Learning Through Exhibitions
A resource for teachers and community leaders

Phyllida Barlow
27 June – 18 October 2015

The Fruitmarket Gallery


45 Market Street, Edinburgh
Mon–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 12–5pm
Entry to our exhibitions is always free
Learning Through Exhibitions  
A resource for teachers and community leaders

The Learning Through Exhibitions series helps schools and community groups to explore exhibitions before, during and after a visit to The Fruitmarket Gallery. They can also be used for arts activities at any time alongside our other resources documenting the exhibition. The series suggests ways to think with and through art and be inspired to make it. Creative Challenges are open-ended and adaptable to any age group.

**Art forms:** creative writing, drawing, painting, sculpture  
**Themes:** materials, the everyday, the outside environment, recycling, scale, space  
**Activities support Curriculum for Excellence levels 0-4:** Expressive Arts, Literacy, Religious and Moral Education, Social Studies

The Learning Through Exhibitions series can be downloaded from www.fruitmarket.co.uk.  
**Group visits are free** and include an introduction to the exhibition and a copy of the current Learning Through Exhibitions resource.

**Exhibition:** Phyllida Barlow: set  
**Date:** 27 June – 18 October 2015

A major exhibition of new work made specially for The Fruitmarket Gallery by Phyllida Barlow, one of the international art world’s brightest stars. Born in Newcastle in 1944, and with a career spanning five decades, Barlow is known for monumental sculpture made from simple materials such as plywood, cardboard, fabric, plaster, paint and plastic. Physically impressive and materially insistent, her sculptures are inspired by the outside world, and with the experience of living and looking. Barlow’s exhibition sets out, in her own words, to ‘turn the Gallery upside down’. A new series of large sculptures engulf The Fruitmarket Gallery in art, spilling from the upper gallery over the staircase and into the ground floor, enticing the visitor from the street and into a new world.
Thinking with art

Use the guide below to introduce your group to ideas around the artwork in the exhibition before a visit to the Gallery or starting your own project. Activities suggest ways to think about and make abstract art through the experience of objects, materials and the outside world.

- Make a viewfinder with your hands or cut a hole in a piece of paper. Look through the viewfinder and draw what you see in the frame. Focus on lines, shapes, textures and the spaces in between objects or forms.

- Collect everyday objects e.g. cereal boxes, clothing, packaging, plastic bags. Look at the materials and form rather than the function of the object. What colours do you see? What shapes do the objects make?

- Photograph objects or forms you see outside that catch your interest e.g. a fence, a bin, a traffic cone. Discuss your images as a group. What have you chosen to focus on, and why?

- Observe your surroundings around the home, school or outside and keep a descriptive diary for a week. What catches your interest? It could be the shape or feel of an object or form, what you see out of the window, the fall of light, the feeling of the weather or a tree you see every day. Try making quick notes and be as descriptive and imaginative as you can. What do your observations and experiences remind you of? How do they make you feel? What colours do you see?
Look and Respond

The guide below helps you explore the artworks in the exhibition. It can also be used alongside resources documenting the exhibition.

- Walk around the exhibition and draw the path you take on a piece of paper. Compare these as a group.
- Sketch different points of view as you move around the sculptures.
- Look at how the sculptures are made and displayed. How are forms fixed together? How do they stand up? How did they get into the gallery?
- What materials are used? Are they hard or soft, heavy or light?
- Look at how paint, plaster and cement have been applied to the sculptures. What types of marks do you see? How have they been made? What do colour and changes in types of materials add to the artwork?
- How do the sculptures relate to the space and architecture of the gallery – the floor, ceiling, walls and staircase - and how do they change it?
- What is the effect of the scale of the artwork in relation to your body, and to other visitors moving around the gallery?
- What relationship do you think the large sculpture stockade in the upper gallery has to the sculptures downstairs?
- What artworks can you find in the bookshop and café? What do they remind you of? What is their effect in being displayed outside the gallery spaces?
- Look at the titles of the artworks. How does this add to or change your encounter with them?
Creative Challenges

These creative challenges use participants’ own ideas and artistic responses to the exhibition to make new abstract drawing and sculpture.

Barlow takes inspiration from the outside world, and her work has associations with events that disrupt the natural order of things and impact on humanity: wreck and ruin, triumph and disaster, history and the present. She also takes inspiration from the experience of living and looking, noticing forms, shapes and colours of everyday objects, materials and her surroundings.

Choose a theme you’re interested in exploring. It could be a subject, idea or political issue; the feeling of a place or space; or an exploration of form, shape and materials. Use Thinking with art for inspiration, and Tips to develop ideas.

