From Norman King’s papers

How to use this teachers’ pack:

The pack begins with a conversation between its writers, artists Rebecca Greathead and Daniel Wallis. It outlines some key information about the artist and the exhibition, giving you some context to pass on to your students.

The activities are guidelines that you can vary to suit the vocabulary or ideas that you think students might best respond to. We have suggested ways to differentiate for all Key Stages but you may feel that your students will benefit from trying those aimed at a different group.

First come activities and discussion points to use in the gallery. It is probably best to read these through first although they should be self explanatory and normally only need paper, something to write with and an open mind.

The school activities can easily be expanded from the length of one lesson to multiple sessions. We’ve included images throughout that you can display in the classroom to help prompt the group and remind them of the exhibition. Perhaps talk your ideas through with a colleague.

Have fun.
Daniel: This isn’t what I expected an art gallery to look like. There doesn’t appear to be much artwork. I think I recognise that big painting though.

Rebecca: It’s a tapestry copy of Guernica, a painting by Picasso. He made it after the bombing of a Basque town by German and Italian bombers under orders from Spanish Nationalists in 1937. One thousand five hundred civilians were killed.

Daniel: But why show that here, now? Isn’t this an exhibition of artwork by London-based Polish artist Goshka Macuga, especially commissioned for the reopening of the Whitechapel Gallery?

Rebecca: The artist is interested in art histories and archives. Her starting point for this commission was the extensive archives that the Whitechapel keeps.

Daniel: But how does a work by a Spanish Cubist painter from over 70 years ago fit into the East End of London and the Whitechapel’s role in its history.

Rebecca: Picasso exhibited it at the Paris World Exposition in 1937 to show the world his support for Republican Spain and raise awareness of the atrocities that were happening there. Two years later it was displayed at the Whitechapel as a means to rally people to the anti-fascist cause. In the first week there were over 15,000 viewers. In addition over £250 was raised and over 400 boots donated to be sent to the Spanish front.

Daniel: That’s amazing. It’s like a big piece of propaganda. But this isn’t the original painting; it’s just a big woven beach towel version.

Rebecca: Actually Picasso authorised the production of this tapestry. It normally hangs in the United Nations Headquarters as a reminder of the horrors that war can bring. The United Nations charter was signed after World War Two, one of its aims was to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Daniel: There are nearly 200 member states of the UN. Can art really have that impact in a political world?

Rebecca: Picasso said art “is an instrument of war for attack and defence against the enemy.” In 2003 it was covered by a big blue curtain when Colin Powell, the US secretary of State at the time, stood in front of it and gave a press conference to present ‘proof’ that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. If you look at the archive information Goshka Macuga has displayed around the table, you can see examples of Guernica being used in protests against the Vietnam War and being associated with recent events in Fallujah in Iraq.
Daniel  It reminds me of the table in the UN Security Council Chamber. Very suitable for us sit around and discuss the ideas that Macuga’s work throws up.

Rebecca  Anyone can book to use this space as a meeting place, in fact the artist designed the whole room to encourage it. All she asks is that all meetings are documented in someway and added to the archives.

Daniel  Let's have a closer look and a good discussion.

Rebecca  I'll take the minutes.
Leader of the opposition Clement Attlee speaking at the Guernica exhibition, Whitechapel Gallery, 1939
Gallery Activity 1 (suggested for KS1)

- Stand across the room from the Guernica Tapestry.
- Describe the room.
- From a distance what can you see in the tapestry?
- Have a closer look now.
  - How many people are in the tapestry?
- How many different animals are there?
- Pick one person from the tapestry.
  - Everyone pretend to be this person by holding their pose like you are a statue.
  - When would you find yourself in a pose like this?
  - What is this person thinking?
  - How might they be feeling?
- In small groups become different characters from the tapestry.
  - Stand as still as you can in a similar pose as though becoming a statue.
  - How does each character feel about the others?
  - Do they know each other or are they related?
- What emotions would you use to describe this scene?
- Again in your group statues move your individual poses slightly to shift the scene to a different emotion.
  - Can you make a scared pose into an excited pose by only slightly changing position?
Art students using *Guernica* as anti-war placards, New York,
Gallery Activity 2 (suggested for KS2–5)

- Individually look at the Guernica Tapestry. Start from across the room and then move closer.

