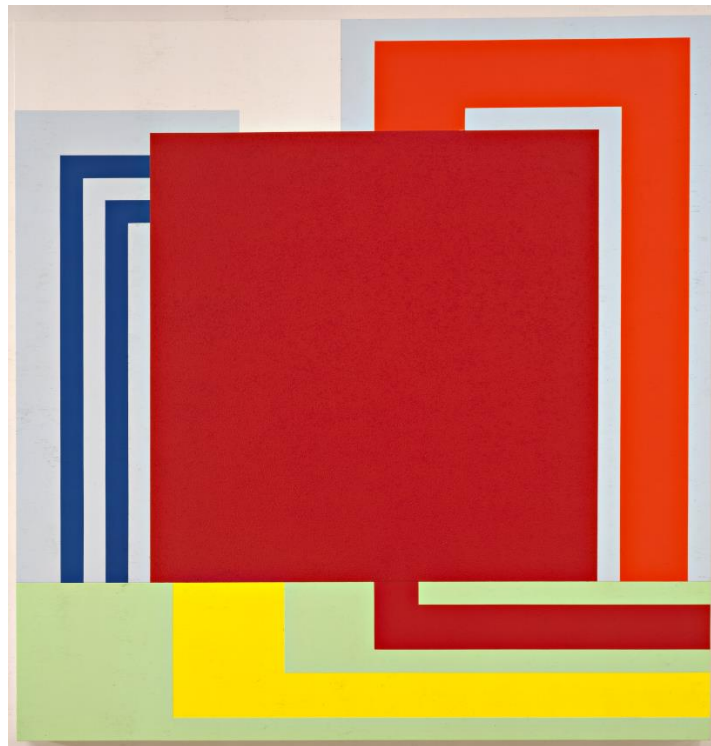


## Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915-2015

### Teachers' Notes

This resource has been put together by the Whitechapel Gallery's Education Department to introduce teachers to each season of exhibitions and new commissions at the Gallery. It explores key themes within the main exhibition to support self-directed visits.

Also including: Bart Lodewijks: White Li(n)es; David Batchelor: Monochrome Archive; Sculptors' Papers from the Henry Moore Institute Archive; Karen Mirza and Brad Butler: The Unreliable Narrator (2014); Fiona Banner selects from the V-A-C Collection: Stamp out Photographie.



### Find Out More:

To find out more about talks and events related to the exhibition pick up a leaflet, exhibition guide or visit [whitechapelgallery.org](http://whitechapelgallery.org)

A fully illustrated publication is available in the bookshop priced £29.99.

Limited edition artworks to accompany the exhibition are on sale now, buy from the information desk or visit [whitechapelgallery.org](http://whitechapelgallery.org)

Share your everyday abstract encounters: [#AbstractEverywhere](https://twitter.com/AbstractEverywhere)

## Winter 2015 at Whitechapel Gallery

### Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915-2015

Galleries 1, 8 & 9

Until 6 April 2015

A major new exhibition tracing a century of Abstract art from 1915 to today brings together over 100 works by 100 modern masters and contemporary artists including **Carl Andre, David Batchelor, Dan Flavin, Andrea Fraser, Piet Mondrian, Gabriel Orozco, Hélio Oiticica, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rosemarie Trockel, Theo Van Doesburg** and **Andrea Zittel**, taking over six exhibition spaces across the gallery.

The exhibition takes a fresh look at this new art for a modern age, and asks how art relates to society and politics.

### David Batchelor: Monochrome Archive

Gallery 2

Until 3 May 2015

For nearly 20 years British artist **David Batchelor** (b. 1955) has been photographing his series of Found Monochromes – white rectangles and squares encountered on walks through cities from London to São Paulo. While he started looking at how abstraction is embedded in the urban fabric, the series has grown into a far more personal project: a psychogeographical map of each city he visits. Now for the first time all 500 images – an explosion of white rectangles in the Gallery – are shown as a multi-screen installation, giving a spectacular counterpoint to the Adventures of the Black Square exhibition.

### Papers from the Henry Moore Institute Archive

Pat Matthews Gallery (Gallery 4)

Until 22 February 2015

The stories behind some of London's most radical public sculptures are traced in a display drawing on the Henry Moore Institute's rich collection of sculptors' papers in Leeds, England. The exhibition sheds new light on sculpture in the capital, charting the creative process, political debates and critical responses surrounding realised and unrealised works from the early twentieth century onwards.

