



Teachers' Notes Whitechapel Gallery

The Production Line of Happiness: Christopher Williams

Also including: Max Mara Art Prize For Women in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery: Corin Sworn; Lynette Yiadom-Boakya selects from the V-A-C collection: Natures, Natural and Unnatural; A Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts Shiraz Persepolis; Peter Liversidge: Notes on Protesting; Artist Film International Anatoly Shuravlev, Tran Luong, Vahap Avşar

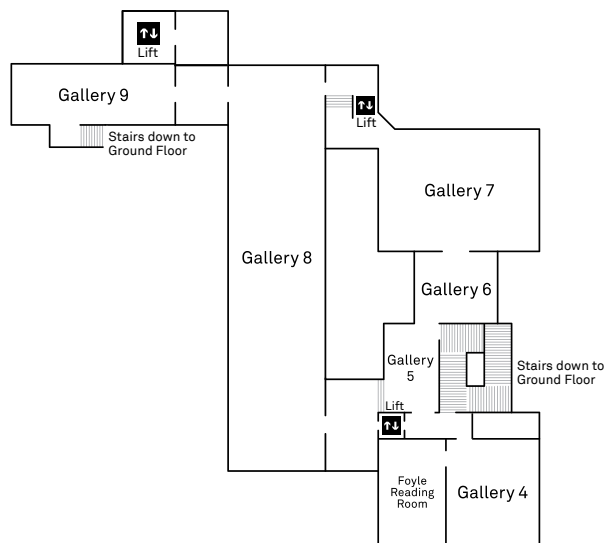


Introduction: Teachers' Notes

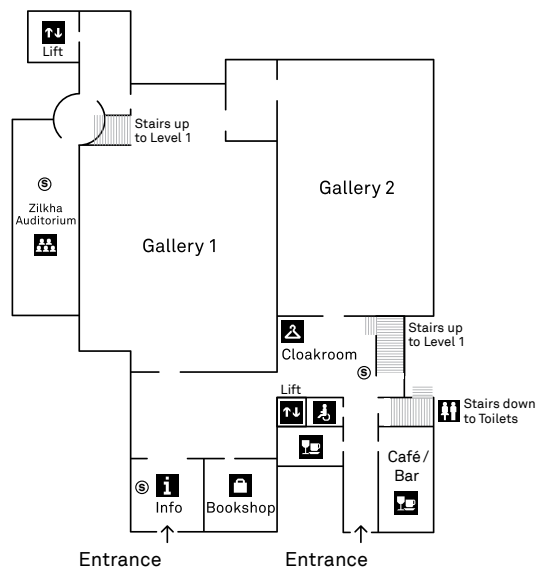
This resource has been put together by the Whitechapel Gallery's Education Department to introduce teachers to each season of exhibitions and new commissions at the Gallery. It explores key themes within the main exhibition to support self-directed visits. Key words and themes are box highlighted throughout this resource to support self-led visits in the Gallery and work in the classroom.

Whitechapel Gallery Map

Level 1



Ground Floor



Exhibition

The Production Line of Happiness: Christopher Williams:

29 April–21 June 2015

Galleries 1, 8 & 9 (Victor Petitgas Gallery)

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Themes: Photography, Composition, Colour, Disruption

Somewhere between a film director, a picture editor and an art historian, American artist **Christopher Williams** (b.1956) investigates photography as the defining medium of modernism.

Williams' exquisite prints reveal the unexpected beauty and cultural resonance of commercial, industrial and instructional photography. Often working with set designers, models and technicians, Williams' technically precise pictures recall Cold War era imagery and 1960s advertising, as well as invoking histories of art, photography and cinema. Closer inspection reveals that flaws and aberrations which would usually be removed in production or postproduction, such as a model's dirty feet or a bruise on a ripe apple, remain in the final images.

This is the first survey of Williams' work in the UK. The Whitechapel Gallery exhibition is the third realisation following shows at The Art Institute of Chicago and MoMA. It brings together over 50 photographs from Williams' 35-year career. Christopher Williams photographs are elements at play in a larger system including architecture, exhibition design, books, posters, videos, vitrines and signage that investigates the stage sets of the art world and the publicity structures on which they rely. The photographs are displayed in an architectural installation specially conceived by the artist and inspired by histories of display. Temporary walls come from art institutions in the Rheinland region of Germany, where Williams currently lives and works and are both a reference to and a partial reprisal of a 2009 exhibition at the Bonner Kunstverein made in collaboration with Austrian artist **Mathias Poledna**.

