

WORLD ART COLLECTIONS EXHIBITIONS

SAINSBURY CENTRE
for Visual Arts

Notes for Teachers

The Artist's Studio

9 February – 23 May

These are some brief introductory thoughts based around the exhibition, arising from a discussion by this year's MA Museology students. Their remit was to look at aspects which could be interesting for learning in school, and to come up with ideas which could be developed further. The students found it a very accessible exhibition, with many messages of general relevance for the teacher and learner.

Expectations in advance of a visit

- What are you expecting to see and learn about?
- Might you see paintbrushes, easels, paints? What other things?
- How do artists wish to be seen? How would you like to see them?

Exhibition themes / headings

Clockwise from left of entrance:

- Myths
- Self-display
- The Studio as Workplace

Clockwise from right of entrance

- The Studio within the Academy
- The Model and the Studio
- The Garret
- Where Worlds Collide: Society and the Studio
- The Artist at Work
- The Studio Still Life
- The Alternative History: Women and the Studio
- Beyond the Frame

Lower link gallery

- Photography and the Studio
- Artists on Film
- Photos of East Anglian Studios (submitted by regional artists)
- Shrine to the Studio

For further details of these, please see the exhibition page on the Sainsbury Centre website at www.scva.ac.uk/exhibitions/

Broad categories covered by our discussion / learning

Processes

- Academic practice - of copying, drawing, observation, skills which underpin the whole profession
- Difficulty – mess of process, work in progress
- Evidence of changes of mind, alterations, trial and error
- Showing that repetitive work, in the context of apprenticeship, is part of the process of learning and skill development, eg. Pier-Francesco Alberti's 'Studio with numerous groups being taught' shown upstairs, in the 'Studio within the Gallery' section

Materials, techniques and structure

- Palettes as objects in their own right – what does the palette say about the artist? Here they were used to make art and have now become art. Can children design their own?
- Special cases and containers for art materials – enable portability of studio, but also make materials seem more precious. Think about equivalent design by children for a purpose
- The role of work outside the studio and travel beyond the studio, bringing things back

Frames

- What do different materials mean? For example, do gold frames enhance the value of a picture> Do they acknowledge the grandeur of the display setting?
- Is anything in a frame art?
- Frames and the selection of focus: how frames spatially determine the narrative and how emphasis may shift if the frame is moved

Different techniques of painting

- Oils, watercolour, egg tempera: links with science/chemistry
- Experimental practice
- Use of space, light, reflections. Often images show the virtuosity of the artist, but demonstrate tools and effects which are important in artistic practice

Patronage

- Encounters with richly dressed patrons raise questions about relationships and extent to which artists have freedom. Children can role play the patron / commissioner and the artist / executer of the commission, to see what issues arise about exchanges of ideas and different hierarchies.

Personality / the image of the artist

- Broad definitions of artists, especially in photographs, include actors and there is much theatricality about the images of artists, especially early ones
- The artist as recorder of humanity, the human form, is a recurrent theme, overlaying the view of the professional at work
- Gender issues: mainly men are shown
- Is there an overwhelming image of the artist as solo-operator or do you see collaborations, and of what kind?
- Note the change between earlier images, where context, social history and furnishings are often important and the artist's portrait not always shown, and later ones, which either highlight the place or the person. Why might this be?
- Most of these images were captured slowly and painstakingly, does that give them greater value?

Stimulus to further development

- Stories. There are many different narratives here and lots of potential for story and drama, imagining actions / speech of both major and minor characters
- Role of travel, widening focus, bringing back souvenirs
- Children drawing, painting, constructing their own space, with objects which identify them

Photography and film

- People carefully posed for posterity, especially in older photographs. Is there more informality in the more recent ones, or are they just as posed and considered?
- Some works are deliberately hybrid: look at Andrew Grassi's four tempera paintings upstairs, why has he made them look so photographic?
- Do photographs tell a more 'truthful' story than paintings?
- Is the proliferation of photographs changing how we view photographs as art?
- Whose art is it? The artist whose studio is portrayed or the photographer?
- Look at evidence of change over time which photography enables, eg Snowdon's pictures, or images of Bacon's studio
- Film as equivalent of painting – look at narratives, compositions.

Exhibition curator: Giles Waterfield

Moderator: Dr Veronica Sekules, Head of Education and Research, February 2010