



discover art

AT DUBLIN CITY GALLERY THE HUGH LANE

AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Jessica O'Donnell

About Frames

As you walk through the gallery you will notice that nearly all the paintings, whatever their size, have a frame.

i Some Impressionist painters such as **Pissarro** liked to use white frames because they looked bright. Also he felt the colour white would not compete with the colours in his paintings.

Most of these frames, particularly those surrounding paintings from the 19th and early 20th centuries, are very ornate and have a lot of decorative detail. These frames are sometimes made of wood but more often are made of plaster. As the floral and decorative detail is usually three-dimensional, these frames are prone to damage and need specialist care to repair and conserve them. Traditionally these frames were painted with a gold coloured pigment or skilfully covered in gold leaf. These are called gilded or gilt frames because of their colour. Frames surrounding paintings made more recently tend to be plainer and have little or no detail, although very plain frames were also fashionable a few hundred years ago.



Frame Detail. Like paintings or sculptures, frames are cleaned by specialist conservators.

As well as making a painting look finished, more ornate and showing it off to good advantage, a frame helps to protect a painting when it is on display, when it is being carried or when it is in storage. Occasionally paintings are also covered with a sheet of glass or perspex rather than being varnished. This may be because an artist liked the way the painting looked when glazed or because the layer of glass helps to protect thick impasto oil paint, for example with paintings by Jack B. Yeats. Varnishing an oil painting usually is sufficient to give the work a protective layer and a good finished appearance.

A frame generally matches the age and style of a painting although they are rarely made specifically for each other. Occasionally a frame may have been designed by the artist themselves, or by someone close to them, as in the case of *Un Matin* by William J. Leech.



Un Matin by William J. Leech

The timber frame surrounding William J. Leech's painting *Un Matin* is signed by the artist and has a delicate oriental inspired painted pattern.

More recently artists increasingly leave their work unframed, preferring to break with traditional means of showing art. Some artists like to let their paintings speak for themselves without any additional adornment or distractions.

i The American artist **Mary Cassatt**, who exhibited with the French Impressionists, used both red and green frames.



MAKING AN ORNATE FRAME

Discover ornate detail in frames through sketching. Then use your drawing to help you make your own gold frame.

What you need:

Sketching materials:

- * A4 paper
- * Pencil
- * Colouring pencils

Frame materials:

- * A4 stiff card
- * Light card
- * Pencil
- * Gold paint or yellow/orange/brown paint
- * Glue
- * Scissors
- * Shells, dried flowers, leaves, gold spray paint (optional)

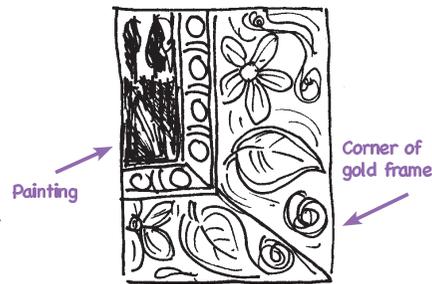
Instructions:

Step 1

- Start by looking at the gold frames around a number of the paintings in the gallery. Some of the larger frames are particularly ornate. If you look closely you will see many different patterns such as swirls, flowers and leaves.

- Choose a frame you like and study just one section - perhaps a corner. On an A4 page sketch that section of the frame exactly as you see it. At home use colouring pencils or paints to try and make your frame look gold. Yellow, orange and brown are all good colours for this. You could use blue and purple for the shadows.

Sketch of section of frame on A4 sheet



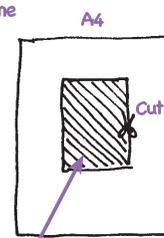
Step 2

- To make a basic frame, cut a smaller rectangle out of the middle of your stiff A4 size card. Ask for adult help with this if you need to. The smaller rectangle that you cut out should be around the size of a postcard. Paint your frame in gold (or yellow/orange/brown) colour and leave to dry.

CONTINUED

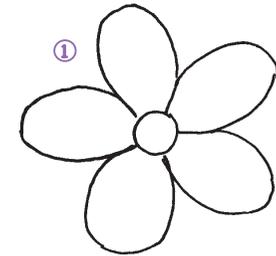


Frame



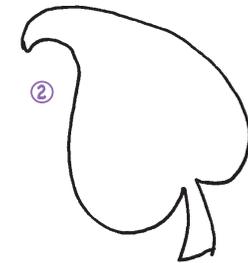
Postcard size

Shape templates



①

- On the lighter card draw some of the shapes you saw on the frames in the gallery such as flowers, leaves, circles, swirls. There are some templates here to help start you off.

