

HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN WITH DR HARRIET ATKINSON

TALKING POINTS

KNOWLEDGE & COMPREHENSION

1. Why did Britain become a hotbed for artists during the 1930s?
2. What were the purposes of exhibitions mounted in the 1930s and 40s by a) artist organisations and b) the British government?
3. Why did art incorporating photography become more popular during the 1930s and 40s?
4. Why can it be challenging to find evidence about the existence and impact of these exhibitions?

APPLICATION

5. Imagine you have a day in the British Library to gather information about a particular medium-sized exhibition that happened in 1940. How might you spend the day most effectively?
6. Political divides are very much alive in today's society. Can you think of examples of how contemporary art or exhibitions have been used as propaganda? Can you think of how propaganda is used online and in the printed press?
7. How can we be a critical audience when viewing social media posts?

ANALYSIS

8. Why do you think the British government was suspicious of activist artists' groups in the 1930s? Do you think these suspicions were justified?

EVALUATION

9. Harriet says her area of research has been under-studied because it does not fall neatly into one discipline. How do you think different disciplines – such as history and visual culture – can better work together to fill these knowledge gaps?
10. What has reading about Harriet's work made you consider about art and design that you had not thought of before?

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT HOME OR IN THE CLASSROOM

After World War II, tensions grew between the communist nations of the east and capitalist countries in the west. These profound differences in ideologies set the stage for the establishment of the Iron Curtain and the advent of the Cold War.

Like any ideological divide, art played a profound role in shaping societal beliefs. Using the internet, research how art influenced public opinion – both through propaganda by governments and the works of individual artists.

Once you have gathered evidence, design a poster that explores the key themes of your research. Incorporate the artworks you have come across and think about how to make your poster informative, accessible and engaging.

Some particular research areas to start you off include:

- Propaganda, such as by the US Government and the Soviet Union
- The 'narratives' of capitalism and communism
- How politics influenced art, and how art influenced politics
- The work of artists such as Gerald Laing (Souvenir), Vito Acconci (Instant House), Theodore Roszak (Unknown Political Prisoner), and Jackson Pollock.

MORE RESOURCES

- The Twitter feed for Harriet's project contains information and links to the project's progress and resources such as podcasts. Find it here: twitter.com/Materialisatio2
- Try this video for a very brief introduction to modernism: www.britannica.com/video/186408/Modernism-art-design
- The University of Brighton runs many events for schools and prospective students. Find out more here: www.brighton.ac.uk/studying-here/applying-to-brighton/schools-colleges/events/index.aspx