### Bart Lodewijks: White Li(n)es

Outset Project Gallery (Gallery 5) & 176/Zabludowicz Collection Project Gallery (Gallery 6)

Until 8 March 2015

Dutch artist **Bart Lodewijks** uses urban environments around the world as a canvas for his distinctive chalk abstract drawings – from residential buildings in quiet suburban neighbourhoods to street surfaces in bustling metropolitan city centres. He is interested in how drawing can be a social process built on trust and conversations with individuals or groups. As part of a Gallery-wide celebration of abstract art, Lodewijks' new commission draws from workshops with local young people, where he found out about their relationships to the public and private spaces around them.

### Fiona Banner selects from the V-A-C Collection: Stamp out Photographie

Gallery 7

Until 8 March 2015

Renowned for exploring the visual possibilities of language, British artist **Fiona Banner** (b.1966) chooses works of art from the V-A-C collection, Moscow, as part of the Whitechapel Gallery's programme opening up rarely seen collections from around the world.

The display explores the blurred lines between language, photography and painting and includes **Gerhard Richter's** *Kerze* (1982), a hyper realistic painting of a single, glowing candle famously used as the cover of **Sonic Youth's** 1988 album *Daydream Nation*. While **Andy Warhol's** *Jackie* (1964) based on photographs of Jackie Kennedy Onassis is shown alongside *Stretch* (1964), an optical black & white painting by **Bridget Riley** which appears to shift and vibrate.

### Karen Mirza and Brad Butler: The Unreliable Narrator (2014)

Zilkha Auditorium

Until 6 April 2015

The London-based artist duo's new film tells the story of the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, India. The gripping footage is sourced from CCTV recordings of the siege and overlaid with telephone conversations between the attackers and their controllers, who orchestrate the violence from afar. The film suggests these scenes were performed for the news cameras and is part of **Karen Mirza** and **Brad Butler's** project, *The Museum of Non Participation*.

The logo for Whitechapel Gallery, consisting of the words "Whitechapel" and "Gallery" stacked vertically in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a black rectangular background.

Whitechapel  
Gallery

**Adventures of the Black Square poem**

- The exhibition has been hung in chronological order. Why do you think the curators chose to do this?
- Abstraction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century gave artists space for experimentation, with no hierarchy between mediums. What may this have been a reaction to? Think about other artist movements and political and social contexts.

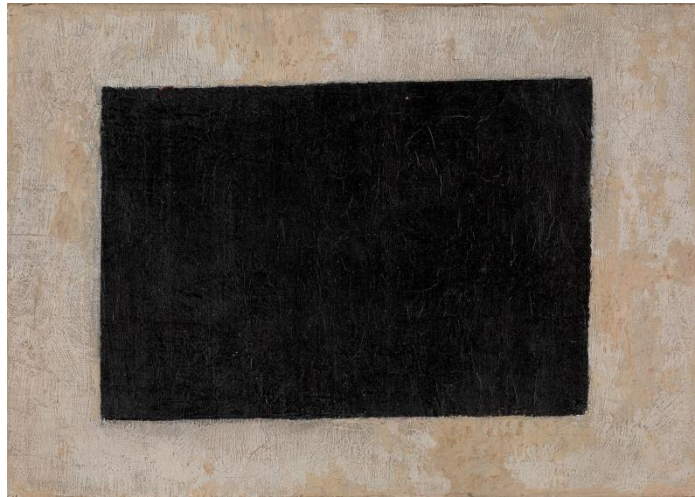
As you walk through the exhibition, make a list of words to describe the work you see.  
Use these to make a poem and share using #abstracteverywhere

Some words to get you started:

Abstraction / Revolution / Monochrome / Geometric / Utopia / Architectonics / Propaganda / Dystopia /  
Totalitarianism / Industrialisation

**Utopia:**

**Kazimir Malevich** (Russia, 1879-1935) *Black Quadrilateral*, c.1915



Oil on canvas ©Collection Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art, Costakis Collection, Thessaloniki

**Architectonics:**

**Lyubov Popova** (Russia, 1889-1924) *Painterly Architectonic*, 1916



Oil on board © Collection Scottish Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh

