

THE PRACTICE OF PORTRAITURE

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers



Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)

Patrick Heron, signed, dated 1949

Oil on canvas

NPG 4467

© Estate of Patrick Heron /DACs/Collection

National Portrait Gallery

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

Teachers' Notes



We will consider works in different media and a number of approaches to making portraits of a selection of people, for a variety of reasons.

The images range from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. There is background information about the portrait and the sitter, each image can be viewed on the web, cut and copied from there, but is also available in better quality print form, from our shop. In addition to this the **Woodward Portrait Explorer on CD-Rom**, is an interactive catalogue of the Gallery's Primary Collection of 10,000 portraits.

Together with the portraits is a list of questions designed to provoke discussion about each image, and two suggestions for practical art projects which can be done in connection with the individual works.

Portrait projects suggested are conceived with demands of Key Stage 3, 4 and G.C.S.E. in mind, but the approach is designed to welcome all levels of debate around the diverse chronological selection. This resource is particularly relevant to Key Stage 3, Unit 10 gen. and other specific units from Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, (QCA).

The National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1856, and the intention was that it should provide a source of inspiration for contemporary portraitists to *'soar above the mere attempt at producing a likeness, and to give that higher tone which was essential to maintain the true dignity of portrait painting as an art.'* It was to be an example to future generations. During a debate about the Gallery in the House of Lords, Lord Palmerston declared – *'There cannot, I feel convinced, be a greater incentive to mental exertion, to noble actions, to good conduct on the part of the living, than to see before them the features of those who have done things worthy of our admiration, and those whose example we are more induced to imitate when they are brought before us in the visible and tangible shape of portraits.'*

In other words, the Gallery exists to encourage the art of portraiture and inspire us through the very act of looking at portraits in this broad and diverse collection.

Based on teaching experience at the National Portrait Gallery in certain cases where key terms or words may well not be within the pupils' vocabulary we have suggested an appropriate substitute to use in discussion with students.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

Teachers' Notes, Contents



1. The abstract portrait

Key Stage 3
Unit 8A Objects and Viewpoints
Unit 8B Animating Art, Section 2



Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)

Patrick Heron, signed, dated 1949

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Collection National Portrait Gallery



2. Photographic portraiture and the manipulation of the image

Key Stage 3
Unit 8B Animating Art



Hugh (Binkie) Beaumont (1908-73) with Angela Baddeley (1904-76) and Emlyn Williams (1905-87), in Terence Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*

Angus McBean, signed by the
photographer on the mount, 1947

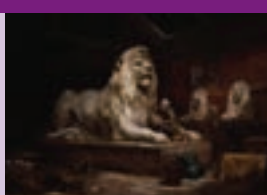
NPG P59

© Harvard University, courtesy of
Harvard Theatre Collection.
Bromide print



3. The artist's studio

Key Stage 3
Unit 8C Shared View
Unit 9C Personal Places, Public Spaces



Sir Edwin Henry Landseer (1802-73)

John Ballantyne, c.1865

Oil on canvas

NPG 835



4. The group portrait: compositional tricks

Key Stage 3
Unit 9A Life Events



The Sharp Family

Johan Zoffany, 1779-81

Oil on canvas

NPG L169

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

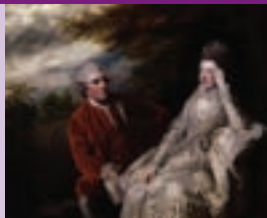
Teachers' Notes, Contents



5. The double portrait

Key Stage 3

Unit 7C Recreating Landscape, Section 3



**David Garrick (1717-79) and
Eva Maria Veigel (1724 -1822)**

Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1772-3

Oil on canvas

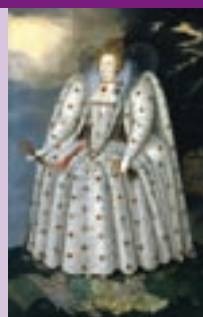
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6. Symbols & political references

Key Stage 3

Unit 9B Change your style



Elizabeth I (1533-1603)

Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger,
(inscribed) c.1592

Oil on canvas

NPG 2561



7. The miniature, the family and the self-portrait

Key Stage 3

Unit 7A Self-image



Isaac Oliver (1565-1617) c.1590
Water-based paint on vellum, oval
NPG 4852

Peter Oliver (his son) (1594 -1648)
c. 1625-1630

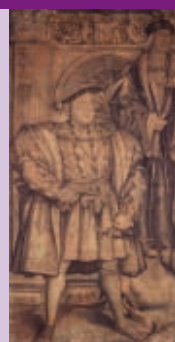
Water-based paint on vellum, oval
NPG 4853



8. Drawing

Key Stage 3

Unit 7B What's in a building?



