

FRANCIS BACON

Teaching and Learning Resource

ABOUT THIS TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCE

This learning resource uses four distinct works by artist Francis Bacon as jumping-off points for artistic and visual enquiry. Initially created to complement the Art and Design Curriculum at Key Stage 3 in the United Kingdom, it is also intended to support and inspire students and teachers of all levels.

It can be used to encourage independent research, provide homework activities, provoke group discussions, support sketchbook work or simply invite new ways of looking at a well-known artist's work. Each chapter has been designed to be self-contained so that the user can either choose to read through from beginning to end or simply pick which elements are most relevant to them without the need to refer to the rest of the pack.

Each chapter begins with a First Look section, intended as an introductory exercise to encourage close observation and use of art vocabulary. The following In More Depth section offers some background information about the featured work, along with an exploration of two major artistic themes; for example the figure and abstraction, or movement and pictorial space. There are questions for thought and discussion (Think About It) along with suggested practical activities (Explore Further).

At the end of the pack is a Glossary providing definitions of some of the art terms used. The pack includes full page images of Bacon's artworks which can be reproduced for personal and classroom study.

We hope that this learning pack is a useful resource. If you have any feedback about the pack please get in touch at <http://francis-bacon.com/bacons-world/scholarship-education/education-material>



ABOUT FRANCIS BACON

Francis Bacon was one of the most famous British artists of the 20th century and his dark and powerful paintings of figures, creatures, objects and landscapes are shown in galleries across the world.

Born in Dublin to English parents in 1909, Bacon left home at 16 and travelled to Berlin and then Paris where he was inspired by the work of the artist Pablo Picasso. Throughout his 20s he taught himself to paint and worked as a furniture and interior designer before he began to establish himself as an artist in the early 1930s. By the 1950s he had found substantial success and become part of an artistic community in London that included artists, photographers and writers. Unlike many artists Bacon success grew rapidly within his own lifetime and his work was shown in major museum exhibitions and fetched high prices. He travelled extensively during his lifetime and regular visits to Tangiers, South Africa and Monaco had a significant impact on his work. His homosexuality and intense relationships with his partners also influenced his work and subject matter. Bacon died in 1992 in Madrid. After his death his studio and the source material that inspired his work were preserved just as he had left them and reconstructed in the Dublin City Art Gallery the Hugh Lane.

Passport strip of B&W photographs (4)
of Francis Bacon in black polo neck and jacket, c. 1970,
Collection: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane
© The Estate of Francis Bacon



Francis Bacon's studio at Reece Mews, 1998
Photograph: Perry Ogden © The Estate of Francis Bacon

Bacon's paintings are bold, intense and sometimes grotesque. Inspired by traditional religious paintings, surrealism, photography and film, Bacon drew together all of these elements as he painted imagined scenes and portraits of the friends and lovers that he shared his life with. Bacon's distorted figures and desolate spaces have led many observers to see his work as a comment on the state of humanity in the aftermath of the Second World War and throughout the 20th century.

Study after
Velázquez's Portrait of
Pope Innocent X, 1953



Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X, 1953

Oil on canvas / 60¼ × 46½ in. (153 × 118 cm)

FIRST LOOK

To begin, take a minute or two to look carefully at this painting.

Let your eyes travel all around the image.

Look from corner to corner and bottom to top, letting your eyes stop at any interesting shape or colour.

Hold the picture up to your nose, and then look at it from far away.

Now using your powers of observation, describe what you see.

You can talk about the painting however you like, but you might want to start with these ideas:

Colour: What kinds of colours are in this painting? Are they warm or cool? Dark or light? Do any colours jump out at you? Why do you think the artist used these particular colours? Can these colours be symbols for something else?

Medium: The medium used in this painting is thinly-applied oil paint on a canvas background. Can you see the brush marks? Do you think the artist was painting quickly or slowly? Can you find a place where different colours overlap?

Subject: Describe the figure in the painting – What is he doing? What is he wearing? How is he presenting himself? What job or role does he do? What emotions does he seem to be expressing? Does the painting feel happy, sad, anxious or something else?

IN MORE DEPTH

Francis Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* was painted in 1953. As its title suggests, it draws upon a portrait of the leader of the Roman Catholic Church painted by the Spanish painter Diego Velázquez centuries earlier in 1650. Bacon's study is one in a series of paintings that he made using the image of a Pope as its subject, a project that consumed him for over 20 years.

