



JUNIOR PHASE  
NARRATIVE

# NARRATIVE

JUNIOR PHASE | TEACHER'S NOTES



## CREATIVE THINKING AT ABERDEEN ART GALLERY

Welcome. This pack has been put together by our experienced learning team to help you explore the building and the collection with your pupils. Every artwork tells a story, giving an insight into a particular culture, society or time in history. Exploring the collection will encourage curiosity, imagination and problem solving.

### **About Aberdeen Art Gallery**

The opening of Aberdeen Art Gallery on 7 July 1885 was made possible by financial contributions from local businessmen including granite and flour merchants, art collectors and civic-minded individuals. The people who paid for this building also donated many of the older paintings that you see on display today. They were philanthropists who wished to give something back to the community by establishing a public venue for the enjoyment and appreciation of art.

### **Before your visit**

You may want to begin with a picture of Aberdeen Art Gallery and ask your learners to set some questions about the gallery and what they might see there.

This will help to de-mystify what an art gallery is, who it's there for and hopefully have them looking forward to their visit.

### **How to use the teacher's notes**

In order to make these notes work for you, we have chosen artworks and activities that are age appropriate. Primary is divided in to Lower and Upper and Secondary is divided in to Junior and Senior phase.

This resource provides you with suggested activities and background information on selected artworks. There are six themes that will direct you to at least three gallery spaces, but you can of course look at more artworks along the way.

As these teacher's notes will be available to download from our website, some images of the artworks are copyright protected and cannot be included in the pack.

Visit our website at [www.aagm.co.uk](http://www.aagm.co.uk) to see images of all the artworks featured in this pack as well as many others from the collections of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums.

# NARRATIVE

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## THEME FOR THIS PACK: NARRATIVE

All art stems from a strong narrative. From the earliest drawings on cave walls to contemporary public art, the artist's motivation is to share their stories and experiences. This language of art is shown throughout our collection in many ways, some are easy to interpret while others require further exploration. The narrative embedded in an artist's work is the hook which draws the viewer in and creates a connection between the creator and the audience.

### **On arrival**

Go to the welcome desk and staff there will tell you where to store your coats and bags.

They will also point out where the toilets and lifts are.

Our staff will provide you with any equipment you have booked in advance of your visit.

If you have booked our Learning Centre to use for a snack or lunch, please let our staff know. Eating and drinking in the gallery spaces is not allowed.

### **Around the Gallery**

Explain to your learners that they must not touch any of the art on display (oily hands can damage artworks) unless a label invites them to touch.

You are welcome to sketch with pencils in the Art Gallery but please make sure your learners are creative on their paper only, not on any other surfaces!

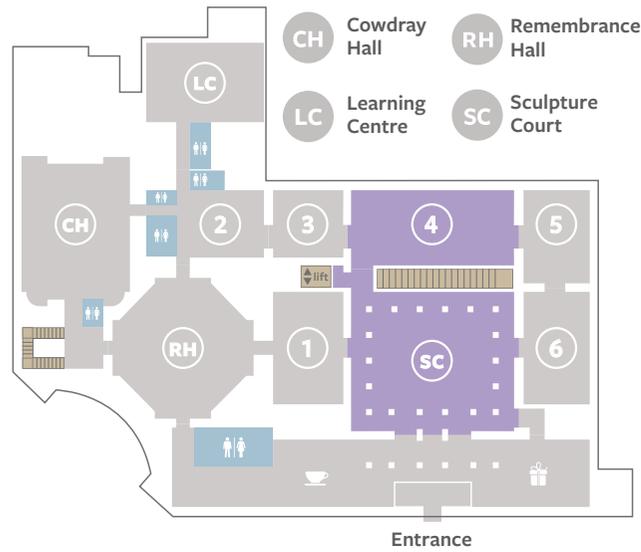
Please supervise your pupils appropriately at all times and ask them to be considerate of other visitors.

We really hope you enjoy your visit to Aberdeen Art Gallery and we welcome any feedback on how to improve the experience for others.

