



UPPER PRIMARY  
NARRATIVE

# NARRATIVE

## UPPER PRIMARY | 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.

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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!

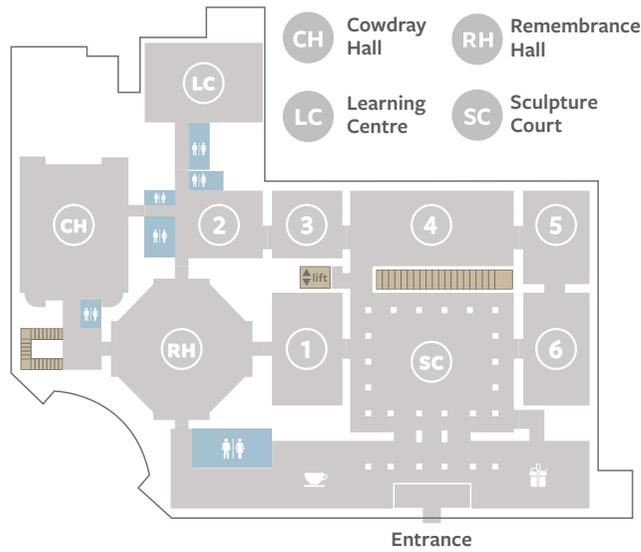
Please supervise your pupils appropriately at all times and ask them to be considerate of other visitors.

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

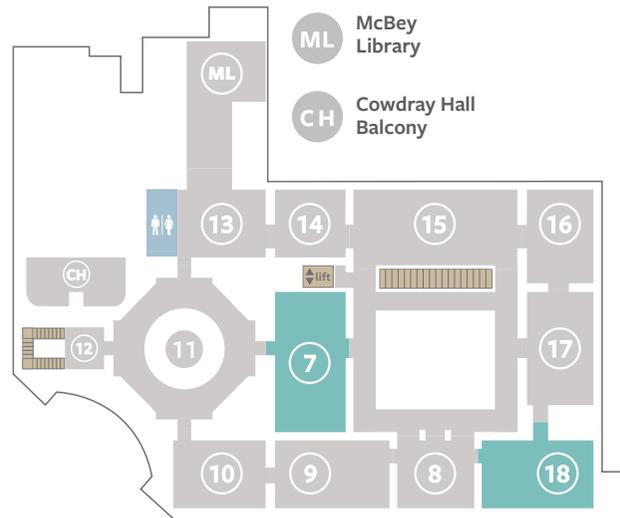
# GETTING AROUND THE ART GALLERY



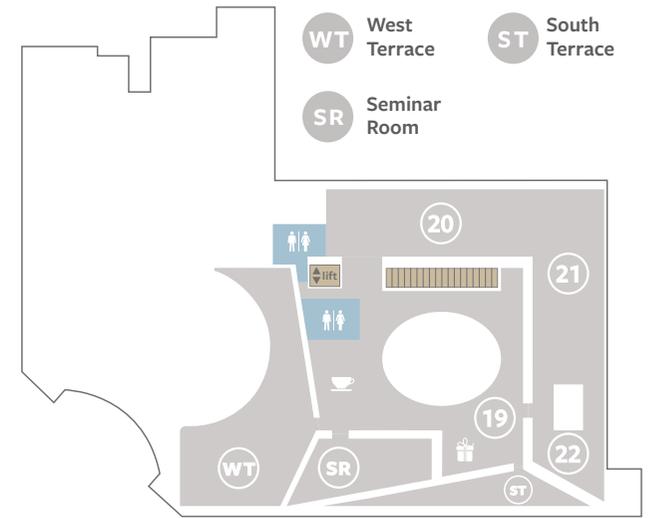
## Ground Floor



## First Floor



## Second Floor



start here **7** end here **18**

**Exploring Art**

- In the Gulf they Dream of Sea and Ice**  
Joyce Cairns
- Maternité**  
George Hitchcock
- A Scotch Fair**  
John Philip

**People and Portraits**

- Cigarette Box**  
Martin Parr
- Mariana**  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti

# SETTLER ACTIVITY

## Gallery 7: Exploring Art

Organise your learners into a circle and briefly explain that art is all about telling stories and there are many different ways that an artist can do this. Ask everyone to look around this room in which there are sculptures, paintings, photographs and interactives on display. They all create a visual narrative for us, the audience.

It is important for young learners to realise that art is not just about being good at drawing.