There are dozens of variations in Bacon's series of Pope paintings, each slightly different but focussed on the figure of a Pope dressed in rich robes and seated in a grand chair. To make these paintings, Bacon worked extensively from photographic reproductions of the Velázquez portrait found in books, and by his own account, purposely avoided seeing the original in person, even during a visit to Rome in 1954.

In this section, we will use this painting as a starting point for exploring two artistic themes: working in a series and appropriating images. Each theme includes relevant thinking exercises as well as suggested practical activities.

1. WORKING IN A SERIES

Why might an artist want to paint the same thing twice? Many artists paint in a series as a creative exercise to explore an image or idea in greater depth, making small variations until they are satisfied with what they have created. A series can be built around an object, an idea, something you've made – or even someone else's work of art.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- Why might an artist want to create a series of artworks on the same subject instead of just one? How do you think this process might help the artist to explore and discover elements of the image that they might not otherwise focus on?
- Take a look at Velázquez's painting and compare it to Bacon's: what has Bacon taken from Velázquez's *Portrait*? What has he kept the same? What has been changed, and how?
- Now take a look at some of the other paintings in Bacon's Pope series:
What are the similarities and differences between them? Can you see a change in style or direction over time?



Diego Velázquez
Portrait of Pope Innocent X, c. 1650.
 Oil on canvas / 141 x 119 in. (358.2 x 302.3 cm)



Page fragment from Elizabeth Du Gué Trapier, *Velázquez* (Hispanic Society of America, New York, 1948) with black and white reproduction of Diego Velázquez, *Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, c.1650, that Bacon frequently worked with
 Collection: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane / © The Estate of Francis Bacon



Head VI, 1949
 Oil on canvas / 36¾ x 30¼ in. (91.4 x 76.2 cm)
 © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved / DACS 2016



Study for a Pope III, 1961
 Oil on canvas / 60 x 47 in. (152 x 119 cm)
 © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved / DACS 2016

EXPLORE FURTHER:

- Look at Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* and Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, then make a list of words for each. This list can include colours, subjects, objects, styles, techniques, or any other way you can think of describing the paintings. Once you have done this, compare the two lists and see where there are similarities and contrasts. If you are working in a group, discuss what you've noticed with someone else.
- Gather together 1 or 2 images of artworks that interest you – these can be anything you like. Highlight the key details that draw you to them. Then try to make your own studies of each, but in different ways: by drawing them, taking pictures of them, photocopying, or any other way you can think of. Create a series of 3 or 4 artworks that showcase different ways of approaching the original. Did this process change the way you see or think about the original artwork? Can you see why Bacon may have adopted this approach?

2. APPROPRIATION

Why would an artist ever make a copy of someone else's artwork? While it might not seem like the most creative exercise, copying is often an integral part of artistic practice. It allows an artist not only to try their hand at a new style or technique, but also to better understand another artist's process.

In art, appropriation is the act of taking something and re-using it in your own way to create a new work. Why might an artist do this? What do you think they might gain from exploring someone else's images or way of working?

Bacon's *Study* is largely inspired by Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* but it also includes ideas from other parts of Bacon's life and experiences. When Bacon was just a young man, he went to the cinema and saw a film called *Battleship Potemkin*, a silent film from 1925. The work of Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein, the film tells the story of a mutiny and subsequent massacre in the waterfront city of Odessa. In one iconic scene, a woman screams with an open mouth, her glasses askew and blood running down her face. Bacon was so struck by that image that he incorporated it into numerous paintings to come, both in the Pope series and others.



Cropped still from Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)



Black and white reproduction of film still found in Bacon's studio, Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin*, 1925, source and date unknown
Collection: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane



Detail of *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953

THINK ABOUT IT:

- How do you feel about appropriation? Can you think of any artworks that make use of appropriation? This could include music that uses sampling, or books, plays or films that draw on existing stories. Have you ever appropriated or adapted someone else's ideas or techniques for your own artwork?
- Why would the artist put such a despairing face in a portrait of a Pope, a symbol of otherwise confident power? Think about how famous or powerful people are typically represented in art – in portraits, busts, statues, or other forms of art. How is Bacon's painting different from these more typical depictions of those in power? How does he challenge or undermine our expectations? What kind of statement do you think he is trying to make about the Pope, power, or human life in general?