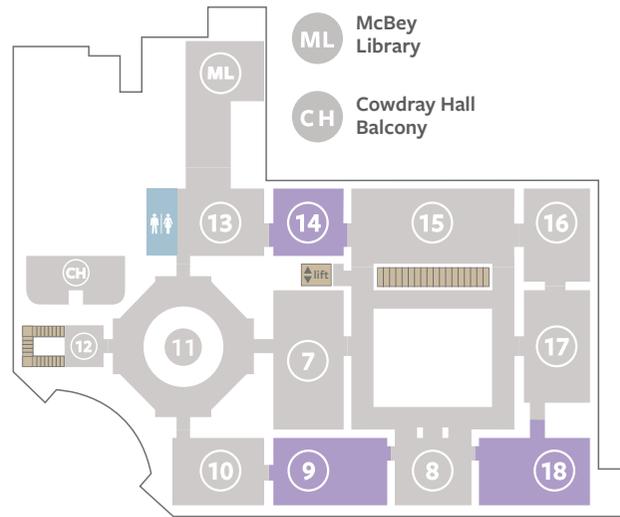
# GETTING AROUND THE ART GALLERY



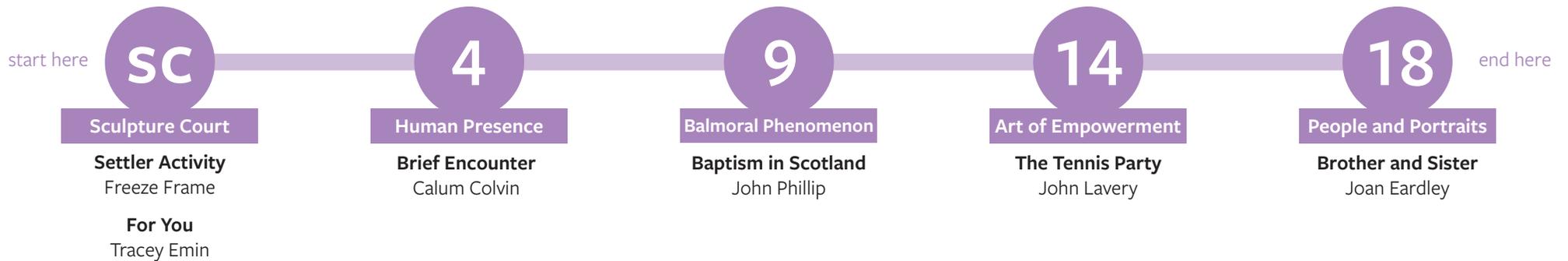
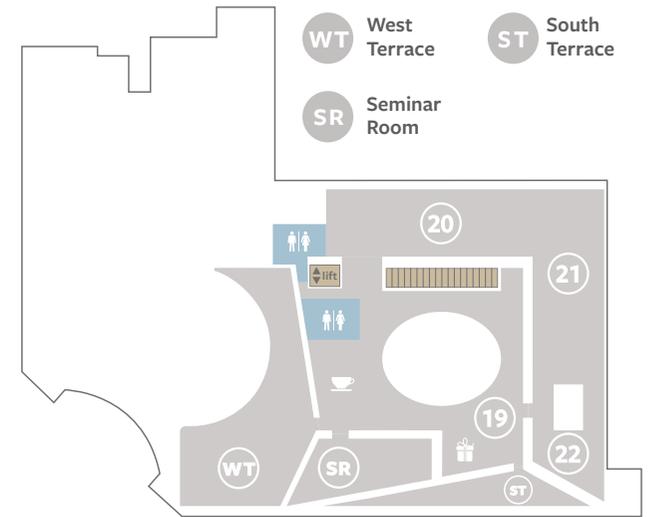
## Ground Floor



## First Floor



## Second Floor



# SETTLER ACTIVITY

## Bring the class together in the ground floor Sculpture Court

The size and needs of your class may determine how many learners are around an artwork at a time. You may want to split your class into smaller groups, with each group starting in a different part of the building.