# IN THE GULF THEY DREAM OF SEA AND ICE

Joyce Cairns, 1991

Born in Edinburgh in 1947, Joyce Cairns studied painting at Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen, 1966 to 1967, and the Royal College of Art, London, 1971 to 1974. She returned to Gray's School of Art in 1976, where she taught drawing and painting until 2004, when she retired from tutoring. During these years in Aberdeen, Cairns lived in Footdee, the former fishing village situated at the mouth of Aberdeen Harbour.

Cairns has been exhibiting her work since 1969 and she is known for her figurative compositions that combine autobiographical details and psychological themes. Her mother's struggle with mental health issues, her father's time served in the military and her own visits to Bosnia and former concentration camps in Europe, all contributed to her subjects of war, loss and memory. Cairns features in her paintings as if she is the narrator, or as she calls herself, a 'war tourist'.

In this painting the thinly applied oil paint on board is almost like watercolour in places. It contrasts with the opaque areas to create structured and colourful forms. Cairns' inspiration was the soldiers deployed overseas during the Gulf War and how they would have longed for the cooler climes of home.



# MATERNITÉ

George Hitchcock, 1889

Gallery 7  
Exploring Art



George Hitchcock was one of a number of young American artists drawn to Europe in the wake of the Realist and Impressionist movements. Abandoning a career in Law in his early twenties, he studied art first in England, then in France, finally settling in The Netherlands. Hitchcock set up his own Art Summer School in the village of Egmond-Binnen. Influenced by the light and colour of his Dutch surroundings, most of his subject matter was inspired by the rural landscape. Scenes of peasant women in tulip fields had ethereal, Madonna-like qualities and *Maternité* is a prime example of that. The muted colour palette coupled with the soft landscape creates a heavenly atmosphere.

Although on one level it is a depiction of a young peasant woman with her two children, the basket which frames her head like a halo turns her into the archetypal Madonna. The religious symbolism transforms the group into a Holy Family – the Virgin and Child with St John the Baptist. The young boy holding a stick takes up the crouching, attendant pose typically found in Renaissance depictions of the infant St John. Casting a gloomy portent of the crucifixion, the woman's shadow is about to fall upon a cross formed by the creepers growing on the path. These religious references or symbols would have been immediately recognisable to the 19th-century viewer.



# A SCOTCH FAIR

John Philip, 1848

Narrative or storytelling painting was highly popular in the Victorian era and reflected the taste of the time for paintings that were rich in colour, action and drama. Aberdeen-born artist, John Philip began his career painting in this style.

*A Scotch Fair* is full of action and narrative detail. In the central group a Highlander and a Lowlander are negotiating the sale of cattle. The Highlander's daughter looks sorrowfully down to the calf which playfully sucks her fingers. There are many other characters to look at, all with their own stories. In the background a recruiting party is looking to enlist men for their regiment. To the left is an ale tent bearing the signpost 'Widow Wattie licensed to sell spirits' which contains a rowdy rabble.

When *A Scotch Fair* was conserved recently it was found to have been painted on two separate pieces of canvas. Philip had cut the original canvas neatly around the figure of the girl tending the calf. He removed the right-hand section of the painting and replaced it with a narrower section which he then painted to finish the composition. As for the discarded right-hand side of the original painting, Philip joined it to a new piece of canvas to create another different version of the fair scene.



# GALLERY 7 ACTIVITIES

Organise your class into three groups and allow them five minutes in front of each of the three highlighted paintings in this room.



## Discussion points for *In the Gulf they Dream of Sea and Ice*

- Can you imagine what the young soldiers might feel when they are stationed in a foreign country, far from home for the first time?
- What is the dominant colour in this artwork?
- Would you rather be: too hot or too cold?



## Discussion points for *Maternité*

- Focus on the young woman holding the infant. If she could talk to us, what do you think she would say?
- What was your first impression of the painting before learning about the religious symbolism of the characters?
- Provide an alternative title for this artwork.



## Discussion points for *A Scotch Fair*

- This is such a busy painting, ask your learners to come up with six words that describe the atmosphere and the characters they can see.
- What clues are there that show this scene is located in Scotland?
- Pick one character from the painting and give them a name and a backstory explaining why they are at the fair.



Now go to **Gallery 18: People and Portraits.**

When moving between galleries ask your learners to look out for other examples of narrative artworks, such as sculptures, photographs, prints and drawings.



# MARIANA

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1870

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a British poet, illustrator and painter whose work is characterised by its medieval style. In 1848 he co-founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. Their aim was to combine the religious qualities of medieval art, with their own study of nature and the world around them. They were opposed to the Royal Academy's promotion of modern styles and the triviality of the increasingly popular 'genre painting' that depicted everyday life.

