



Teachers Pack

IDA KAR

BOHEMIAN PHOTOGRAPHER

Portraits of Artists from Paris, London and St. Ives
in collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery
26 January 2013 to 13 April 2013

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The aim of this pack is to provide a way to look at, learn from, and engage with the various portraits and artworks on display in the **Ida Kar: Portraits of Artists from Paris, London and St Ives** exhibition.

Elements of this pack can support your visit to the exhibition, and can also be adapted for use in the classroom pre- or post- visit.

Please refer to page 13 for guidance on how to book a visit.

Who was Ida Kar?

Ida Kar was born in 1908, in Tambov, near Moscow.

Kar was influenced by the Paris avant-garde whilst studying there in 1928. She had met the German surrealist painter and photographer Heinrich Heidersberger whilst living there, and made her very first experiments in photography alongside him. Through Heidersberger, Kar also met a wide range of artists and writers living on the Left Bank (La Rive Gauche). After a move to Cairo to establish her first photographic studio with her husband Edmond Belali, Kar exhibited surrealist photography in the Egyptian capital. Following a divorce from Belali, Kar met and married the British writer, artist, and publisher Victor Musgrave. In 1945, Kar and Musgrave moved to London, setting up a studio, and working for a number of galleries in the city.

Commissions from magazines such as Tatler followed, and Kar's reputation grew. In 1960 Ida Kar became the first photographer to have a retrospective exhibition at a major London art gallery.

Despite receiving public and critical acclaim from her contemporaries, Ida Kar remains surprisingly little known.

Ida Kar was instrumental in encouraging the acceptance of photography as a fine art. Her subjects were the most celebrated figures from the literary and artistic spheres of 1950s and 1960s Europe and Russia. They include artists such as Henry Moore, George Braque, Gino Severini and Bridget Riley and writers such as Iris Murdoch and Jean-Paul Sartre.

In 1999 the National Portrait Gallery purchased the complete surviving Ida Kar Archive, which comprises eight hundred photographic prints, ten thousand negatives, four hundred vintage contact prints, exhibition catalogues, correspondence, press cuttings and the ownership of Ida Kar's copyright.

To see work by these photographers in the National Portrait Gallery Collection and over 1000 works by Ida Kar now catalogued see www.npg.org.uk/collections.php

Paris

Alberto Giacometti
Man Ray
Jean Arp
Marc Chagall
Gino Severini
Le Corbusier
Georges Braque
André Breton
Fernand Léger

London

Yves Klein
Henry Moore
Sir Stanley Spencer
Reg Butler
Kenneth Armitage
John Bratby
Graham Sutherland
Sandra Blow
Francis Newton Souza
John Piper
Ivon Hitchens
Keith Vaughan
Bridget Riley
Jacob Epstein

St Ives

Bernard Leach
Barbara Hepworth
Peter Lanyon
Patrick Heron
John Milne
Terry Frost
Monica Wynter (the artist Bryan Wynter's wife)
Denis Mitchell
Roger Hilton



Yves Klein
by Ida Kar
2 1/4 inch square film negative, 1957
Purchased, 1999
NPG x132962

Yves Klein (1928 – 1962) was a French artist, most commonly associated with his monochrome paintings in International Klein Blue (IKB), a colour he was able to patent. In this image, Ida Kar has photographed Klein next to one of his sponge sculptures at his first UK exhibition, at her husband Victor Musgrave's Gallery One in London. The exhibition *Monochrome Propositions of Yves Klein* included paintings and sculpture, all made with the IKB colour. The sponge behind Klein in this image would have been used as a tool to make the larger paintings on display, and is soaked in the paint. Klein saved these sponges, and mounted them on stones found in his parent's garden.

"Thanks to the sponges - living, savage material - I was able to make portraits of the readers of my monochromes who, after having seen, after having travelled in the blue of my paintings, come back totally impregnated in sensibility like the sponges" - Yves Klein

Klein also made work in a number of different colours and mediums – pink, yellow, orange, gold leaf – and with a variety of techniques – painted sculpture, using the human body as a brush, photomontage, and flame throwers. The National Portrait Gallery has the original contact sheet in their collection with this image included on it. Try searching for **NPG x134822** on their website to see other images from the sequence.

Activity

In this photograph, the artist is shown in front of a work of art in a gallery context. He is not in his studio. In fact, we see nothing of the artist below his shoulders, and his head shoulders obscure the view of the sculpture behind. How many other examples of this 'framing' of head and shoulders can you find in the exhibition? 'Head Shots' are common in theatre and film to publicise the actor or actress. Why might a photographer choose to frame an artist in such a way? Why wouldn't they necessarily want to show the entire artwork and figure? How might this be articulated when we discuss as a group?



