Viola immersed himself in the conventions of expression during a period of study at the Getty Research Institute in 1998. His encounters with older painting and theories of emotional expression – codified in the 17th century by French painter Charles Le Brun – led him to the challenge of showing in between states: transitions and ambiguous or mixed emotions.

- (CLICK) One of the first works in *The Passions* series is this one, *The Quintet of the Astonished*, which was commissioned by the National Gallery, London, and was inspired by Hieronymus Bosch's painting of a quartet of executioners surrounding Christ. Shot on high-speed film, permitting the action to be slowed drastically when played back, the video is an intense tableau of shifting and momentary emotions. The relationships between the figures were unplanned and exist in varying intensities over the work's duration.

REFERENCES

- National Gallery of Australia.

Has sale price become a measure of an artworks value?



Marina Abramović performing in "The Artist is Present" at the Museum of Modern Art, May 2010

Marina Abramović (b. 1946) performing in "The Artist is Present" at the Museum of Modern Art, May 2010

STEP 14: HAS SALE PRICE BECOME A MEASURE OF AN ARTWORKS VALUE?

- (CLICK) The question here is a negative one. **Has sale price become a measure of an artworks value?** Do we measure the value of a work of art by how much it sells for? If so how can an artist escape from this market-driven valuation of what they do? One way is performance art because it only exists for the length of the performance, it cannot be packaged and resold except perhaps as a video but that does not capture the uniqueness of the performance.
- Performance may be scripted or unscripted, random or carefully orchestrated; spontaneous or otherwise carefully planned with or without audience participation.
- **The aim in a way is to destroy the power of the art market.**
- From March 14 to May 31, **2010**, the **Museum of Modern Art** held a major retrospective and performance recreation of Marina Abramović's work, the biggest exhibition of performance art in MoMA's history. During the run of the exhibition, Abramović performed *The Artist Is Present*, a 736 and a half hour static, silent piece, in which she sat immobile in the museum's atrium while spectators were invited to take turns sitting opposite her.
- Abramović sat in a rectangle drawn with tape in the floor and visitors waiting in line were invited to sit individually across from the artist while she maintained eye contact with them. Visitors began crowding the atrium within days of the

show opening, some gathering before the exhibit opened each morning to rush for a more preferable place in the line to sit with Abramović.

- Most visitors sat with the artist for five minutes or less and the line attracted no attention from museum security except for the last day of the exhibition when a visitor vomited in line and another began to disrobe. Tensions among visitors in line could have arisen from an understanding that for every minute each person in line spent with Abramović, there would be that many fewer minutes in the day for those further back in line to spend with the artist.
- Abramović sat across from 1,545 sitters; sitters were asked not to touch or speak to the artist. She would not react except if a sitter then she would cry.

NOTES

- Due to the strenuous nature of sitting for hours at a time, art-enthusiasts have speculated as to whether Abramović wore an adult diaper to eliminate the need to move to urinate. Others have highlighted the movements she made in between sitters as a focus of analysis, as the only variations in the artist between sitters were when she would cry if a sitter cried and her moment of physical contact with one of the earliest visitors to the exhibition. By the end of the exhibit, hundreds of visitors were lining up outside the museum overnight to secure a spot in line the next morning. Abramović concluded the performance by slipping from the chair where she was seated and rising to a cheering crowd more than ten people deep.
- A support group for the "sitters," "Sitting with Marina," was established on Facebook, as was the blog "Marina Abramović made me cry." The Italian photographer Marco Anelli took portraits of every person who sat opposite Abramović, which were published on Flickr, compiled in a book and featured in an exhibition at the Danziger Gallery in New York.
- Abramović said the show changed her life "completely – every possible element, every physical emotion," and that Lady Gaga saw it helped boost her popularity: "So the kids from 12 and 14 years old to about 18, the public who normally don't go to the museum, who don't give a shit about performance art or don't even know what it is, started coming because of Lady Gaga. And they saw the show and then they started coming back. And that's how I get a whole new audience." In September 2011, a video game version of Abramović's performance was released by Pippin Barr.