**Henry VIII (1491-1547)
and Henry VII (1457-1509)**

Hans Holbein the Younger, 1536-1537
Ink and watercolour on paper
NPG 4027

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

1. The abstract portrait

Key Stage 3

Unit 8A Objects and Viewpoints

Unit 8B Animating Art, Section 2

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)

Patrick Heron, 1949

Oil on canvas

NPG 4467

© Estate of Patrick Heron

DACS/ Collection National

Portrait Gallery)



American by birth, British by adoption, T.S. Eliot is possibly the greatest poet of the twentieth-century to write in English. The publication of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915) and 'The Waste Land' (1922) signalled a new classical spirit in English poetry which had a profound influence on young writers of the time, and has remained of supreme importance in the literary tradition ever since. This is one of five abstract portraits by the painter and art critic Patrick Heron in the Gallery's Collection. Eliot is portrayed simultaneously face on and in profile.

The others are painted in a similar fashion. Patrick Heron's dual role as critic and artist, together with his enthusiasm for American Abstract Expressionist painters such as Mark Rothko and Robert Motherwell, and Clement Greenberg, the art critic who championed their work, had a profound effect on the way that abstract painting was considered and developed in Britain after the war.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

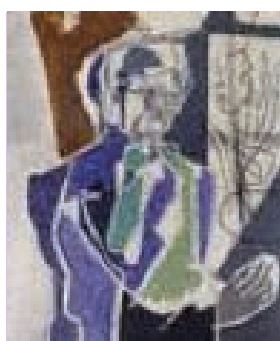
1. The abstract portrait

Activity

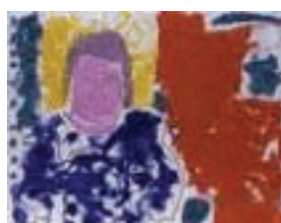
Discussion points



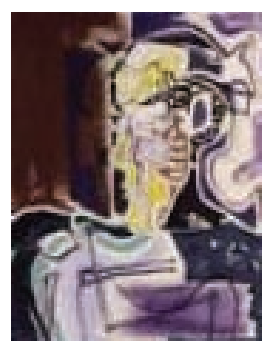
- Do you think that this portrait would be any good for purposes of recognition?
- How does the artist combine profile and full-face in one image?
- Look at the colours, how could you describe this palette (range of colour)? Notice how Heron uses both black and white paint in order to emphasise salient (characteristic, such as the hooked nose) features.
- Examine the brushwork, look how in some places the colour is very thin and in others impasto (thickly applied).
- Do you think that there is an outline of a cat on the poet's right shoulder?
- Find a copy of Eliot's poems about cats; *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. Do you think there could be visual connection here?
- What can you make out hovering above his other shoulder?
- Look at the pattern, how does this contribute towards establishing the mood of the portrait?



Sir Herbert Read
Patrick Heron, 1950
NPG 4654



Dame Antonia Susan Byatt (Portrait of A S Byatt : Red, Yellow, Green and Blue : 24 September 1997)
Patrick Heron, 1997
NPG 6414



Self-portrait
Patrick Heron, 1951
NPG 6540

- Other portraits by Patrick Heron in the National Portrait Gallery's Collection.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

1. The abstract portrait

Activity

Project A



Choose someone to be your model. Onto acetate make a simple line drawing of the full face and then of both profiles. Spend some time projecting these drawings simultaneously - and in different combinations; two or three together with perhaps some variation in alignments.



Choose the amalgamated portrait that you think works best, re-draw it as projected onto paper suitable for painting on. Now work out a colour scheme appropriate to the character of your original sitter, and paint a portrait in the manner of Heron.

Project B



Have a look at some Cubist paintings by the artists Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, compare the colour range used in their work with that of Patrick Heron. Make a series of large portraits in paint, painting freely and boldly. Don't worry about working from life, make up different heads and torsos as you go along. Try and do five heads, all roughly 20cm high, and paint them different colours, having fun trying out, for example blue and yellow skin. When dry, cut out the features, following the lines indicating the different parts of the face on the Heron example. Paint the heads from different viewpoints.



Choose features from your different paintings, arrange them on another piece of paper and stick them down. Using black and/or white paint, work into your picture re-enforcing aspects and making the overall image more cohesive.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

2. Photographic portraiture and the manipulation of the image

Key Stage 3

Unit 8A Objects and Viewpoints

Unit 8B Animating Art, Section 2

Hugh (Binkie) Beaumont with Angela Baddeley and Emlyn Williams

Angus McBean, signed by the
photographer on the mount, 1947

Bromide print

NPG P59

© Harvard University, courtesy of
Harvard Theatre Collection



At the age of twenty-eight 'Binkie' Beaumont together with his associate H.M. Tennent, founded the firm of theatrical producers H.M. Tennent Ltd. Beaumont was the moving spirit behind the company. This firm dominated the West End theatre scene for almost twenty years, and during that period Beaumont had the power to make or break the career of almost any actor. From the start he had the friendship and support of Sir John Gielgud and Sir Noël Coward, and this combined with his exceptional managerial skills and perfectionism, resulted in a run of highly successful productions. Above all, the firm of Tennents became a byword for superbly-designed comedies with starry casts.

