Helping your children choose books they will love

I ♥ reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

Introduction to Modern Art

Written by

Rosie Dickins

Published by

Usborne Publishing Ltd

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

The picture on the previous page is part of *A Bigger Splash*, by David Hockney. You can see the whole picture on pages 58-59.

These pages show an enlarged detail from *Dynamic Suprematism*, by Kasimir Malevich. The whole picture is reproduced on page 31.

The Usborne Introduction to Modern Art

Rosie Dickins

Consultant:
Tim Marlow

Edited by Jane Chisholm
Designed by Vici Leyhane and
Catherine-Anne MacKinnon

Picture research by Ruth King

Contents

Introduction

What is modern art? 6
Looking at modern art 8

Breaking away 1870-1914

Making a big impression 12
Colourful views 14
The Starry Night 16
Running wild 18
Express yourself 20
Seeing things differently 22
Les Demoiselles 24
Bright lights, big city 26
Into the future 28
Shapes and colours 30

Dreams and conflict 1914-45

Going to war 34
Travoys Arriving 36
A world gone mad 38
In your dreams 40
Building the future 42
The power of persuasion 44
Aftermath 46

New directions 1945-69

New York, New York 50
Shaping up 52
On the streets 54
Being popular 56
A Bigger Splash 58
Famous faces 60

Anything goes 1970 onwards

Beyond the frame 64
Cold Dark Matter 66
The great outdoors 68
Religious visions 70
Model relationships 72
Taking pictures 74
Me, myself and I 76

Useful information

Fame and fortune 78
Timeline 80
About the artists 82
Using the Internet 87
Glossary 88
Index 92

Internet links

Look for Internet link boxes throughout this book. They contain descriptions of websites where you can find out more about modern art. For links to these websites, go to the **Usborne Quicklinks Website** at **www.usborne-quicklinks.com** and type the keywords "modern art".

The websites described in this book are regularly reviewed and the links in **Usborne Quicklinks** are updated. However, the content of a website may change at any time and Usborne Publishing is not responsible for the content of any website other than its own. Please follow the Internet safety guidelines on page 87.

These pages show a detail from *Stables* (1913), by Franz Marc. You can see the whole picture on page 21.

What is modern art?

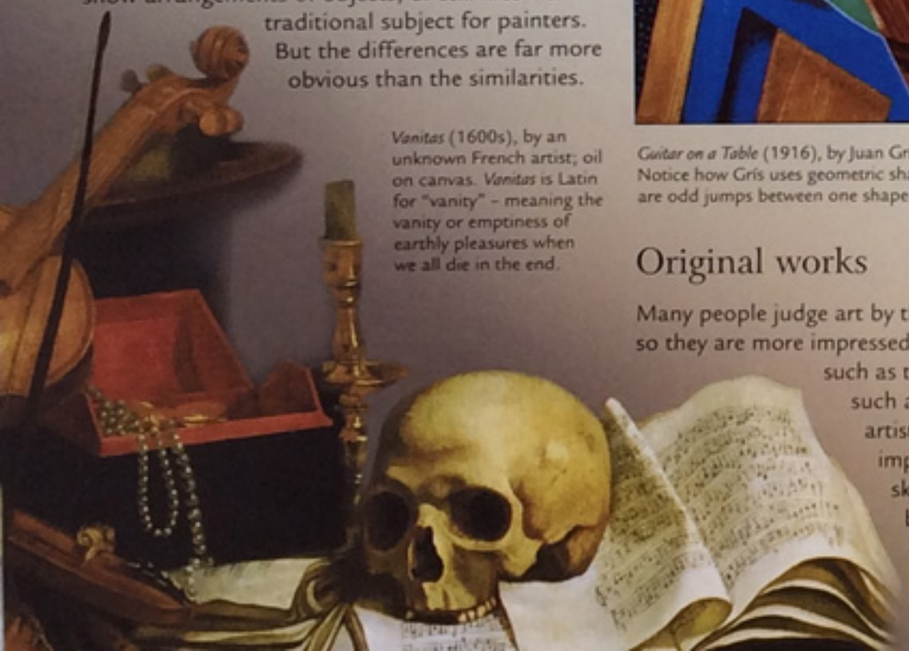
Modern art can be anything from an elaborate oil painting to a melting snowball or an empty room with the light going on and off. Surprisingly, people use the term "modern art" to describe art from as far back as the 1850s. That might not sound very modern, but it was about then that artists began to rethink their aims and ideas in a very radical way.

Spot the difference

For hundreds of years, most artists tried to create the illusion of real, 3D scenes. But in the 19th century that began to change – partly because of the invention of photography in the 1830s. Before then, people had relied on artists to capture appearances. Once photographs could do that, some artists felt they should be doing something else. Also, in the past many artists had been paid by wealthy people to work for them. But that changed during the 19th century too. Artists began to create art first and sell it later, which gave them more freedom to experiment.

