

IMMA PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAMME 2014 -2015

PRIMARY CONVERSATIONS

From September to December 2014, children visiting the Irish Museum of Modern Art as part of the Primary School Programme will have the opportunity to experience the exhibition **IMMA Collection: Conversations**.

Conversations is a selection of diverse displays from the IMMA Collection that present the idea of dialogue on a number of levels: between artworks, artists, art collectors, and IMMA. Some artworks in the exhibition relate to each other due to the era in which they were made, or because they have a similarity in terms of shared concept or movement. Some artworks were created by the same artist but are separated by a number of years, even decades. In different parts of the exhibition you will see artworks that contrast strongly in terms of the respective artists' ideas or approach to art-making. During the Primary School Programme, we hope to extend these *conversations* into a dialogue between children, teachers, and IMMA staff about the experience of visiting and engaging with these artworks.

The exhibition is modular in composition, so although Conversations continues until nearly Easter 2015, some artworks will come and go and some individual rooms will close and reopen with new exhibits. During any given tour, for various reasons, it may not be possible to visit all of the artworks outlined below. However, the information below is a best attempt to capture all the relevant material for primary school teachers up till December 2014. These notes will be amended online as the exhibition changes.

Here are selected themes and ideas – conversations - that link a number of artworks on show:

PORTRAITS AND PEOPLE – Conversations about how we might represent a person: as a picture of a face, head, or body; as a form of shapes or with lines and colours; as a set of objects, clothes, places, or emotions that we associate with that person.

PAINT AND COLOUR – Conversations about the different approaches artists take to painting and using colour: as flat and patterned, as evocative, textured, and

expressive, as a vehicle for an idea, as a visual sensation, as a descriptive representation of somebody, something, or someplace.

LOOKING AND SEEING – Conversations about the difference between looking and seeing; how we see things - what we think affects how we see, and how we see affects what we think; visual illusions and optical sensations.

MEMORIES AND REMEMBERING – Conversations about what we remember and how we remember: with accuracy (or not), with emotion, through associations with people, objects, places, colours, sounds; the idea of an artwork as a commemoration of someone or something - a way of making others remember something in the years to come.

Of course some artworks could fit under two or more headings, and others are only very lightly linked together. But the headings provide a general framework to talk about the exhibition with children.

If you are reading these notes on a screen, click on any [hyperlink](#) to access online information which will hopefully be of use to you as a teacher, both in the gallery and in the classroom.

Most hyperlinks will take you through to a relevant image or text in IMMA's online [Collection database](#). There you can see an image of the artwork in question and find out more about that artist's work and life. There are occasional links to relevant artists' and galleries' websites, including the [Tate](#) and [MoMA](#). Most of the following text is adapted from existing IMMA publications and online information. Extended bold text is an excerpt from previous publications about IMMA and is specially written for children. IMMA's own online glossary [What is _ ?](#) contains an A-Z of information about art terms and concepts.

PORTRAITS AND PEOPLE

Sir Antony Gormley is best known for his sculptures in lead, steel, iron or clay, which often use his own body as a starting point. His sculpture [Angel of the North](#) is very well known, and often used on TV to represent Newcastle. His [Field series](#) has also appeared in many different situations, filling up huge spaces with a crowd of tiny clay figures. His sculpture at IMMA is called [Still Falling I 1991](#). On the outside this artwork looks like a huge rusty cocoon. When you are in the room beside the artwork, it really feels like this massive object is frozen mid-air, just above the floor, still falling. Inside the sculpture there is an empty body space, the space around a human figure during movement.

Enrico Baj used sculpture, print and collage in his artwork. His portraits often poked fun at figures of authority like army generals. His series of [Head](#) artworks create the features of a face through geometric patterns and flat areas of colour.

LOOKING AND SEEING

Robert Ballagh has a number of paintings exhibited in Conversations. These paintings could fit under a number of headings such as portraits and people, looking and seeing, paint and colour, but also memories and remembering. He is an Irish painter and designer credited with the introduction of [Pop Art](#) to Ireland. His work includes set design for the theatre and shows such as Riverdance, the final set of Irish Punt banknotes before the introduction of the [Euro](#), postage stamps, self-portraits and portraits of well-known Irish people. In 1972, Ballagh began his *People at an Exhibition* series; a set of paintings which portray people looking at paintings. There is a playful element to the format of these images. In effect, when we look at these paintings we are looking at the painting of another person looking at another painting. In Ballagh's [People and a Morris Louis](#), the painting being looked at is a variation on Morris Louis's [Beta Lambda, 1961](#). Here the picture of the people doing the looking (a group of children with a grown-up) are printed onto the inside of glass covering the painting – Ballagh is incorporating the way the artwork is framed with glass into the actual artwork itself.

In **Mark O'Kelly's** [The Party 2010](#) we are also looking at someone looking: a woman on a street is standing looking at a wall of election posters.

