

MODULE 6 – WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OBJECT? CONCEPTUAL ART: Additional Teachers Notes

This PowerPoint slide presentation is for Tate Tools Module 6 – What Happened to the Object? Conceptual Art.

The full-length Teachers' Notes in Word format can be printed out to use alongside this PowerPoint. The notes at the bottom of the screen in the presentation are brief bullet points to remind you of the main activities and discussion elements for each slide.

Most of the artworks used in the slide presentation are available to view on the Tate website where you will also find further information about the artwork concerned.

Slide 1: Module 6: Conceptual Art: What happened to the object?

Set up the PowerPoint to this title page to start the lesson.

This module introduces students to key ideas about conceptual art; what it is and where it came from. The module provides some tools to help teachers work with their students and with artworks in the Tate Collection and in other galleries of modern and contemporary art. The module operates through debate and discussion as a way of 'thinking through' concepts and ideas.

Be open minded! There is considerable latitude in how you might approach teaching about conceptual art.

Before beginning this module you may want to discuss the meanings of the words 'concept' and 'conceptual' with your students. Encourage learners to continue being challenged and provoked by art long after they have worked on this module.

Use the Tate website to get more background information on the images in the slides.

The module enhances key skills such as:

- deductive thinking - asking and answering questions
- formulating propositions – asking 'what if ...?'
- understanding the role of language in visual perception and understanding
- inventiveness – thinking differently, or 'outside the box'
- lateral thinking – using different points of view and a wide range of reference points to 'make meaning'
- interactivity and engagement – sometimes the viewer's response defines the work. The viewer is actively engaged in making meanings.
- using a wide range of popular social and cultural references – creating links to learners' own personal experiences
- investigating and making links to other subjects outside the art curriculum

Slide 2: Conceptual Art: Introduction

Discussion: What do we think of as art?

Activity: Question time

When did conceptual art happen?

It's still happening! But it started mainly in the mid 1960s until the mid 1970s. It was and is an international art practice, occurring in most parts of the globe. It is still alive today, but it is always changing and being defined through the way in which artists develop the concepts and practice of conceptual art.

1. Discussion: What do we think of as art?

- Brainstorm: What do we think of as art? Where do students see art? For example, on the TV, in the newspaper, in books, in the local gallery, on school trips.
- Discuss examples of things that pupils have seen that they think might be conceptual art. Make a note or a list of these examples to refer to later.
- What is the difference between seeing art on TV and seeing it in a gallery or museum space?
- Who do you think artists are?
- What sort of people become artists?
- Who pays artists and why do they do what they do?

2. Activity: Question time

Use the Tate website to compare two artworks and to analyse how they work upon the viewer differently. Select one conventional figurative sculpture or painting (for example Antony Gormley) and one conceptual art work. What questions does each work provoke? Divide the class into two teams - one to devise the questions and one to devise the answers to the questions they think they will be asked. See how the questions and answers match up.

Slide 3: History: Shock tactics!

Discussion: How do we make value judgements about what is good and bad art?

Activity: Write a brief review of one of the works

The origins of conceptual art come out of an anti-authoritarian culture, for this reason it may have an appeal and a resonance with artists and students of any period in time!

Controversy and shock are not new in terms of a reaction to art. Nor are today's artists any more shocking than those artists of eighty or ninety years ago. Perhaps they are a lot less shocking given that we live in more liberal times than the first decades of the twentieth century?

Artists in the Dada movement (between 1914 and 1921) deliberately set out to shock a system that they perceived as in a crisis and rotten to the core. There were aspects of Dada that related to anarchism and revolution in a literal form.

The image shown on this slide is Fountain (1917) by Marcel Duchamp.

Marcel Duchamp – Fountain

In 1916 in New York there was an annual exhibition organised by the Society of Independent Artists. There was to be no jury, no censorship and each artist had to pay six dollars to enter a piece of work. Marcel Duchamp entered a urinal he had bought in a showroom; he had signed it 'R Mutt' and titled it 'Fountain'. It was rejected from the exhibition. The debate (which has been going on since 1917) has proved more important than the object. In a period of crisis of authority (World War I) Duchamp was challenging the very basis of art and culture.

