
Visit guide for
teachers

Drawing in
silver and gold
**Leonardo to
Jasper Johns**

10 September – 6 December 2015



Organised by the
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, in association
with the British Museum

Leonardo da Vinci
(1452–1519), *A bust of
a warrior in profile to left
(detail)*. Silverpoint, on
prepared paper, 1475 –1480.

Planning your visit

We recommend the following three guidelines in planning your students' visit to the exhibition:

- Provide a focus that students should keep in mind as they explore the exhibition and which you can follow up afterwards
- Do some preparatory work in school to develop the focus of the visit and familiarise students with the content of the exhibition
- Allow students some scope to explore to find objects that interest them

Curriculum Links

The exhibition offers opportunities in the following curriculum areas:

Art and Design:

- Produce creative work, exploring ideas and recording experiences
- Become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques
- Evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design
- Know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms.

Using this resource

This resource is designed to support your visit to the *Drawing in silver and gold Leonardo to Jasper Johns* exhibition.

It is aimed to support the Key Stage 3 and 4 Art and Design curriculum and gives you the opportunity to work the exhibition into your teaching. To accompany this resource we also have a downloadable image bank.

Introduction to the exhibition:

Drawing in Silver and Gold explores the development of metalpoint through five centuries from Leonardo Di Vinci to the present day.

The exhibition will explore how metalpoint became established as one of the favoured means of drawing both north and south of the Alps before the advent of chalk from around 1550. In northern Europe metalpoint continued to be used by artists such as Hendrick Goltzius and Hans Bol in the late 16th century and was then used by Rembrandt. Metalpoint as a technique was virtually forgotten until the 19th century when the admiration for Renaissance art brought the technique back into fashion.

Drawing in Silver and Gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns explores how the technical challenge of using the medium inspired some of the greatest drawings by artists of the calibre of Fra Filippo Lippi, Rogier van der Weyden, Petrus Christus, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Albrecht Dürer, Holbein the Elder, Lucas van Leyden, Rembrandt, William Holman Hunt, Otto Dix, Bruce Nauman, and Jasper Johns.

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Drawing in silver and gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns

Using the exhibition

In advance

Decide on a focus for the visit and a follow-up activity. Go through these with the students. Some examples of possible overarching questions are given to help you.

Use the ideas on the next page and the exhibition image bank to provide general background to the exhibition and to familiarise students with some of the content in the exhibition.

On the day

Divide the class into small groups, with an adult assigned to each group.

Encourage adults to allow students to linger at objects, which interest them, and to discuss what they see sharing things they find out as they go round. Remind students to behave calmly and politely. Photography is not allowed within the exhibition, but students may take photographs of relevant objects in the Museum's permanent galleries.

Afterwards

Discuss the students' thoughts and responses to the exhibition. Use what the students have gathered in the exhibition for the follow-up activity back at school.

The 'Big' questions

It is often a good idea to have an overarching question for students to keep in mind during their visit to the exhibition. Here are some possible examples:

Which did I think, and why, was the most interesting piece in the exhibition?

What did I learn about metalpoint that I did not know before?

What did I learn about how metalpoint changed through time?

How did different artists adapt metalpoint?

How useful did I find these for learning about artists of the past and the techniques used in metal point?

What have I learned about from artworks in the exhibition?

What else would I put in the exhibition to make it interesting/informative?

Exhibition Themes

The exhibition is divided into five sections. **The Introduction, Italian Renaissance, Northern Renaissance, The Low Countries in the 16th and 17th Century and 19th Century and Contemporary Modern Art.**

Introduction: Two different drawings by two different artists in metalpoint by the 15th century Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci and a contemporary, abstract by Bruce Nauman dated 2013.

These two artworks begin to explain the chronological range of the exhibition and how artists have continued to explore the technique of metalpoint.

