



SENIOR PHASE  
NATURE



# NATURE

## SENIOR 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.

# NATURE

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## THEME FOR THIS PACK: NATURE

Throughout history the natural world has provided a source of inspiration for artists and designers. From the vast vistas in landscape painting to abstract art which captures the emotions of nature's elemental forces, our collection illustrates how different artists have responded to the same theme in a variety of media. Our displays show nature in all of its beautiful, destructive and organic glory.

### **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!

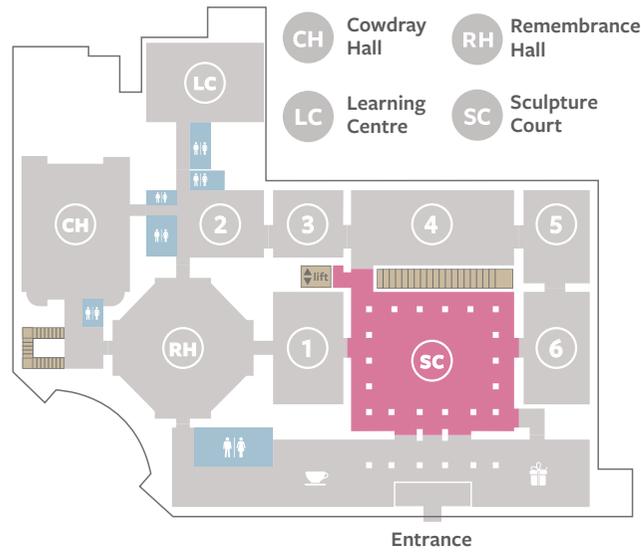
Please supervise your pupils appropriately at all times and ask them to be considerate of other visitors.

