Art Encounters: Teacher Guide

How to use Art Encounters

Art Encounters and the resource pack have been designed to be adaptable for KS 2-5. The episodes can be used individually or as a series and don’t need to be used in order, but you should start with the Introduction video to give pupils some background on the artist.

The videos can be used in class or at home. If setting as a remote activity, you can use the PDF worksheets included in the resource pack for pupils to complete. The pack also includes Powerpoint versions of the worksheets which you can edit to adapt the activity to your learners.

The videos include suggestions to pause at certain points, to discuss and respond to questions. This can be done in class in groups or pairs, or remotely at home using the PDF worksheet, or by making notes in a sketchbook. The Teacher Notes documents in this pack contain relevant sections of the transcript, with additional discussions prompts that may be useful in class.

The videos suggest creative activities that pupils can do in response to the artwork. Some episodes link to activity resources, while others just suggest themes that you may want to explore through your own activities. The following pages have more information on the accompanying resources, with ideas for extension activities to create a longer scheme of work.

We encourage teachers to adapt, experiment and cherry pick from these resources, to suit your group’s age, needs and abilities.

Introduction

Show pupils the Introduction before using the other Episodes, to provide background information about Paloma Varga Weisz and her practice.

Episode 1: Still Life

Episode 1 explores Still Life, a mixed media sculpture by Paloma Varga Weisz.

Themes: Childhood memories, play and imagination, identity, family heritage and traditions, family heirlooms, life cycles

The creative activities suggested are:

- The Sculpture Poems activity (see below) which should be used alongside the video, tasking students to gather ideas then write a poem or short story about the artwork
- To create artwork that responds to the themes that inspired this piece; childhood memories, play and imagination, family heritage, past generations, family heirlooms
- To think of an object or objects that have sentimental value, or have a connection to family or childhood memories and use this as a starting point for their work

**Sculpture Poems Activity**

This cross-curricular activity tasks students to record their immediate responses to artwork through a series of ‘free writes’, then develop their ideas into a poem or short story about one (or more) artworks. It can be used alongside the *Still Life Art Encounters* video, or as a PDF with the still images provided.

**This resource aims to:**

- Use creative writing to engage students with art
- Encourage analysis, exploration and reflection on an artwork (looking, thinking, and discussing/debating if working with others)
- Promote students’ immediate personal responses to art, and understanding that art is subjective and all ‘readings’ of an artwork are valid
- Introduce students to contemporary artists’ practice, and provide routes for further investigation

**Tips for delivering this activity**

- The format of the poem/story is not defined, so for English teachers this could be adapted to fit any style of poetry or prose
- The activity could be used for group work, with students sharing ideas generated through their free-writes and writing a collaborative poem
- The activity aims to use art to capture students’ imagination, and record their gut response to the artwork, which is why the ‘free-write’ is set at the start of the video

**Extension Activities**

Write about other artworks: Use the free-write activity with any artwork of your (or your pupils’) choosing. You can find more images of artwork from our collection and past exhibitions on our website, and view the [Henry Moore digital catalogue here](#).

Research *Ekphrasis*:* Ekphrasis* is an Ancient Greek word for a poem written about an artwork. It’s origins in Ancient Greece also present opportunities for historical research. These links may provide useful content for further research.  
[Ten of the best examples of ekphrasis](#)  
[Getty Museum Ekphrasis Resource](#)
Episode 2: Home Portraits

This video introduces *Magazin* and *Haus*, two artworks by Paloma Varga Weisz with connections to her childhood home. The suggested activity to accompany this episode is our Home Portraits resource.

**Themes:** Home, identity, childhood, family, heritage

**Home Portraits Activity**

This 3D drawing activity tasks students to create a ‘Home Portrait’, capturing part of their home that has been significant, or changed in 2020. The activity may be relevant for PSHE, mindfulness and a starting point to explore mental wellbeing.