Angus McBean began his career in the theatre as an odd-job man, making masks and building scenery, but turned to full-time theatre photography in 1936, and known as *one-shot* McBean, was virtually the official photographer to Tennents. His work is characterised by its wit and imagination, and, as he himself put it, *the use of surrealism for its fun value*. In this characteristically inventive photograph Beaumont is shown as puppeteer, manipulating Angela Baddeley as Catherine Winslow and Emlyn Williams as Sir Robert Morton, in the first production of Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*, which had opened at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, in May 1946. It is the perfect image of Beaumont who all his life cultivated anonymity, and yet was a domineering personality, one in whom, according to Tyrone Guthrie, 'the iron fist was wrapped in fifteen pastel-shaded velvet gloves'. It was published in *The Tatler and Bystander* in August 1947.

2. Photographic portraiture and the manipulation of the image

Activity

Discussion points



- If you were simply to look at the photograph, what relationship do you think the person in the top half of the photograph has with those below? What is he doing? Can you see how the picture reflects Binkie Beaumont's work, suggesting the manipulation of the actors?
- How do you think that this photograph was made? Remember that this is not a digital print. Make some comments about the relationship between power and scale. Think of other examples of people being portrayed larger or smaller than life size.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the photographic and the painted portrait. If you were an actor, which medium would you choose for your portrait?
- What can you see in this photograph which can help you to date it?
- How long do you think that photography has existed as a portrait medium?
- Have you ever heard the word 'surreal', what do you think this could mean? Try and find out about 'surrealist' artists such as Salvador Dali, Max Ernst and Man Ray.
- How true to life is the photographic portrait?
- What skills do photographers and painters have in common?

Links



What is Surrealism? This lecture was given by André Breton in Brussels, 1st June 1934.
www.surrealist.com/what_is_surrealism.aspx

2. Photographic portraiture and the manipulation of the image

Activity

Project A



Think about three different kinds of profession (for example a doctor, an artist and a florist) and the type of qualities or personality traits required for these professions. What type of clues could be included in a work to help portray these professions visually?

For example, the actors in the photograph are playing to us (as an audience) but are also being 'played with' by the producer, who is literally 'pulling their strings', as the title of the photograph suggests. Make rough drawings and notes, discuss your thoughts in order for you to choose the best idea. Either set up your idea and take a photograph, or, make a much more detailed drawing (or collage) of it. Try drawing onto acetate sheets and using an over-head projector, or a computer or a photocopier, play around with the scale of the drawings until you invent an image that relies on two types of scale for its success - just as in the McBean.

Project B



Shakespeare wrote :

*'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players...'*

perhaps implying that no one shows their real feelings, and we all pretend to be different from what we really are, masking our real feelings or disguising our personalities. This project is about trying to make a portrait of someone in a position of power over you - it could be the head of the school, your parent, someone at your local police station, or even someone who appears to be powerful perhaps because of their physical strength. Discover ways to suggest the power they possess within your image.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

3. The artist's studio

Key Stage 3

Unit 9C Personal Places, Public Spaces

Unit 8C Shared View

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer (1802-73)

John Ballantyne, c.1865

Oil on canvas

NPG 835



Sir Edwin Henry Landseer was one of the most popular painters of the Victorian period. His works, especially his animal pictures, were much appreciated by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, as well as by thousands of ordinary people, who bought copies of them. He is probably best known for the paintings which attribute human emotions and actions to animals, such as his *Monarch of the Glen*; an arresting portrait of a stag with antlers set in the Scottish Highlands, but he also painted dramatic scenes of outdoor life as well as a number of highly perceptive portraits.

This painting, one of a series by John Ballantyne depicting artists at work in their studios shows Landseer. He is working in the studio of the sculptor Baron Marochetti on the clay models for the bronze lions he created for the base of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square.

The picture was exhibited in 1865 much to Landseer's fury as it was to be another two years before the lions were formally unveiled, and he did not want them to be seen in an unfinished state.

Ballantyne had to withdraw the picture and he later altered the lions to conform to the appearance of the finished casts.

3. The artist's studio

Activity

Discussion points



- Look at how big the lions are in relation to Landseer, notice how his own dog is also included, possibly as another visual reference to scale. Dogs are traditional symbols of loyalty, but are often used to suggest movement within a painting.
- What other aspects of this painting underline the issue of scale?
- Can you spot the real lion skin, the reference paintings and the measuring callipers (specialist three dimensional measuring instruments)? Do you think that Ballantyne is convincing in his rendering of the artist at work?
- Notice how the work is composed. Try and draw a diagram of this.
- Discuss the lighting within the work, and how the deep shadows of the ceiling throw the central lion into the forefront of the painting.
- Have you noticed any public sculpture in your area? Do you think that this art form serves a useful purpose? Who do you think pays for public sculpture? What do you think is the most durable material to use for outdoor sculpture?