When moving between galleries, ask learners to look out for examples of art which they think tells a story. This could be in a variety of formats such as painting, jewellery, ceramics, sculpture, drawings, prints, photography or digital media.

## SCULPTURE COURT

This is a good way to settle into critical thinking and encourage learners to feel part of the gallery space.

### Freeze Frame

Come together in a circle. Have a look at the space around you and think about a type of person that would visit a gallery. It could be an artist, an art student, a parent/carer with children, a school pupil, a business person, tourist or anyone you like.

Think about why people visit a gallery. What motivates them to explore artworks, the stories behind the art and the artists that created them?



Begin your tour in the **Sculpture Court**.

Ask learners to look out for artworks that have a narrative when moving through the rooms.

# FOR YOU

Tracey Emin, 2004

Tracey Emin is one of the most well-known and successful British artists of her generation. She emerged in the late 1980s as part of the Young British Artists group and became noted for provocative and controversial pieces. Working across a range of media including painting, drawing, video, needlework and sculpture, her work is candid and intimate.

Born in London in 1963 to parents of British Romani and Turkish Cypriot descent, Emin studied at Maidstone College of Art and the Royal College of Art, London. In 1993 she opened a shop with fellow artist Sarah Lucas, to sell their artwork, and had her first solo show at White Cube, a renowned contemporary art gallery in the capital. In 1995 she came to the public's attention with her work, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995*, a tent with the appliquéd names of everyone, including pets and friends, she had ever slept with, including pets and friends. This was followed up in 1998 by her equally controversial Turner Prize-nominated, *My Bed*.

As Emin has matured the art establishment has embraced and rewarded her. In 2007 Emin became the second British female artist to represent the country at the celebrated Venice Biennale. In 2011 she was appointed Professor of Drawing at the Royal Academy - the second woman to hold the post since the Academy was founded in 1768.

*For You* is a hand-blown neon sign, a pink heart containing the words "I felt you and I knew you loved me" written in blue. Neon is generally associated with the advertising business and has connotations of seediness, which is in direct contrast to the message exploring love and sensuality. The heart is a warm pink, but the writing is in an icy blue colour. This piece is very much a continuation of Emin's autobiographical art works which illuminate her own experiences and emotions.

## Activity for *For You*

### Form, content, process, mood, context

- How do you think this sculpture was created? What materials or technology have been used?
- What do you notice first about this artwork?
- What do you think Emin is communicating?
- What do you think Emin was feeling or experiencing when she made this piece?
- Who or what do you think it was made for?
- Does the work relate to other disciplines, such as science or technology?
- If you were to create a piece like this, what message would you write? (Learners do not have to share this last thought with anyone else)

Learners can discuss their thoughts in pairs or in small groups and feed back to their teacher of the whole group.

Gallery  
Sculpture Court



Go to **Gallery 4: Human Presence** to see a contemporary artwork full of symbolism.

# BRIEF ENCOUNTER

Calum Colvin, 1990

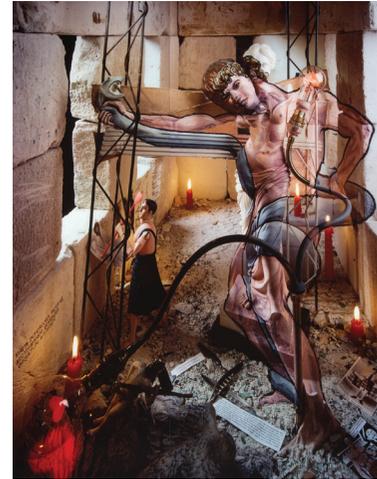
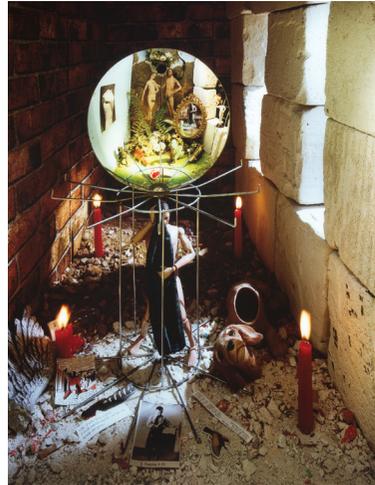
Gallery 4  
Human Presence



Calum Colvin was born in Glasgow in 1961. He studied sculpture at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee before graduating from the Royal College of Art, London in 1985. He was awarded an OBE in 2000, and is Professor of Fine Art Photography at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. Colvin has developed a process of art which combines everyday objects and painted imagery to create photo-pieces which evoke the drama and illusion of a stage set.

