

POPARTPORTRAITS **YOUNG PEOPLE'S GUIDE**

This Pop Art Portraits Young People's Guide was written by Pooja Raj Kalyan and Shaful Khanom as part of their Young Graduates for Museums and Galleries scheme placement.

If you're aged 11-21, you might like to borrow this guide to Pop Art Portraits to use while you are in the exhibition. It was written to answer the questions you might have about Pop Art, but also includes a few questions for you to think about as you walk around the space. Please return this guide to the Information Desk when you have finished using it.

WHAT IS POP ART?

Pop Art was an art movement that dominated London and New York in the 1960s. Its ideals were to bring art to the masses, instead of creating it for the elite.

HOW DID POP ART BEGIN?

Pop Art began in the 1950s. After the Second World War, America and the United Kingdom had suddenly seen growth in their economies. People found that they had more money to spend and mass production techniques meant that goods were available more cheaply and in greater quantities than ever before. Pop Art was a reaction to the attractive new mass culture of objects, products and personalities.

WHY HAVE A POP ART PORTRAITS EXHIBITION?

Many people regard Pop Art as simply paintings of Campbell's soup cans. However, in order to appreciate Pop Art Portraits, the idea of portraiture must first be explored. Portraiture can be defined as a representation of a person; the most basic of way is through depicting the face. Pop artists used portraiture to help them show the different sides of fame and wealth.

WHAT DID POP ART INCLUDE?

Pop Art included images of everything in the real world of the 1960s: music, politics, food, fashion and technology. Pop Art used a large variety of techniques including photography, collage, painting, sculpture and printmaking to show society what it had become. It contained items from the real world, that people could now see in art as well as in their homes. This made it more accessible to its audience.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? DO YOU THINK PORTRAITS ARE A BIG PART OF POP ART? WHICH PORTRAIT IS THE MOST UNUSUAL?

HOW DID POP ART REFLECT SOCIETY?

Pop Art not only reflected society's attitude to mass production but also its feelings towards news and the creation of the cult of celebrity. Marilyn Monroe is an icon within Pop Art as she began her career at a similar time to the movement and seemed to be living the American dream. She was beautiful and famous and looked as if she had it all: fame, money and beauty but she committed suicide aged 36. Suddenly society wondered if money really did buy happiness. Pop Art followed Marilyn's life, as when she first appeared she was shown to be beautiful, but after she died many artists represented her as someone who had lost her real self as the result of fame.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? WHAT TOPICS WOULD YOU INCLUDE IN MODERN POP ART?



Page 16: Ecology, Fire, Air, Water, Earth Joe Tilson 1969-70 © The Artist

WHAT DO YOU THINK? DO YOU THINK POP ART SHOWED SOCIETY IN AN HONEST WAY?

WAS POP ART REALLY RELEVANT?

Pop Art was relevant because it showed the 1960s as it was. It did not try to make it look better. It showed it simply as a time when people were superficial, had lots of money and were willing to invest money into the stereotypical perfect life, even if it didn't make them happy.



My Marilyn Richard Hamilton, 1965 © Richard Hamilton



Towards a definitive statement on the coming trends in men's wear and accessories (a) 'Together let us explore the stars' Richard Hamilton, 1962 © Richard Hamilton

WHAT DO YOU THINK? DO YOU THINK PEOPLE STILL BELIEVE MONEY AND FAME CAN MAKE THE PERFECT LIFE?



Swinging London 67(a) Richard Hamilton, 1968-9 © Richard Hamilton

TIMELINE

UK

1952

The Independent Group of artists and writers is established at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), to discuss issues around contemporary urban life.

1953

Eduardo Paolozzi, Nigel Henderson and Alison and Peter Smithson curate the highly influential exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA.

1955

Ruth Ellis is the last woman to be executed in Britain.

1956



The exhibition *This is Tomorrow* opens at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. Richard Hamilton produces the exhibition poster, a collage, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?*

US

CBS begins the first colour television broadcasts; 54 per cent of American homes now have television sets. IBM starts building commercial computers.



Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat to a white American passenger in Alabama and is arrested.

Elvis Presley releases his first No. 1 hit, 'Heartbreak Hotel', and becomes known as the King of Rock and Roll. The first transatlantic cable telephone service becomes operational speeding up communication between the US and UK.



UK

1958

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) is launched.

1959

David Hockney, Derek Boshier, Peter Phillips and **Allen Jones** all enrol at the Royal College of Art (RCA), London and R. B. Kitaj transfers to the RCA.

Britain's classic car, the Mini, goes on sale.

1960

Jasper Johns exhibits *White Numbers* (1958) as part of the *Mysterious Sign* exhibition at the ICA, London, his first work to be shown in the UK.

1962

Pop Goes the Easel, a documentary film is screened on BBC TV. This introduces the British public to Peter Blake, Pauline Boty, Peter Phillips and Derek Boshier.

US

Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg hold their first solo exhibitions in New York. The US establishes the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to run the national space programme.

The microchip is invented, its legacy is the computer revolution.

The Minimalist movement begins and maintains an important place in the art world for about a decade.

Andy Warhol paints *Campbell's Soup Cans*, a key work of the Pop Art movement. Marilyn Monroe is found dead.



UK

1963



The **miniskirt** appears, designed by Mary Quant.

1964

The exhibition ***The New Generation: 1964*** is held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery and features the work of Derek Boshier, Patrick Caulfield, David Hockney, Allen Jones and Peter Phillips.

The **Labour Party** wins the British general election and Harold Wilson takes over from Sir Alec Douglas-Home as prime minister.

1965

The **Beatles receive the MBE** for their services to pop music. Winston Churchill dies and an estimated 350 million people worldwide watch his state funeral on television.

1966

England wins the football World Cup at Wembley Stadium, the first victory for a home team since the tournament began in 1930.

US

Andy Warhol opens the Factory, where he concentrates on mass-producing art works.

David Hockney has a highly successful first solo US show at the Charles Alan Gallery, New York. The first Ford Mustang from Ford Motor Company is produced.



Black militant Malcolm X is shot dead in Harlem.

Pop and the American Tradition opens at the Milwaukee Art Center, Milwaukee.



UK

1967

Mick Jagger and the art dealer Robert Fraser are arrested on drugs charges.

1968

Roy Lichtenstein retrospective held at London's Tate Gallery, the first show at the Tate devoted to a living American artist.

1969

Pop Art opens at the Hayward Gallery, London.

US

The exhibition ***Homage to Marilyn Monroe*** held at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, exhibits 50 works by various artists.

Dr Martin Luther King is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee; a week of rioting and looting in American cities follows.

Apollo 11 is launched from Cape Kennedy in Florida; astronaut Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to set foot on the surface of the moon.

If you would like to take part in the National Portrait Gallery's Young People's Programme with free activities every month ask for more details at the information desk or visit www.npg.org.uk/youngpeople. You can also find out about the Gallery's Youth Forum that helps shape what the Gallery does for young people including developing more resources like this for future exhibitions.

Timeline image credits

Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing? 1956 Richard Hamilton © Richard Hamilton

Head of a Man 1956 Nigel Henderson © Nigel Henderson Family Estate

Oedipus (Elvis #1) 1956-7 Ray Johnson © The Estate of Ray Johnson at Richard L. Feigen & Co.

Hand Marilyn Monroe 1958 Ray Johnson © The Estate of Ray Johnson at Richard L. Feigen & Co.

Astronaut 4 1963 Gerald Laing © Gerald Laing

The Only Blond in the World 1963 Pauline Boty © Pauline Boty Estate

Walter Lippman 1966 R. B. Kitaj © R. B. Kitaj