3. The artist's studio

Activity

Project A



Visit a zoo, a city or country farm or another place where live animals are kept. You could also use a pet for this project. Make drawings in a variety of media - pencil, chalk, pastels, of your subject, if possible concentrate on large animals that are at rest in some way.



If you can't get to a zoo, an alternative might be to work from a video of a wild-life programme about similar animals. The important thing to concentrate on is the size of the beasts in relation to the human scale. Make sure that your drawings show the muscles, the fur and if possible all sides of the creature.



Make clay or papier mâché models based on your drawings. Make further drawings of your colleagues at work on their sculptures. Further paintings could be made from these.

Project B



Visit either Trafalgar Square in London, or your local town centre or a cemetery. If you go to Trafalgar Square, notice the plinth, known as the 'Fourth Plinth', which is reserved for contemporary work by living artists. Think about the sculpture that you could make for it.



Make drawings of the sculptures that you find. Concentrate on incorporating other things which will reflect the scale of the sculpture. Make further drawings which show how the works are placed in relation to the overall architectural planning of the space. Back in the studio, make drawings or collages which outline alternative proposals for the siting of Landseer's lions, either in London or elsewhere in England or the world - for example at the base of the Eiffel Tower. Make further suggestions for alternatives to his lions.



Look at the sculpture of Sir Jacob Epstein, Claes Oldenburg and Eduardo Paolozzi for a feel of twentieth-century public sculpture. Have you ever noticed any public sculpture? Did it enhance the place in which it was sited? Have you seen any contemporary public sculpture?

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

4. The group portrait: compositional tricks

Key Stage 3 Unit 9A Life Events

The Sharp Family

The Sharp Family
Johan Zoffany, 1779-81
Oil on Canvas
NPG L169



The musical sons and daughters of Sir Thomas Sharp, formed a united family group who from the 1750s gave concerts from on board their sailing barge, *The Apollo*, on the Thames at Fulham, in the background you can see All Saints Church which is still there today. The fact that the flying union flag does not contain St Patrick's Cross, helps us to confirm that the painting pre-dates the political union with Ireland.

The Sharp orchestra is commemorated in this family 'conversation piece'. This is an art historical term describing an informal painting consisting of more than one portrait, a genre speciality of Johan Zoffany.

The work was painted for William Sharp (1729-1820), surgeon to George III (1738-1820), who stands wearing 'Windsor' uniform at the stern of the boat, holding the tiller in one hand and raising his hat with the other. Seated below him with their daughter Mary, who holds a kitten, is his wife, her hand holding that of her sister-in-law, Mrs James Sharp. At the far left are, Dick Spikeman the cabin boy and William Lee, the boatman, in front of whom sits James Sharp holding a wind instrument, called a serpent (an early type of bassoon see: Bate Collection link on the next page), beside him stands his daughter Catherine and to her right is Granville Sharp.

Seated at the harpsichord is his sister Mrs Elizabeth Prowse, who recorded in her diary:

'1779 Nov 12. Sir: F and the children left me, as all the party was sitting to Zoffany for the family picture, and when I go to Town I am to be added to the party. Nov. 29. I set out for London and my picture was added to the group. 1780 Dec. Near Xmas Zoffany came to finish my picture and brother G(ranville) came down with him in order to have it finished for the exhibition in the Spring...' (The work was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1781.)

Her sister Frances sits at the front holding a sheet of music, her brother John Sharp, who was an Archdeacon (which is why he is in clerical dress), rests his arm on the back of her chair; above them their sister Judith sits holding a theorbo, which is a double necked lute. In the foreground is Zoffany's dog, Roma, who appears in other conversation pieces by the artist. (See NPG 6133)

Zoffany was expert at painting group portraits, often using a triangular structure to anchor the figures and make a cohesive pictorial arrangement.

The different poses, minutely recorded expressions and intricate detail, all work together to animate the ensemble.

4. The group portrait: compositional tricks

Activity

Discussion points



- Discuss what a flag can convey about those who fly/use it?
- What do you think a 'Windsor' uniform is?
- Who do you think is the most important figure in this group composition?
- Why have you chosen this person?
- Which clues has the artist given to help you make this decision?
- What overall shape underpins the entire group?
- Where can you see this shape echoed within the painting?
- What about the colours employed? How do these operate to knit the work together? Zoffany specialised in the group portrait, and enjoyed adding particular details specific to his sitters' clothing and location. Look closely at how these people are dressed, how the material of their clothing flows, what their hair and wigs look like.
- How do their poses reflect the instruments that they are playing.?
- Can you think of a twentieth-century situation similar to the one portrayed (not necessarily on a barge) - perhaps during the making of a film or a pop video?
- Discuss the complications of painting a group family portrait.

