

Art Attack Reading

Read the article 'Art Attack' and then answer the following questions related to the article

1] *True or false?*

- 1 Most journalists appreciate modern art forms
- 2 The author disagrees with the views expressed by the journalists
- 3 The writer feels that journalists are too conservative in their taste
- 4 The writer feels that art should be about expressing yourself in any form
- 5 The writer has a high opinion of journalists

2] *Match the names of the following artists with their work*

Richard Long	A map
Martin Creed	Bricks
Rachel Whiteread	Religious figures
Simon Patterson	Lights
Chris Offili	A movie
Tracy Emin	A bed
Douglas Gordon	Every day objects

3] *Answer these questions*

A] *Are there any similar artists in your country? If so, what is the general opinion about them?*

B] *Would you pay to go and see installation art? Why/why not?*

Reading

1 Before you read

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Do you like modern art? Why/why not?
2. What do you think art is for?
3. Do you like any of the works you can see on these pages? Why/why not?

2 While you read

 Now read the article and decide how the writer would answer the three questions in Exercise 1.



Art Attack

It's November, which means it's the time of year when the papers are full of articles by people who are shocked about art. This is because in November the Tate Gallery in London holds the annual Turner Prize exhibition of modern art. Each year four of the best British artists are selected from all those who have exhibited during the year and of these, one is chosen. For the most part, the shock journalists express is not moral outrage, but more of the 'You call that art?!' variety. We are treated to a string of the usual complaints and clichés: 'Anyone could do that!' 'My five-year-old daughter could do better than that.' 'A bed in the middle of a room! Where's the skill in that?' 'Whatever happened to people just painting pictures?' 'Fifty thousand pounds for that! You're pulling my leg.' etc., etc. Well, personally, I'm sick of it – the journalists complaining, that is – not the art. The only thing which is predictable, boring, and money for nothing is their writing. These people just want art to be pretty pictures. For them, it's just an extension of interior design – something which will match the sofa or look good in the bedroom. For me, the worst thing anyone could say about art is that it looks quite nice. Art should make you think. Art should be the result of artists thinking about the world they see and their reactions to it. It shouldn't be about seeing something and saying, 'Oh, that looks nice. I'll paint that and make it look just like a photograph, and I'll take ten years to do it,' which is what these journalists seem to think is required of art.

I have made a selection of some of the previous Turner Prize entrants – I know journalists do not like to spend time doing research for themselves, so I've done it for them. Perhaps they could ask the question Wolfgang Tillmans, a previous winner, poses. 'These scenarios might appear

strange to some people, but I try to ask through them, what is so strange here, the scenario in the picture, the world around you, society, your ideas about beauty or my ideas about beauty?'

Richard Long caused outrage with his work, which was a line of bricks laid on the floor of the gallery. He made a similar piece with bits of slate, a kind of grey stone, which he'd found on a walk in the countryside.

Martin Creed won the prize with a piece which involved the audience walking into an empty gallery space and the lights suddenly being turned off and then sometime later turned back on again.

Rachel Whiteread uses common objects as a mould. She fills the inside with concrete and exhibits the sculptures with the objects removed. She has used tables, chairs, bookcases and, most famously, a whole house.

Simon Patterson, in a work called 'The Great Bear', painted a replica of the London Underground map, but replaced the names of the stations with the names of famous people from history.

Chris Ofili paints religious figures, and as well as paint uses other media such as mud and elephant dung. Mayor Giuliani in New York once tried to ban one of his works of the Virgin Mary because he said it was an insult to the Catholic religion.

Tracy Emin was famous for making an installation of her slept-in bed in the middle of a gallery. She also made a tent and pinned on the inside the names of all the men she'd slept with.

Douglas Gordon won for showing Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, 'Psycho', which he slowed down so much that it took twenty-four hours to play instead of two.

Personally, I don't really care if you don't *like* these pieces; that's not the point. What should be absolutely clear, though, is that these *ideas* are not the work of five-year-olds, but of creative, intelligent adults. It's a shame we can't say the same of some journalists and critics!