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

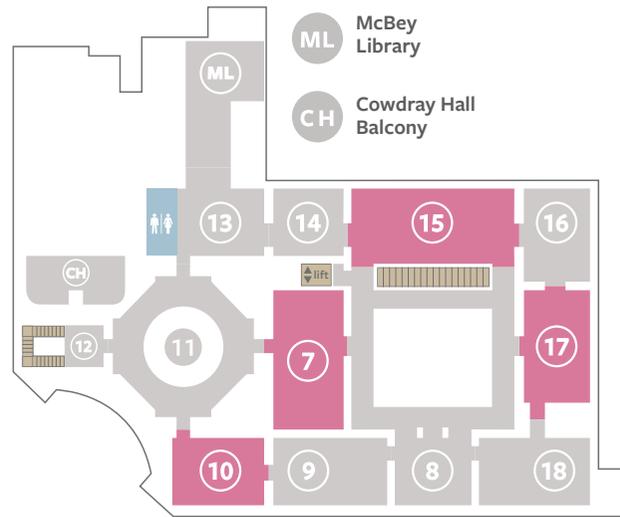
# GETTING AROUND THE ART GALLERY



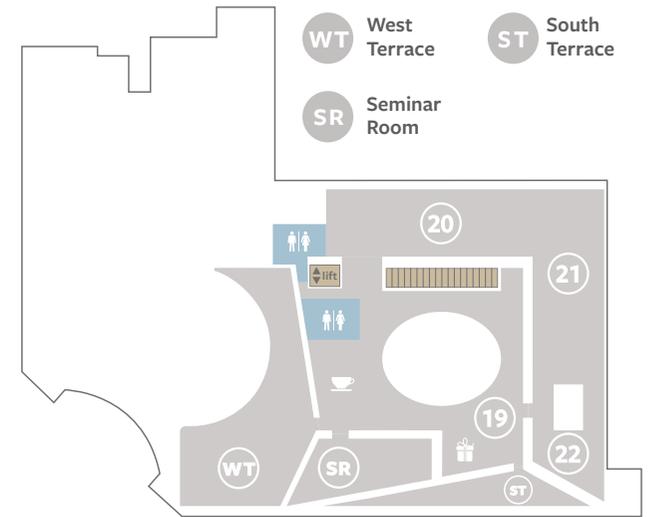
## Ground Floor



## First Floor



## Second Floor



start here

**SC** **7** **10** **15** **17** end here

**Sculpture Court**  
**Settler Activity**  
 Freeze Frame

**Exploring Art**  
**Bellinzona from the Road to Locarno**  
 Joseph Mallord William Turner

**French Impressions**  
**Les Pommiers à Damiette**  
 Jean Baptiste Armand Guillaumin

**Paradise Lost**  
**Honeysuckle and Sweetpeas**  
 Winifred Nicholson

**Abstract Art**  
**The Tempest**  
 Henry Inlander  
**Meditation**  
 Dame Barbara Hepworth

# 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 area of the building.

When moving between galleries, ask learners to look out for other types of artwork inspired by nature. This could be in a variety of formats such as painting, ceramics, sculpture, costume, jewellery, photography, print or digital media.

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 the centre of the Sculpture Court. Look all around the space you are in just now. Look up to the ceiling, down to the floor, at the lighting, the walls, the windows and the artworks. What do you think around you has been made from, or inspired by, nature?

This helps learners to connect with the building and consider how nature inspires many elements of art and design, before beginning your tour of the galleries.

Sculpture Court



Now make your way to **Gallery 7: Exploring Art.**

Ask learners to look out for different representations of nature when moving through the rooms.

# BELLINZONA FROM THE ROAD TO LOCARNO

Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1843

Gallery 7  
Exploring Art



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851) was an artist of the Romantic genre of the late 18th century, which revolted against the Classical rationalisation of harmony and balance in expressive arts. Romanticism celebrated the irrational and more imaginative aspects of human nature and Turner excelled in depicting these themes.

His use of layered colour and tempestuous brushstrokes created a sense of nature that seemed to burst with light from the canvas and gave him with the reputation as the father of abstract art.

Born in London in 1775, Turner was known for his anarchistic approach to traditional fine art. His father encouraged Turner's artistic talent and supported his training in life drawing at the Royal Academy when he was only 14 years old. Turner would gain as much knowledge and experience as he could through night classes, architectural draughtmanship and painting scenery for the stage. Turner lived with his father near the Thames at Twickenham in a house that was also his studio. Turner would travel during the summer months and work in his studio during the winter, for the following year's exhibitions and commissions.

Turner visited many places to inspire his landscape paintings, but he had an affinity with Switzerland and his romantic depiction of the alpine landscape is clearly seen in this late watercolour of Bellinzona.

Bellinzona is a city in southern Switzerland, known for its three distinctive medieval castles. In Turner's watercolour painting the city glimmers in the mist, as the long diagonal of the bridge leads the viewer's eye into the narrow valley.

Turner's masterly depiction of light and instinctive application of paint shows the sunlight on the city walls to create an almost mythical scene.

## Activity for *Bellinzona from the Road to Locarno*

Ask learners to take a minute or two to look closely at the painting and then use the following questions to open a discussion.

- What do you think the theme of the artwork is?
- What do you see in the foreground, middle-ground and background? How does Turner represent scale in this artwork?
- What parts of this watercolour painting are different in brushwork? Where has the watercolour been scraped at?
- Have any parts been exaggerated or distorted or focused on? Why has Turner done this?
- How do the things you've mentioned contribute to the mood or atmosphere of the artwork?
- What do you think Turner was trying to capture in this landscape? Is it to produce something realistic / imaginative / romantic?



Head to **Gallery 10: French Impressions** to see an example from a group of artists inspired by Turner.

# LES POMMIERS À DAMIETTE

Jean Baptiste Armand Guillaumin, 1893

Guillaumin belonged to the group of artists known as the Impressionists. Although he is perhaps less well known than artists such as Monet or Renoir, his work has a freshness and vibrancy of colour synonymous with the Impressionist style. The Impressionists were interested in capturing light and movement, giving an impression of a scene rather than capturing exactly what it looked like. They used bright colours and fluid brush strokes which gave their work a more immediate feel than traditional landscape painting techniques. They pioneered a technique called painting *en plein air*, which simply means that they painted outside. However, this was a major innovation, and followed the invention of ready-mixed oil paints. Being able to paint outside allowed them to be more experimental. Guillaumin's painting of apple trees in a small village west of Paris, perfectly captures the essence of a bright summer's day. Guillaumin used contrasting colours which are applied and mixed directly onto the canvas. Deep Prussian blue shadows highlight the white blossoms that seem to flutter in the gentle summer breeze.

