

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Try visiting the gallery beforehand with a downloaded copy of the notes to get accustomed to the exhibition.

There is often a talk arranged in conjunction with the exhibitions. They are open to the public and are free. Find out when and where from the education team on [rls@aber.ac.uk](mailto:rls@aber.ac.uk) or 01970 622888

## BEFORE YOU VISIT

In class, discuss the visit and what the pupils (and yourself!) think you are going to -

- See ( you might end up having a discussion about different types of art, painting, sculpture, ceramics, film and even have a discussion about what art is... very deep!)
- Do ( looking, talking and listening for a start, but it is possible to record what you think and what you can see in sketchbooks on paper with dry materials such as pencils and pens. Speak to the Arts centre about using another room for practical activity after visiting the gallery and about borrowing materials.

You could visit another site in Aberystwyth, Amgueddfa Ceredigion or the National Library for example and make a day of it!

## RULES

Gallery rules are common sense. Ask pupils what they think they are and why they think they are important

- Walk in the gallery. (There are valuable works of art that might be damaged and there are other visitors who don't want to be bumped into.)
- Keep your hands to yourself ( Even if they look clean, there is grease on your fingers that can cause damage to works of art.)
- Keep the volume down. ( It's good to discuss works of art but not so loudly that it disturbs other visitors.)
- Stay safe. (You could get lost. If you feel ill or need the toilet you must tell the teacher immediately. The main desk is a good point for any queries.)

These rules are just crying out for the poster treatment!  
(A great activity for the day before the visit.)

Successful visits result from the children knowing what is expected of them.

Engaging with art isn't just to do with visual creativity. It also supports language and communication skills, design and technology, co-operation and team-working, problem-solving skills, citizenship, personal and social education and Curriculum Cymreig.

Opportunities for follow-up activities from a gallery visit are endless. Remember that you can organise to use the 2D room upstairs from the gallery if it is available on the day of your visit. Activities you can use in the 2D room are in this pack.

## **BP PORTRAIT AWARDS 2008**

The BP Portrait award attracts entries from artists from all around the world. A total of 1,727 artists from 26 countries submitted work and a panel of judges chose the overall winners and the 55 works to be included in the exhibition.

The works in this exhibition vary from realistic to expressionist styles. And although we as viewers do not know the subjects personally, we become engaged in a relationship between artist, subject and viewer.

## **WHAT IS A PORTRAIT?**

Portraits are artistic representations of people. They can be created in any media, from traditional oil paintings, to photographs, sculpture and even mixed media. Portraits can show part figures, usually showing the sitter's head and shoulders, but they can also depict the whole figure. They can also illustrate more than one person, in a group portrait.

When making a portrait the artist aims to show the sitter's appearance as well as some elements of their character. Portraits often relate to a message, which the artist or person who commissioned the work wished to relay, such as the beauty of a daughter or the wealth and power of a monarch.

**A great website for you to visit before hand and use on the interactive whiteboard contains many tips as to how to approach portraits. Visit [www.show.me.co.uk/face it](http://www.show.me.co.uk/face it)**

## Some ways into discussing portraits

- Do any of the pupils have pictures of people up on their walls at home?
- What relationship do they have with the subject? (family photos, posters of pop stars or sports heroes)
- What do you understand by the word 'portrait'?
- Why do you think artists paint portraits of people?

( Discuss the fact that many artists make their living from commissioned work, when artists are paid to paint the subject, to show them in a particular way, to record a subject for posterity. Do the children see being an artist as a career or a vocation?)

With older children, a discussion about how people react to portraits of specific people can give an insight into human reactions, e.g. the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue or the iconic image of Che Guevara.



We as viewers will probably not have any connection or prior knowledge of the people portrayed in the paintings in this exhibition, unlike the portraits that the children might be familiar with.

(You could discuss any famous portraits that the children will know before looking at the exhibition, artists whose work they might be familiar with.)

## SHORTLISTED



Hannah O'Brien by Robert O'Brien. Born in 1954, in Rochester, NY, Robert O'Brien has been painting in watercolours for 30 years



Untitled by Peiyuan Jiang. Originally from China, Peiyuan Jiang is a student at the University of the Arts, Chelsea



Amanda Smith at Vincent Avenue by Simon Davis. Davis is a member of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists and works illustrating contemporary comic books



K by Craig Wylie. Wylie was born in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. He studied fine art in South Africa, graduating with a distinction in 1996

Leave the children have a good look around the exhibition on their own, you can encourage them to try out the rules for visiting a gallery or even ask them to look out for something specific like emotions or colour. Use this as a topic for opening a discussion on the first portrait you intend to look at together.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN LOOKING AT PORTRAITS

Choose the works that you would like to look at beforehand if you get a chance to visit the exhibition. You don't need to discuss all the work in detail. Some pupils might be drawn to specific work that they will want to discuss. Go with what's right for you and your class.

- Is the size of the work important?
- Where has the artist placed the figure in the work?
- What pose has the subject taken?
- What size is the subject compared to everything else?
- Which kind of facial expression does the subject have?
- What materials has the artist used and how have they been used?
- What relationship does the artist have with the subject?
- What kind of clothing is the subject wearing and does it tell us anything about him/her?
- Are there any props in the picture that tell us anything?
- Does the title tell us anything?
- What else do you want to know about the subject?