- **Performance art has never been an easy way to make a living**, even by the dire standards of artists. Collectors can't hang it on their walls or, perhaps more important, sell it at a profit. The form is innately ephemeral and self-consciously defies definition; many of the medium's stars, including Abramović, make works based on time, space, their own bodies, and their relationship to an audience. "If I can change human consciousness, even the slightest bit, this is my job," she says.
- She lived in a **black van for five years** and then **started teaching** but earned very little. "There were moments where I wake up and wanted to switch on light, and there was **no light** because I didn't pay bills, or no heat," she recalls. "I just lie on the bed and **laugh and laugh** and laugh and think this is really disaster but, OK, let's start the day and see what I can do." Now she is famous she sells prints and videos of her performances and lives on gifts from wealthy friends.
- The top ten prices (as far as known) are William de Kooning ~\$300m (2015), Paul Gauguin ~\$300 (2015), Paul Cézanne \$259m (2011), Jackson Pollock ~\$200m (2015), Mark Rothko \$186m (2014), Rembrandt \$180m (2015), Pablo Picasso \$179.4m (2015), Amedeo Modigliani \$170.4m (2015), Jackson Pollock \$164.3m (2006), Willem de Kooning \$161.4m (2006).
- **None are British artists.** In the top 50 the only British artist to appear is **Francis Bacon** with three works (\$144.7m the highest price ever paid at an auction, \$94.8m and \$81.9m). The highest prices for British female artist were **Bridget Riley** *Chant 2*, \$5m (2008), **Tracy Emin** *My Bed*, \$4.4m (2014), **Jenny Saville** *Plan*, \$3.5m (2014).

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<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-27/marina-abramovic-tries-to-monetize-performance-art>



Banksy, *Dismaland*, 2015, Weston-super-Mare

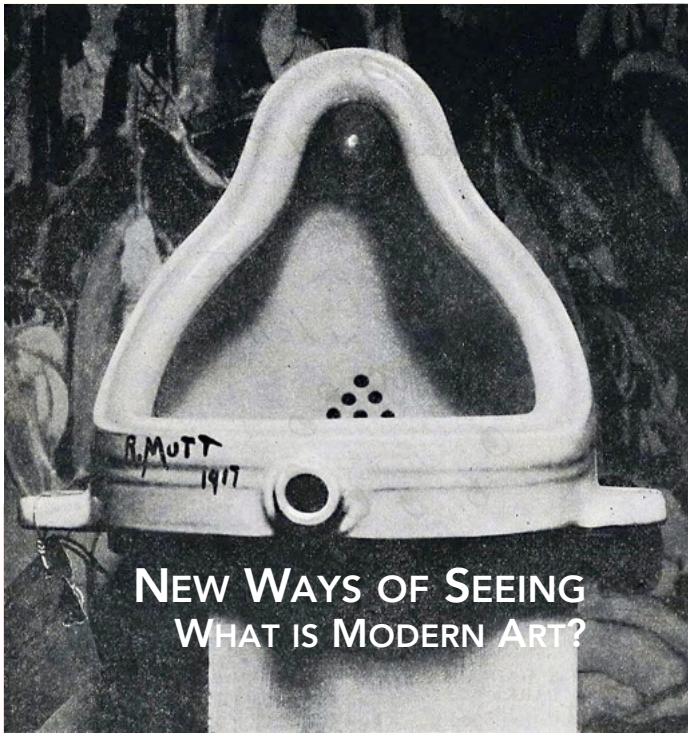
Can art be taken to the streets?

Banksy, *Dismaland*, 2015, Weston-super-Mare

STEP 15: CAN ART BE TAKEN TO THE STREETS?

- My last question.
- On 21 August 2015 Banksy opened Dismaland, a large scale group show lampooning Disneyland and it closed permanently just over a month later on 27 September 2015. The "theme park" was located in Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, England.
- Banksy wrote, '**When you go to an art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires'**
- (CLICK) The question is: "Can art be taken to the streets?", that is can we escape the gallery, the dealer, the exhibition and art for multimillionaires and really engage with the everyday life?
- It was a traditional Banksy work in that it was shrouded in secrecy before it opened and the themes were the apocalypse, anti-consumerism, and a social critique of celebrity culture, immigration, and law enforcement. The bulk of the artwork was created by dozens of artists.
- The brochure says, "**Are you looking for an alternative to the soulless sugar-coated banality of the average family day out? Or just somewhere cheaper. Then this is the place for you—a chaotic new world where you can escape from mindless escapism.**"
- The park is staffed by morose Dismaland employees who are uninterested in being helpful or remotely informative. Entrance to the event requires an


uncomfortably, intentionally awkward security screening, and of course, you exit through the gift shop.



NEW WAYS OF SEEING WHAT IS MODERN ART?

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- I don't think modern art is to do with answers which is why I have framed it in a series of questions. There is no right answer but I hope the questions have provoked some thoughts and at least made you smile when looking at some of the works.
- Thank you for your time, interest and attention and I will be bringing you another talk soon as part of my series on Western art.



FURTHER NOTES

- The following pages list the major art movements of the twentieth century.