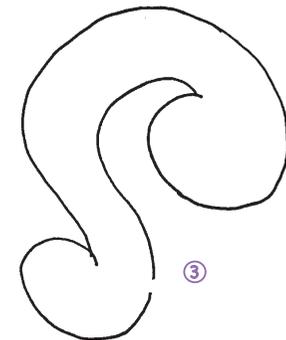


②

- Cut out the shapes and paint them. When the shapes are dry, stick them to your frame. Arrange them so that they overlap and appear three-dimensional. Now all you need is a painting by you to make your very own Old Master!

Three-dimensional Frame:

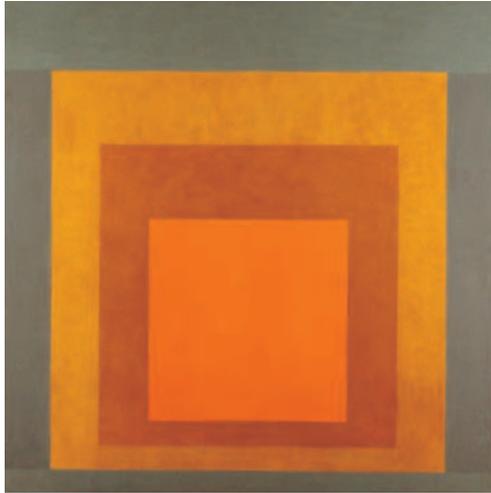
- You could try sticking on real shells, dried flowers and leaves which have been covered with gold spray paint. Sticky tape, stronger glue and some adult help may be needed here.



③

Building Blocks of Art:

Colour, Tone & Texture



Homage to the Square
– Aglow
by Josef Albers

Why does an artist choose a particular colour or use brushstrokes in a certain way? The way these are used can dramatically change the way a painting looks.

COLOUR

Usually when you think of paintings you immediately think of colour. Artists use colour in very different ways. While some use colour to describe objects realistically, others use colour in an expressive way to give their painting a greater emotional strength. All colours have their own qualities. Some colours

such as red and orange seem warm, while other colours such as blue or white can seem cold. Colours can also appear to change or glow if one colour is put beside another colour, for example when red is placed beside green. Colours are also associated with different emotions – red with anger or embarrassment, green with envy or sickness, yellow with cheerfulness or cowardice.

Homage to the Square – Aglow by Josef Albers

Josef Albers was fascinated by the way colours affect each other and how their appearance can seem to change when they are placed alongside another colour. Around 1950 Albers began a series which he called *Homage to the Square*. To pay homage to something is to praise it and hold it in high regard. Of all shapes, the square was his favourite. Through this series Albers experimented with different colour combinations using only the format of squares within squares. Albers would sometimes start with colour sketches which he would then develop into larger paintings or even tapestries. He eventually made over 1000 works

which explored colour harmony, and the illusion of colour coming forward or moving backwards. As well as naming each of his works *Homage to the Square*, he would sometimes add descriptions to his titles. For this painting he added the word 'Aglow'. The different orange tones of this painting placed beside each do seem to be warmly glowing and have a light of their own. In his series he combines squares, which are precise and mathematical shapes, with colour which is associated with emotion and whose appearance is changeable.

Garden Green by Norah McGuinness

Garden Green is a still-life painting by the Irish artist Norah McGuinness. This painting is made up of lots of squares and is painted using mostly greens. On the table are a cup and saucer, a large black pot, two bottles, a spoon, a white cloth and a fruit and vegetable. But there is something strange about the way these objects appear. It looks as though they are sliding off the table! That is because the artist is painting in a Cubist style.



Garden Green
by Norah McGuinness

Cubism was a style of painting explored most famously by two artists – Picasso and Braque – in France at the beginning of the 20th century. Rather than paint from one direction, they showed objects from a number of different viewpoints – from the front, the side, the top, the bottom and painted all these viewpoints together in the one painting. Rather than showing distance in a painting using perspective, the Cubists wanted to show how the surface of a painting is actually flat. In *Garden Green* it seems as though we are looking down on the spoon but looking across at the cup and saucer. If

we were looking down at the cup and saucer we would be able to look right into it. Norah McGuinness has captured the sense of a lovely warm day. The kitchen table is before an open window with pink climbing roses outside. There is a girl in the garden. What do you think she is doing? Maybe she is picking something from the patchwork garden for dinner.