In 1891 Guillaumin won 100,000 francs in a French lottery, allowing him to concentrate on painting full time, which invited jealousy from some of his contemporaries. Although Guillaumin is linked to the Impressionists, if you compare this painting with the other Impressionist paintings you'll see that it looks rather different. Guillaumin was friends with Vincent van Gogh, and his influence is obvious in this painting, particularly in the swirling application of the paint, the spindly branches of the trees and the bold, bright colours. In fact, Monet, who was one of the founding members of the Impressionist movement, actively disliked Guillaumin's work and thought it was rather bright and garish.

## Activity for *Les Pommiers à Damiette*

Before revealing any information about the artist, ask learners to consider the following discussion.

This encourages critical analysis through imaginative thinking.

- What is this a painting of and why do you think the artist painted it?
- What do you think the artist is trying to capture?
- Using prior learning, what other artists could have influenced this painter?
- Describe the use of colour, brushwork and composition with the person next to you.



Gallery 10  
French Impressions



Head to **Gallery 15: Paradise Lost** to see an artist inspired by Impressionism.

# HONEYSUCKLE AND SWEETPEAS

Winifred Nicholson, 1945-1946

Gallery 15  
Paradise Lost



When discussing the career of artist Winifred Nicholson, it is sometimes overshadowed by the fact she was the first wife of artist Ben Nicholson and was the mother of artist Kate Nicholson. However, Winifred Nicholson was a successful artist in her own right who participated in over 200 group exhibitions in her lifetime, as well as many solo shows and retrospectives at home and abroad.

Nicholson was born Rosa Winifred Roberts in Oxford in 1893. She was encouraged to paint at an early age by her grandfather, artist George Howard, who was a friend of Pre-Raphaelite artist William Morris. Her formal studies began at Byam Shaw School of Art in 1912 which she returned at the end of the First World War. Meeting and marrying Ben Nicholson had a major impact, not just on her personal life, but also on her artistic output. They worked, travelled and exhibited alongside each other and their home, Bankshead in Cumbria, became a hub for artists such as Paul Nash, Ivon Hitchens and Christopher Wood. Winifred's artistic endeavours continued when the marriage ended, after Ben met the artist Barbara Hepworth. She continued to travel and live in Europe, where she met and learned from artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian.

Nicholson experimented with abstraction, but her own, almost impressionistic style has often been referred to as having a *faux naïve* charm: her simplification of domestic still life objects and landscapes was intentional. The garden at Bankshead provided much inspiration and she loved the pure colours of flowers. In *Honeysuckle and Sweet Peas*, the yellow background seems almost to provide the painting with its own inner light.



## Activity for *Honeysuckle and Sweetpeas*

**Discussion** – Split the learners into smaller groups with a few questions to start their discussion:

- What do you notice first about the artwork?
- What visual elements do you think Nicholson focused on in this composition?
- Why do you think Nicholson deliberately chose this composition with a very blank background?
- What personal or cultural events do you think may have inspired her subject matter?

Learners can either feed back to their teacher in their small groups or the whole class can come together to discuss their thoughts.



Go to **Gallery 17: Abstract Art** to see nature depicted in a very different manner.

# THE TEMPEST

Henry Inlander, 1959

Growing up in Vienna, Henry Inlander experienced the cultural explosion of the 1920s, followed by the Great Depression and the growth of Nazism. To escape the threat of persecution his family fled to Italy but the rise in Fascism meant they had to leave once again, this time settling in London in 1938. These early childhood experiences, living through the London Blitz and the death of family members at Auschwitz had a profound impact on Inlander's artistic output. Inlander studied at Saint Martin's School of Art from 1939 to 1941, at the Camberwell School of Art from 1945 to 1946, and at the Slade School of Fine Art from 1949 to 1952 where he won a scholarship to Rome. After the war Inlander continued with his studies in London and returned to Italy, to the small village of Anticoli, near Rome, where he spent much of his life.

