

Art Encounters Teacher notes: Home Portraits

Pause and Discuss

The video introduces two sculptures by Paloma Varga Weisz called *Magazin* and *Haus*, with suggestions to pause the video at specified points to respond to questions. The first 'pause' encourages pupils to share their initial responses to the artwork before hearing more information about it.

Learning Format

The resource can be used in class or at home. If setting it as a remote activity, you may wish to use the **PDF worksheet** included in this pack. The pack also includes the worksheet as a Powerpoint file which you can edit to adapt the activity.

Creative Activities

The video can be used on its own without a follow on activity, but you may want to combine it with a creative activity of your own design, or our **Home Portrait activity**, which you can find the resources for in this pack.

Video Transcript

We've provided the transcript for the relevant sections of the video here, with questions highlighted in bold. You'll also find some discussion prompts to use in class below each set of questions.

Lots of pieces in the *Bumped Body* exhibition explore family relationships. Some draw directly from Paloma Varga Weisz's childhood, particularly her childhood home and objects from it. *Magazin* is the largest piece in the exhibition, and is a replica of the front of the artist's childhood home. Mounted on the wall, almost as if it's levitating, visitors view it from below, leaning back to peer up at the wooden slats and carved details. The piece is accompanied by a soundscape of children playing, which is a recording of Varga Weisz and her siblings, made by her father then they were young.

A neighbouring piece in this gallery is *Haus*, which is a readymade. This means it's not been made by the artist, but is an object she has chosen to reframe as a sculpture. *Haus* is Paloma Varga Weisz's childhood dolls house, which she inherited from her mum. It's clearly very old, with yellowing lace curtains and grubby wallpaper. The rooms within it are empty.

So, let's gather your first reactions to these two pieces. I'm going to ask a few questions, and in a moment, pause the video to discuss or write down your ideas.

What are your first reactions to *Magazin* and *Haus*?

Why do you think the artist chose to create these pieces? What do you think they might represent?

PAUSE

The piece replicates a section of a house, but it doesn't have any doors or windows – there's no sign of any way we might enter, or any light coming from within. Why do you think the artist chose to represent her house like this? What difference would it make if it did have doors or windows?

Discussion Prompts

These words may spark ideas:

Open – closed – mystery – light – dark – trapped – life – hidden – false – old – German – shuttered – folklore – castle – tower – family – love – isolation

In *Haus*, Paloma Varga Weisz has chosen to display her childhood dolls house, but the rooms are empty and the house looks old and a bit grubby. Why do you think she chose to display it like this? Why not clean it up and fill it with toy furniture?

PAUSE

Magazin and *Haus* appear alongside many other pieces inspired by the artist's parents and childhood, including *Still Life* and *Cabinet*, which you can hear more about in our other Art Encounters videos. During recent video interviews with us, Paloma Varga Weisz talked about her family's influence on her work, and particularly her father, who she had quite a difficult relationship with. He was also an artist from Hungary, and – being Jewish – had been forced to move around quite a lot to flee the war. He was 20 years older than his wife, and Varga Weisz describes how she spent much of her childhood alone with him, and how, as a man in his 60s he didn't really know what to do with her. She speaks about feeling very isolated as a child.

Now you know a little more about Varga Weisz's childhood and relationship with her father, does this change any of the initial thoughts you had about the artwork? Does it confirm any of the ideas you had? Pause the video now to discuss this, or write down your ideas.

PAUSE

Discussion Prompts

Artist exploring her negative experiences as a child through her work.

Both pieces are symbolic of the artist's childhood home – *Magazin* is closed off, inaccessible and unwelcoming. *Haus* is empty, uncared for, devoid of life (and love?)

Haus explores the idea of inheritance – we inherit attitudes and behaviours from our parents as well as physical things. Perhaps the artist is also exploring her feelings about the other things she inherited from her parents?

We'd love to see what your class makes in response to our Art Encounters videos. You can share images of their Home Portraits with us via email to homeportraits@henry-moore.org or any of their work on social media via:

@HMILeeds on Twitter

@henrymooreinstitute on Instagram