Duchamp wrote that with his Fountain, 'Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He **CHOSE** it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – created a new thought for that object.'

Fountain is an example of what Duchamp called a 'readymade', an ordinary manufactured object designated by the artist as a work of art. It epitomises the assault on convention and good taste for which he and the Dada movement are best known. Duchamp's readymades also asserted the principle that what is art is defined by the artist.

There are some very important points here: first, that the choice of object is itself a creative act. Secondly, that by cancelling the 'useful' function of an object it becomes art. Thirdly, that the presentation and addition of a title to the object have given it 'a new thought', a new meaning. Fourthly, that by signing the work the artist lays claim to it as an artwork made by him.

Duchamp was an influential figure in Dada and Surrealism, an important influence on pop art, environments, assemblage, installation art, conceptual art and much art of the 1990s such as YBA or Young British Artists.

The Fluxus movement is also an important precursor to conceptual art. Fluxus was named and loosely organized in 1962 by George Maciunas. It traces its beginnings to John Cage's Experimental Composition classes at the New School for Social Research in New York City from 1957 to 1959. Fluxus encouraged a 'do it yourself' esthetic, and valued simplicity over complexity. Like Dada before it, Fluxus included a strong current of anti-commercialism and an anti-art sensibility; it rejected the conventions of the art world in favor of an artist-centered creative practice. Fluxus artists preferred to work with whatever materials were at hand, and they often collaborated in the creation process with their colleagues.

1. Discussion: How do we make value judgements about what is good and bad art?

The media often fuel the controversy over the value of art, for example, with Tracey Emin's *Bed in the Turner Prize*, or Damien Hirst's *Mother and Child* (a cow and a calf sliced and presented in glass tanks). These last two are not examples of conceptual art per se, but they provide 'case study' examples of how artists and the media feed off each other and how public opinion is formed.

- How do we make value judgements about what is good and bad art?
- What do we base our opinions upon? Make a list of opinion forming influences.
- Should artists set out to shock people?

- Do they draw attention to their art because they have something very important to say?
- Do they draw attention to themselves and their careers through their art?
- How, when and where do people question their assumptions and their thinking about contemporary art?

2. Activity: Write a brief review of one of the works

Find images of any of the works mentioned above and discuss the class's reactions to them. Find out about the context they were shown in. Look at how the media reported on these works via a web search. What else was going on in the world at the time of the debate over these works? Write a brief review of one of the works from different points of view if possible.

Slide 4: Art and language

Discussion: Advertising campaigns

Activity: Art in unexpected places

Activity: Pictogram

The image shown on this slide is *Truisms* (1984) by Jenny Holzer.

In the late 1970s, Jenny Holzer wrote nearly 300 aphorisms or slogans that appeared in the public arena on stickers, T shirts, posters and electronic displays. The slogans are a form of wordplay upon commonly held truths and clichés. Initially, the *Truisms* were infiltrated into the public arena via stickers, T-shirts and posters. In 1982 when Holzer started using electronic displays, she blazed these messages across a giant advertising hoarding in Times Square, New York. The *Truisms* are deliberately challenging, presenting a spectrum of often-contradictory opinions. Holzer hoped they would sharpen people's awareness of the 'usual baloney they are fed' in daily life.

Other phrases on the artwork pictured on this slide include:

money creates tastemost people are not fit to rule themselvesnoise can be hostileold friends are better left in the past ...many sacrifices.

Other artists to look at might include Banksy and the Guerilla Girls, Bruce Nauman, Joseph Kosuth, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Emma Kay or Hamish Fulton.

1. Discussion: Advertising campaigns

Some advertising is so clever and conceptual that we might think it is the work of conceptual artists. Think of some advertising campaigns on TV or on billboards that get you to think differently or make you work hard to put the pieces together. Think of some adverts that use wordplay as their main strategy. Discuss responses and reactions.