Just compare the two paintings on this page. Both show arrangements of objects, or still lifes – a traditional subject for painters. But the differences are far more obvious than the similarities.

Guitar on a Table (1916), by Juan Gris; oil on canvas, 92 x 60cm (36 x 24in). Notice how Gris uses geometric shapes to break up the picture, and there are odd jumps between one shape and the next, so things don't join up.



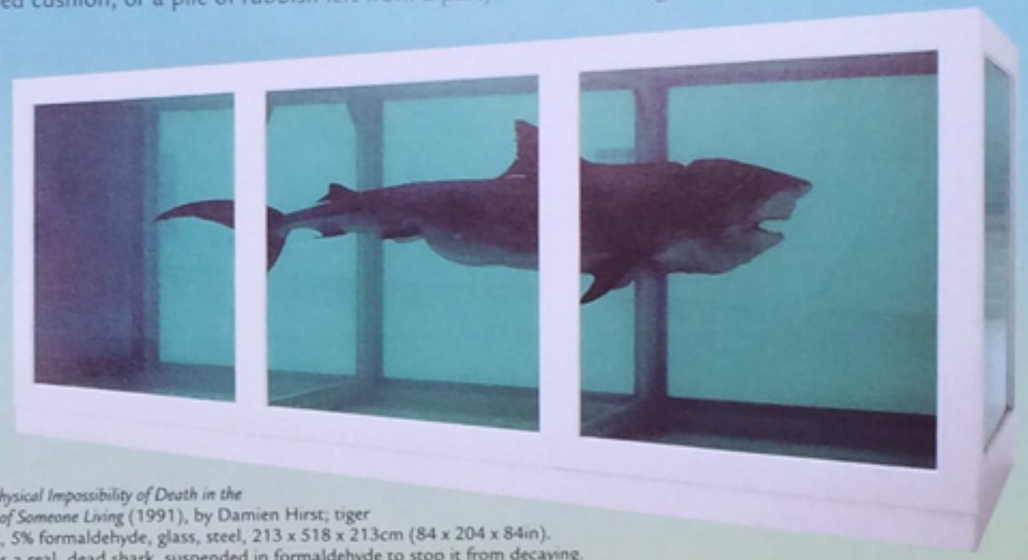
Vanitas (1600s), by an unknown French artist; oil on canvas. *Vanitas* is Latin for "vanity" – meaning the vanity or emptiness of earthly pleasures when we all die in the end.

Original works

Many people judge art by the technical skill of the artist – so they are more impressed by polished, lifelike paintings, such as the skull, than experimental art, such as the guitar. But for many artists nowadays, originality is more important than technique. The skull might look very convincing, but the simple shapes and vivid colours of the guitar make it a very striking, inventive image.

Is it really art?

Now there is such a huge emphasis on being original, it isn't surprising that artists are constantly pushing the boundaries of what we call "art". If you visit an art gallery today, you might see a completely white canvas, a bottle rack, a row of pebbles, a huge, hamburger-shaped cushion, or a pile of rubbish left from a party. Does that sound like art to you? The word "art" originally meant "made by people", but some of these things weren't even made by the artist. They were just things he or she had found. You might not expect to come across them in a gallery at all. Does seeing them there make them art?



The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (1991), by Damien Hirst; tiger shark, 5% formaldehyde, glass, steel, 213 x 518 x 213cm (84 x 204 x 84in). This is a real, dead shark, suspended in formaldehyde to stop it from decaying.

The shock of the new

A lot of modern art sets out to be new and shocking, in order to startle you and make you see things in a new way. But, when you look at it closely, modern art often turns out to be about age-old themes. Damien Hirst became notorious for using dead animals, such as the shark above. But he uses it to explore mortality, just like the 17th-century oil painting on the left. The shark's preserved body, like the painted skull, is meant to make us think about death. But it looks so alive, it is hard to accept it is really dead – illustrating Hirst's title, "The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living".

Arguing it out

Modern art can provoke fierce arguments and sometimes even court cases. Everyone has different ideas and opinions, and it is no easy matter to resolve them. Sculptor Constantin Brancusi sued U.S. Customs to prove his sculptures were "art". He won; but artist Richard Serra wasn't so lucky. He made a huge, curving wall of steel entitled *Tilted Arc* for a New York square. The arc angered locals, who said it stopped them using the square. For Serra, that was the point – he wanted to change their awareness of space. But, after a court hearing, judges ordered that it be removed.

In 1998-99, Tracey Emin sparked off a huge controversy by exhibiting her own bed as art. Two visiting artists were even inspired to stage a pillow fight on it in protest.

