

20th Century People

Figurative Art since the War

Despite the pictorial experimentation of abstract art artists in the 20th century continued to depict people. Following the huge influence of Pablo Picasso, artists and makers reinvented the figure. This display comprises different ways of doing so, from the traditional to the more challenging.

The paintings made during the Second World War portray the importance of community spirit and collective action at a time of national crisis. Later, the post-war anxieties of the nuclear age underpin the work of artists like Bacon and Freud, which stresses the individual's isolation in the world.

Figuration remained a powerful means to comment on political events, and also to reinterpret the past. Other artists have looked inward to explore their feelings about personal and sexual identity. Artists and makers responded to a changing world and in turn they have contributed to that change.