2. Activity: Art in unexpected places

Make a series of discreet images, texts or objects that could be inserted into some of the school communication systems like notice boards, newsletters, display cases etc. Monitor people's reactions to finding word art in unexpected places and discuss the outcomes.

3. Activity: Pictogram

Making up a pictogram – an image that represents a word or a concept – is a good way to think conceptually and laterally.

Also look at the idea of a rebus. A rebus is a puzzle consisting of pictures representing syllables or words. For example, the letter H followed by an image of an ear would represent the word 'hear'.

Slide 5: Me, myself and I

Discussion: How do you make your presence known to the world?

Activity: Authorship and identity

The image shown on this slide is A portrait of the Artists as Young Men (1970) by Gilbert and George.

Gilbert and George's art is a form of self-portraiture, since they always feature in their own work. They see no separation between their activities as artists and their everyday existence. In 1969, they began to present themselves as 'living sculptures' and developed the mask-like personas that are presented here. The title of this work suggests a painting rather than a video, and the slowed-down action suggests the long, scrutinizing gaze of an artist examining his model.

Other examples:

Piero Manzoni - Artist's Breath

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=26872>

This work consists of the remnants of a red balloon tied to a piece of string on which there are two lead seals. These elements are attached to a wooden base to which is also affixed a small metal plaque bearing the artist's name and the title of the work: PIERO MANZONI Fiato d'artista. Originally the balloon was fully inflated with Manzoni's breath but as it deflated the rubber became stuck to the wood underneath.

The work can be seen as an object of failure and of success. It has failed to preserve or to capture the artist's living essence and a successful reminder that without breath we are indeed nothing at all.

Two important precedents for Artist's Breath were Marcel Duchamp's 50cc of Paris Air, 1919 (Philadelphia Museum of Art), in which the artist sealed fifty cubic centimetres of Paris air inside a pharmaceutical vessel, and Yves Klein's Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility performances, begun in 1959, in which designated volumes of immateriality were ceded only on the payment of gold.

Adrian Piper- Catalysis Actions. In a series of street art actions Piper transformed herself and went into the public to experience people's reactions to her. Sometimes she made herself appear odd or repulsive! For example, she covered her clothing in white paint with the words 'wet paint' on her tee shirt. She is particularly engaged in ideas about perceptions of race and racism; the direct reaction between the artist and the viewer forms the substance of the work. She has also devised work that consists of handing out printed cards to people at random. The statements on the cards address the reader directly as 'You ...'

1. Discussion: How do you make your presence known to the world?

How do you make your presence known to the world?

How could you make your mark in a conceptual art type of gesture?

How could you become a living artwork?

What would you look like and what would you do?

2. Activity: Authorship and identity

If you signed some ordinary objects, would they immediately become artworks?

Remember that Marcel Duchamp signed his readymade and thereby claimed himself as the artist who made it into an art object. Discuss this concept and try it out in practice.

Make a temporary museum of signed objects and show them to other people in the school. Try to present to them your arguments about how the objects have become art.

Good luck!

Slide 6: Ideas and objects

Discussion: Can objects only and ever just remain as objects?

Activity: A new thought for an object

The images shown on this slide are *An Oak Tree* (1973) by Michael Craig-Martin and *Sixty Seconds of Light* (1970) by John Hilliard.

An ordinary glass of water is presented above the viewer's head on a glass shelf. Below it is a framed text. The viewer is being asked by the artist to believe that the glass of water is actually an oak tree. The ability to believe that an object is something other than its physical appearance requires a transformative vision. This type of seeing (and knowing) is at the heart of conceptual thinking processes, by which intellectual and emotional values are conferred on images and objects.

When *An Oak Tree* was first exhibited, in 1974 at Rowan Gallery, London, the text was presented printed on a leaflet. It was subsequently attached to the wall below and to the left of the shelf and glass. The piece of text, exhibited with the glass of water on a shelf, is an imaginary conversation between the artist and an interviewer in which the interviewer asks the artist 'how have you changed a glass of water into an oak tree?' This is the question we ourselves might want to ask the artist and, as we read, we weigh up the argument being made.