He creates a large-scale still life in his studio, using furniture and bric-a-brac, which he then paints over with iconography from classical literature, pop culture and children's stories to create a tableau (motionless figures representing a scene from a story). The whole set is carefully posed and theatrically lit and photographed from a fixed perspective to capture the optical illusion. The set-pieces are photographed on film, digitized and printed onto paper or canvas so that they can be displayed as large-scale prints. These prints invite the viewer to decode the symbols and themes hidden in the artwork. *Brief Encounter* is a triptych of prints and with the centre print being the larger of the three, it is reminiscent of early Christian altar paintings. In *Brief Encounter* we can see symbols for the figure of Christ, Adam and Eve, natural evolution, Scottish national dress, comic book excerpts, classical art, childhood and love.

Colvin has said of his work 'The visual illusions are intended to draw the viewer into a creative dialogue as the images are interpreted, touching on themes of gender, art, history and national identity.'



## Activity for *Brief Encounter*

Don't give any information about the artwork straight away – ask learners to look closely first. They could make a viewfinder with their hands to focus on one area.

### 'Notice' not 'know'

This can sometimes be rushed but taking time to notice and comment on the artwork removes the need for 'right' answers and encourages observation. Ask learners to tell you what they see – they don't have to explain their thoughts at this stage, just point out as many things as possible in the artwork.

### Extend the observation

As learners point out their observations ask what they think those objects and images may symbolise. Again, there are no 'right' answers, just open ideas.

## Background story

Once the learners are engaged and curious about the artwork, tell them a bit about the artwork and the artist. Point out that these are created in a studio and end up as large-scale photo-pieces. This will engage learners further in discussion about how an artist uses different media.

## Social & cultural context

Ask learners to discuss and feedback why they think the artist made certain choices: objects, images, tone, colour and composition. Why did the artist choose this subject matter? Why is it important?



Got to **Gallery 9: Balmoral Phenomenon** to see symbolism in narrative used in a different way.

# BAPTISM IN SCOTLAND

John Philip, 1850

Narrative or storytelling painting, pioneered by the artist David Wilkie, was highly popular in the Victorian era and reflected the taste of that time for paintings that were rich in colour, action and drama. Aberdeen-born John Philip (1817-1867) began his career painting in the manner of Wilkie and this painting was the culmination of the first part of Philip's career. A year later the artist made his first visit to Spain where his subject matter was influenced by colourful continental life.

Painted in response to the birth of his first child, the focus of the painting is a baptism ceremony in a family home, which was common in the 19th century. The daylight flooding in through the window draws our attention to the central grouping of mother, father and baby. The surrounding gathering of the extended family, of which there are at least four generations, can be studied as they witness this religious occasion. The depiction of children shows them from new baby right up to young adulthood and each child has their own personality, from the toddler having to be restrained from interrupting the ceremony, to the boy peeking out from behind a chair.

This artwork contains anecdotal details and makes references to the Jacobite Risings: 1745 is embroidered on the corner of the linen tablecloth and on the elderly woman's pocket. In the window, roses in full bloom and in bud are acknowledged emblems of The Old and Young Pretenders.

## Activity for *Baptism in Scotland* Form, content, process, mood, context.

- What kind of media do you think the artist used? How has the use of media contributed to the success of the artwork?
- What do you think is happening in this artwork?
- Has any part of the composition been focused on? Why do you think the artist has done this?
- Why do you think it was made and who for?
- What do you think the theme of the work is? What story does the artwork tell us?
- The painting contains a couple of clues to the family support of the Jacobite Rising in 1745 – ask learners to point out any they see.
- What words come to mind when looking at this artwork?
- Do the things you've mentioned contribute to the mood of the artwork?