Bridget Riley
by Ida Kar
2 1/4 inch square film negative, 1963
Purchased, 1999
NPG x127158

Bridget Riley (born 1931) is an artist associated with 'op-art' in the early 1960s. Her early work was influenced by impressionism and pointillism, and was focused on depictions of landscape. She evolved a style from this work that explored the use of optics and optical illusion, hence 'op-art'. The work was often unsettling or disorientating, using finely modulated passages of black and white in the early 1960s, and later with colour. Many paintings use a curve to give the appearance of a surface in flux, such as *Fall*, 1963, from the Tate collection. This painting was purchased from her exhibition at Victor Musgrave's Gallery One exhibition in 1963. When discussing this work, Riley has said:

"I try to organise a field of visual energy which accumulates until it reaches maximum tension"

In the image included in this show, Riley is photographed posing in front of a painted wall in an area of the gallery. The National Portrait Gallery has the original contact sheet in their collection with this image included on it. Try searching for **NPG x134209** on their website to see other images from this sequence.

Activity

Again, the photographer has chosen to depict the artist in front of her work in a gallery context. Once more the photographer has cropped the artist's body in an unusual way – this time with one arm raised above her head. How does this approach to the composition of a photograph relate to the compositions in Bridget Riley's paintings – are there any similarities? Riley's paintings on the early 60s were groundbreaking – could this photograph have been taken at any other time? What does this context tell us about the art world in the early 1960s?



Barbara Hepworth at work on the armature
of a sculpture

by Ida Kar
vintage bromide print, 1961
9 7/8 in. x 10 in. (250 mm x 253 mm)
Purchased, 1999
NPG x88502

Barbara Hepworth (1903 – 1975) was an artist most commonly associated with the development of abstraction in British artistic practice, and with the artists living and working in-and-around St Ives, Cornwall. Among many other achievements, Hepworth became a member of the 7 and 5 Society in the 1930s, and through membership met her future husband Ben Nicholson. Their work developed rapidly during the 30s, and they were able to forge strong links with an international avant-garde of artists - Arp, Brancusi, Mondrian, Braque and Picasso among others, many of whom are included in this exhibition. During WWII, Hepworth and Nicholson moved to Carbis Bay, Cornwall, to escape the bombings in London. They were able to convince Naum Gabo and his wife to also move to the South West, meaning that some of the most important practitioners of abstraction were now based in Cornwall. Hepworth secured a huge number of public commissions during her lifetime, including **Single Form**, 1961-4, installed outside the United Nations Building in New York.

This photograph shows Hepworth in her studio with an armature for a sculpture. This armature would have most likely covered in plaster, and then worked into a sculptural form. This plaster form would then have been used to make a cast in bronze. The photo was taken during a visit to St Ives by Ida Kar, who was commissioned to photograph the artists working in-and-around town by Tatler magazine.

Activity

Here, the artist is shown in her studio, seemingly at work on a sculpture. Yet, we know that this photograph is posed, as there are many images of Hepworth from the same session in the National Portrait Gallery collection, even posing with different sculptures and in different contexts. We also know that the photos from the 'Le Quartier St Ives' were commissioned by Tatler to document the daily life of artists working in the town. In this photograph, Hepworth's body is obscured by the armature for a sculpture. What can we deduce from this? What is this photograph trying to tell us? What does it tell us about St Ives at that time?

After visiting **Ida Kar: Portraits of Artists from Paris, London and St Ives** at the City Museum and Art Gallery, why not explore photography in the classroom?

There are a number of different ways of doing this. If your school has dark room facilities, you could explore the creation of images using a range of photographic processes. If your school does not have a dark room, you can explore photography through digital images.

Analogue Photography

The term 'analogue photography' usually refers to photography that uses traditional techniques for creating images. Usually the processes involve film or plate-based photography, and make use of chemical developers. Some techniques require supervision from staff with experience in this area, and would be tricky to achieve without that experience. Other techniques can be learnt very easily, and attempted in the classroom. Ask your colleagues if they have any experience in this area.

Because of the difficult and more time consuming nature of analogue photography, it has once again began to find appeal with artists and amateurs alike – plastic cameras such as models of Holga and Diana are once again being produced, and professional medium format film cameras such as those made by Rolleiflex (used by Ida Kar) and Hasselblad are now incredibly valuable.

