

Bishop Vesey's Grammar School

Art Department-Summer Bridging Task 2023

EDEXCEL-A Level Fine Art

We hope you are looking forward to enrolling onto A Level Fine Art in September. In preparation for this, we would like you to complete the following tasks. Please ensure that you bring this work to your first lesson. We look forward to welcoming you in September.

Get Inspired!

Study the past paper provided (exam series 2023), that outlines the theme for your Personal Investigation, ***Simple or Complex***. Read the literature that directly relates to the Fine Art endorsement (**pages, 4-5 & 8-11**) and **examine the visuals** provided closely. Next, **look up any contextual references** it makes to artists, Art movements and/or artwork. Be sure to **highlight** anything of real interest to you, to **make notes** based on your initial research and to **jot down any ideas** that spring to mind on the back of your findings.

Next, you need to **create an account on Pinterest and build a board** around the theme ***Simple or Complex***. In addition to this, you must also **take lots of photos** that explore your own personal interpretation of the theme. At this early stage, you are expected to explore multiple avenues. This will give your work greater scope for development later down the line. In your early lessons, we will be introducing you to a wide range of recording methods, so it will be beneficial to have a wealth of visual stimulus to work from.

Finally, you are required to complete **three initial A4 drawings** that reflect the highest quality you are capable of and an imaginative interpretation of the theme. Consider working from real life, a photograph and/or secondary image of your choosing.

- **Drawing 1 must be pencil and explore the use of line**
- **Drawing 2 must be in pencil and explore tone**
- **Drawing 3 must be in colour. Choose your preferred media and attempt to blend and shade through colour**

Presentation

You will need to buy **an A3 spiral bound sketchbook (with hard cover)** that contains good quality white cartridge paper for drawing purposes. You will also need to pick up **an A4 presentation folder** to keep course guidance material in, tutorial logs/action plans and assessment feedback sheets.

Any questions?

Please contact Mrs Rowlands on email e.rowlands@bishopvesesys.bham.sch.uk who will be happy to help with you enquiries.

Have a lovely summer!

The theme is: SIMPLE OR COMPLEX

A relatively simple mathematical progression of numbers 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13... created by each number being the sum of its two predecessors, was discovered by the mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci to represent a principle that defined the basic structure of the universe. It illustrates the ratio 1.618, commonly represented by the Greek letter Phi. The structure of intricate and complex organic and inorganic forms, such as crystals, ferns and shells can be explained by the mathematic principle of this formula. It was found to fundamentally influence our aesthetic appreciation of the world. It is accepted that even before Fibonacci's discovery, artists and craftsmen of classical civilisations in Greece, Rome and Egypt were using its rules. They understood that when applied to the design of buildings, objects and paintings it considerably enhanced their beauty. Its impact was so profound it was thought to be as valuable as gold and was called the golden ratio or golden mean. Le Corbusier and Dalí were renowned 20th century artists who exploited its attributes, and it still influences and underpins much contemporary art, architecture and design.

Complex geometry has been used for centuries in the production of ceramics and woven and printed textiles. Tessellation allowed for the construction of vast intricate panels, often built up from simpler geometric forms, such as polygons. This form of decoration was taken to impressive levels in Morocco and Algeria in the Middle Ages.

Many popular perceptions of simplicity are false. For example, Cezanne's prolific paintings of fruit. His compositions of apples, pears, peaches and grapes appear as straightforward still lifes. However, for Cezanne they provided formidable challenges, as he attempted to capture the very essence of the fruit. He stated, 'Painting from nature is not copying the object, it is realising one's sensations.' This explains why he would return to the same subject matter over and over again. The complexity of representing any three-dimensional subject on a two-dimensional surface is readily acknowledged. The sensitivity and sophistication required to accurately control hand and eye explains why traditional forms of art still have a magical fascination for any audience. Many artists choose to use unsophisticated techniques and methods yet produce astounding pieces of work. For example, Kara Walker's simple technique of cutting black paper silhouettes to create large installations, results in complex narratives that make powerful statements about race, gender, sexuality and violence.