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, 1935, 299.7 × 246.9 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York



INTERNATIONAL ART MOVEMENTS AND STYLES

- **43 Group:** A modern art movement formed in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1943 by a group of young, pro-independence painters who were committed to promoting a Sri Lankan form of modernism.
- **85 New Wave:** Coined by the curator and critic Gao Minglu, 85 New Wave defined a nationwide avant-garde movement that emerged in China in the mid-1980s.
- **798 Art Zone** (also known as Dashanzi Art District): An artistic community based in an old industrial area of North-East Beijing.
- Object art is used to describe artworks which explore themes that transgress and threaten our sense of cleanliness and propriety particularly referencing the body and bodily functions.
- **Abstraction-Création:** Association of abstract artists set up in Paris in 1931 with the aim of promoting abstract art through group exhibitions. It embraced all abstract art but tended towards the more austere forms such as Concrete art, Constructivism and Neo-Plasticism. In Britain members of the modernist groupings the Seven and Five Society and Unit One, kept in close touch with Abstraction-Création. Their chief members were Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Paul Nash and John Piper.
- **Angry Penguins** was a modernist literary and artistic movement that sought to shake up the entrenched cultural establishment of Australia in the 1940s. It was the victim of a literary hoax when M.H. Harris published

a set of concocted modernist poems later found to be obscene. His trial set back modernism in Australia.

- **Artists' International Association** was an exhibiting society founded in London in 1933, which held exhibitions and events to promote and support various left-of centre political causes.
- **Bauhaus**, was an art school in Germany that combined crafts and the fine arts, and was famous for the approach to design that it publicised and taught. It operated from 1919 to 1933. It was founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar and later included Wassily Kandinsky from Der Blaue Reiter.
- **Bloomsbury Group** name commonly used to identify a circle of intellectuals and artists who lived in Bloomsbury, near central London, in the period 1904–40. It included Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry and Duncan Grant as well as Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, Virginia Woolf and Clive Bell.
- **De Stijl** was a Dutch art movement also known as Neoplasticism that was founded in 1917 and included Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian.
- **Der Blaue Reiter** (The Blue Rider) was an art movement lasting from 1911 to 1914. The group was founded by a number of Russian emigrants, including Wassily Kandinsky and native German artists, such as Franz Marc and August Macke. The name came from Wassily Kandinsky's Der Blaue Reiter painting of 1903.
- **Die Brücke** (the Bridge) was formed in 1905 by a group of four German artists, led by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in the city of Dresden. This was arguably the founding organization for the German Expressionist movement, though they did not use the word itself. A few years later, in 1911, a like-minded group of young artists formed Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) in Munich.
- **British Surrealism** was formed in 1936, see Surrealism.
- **British War Artists** include David Bomberg, Frank Brangwyn, George Clausen, Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis, John Nash, Paul Nash, Christopher Nevinson, William Orpen and Stanley Spencer.
- **Camden Town Group:** English Post-Impressionist artists active 1911-1913. They gathered frequently at the studio of painter Walter Sickert in the Camden Town area of London. It included Harold

Gilman, Spencer Gore, Lucien Pissarro (the son of French Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro), Wyndham Lewis, Augustus John and Charles Ginner. Influences included Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin.

- **Cloisonnism** is a style of post-Impressionist painting with bold and flat forms separated by dark contours. The term was coined by critic Edouard Dujardin on the occasion of the Salon des Indépendants, in March 1888.
- **Concrete Art** is art that is entirely free from any basis in observed reality and has no symbolic meaning. The term was introduced by Theo van Doesberg in *Manifesto of Concrete Art* (1930). Max Bill said the aim of Concrete art was 'to represent abstract thoughts in a sensuous and tangible form'. It is very close to Constructivism.
- **Constructivism**, an austere branch of abstract art founded by Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchenko in Russia around 1915. It directly reflects the industrial world. Tatlin was influenced by Picasso's cubist constructions that he saw in 1913. In the 1923 manifesto it said, 'The material formation of the object is to be substituted for its aesthetic combination. The object is to be treated as a whole and thus will be of no discernible 'style' but simply a product of an industrial order like a car, an aeroplane and such like. Constructivism is a purely technical mastery and organisation of materials.' It was suppressed in Russia in the 1920s and brought to the West by Naum Gabo and his brother Antoine Pevsner.
- **Cubism** was a revolutionary new approach to representing reality invented in around 1907/08 by artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque who aimed to bring different views of subjects (usually objects or figures) together in the same picture, resulting in paintings that appear fragmented and abstracted. Cubism was one of the most influential styles of the twentieth century. It is generally agreed to have begun around 1907 with Picasso's celebrated painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* which included elements of cubist style. The name 'cubism' seems to have derived from a comment made by the critic Louis Vauxcelles who, on seeing some of Georges Braque's paintings exhibited in Paris in 1908, described them as reducing everything to 'geometric outlines, to cubes'. By showing different viewpoints at the same time the three dimensional nature