Mariana appears as a minor character in Shakespeare's play, *Measure for Measure*. She has been rejected by her fiancé Angelo because her dowry was lost in a shipwreck. Millais had painted this subject 20 years earlier, using as his source Tennyson's poem *Mariana* which develops the themes of Shakespeare's tragic heroine. In this painting Mariana is captured in a moment of inaction, lost in reverie. Her introspective gaze conveys her longing for Angelo.

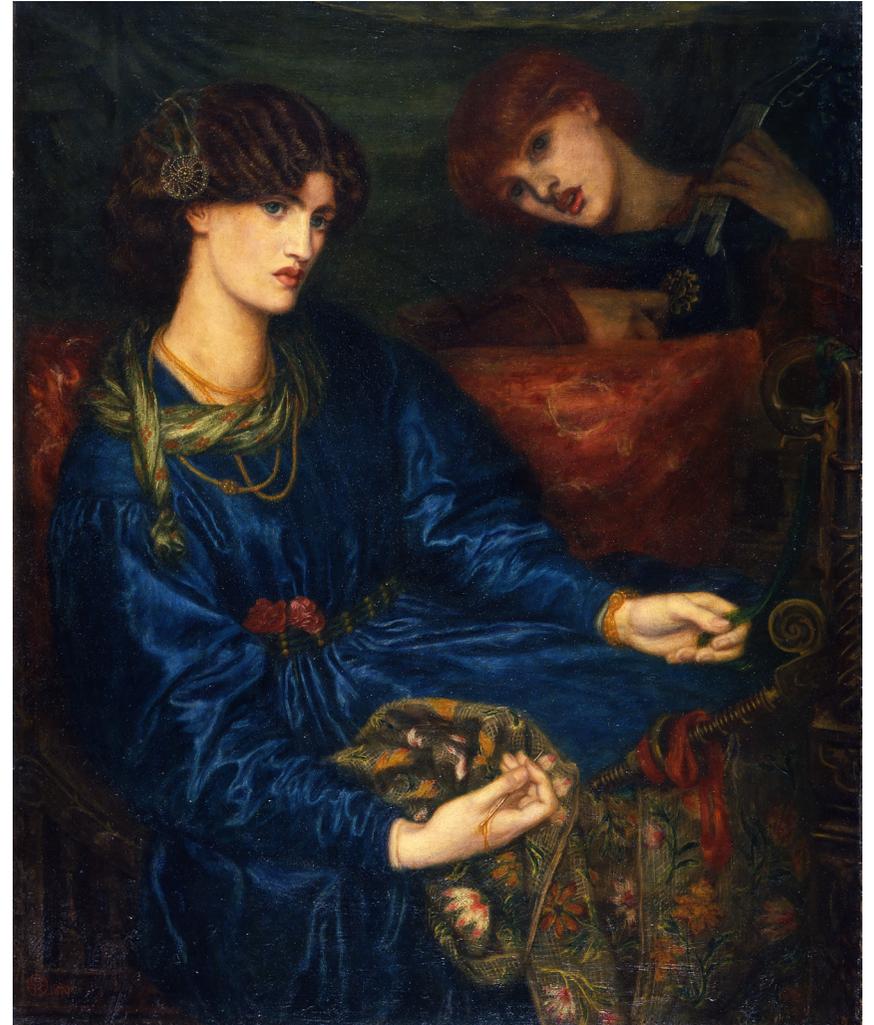
Rossetti's model for this picture and his real-life muse was Jane Morris, an Arts and Craft embroiderer and the wife of his friend and fellow artist William Morris.

## Activity for *Cigarette Box* (previous page) and *Mariana*

Divide your class into two groups. Allow each group ten minutes to study each of the two highlighted artworks in this room. Ask your learners to describe what they see. They do not have to explain their thoughts at this stage, just point out as many details as possible. This can include:

- facial expressions
- body language
- the colours used
- objects and people in the background

Gather the two groups together and then with all these details ask the pupils to create a narrative for each artwork.



# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Complete back at school



**“I can create and present work that shows developing skill in using the visual elements and concepts.”**

EXA 2-03a

i have something to say...

Ask your pupils to think about all the artworks they saw during their visit to the Gallery and get them to focus on the one they thought had the best story – which may not be the piece they liked the best. They should then write a short story and create an artwork that best illustrates their narrative.



*In the Gulf They Dream of Sea and Ice*, Joyce Cairns, 1991 Artist © Joyce Cairns (2005)

*Maternité*, George Hitchcock, 1889

*A Scotch Fair*, John Philip

*Cigarette Box*, Martin Parr, 2005 Artist © Martin Parr / Magnum, Courtesy Rocket Gallery (2006)

*Mariana*, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1870



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