Camera Obscura

Materials:

Black fabric/ sugar paper/ bin liners
Black card to make the aperture
Different sized circular objects to draw around
Masking tape and black electrical tape
Scissors
Projection screens/ white fabric (if necessary)

Making your classroom into a camera obscura is a very easy thing to do. The term 'camera obscura' (Latin; camera for "vaulted chamber/room", obscura for "dark", together "darkened chamber/room") is used to describe an optical device, very similar to a camera. Camera obscuras were used by artists for many years before the development of photography, to make detailed drawings from projections of the real world. These devices were usually made into boxes with lens and mirrors, to project a scene onto the artist's drawing paper.

Your camera obscura does not need to be in a box - your classroom is your box! As long as you have a window (with a view) in a room that can be made very dark, you can make a camera obscura.

1. Start by finding the middle of your window(s). This can be achieved by measuring diagonally, and making a mark on piece of masking tape stuck to the window.
2. Block the light from all windows in the classroom using the black fabric/ paper/ bin liners, using the electrical tape to attach them to the window frames. We use black electrical tape to avoid sticky marks on window frames. Any sticky residue can be cleared away afterwards.
3. Leave an area the same size as your black card to attach the aperture to the window. Attach a blank piece of card to the window, so you can test the room for light-leaks.
4. If you have internal windows/ glazed doors, these also need covering. Try and use white paper/ fabric if you need to cover these, as the image will almost certainly be projected onto them.
5. Cut a variety of circular apertures on different pieces of card. Which sized aperture do the class think will perform the best?
6. Clear away any extraneous posters/ wall coverings in the classroom. White/ pale walls always work better than dark walls.
7. Starting with the largest aperture, test each one to see which produces the best image in the room. If you can see an image of the landscape outside your window projected onto the walls of your classroom, congratulations – you've made a camera obscura!

We have made our own camera obscura here at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, and can book your group in for a facilitated visit to use it. Please refer to the 'How to Book a Visit' section of this document for more information. Have a look at our Flickr galleries to see our progress:

Camera Obscura 2011 -

www.flickr.com/photos/plymouthmuseums/sets/72157626481250622/

Camera Obscura 2012 -

www.flickr.com/photos/plymouthmuseums/sets/72157631888069887/

Make a Pinhole Camera

Making your own pinhole camera is also very easy, requiring a little patience and some forward planning. We have made a simple, downloadable step-by-step guide to making a pinhole camera on our Education Resources page (www.plymouth.gov.uk/pinhole_camera.pdf). Cameras can be made from most cardboard boxes, drinks cans, metal paint cans – almost any light-tight container you can think of. Have a look online for other guides to making drinks can cameras; there are a vast number of resources available.

Essentially, in creating a pinhole camera, you are remaking a much smaller version of the camera obscura above. The main difference is that the intention of making a pinhole camera is to capture an image on photographic paper. This requires a certain amount of resources to be purchased before making the camera, all of which are listed in the downloadable resource.

Once you have assembled your cameras, we are going to attempt to create portrait photographs in the classroom. To do this, you will need a brightly lit room to work in, and some patient photographers/ sitters!

1. Ask the sitter to think about how they would like to be photographed. Remember the example of Ida Kar's images of Yves Klein and Barbara Hepworth, being photographed with objects/ artworks that the sitter has made. Work in pairs, with each person becoming a photographer and sitter at the same time.
2. Strong lighting will help. If you have a lamp in the classroom, use it to help light the face of the sitter.
3. As the process of taking the photograph is different to a normal camera, the pinhole camera will have to be left in position for a long time, so the subject really does need to sit still! Try 2 minute, 5 minute, 10 minute, and, if you can, 20 minute poses. Very early plate cameras would have needed a similar amount of time to make an image – can you imagine every photo taken today needing that long?
4. Once you have taken, developed, and scanned your images your images, print them out and create an exhibition of your portrait photos in school. How do they compare to Ida Kar's photographs?
5. How does the inclusion of objects/ artworks in their photographs help to instigate a discussion around how meanings and values are conveyed?

Digital Photography

Digital photography is the most common form of photography we use today. Digital photography has become more and more affordable and convenient over the last few years – these days, many people have access to digital cameras on their mobile phone, tablet or computer – you can even buy digital camera key rings. The rise of Instagram and Hipstamatic, two digital camera apps for smart phones that create analogue-style photographs, suggest that a cross-over appeal between analogue and digital is beginning to take place.