EXPLORE FURTHER:

- Return to the series of studies you made earlier in this chapter of an artwork you like. Now repeat the process with another artwork or image, but this time choose something very different from your first source. As you create new studies, this time bring various elements – shapes, colours, subjects, or other features – from your first series into the new one. Cut and paste them if you like. If you have access to digital software or apps, see how you can use them to cut, paste, distort and layer your new images. Try to create new and unexpected hybrids.

Crucifixion, 1933



Crucifixion, 1933

Oil on canvas / 24¾ × 19 in. (62 × 48.5 cm)

FIRST LOOK

To begin, take a minute or two to look carefully at this painting.

Let your eyes travel all around the image. Look from corner to corner and bottom to top, letting your eyes stop at any interesting shape or colour. Hold the picture up to your nose, and then look at it from far away.

Now using your powers of observation, describe what you see.

You can talk about the painting however you like, but you might want to start with these ideas:

Subject: Take a look at the painting, and then read its title. What is the subject of this painting? Do you think the title and the painting are referring to the same thing? If you saw the painting without the title, would you have been able to guess what it's about? Do you think this painting is really about a crucifixion, or is it about something else?

Colour: What colours has Bacon used in this painting? Name the main colours you see. Now look more closely at these colours: are there variations within them or are they completely solid? Why do you think the artist has chosen these particular colours? How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that these colours evoke?

Scale: How big do you think this painting is? Imagine that it's tiny: what would it look like from far away, and up close? And what if it was gigantic: how would the paint look up close? What might it feel like to stand in front of it? Why would an artist paint something small? In which circumstances might an artist choose to paint something very large? In what kinds of places might big and small paintings be on display?

IN MORE DEPTH

Francis Bacon's *Crucifixion*, 1933, was one of his first oil paintings. Bacon was fascinated with the subject of crucifixion in European Christian art and painted many different variations on the theme. Whilst Bacon's artistic style was modern he was interested in exploring very traditional subjects used throughout the history of art.

In this section, we will use this painting as a starting point for exploring two artistic themes: the figure and abstraction. Each theme includes relevant thought exercises as well as suggested practical activities.

1. THE FIGURE

In art, the figure refers to the human body as it is painted or otherwise represented. It is one of the most common subjects in art history, and one of the oldest, having appeared in Stone Age cave paintings.

Like many other artists, Bacon focused heavily on painting human figures. But while more traditional artists focussed on the accurate representation or beauty of the figure – just think of Renaissance artists like Leonardo da Vinci, or look at the painting by Diego Velázquez from 1632 to the right – Bacon depicted the human figure in often unexpected ways.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- Can you see how the Velázquez painting to the right might have influenced Bacon's own *Crucifixion*?
- Now look closely at Bacon's painting. How can you tell it is showing a crucifixion? Are there any markers or signs that point to this? Can you see a pair of outstretched arms on a bar? A head? How about legs? How many legs are there?

What makes Bacon's painting so interesting to many people is how he uses the bare minimum to suggest the human figure: some arms, a few legs, a torso, a head. It's almost like a stick figure. But all of these elements are somehow distorted: the head is tiny, the torso is split into blurry pieces, and the legs seem to



Diego Velázquez
The Crucified Christ, 1632
 Oil on canvas / 97 ½ x 66 ½ in. (248 x 169 cm)

blend into other lines. Why might the artist choose such a strange and stripped-back figure as the subject of a crucifixion? What might that suggest about the individual shown in the painting and more generally about human life?

EXPLORE FURTHER:

Bacon's painting uses only a few marks to suggest the outline of a human body. For this activity, experiment with drawing figures. What is the most basic drawing of a human figure you can make? What are the most essential elements for drawing a figure? You might want to start by finding a photograph or painting that you like that shows a person. Now recreate that image, but as simply as possible. What parts are essential, and how much can you leave out before you lose the figure completely?

2. ABSTRACTION

In its broadest sense, abstraction deals with ideas rather than concrete things or events. In art, there was an entire movement dedicated to abstraction in the 20th century, but the term abstraction also refers to any type of artwork that doesn't try to depict the world as we see it.

Here's an example of an abstract work of art. This is actually a woolen rug designed by Bacon in 1929, when he was experimenting with abstraction at the very start of his artistic career.

