

1. Is it art?

This week's lesson features two very contrasting opinions on the merits of some of the conceptual art found in many modern art museums.

Level

Upper intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. How many different forms of art can your students name in English? (Include three-dimensional installations in any list you make, as they feature in the text.) How would your students define art? Do they think art has to be difficult to create in order to be good? Are some forms of art more worthy of respect than others? Are there any forms of art (or famous artists) they consider overrated/underrated, and if so, why?
2. Give your students five to ten minutes to read through the text on Worksheet A, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Tell them they are going to answer a series of questions on the text, but that they shouldn't write anything down at this stage.
3. Divide the students into pairs and hand out Worksheet B. Ask them to work together to complete the true/false/doesn't say questions in Exercise 1 and the comprehension questions in Exercise 2.
4. Check answers in open class. At this stage you could also ask the students if they particularly agreed or disagreed with anything Jack or Lily said, and if so, why.
5. Keeping the students in their pairs, hand out Worksheet C and ask the students to complete the crossword.
6. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. D 6. F 7. T 8. T

Exercise 2

1. Painting, drawing, sculpture, video, (three-dimensional) installations
2. Any materials arranged in such a way as to stimulate a person's emotions or thoughts.
3. Anything that appears as if he could have created it himself in fifteen minutes.
4. Both are a mess.
5. In the idea behind them (rather than in their execution).
6. Because he thinks they must find it hard to work out what's an exhibit and what's just litter.
7. He says he's not afraid of being looked down on when he admits he doesn't like the kind of thing he saw at the modern art museum.
8. The fundamental difference is that Lily has a very wide definition of art and seems not to think that certain examples of art are necessarily better than others, while Jack dismisses some examples as rubbish on the basis of their being too easy to create.

Exercise 3

1. technical 2. girlfriend 3. original 4. great 5. floor 6. dismiss 7. rubbish
8. installations 9. drawing 10. like

If the sentences have been completed correctly, *tiger shark* will read from top to bottom.

2. Related Websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/4536071.stm

Visitors to the BBC website respond to the question 'What do you think of modern art?' Upper-intermediate level and above.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/3604278.stm>

Again from the BBC (2004), the story of a bag of rubbish that was part of an exhibit at the Tate gallery in London but was accidentally thrown away by a cleaner. Upper-intermediate level and above.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damien_Hirst

The *Wikipedia* entry for Damien Hirst, the British artist who rose to fame in the 1990s because of his controversial installations. Upper-intermediate level and above.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/01/arts/design/01voge.html>

A long article (2006) in the *New York Times* on Damien Hirst's famous shark exhibit. Upper-intermediate level and above.