The resource aims to encourage students to:

- Develop observational drawing skills, use flat perspective, draw to scale, and select appropriate media
- Reflect on recent experiences and gain a new perspective on their home and the objects within it, exploring and expressing these through art
- Find inspiration for their artwork in unexpected places
- Discover new contemporary artists and gain understanding of artists’ practice

**Tips for delivering the activity**

- The drawing style and media is not specified, so it can be tailored to age and ability, or link into a relevant technique or area of study. The resource suggests an observational method, drawing students’ chosen space realistically using flat perspective (if the room was in a dolls house, what would it look like if they peered inside?)
- Paint is not ideal for this activity as it will cause the card to warp and prevent it from holding its shape when folded (stretched thick watercolour paper with the outline drawn on may be a solution if paint is preferred!) If finished Home Portraits are losing their shape, try reinforcing them with an extra layer of card.
- The activity would work well as a remote learning task, as homework (perhaps making the template in class then doing their drawing at home), but could also be completed in class, with pupils working from photographs taken at home.

**Reflection** at the end of the activity will encourage students to think about the process and their personal responses to the task. Here are some suggested questions:

- How did you decide which area of your home to draw?
- Why did you choose the area you drew? What were the other options?
- What was it like to draw part of your home in detail? What did you think about as you did it?
- Did the activity make you think or feel differently about the space or objects you drew?
- Why did you choose the materials, and drawing style that you used? Did they work well? If you were to repeat the activity, would you do anything differently?
Sensitivity Around Capturing Home Environments

This activity should be approached with sensitivity for students who have difficult circumstances at home, or for young people in care. The activity can be tailored to different circumstances, for example focusing on a shelf or selection of objects rather than a whole room, or creating an abstract portrait that captures their feelings about their home environment. Also, you may want to make clear from the outset that there is no pressure to share their work with their peers or with us at the Institute if they would prefer not to.

Extension Activities

Build a house of Home Portraits: Combine a whole class’ drawings to create a giant dolls house, encouraging sculptural thinking through the process. Students could work in pairs or groups to come up with different methods of stacking, reinforcing and fixing their drawings together to create a strong structure.

Realist then Abstract: Task students to respond to the same space twice, capturing a realistic portrait first, then an abstract representation. Encourage students to reflect on feelings, sounds, interactions or memories while making the first piece, then to use this to inform their abstract version. You could use this as a chance to discuss realism vs abstraction in art.

Explore other art about home: Task students to research other artists who take inspiration from domestic spaces. Many artists have documented their homes, and explored the home as subject matter. Students could explore how and why artists depict home environments, and take inspiration from a style, medium or concept to use in their own Home Portrait. Our Pinterest board detailed below will provide some starting points for research.

Additional Resources

We’ve compiled this Pinterest board to share a selection of artwork that explores the home environment, which may be a useful starting point for research. Episode 5 of Grayson Perry’s Art Club (which was still available on Channel 4 at the time of writing), explored the theme of ‘Home’ in the context of lockdown.

Episode 3: Strange Creatures

This episode introduces Bumpman, Wild Bunch and other characters who appear in Varga Weisz’s work, exploring the rich texture of her sculptures and the theme of ‘hybridity’.

Themes: Natural forms, texture, mark-making, animals, wilderness, fantasy, hybrid creatures

There isn’t an activity resource to accompany this episode, just a suggestion for pupils to:

- Create a character inspired by the work of Paloma Varga Weisz, combining animal and human qualities and using interesting textures
- Create a character that combines human and organic forms, like the pinecone man. This activity could involve collecting and drawing natural objects, then using the object as a starting point to create a character.

**Extension Activities**

Explore Varga Weisz’s influences: The video mentions Paloma Varga Weisz’s ‘archive in her brain’ and introduces some of her influences, which are very varied and span art history. They include:

- Early Renaissance artists Lucas Cranach the Elder, Hans Holbein and Piero della Francesca
- Louise Bourgeois
- Bruce Nauman
- Paula Modherson-Becker and Otto Modherson

Most contemporary artists reference and take inspiration from art history. You could create and encourage pupils to become ‘Art Detectives’ and look for historical influences in contemporary artwork.

**Research Talks:** For older learners (KS5+), our series of online research talks may be of interest. They include:

- **Women Who Run with the Wolves**, a series of talks and a Q&A exploring psychoanalysis, metamorphosis, embodied storytelling, fairy tales and gender.
- **Wild (Wo)men, Commodified Forests: Matter and Myth in German Sculpture**, Dr Ruth Ezra’s talk looks at the Bumped Body exhibition, its links to Medieval art and the significance of limewood sculpture in German art history.

**Have questions or feedback on these resources?**

Contact Engagement Curator Alison Smith on Alison.smith@henry-moore.org.