You could also say that Bacon's *Crucifixion* takes something very concrete – in this case, the human body – and makes it more abstract, almost pushing it to the limit where it becomes unrecognizable. This is a feature in much of his work, which often takes figures and warps and distorts them almost to the point of altering them completely.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Crucifixion is one of Bacon's first paintings. Prior to that, Bacon had been painting for several years, but as mentioned above, he also worked as a designer for high-end modernist rugs and furniture. Are there any similarities between the highly abstract rug above and *Crucifixion*? Are they both abstract? If they are, are they abstract in different ways? Could you say that one is more abstract than the other?



Rug, c.1929

Wool / 213 x 125 x 1 cm

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· Now take a look at another painting by Francis Bacon from several decades later:

Compare this to the 1933 *Crucifixion*. How are they similar, and how are they different? Is one more abstract than the other? Does one depict the human figure more realistically than the other?

What similarities and differences can you see between these two works? What is the impact of showing a more naturalistic figure in an abstract space? Why do you think Bacon uses abstract images in the first place? Can they tell a story – about the subject of a painting, or even about the human condition more generally – that a purely representational image might not be able to?

EXPLORE FURTHER:

Choose an image or a subject that you like – it can be a person, an animal, or anything that is easily recognisable. Now make two different drawings: one that is very clearly and simply that subject, and another that is a highly abstract version. The abstract drawing can be as simple as a few lines or colours, or it can be your subject broken down into shapes. Be as creative as you like with your abstract drawing.

Now make a new drawing that sits somewhere between the previous two, as if it were part of a progression. Half of it can be representational and the other half can be abstract. Or it can have some representational elements – like eyes, hands, or other features – incorporated into more abstract shapes. Or come up with your own style that combines representational and abstract elements – think of different possibilities where certain elements are exaggerated, abstracted, or erased completely. Which of the three do you like the most?



Study of a Nude, 1952-53
Oil on canvas / 24 x 20 in. (61 x 51 cm)
© The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved / DACS 2016

Three Studies of Lucian Freud, 1969



Detail of
Three Studies of Lucian Freud, 1969
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Three Studies of Lucian Freud, 1969

Oil on canvas / Triptych: each panel 77 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 58 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (197.8 × 147.5 cm)

FIRST LOOK

To begin, take a minute or two to look carefully at this painting.

Let your eyes travel all around the image. Look from corner to corner and bottom to top, letting your eyes stop at any interesting shape or colour. Hold the picture up to your nose, and then look at it from far away.

Now using your powers of observation, describe what you see.

You can talk about the painting however you like, but you might want to start with these ideas:

Colour: Take a look at the colours used in this painting. Can you count them? Remember to look carefully, not just at the solid colours in the background – how many colours appear in the figure's face? How about his arms? Why might an artist use so many colours on one element of the painting? Do the colours change the closer or further you are from the painting?

Arrangement: This painting is a triptych, an artwork made up of three separate images that are designed to be shown together. Look at all three parts of the painting, one by one. What is the same and what is different in each part of the triptych? Why do you think an artist would paint three pictures of the same thing, instead of one? Do the three images tell a story?

Composition: What is the figure doing in each image? Is he in the same position, or is he moving around? Do you think the figure is seated indoors or outdoors? What makes you think this? Is it a light or dark space? What objects or structures can you see, and how are they arranged?

IN MORE DEPTH

Francis Bacon's *Three Studies of Lucian Freud* was painted in 1969. It is part of a series of large three-panel portraits of Bacon's friends, partners, and other subjects painted in the 1960s. What makes this painting particularly interesting is that the man being painted is an artist himself, a painter named Lucian Freud. Bacon and Freud were both friends and rivals, and inspired one another through their relationship and work.

In this section, we will use this painting as a starting point for exploring two artistic themes: the triptych and portraiture. Each theme includes relevant thinking exercises as well as suggested practical activities.

1. TRIPTYCH

A triptych is an artwork made up of three separate images made to be shown together. The triptych is a very old form – in the Middle Ages, paintings with multiple panels were hinged, so that they could fold in and out and tell complex religious stories. It was a form Bacon used in a number of paintings throughout his career.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- Why do you think Bacon chose to create a triptych portrait of Freud instead of a single image or even a diptych (which is made up of two paintings?) What can you capture in three paintings that you can't capture in one or two?
- How are the three images arranged? What position does the figure take in each of them? What if Bacon had chosen to arrange the three paintings in a different order, for example with the figures facing away from each other? What impact would that have on your experience of the painting?
- Here is another triptych by Francis Bacon called *Three Studies of Isabel Rawsthorne*, and it was painted a few years earlier in 1966. Isabel Rawsthorne was another friend of the artist, and part of a circle of artists, actors, writers, and other creative people that both Bacon and Freud were involved with. How are these two triptychs similar? How are they different?