Links



You can view other images of early musical instruments by visiting:
The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, Oxford www.bate.ox.ac.uk
The Horniman Museum, London www.horniman.ac.uk

4. The group portrait: compositional tricks

Activity

Project A



With reproductions of your favourite band or team, cut out individuals and arrange them so that they form a rough triangle. Stick them down on paper, cut round the edges of the figures. Now, using your imagination, invent three completely different backdrops for your group.



Watch out for problems of scale - decide if your group needs to dominate the picture or be lost in their location - perhaps they are playing in Egypt and the pyramids serve as the background. Do you put your group in a position where they are dwarfed by these well-known architectural and historic monuments or at a distance so that the exoticism of the place informs the atmosphere of your work?



When you have made the three backgrounds, photocopy your group onto each of these, and reduce the final image to the size of a CD container.

You could also do this project on a computer using Photoshop or a similar computer programme.

4. The group portrait: compositional tricks

Activity

Project B



Look at the hair of the people portrayed in the picture. In the eighteenth century it was fashionable for men to wear wigs and for women to augment their own hair with false pieces. This project is about how wigs, hair and hats, affect the shape of the human face.



Wigs were commonplace in Ancient Egypt and were also worn in Roman society, but the 'peruke', was first worn in France and Italy about 1620 and introduced into England around 1660 where it remained in widespread use until about 1810. People have always been interested in hair, because it complements the face and can follow fashion in clothes, shoes and accessories.



Organise a visit to your local hair dresser or barber shop, ask if you can take some photographs and do some drawings of customers and of the interior of the salon. Notice how everything is geared to the head and the business of hair. Ask if you can have some hair for closer investigation, perhaps you can view samples of it under a microscope. An alternative would be to study magazines featuring hairstyles, or books that show the development of hair fashion.



Back in the art room, look at the reproduction of the Zoffany painting - choose one individual for your study. Focus on the head, make a drawing of the hair without the face. Choose someone from your form to be the model for the wig. Having collected string, wool, raffia or thin rope and after making a base (perhaps using a swimming cap or knitted hat) construct a wig to be modelled on a fellow students' head. Then photograph the result. To make papier mâché wigs, take a swimming cap, and use it to make a base for the 'hair' by layering pieces of gum strip all over the head shape - you will need about six layers. If this is lifted off the cap gently and left to dry overnight, it should be quite sturdy. Now put a couple of layers of papier mâché over it and again leave it to dry in order to make sure it is really strong. This shape can then be used for the fake hair.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

5. Double portrait

Key Stage 3

Unit 7C Recreating Landscape, Section 3

David Garrick (1717-79) and Eva Maria Veigel (1724 -1822)

Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1772-3

Oil on canvas

NPG 5375



David Garrick made his first appearance on the London stage in 1741. His distinguishing characteristic was what Dr Johnson called his 'universality' - his ability to interpret all kinds of parts. A close friend of Reynolds, he was painted by the artist on several occasions, notably as the actor torn between Comedy and Tragedy, (1762). He and Eva Maria Veigel; a Viennese dancer whom he married in 1749, are shown relaxing in their garden in Hampton near the Thames. Reynolds, is known as an inspired artist but has also been criticised for sometimes being technically rather incompetent.

Eighteenth-century artists often ran busy studios with assistants to help with the work schedule. Reynolds is known to have used a 'drapery painter' specifically to paint the clothing and backgrounds of his paintings. In this portrait the brushwork on the clothing of the sitters is markedly different from that on the faces.

There is documentation that Reynolds sent paintings to be finished by another artist called Joseph Van Aken. On 5 October 1761, William Pulteney, 1st Earl of Bath wrote of this experience to his friend Mrs Montague; *'I was yesterday with Mr.Reynolds, and have fixed Fryday next at twelve to finish the Picture. I have discovered a secret by being often at Mr. Reynolds, that I fancy, he is sorry I should know, I find that none of these great Painters finish any of their Pictures themselves. The same Person (but who he is I know not) works for Ramsey, Reynolds, and another called Hudson, my Picture will not come from that Person til Thursday night and on Fryday it will be totally finished and ready to send home.'*

He obviously didn't want everyone to know that this wasn't all his own work.

