

Art and Architecture

Information for educators

The following booklet has been formulated to provide you with ways of working with groups in the Gallery. The information is based on Art and Architecture within the Gallery and supplies practical and theoretical approaches to using artworks. You could use the artworks and suggested activities as a starting point to further study or for a new class project, developing the ideas to suit your yearly or termly planning. Ideas can be photocopied directly from the pack or adapted into worksheets for your students to explore independently, in pairs or as part of a group discussion.

The theme has been chosen to give educators and their pupils or students an introduction to the architecture of the Gallery combined with selected paintings within the collection that complement the development and founding of Manchester Art Gallery.

Paintings, furniture and sculpture, have been selected to demonstrate the key elements of the architecture of Manchester Art Gallery. The selected pieces will target specific areas within the Gallery, whilst also allowing time to explore the building generally and grasp the various destination Galleries and breadth of study that can be conducted using the collection.

Manchester Art Gallery is a fantastic resource for engaging with many subjects across the curriculum. Art and Design, History, Design and Technology and Citizenship, can be easily addressed within one visit and provide a framework for further visits. The education team use many artworks in a cross-curricular approach, which can be adapted to suit individual student, teacher and school/college needs. Some of these techniques will be explored through the information that follows to create a focal point to your visit and to provide inspiration for related classroom or studio activities and future practise.

Manchester Art Gallery

Main entrance to the Gallery

Includes casts of the Elgin Marbles (shown to the right) and a decorative Frieze.



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The sculptures in the front square of the building are casts from the Elgin marbles, which are kept in the British Museum and once decorated the Parthenon in Athens (447-432 b.c.)

The sculptures present gods fighting against centaurs. It can be understood as the battle and triumph of order versus chaos. The frieze (not depicted above) represents a religious procession dedicated to Athena. This was quite an unusual theme as Greek architectonic sculpture tended to represent Gods and heroes rather than everyday people.

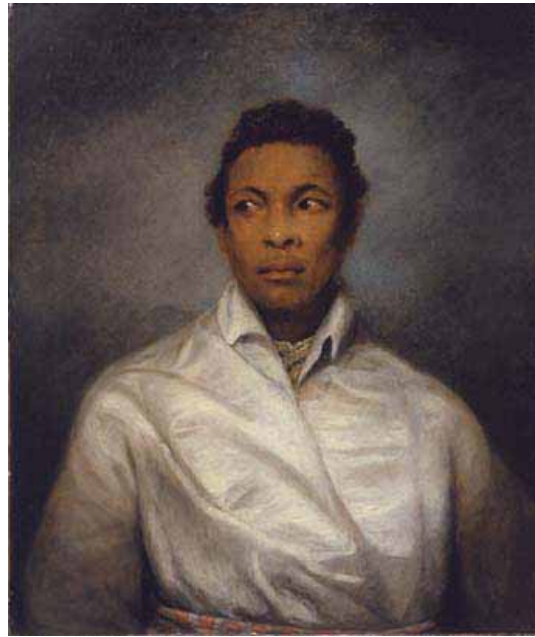
CIS Manchester Gallery

Artwork: *Othello, the Moor of Venice*.

Artist: James R.A. Northcote.

Date: 1826

Oil on canvas



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This painting was the first acquired by the Royal Manchester Institution in 1827. It is a portrait of Ira Aldridge, an important 19th century actor, in the role of Othello.

The artist, Northcote was born in 1746 in Plymouth and was taught by Sir Joshua Reynolds and like him travelled to Italy to learn from the Great Masters. Northcote became a successful painter of historical paintings and also wrote, 'Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds' in 1813.

Gallery Three.

Artwork: *Samson Betrayed*.
Artist: Frederick Pickersgill.
Date: 1850.
Oil on canvas



© Manchester City Galleries

The painting represents the Biblical story of Samson who was known for his great strength. God had warned him never to cut his hair but a Philistine woman, one of his enemies named Delilah, seduced Samson discovered his secret and betrayed him, getting a man to cut the heroes hair and his source of power.

This artwork was acquired by the Royal Manchester Institution, which was based in this building from 1824 until 1882. This painting had been damaged over the years including a large loss in paint to the sitter to the right of the composition whose back is to the viewer. Conservator Maureen Cross has recreated the missing section, the lower back of the figure. Cross researched the work of other painters such as Rubens to aid her work.