of the object was suggested at the same time as emphasizing the flatness of the canvas. 'A head', said Picasso, 'is a matter of eyes, nose, mouth, which can be distributed in any way you like'. Cubism divides into Analytic from 1908-12, the initial phase of fragmented images in blacks greys and ochres and Synthetic from 1912-14 with simpler shapes, brighter colours and often including collaged real elements such as newspaper cuttings. The inclusion of real objects was one of the most important ideas in modern art.

- **Dada** was an art movement formed during the First World War in Zurich in negative reaction to the horrors and folly of the war. The art, poetry and performance produced by dada artists is often satirical and nonsensical in nature. Dada artists felt war called into question every aspect of society and their aim was to destroy all traditional values and assumptions. Dada was also anti-bourgeois and aligned with the radical left. The founder of dada was a writer, Hugo Ball. In 1916 he started a satirical night-club in Zurich, the Cabaret Voltaire. Dada became an international movement and was the basis of surrealism in Paris after the war. Leading artists associated with it include Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Kurt Schwitters. Duchamp's questioning of the fundamentals of Western art had a profound subsequent influence.
- **De Stijl** was founded in 1917 by two pioneers of abstract art, Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg. De Stijl means style in Dutch. The first issue of the magazine De Stijl defined the term neo-Plasticism. Mondrian left in 1923 after Van Doesburg started to use diagonal lines.
- **Der Blaue Reiter** was an art movement lasting from 1911 to 1914, fundamental to Expressionism, along with Die Brücke which was founded in 1905. The group was founded by a number of Russian emigrants, including Wassily Kandinsky, Alexej von Jawlensky and native German artists, such as Franz Marc and August Macke. They considered that the principles of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München, a group Kandinsky had founded in 1909, had become too strict and traditional.
- **Die Brücke (The Bridge)** was a group of German expressionist artists formed in Dresden in 1905. Founding members included Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. Later members

were Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein and Otto Mueller. The seminal group had a major impact on the evolution of modern art in the 20th century and the creation of expressionism.

- **Direct carving** refers to the sculptor carving the finished sculpture without using intermediate models or maquettes. The sculptor typically works from memory, though some such as Cornelia Van A. Chapin would carve with a model in front of them. The practice gained prominence in the early 20th century and, in some respects, was seen as a return to the direct approach used in primitive art.
- **Euston Road School** is a term applied to a group of English painters, active either as staff or students at the School of Drawing and Painting in London between 1937 and 1939. The School was founded by William Coldstream and Victor Pasmore and Graham Bell was a substantial theoretical influence on the teachers. The emphasis was on acute representational painting based on observation. The School emphasised naturalism and realism, in contrast to the various schools of avant-garde art then prevalent. Many of the members were on the political left, and naturalism was seen as an attempt to make art more relevant and understandable to non-specialists and members of the public.
- **Expressionism** was a modernist movement before WW I, initially in poetry and painting, and originating in Germany. Its typical trait is to present the world solely from a subjective perspective, distorting it radically for emotional effect in order to evoke moods or ideas. Expressionist artists sought to express the meaning of emotional experience rather than physical reality.
- **Figurative art** describes artwork—particularly paintings and sculptures—that is clearly derived from real object sources, and are therefore by definition representational. Figurative art is not synonymous with figure painting (art that represents the human figure), although human and animal figures are frequent subjects. Nor is it a synonym for realism.
- **Futurism** was an Italian art movement that aimed to capture in art the dynamism and energy of the modern world. It was launched by the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1909. On 20 February he published his *Manifesto of Futurism* on the front page of the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*. He wrote, 'We declare...a new beauty, the

beauty of speed'. Chief artists associated with futurism were Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Gino Severini.