Three Studies of Isabel Rawsthorne, 1966

Oil on canvas / Triptych: each panel 14 × 12 in. (35.5 × 30.5 cm)

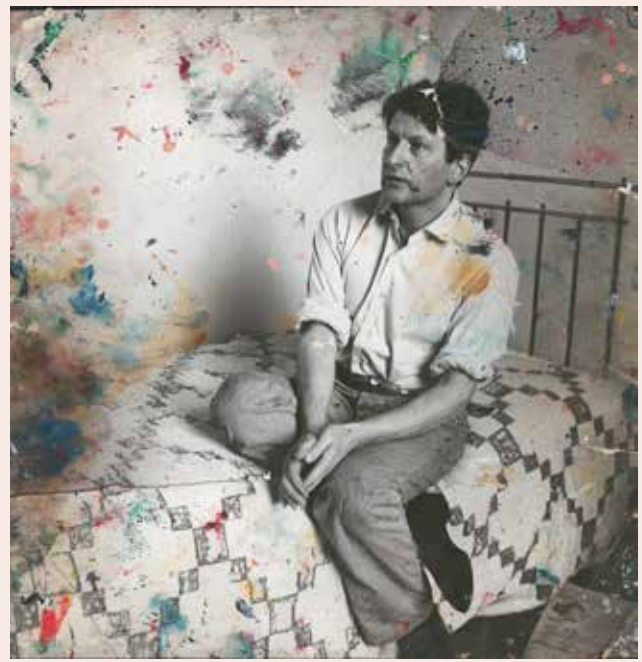
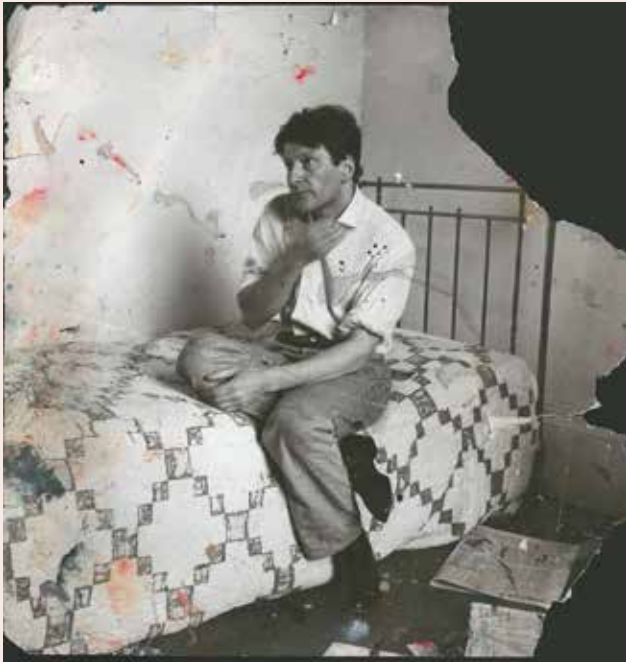
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EXPLORE FURTHER:

- With a camera take several images of an object or person from lots of different angles. Print off all your images and look at them as a whole. Start to make a selection, discarding one photo at a time. Work slowly and document your decision making process by taking photos of your group of images at each stage or keeping a written note of why you have chosen certain images over another. Once you have a selection of three images decide on what order they should be displayed in. Try a variety of different arrangements and consider how small changes might change how your audience looks at your work. When you are finished, think about the process you have just gone through – what does it tell you about your preferences and how you make choices when making an artwork?
- Now experiment with rearranging your triptych. Move each panel to a different place. How does that affect your triptych? Do different arrangements tell different stories? Which arrangement looks most interesting to you, and why?

2. PORTRAITURE

A portrait is a work of art - a painting, photograph, sculpture, or anything else – that depicts a person. Portraits are often of a person's face, but they can show a whole figure too, as in the case of *Three Studies of Lucian Freud*.