The Gallery of Craft & Design

Artwork: *Whispering Walls*

The artwork is actually benches situated opposite both entrances to the Gallery of Craft and Design that have an audio installation attached to them.

Image: A section of the Gallery ceiling demonstrating the decorative detail that still remains within the space.



© Manchester City Galleries

The piece of work relates to the time when the Gallery space was used as a lecture theatre and concert hall. The audio is activated when you walk past, letting you hear extracts from theatre plays, songs, monologues, readings and lectures. This room was a later addition to the original building and was added in the 1870s.

The idea behind the work is that old buildings contain memories of the people that used them, suggesting the layers of sound trapped within the walls of the Gallery for posterity.

The aim of this work is to encourage visitors to look around and imagine the people and events that happened in the past and a booklet of further information and photographs is available alongside the work to explain in further detail.

Ways In

- The main entrance of the building into Manchester Art Gallery formerly hosted the Royal Manchester Institution. Charles Barry designed it in 1824 in the Greek Revival Style. The style of this building can be used to discuss British architectural revivals during the 19th century.
- The front square of Manchester Art Gallery is decorated with casts of the Parthenon. Discuss ideas surrounding the use of replicas by museum. What are the students' views on the subject?
- The original Parthenon frieze is at the British Museum. Discuss ideas around the repatriation of artworks and artefacts. The question of whether or not the British Museum should have returned the Elgin Marbles to Greece for the Olympic Games (2004) could be debated.
- Merchants and manufacturers who intended to elevate their social status by promoting the sciences and the arts founded the Royal Manchester Institution in 1823. With the rise of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, art patronage shifts from the hands of the aristocracy to businessmen. Compare the taste of the 18th century British aristocracy (reflected by paintings in Gallery 2) who favoured continental old masters with the taste on the new patrons (paintings in Gallery 3) who preferred British artists.
- Bible stories were often represented in paintings of this period, (first half of the 19th century), as they were engrained in national consciousness. This theme could be used to explore the painting *Samson Betrayed* by Frederick Pickersgill.
- Examine the new Manchester Art Gallery building and the architects who redesigned the space. Ask the students what they think? How well does the Hopkins extension work?
- Examine the materials and the use of space throughout the three buildings. What differences can be found and what is the relevance of them?
- Discuss how the glass provides transparency, which is associated with Contemporary museums. The colour of the walls in Galleries 1-9 are red and green, associated to the Victorian's as opposed to white, which reflects modern art and is seen in Galleries 14-16. The staircase at the main entrance, once the only access to Gallery compared to the new extended Gallery, with lifts and ramps making the space fully accessible and provides equal opportunities.

Follow Up

Research the architect Charles Barry and other buildings he designed. Such as the Houses of Parliament, London and within the north-west of England, Buile Hill House in Salford (1825-27) and two churches in Manchester (The Church of All Saints' Stand, Whitefield and Ringley Church, 1827, partially demolished in 1854).

The Athenaeum Theatre was created after a fire in 1873 destroyed the upper storeys. Plays, operas, lectures and exhibitions took place here. The Athenaeum building was sold to the City Art Gallery in the 1930s; the Theatre remained a storage room for years, until it was refurbished, and opened to the public in 2002, following the Gallery's extension. Further research could be conducted on the changing use of buildings and spaces.

Further examples of exhibitions in art galleries that borrow ideas from the theatre, i.e. recreation of scenarios, use of dramatic lighting or sound effects could be explored. Theatre is a powerful education and interpretation method for art galleries and museums because it can captivate a child as well as an adult.

Look at the different buildings that house art galleries and museums in Manchester. Students could write a piece of work on a chosen art gallery or museum, examine what the building projects about its content? When entering the building do you see what you expected based on the architectural design?

Research other buildings in Manchester that use architectural revivals, e.g. Manchester University and the Town Hall.

Works of art invite reproduction. Explore the introduction of new copying technologies, first photography and later digital reproduction and how this has opened a wider audience into the history of art and museums.

At the end of this millennium, Malraux (French Minister for Cultural Affaires from 1958 to 1969) said "an imaginary museum (that of reproductions) has opened that will push to extremes the incomplete confrontation imposed by real museums"

Further Research

This website provides an International Architecture Database <http://www.archinform.net>

The psychology of art / André Malraux. - Vol.1 : Museum without walls / translated by Stuart Gilbert

Museum Theatre: Communicating with Visitors through Drama. Ed. by Catherine Hughes, 1998.