- Write down one word responses/descriptions based on the following prompts:
  - Colour
  - Movement
  - Location
  - Animal’s expressions
  - People’s feelings
  - One question that comes to mind

- In small groups share your responses. Are there common words? Do you have different interpretations?

- Write down five words from those you have just shared, or new ones that came out of any discussion.

- Each group should pick a different person (or animal) from the tapestry. What might they be saying?

- Use all or some of your five words as the basis to create a one line phrase for this person. Could it be their final message?
KS3 extension for Gallery Activity 2

Much of the imagery contained beneath the glass table top is of posters and flyers used by people either protesting against a cause or promoting their own. There are photos of people chanting in the street in an effort to get their message across to others.

- Each group practice chanting their phrase (developed from the first part of Gallery Activity 2) over and over as if they are one voice.

- Take it in turns to stand in front of the tapestry in your group and chant your phrase.
  Can the other groups spot which person in the tapestry you are meant to be?
  Can they work out what their message is?

- Once you have heard all the chants discuss the message of Picasso’s artwork. Does it still convey the same message as it might have done in 1937?

- Draw a picture of the character whose message you have written to help you remember who they are.

Back at school you could put your phrases into posters or flyers.
KS4 and KS5 extension for Gallery Activity 2

• Gurencika was considered a shocking image when it was first painted. Do you think it still is?

• The film on the left of the gallery shows a more contemporary depiction of war. How does it compare to the Guernica image?

• Which do you consider to be more powerful?

Picasso said:

“Everything I have done has been for the present, in the hope that it will forever remain in the present.”

He made the original painting of Guernica in 1937 in response to a military event that deeply affected him.

• Can you link your phrases, made in response to Picasso’s work, to a modern event in the news or your life that affects you or that you feel strongly about?

The Guernica tapestry normally hangs in the United Nations Security Council Chamber in New York. From here representatives from the UN’s 192 member states hold press conferences to help spread their messages across the world.

• One representative from each group stand in a line in front of the tapestry.

• Each person read their phrase aloud in turn combining the separate phrases into one statement or manifesto.

The purposes of the United Nations, as set forth in its Charter, are to:

- maintain international peace and security
- develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- to cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these ends

• How could your phrases connect into this?

• Why would the UN choose this work by Picasso to hang in their World Headquarters?
Gallery Activity 3 (suggested for KS3–5)

The table in this gallery space can be booked free of charge by anyone who wants to use it host a meeting or discussion.

*If you can’t access the table stand back from it and watch the meeting. The first few elements of this activity may not be possible, but everything from the next page is.*

*If you can access the table:*

Sit around the table and look at the archive materials that Goshka Macuga has assembled in it. In small groups focus in on one section each.

- What links all the material in your section?
- How does the way it is displayed help you make sense of what you are looking at?
- How does each group’s section relate to the next?
- How can you sum up the themes that the artist is interested in?

The table reflects the circular table in the UN Security Chamber where the tapestry of Guernica is normally displayed. The shape and position of the table in relation to the tapestry mirrors that of Alexander Calder’s *Mercury Fountain* to Picasso’s painting at the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition in 1937. (see archive image beneath the glass)

- Why is the table round?
- Sitting in the chairs, how does the atmosphere in the room, created by its shape, lighting and displays, have an impact on you? What role does the Guernica tapestry have in this?

Macuga often refers to people who have an influence on exhibition design in her work. For this commissioned piece she said:

> “*The room has been designed with a real emphasis on accommodating and encouraging meetings for discussion groups*”

- How has she done this?
- In what ways does having a meeting in a public space affect the discussion?
- Would you want to hold an important meeting here?
• What sort of meetings would benefit from this public arena?

The artist is interested in archiving and research. As a student in late Communist Poland it was nearly impossible to buy the books she needed. Instead she would photocopy editions from the library and bind the A4 sheets together into a book she could keep for future reference. Anyone who holds a meeting here has been asked to send documentation to the gallery’s archive.

• Why do you think the artist asked that meetings are documented?

• What different ways can this be done?

Each section of the table has a display of elements drawn from the Whitechapel Archive and Macuga’s research for this commissioned artwork.

• In what ways could you display the documentation of the meetings held here?

• What would make it interesting for a viewer to the gallery?