In his paintings he attempted to capture the motion of nature and the way the natural environment undergoes change and transformation. While never adhering to one school of painting, his varied studies and experiences meant he developed a style that uniquely expressed his vision of the world.

Inlander did not draw in situ, instead he worked from memory and his own imagination and the resulting landscapes disappear into abstraction dominated by texture and colour. Nature is there as inspiration not just for mere representation. The ambiguity of the shapes in *The Tempest* and his palette of saturated greens, chalky blues and hints of yellow combine to create an energetic and emotive painting that can be interpreted in different ways. Inlander brings a storm to life and challenges us to consider if it is just an abstract landscape or a reflection of the natural world in turbulent times?

## Activity for *The Tempest*

### Social & Cultural Influences:

The art of Henry Inlander provides a context for how personal experience and social events can impact an artist's life. Begin with questions relating to the artwork.

- What are your first thoughts about this artwork? What is your gut reaction to it?
- What colours, tones or textures do you notice first?
- What mood or atmosphere has the artist created?

Give the learners some background information about Inlander and ask them to consider what this suggests about the era and the issues it raises:

- Why do you think the artist chose to paint this scene?
- How does Inlander's personal life impact on his art?

Through discussion you can introduce the rise of Nazism and social inequality and how this influenced artists.

- What clues about Inlander's personal experiences can we see in this painting?

Challenge learners to find examples of other artworks that convey a sense of personal experience.



# MEDITATION

Dame Barbara Hepworth, 1972

Born in Wakefield, Yorkshire in 1903, Barbara Hepworth enjoyed a career that lasted five decades, in which she produced more than 600 works of sculpture. She was a leading figure in the international art scene and her home in St Ives became a hub for a generation of younger, emerging artists.

She studied sculpture at Leeds School of Art from 1920 to 1921 where she met fellow Yorkshire-born artist Henry Moore. They became friends and established a long lasting but friendly professional rivalry. Like Moore she was an advocate of the direct carving method. This is when an artist works directly into the chosen material and avoids the more traditional process of making preparatory models and maquettes, from which an artist would produce their finished work.

Through the 1920s and 30s travelling through Europe played an important part in Hepworth's life both professionally and personally. She learned new skills, like learning to carve marble from the master carver Giovanni Ardini and met artist such as Georges Braque, Jean Arp and Pablo Picasso who helped restore her artistic clarity and reinvigorate her career.

She moved to St Ives in 1939 with her second husband, the artist Ben Nicholson, and although the marriage wouldn't last, St Ives remained her home until her death in 1975. She was inspired by Cornwall's wild beauty and by the forces of nature so although her art was concerned with form and abstraction, the relationship between the landscape, colour and texture all played a role in her artworks. *Meditation* is a fine example of these creative influences. It

looks like a pebble or rock found on a beach that has been made smooth by the constant motion of the tides. But on closer inspection you can see the perfect circle carved into its middle. This is nature taken to a new level by the artist.

## Activity for *Meditation*

- What do you notice first about the sculpture?
- How do you think this was created? What specific technology or materials do you think Hepworth used?
- What do you think this artwork is communicating?
- What do you think the theme of the work is?
- What words come to mind when looking at this artwork?
- Does the work relate to other disciplines, such as science or technology?
- Why do you think Hepworth called this piece *Meditation*?

Gallery 17  
Abstract Art



# FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Complete back at school



- Learners will produce analytical drawings and related investigative studies in response to stimuli
- Learners will analyse the impact of social, cultural and other influences on artists' work and practice