5. Double portrait

Activity

Discussion points




- Do you think that all of this painting was done by Joshua Reynolds? Look carefully at the way that the faces and the clothes are painted.
- Would it surprise you to know that the painting was done indoors?
- Why do you think that Eva Maria is so pale?
- Do you think it would be easy to paint a double portrait and fit it into a square format? What are the advantages of using the landscape format in a double portrait?
- Notice how the body language (pose) reinforces the relationship between the couple.
- How can you make a pose denote friendship, love or team spirit?
- When an artist uses a bright red to contrast with the startling white of the sitters' clothing, does this create an optical rhythm in the picture?
- Why do you think that the sitters neither look at us, nor at each other? Could anyone know the answer to this?
- Is the seat on which they sit, curved or straight? How do you think that this might influence the composition? Is she leaning on a pillar, or part of the seat?
- Do you think that he is reading to her or learning his lines?


Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

5. Double portrait


Activity


Project A


 Set up a pose, ideally outside, using the Joshua Reynolds portrait as a model, if this is impossible, use lighting to simulate those conditions inside. Discuss the pose, and investigate how the different ways that the sitters relate to each other physically can reinforce the type of relationship they have, ask your models to try out different related poses. Make drawings of your sitters' faces, in pastel, paying particular attention to the way that the light falls on them, and the shadows made as a consequence. You can extend this project using a digital camera. Pairs could be asked to pose, acting out a number of different relationships, i.e. siblings, a married couple, a parent and son/daughter, friends and even different occupations (as in the reference to Garrick's acting). Taking a digital photograph of each, these could then be viewed on a computer, before printing out the most successful image. This could be used as the basis for a painting, and also for some critical work, analysing what was successful about the pose, and how it illustrates the relationship.

 On white cartridge paper make a continuous line drawing of the sitters, making sure that you have a clear outline as well as information about how they relate to each other, and details of their clothing. Spend time comparing the results of both drawing sessions. Pay special attention to the effects of indoor and outdoor lighting.

Project B

 This is about cloud studies as a backdrop to a double portrait. Look at the work of John Constable (1776-1837) who made many cloud studies from nature during his lifetime. Try and find other artists who use clouds as background to their portraits. Study these and notice the different types of cloud formation.

 Mix (to quite a thick consistency), water paints coloured blue, white, mauve and black. Equip yourself with a number of different coloured sheets of sugar paper - brown, black, blue, grey and white. Either choose a day when the sky is full of clouds, preferably with some wind, so that your subject will be constantly changing, or select from the paintings that you have found in reproduction that show different types of cloud.

 Make a least ten painted studies of the sky above (or reproduced) before you choose the cloudscape that you like best. Paint in a copy of your linear figure drawing into this backdrop, so that your sitters form a dramatic silhouettes against it.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

6. Symbols & political references

Key Stage 3
Unit 9B Change your style

Elizabeth I (1533-1603)

Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger,
(inscribed) c.1592

Oil on canvas

NPG 2561



This portrait of Queen Elizabeth I aged fifty-nine, known as the Ditchley Portrait, was painted for Sir Henry Lee and commemorates her visit to Lee's house at Ditchley near Oxford in September 1592, when Lee organised an elaborate party and staged events for her. After his retirement in 1590 Lee lived in Ditchley with his mistress, Anne Vavasour, and the Queen's visit to him there was a sign that he was forgiven for becoming 'a stranger lady's thrall' (slave or servant). In other words, the queen had disapproved of Lee's elopement with her lady in waiting, but she finally forgave Lee. The portrait's symbolic theme is forgiveness; we see Elizabeth standing majestically on the globe, with her feet placed appropriately

at Ditchley in the county of Oxfordshire, England having risen to the top of the world. The stormy sky behind the monarch and the clouds parting to reveal sunshine, indicate the triumph of peace after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. The sonnet inscribed to her left states that the sun reflects her glory and the thunder her power. Her white dress is almost bridal, the colour certainly symbolic of her virginity. The Tudor rose pinned to her ruff reinforces her status as member of the ruling dynasty who had brought peace to England, after the Wars of the Roses.

6. Symbols & political references

Activity

Discussion points



- Try and imagine how big this picture is in real life.
- This canvas has been slightly cut down in size. Originally it was as wide as could possibly made be at the time. Can you think why this would be? (There was no limit on how long it could be made.*)
- Before using canvas, artists used wooden panels to paint on; can you think what advantages canvas has over wood as a painting support?
- Can you see where it has been slightly reduced in size at each side?
- Do you think that her body is correctly proportioned?
- Can you spot her Tudor rose? Do you know why this was a family symbol?
- Can you recognise the island in the sea off the South coast of England? Where is she standing?
- Why do you think that the artist has positioned her here?
- What else can you see in the water?
- Does she look fifty-nine years old in this picture?
- Can you suggest why she carries such practical gloves instead of ones that would match her splendid outfit?

* All hand-woven cloth was roughly this width. This was because the shuttle containing the cross thread wound tightly within it, could only be thrown about two metres horizontally, across the weft. (Warp means 'that which is thrown across'). In very large old paintings, one can often see the physical joining of the canvas, where two pieces have been sewn together to create a bigger painting surface.)