For this project Williams has installed vibrant green stripes in the foyer and throughout the galleries that are inspired by the brand colour of Fuji film and a work of art by **Daniel Buren** (a photograph of which is in Gallery 1). The green partially covers previous signage for *Adventures of the Black Square*, an exhibition Williams is very interested in as he sees his exhibition as an abstraction. He wants visitors to see the exhibition without any text, so there are no signs or interpretation panels, but there are season guide leaflets for all our spring shows and a green hand out with floorplan available in the small reading room between galleries 1 and 2. The Visitor Services team are welcoming every visitor and Gallery Assistants are encouraged to engage with visitors about the exhibition. The photographs also have quite a low hanging height, partly to slow the pace in which visitors experience the work and encouraging people to go towards the pictures.

Exhibition highlights include:

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Five new works never seen before in the UK, including a pristine image of a broken Citroen car headlight and a photograph of a cockerel (Gallery 1).



Williams' renowned 1989 studies of botanical specimens, Angola to Vietnam (in Gallery 9).



The hyper-real, colour saturated studies of kitchenware made in 2014 (in Gallery 1).

The Production Line of Happiness: Christopher Williams

The exhibition can be seen as operating in four key areas: Walls, Words, Pictures and Lessons.

Walls

The exhibition starts outside the Gallery space with large green vinyl panels. The green monochrome is the green of the Fuji film brand and references artists **David Batchelor** and **Daniel Buren**.

The exhibition is hung anti-chronologically.

The blue wall in Gallery 8 is recycled from **Doug Ashford's** installation in the previous exhibition *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915-2015*

Words

The book 'Printed in Germany' is a book with no text, no language and the words 'printed in Germany' are a legal requirement.

The exhibition can be seen as a visual essay on walls, signage and print.

Notice the absence of the artists name throughout the exhibition.

Lessons

Williams started working with photography in 1979 in reaction to the experimental photographic contemporaries– **Barbara Kruger, Jeff Wall, Louise Lawler, Dan Graham** and **Robert Smithson**.

The walls reference the walls that were specially constructed in the Whitechapel Gallery for the first UK exhibition of **Jackson Pollock** in 1958 and **Mark Rothko** in 1961.

Pictures

Film and cinema are referenced throughout the exhibition.

The exhibition takes its name from a line in a documentary by French director **Jean-Luc Godard**, in which an amateur filmmaker compares his daily job as a factory worker with his hobby of editing his films of the Swiss countryside as "the production line of happiness."

Disrupting and critiquing the rules of photographic convention, for example: the white borders surrounding the photographs in the frames are too big, height, layout on walls, non-pristine walls.

The subject matter of Williams' work references objects found in everyday life, commercial advertising and early Pop Art; 'Headlights' – **Richard Hamilton**, 'Tyre' – **Roy Lichtenstein**, 'Socks' – **Sigmund Polke**, 'Green Stripes' – **Daniel Buren**.

Questions

Colour is very important in Williams's work. What thoughts and feelings are associated with certain colours?

What happens if we change the colour of objects? For example, if you changed the colour of traffic lights to blue, pink and white? Would you eat a green sandwich?

Christopher Williams name isn't on display anywhere throughout the exhibition, or even on the catalogue. Why do you think he has chosen to do this? Do you think it's important to use your name on work that you do? Why?

Photography Failures – what makes a bad photograph? What makes a good photograph? Take some 'bad' photographs, identify what makes them not so successful, improve them and turn them into 'good' photographs.

Useful links for further reading;

<http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/christopher-williams/>

<http://artforum.com/words/id=47543>

<http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/as-we-speak/>

Cyanotype Workshop

This practical activity was developed by artist **Felicity Hammond** and is suitable for students of all ages (KS1 – KS5). It is a simple, inexpensive way of introducing your students to a new medium, expanding their understanding of photographic techniques



Photo Credit, Sam Ayre

You will need:

Paper, Glue, Black Marker Pen, Magazine, Plastic Wallet, Cyanotype Paper and a sunny day!

Cyanotype is a photographic print process used by engineers in the early 20th century to make large scale, inexpensive reproductions of drawings. It consists of photosensitive chemicals and reacts to sunlight. This process is where the term 'blueprint' comes from. Today blueprints are made digitally and the process of cyanotype is a medium for making art.

Step 1

Ask yourself these two questions:
What do you want?
What do you need?

Step 2

What are the differences? What are the similarities? Are there any items/objects that you both 'want and 'need'?