There is no right or wrong way to 'read' a portrait, but they often contain many 'clues' that can reveal information about the sitter's life and character.

Colour: can create different kinds of emotional responses

Pose: can show what kind of personality the sitter has.

Facial Expression: will show mood and emotion well.

Costume: can show standing in society, ambition, financial status etc.

Props: will sometimes give clues as to profession, history etc.

Background: if there are few background details, this helps the viewer to focus on the central figure, but background can give the viewer clues.

Social Context: When 'reading' a work we bring our own expectations, for example that artists will be dressed in paint splattered clothes. Should we succumb to or challenge these 'prejudices'?

## PRACTICAL WORK IN THE GALLERY SPACE

Use sketchbooks to study and record different aspects of visual language.

- look at how the artists have portrayed eyes, noses, lips etc. choose one and record different styles from different work in your sketchbook. Then discuss what you have seen.
- look at the shapes within the work. For example the outline of the figures are all different, record just the outlines in your sketchbooks.
- Sketch a portrait that is a particular favourite.

Older children can have a copy of the questions to ask and in pairs discuss these in relation to a work that you haven't discussed as a class. Then present their thoughts to the class.

**PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES FOR A FOLLOW UP WORKSHOP**  
(..for use in the Arts centre's 2D room or back at school)

Creating portraits - collect an assortment of clothing and props and use them to 'dress' a subject. Use an old picture frame or make one from a large piece of cardboard and encourage the children to draw the subject. These must be a series of quick ( 5min ) studies so that the subject doesn't get cramps, and to get the children used to working at a new pace. Explain that these are what artists call 'studies', like practices, and are not the end product. Use drawing materials that they can't rub out, e.g. charcoal, fine black markers, biro. Repeat.

Digital portraits - use the same props as above but record the portraits with a digital camera. Then children can work from the printed image, add to the image with I.T. editing tools or work into a printed copy with oil pastels or paint.

Collage faces - magazines offer a brilliant source from which you can create really exciting portraits. Use found facial features or make up your own using different objects. A vast variety of tones and textures are at your fingertips.

Portrait Pairs - pair up and use dry drawing equipment to draw head and shoulder portraits of each other, one at a time.

Below are some tips on drawing a face that you might want to share with older children.

### Drawing a Face

There are some basic rules you can follow to help you draw faces. Follow these simple steps to draw the front view of a face (the measurements can be easily adjusted to create your individual portrait or to draw an angled face).

1. There are many different facial shapes, but the basic shape is an oval. You can adjust the oval to make it more square, round or heart-shaped according to your sitter (the person that you are drawing). Start by drawing this shape.

2. Divide the face into two vertical halves, this will help you position the nose and the other features.
3. Then divide the oval into two horizontal halves, this creates the eye line.
4. Draw another horizontal line halfway between the eye line and the bottom of the chin, this is where the bottom of the nose will be and shows you where to position the ears.
5. If you draw another line in the centre of the bottom quarter, the mouth will sit a little above this line.

#### Finer details:

1. To position the eyes, divide the width of the face, along the eye line, into five. There is usually one eye width between the eyes.
2. The base of the nose is often as wide as the space between the inside corners of the eyes.
3. If the sitter is not showing any particular expression, the corners of their mouth will line up with their pupils.
4. Ears sit from the eye line to the bottom of the nose, so make sure they are big enough!

**MORE IDEAS ON DRAWING PORTRAITS**

These drawing games are designed to help you make portraits of yourselves and others.

1. Close your eyes and make a drawing in a minute of your face. Don't worry about how it turns out. Enjoy the fun of it.
2. Think of the differences between happy and sad, and how these emotions are reflected in your face. Draw the lines of your mouth shape both ways.
3. Draw your portrait in one continuous line, without taking your pencil off the paper.
4. Slowly move your finger down your face to feel your profile. Draw the shape as you feel it, as if the pencil were your finger. Shade in one side of the line.
5. Draw your face using the side of the pencil so that you don't make a line drawing but rather a tonal portrait.
6. Choose a feature eye, nose, mouth, ear, and draw it so that it fills the paper
7. Draw round your hand, but with the palm side of your hand facing you, back against the paper. Now put your hand lines into your drawing.
8. Choose some objects that reflect your interests. Position yourself in a mirror with the objects in front of you and draw both yourself and the objects.
9. Hold your head with your non-drawing hand and draw your head and hand together as one form.
10. Position yourself in a strong light source. Cover a paper with charcoal and rub it to a smooth grey. 'Draw' back into it with an eraser to draw the lightest parts of your face, then work with the charcoal further to emphasize the darkest parts. Try to avoid making lines; stay with large forms.
11. Draw yourself in relation to someone else.
12. Draw your portrait by starting with the point closest to you, the nose, and going outward. Emphasize the structures, of the whole nose, the eye socket, and whole mouth and chin rather than nostrils, pupils, lips.

Useful websites

[www.national portrait gallery.co.uk](http://www.nationalportraitgallery.co.uk)

[www.show.me.co.uk](http://www.show.me.co.uk)

[www.24hr museum.co.uk](http://www.24hrmuseum.co.uk)