English painter **Paul Winstanley** creates pictures of [empty places](#) inside buildings such as waiting rooms, passages, and lobbies. If you've ever spent a while waiting in these kinds of space, you will understand how closely you start observing the smallest of details around you, the tiniest of hairline cracks in a wall, the electrical fittings and the woodwork, the pattern of a carpet or a curtain. In a way this level of detail, this scrutiny, matches the way in which these pictures were made. From a distance you might believe that these pictures are photographs. But look closely at the surface of the artwork – these are paintings. The artist must have taken considerable time and care to paint these images in such a detailed way. In [Veil 11, 2002](#), a white net curtain (like the ones you might find in any house or hotel room) is painted from inside a room looking out. Why do you think this picture is called *Veil*? Isn't it a very poetic title for a picture of an ordinary net curtain? While the daylight coming through the curtain is dazzlingly bright, we cannot see outside. Despite the window and light, the outer world is hidden from view.

[Preserve, 1987-88](#) by **Richard Wentworth** features a wire bucket filled with used light bulbs. At the top of the bucket there is a concrete lid. The heavy lid might be containing and protecting the contents under it, but it also possesses the potential to crush the fragile glass bulbs below. The title of the artwork is *Preserve*. A preserve can be a protected area or an American term for jam. Extending the word play, jam is a slang term for a predicament or a quandary.

Victor Vasarely was born in Hungary. He lived in France for most of his life. His painting called [Lant](#) has a grid like the squares in a maths copy book. The artist put a shape inside each square and he painted each square with a different colour. Name a few of the colours that you can see. Look for red. Now look how the red is painted darker or lighter in different parts of the painting. As the colours get darker or lighter, they make us think that some parts of the painting are closer to us and some parts are further away.

Some people call this type of painting [Op Art](#). Op is short for Optical. Optical is a word we use when we are talking about our eyes and seeing. Op artists put together colours and shapes in a special way so that their artworks seem to dazzle or shimmer in front of our eyes.

Find out more about [Pop Art](#), [Op Art](#) and [Kinetic Art](#) at:

Tate.org.uk online glossary

In [Curvas Imateriales](#), there are metal rods, painted yellow and white that hang down in front of a painting of black and white horizontal lines. When you stand in front of this artwork, your physical movement can generate enough of an air current to move the rods ever so gently. Your mere presence, just looking at this artwork, is enough to activate it, thus giving you the viewer an active role in the artwork. The artist who made this work, **Jesús Rafael Soto**, believed that the surrounding light conditions also have a powerful effect on how we perceive an art object. As the lengths of yellow and white curved rods move in front of the fixed thin black and white lines in the background, the artwork dazzles and shimmers, appearing almost magical and mesmerizing to our eyes. Some people refer to this artwork as [Kinetic Art](#).

Bridget Reilly's [from Nineteen Grey, B](#) is a print featuring a pattern of grey-blue egg-shaped ovals, some of which seem to be closer, and some seem to be further away, all depending on the darker or lighter tones of each oval.

Op Art and the artwork of Bridget Riley were synonymous with the Pop culture of *the swinging sixties* London scene and the style was linked to international fashion and design. We can see on the opposite wall to *from Nineteen Greys, B*, there is a photograph of 1960s super celebrity [Twiggy](#) in front of a Bridget Reilly artwork. The photo was taken by the American **Bert Stern** for Vogue magazine.

François Morellet's [Sphère-Traume](#) hangs from the ceiling. From a distance this sculpture looks like a silver globe. Close-up though, we can see that its sphere form is actually made-up from a matrix of individual square and cube shapes. These squares and cubes have been created by straight steel rods of varied length which run across each other at right angles. This is a circle made from squares, a globe made from cubes.

English Op artist **Peter Sedgley** first studied architecture before turning to art in the early 1960s. Sedgley's luminous circle [paintings](#) developed to incorporate video, light and sound elements.

PAINT AND COLOUR

Like the still life paintings of [William Scott](#), **Guggi**'s painting [Objects with Colour 2, 2008](#) shows bowls and jugs that are everyday objects, but also profoundly important to our lives in terms of cleansing, nutrition, and our social gathering together at mealtimes. Guggi uses hand-drawn lines to portray these vessels and containers. Guggi draws these objects in simple lines so that they appear as universal symbols.

It's interesting also to look at the way Guggi uses paint in this artwork. Like **Barrie Cooke**'s big painting *Lough Arrow* on the opposite gallery wall, you can see the various layers of paint, the trails of brush strokes, and the watery blobs and drips of paint. These are different types of painting compared to the smooth surface and sharp shapes in **Victor Vasarely**'s [Lant](#). There are many different ways in which to apply paint, and each way communicates something different.

Sometimes artists purposely use very few colours in their artworks ...