**Communication:**

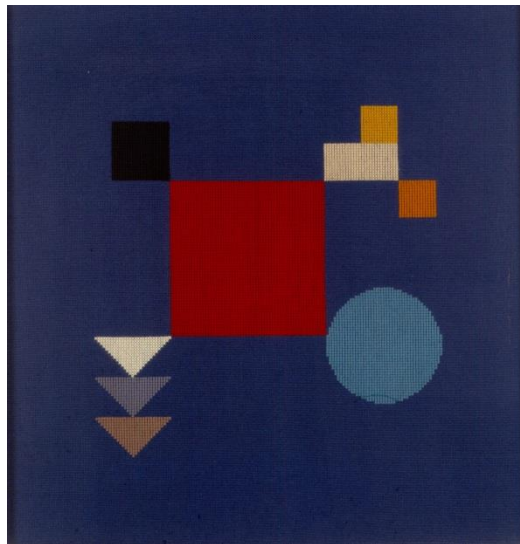
Gustav Klutsis (Russia, 1895 – 1938) *Design for Loudspeaker No.5, 1922*



Ink and gouache on paper © Collection Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art, Costakis Collection, Thessaloniki

**The Everyday:**

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (Switzerland, 1889 – 1946) *Untitled (Composition with Squares, Circles, Rectangles, Triangles)*, 1918



Pearl cotton, coloured dyes © VG Bildkunst, Bonn, collection Stiftung Arp e.v, Rolandswerth, Berlin

## Exhibition Notes

### **Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915-2015**

**Galleries 1, 8 & 9**

**Kazimir Malevich's** revolutionary paintings of black and red squares were first shown in Russia in 1915. These monochromes provided a blueprint for geometric abstraction - art made up of pure line, form and colour set against non illusionistic space. Although this kind of abstract art is based on mathematical principles, the exhibition reveals how it connects with society and politics.

It is often assumed that Modernism evolved only in Russia, Europe and North America. The works of over a hundred artists brought together here tell a different story. From Buenos Aires to Tehran, London to Berlin, New York to Beijing, geometric abstraction occurred around the world, resonating through the 20th century into the present.

The exhibition proceeds chronologically and traces four themes: **Utopia, Architectonics, Communication and The Everyday**. The open structures and infinite variations of geometric abstraction translate into artistic strategies ranging from painting and sculpture to film and performance. Evolving in tandem with technological advances, with the convulsions of geopolitics and the rise and fall of political ideologies we see how it can express revolution or dystopia.

### **Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915–2015**

**Gallery 1: 1910s–1980s**

Four works set out the themes of the exhibition. Malevich's Black Quadrilateral circa 1915 emblemizes utopia. For artists at the beginning of the 20th century the ground zero of the monochrome broke with academic subject matter, inaugurating a progressive art for an egalitarian society.

Painterly Architectonic (1916) by **Lyubov Popova** visualises spatial forces and planar dimensions to reflect and shape a modern era. As factories manufactured cars and planes, and skyscrapers arose illuminated by electric lights it uses speed, defiance of gravity and luminosity which defined architectonics or 'the science of architecture and the arrangement of knowledge'.

**Gustav Klutsis'** 1922 designs for loudspeakers represent broadcasting. Pure colour and form offered a universal language that could transcend class and nationality for the communication of a new social order. Radio towers, cameras and telegraph wires became a subject of art. Early avant-gardes also published scores of manifestos and magazines.

**Sophie Taeuber-Arp's** wall hanging of 1918 shows art as integral to the everyday. The Russian Constructivists, the Dutch De Stijl and the German Bauhaus movements approached abstract art in communal and functional terms. Guiding design and architecture, abstract art filtered into everyday routines, material cultures and social relations. Following the exile or eradication of the European avant-gardes in the 1930s and 40s, abstraction is reinvented in Latin America in the 1950s, an era of optimism and growth.

Its legacies are taken up by artists in the USA, Southern and Eastern Europe and the Middle East in the 1960s and 70s, who steer it into the social space of installation and performance.

**Bart Lodewijks: White Li(n)es**

**Outset Project Gallery (Gallery 5) & 176/Zabludowicz Collection Project Gallery (Gallery 6)**

**Until 8 March 2015**

From residential buildings in quiet suburbs to street surfaces in bustling city centres, Dutch artist **Bart Lodewijks** (b. 1972) uses urban environments as a canvas for his abstract chalk drawings. How can drawing activate a shared experience? Stating that his lines are made both of 'chalk and trust', Lodewijks is interested in drawing as a social practice built on conversations with individuals and communities. While the drawings often disappear, the stories and encounters are captured through his writings.

Working in collaboration with two groups of young people from across London, Lodewijks created a series of assignments that were the basis for workshops exploring public spaces. The project challenged participants to expand their idea of drawing, and developed into creative interventions inside and outside of the Whitechapel Gallery.

