

The Importance of Art in Society



Sculptor Tyson Smith in his Bluecoat Studio © Bluecoat

Curriculum links

History

Knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past

Local history study

English

Planning their writing by:

Discussing and recording ideas

Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary

PSHE and Citizenship

To think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs

Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities

Art

To improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials

Summary

Pupils will explore the role that the artist plays in society and why art is important. They will look at the range of art – from different artists and cultures – that we exhibit at Bluecoat

Duration

Core activities: 5 x 1 hour sessions
Extension activity: 1 x 1 hour session

Aims and Outcomes

- Pupils will have gained an awareness about the importance of art and the artist in society
- Pupils will have gained confidence in looking at and talking about art and how to express their own opinions on what art they do and don't like

Background

Blue Coat School moved to new premises in 1906 and in 1907 a group of artists moved in to Bluecoat. The Sandon Studios Society was a group of art students and two of their tutors who had broken away from the University, in order to maintain a more radical, independent way of working. They also had a vision to create a distinctive art movement in Liverpool, independent from London, and to encourage local people to engage with new art. The Sandon combined visual art, architecture, music and performance to build a creative community in the building.

In 1927 the Sandon and their supporters raised funds to buy the building, securing its future and saving it from possible demolition. They founded a charitable organisation, Bluecoat Society of Arts, whose purpose was to **'preserve the building for its architectural value, and to establish a centre for the arts'**, thus establishing the first arts centre in the country. Bluecoat became the focus for Liverpool's artistic and social life, with cabarets and parties taking place regularly.

Over the years, Bluecoat has hosted many important exhibitions and artists. The first art exhibition, held in 1908, had a painting by French Impressionist Claude Monet, and in 1911 works by Picasso, Matisse, Cézanne and Van Gogh were included in a ground-breaking Post-Impressionist exhibition. Many talented artists had studios at Bluecoat and their work can be seen around the city today. For example, relief sculpture by long term studio resident Herbert Tyson Smith can be seen on the Liverpool Cenotaph on St George's Plateau.

Today, Bluecoat is Liverpool's centre for the contemporary arts and showcases talent across visual art, music, dance, live art and literature. As well as being the oldest building in the city centre, Bluecoat has four galleries, is home to a creative community of artists and businesses and runs a participation programme for local people. It is a space for people to meet, talk, work, perform, create, display and enjoy themselves.

Activity

Starter questions

These questions will assess the pupils' prior knowledge and also alert you to any possible difficulties or sensitive topics.

Have you ever visited Bluecoat and do you know anything about it?

What art, if any, do you like?

Core activity

Using the material on our website, pupils will work in groups to look at artworks that have been exhibited at Bluecoat and explore some of the different functions of artworks. They will then complete an art-based activity.

Extension activity

Bluecoat works with local arts and community groups. Pupils will be asked to think about the role of the artist in the local community and will design their own artist's studio.

End questions

These questions will ask pupils to reflect on what they have learnt and ask them to apply this knowledge to the world today.

What is art?

Is art important?

Think About

- What do you think makes art 'good'?
- Have you ever visited an exhibition at Bluecoat? If so what did you think of it?
- What art do you like to look at?

Talk About

- Why is it important that people have access to art?
- What positive changes do you think art can make to someone's life?
- How can we use art to help people in our own community?

Research

- What exhibition is on at Bluecoat at the moment? Is it one you would like to see?

If you enjoyed this resource you might want to look at *Slavery and Bluecoat on Strike*