Alexandra Wejchert's sculpture [Green Lines](#) from 1974 features only the colour yellow and it is see-through. It twists, and curves, and flows around on top of its pedestal. The short edge of the Perspex appears like a dark yellowish line compared with the rest of the transparent material. Wejchert was born in Poland. She studied art in Warsaw and lived in Italy and France before moving to Ireland in 1965. Wejchert made large sculptures in coloured Perspex, Plexiglas, and neon. Think about these materials. You tend to see these types of material used in modern objects and machines, and on the front of modern businesses. When Wejchert used these materials in the 1970s they were understood as representing newness and modernity in Ireland.

MEMORIES AND REMEMBERING

Sean Scully is an artist who makes paintings by putting stripes of colour beside each other. If you look closely at [this painting](#), you can see the brush strokes in the paint. Follow the stripes: up and down or sideways. Imagine that you are painting these big stripes. You would have to bend and stretch, step back and step forward, and move side to side. It would be almost like a dance. Look again at the painting. There are small spaces between the stripes. You can see colours like dark red that are different from the colours of the stripes. Can you see any other colours between the stripes? The big stripes of colour are like the blocks or bricks in a wall. Each colour needs the colour under it, above it or next to it. Colours often remind us of a place or a time, a feeling or a person. Do the colours in this painting remind you of something? This painting is called Dorothy. Sean Scully made this painting in memory of his friend Dorothy Walker.

[Dorothy Walker](#) was an art critic and a friend to IMMA. Throughout her life she worked very hard to make sure people in Ireland were given opportunities to see modern art. Close by the entrance to the IMMA car park, on a lawn in front of trees, you can see a sculpture by the artist **Oisín Kelly**. It is a portrait of Dorothy Walker.

Barrie Cooke was born in England, grew up in Jamaica, studied in the US, and came to live in Ireland in 1954. In the early 1970s he produced sculptures with boxes, which often contained vegetation, sand, and in particular, [bones](#). They inspired his friend the poet **Seamus Heaney**. Heaney's Bog Poems (1975) were illustrated with drawings by Cooke. Think about the idea of these containers, particularly [Green Box](#). The green Perspex is a very modern material, but the bones inside indicate something archaeological, possibly ancient. Although the sculptures are engaging in an artistic way with ideas of nature and a threatened or destroyed ecosystem,

the boxes also remind us of scientific containers used to collect specimens and evidence.

Elinor Wiltshire was born in Limerick in 1918. After her husband died, she moved from Dublin to London where she worked as a botanist and researcher at the Natural History Museum. Wiltshire later donated her collection of photography to the [National Library of Ireland](#). A lot of these photos give a view of life in Dublin during the 1950s and '60s. During the 1980s, Wiltshire created over 50 needlepoint pieces based on her life in London. She donated 12 of these pieces to the IMMA Collection. Here are some of them: [Cleric and Swan by Grand Union Canal, London, 1986](#) | [Greenwich Tunnel under the Thames 1987](#) | [Crush Hour, Oxford Circus Station, London, 1988](#) | [Beachy Head Lighthouse, Eastbourne, East Sussex, 1987](#) | [Kestrel over Motorway, near London, 1987](#)

In **Robert Ballagh's** [Man with a Frank Stella 1974](#) we can see a man looking at the type of work made by Frank Stella in his [Irregular Polygons](#). The figure looking at the painting-within-the-painting is the Irish art collector Gordon Lambert. Lambert worked for Jacobs biscuits and was an important figure in supporting Irish modern art. He donated approximately 300 artworks to IMMA and one of the galleries at IMMA is named after him. Naming the gallery after him is a way of remembering his contribution to IMMA. The topic of being a collector, of having a collection, is worth pursuing in conversation with children. Collecting is such a human attribute and even young children have some concept of building a collection. We collect things that are important to us – IMMA collects art, and so do people such as Gordon Lambert. Lambert also appears in the painting by Robert Ballagh called [Portrait of David Hendriks, 1972](#). David Hendriks ran a gallery which promoted a number of Irish artists in the early 1970s including Robert Ballagh. Many of the Irish artists taken on by Hendriks went on to achieve international reputations. This portrait shows Hendriks looking out at us, but behind him there is a painting showing Gordon Lambert looking at an abstract painting by Irish artist [Cecil King](#). Making a portrait of someone is a way of symbolising their significance or importance; a way of remembering someone or commemorating that person.

This is the full A-Z list of artists who have work included in the exhibition:

[Valerio Adami](#); Enrico Baj; Robert Ballagh; Barrie Cooke; Guggi; [Allen Jones](#); [Mary Kelly](#); Brian Maguire*; [Fergus Martin](#); Colin Middleton*; François Morellet; Mark O'Kelly; [João Penalva](#); Bridget Riley; [William Scott](#); Sean Scully; Peter Sedgley; Jesús Rafael Soto; [Hannah Starkey](#); Bert Stern; Victor Vasarely; Alexandra Wejchert; Richard Wentworth; Elinor Wiltshire; Paul Winstanley.

*online listing and image not yet available