Step 3

Make a collage on A4 paper of items you 'want' from magazines. Pay special attention to the

composition of your collage; try different arrangements before sticking them down on the paper.

Step 4

Put your collage into a plastic wallet and use a black marker pen to trace the outlines of it to create an abstract drawing.

Step 5 (outside or in the sunlight)

Take the collage out of the wallet, take the cyanotype paper out of the special 'dark bag' it's in and place it inside the plastic wallet. The moment the paper is exposed to sunlight it starts the process, so make sure you're quick!

Step 6

Hold everything really still! Make sure the sun is on it, expose for 3-6 minutes depending on how sunny it is.

Step 7

Keep the exposed cyanotype paper out of direct sunlight once you've exposed it. Run the cyanotype paper under water until the image disappears - this stops it exposing. Leave to dry and you're done!

Events

Teachers' Preview, Thursday 7th May, 5–7pm (Free)

Teachers' Workshop, 21st May, 4.30–6.30pm (Free)

Walls Words Pictures Lessons Talk Fri 1 May, 3–6pm (£8.50/£6.50 conc.)

Chisato Minamimura on Christopher Williams Tour Thurs 21 May, 7.30pm (Free, booking required)
For Deaf Visitors, with Audio Interpretation

Family Day: The Factory of Images Workshop Sat 30 May, 12–4pm (free)

Mark Godfrey on Christopher Williams Tour Thurs 4 June, 7pm (Free)

Crib Notes: Christopher Williams Tour Weds 10 June, 10am–12pm (£5, includes refreshments)

Cally Spooner Talk Thurs 11 June, 7pm (£10.50/£8.50 conc.)

Film: Walls Words Pictures Lessons Film Sat 13 June, 1–6pm (£10.50/£8.50 conc.)

To book visit <http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/events/>

Commission

Max Mara Art Prize For Women: Corin Sworn

20 May–19 July 2015

Gallery 2

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Costume sketches at the headquarters of Max Mara, Reggio Emilia, December 2015,
Photo : Courtesy Max Mara/Collezione Maramotti

Corin Sworn's new work is inspired by the characters and tales of mistaken identity from the Italian Commedia dell'Arte theatre, performed from the 16th century by touring troupes. These plays and vagabond actors influenced Shakespeare and artists from Goya to Picasso. Sworn's installation uses performative and theatrical devices – props, lighting and costumes – to retell an infamous story of deception and imposture.

Sworn (b. 1976) lives in Glasgow and is the latest winner of the Max Mara Art Prize for Women, which nurtures female artists based in the UK in making a new work of art following an Italian residency. The judges included Director **Iwona Blazwick**, artist **Runa Islam**, gallerist **Pilar Corrias**, collector **Candida Gertler** and curator **Lisa Le Feuvre**.

Collection

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye selects from the V-A-C Collection: Natures, Natural and Unnatural

17 March–14 June 2015

Gallery 7

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Themes: Nature, Painting, Still Life, Human Nature

Painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (b. 1977) chooses art inspired by nature for this spring display from the V-A-C collection, Moscow. The exhibition is part of the Whitechapel Gallery's programme opening up rarely seen collections from around the world. Yiadom-Boakye is a Turner Prize nominated contemporary artist renowned for her oil paintings of people conjured from her imagination, drawings and scrapbooks of found images.

She says: 'The works that I was drawn to in the V-A-C Collection, or really caught my eye, all had a link to nature or still life or, a combination of the two. The title of the display refers to the idea of nature, and the different types of nature – the nature you walk out into in the wilderness, nature that you bring into the house, human nature, people interacting with nature and also the nature within a person. I wanted to think about all of those things in the selection'



David Hockney, 30 Sunflowers (1996) Oil on canvas © David Hockney. Photo Credit: Richard Schmidt

Exhibition highlights include:

- Russian artist **Aristarkh Lentulov** links 'the natural' with the avant garde in his futurist masterpiece of naked Bathers (1910) which pulsates with raw energy.
- Contemporary Russian artist **Nikolay Bakharev** who persuaded bathers at the seaside to pose for him under the trees. Dappled skin, swimwear and foliage combine to create elegiac black and white photographs.
- US Pop artist **Andy Warhol's** transformation of a cow from an ad for dairy products into a silkscreened icon.
- UK artist **David Hockney's** dazzling painting of vases of hot-house sunflowers.
- British painter **Peter Doig** conjures from memory the eerie splendour of Ontario pine forests.
- **Jan Toomik** dances in front of his father's grave in his native Estonian woodland to the soundtrack of Jimi Hendrix' Voodoo Child evoking the lost wilds of youth in this multi-dimensional exploration of human and organic nature.