Go to **Gallery 14: Art of Empowerment** to see a different kind of home telling a different story.

# THE TENNIS PARTY

Sir John Lavery, 1885

Born in 1856, in Belfast, Lavery was orphaned at the age of three and had an unhappy childhood. Lavery ran away to Glasgow to become an artist in the 1870s and studied at the *Académie Julian* in Paris in the early 1900s. It was here that Lavery studied under Jules Bastien-Lepage who encouraged him to capture figures in motion. Lepage advised Lavery to choose a person to observe closely and make as many drawings as possible in a short space of time. This gave Lavery an acute sense of movement which can be seen in *The Tennis Party*.

Wealthier Victorians could travel abroad but most working-class people would have an occasional family day out, perhaps to the countryside, beach or a public park. This group composition shows people of various ages enjoying the relatively new game of lawn tennis in the Cathcart area of greater Glasgow.

The party includes some of Lavery's friends such as fellow Glasgow Boys artists Arthur Melville, James Guthrie and EA Watson. Not only is this an excellent example of Lavery's masterly handling of light and colour, but it is also a comment on social changes taking place at the time. Changes in women's fashion, such as simple skirts and Aertex corsets, allowed for increased freedom of movement, with the result that women could take part in more outdoor activities. A female figure is placed front and centre, her animated pose showing her ready to return the serve from her male opponent, who is also shown in mid-action. The men and women playing mixed doubles suggests the beginnings of gender equality in the Victorian era. It can also be interpreted as depicting the game of love, as the young people of marriageable age are in mid-play, whilst the older and younger generations watch from the sidelines.



## Activity for *The Tennis Party*

### Time Travel – Social & Cultural Influences

The *Art of Empowerment* gallery provides some context for the rapid changes which were taking place around the developing Suffrage movement.

- Describe the natural setting. What is in the background?
- How does this group seem to you on first impression?
- What are they wearing / holding / standing with?

We can then consider what this suggests about the era and the questions it poses:

- Why do you think the artist chose to paint this scene?
- Why do you think he chose to paint these people?

Through discussion you can introduce ideas regarding gender equality during this period in history. For example, changes in clothing allowing women to be more active outdoors.

- What clues to the Suffrage movement can we see in the painting?

▶ Got to **Gallery 18: People and Portraits** to see a narrative with a different tone.



# BROTHER AND SISTER

Joan Eardley, 1955

Born in Sussex in 1921, Joan Eardley spent her artistic career closely linked to Glasgow and the North East of Scotland. During her early childhood, her father suffered a mental breakdown, having been wounded in a gas attack during the First World War. He committed suicide when Eardley was only nine years old. Eardley studied under the Scottish painter and teacher James Cowie, whose painting *Falling Leaves* can be seen in *Gallery 18: People and Portraits*. Cowie's precise and linear style famously clashed with Eardley's freer approach. Cowie couldn't convince Eardley to change her expressive style and in 1940 she enrolled at Glasgow School of Art where she was influenced by the Scottish Colourists.

In the Townhead area of Glasgow, Eardley made the working-class children of that area the subject of her art. *Brother and Sister* demonstrates Eardley's technique of unifying human subject matter with the man-made environment. The confident sweeping brushstrokes carve out the apprehensive faces of the two children and the graffiti-covered building behind them. The elder brother protectively grasps his younger sister's arm. He shyly avoids eye contact with the viewer, while she is innocently confrontational.

In the early 1950s, Eardley moved to Catterline, near Stonehaven, where she approached painting seascapes and landscapes with the same vigour and empathy as her paintings in Townhead. Eardley died of breast cancer in 1963 at the age of 42. Her ashes were scattered at Catterline and she left a legacy as one of the most influential British artists of the 20th century.

## Activity for *Brother and Sister*

This activity will encourage learners to look closely at the artwork and use critical analysis through imaginative thinking.