John Deakin, Lucian Freud sitting on a Bed, c.1964,
Collection: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane © The Estate of Francis Bacon

Lucian Freud was an artist himself, and he and Bacon shared an artistic friendship (and rivalry) that lasted for years. Freud is also known for his keen and perceptive portraits, which often show his subjects in a new or unusual light. And while Bacon painted a portrait of Freud, it happened the other way around too – for one intense portrait, they sat knee to knee for weeks while Freud worked away on a painting of Bacon. Bacon, on the other hand, preferred to work from photographs, picking and choosing which elements ended up in his paintings. For example, in this portrait, Freud is sat on a chair whereas the photo Bacon used as source material shows him sitting on a bed.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- Think of other portraits you have seen. Classical portraits often serve to capture the image of someone for posterity, and to make them look good while doing so. Do Bacon's paintings of his friend look like a typical portrait?
- What details of Freud's appearance has Bacon emphasised? Do you think that Freud's profession as an artist influenced the way Bacon painted him? What elements of these portraits might suggest that their subject is an artist too?
- Does a portrait have to look exactly like someone? What if the artist isn't necessarily trying to capture the sitter's appearance, but their personality instead? What other qualities might a portrait try to capture?



Detail of

Three Studies of Lucian Freud, 1969

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EXPLORE FURTHER:

Look closely at the faces in each part of the triptych. Which elements of the face are representational and which are abstract?

With that in mind, choose someone to be the subject of your own portrait – it can be a self-portrait if you like! If you choose to draw yourself, sit down in front of a mirror. Use the mirror to help draw the outline of your head. Now, look straight at the mirror and do your best not to look at the paper – and start to draw in the features of your face. Don't look until you've finished! Once you are done, take a look at your drawing. Does it look like you?

Now choose someone else you would like to make a portrait of. Think about what features you would emphasise in their portrait.

Choose one or two features – eyes, nose, hands, or anything – and make those features stand out. Make them bigger, smaller, brighter, or make them stand out some other way. You can draw this, collage it, or use Photoshop to layer and distort your image. Which features did you choose, and why? How did you emphasise them?

Study of a Baboon, 1953



Study of a Baboon, 1953

Oil on canvas / 78 × 54 in. (198 × 137 cm)

FIRST LOOK

To begin, take a minute or two to look carefully at this painting.

Let your eyes travel all around the image. Look from corner to corner and bottom to top, letting your eyes stop at any interesting shape or colour. Hold the picture up to your nose, and then look at it from far away.

Now using your powers of observation, describe what you see.

You can talk about the painting however you like, but you might want to start with these ideas:

Colour: What colours has the artist used to paint this image? Can you count them? Are there places where different colours blend – what effect does that have? Are they colours that appear in nature? Take a close look at the yellow colour in the painting – is it painted, or is it something else? Maybe even the canvas itself?

Composition: Can you make out the baboon? Where has Bacon positioned it in the frame of the painting? What is it doing, and how is it sitting? Can you find its mouth and tail? What about the rest of it? What about the baboon's surroundings? Is the baboon shown as being in its natural habitat or in a cage?

Technique: Look closely at the marks that Bacon has used to make this image. What words would you use to describe them? Are they short or long, heavy or light? Have they been carefully made or quickly drawn onto the painting? Imagine the paint he was using – was it wet or dry? What do these different types of marks tell us about the objects in the painting – for example how would you describe the baboon's fur or the grass?

IN MORE DEPTH

Francis Bacon's *Study of a Baboon* was painted in 1953. While most of his paintings dealt with human subjects, Bacon also made a number of animal paintings using dogs, owls, and even more exotic creatures.

Study of a Baboon was painted after Bacon had made several trips to South Africa to visit his mother, who had been living there since the 1940s. During these visits he had seen many animals both in the wild and in captivity, and they became the subjects for a number of his works.

In this section, we will use this painting as a starting point for exploring two artistic themes: movement and pictorial space. Each theme includes relevant thinking exercises as well as suggested practical activities.