- **Group X** was a short lived group of British artists formed by Wyndham Lewis in 1920 to provide a continuing focus for avant-garde art in Britain following the First World War. It was an attempt to revive Wyndham Lewis's pre-war Vorticist group. One group exhibition was held in 1922.
- **Leeds Art Club** was founded in 1903 by Alfred Orage and Holbrook Jackson and was one of the leading centres for advanced modernist thinking. It was influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche, feminism, theosophy and the early Fabian Society. It was taken over by Frank Rutter and Michael Sadler and he used his personal link to Wassily Kandinsky to build up the largest collection of expressionist and abstract work at the time when such art was unknown or dismissed in London.
- **The London Group** was formed in 1913 from the merger of the Camden Town Group and the Fitzroy Street Group. It is one of the oldest artist led organisations in the world and famous members include Walter Sickert, Jacob Epstein, Wyndham Lewis, Barbara Hepworth, Frank Auerbach, David Bomberg, William Coldstream, Elizabeth Frink, Spencer Gore, Harold Gilman, David Hockney, L.S. Lowry, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Victor Pasmore, John Piper, Lucien Pissarro, Christopher Nevinson, Stanley Spencer and Euan Uglow.
- **Merz** is a nonsense word invented by the German dada artist Kurt Schwitters to describe his collage and assemblage works based on scavenged scrap materials. It is said to have come from 'Commerz Bank' which appeared on a piece of paper in one of his collages. Schwitters founded a dada group in Hanover where he was based from 1919. There he created his first Merzbau (Merz building). This was his own house, which he filled with about forty 'grottoes' – constructions actually attached to the interior fabric of the building and even extending through windows. In 1937 his work was judged degenerate and he fled to Norway and created a second merzbau. In 1940 he went to England and started a third Merzbau at Ambleside. The first was destroyed in the war, the second in a fire and the third left unfinished and is now in Hatton Gallery, Newcastle.
- **Naïve art or primitivism** is any form of visual art that is created by a

person who lacks the formal education and training that a professional artist undergoes (in anatomy, art history, technique, perspective, ways of seeing, etc.).

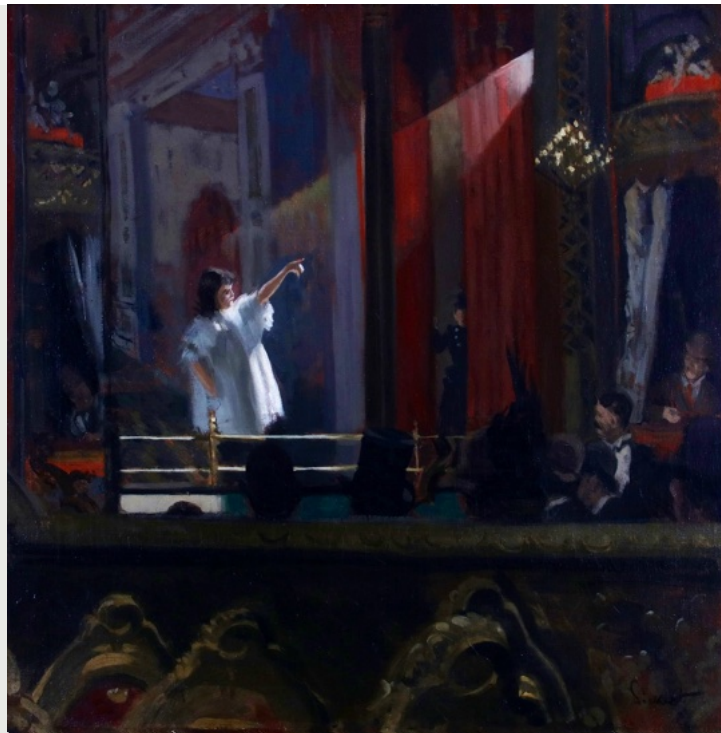
- **Neo-Impressionism** is a term coined by French art critic Félix Fénéon in 1886 to describe an art movement founded by Georges Seurat. It involves Divisionism (using contrasting colours side by side) and Pointillism (dots of colour, not necessarily contrasting).
- **Neo-Plasticism** is a term adopted by Piet Mondrian for his own abstract art which used only horizontal and vertical lines and primary colours. It is from the Dutch and means new art as painting and sculpture are plastic arts. It is also applied to the work of the De Stijl group until Mondrian left in 1923.
- **Neo-Romanticism** is often associated with Richard Wagner and has been applied to writers, painters, and composers who rejected, abandoned, or opposed realism, naturalism, or avant-garde modernism at various points in time from about 1840 down to the present.
- **Realism** in the arts is the attempt to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions, implausible, exotic and supernatural elements. It is not synonymous with Social Realism or Socialist Realism.
- **Pont Aven School** was inspired by Paul Gauguin and characterised by the use of bold colours and a choice of Symbolist subject matter.
- **Post-Impressionism** is the term used to refer to artists such as Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh and Paul Seurat.
- **Secession** refers to modernist art groups that rejected official academic art. The best known is the Vienna Secession formed in 1897 and including Gustav Klimt.
- **Seven and Five** was formed in London in 1919 and advocated the return to traditional pre-war techniques. Its first exhibition was in 1920 and it did not advocate a new 'ism' as it felt there had been too much pioneering work. In 1924 Ben Nicholson joined followed by other modernists including Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and later, John Piper. They effectively hijacked the group, expelling the non-modernists. In 1935 they renamed it the Seven and Five Abstract Group and held the first all abstract exhibition in Britain at

the Zwemmer Gallery in London.