The complexity of representing movement has often intrigued artists, especially those that were attempting to show the sensation of speed, created by the new machines of the industrial revolution. J.M.W. Turner and later, in the 20th century, the Futurist's Gino Severini and Giacomo Balla, attempted this with various techniques. The complicated kinetic sculptures of Alexander Calder and Jean Tinguely exploit actual physical movement and the video installations of Bill Viola record and document it. His *Ocean Without a Shore* is a good example in which human ephemerality is subtly yet powerfully represented.

The sophisticated and complex technology in digital cameras has in many ways simplified the processes of capturing an image. Contemporary cameras on automated settings dispense with the need for light meters, film speeds, darkroom chemicals and multiple lens combinations. Computers and printers can adjust and compensate for many of the issues that preoccupied photographers in the past. However, many current practitioners experiment with past technology and processes to exploit the unique characteristics these historic techniques give to the images. Vera Lutter's pinhole camera photographs are a good example of this.

Some artworks, whilst appearing initially simple are conceived from complex concepts that challenge the viewer and raise important political issues. Doris Salcedo's *Shibboleth* installation appeared as an impressive but simple crack in the floor of the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. It was designed to raise awareness of major global issues concerning racism and colonialism. Olafur Eliasson's *Ice Watch* consisted of simple large blocks of ice cast off from Greenland's ice sheet. Presented in a clock face formation it made a powerful statement about global warming.

Designers have often dealt with the concept of form over function. A complex design, whilst intriguing, may often interfere with a product's primary function, rendering it useless. Even renowned designers such as Philippe Starck have fallen foul of this principle on occasion. His *Juicy Salif* lemon squeezer lost more juice than it collected, and its coating was rapidly tarnished by the acidity of the fruit. Often the aesthetic qualities of a product have been realised by them simply fulfilling the task to which they were intended. Some of the most collected and prized ceramics from the early Chinese dynasties derive their form and aesthetics from pure function, such as the Qianlong Dynasty porcelain teapot recently sold at Sotheby's for \$3.5 million.

Here are some other suggestions that may stimulate your imagination:

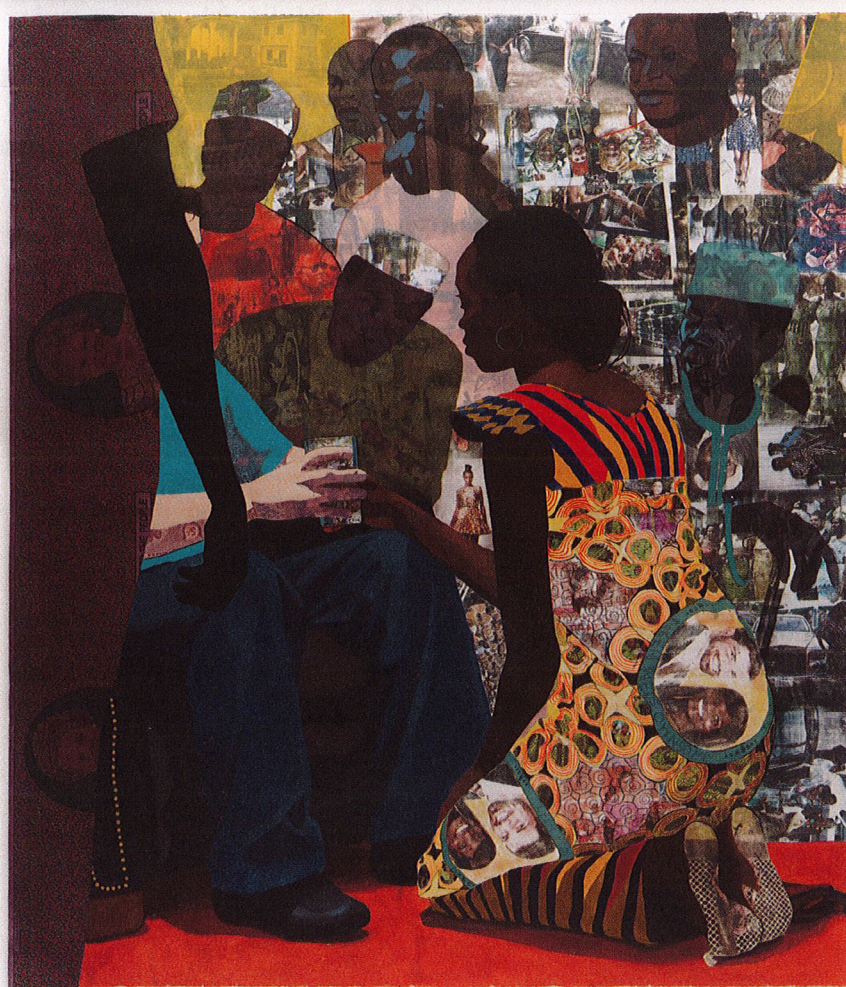
- lace, Persian carpets, Viking knotwork, Art Nouveau prints
- algorithms, formulae, coding, punch-cards, diagrams, instructions
- skeletons, cobwebs, nests, honeycombs, crystals
- maps, roads, railways, airports, scaffolding
- enzymes, viruses, bacteria, mould, protozoans
- cathedrals, stadiums, skyscrapers, towers, pylons
- seas, lakes, rivers, streams, weather, deserts, dunes
- insects, birds, mammals, plants, trees, moss, algae, ferns.