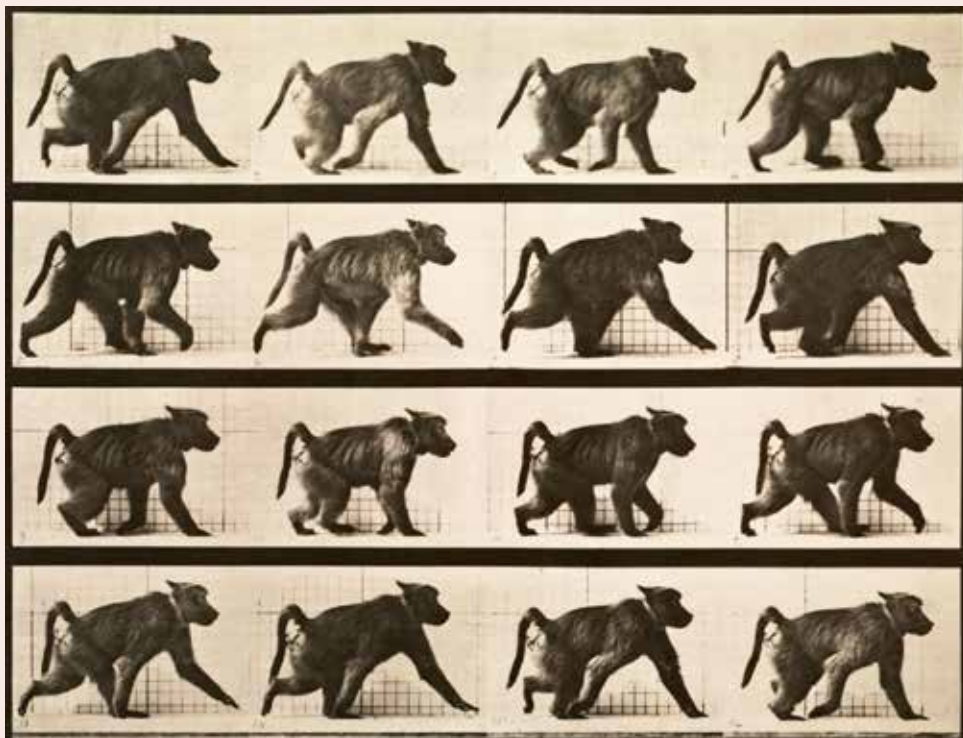


Francis Bacon, his mother and two sisters Winifred and Ianthe in Louis Trichardt, South Africa, 1967.
© Courtesy The Estate of Francis Bacon and the Knott family

1. MOVEMENT AND STASIS

Whilst Bacon had observed baboons and other animals in zoos and while travelling in South Africa, like many of his paintings *Study of a Baboon* was probably based more directly on a photograph. Bacon collected and frequently consulted many books on African wildlife, such as *Stalking Big Game with a Camera in Equatorial Africa* by Marius Maxwell and A. Radclyffe Dugmore's *Camera Adventures in the African Wilds*.

Some of Bacon's paintings were also derived from his close scrutiny of the work of pioneering photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who created sequential photographs of humans and animals in motion.



Eadweard Muybridge
Animal Locomotion Plate 747 (1887)

THINK ABOUT IT:

- Take a look at the photo series above, taken from Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* from 1887. Even though the photographs are still, do you think they convey a sense of motion? How is this achieved? While it is possible to capture motion in a series of images, do you think it is achievable in a single image?
- Do you think *Study of a Baboon* looks like a photograph? Is it completely still, or does movement play some kind of role in this painting? Take a close look at the yellow grass in the painting – is it completely static, or has the artist painted it in a way that conveys movement? How has Bacon achieved the effect of movement?
- Now take a closer look at the baboon's head to the right. Do you think the baboon is frozen in this position, or has Bacon captured a moment of movement? Look at the paint used to create the baboon's open mouth – does it look like it was applied slowly or quickly? Is it clear or blurry? Do you think the speed at which a painting is made affects whether it looks stationary or moving?



Detail of
Study of a Baboon, 1953
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EXPLORE FURTHER:

How would you capture movement and motion in a work of art? Draw a figure in a simple pose using a pen, pencil, or brush – it can be animal or human, and as simple or detailed as you like. Now draw the figure again, but this time give it a very different pose. Now take the two figures and imagine how your character would get from the first pose to the second. Create two or three more images to go in between your original drawings, showing a sequence of movement from the first pose to the second pose.

Come back to your original figure. Now think about how you can give your picture movement without creating a series. Can you add lines or shapes to the background? What kinds of elements can you add to make the picture look like it's moving? Think about the marks you are making – are they slow or fast? Do they give your picture different degrees of movement?