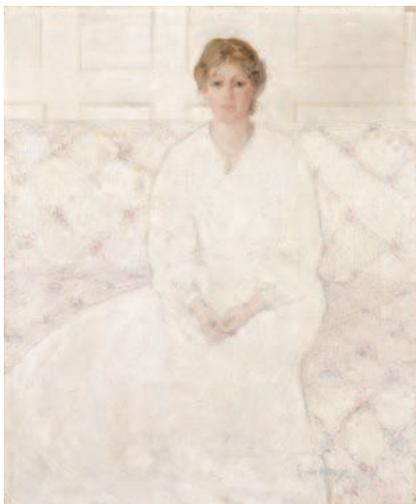
TONE

Tone is a word which describes the overall brightness or darkness of colours in a painting. Tone also describes shades of a similar colour. For example, a painting may be painted using mostly shades of dark to light grey and so could be described as having a grey tone or tonal range.

The Girl in White by Grace Henry

Grace Henry loved to use lots of bright colours when she painted the people of the west of Ireland. However, this painting of Miss Kitty Hearne is almost completely white except for Kitty's rosy cheeks and her dark hair and eyes.

The Girl in White
by Grace Henry



Wearing a lovely long white dress, Kitty seems to be daydreaming as she sits on a diamond patterned couch. While her dress is soft and flowing the rest of the painting, such as the wood panelling behind her head, is made up of strong geometric shapes. The combination of using mostly the colour white with such clear patterns makes the painting appear flat and delicate.

TEXTURE

The way paint is applied, whether thickly or thinly, or the addition of materials such as sand, can change the appearance and expressive quality of a painting dramatically. William Orpen's still-life objects in *Reflections: China and Japan* look amazingly shiny and real. Orpen used very diluted, thinly applied paint to help him achieve this effect.



Reflections: China and Japan
by William Orpen

Artrivia

The painter **Antonio Mancini** used to add foil to his paintings as he wanted to make them appear more textured, shiny and luminous.

In contrast, *There is No Night* by Jack B. Yeats is a celebration of texture and *impasto* oil painting. *Impasto* is a word to describe thickly applied oil paint. Yeats uses lots of oil paint and expressive, colourful brushstrokes which makes the surface of his painting bumpy and raised. All this raised texture is only emphasised further by the parts of his painting where he has left the canvas almost bare.



There is No Night
by Jack B. Yeats



TONAL STORIES

What you need:

- * Various coloured papers from a paper pack or torn from old magazines.
- * You could also use coloured fabrics or coloured tissue paper. The more variation in colour and texture the better.
- * Scissors
- * White paper
- * Pencils
- * Pritt stick glue

Instructions:

- Lay out lots of different coloured paper or fabric in piles of similar colour e.g. all green tones together, all pinks and reds together and so on.
- Pick a colour to work with and collect a bundle from your chosen colour.
- On a white sheet of paper arrange your chosen colour from darkest tone to lightest in bands across the page. You can cut neat stripes or tear strips for a more varied effect. The end result will generally look like thick or thin stripes of colour with scissor cut or torn edges.
- When your page is completely covered in colour, ask yourself what you think the arrangement of coloured stripes reminds you of. For example, a page of greens often resembles hills and fields in the countryside or stripes of pinks can look like a pile of mattresses. This idea will form the basis for a page from your story.
- When you have chosen an image, cut out shapes in plain paper which tell your story – perhaps cutting out clouds to float across the green stripes will make a landscape, or a camel on yellow tonal bands of colour which had looked like a desert. Stick these shapes onto your tonal stripes.
- If making this in your classroom, tell your tonal stories in full to each other or at home to your family.



PAINTING MULTI-COLOURED BUTTERFLIES

What you need:

- * A3 white paper
- * Pencils
- * Poster paint and paint brushes
- * Paint trays or old plate to mix your colours
- * PVA glue
- * Glitter, sequins and eyeballs (optional)

Instructions:

- During a visit to the gallery, look at the many colours and patterns you see in the paintings around you as inspiration for your imaginary multi-coloured butterflies. You could also look at some nature books to find out more about butterfly shapes and colours or keep a close eye out for fluttering butterflies in your garden or in the local park.
- With your pencil, fill your A3 paper with your butterfly design. There is a line drawing here to help you with the shape. Fill your butterfly wings with lots of patterns, swirls, spirals, dots, circles and stripes.
- Next paint your butterfly. You could mix different colours together to create new colours. For example, mix red and blue to get purple or place light colours beside dark colours to see how each enhances the vibrancy of the other.
- When the butterfly is fully painted then add textured decorations by glueing on sequins or glitter. Finally place two eyeballs on the head for a 3D effect. This is optional and the butterfly will look just as great with painted eyes.
- When the butterfly is finished you could fill in the background of your picture with flowers or long grass.



BUTTERFLY LINE DRAWING