Italian Renaissance charts the rise and decline of metalpoint from the 1440s to the second decade of the 16th centuries. The earliest examples include a study of a

monkey by the famous northern Italian artist Pisanello and Fra Filippo Lippi's drawing of the Virgin Mary watching her son on the cross. The selection is dominated by five drawings by Leonardo da Vinci who learnt the technique in Florence, where he executed the celebrated *Bust of a Warrior*, and then made the technique more widely known in Milan among his pupils and followers during his twenty-year stay in the city from the early 1480s. Leonardo's examples inspired his younger contemporary Raphael to develop his skill in the medium and the section ends with three refined studies by him. After Raphael's death in 1520, Italian artists gave up metalpoint and a chapter in techniques history closed, at least in Italy.

Northern Renaissance will explore the workshop practice of Northern artists during the 15th century who mainly used metalpoint to record or copy other works of art to achieve the highest detail. From the 16th century onwards metalpoint was used more freely, in the preparation of portrait studies and also outdoors in sketchbooks. Highlights include works by the Flemish master Rogier van der Weyden, as well as an allegorical study by Lucas van Leyden. German artists like Albrecht Dürer recorded their travels in sketch-books, while others like Hans Holbein the Elder created life-like portrait studies.

The Low Countries in the 16th and 17th centuries will demonstrate that metalpoint continued to be used in the Netherlands as opposed to the rest of Europe. Dutch and Flemish artists used metalpoint while preparing small portrait engravings for highly detailed studies. This section includes portraits by two of the foremost printmakers of that time, Hendrick Goltzius and Jacques de Gheyn II. Two landscape views by Rembrandt show that Dutch artists also used metalpoint on their travels.

19th century, modern and contemporary works of art charts the revival of metalpoint as artists looked back to the Renaissance. This section includes three works by the British artist William Holman Hunt and two by the French-born Alphonse Legros who was a key figure in the rise in the popularity of metalpoint in Britain through his position as professor at the Slade School of Art. He encouraged artists of the successive generation to take it up, such as Muirhead Bone who used it to make a sketch of scaffolding in the entrance hall of the British Museum and later Christopher Nevinson's youthful self-portrait. It continues into the 20th century exploring how artists have continued expand the boundaries of metalpoint from either a figurative angle or with a more abstract or conceptual approach used by artists such as Jasper Johns and Bruce Nauman.

Art and Design

Drawing in silver and gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns lends itself well to the art and design curriculum. The exhibition looks at the development of the technique and explores how artists have used it in their practice across time.

Suggested activities in the galleries:

Annotating

We annotate through notes to share our thinking and what we notice. Annotating gives evidence to a reader or examiner of working and when and why students have drawn in their sketchbook.

- Ask students to walk to the far end of the room you're in then turn around and walk back to the other end. Ask them to record in their sketchbook what they noticed as they walked.
- Ask students to choose an artwork in the exhibition that they find ordinary and one they find extraordinary, ask them to draw in one minute the outline of the artwork. Ask them to record their thinking of why they chose the objects.

Sketching

Sketching is one of the first ways of making art. Some artists specialise in it, other artists use it as a means to an end. There is no right way of sketching, and practicing different styles will help students develop their own style. The only thing you can do wrong is to never experiment.

- Ask students to choose a different selection of colour, paper, and variety of pencils, pens and crayons to carry out sketching activities. It is important to get students to think about the process they are being asked to do and do not worry about the final outcome. Label each drawing so a viewer will know what your experiment was.
- Choose an artwork. Look closely at your artwork for 2 minutes. Facing away from your artwork draw it from memory. Label your drawing "Two Minute Memory Sketch"
- Make 3 timed sketches of an object. You should complete your entire sketch in the time allotted. Sketch for 3 minutes; 1 minute; 30 seconds. Don't try and use the same style for each drawing, for example your 30 second sketch will need quick confident lines. Remember to label your drawing.
- Choose another object. Draw it with the opposite hand you would normally use. Do not worry about the end result. Do not forget to label your drawing. (You could also try drawing with the pencil in your mouth, or your foot!)

Back at school:

Ask students to try to create their own metal point miniature drawing using the techniques explored in the exhibition, it could be simple line drawings or a sketch they want to develop from their sketchbooks.