Archive

A Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis

21 April–4 October 2015

Pat Matthews Gallery (Gallery 4)

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Themes: Performance, Theatre, Progressive, Iran, Trans-national

The ancient Persian ruins of Persepolis were a spectacular backdrop for 'one of the most adventurous and idiosyncratic festivals in the world' (Artforum). The Festival of Arts was held around Shiraz, Iran every summer from 1967–1977.

A melting pot of traditional and avant-garde music, theatre and performance, the festival featured artists from both East and West, including the Beatles' muse, sitar player **Ravi Shankar** and American composer **John Cage**, alongside Rwandan drummers and Balinese Gamelan musicians and dancers. Orghast, a play by poet **Ted Hughes** and **Mahin Tajadod**, co-directed by **Peter Brook**, was staged, while **Merce Cunningham**'s dancers performed calisthenics among the ruins of Persepolis. The festival came to an end with the Iranian revolution, but is now brought to life through this display of archive film and photographs, original theatre programmes and posters seen for the first time in the UK.

An outcome of significant research, this exhibition retraces documents and records related to the Festival of Arts and reconstructs the spaces and network of ideas that shaped its original curatorial direction. The Festival juxtaposed performances ranging from intimacy to ritual, archaic to contemporary, folkloristic to experimental, satirical to subversive; equally considering the value of cultural expressions of Asia, Africa, Europe and America.

Divided into six sections Theatre and Ritual, Year of Percussion, Local Context, 1972, A Transnational Experimental Network and Asian Dance and Dance Drama, the exhibition looks at the shifting structure of the Festival and its radical cultural model from the periphery to the centre. Formed by rare archive material seen for the first time in the UK, including film, photographs and printed matter such as original theatre programmes and posters, it presents the vision of the Festival and preserves its legacy for contemporary audiences.



Credit line: Courtesy of Stockhausen Foundation for Music, Kürten

Events:

Retracing a Utopian
Stage Talk Thurs
28 May, 7pm
(£8.50/£6.50 conc.)

Project

Peter Liversidge: Notes on Protesting

17 March–14 June 2015

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

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Themes: Protest, Rules, Performance, Collaboration



Notes on Protesting, rehearsal at Marion Richardson School, London, April 2014, cotton, iron on, cardboard and wood © Peter Liversidge

Inspired by ideas around demonstration and protest, British artist **Peter Liversidge** (b.1973) worked with sixty children on a performance staged at the Whitechapel Gallery on May Day 2014. Together they created songs, choreography, banners and placards which expressed their views on everything from 'No more homework' and 'Our shoes are too tight' to 'I don't like cooked tomatoes' and 'Less trucks and cars. More chocolate bars!'

This exhibition presents a film of the performance, alongside documentation of the workshops and rehearsals. Over four months Liversidge worked closely with children aged 8 to 9 years old from the **Marion Richardson Primary School** in east London to discuss community, commonly held ideas and the power of a collective voice.



Notes on Protesting, restaging 1st may 2015 at Whitechapel Gallery, Mischa Haller

Events:

Notes on Protesting
Performance Friday
1st May, 12pm (Free)

Artists' Film International

Anatoly Shuravlev, Tran Luong, Vahap Avşar

29 April–14 July 2015
Zilkha Auditorium

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Themes: Politics, Demonstration

This season of artists' film and video from around the world explores the theme of conflict. It includes: Russian-born, Berlin-based artist **Anatoly Shuravlev's** *Panic* (2011) sees the artist shooting at the walls of a white cube gallery. It represents his violent demonstration against the blank conformity of exhibition spaces.

Vietnamese artist **Tran Luong's** *Lập Lòè / Welts* (2012) is derived from a performance that began in 2007 in which the artist invites an audience to flick his body with a red scarf, an item of historical and political significance associated with Communism.

Vahap Avşar's *Road to Arguvan* (2013) is filmed in the artist's native Malatya Province, Turkey. It follows a road destroyed by unknown forces, leaving a long jagged rift that renders the road, which was once a major route to the east of the country, seemingly useless.



2013, *Road to Arguvan*, single channel video, 00.02.18 (videostill 3),
Sanatçının ve Rampa'nın izniyle / Courtesy the Artist and Rampa

We encourage schools to visit the gallery Tuesday to 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 whitechapelgallery.org

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