

ART.

Of all the different aspects of culture the most difficult to access is Art.

It is all very dependent where you are born and bred. Unless you lived in a large conurbation such as Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield or Glasgow you were unlikely to have an art gallery or museum within easy reach. Therefore, you were restricted by the lack of such venues and those you did have limited because they often did not change what was on show. I can remember vividly the "japanese wrestlers" at Western Park Museum Sheffield there when I was a teenager and which only disappeared in the late 2000's

The South fared better, especially London with its plethora of National Galleries and art collections to visit and their regular input of exhibitions from all over the world. The questionnaires used in my research showed that visits to Galleries were popular with families because they were free but very rare (usually in school holidays). Many also said that they found the institutions unwelcoming and as kids they felt out of their comfort zone.

Eileen said "Everything was in glass cases too high for me to see properly and the art was dull and boring with hideous gilt frames".

Few of our participants had art books at home so first introductions to the subject were on the walls of primary schools. Most of these pictures were reproductions of famous paintings such as Picasso's - Boy with a Dove, Constable's - Haywain and Van Gogh's - Yellow Chair. These were provided to schools in the early 1950's to cheer up the gloomy state of our schools after the war and some had clung on until the next decade.

By the time the "baby boomers" hit the mid-sixties what we now know as Modern Art had been around nearly 100 years (1860's). Modern Art begins with the heritage of Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, George Seurat and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. At the beginning of the 20th Henri Matisse and several other young artists revolutionised the Paris art world with wild multi-coloured expressive landscapes and figure paintings that the critics called Fauvism. "The Dance" signified a key point in his career and in the development of modern painting.

Influenced by all the above Pablo Picasso made his first cubist paintings based on Cezanne's idea that all depiction of nature can be reduced to 3 solids, cube, sphere and cone. World War 1 brought an end to this phase but indicated the beginning of a number of anti-art movements such as Dada including the work of Marcel Duchamp, and of Surrealism. Artist groups such as de Stijl and Bauhaus developed new ideas about the interrelation of the arts, architecture, design and art education.

Modern Art was introduced to the United States with the Armory show in 1913 and through European artists moving over there during World War 1.

However, it was only after World War 11 that the U.S. became the focus point of the new artistic movements. The 1950's and 1960's saw the emergence of Abstract Expressionism, Pop art, Op art, and various other movements. In the era we are looking at from 1955 - 1965 Pop art became the true art movement in New York city with giants like. :-

Andy Warhol - the prince of Pop - and iconic images such as Campbell Cans and the Marilyn Diptych.

Roy Lichtenstein - The Drowning Girl and Wham!

Jasper Johns Flag.

Pop art used images and icons that were popular in the modern world. It was revolt against the dominant approaches to art and culture and traditional views on what art should be. They used themes from comic books and strips, advertising billboards, and thus mundane objects such as reels of cotton, waste bins and soup cans were framed and hung on the walls of art galleries. It was meant to be fun.

Here in Britain, the Pop art flag was carried by David Hockney - A Bigger Splash - and Peter Blake with his iconic - On the Balcony. They used bright colours, flat imagery, celebrities and fictional characters and completed the Modernist movement into the early 1970's.

Few of our participants had much to say about art other than if they drew and painted at school. Art history was largely dead and buried. If you took art at G.C.S.E. and A Level this is probably where some interest in it began.

Wendy tells us her Grandfather lost his job in the 1960's and took a job as a gallery warden in the Walker Art Gallery Liverpool. Whilst working there he bought a picture by Henry Holliday of Dante and Beatrice which hung on their sitting room wall. By its side was the Chinese Girl - by Vladimir Tretchikoff - popularly known as (The Green Lady). It became one of the world's most popular paintings of the twentieth century when made into prints.

The original sold for \$3.5 million in March 2013. It was purchased by British jeweller Laurence Graff and is on display at his South African estate. It was also used as an album cover for Slap - by the British band Chumbawamba in the 1990's.

The art works we do remember seeing in the 60's were the very famous ones those reproduced on tea - towels or biscuit tins. John Constables - The Haywain and Monet's Poppies to name but two. Art works used in advertising like "Bubbles" - Millais or Franz Hal - " The Laughing Cavalier " .

Most popular movements were the Impressionists and the Pre- Raphaelites. Artists such as Monet, Leonardo - Da Vinci, Van Gogh, Picasso and Lowry. Remembered art works were "The Haywain ", "The Fighting Temeraire ", "Sun Flowers ", "Water Lilies" and "Starry Night " . "Geurnica" was another that left an imprint as were " The Mona Lisa " and George Stubbs - "Whistlejacket " .

By the early 1960's a cultural revolution was underway, led by activists, thinkers, and artists, who sought to rethink even overturn what was, in their eyes, a stifling social order ruled by conformity. At the same time, the Vietnam War incited mass protests, the Civil Rights Movement sought equality for African Americans and the Woman's Liberation Movement gained momentum. Much of this passed me by.