

# BE MODERN – Exploring Abstract Art

## Worksheet

### Guidelines for educators

- **Context and the area of cultural heritage:**

Digital cultural heritage, example from Belgium

- **Description and justification:**

BE MODERN exhibition took place from 2 October 2020 to 21 February 2021. In order to offer more people the possibility to visit the exhibition even after it was officially closed, the organisers created an interactive and immersive digital exhibition. In this digital space you can walk through modern and contemporary art collections of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. BE MODERN gathers famous Belgian and international artists and it is a selection of 150 paintings, sculptures, works on paper, installations and moving images. The exhibition is available here: <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=TBydNAV6nid>

Through this worksheet, students will get to know more about modern and contemporary art and its Belgian representatives. Students will be able to explore the exhibition, acquire related vocabulary, express their opinion and write a short review based on different artworks. In addition, contemporary artists often address the current (and historical) events which can initiate debate about the issues currently faced.

- **Duration:** 45 minutes
- **Language level:** B1

- **Prior knowledge:** It would be useful to see whether students have encountered contemporary art before. They should know basic phrases for expressing opinions, asking questions, and have the ability to write a short review
- **Thematic area, grammatical and syntactical phenomena (learning objectives):**

In this worksheet students will learn

- How to express their opinion regarding the art exhibition and art work and share their opinion with others
- How to write a short review (5-10 sentences) of an art exhibition using academic English
- **Skills developed (or benefits for students):**
  - Creativity
  - Writing skills
  - Communication and collaboration with peers
- **Material needed:** technological equipment to access to the exhibition, pen/pencils
- **References and resources:**
  - Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021) 'Be Modern' [Video playlist]. Youtube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtuL8dXe6EMTqKVOyFizAI1MMAFLYuD37>
  - Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (October 2nd, 2020) 'BE MODERN | exhibition trailer [Video]. Youtube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r515hPX0o0>
  - Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (2020) BE MODERN. Available at:  
<https://www.fine-arts-museum.be/en/exhibitions/be-modern>
  - Ching, C. L. T. (2015). Teaching contemporary art in primary schools. *Athens Journal of Humanities and Arts* April, 2(2). Available at:  
<https://www.athensjournals.gr/humanities/2015-2-2-3-Ching.pdf>

- TATE (n.d.) Abstract art. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abstract-art>

# Worksheet for the student

## EXERCISE 1: Exploring the virtual exhibition

(Duration: 15 minutes)

**Task 1:** Take a virtual walk through the exhibition. Write down short notes about your first impressions of the exhibition: what is the first thing you noticed when you began your virtual walk? Do you like the exhibition? Why/why not? (10 minutes)

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**Task 2:** Share your notes with a partner and discuss the following questions (5 minutes):

- What do you think the exhibition is about? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Which elements of abstract art do you notice in this exhibition? As a helpful tip you can look at the definition of abstract art:

“Art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colours, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect.” (TATE, n.d.)

## EXERCISE 2: Expressing opinion

(Duration: 30 minutes)

**Task 1:** Read the expressions and categorise them. (10 minutes)

- Personally, ...
- That's so true.
- So do I.
- My personal view is that....
- I'm sorry to disagree with you
- I don't think so.
- I understand, but...
- From my point of view...
- In my honest opinion...
- I couldn't agree more.
- No doubts about it.
- I'm afraid I disagree.
- I'm not so sure about it.
- You are absolutely right.
- I totally disagree.
- I see what you're saying but...
- That sounds good to me.

| Agreeing | Disagreeing | Expressing opinion |
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**Task 2:** Asking for opinion: Get into groups of 2-3 and share your opinions. Use the following phrases (5 minutes):

- What do you think of the exhibition/ the paintings/ the sculptures?
- How do you feel about....?
- What are your thoughts on the exhibition/ abstract art/ colours used in the paintings?
- What's your opinion on abstract art?

**Task 3:** Choose a painting or sculpture that you like the most from the exhibition and write a short review about it. While writing the review, use the phrases mentioned above for expressing opinions (15 minutes).

Focus on these questions:

- What is the exhibition about?
- What did you like about the exhibition? What didn't you like?
- Take a look at the colours in chosen artwork. Why do you think the artist used these colours? What colour do you see the most in this work? What colour do you see the least?
- Why do you think this artist created this piece of art?
- Describe the lines and shapes that you see in the artwork. (For example: There are thin and curved lines on the painting).
- Is this artwork and the exhibition beautiful to you? Why or why not?
- Is it still art if it is not beautiful? Why or why not?

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## ANSWER KEY

### EXERCISE 2: Expressing opinion

**Task 1** Read the expressions and categorise them.

| Agreeing                  | Disagreeing                     | Expressing opinion           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| That's so true.           | I'm sorry to disagree with you  | Personally, ...              |
| I couldn't agree more.    | I don't think so.               | My personal view is that.... |
| That sounds good to me.   | I understand, but...            | As for me, ....              |
| So do I.                  | I'm afraid I disagree.          | I think it's possible        |
| No doubts about it.       | I'm not so sure about it.       | From my point of view...     |
| You are absolutely right. | I totally disagree.             | In my honest opinion...      |
| That sounds good to me.   | I see what you're saying but... |                              |