This exhibition presents a series of wall drawings Lodewijks has made in response to the gallery, alongside a selection of printed materials. A booklet designed with Roma Publications documents his working process with the young people, as well as drawings made in the local area over the last year.

Bart Lodewijks trained as a painter and began making drawings in the Netherlands at The Academy of Art and Design St. Joost in Breda, and the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. He has worked on projects in cities including Ghent, Lisbon, Porto, Rio de Janeiro, Ronse, Sligo and Willemstad.

Activity: **Be an Abstract Artist**

1. Using a non-permanent pen, trace the outline of what you can see through your classroom window directly onto the glass.
2. Now use a piece of paper or card to cut out your own viewfinder. Use this to frame part of your drawing and fix it in place using blu-tac.
3. Now draw the framed area onto a piece of A4 paper remembering to fill the entire page!

Hear Bart talk about his work during a Masterclass with Wapping School here:

<http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/learn/schools-teachers/schools-projects/masterclasses/>

**David Batchelor: Monochrome Archive**  
**Gallery 2**  
**Until 3 May 2015**

**'Abstract art is the art of the city and the monochrome is its exemplary form.'**  
**David Batchelor**

Alongside his colour-based sculptures, paintings, drawings and installations, for nearly two decades British artist **David Batchelor** (b.1955) has been photographing 'Found Monochromes' – white rectangular and square panels encountered on walks through cities from London to São Paulo.

In the first instance this series was concerned with how abstraction is embedded in the fabric of the city, but over the years it has grown into a far more personal project: a map of small voids and an archive of temporary blanks that exist briefly in image-saturated environments.

There are now over 500 images – each of a central white rectangle or square, behind which are a wide range of backdrops: brick walls, car windows, wooden doors, metal fences and the general paraphernalia of the city streets. Each monochrome is the back of a sign, a blank screen, an empty billboard or a faded message. 'I suppose it is the implied autonomy of colour that makes every surface of the city a potential monochrome, a surface on a surface, a provisional, contingent, temporary presence', says Batchelor.

Now for the first time all 500 images – an explosion of white rectangles – are shown here as a multi-screen installation, giving a spectacular counterpoint to the Adventures of the Black Square exhibition.

#### **Prompter Questions**

- David Batchelor found abstraction as part of our daily lives, can you think of where abstraction comes into your life?
- What does an empty space in a busy city mean to you? What could it represent?

Find your own 'Found Monochromes' and share @\_The Whitechapel #abstracteverywhere



**Fiona Banner selects from the V-A-C Collection: Stamp out Photographie**  
**Gallery 7**  
**Until 8 March 2015**

British artist **Fiona Banner** (b.1966) chooses works of art from the V-A-C Collection, Moscow, in an installation that plays with museum display conventions. Renowned for exploring the visual possibilities of language, Banner's selection focuses on the blurred boundaries between language photography and painting. She is drawn to pieces their own medium. For example, works by artists **Christopher Williams** and **Shannon Ebner** but are in fact photographs staged with meticulous attention to detail. Similarly, **Sherrie Levine's** *Khmer Torso* (2010) is a cast of an ancient Buddhist sculpture; it questions ideas of authenticity.

Banner has devised an installation which reveals but also conceals the image. Rejecting conventional gallery lighting, Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black in a direct reference to the CMYK system commonly used for printing images. She says, 'I want to make a theatre for the works to act in. It is a play on the act of looking, on our perception.'

The display includes **Gerhard Richter's** *Kerze* (1982), a painting of a single, glowing candle famously used as the cover of **Sonic Youth's** 1988 album '*Daydream Nation*'. **Andy Warhol's** *Jackie* (1964) is a painting based on photographs of Jackie Kennedy Onassis. While *Stretch* (1964), a major black & white painting by **Bridget Riley** is an optical art work which appears to shift and vibrate. This presentation also includes a video by Russian born artist **Olga Chernysheva** soundtrack for the exhibition.

Prompter Question

- Fiona Banner challenges the way we see art by changing the lighting in the gallery; what other ways are there to change the way that people look at art?

**We encourage schools to visit the gallery Tuesday – Thursday during term time, and make use of our Clore Creative Studios for free. All visits must be booked in advance with the Education team.**

**For details of school workshops, CPD for teachers and education events please visit [www.whitechapelgallery.org](http://www.whitechapelgallery.org)**

**To find out more or to book a visit please contact:**

**E: [education@whitechapelgallery.org](mailto:education@whitechapelgallery.org)**

**T: +44 (0)20 7522 7894**