6. Symbols & political references

Activity

Project A



Choose someone that you would like to crown as queen - your friend, your mother, a favourite personality. Make a fantasy painting which makes her look like an important monarch isolated in her position of power, but also imperious, in control and very, very rich.



Firstly collect visual material, either making drawings or taking photographs that relate to her physically; this is to help you with a likeness. The second batch of research material should relate to her status - you could collect anything for this, for example pictures of private jets or luxury yachts, pictures of jewellery, castles and anything else that you feel reflects the status of a contemporary monarch.



Your final work should be painted, should include a reference to the weather, some text, symbolic clues, plus masses of visual pointers to her wealth. Remember that the original is a political artwork - your contemporary version should also attempt to reflect this.

Project B



Looking at the image, try to visualise it in the third dimension - imagine cones and cylinders, making up the physical aspects of the picture. Think about how you could reduce this picture to completely abstract forms. Look at the work of artists such as Kazimir Malevich and Fernand Léger, notice the geometric form of the bodies in some of the compositions. Now make drawings based on the painting of Queen Elizabeth I, but in the manner of these other early twentieth-century artists. Use strident colours; brash yellows, reds and strong blues. It could be interesting to pursue this line of work by repeating the transformed image of the queen, making a lino-cut, and using this image as the basic digit within a wallpaper pattern.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

7. The miniature, the family and the self-portrait

Key Stage Unit 7A Self-image

Isaac Oliver (c.1565 - 1617)

c.1590

Water-based paint on vellum.

Oval 6.2 x 5 cm

NPG 4852



Peter Oliver (his son) (1594 - 1648)

c.1625 -30

Water-based paint on vellum.

Oval 8.6 x 6.7cm

NPG 4853

The reverse of this image reveals a portrait

of Peter's wife, Anne Oliver (1593-1672)

NPG 4853a



These self-portraits in miniature represent father and son. Peter Oliver (shown here in monochrome) was Isaac Oliver's eldest son and learned miniature painting or 'limning' as it was then known, from his father. His portrait is signed with his initials in monogram on the lower right, and on the reverse is a drawing of his wife, Anne, (who was, coincidentally, the youngest sister of his father's third wife.) It is relatively unusual to have a self-portrait in profile, and in this he uses a delicate watercolour wash to create the tones in monochrome. The earlier portrait by Isaac is typical in that he uses a blue background, the standard colour for backgrounds in Queen Elizabeth I's time. The semi precious stone lapis lazuli was ground up to make ultra-marine; an expensive but beautiful blue paint or else a less costly ground glass alternative was used called smalt (which was found later to fade in strong

lighting conditions). Isaac uses the technique of stipple (dotting with paint) and impasto (thickly applied) white on parts of the ruff which make it literally stand proud of the vellum (calf-skin covered with animal glue) giving maximum effect. Around 1580, Oliver senior studied limning under Nicholas Hilliard; the leading miniaturist of his day. Oliver was a Huguenot (Protestant) refugee from Rouen (France), who came to England with his father Pierre Olivier, a goldsmith (like Hilliard) in 1568. These miniatures were painted onto sized vellum stretched over card (often old playing cards were used), artists used brushes made from miniver (a type of ermine fur), then called 'pencils' and paint was pure ground pigment mixed with water, gum arabic (a sticky substance produced by the Acacia tree) and sugar. Real gold and silver was used to imitate jewellery.

7. The miniature, the family and the self-portrait

Activity

Discussion points



- Why do you think that an artist paints a self-portrait?
- How many self-portraits do you think an artist will paint during a life-time?
- How do you think that Peter Oliver painted his profile?
- What happens when you see your face in the mirror? Is your image reversed? How big is it in relation to real life?
- Do you think that a self-portrait is easy to sell?
- Think about the scale of the self-portrait, what types of miniature portrait do we have today?
- Why do you think that these miniatures are oval shaped?
- What type of symbols or clues to artists' status might you find within a self-portrait?
- Why do you think that these miniatures lack props?
- Do you think that an artist might flatter themselves when painting a self-portrait?
- Do you think that the self-portrait is like a self-advertisement?
- Do these two portraits look stylistically similar?

Link



- Have a look at the work of Ron Bowen
www.npg.org.uk/live/edbowen.asp

7. The miniature, the family and the self-portrait

Activity

Project A



Think about the way you would like to be portrayed in your self-portrait, imagine props, type of clothing, expression. Go prepared to your local photo-booth and pose for your self-portrait, firstly full-face and then in profile.



Draw two ovals the same size as those of the Olivers, on paper. Using the photographs as reference, with a pencil, draw two self-portraits within them. Use a wash on top of the pencil to create the tones. Choose two background colours and apply these as flatly as possible.

Project B



Using a mirror or a photograph, make a life-size drawing of yourself.