Theme: SIMPLE OR COMPLEX

Title: 9FA0/02 Fine Art

The starting points in this paper may help you form ideas. You can follow them closely, use them as a source of information or produce your own individual response to the theme. Please read the whole paper as any section may provide you with inspiration.

The complex web of experiences that make up cultural and social identity can be shown in many ways. Njideka Akunyili Crosby's *Wedding Portrait* contains a subtle narrative, as half-hidden elements of the composition imply an unequal relationship of power between races and generations. In contrast, George Shaw's landscape paintings often portray the backyards of the council estate near Coventry where he grew up, complete with piles of builder's rubble and sagging net curtains. Identity is expressed through the subtleties of a particular time and place. This connects to a tradition depicting identity through attachment to specific locations, perhaps best known in the work of John Constable. The Pitmen Painters of Ashington, Zhang Xiaogang, Nina Chanel Abney, Glenn Ligon and Hardeep Pandhal also explore identity with various degrees of humour and pathos.



(Source: © San Francisco Museum of Modern Art/Bridgeman Images)

Njideka Akunyili Crosby

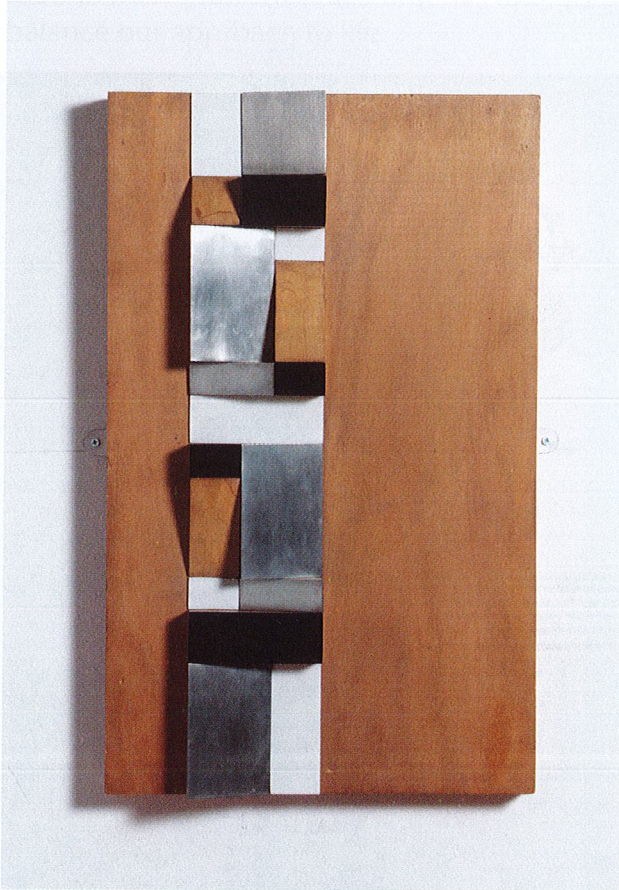
Wedding Portrait, 2012

acrylic paint, pastel, coloured pencil, marble dust, transfers and custom fabric on paper