- **Social Realism** refers to the work of artists who draw attention to the everyday conditions of the working class and the poor; social realists are critical of the social structures which maintain these conditions.
- **Socialist Realism** the official Soviet art form that was institutionalized by Joseph Stalin in 1934 and was later adopted by allied Communist parties worldwide.
- **Surrealism** was founded by French poet André Breton in Paris in 1924 and it became an international movement including British surrealism which formed in 1936. Surrealists were strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud (the founder of psychoanalysis) and his theories about the unconscious and the aim of the movement was to reveal the unconscious and reconcile it with rational life. Key artists involved in the movement were Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, René Magritte and Joan Miró. Two broad types of surrealism can be seen: the oneiric (dream-like imagery) and automatism (a process of making which unleashed the unconscious by drawing or writing without conscious thought). Some (such as Max Ernst) used new techniques such as frottage and collage to create unusual imagery.
- **Suprematism** is an art movement found by Kasimir Malevich around 1913. It was based on basic geometric forms, such as circles, squares, lines, and rectangles, painted in a limited range of colours. It was based on 'the supremacy of pure artistic feeling' rather than the visual depiction of objects.
- **Symbolism** used symbolic images to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind. It originated in late 19th-century France and Belgium, with important figures including Mallarmé, Maeterlinck, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Odilon Redon.
- **Synthetism** is a term used by post-Impressionist artists like Paul Gauguin and Émile Bernard to distinguish their work from Impressionism. Earlier, Synthetism has been connected to the term Cloisonnism, and later to Symbolism.
- **Unit One** was a group formed by Paul Nash in 1933 to promote modern art, architecture and design. At this point there were two major current in modern art, abstract art and surrealism and Nash embraced both. He held the International Surrealist Exhibition in

London in 1936. It also involved Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Edward Wadsworth.

- **Vorticism.** The Vorticists were a British avant-garde group formed in London in 1914 with the aim of creating art that expressed the dynamism of the modern world. Vorticist painting combines cubist fragmentation of reality with hard-edged imagery derived from the machine and the urban environment. It was founded by the artist, writer and polemicist Wyndham Lewis in 1914. Two issues of the magazine *Blast* were issued by Lewis. He was 'blasting' what he considered to be the effete-ness of British art and culture. Although it was a British form of Futurism Lewis was deeply hostile to the Futurists. WWI brought an end to Vorticism although Lewis tried to revive it in 1920 with Group X. In Britain the horrors of war brought about a rejection of the avant-garde and a 'return to order'.



Walter Richard Sickert, *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall, 1888-89*, private collection

Walter Richard Sickert, *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall, 1888-89*, private collection