2. PICTORIAL SPACE

Pictorial space refers to the physical space that a picture is showing. In the case of *Study of a Baboon*, it looks like we have a baboon sitting on a tree in a golden field with a darkened sky, with a fence or cage in the top half of the painting. Bacon only used a handful of elements in this painting, but it turns out that even something as simple as a baboon in a tree can make for a very complicated pictorial space.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- What is the relationship between the baboon, the tree, and the background? If you imagine the painting as a real space, what goes where – which things are in front of or behind the others?
- Now what about the black crossed lines that look like a cage, or a fence. If it's a cage, why would it be at the top of the painting? Is the baboon inside or outside of the cage? And what about the tree?
- How does the space of this painting make you feel? Is it confusing or disorienting? Why do you think Bacon painted it this way, and what feeling do you think he wanted to convey?
- A word that might be helpful for thinking about this painting is “between”. Many things are between one space and another – somewhere that's both in front of or behind the fence, for example, or in the foreground and background. Even the baboon might be somewhere between an animal and a human.
- Compare this painting with Bacon's other work, *Elephant Fording a River*. How are the spaces and landscapes surrounding the animals different? Can you tell where the elephant is in relation to its environment? Does this painting show a space that is more logical or straightforward than *Study of a Baboon*?



Elephant Fording a River, 1952
Oil on canvas / 78 x 54 in. (198 x 137 cm)
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EXPLORE FURTHER:

Draw or create a picture of the room or place you are in. Make it as simple or detailed as you like.

Draw something in the foreground that's close to you – make it big. Now draw something in the background, and make it small to give the illusion of it being far away. This is often how artists create a sense of perspective and depth in a picture.

Now draw the same room. This time, take the things furthest away from you and make them big, much bigger than they really are.

Draw the things closest to you and do the opposite – make them tiny. What kind of effect does this have on your picture? How does it look compared to the space you're really in? Think of three words that describe the strange new space you have drawn.

Glossary

GLOSSARY

ABSTRACTION

In art, abstraction is a quality held by works that do not attempt to represent reality exactly. Some types of abstraction involve the distortion of reality, while others do not depict any type of identifiable object, place, or thing.

APPROPRIATION

Artistic appropriation is when an artist uses a specific pre-existing image as a basis or starting point for his or her own artistic creation. Appropriated images are sometimes altered significantly from their original form.

CANVAS

A canvas is made from woven linen or cotton, and is the surface on which most painting since the Renaissance has been done. It is typically stretched over a wooden frame, and primed to provide a smooth surface on which to apply paint.

COMPOSITION

The composition is the formal arrangement of an artwork; the way in which the various elements (such as the background and figures) interact with one another.

DEPTH/SPACE

Depth or space are the terms used to describe the fictional three-dimensional space which artists can create on a two dimensional surface. Devices such as linear perspective help artists to create this illusion.

DIPTYCH

A diptych is a two-paneled artwork, which is sometimes hinged, or shown side by side. It was first used in Roman folding tablets, as a way to send messages. The form then was adopted for altarpieces in Christian churches. It has come to be used for secular subjects, including companion portraits.

MEDIUM

Medium describes both the type of work done by an artist; i.e. sculpture, painting, drawing; and the exact elements that compose the artwork, such as an oil painting on canvas, or a charcoal drawing on paper. It is also the term used to describe the liquid in which dry pigment is mixed, in order to make paint.

MODERNISM/MODERN

Modernism generally refers to the broad movement in Western art and literature which began in the late nineteenth century and continued to around 1960; it may be defined by its focus on the new and rejection of the norms and styles of the past, such as the classical art tradition. In the emerging industrialised world, modernists embraced experimentation in materials and techniques. Many different styles fall within the overall movement of Modernism, such as Impressionism, Expressionism, Pop art and Minimalism.

REPRODUCTION

A photographic image of an artwork, which attempts to represent the original work.

SERIES

A series is a group of works that depict the same central subject or theme. They allow artists to explore the subject or theme in different ways.

SOURCE/SOURCE MATERIAL

An artist's source material provides inspiration for aspects of their own artistic creation.

STUDIO

An artist's studio is the building or room in which they create their artworks.

STUDY

A study is a work that is intended to prefigure a later 'final' artwork. A study may be used to allow an artist to decide upon the best way to depict a subject, or to practice certain elements of the ultimate work.

SUBJECT

The subject is the main focus of an artwork, such as, for example, the sitter in a portrait.

TRIPTYCH

A triptych is a three-paneled artwork. The panels are sometimes hinged, and the outer panels may fold over the central panel. Triptychs were historically used primarily for religious purposes, as altarpieces, or to

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