1. Draw

Use a range of materials to draw shapes, forms, colours and textures to explore your theme, rather than attempting to make a direct visual representation of it. Use a variety of techniques and try working on a large and small scale, and on different types of paper, card or wood.
2. Make

Collect found and recycled materials. Discuss their shape, texture and weight and combine them to make a small sculpture without thinking too much about what it is to become. Think about how to connect materials together and how your sculpture will stand up, hang, balance, lean or sit when it’s displayed. What do the materials look like now? What does your sculpture appear to be doing?

Tips

- Be experimental and playful. Work quickly and roughly – don’t worry about being too neat or precise.

- Try a range of different drawing materials – pastel, charcoal, acrylic, watercolour, different ways of making marks – crosshatch, scribble, smear, rub, collage, and different ways of applying materials to a surface – ruler, hands, rags, brushes. Experiment and combine techniques in your drawing and sculpture.

- Collect found or recycled materials to make sculpture – card, paper, tape, twigs, wire mesh, stones, fabric, string, plastic bags, polystyrene, bandages. Think about contrasts in materials and their combined effect – hard/soft, heavy/light, inside/outside.

- Barlow uses colour to differentiate between one surface and another, emphasising different planes, surfaces and changes in direction. Think about your choice and use of colour, and how it enhances the forms and shapes you make.

- Make drawings to plan sculptures, and as a record of what you’ve made.

- Title your work. Try using adjectives that relate to your theme, the experience you want to create or sense of materials you’re using.
3. Scale

Plan or make a large-scale installation for a specific space. You could fill a room with a sculpture made from painted or collaged cardboard or plan an ambitious piece on a larger scale. Think about how your work responds to the space. What is the feel of the space? What are the walls, floors and ceilings like? What is the light like? Is there a feature or features you want to work with or against? How do you want the viewer to experience the work? Do you want them to walk around the installation, or see it from above or below? For temporary installations, think about how you will document and recycle your sculpture at the end of its life.

Phyllida Barlow, Shedmesh, 1976
Installation view: Camden Arts Centre, London
General Questions

What is The Fruitmarket Gallery?
The Fruitmarket Gallery is an art gallery funded by the taxpayer displaying exhibitions of work that are not for sale. The Gallery brings the work of some of the world’s most important contemporary artists to Scotland. We recognise that art can change lives and we offer an intimate encounter with art for free. The Gallery welcomes all audiences and makes it easy for everyone to engage with art. Gallery facilities include a bookshop and café. The Gallery is physically accessible and family-friendly.

What is contemporary art?
Contemporary art is the term used to describe art of the present day. It is art that has been or continues to be created during our lifetimes from the 1960s to the present.

What is abstract art?
Abstract art uses shapes, forms, colours and textures to achieve an effect rather than attempting to make a direct visual representation of something recognisable.

What is installation art?
Installation art can be three-dimensional or occupy an entire room or gallery space into which the viewer can usually enter. It is often site-specific and designed to transform the perception of a space. Generally, the term is applied to interior spaces that the viewer can interact with and become part of the artwork.

Resources
The Fruitmarket Gallery produces resources that are available in the Gallery and online at www.fruitmarket.co.uk:

Little Artists are activity sheets for families and primary school groups to enjoy the exhibition together.

Exhibition guides provide detailed information about the art on show.

Short Exhibition films with the artist or curator can be viewed in the resource room or online at www.youtube.com/fruitmarketgallery

Talks and events are programmed for each exhibition with recordings available online.

Publications can be viewed in the resource room.

The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication, Phyllida Barlow: Sculpture 1963–2015. An educational discount is available, please enquire at the bookshop.

Send us your work
Send us examples of work produced in response to the exhibition and we will feature a selection on The Fruitmarket Gallery’s Facebook page.

Caitlin Page
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Book a group visit
Group visits are free and include an introduction to the exhibition and a copy of the current Learning Through Exhibitions resource. To book call 0131 225 2383 or email info@fruitmarket.co.uk
The Fruitmarket Gallery

Tell us what you think

Are you a
☐ Teacher Primary/Secondary Name of school _____________________
☐ Group leader Name of group _____________________
☐ Other _____________________

Your feedback is important to us so we can make improvements to future resources. Tell us what you think about the learning resources and how you’ve used them.

Keep in touch Join our e-list __________________________________________

By providing your e-mail address we can keep you updated about all Gallery activities including, talks, events and workshops. The e-mail address provided will be used by The Fruitmarket Gallery to send you information about our activities and will not be supplied to any other organisations.

The Fruitmarket Gallery shows the work of some of the world’s most important Scottish and international artists, helping people engage with it in the way that is best for them – for free. We are committed to making contemporary art accessible without compromising art or under-estimating audiences. We aim to bring artists and audiences together, offering an intimate encounter with art that can change lives.

We make exhibitions, commissions and publications directly in collaboration with artists. We celebrate new thinking, and offer an international platform for artists, curators and writers, whether they have made their reputation here or abroad. The Fruitmarket Gallery welcomes all audiences. We make it easy for everyone to engage with art, encouraging questions and supporting debate.