SUMMARY OF BRITISH ART OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

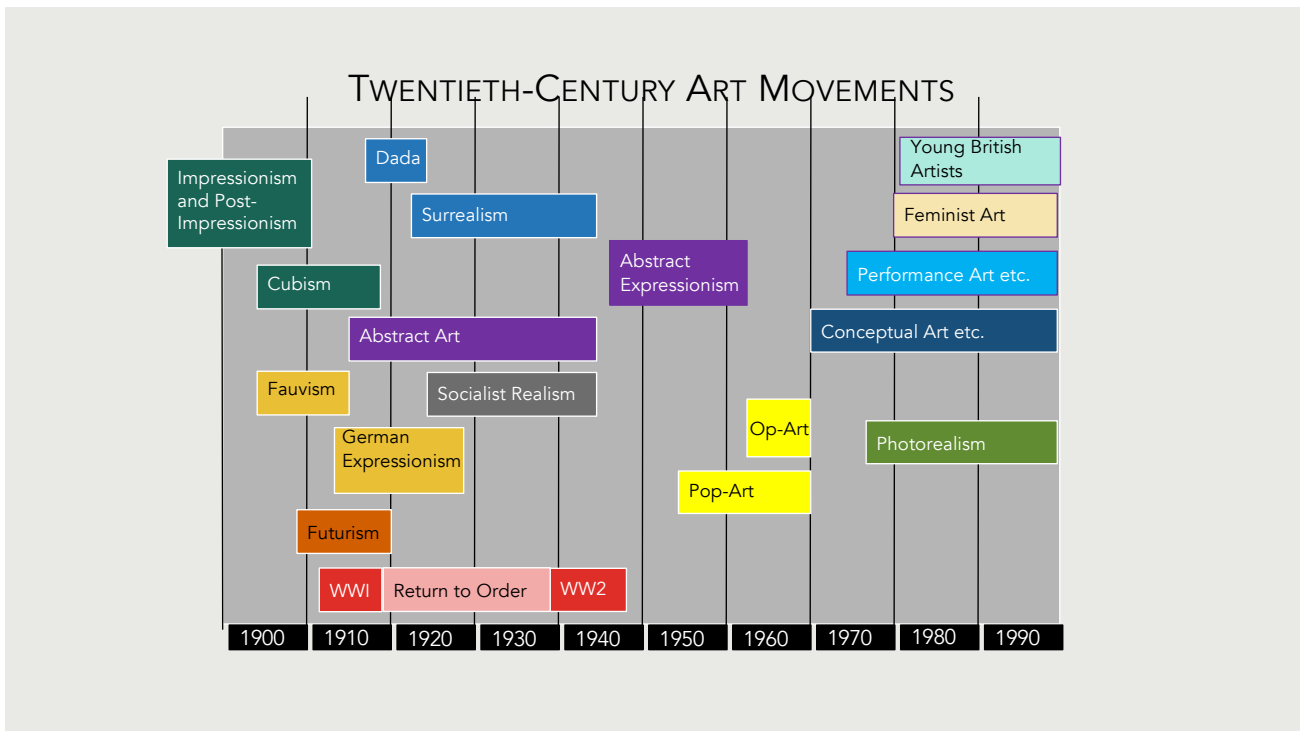
- As the nineteenth turned into the twentieth century mainstream British art as represented by the Royal Academy became increasingly conservative and fixed. This stranglehold continued when the late Victorian artist **Frank Dicksee** (1853-1928) was appointed president in 1924. This conservatism continued with the appointment the well known critic of modernism, **Alfred Munnings** (1878-1959), in 1944
- The American **John Singer Sargent** (1856-1925) was the most successful London portraitist at the start of the 20th century, with **Augustus John** (1878-1961) and **William Orpen** (1878-1931) rising stars. There were still very few women artists. **Gwen John's** (1876-1939) intimate portraits were not appreciated until decades after her death as her brother predicted.
- British attitudes to modern art were polarized and many artists and critics regarded French Impressionism as a 'subversive foreign influence' (Whittle; et al. (2005), *Creative Tension: British Art 1900-1950*).
- **Walter Sickert** (1860-1942) and the Camden Town Group were important factors in the development of a British style of Post-Impressionism with a strong strand of social comment. Important members of this group included **Harold Gilman** (1876-1919), **Spencer Gore** (1878-1914) and **Lucien Pissarro** (1863-1944, son of Camille Pissarro).
- Vorticism was a British modern art movement inspired by Italian Futurism and

founded by **Wyndham Lewis** (1882-1957). Members included **Jacob Epstein** (1880-1959), **David Bomberg** (1890-1957) and, at the periphery, **Christopher Nevinson** (1889-1946).

- The Sitwells artistic circle and the Bloomsbury Group included artists such as **Roger Fry** (1866-1934), **Vanessa Bell** (1879-1961), **Dora Carrington** (1893-1932) and **Duncan Grant** (1885-1978).
- The Slade School of Art run by **Henry Tonks** (1862-1937) had an enormous influence and many of his students became the leading artists of the twentieth century. Tonks was a professor at the Slade from 1892 to 1914 and again from 1918 to 1930.
- In 1933, a short-lived group known as Unit One included the sculptors **Henry Moore** (1898-1986) and **Barbara Hepworth** (1903-1975) and the painters **Ben Nicholson** (1894-1982) and **Paul Nash** (1889-1946).
- British modernism remained tentative and provisional until World War Two with just a few artists, such as **Ben Nicholson** and **Victor Pasmore** (1908-1998), keeping in touch with European developments.
- The reaction to the horrors of World War One resulted in a return to conventional techniques and subjects as in the work of **Paul Nash** and **Eric Ravilious** (1903-1942). **Stanley Spencer** (1891-1959) painted religious and mystical works and **Eric Gill** (1882-1940) produced elegant forms in an Art Deco style. In the 1930s the Euston Road School was a group of progressive 'realists' taught by **William Coldstream** (1908-1987). Also in the 1930s, Surrealism was popular influencing artists such as **Roland Penrose** (1900-1984).
- Fashionable portraitists included **Meredith Frampton** (1894-1984) in a hard-faced Art Deco classicism, **Augustus John**, and **Alfred Munnings** if horses were involved.