You can go up to the Foyle Reading Room on level 1A to find out more about the Whitechapel Archive and its history. There will probably be an archivist there to help you too.
“How much more successful would our meetings, demonstrations and so on be if every branch or group were able at short notice to obtain slogan posters?”

From leaflet No 11
School Activity 1 (suggested for KS3-5)

Both these activities would be highly suitable for a cross curricular project combining in particular one or more of the following subjects:

- History
- ICT
- Citizenship
- Drama
- English
- Personal, social, health and economic education
- Religious education

Discuss the idea of Propaganda: what the word means, how it has become a pejorative term in Western culture and how its meaning might differ in other cultures. (www.Wikepedia.org.uk is a useful reference)

Investigate propaganda imagery both historical and contemporary and try to deconstruct how these images operate. Look for similar themes and techniques.

Choose a suitable medium for producing propaganda material: this could be posters, banners, leaflets, illustrated stories, cartoon strips or a piece of theatre.

You might wish to use a theme related to a cross-curricular project to generate the ideology you wish to promote (or to demolish) or you could take the poster on the next page as a starting point and promote the idea of art as an alternative to violence.

Ideas

As there is such a proliferation of propaganda methods you could choose to concentrate just on one or two, for example:

- Dehumanising the opposition by allying them with animals, aliens, robots, monsters or inanimate objects.

- Promoting an ideology by suggesting its adherents are famous attractive successful people.

- Being intentionally vague by alluding to the mysterious or intriguing aspects of an ideology.

- Using symbols with either a negative or positive aspect in or around an image. Eg Swastika, peace sign.

- Use words and messages that carry a very positive emotional impact to promote your ideology or an extremely negative impact to demonise your opposition.
"You'd much better drop those ugly things, and come and see my show!"
Technique

Decide if you are trying to evoke the voice of authority and those in charge or the voice of the people or the oppressed.

Consider which materials and techniques will be the most appropriate and effective in getting your message across and what message they will express. You could collage using existing images, cut shapes and letters from fabric, use neat sign painting methods or paint hurriedly applied like graffiti.

We’ve included a few pages at the back of this pack of imagery that you could photo copy and use. Try enlarging to different sizes or printing on coloured paper, cutting out and sticking face-down. You can easily find similar images by searching for clipart or vector-art websites.

Look at artists who use propaganda techniques in their artwork. Often there will be a playful twist or an ambiguity, which looks to stimulate thought and reflection. This is the opposite of the intentions of propaganda that usually seeks to promote a simple clear emotional message with little to stimulate the intellect. You may wish to look up these artists:

- Mark Titchner
- Bob and Roberta Smith
- Barbara Kruger
- Ruth Ewan
School Activity 2 (suggested KS 4 and 5)

This activity uses ICT skills

Goshka Macuga sometimes collages together images and symbols in her work to create greater meaning. Look at the image of Charles V.

In this image, Charles V is crossed over by a dollar sign. As with much of Macuga’s work further knowledge is needed to make sense of it. If we look at the history of this King, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire in C16th we are reminded that a large source of his great kingly wealth was derived from the plunder of the Americas. He funded the expeditions of conquistadors in return for shares in the spoils.

The dollar sign used by the artist in this case has two lines through it indicating a South or Central American currency while also reflecting the twin pillars on the Spanish coat of arms originating in the reign of Charles V. The twin pillars represent not only strength and power but indicate promontories forming a gateway flanking the straight of Gibraltar. This was named in times of antiquity as the Pillars of Hercules.

Although there are many different theories about the origin of the dollar sign, one that interests the artist is the idea that the pillars are woven together by the form of a hanging snake. The idea of a snake gives yet another layer of meaning to the image.

• Search the internet or scan an image of a historical, religious or political figure you know something about

• Again using the internet, locate simple signs, symbols and images which will help to convey a message about this figure.

• You may also choose to add scans of previous artwork you have made or hand drawn symbols or lettering.

• There are many clipart and vector art sites which allow you to download imagery including some which are dedicated to conveying a particular message e.g. Religious, scientific, healthy

• Use appropriate software to combine your symbols with your figure to convey some sort of message.

• Try resizing or duplicating your symbols, changing their colour or transparency.

• Add to and alter your symbols to expand or alter their meaning.