

A lesson card on excitement and scandals, and how temporary these often are. About what used to be disgraceful but today we shrug our shoulders about and fresh excitement again. Because those artists... they mess with our traditions deliberately. Right?

But first, what is it actually: tradition?

tradition ● n. **1** the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being so passed on. ► a long-established custom or belief passed on in this way. **2** an artistic or literary method or style established by an artist, writer, or movement, and sub

- 1** Everyone has an idea of what ‘tradition’ is. Find a painting that is very traditional in your opinion. Make a quick sketch of the composition and name the three most traditional characteristics.

Characteristic 1

Characteristic 2

Characteristic 3

Artist:

Title:

Year:

- 2** A quick comparative study: ask a classmate what he/she chose and compare your paintings. Discuss and decide: which of the works is the most traditional?

Title:

What was the deciding factor?

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Okay, that's tradition. But this card is about excitement. You get that automatically when you mess with tradition. People have a problem (and that's also tradition) with someone who does everything differently. Like... an artist. The museum is full of old and new scandals. We make a short tour of the turmoil. In the museum, find the *Monet's studio-boat* by Claude Monet. The instigator.

3 Take a good look at the painting. Maybe compare it with older works in the room next door. What do you think Monet did that scandalized the (art) world?

To which art movement does he belong?

Realism Impressionism Expressionism

Did you know that this term is actually a pejorative? It was thought up by an art journalist who was horrified by the loose painting style and unimportant subjects (he preferred history!). The paintings were – for that time – unprecedented!

4 What do you think of this scandal?

I understand it ← ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ → That's a bit outdated

Something else that was new: the painters left their studios. Outdoors, painting what they saw. Vincent van Gogh also did that, and he must not be forgotten here. Van Gogh never experienced it himself: appreciation for his art. He sold virtually nothing and was faced with constant criticism.

This lithograph is a preliminary study for a painting, which is now regarded as a masterpiece.

Artist Anthon van Rappard wrote: '...What's that pot doing, for that matter; it isn't standing, it isn't being held, but what then? And why may that man on the right not have a knee or a belly or lungs? Or are they in his back? And why must his arm be a metre too short? And why must he lack half of his nose? And why must the woman on the left have a sort of little pipe stem with a cube on it for a nose?'

Vincent van Gogh, *The potato eaters* (lithograph), April 1885



5 Look at the lithograph: which criticism do you think is the most deserved?



Vincent sent the letter back, insulted that his cousin (!) could not see that he was trying something new: to not paint something very precisely, but to show his feelings. To show what a difficult life these farmers had.

6 Look at the painting *The potato eaters*. How does Vincent portray hard life of the farmers? Think of the colour/composition/ language of shapes.

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7 He made the painting after the lithograph and the letter. Compare them well. Has Vincent taken any of the criticism to heart?

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It would not be the last time that Vincent was called a ‘dolloper’. What do you think?

I understand it ← ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ → That’s a bit outdated

The tour continues. Find the paintings by Juan Gris and Pablo Picasso.

8 Choose the work that you find the most appealing.

Artist:
Title:
Year

What makes it appealing to you?

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9 We are on the scandal tour. Why did these works cause such excitement? Compare your work to a painting that is at least 10 years older and say something about:

The language of shapes:

Perspective/depth:

Use of colour:

The cubists defied tradition by dissecting shapes and reassembling them in new compositions. They also began experimenting with materials.



10 What 'strange' materials can you find in this room?

- Paper
 Chalk
 Sand
 Metal

After this brief study: what do you think of the fuss?

I understand it ← ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ → That's a bit outdated

Helene Kröller-Müller also had to get used to this 'new' art: 'I did not understand a thing about it, neither about its purpose and intention, nor its connection with other art. It was a complete surprise for me.' But she follows her instincts, buys the 'scandalous works' and defends the young artists. That was not a miscalculation, because they became world famous and their works became priceless.

innovate /'ɪnəveɪt/ ● **v.** make changes in something already existing, as by introducing new methods, ideas, or products.

– **DERIVATIVES** **innovation** n. **innovational** adj. **innovative** adj. **innovator** n. **innovatory** adj.

11 In your opinion, what does this say about the importance of tradition and innovation in art?

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12 One final search. Which artwork (painting/sculpture/..) in the museum do you not understand at all? And why? Walk around calmly, do the other assignments first, take your time... you'll find it easily!

Artist:
 Title:
 Year:

Incomprehensible, because:

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Probably quite normal in the year:

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