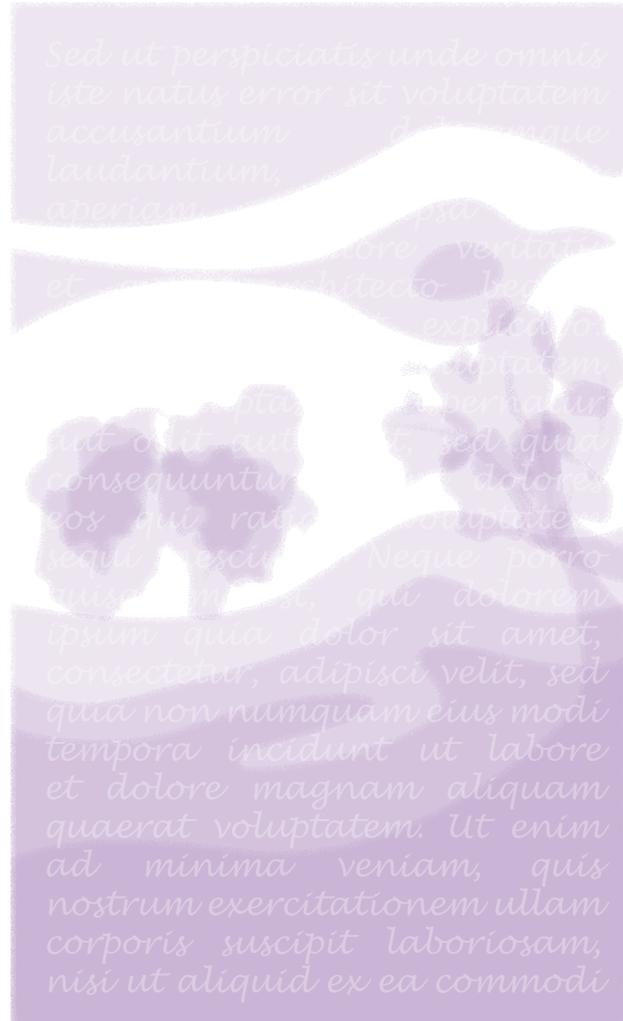
- When do you think this artwork was created? 5 / 50 / 500 years ago? Why do you think that? What clues are there?
- What media do you think Eardley used? How did she apply the media and how does it affect the artwork?
- How would you describe the personalities of the children and their relationship with each other?
- What is the story being told in this artwork?
- What do you think these children were doing before and after Eardley painted them?
- If these children could talk to us, what do you think they would say?

Learners can discuss their thoughts in pairs or small groups and feed back to their teacher or the whole group.



# FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Complete back at school



**“I can analyse art and design techniques, processes and concepts, make informed judgements and express considered opinions on my own and others’ work.”**

EXA 4-07a

**“I enjoy creating texts of my choice and I am developing my own style. I can regularly select subject, purpose, format and resources to suit the needs of my audience.”**

LIT 3-20a / LIT 4-20a

## Follow-up activity

This activity will take 1 to 2 periods and could be done individually or in a group. You will need access to computers, tablets or smartphones.

Learners are to choose an artwork from the Aberdeen Art Gallery Collection, they may want to use one they saw on their recent visit. Using descriptive language, they can create an original piece of text inspired by their chosen artwork. This will encourage learners to see the connection between imaginative writing and visual art and help them to explore and express their own narrative.

Learners are to include as much detail about the art work as possible. Things to consider are:

- Who or what is the subject matter?
- What action is taking place?
- Are there clues or symbols in the artwork that could inform their text?
- Does the artwork convey a particular time and place?
- Do the colours, textures, or tones influence the mood and atmosphere of their text?

Depending on the individual learner’s level or learning style, they could create their text as a short story, a comic book style storyboard or a script.



*For You Tracey Emin, 2004* All rights reserved, DACS

*Brief Encounter, Calum Colvin, 1990* Artist © Calum Colvin (2002)

*Baptism in Scotland, 1850* John Phillip

*The Tennis Party, 1885* John Lavery

*Brother and Sister, Joan Eardley, 1955* Artist © DACS



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