Square this up and do the drawing again, but reducing it to the scale of the Oliver miniatures.



Work the second drawing onto a piece of thick watercolour paper, or card that has been covered with cartridge paper.



You can prepare these surfaces with different sorts of primers, either the traditional gum arabic, or PVA and white emulsion, this white underpaint will give an intense brilliance to the colours you lay on top. Firstly, in pencil, outline the features, then using watercolour, paint yourself in miniature. Choose a small thin sable brush in order to render the detailing. This time give your portrait a blue background.

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

8. Drawing

Key Stage 3

Unit 7B What's in a building?

Henry VIII (1491-1547) and Henry VII (1457-1509)

Hans Holbein the Younger, (1536-1537)

Ink and watercolour on paper.

257.8x137.2cm

NPG 4027



This very large drawing is all that survives of one of the most important of Henry VIII's artistic projects. To commemorate the strength and the triumphs of the Tudor dynasty and his own personal splendour, he commissioned Hans Holbein to make a wall painting for the Privy Chamber of Whitehall Palace, it was completed in 1537. This is the preparatory drawing known as the 'cartoon' for the left-hand section

of that painting. Holbein's painting was destroyed in the Whitehall Palace fire of 1698, and the cartoon for the right-hand section has been lost. The appearance of the whole painting is however recorded in a mid-seventeenth-century copy by Remigius van Leemput (Royal Collection).

Information and Activities for Secondary Art Teachers

8. Drawing

Key Stage 3

Unit 7B What's in a building?

King Henry VIII; King Henry VII; Elizabeth of York; Jane Seymour

George Vertue, after Remigius van
Leemput, after Hans Holbein the
Younger line engraving, 1737
NPG D18545



This is a copy of what the original Whitehall mural looked like. The Whitehall Palace burnt down in 1698.

The majestic figure of Henry VIII as conceived by Holbein is one of the most memorable images of royalty ever created. The cartoon is on several joined sheets of paper, and the figures of the kings and their faces are cut-outs pasted on to backing paper. It is exactly the same size as the finished version, and was used to transfer Holbein's design to the intended position on the wall.

Chalk or charcoal dust was then brushed into holes made by pricking, thus transferring the outline to the wall. This technique was called 'pouncing'. Holbein could then proceed with filling in his design.

8. Drawing

Activity

Discussion points



- Think of different types of words that you could use to suggest a palace/suburban home/country cottage.
- Notice the top of the drawing. Do you think that this depicts real or fantasy architectural space?
- Try and imagine the colours that were employed in the final mural (wall painting).
- What do you think are the advantages of using a technique such as pouncing?
- Why do you think that this drawing has survived for so long?
- How can you tell that the drawing portrays a king?
- Do you think that the way he is posed and the type of clothes he wears reinforce his status as a king?
- What technique has Holbein used in order to convince us of the three-dimensionality of the figures?
- Why do you think that the carpet is rucked-up?
- Count the number of different jewels shown.

8. Drawing

Activity

Project A



Make drawings of members of your family.



Take black and white or colour photographs of them together and standing up in a formal setting. This could be of them grouped on the doorstep or arranged somehow within the context of your home. Make sure that you pose them so that the positioning of their bodies communicates their relationship to one another. Square up your photograph.



Make a large piece of paper (at least 2 x 1 metres) using smaller pieces of paper that you have stuck together. Square up this piece with the corresponding number of squares to match those in your photograph. Transfer your image, enlarging it accordingly.



Using black ink, chalk and charcoal, give your drawing volume by using tonal variations.



Find out about drawings by the artist Chuck Close.

8. Drawing

Activity

Project B



The best thing to use for this project is a good quality hand-made paper, but ordinary sugar paper or cartridge could be used, or you could experiment with making your own paper. (see www.papermaking.net/basicsteps.htm)



Do a life-size line drawing of someone's face on a piece of paper.



Take a large pin - you may need to wrap the head end of the pin up with some tape - bandaging it to make a stump. Use this (i.e. the pointy end) as your hole-making tool.



Prick over the lines of your drawing, with a blank sheet of thick tracing paper underneath, so that, when done, you have your portrait outlined a second time in pin prick holes. This paper is known as the 'pattern'. You need to space the holes at regular intervals, not more than half a centimetre apart.



Now take a third piece of paper, (either cartridge or hand-made) and put it under the tracing paper.



Bash up some charcoal in a pestle and mortar, and with a stiff brush, push the charcoal dust through all of the holes. When you remove the top piece, you will have a transferred image. You could also use this technique to transfer your image onto a wall as part of the basis for a mural painting. If you made a series of tracing papers with pricked holes, you could have fun turning these into a lampshade, the light would shine out of the holes making portrait patterns on the wall.

This technique allows the image to be repeated until the 'pattern' itself is worn out.