Digital/ Analogue

Using Instagram or Hipstamatic as a starting point, we are going to create our own portraits using digital cameras. Most schools have a stock of equipment that students can use, including cameras, tripods, flash guns, and editing software. The minimum equipment needed for this exercise is a camera and Adobe Photoshop.

Essentially, the apps take a standard digital photograph, and apply a pre-determined filter to it to give the impression of a 'vintage' photograph. Using Photoshop to edit their own photographs allows the student to have a much greater control over their image.

1. Ask your students to take digital portrait photographs of their classmates, or if you have access to a mirror, self portraits.
2. Think of the photographs by Ida Kar that the students will have seen – is a snapshot taken of their classmates/ themselves still acceptable? Can we use Ida Kar's examples to adapt and refine our photography?
3. Use the Crop tool in Photoshop to crop the image to a square format. You can hold the shift key down while using the crop tool to keep the image square. This will give us a simulated medium format image.
4. Ask the students to select their best image – it may not always be their favourite. Why is this critical thinking around the selection of their image important? This image will now form the basis for transformation through filtering.

We are now going to try and change the image through using a variety of processes in Photoshop:

1. File: Open: your image
2. Image: Adjustments: Brightness/Contrast: increase contrast by 30
3. Image: Adjustments: Hue/Saturation: increase saturation by 30
4. Choose the Rectangular Marquee Tool (your basic selection tool)
5. Change feather amount to 1/12 the width of your picture (if your picture is 600px wide then you will set your feather to 50px)
6. Select your entire picture note: using select: all, will not work
7. Right click - Select: Inverse
8. Layer: New: Layer
9. Change your primary colour to black.
10. Right Click - Fill the selection (on the new, blank layer).
11. Right Click the layer - Change the blend mode of this layer to Overlay
12. Layer: Duplicate Layer

13. Now select your base layer (the one with the picture on it).
14. Layer: New: Layer
15. Change your fill tool to Gradient
16. Change your Gradient Type to Spherical (in the toolbar above the image)
17. Change your Gradient Shading Style to "foreground to transparent" (I believe this is the default).
18. Change your primary color to white.
19. With the fill tool selected, click in the middle of the picture, and drag the line out to the farthest edge of your picture (if it's a portrait, use top or bottom, if landscape, use left or right).
20. Change the blend mode of this layer to Overlay
21. Change the Opacity of this layer to 80%

This is a really simple way of altering the look of a digital image to look 'vintage'. You can also play around with other approaches by searching for, among others, digital sepia photographs, tilt-shifting, or enhanced saturation in Photoshop on Google.

Inverted colours

One of the most interesting tools in Photoshop is 'Invert'. Open any image, and click on Image: Adjustments: Invert, to see how this tool works.

To begin with, use a colour image:

1. File: Open: your image
2. Choose the Paint Bucket Tool
3. Change your primary colour to black
4. Click on an area of the image to fill it with black
5. Change your primary colour to red
6. Click on another area of the image to fill it with red
7. Change your primary colour to green
8. Click on another area of the image to fill it with green

Before inverting the image, what colours do your students think the black, red and green will 'invert' to on screen?

Try using a variety of colour and black and white images to invert. Also, use tools such as 'Posterize' and 'Threshold' to adjust the look and feel of your photographs. Search for tutorials on how to select foreground elements of your image, such as the face of a sitter, and invert only the background.

We are able to offer schools various options when visiting the exhibition. Visits can be arranged for anywhere between **one class** to an **entire school**. In many cases, a member of staff can be present to facilitate your visit. We are also very happy for you to visit as a self-directed group.

The exhibition provides a perfect opportunity for your pupils to experience nationally significant art first hand – and will act as a starting point for working in sketchbooks, fact finding, and talking about the themes that surround the exhibition.

How to book a visit

Booking in advance is essential for visits

We want to ensure your group has the best experience possible when visiting, so please remember to contact us first before organising your trip. We are very popular with schools, colleges and other user groups, so our galleries can get very busy from time to time.

For enquiries for school visits, contact **museumvisits@plymouth.gov.uk**. Please have a range of possible dates available before contacting us, as it may not always be possible to offer you your first choice date.

Please remember to bring along sketchbooks and pencils for your visit, as wet materials, and also dusty materials will not be permitted in the exhibition galleries. If you have any questions regarding materials, please contact us using the email above.

Further resources

Many of our previous Teachers Packs, Notes, and Resources are available as PDF downloads from our website www.plymouth.gov.uk/museumlearningresources.htm



in collaboration with

**National
Portrait
Gallery**



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