Theme: SIMPLE OR COMPLEX

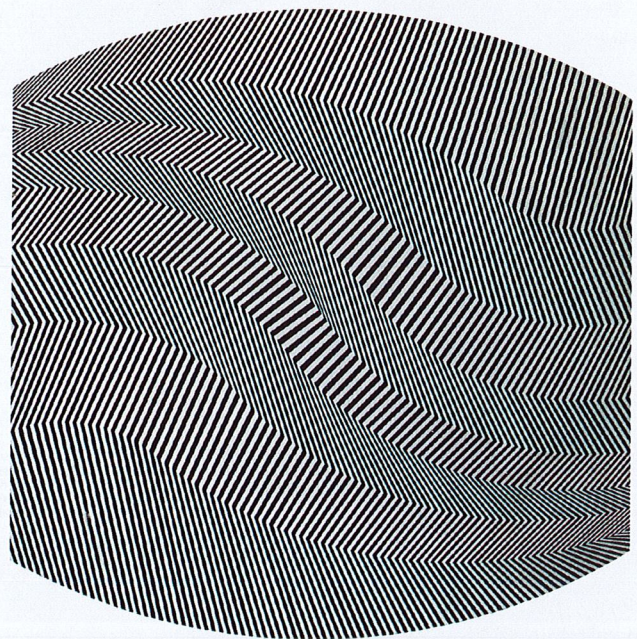
Title: 9FA0/02 Fine Art

Simple processes or beginnings can develop into highly complex outcomes. The conceptual artist Sol LeWitt would send brief instructions on a postcard to the gallery to then be worked up by assistants into highly complex murals. Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely explored the Op Art potential of making a series of changes to a basic unit. Today, inspired by Brian Eno and others, artists such as Anders Hoff, Katharina Brunner, Lauren Lee McCarthy and Jon McCormack explore this principal using computers in Generative Art and Algorithmic Art. In nature, genetic diversity is achieved by different combinations of just four building blocks of DNA.



(Source: Bridgeman Art Library)

Mary Martin
Climbing Form, 1962
metal and wood



(Source: © Bridgeman Art Library)

Bridget Riley
Shuttle II, 1964
emulsion on shaped panel

Theme: SIMPLE OR COMPLEX

Title: 9FA0/02 Fine Art

Extreme attention to detail in art can lead to both admiration and disorientation on the part of the viewer. The tremendous technical skill that Pre-Raphaelite artists such as John Millais showed in a painting such as *Isabella* is somehow so intense as to be dream-like. This quality was exploited by Dali in his Surrealist paintings such as *The Persistence of Memory*; a meticulously imagined dream. The 'Uncanny Valley' effect has been widely studied, in which overly realistic humanoid robots can evoke feelings of unease and revulsion. Ron Mueck plays with the disorientating effect of detail presented at unexpected scales with his hyper-real sculptures. Chuck Close, Richard Estes, Audrey Flack and Gerhard Richter have examined the relationship between photography and hand-painted images.



(Source: © REUTERS/Alamy Stock Photo)

Ron Mueck
Young Couple, 2013
sculpture

Theme: SIMPLE OR COMPLEX

Title: 9FA0/02 Fine Art

Artists have often imagined a return to a more simple and honest approach to life, where humanity can live more in harmony with nature. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, as painted by the medieval artist Hieronymus Bosch is an early example. Constantin Brâncuși was an early 20th century pioneer of the drive to do away with unnecessary complexity. He is known not only for the purity of his sculptures but also for the earthy quality of the tools and furniture that he made from simple materials. Die Brücke, Arte Povera, Environmentalism, Land Art, Minimalism and Japanese Zen Philosophy all explore this idea. In the face of the climate emergency, artists such as Olafur Eliasson, Mary Mattingly and John Akomfrah show the urgency and global nature of the changes needed to rebalance our approach to life.



(Source: © Art Institute of Chicago/Bequest of Katherine S. Dreier/Bridgeman Images)

Constantin Brâncuși
Leda, c1920
marble on concrete base