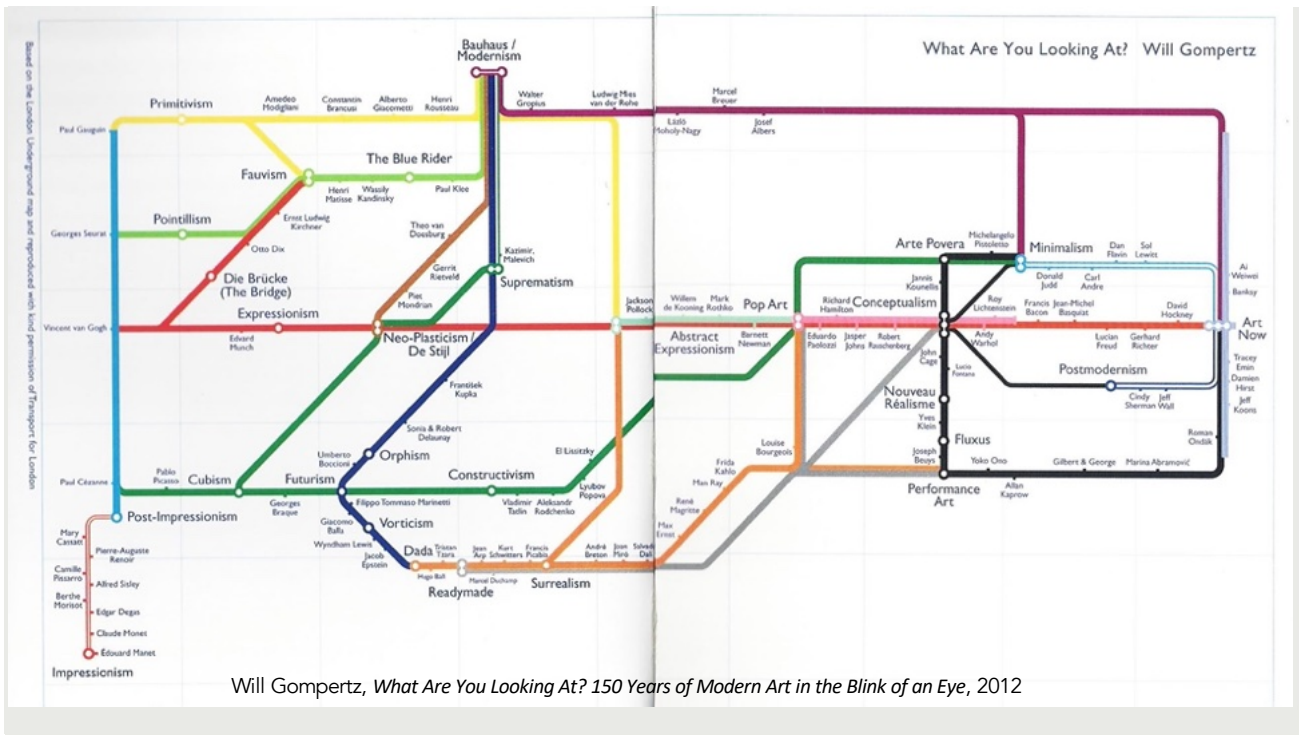
NOTES

- Much of Victorian art deals with accurate visual representation and it often has a strong story-telling element.
- Much of modern art deals with life's big questions, has a certain shock value, and is preoccupied with power, sex, mortality and bodily decay.



- The twentieth century was a time when art was rethought from the basics many times. As a result there are many intertwined art movements.
- Some art movements are self-defined and consciously constructed by a group of artists, some are labelled as such, often using a disparaging term, by art critics and some are constructed by art historians later in order to group like-minded artists in a convenient way.
- Major twentieth-century art movements.
 - Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.
 - Cubism
 - Fauvism, German expressionism, Die Brücke, Der Blaue Reiter
 - Abstract art, De Stijl, Constructivism and Suprematism
 - Socialist Realism
 - Dada
 - Surrealism
 - Futurism and Vorticism
 - Abstract Expressionism, Action painting and Colour-Field painting
 - Pop-Art
 - Photorealism, Hyperrealism
 - Op Art
 - Neo-expressionism
 - Conceptual art, Fluxus, Earth Art, Minimalism and Post-Modernism

- Performance art, happenings, installation art
- Video art, media and digital art



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