National 5 / Higher Course Specification

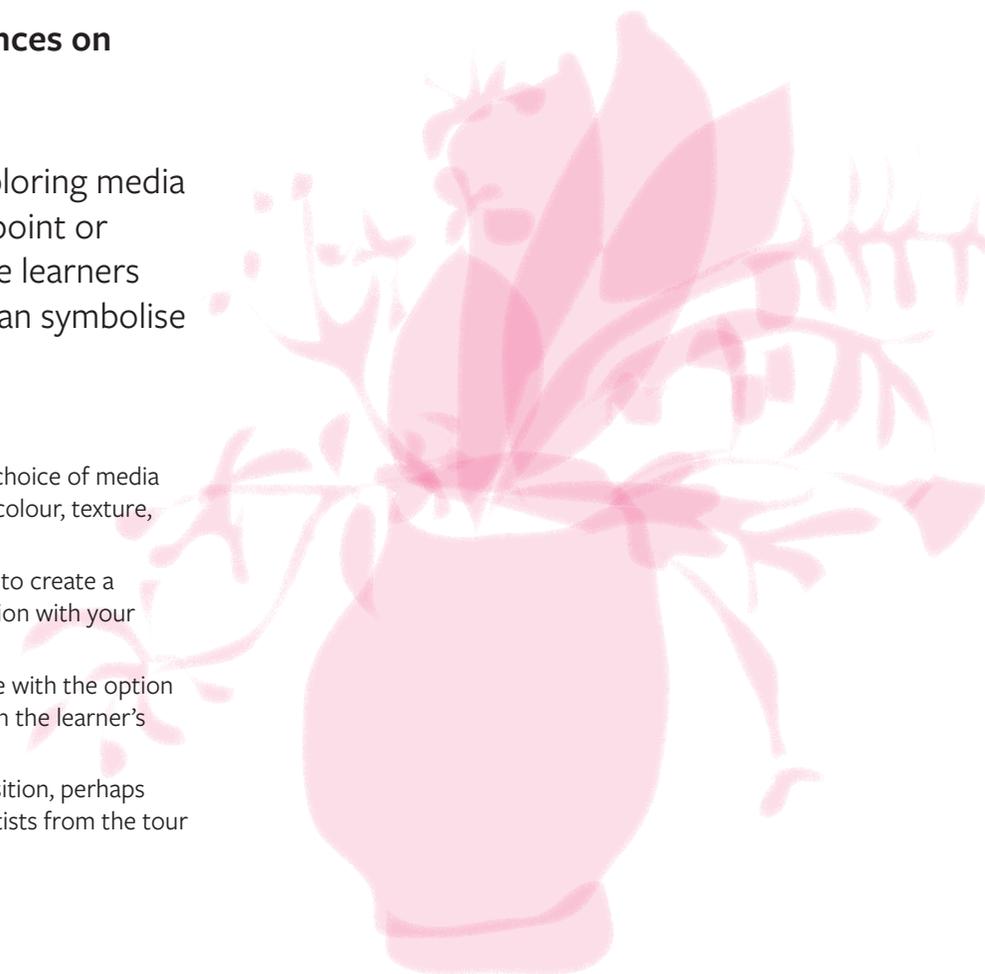
This is to encourage learners to focus less on perfection and more on exploring media by using a range of quick techniques. This could help to create a starting point or study for an expressive portfolio. Annotating their drawings will encourage learners reflect on the artworks they have seen during their visit and how nature can symbolise human experience.

## Follow-up activity

This will take two periods, with the option to develop further. Materials needed: A3 and A2 cartridge paper and an assortment of media (tonal pencils, drawing pens, charcoal, pastels, watercolours and / or acrylic paints), a variety of natural still life objects (shells, plants, fossils, fruit, vegetables) and images of nature or landscapes (optional)

This activity will challenge learners to consider how artists use nature to describe thoughts and feelings.

- Select three objects and do a study of each one in a different media
- Try to use a media that will work well for that object
- Annotate each study explaining your choice of media and your observations of line, shape, colour, texture, pattern or form
- Using images of nature or landscapes to create a background, put together a composition with your chosen objects
  - This can be on a small or large scale with the option of adding objects – it will depend on the learner's level and pace of work
- Try a change of style for your composition, perhaps finding inspiration from one of the artists from the tour of Aberdeen Art Gallery.





*Bellinzona from the Road to Locarno*, Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1843

*Les Pommiers à Damiette*, Jean Baptiste Armand Guillaumin, 1893

*Honeysuckle and Sweetpeas*, Winifred Nicholson, 1945-1946 Artist © Winifred Nicholson's Trustees (2002)

*The Tempest*, Henry Inlander, 1959 Artist © Owned by Ron Burnett (2018)

*Meditation*, Dame Barbara Hepworth, 1972 Artist © Bowness, Hepworth Estate (2003)



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