Looking at modern art

Many people find modern art baffling, especially if they expect to recognize what they see, or are looking for traditional skills such as being able to draw accurately from life. But there are lots of other ways to think about art. These pages explain some of the questions you could ask when looking at it.

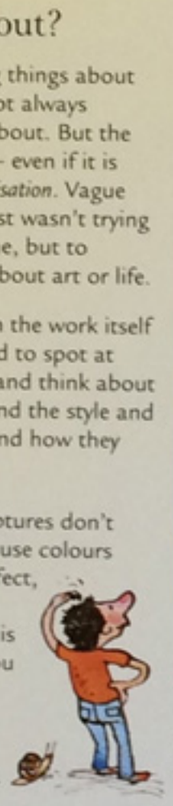
For links to websites where you can view a selection of modern art and take an online "art safari", go to **www.usborne-quicklinks.com**

What's it all about?

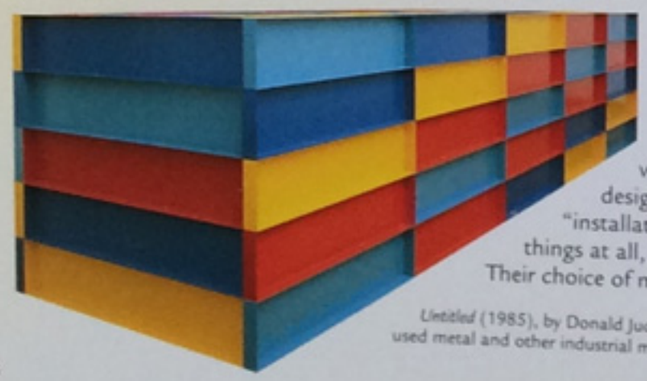
One of the most puzzling things about modern art is that it is not always obvious what it's really about. But the title may give you a clue – even if it is just *Composition* or *Improvisation*. Vague titles often mean the artist wasn't trying to show a particular scene, but to explore his or her ideas about art or life.

There will also be clues in the work itself – even if they may be hard to spot at first. Look at it carefully and think about what the image shows, and the style and colours the artist used, and how they make you feel.

Some paintings and sculptures don't have clear subjects. They use colours and shapes for artistic effect, rather than as a way of representing scenes. This is known as abstract art. You are meant to appreciate these works as things in their own right, not as images of something else.



The Snail (1953), by Henri Matisse, gouache on cut and pasted paper, 286 x 287cm (113 x 113in). At first glance, this just seems like a bright, cheerful pattern. But the title suggests there is more to it. Do you think the spiralling arrangement resembles the spiral shape of a snail shell? There is also a tiny snail silhouette jutting out of the lilac shape in the corner.



Untitled (1985), by Donald Judd, painted aluminium, 30 x 120 x 30cm (12 x 47 x 12in). Judd used metal and other industrial materials because he wanted to explore their particular qualities.

How was it made?

It is worth thinking about how something was made, too. Modern artists don't just paint and sculpt, they use a huge range of materials or "media". Some make films or photographs, or work with things they happen to find. Others design works for specific places – these are known as "installations". And some artists don't actually make things at all, but put on shows or document their thoughts. Their choice of methods will depend a lot on their ideas about art.

When was it made?

If you know something about when a work of art was made, and what else was happening at the time, it may help to explain why an artist chose to work in a certain way. Big historic events such as wars affect everyone, including artists. And the development of art movements such as Cubism or Impressionism, when artists work together and share ideas, can greatly influence an individual artist's style. But it is misleading to see things just in terms of "isms". Art doesn't fit neatly into categories. Each artist and each work is different.

Girl with a Kitten (1947), by Lucian Freud; oil on canvas, 39 x 30cm (16 x 12in). Freud is known for painting intense, detailed portraits. But it is hard to categorize his style, which is sometimes compared to Realism, sometimes to Expressionism.

Do you like it?

Another important question is whether you like a work of art or not, and why. There are no right or wrong answers to this question. It is a matter of taste – and tastes change. What seemed shocking a hundred years ago may look ordinary today. The Impressionists were considered outrageous in the 1850s. But now they are greatly admired. Compared to a lot of very recent art, they even seem fairly traditional.

About this book

This book traces the history of modern art, from the 1850s to the present day. It is arranged roughly in the order things happened, so you can see how different kinds of art developed, and how they related to events at the time. Each section covers a major period of art history, introduces its main ideas and movements, and looks at a few important works in more depth. If you can, try to visit an art gallery or museum too, so you can experience the impact of seeing art first-hand. You can also see a lot more art on the internet – look out for the recommended websites throughout this book.

Maman (1999), by Louise Bourgeois; bronze and steel, 927 x 892 x 1024cm (365 x 351 x 403in). This huge spider is just one example of what you can see at art museums. It stands outside the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.