

Express Yourself is a series of five programmes highlighting the work of six contemporary visual artists living and working in Scotland. The artists have been selected because they are the leading exponents of their various art forms in Scotland. The artists set primary school children projects that break down the process they go through to produce their art. This provides a route into understanding contemporary art, making it more accessible and showing that it can be fun.

The artists have created fun projects that can be easily translated into the classroom to inspire creativity and introduce consideration of methods and ideas practised by artists today.

Programme 1: **Chad McCail** Every picture tells a story

In this programme we gain an insight into the work of Edinburgh-based artist Chad McCail. Chad explains why he is an artist and how he started in his chosen profession. He shows the children how to create the form of visual storytelling that is unique to his arts practice. Chad demonstrates this by showing the children how to produce a series of six pictures that describe their personal stories. Through simple line drawings, the children bring their characters and settings to life.

Chad talks through his pictures with the children, explaining that every element has a specific role to play in telling a story and nothing is superfluous. Chad works with the children on techniques of drawing characters, describing how to make them show emotion by using different colours to convey feeling – blue makes things look cold, while red can be used to make things look angry.

Activities

Before viewing

As this is the first programme in the series, ask pupils:

- to describe what an artist does
- why some people become artists
- whether being an artist is a real job
- where artists work

Language development

Ensure that the children have an understanding of the term 'motion curves'.

Programme 2: **Wendy McMurdo** Photographic dreamscapes

Edinburgh-based artist Wendy McMurdo uses new technology to create digitally manipulated photographs. Wendy explains her work – her ideas, inspiration, influences and working methods. Wendy and the children of Bruntsfield Primary go to the National Museum of Scotland to fire their imaginations before creating their own digitally manipulated photographs.

The children are asked to create artwork about a dream scene. They photograph and sketch various exhibits to be included in their pictures. The children decide what scenes are in their dream and consider items to be included (eg a large bear, other people, a telephone). They are encouraged to think about why they have selected certain things, how different exhibits make them feel and what mood they are trying to convey through their work.

Activities

Before viewing

Engage children in a discussion on portraiture. Use school photographs and family photographs as examples. Ask the following questions about the photographs:

- what is a portrait?
- what does it represent?
- what is the function of a portrait?

Language development

Ensure that the children have an understanding of the following artistic vocabulary and key terms:

- digitally removed
- shadowing
- cut and paste
- doppelgänger
- output

Programme 3: **Iain Kettles and Susie Hunter** 3D inflatable sculptures

Artists Iain Kettles and Susie Hunter work together. From their flat in Glasgow, they create large-scale inflatable sculptures. Their work is made for a particular space, often filling an entire room in a gallery, creating an installation. Iain and Susie exhibit their work at home and abroad. Their work is fun and children easily relate to the cartoon-like shapes and bright colours of the sculptures. Their exhibition in Copenhagen called 'Airspace' is an interactive world created for children in an old church. Children can walk through and touch the various shapes. They can climb ladders, touch clouds floating high in the air and look above the clouds to see birds.

Iain and Susie describe their arts practice and take the children of John Gault Primary School to 'The Big Idea' in Irvine to take part in a fun-fuelled project. The children are asked to create simple 3D inflatable sculptures to do with things you find in the sky. They start by examining 3D inflatable shapes – by dismantling them, they discover how they were put together. Each group of children selects a drawing from which they will produce a large-scale inflatable sculpture.

Activities

Before viewing

Engage children in a discussion on sculpture:

- what is sculpture?
- what does it represent?
- what type of materials is it usually made of?
- where do you see it?

Programme 4: Victoria Morton
Using personal belongings to produce abstract paintings

This programme gives us an insight into the work of Glasgow-based artist Vikki Morton. Vikki is an abstract painter who uses traditional materials to create contemporary art. Vikki explains her working methods, ideas, inspiration and influences and her passion for paint.

Children from Anderson Primary School in Glasgow bring in objects that say something about who they are and what they like doing – items that make them happy, a favourite item of clothing or perhaps images from a magazine. This activity culminates with each child making a set of drawings and collage pieces that builds up to a large painting.

Vikki's project makes abstraction look easy and it's guaranteed to have you rummaging through your personal belongings whilst reaching for your old paintbrushes.

Activities

Before viewing

Engage children in a discussion about abstract painting.

Show examples of drawing, painting and collage from books, eg:

- Cubism (Georges Braque, Picasso)
- Op Art (Bridget Riley)
- Pointillism (Seurat)
- Joseph Alberts
- Helen Frankenthaler
- Mark Rothko
- Willem De Kooning
- Jean Michael Basquiat
- Sonia Delaunay

Language development

Ensure that the children have an understanding of the following artistic vocabulary and key terms:

- abstract
- collage
- tone
- mark-making
- optical effects
- hatching
- impasto
- negative space

Programme 5: Nathan Coley
Project based artwork

The last in the series is Dundee-based artist Nathan Coley. Nathan explains his arts practice, which is termed 'project based'. The conclusion of every project is completely different, making it difficult to categorise his art. Nathan's work is recognised through his approach and treatment, as opposed to a particular style or art object. His work is dependent on research, consultation and decision-making. This approach blurs the boundaries between art disciplines but is still reliant on traditional mediums, for example, sculpture and photography. He takes the children of Newcastleton Primary School on a journey to Kielder Reservoir in Northumberland where he asks them to think about a flooded village, then he helps them to create art that communicates their ideas.

Activities

Before viewing

Engage children in a discussion about gathering information.

Ask the following questions:

- what is research?
- what form does it take?
- what is the function of research?
- where can we get it?

Language development

Ensure that the children have an understanding of the following artistic vocabulary and key terms:

- project based
- commission
- research
- audience
- architecture

More extensive programme notes, activities and learning outcomes relating to the curriculum can be found on the 4Learning website: www.channel4.com/learning

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Visual Art
for 9–11 year olds



The Mix: Express Yourself



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