Craig-Martin's text deliberately asserts the impossible and the questions try to make sense of the impossible: 'haven't you simply called this glass of water an oak tree?' and 'but the oak tree only exists in the mind'. The answers maintain conviction while conceding that 'the actual oak tree is physically present but in the form of the glass of water ... Just as it is imperceptible, it is also inconceivable'.

It has been suggested that *An Oak Tree* could be seen as being based on the concept of transubstantiation, the notion central to the Catholic faith in which it is believed that bread and wine are converted into the body and blood of Christ while retaining their appearances of bread and wine.

Theme: Creating an Object for the Concept

John Hilliard, *Sixty Seconds of Light*, 1970

This photograph took sixty seconds to make and it records the hand of the clock marking off each second. The clock pictured is used in a photographic darkroom to count the time it takes for a photographic image to develop. There is only a faint blurring to show the trace of the hand moving. Conceptually the photograph shows time passing and therefore makes visible something that we cannot literally see. The idea of photography as a 'second hand image' (i.e. an image after the event) plays with the fact that it is the second hand of the clock that measures the seconds of the minute.

Other work to look at:

Simon Patterson, *The Great Bear*, 1992

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=21700>

Adapting the official map of the London Underground, Patterson has replaced the names of stations with philosophers, actors, politicians and other celebrated figures. The title *The Great Bear* refers to the constellation Ursa Major, a punning reference to Patterson's own arrangement of "stars". Patterson playfully subverts our belief that maps and diagrams provide a reliable source of information. "I like disrupting something people take as read", he comments.

Ceal Floyer, *Light Switch*

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=81187>

This work is a colour photographic slide image of a light switch. It is projected to scale on a wall at the height you would expect to find the light switch in any house. There is a slide projector set up on a stand, near an entrance or doorway, a few feet away from a wall. There is a sense of playfulness and humour here since the image of a light switch exists only as a result of being made up of light itself.

1. Discussion: Can objects only and ever just remain as objects?

Can objects only and ever just remain as objects?

Can we use language and ideas to change their purpose and meaning?

The artist Rene Magritte wrote: 'An object is not so attached to its name that one cannot find another that suits it better.'

Do you think this is true? Try testing out this idea by selecting some everyday things and making up new names for them. For example, fire on bread is toast, blue air is sky....

2. Activity: A new thought for an object

Create new thoughts for familiar objects.

Make a display of objects and write a short label, title or piece of text.

The new thought might NOT refer to what the object looks like, but it might refer to an idea or the extension of an idea about the object.

Interview each other in pairs to report back on what has happened to the object, how it has changed and how it has come to mean something other than its true or original meaning.

Slide 7: Idea and instruction

Discussion: Which bit is the art?

Activity: A machine to make art

The image shown on this slide is One-Second Drawing (17" 2002) (Time Signature 5:1), (1972) by John Latham.

Latham produced a set of instructions which specified that sixty 'drawings' were to be created, one per day, by spraying a piece of white blockboard for one second with black acrylic paint. A stamp on the back of the work records the time of its execution (the seventeenth second of the twentieth minute of the second hour) followed by the date (14 December 1972).

Each drawing was also 'minited' using a numerical code, in this case '5:1'. According to this code, the numbers '1' to '5' each refer to different characteristics of the work to which the viewer's attention is directed. '1' signifies that the 'making' of the work is significant. '2' indicates that showing the work, not making it, is significant. '3' relates to colour, texture, etc. '4' relates to movement. '5' relates to something outside the work's structure - the 'event' which produced it.

'5:1' thus invites the viewer to consider the event that created the work and its process of creation.

Since these drawings could be produced by people other than the artist, the stamp also records the identity of the 'operator'. Instructions can be carried out by different people in different ways therefore this allows changes to be made to the artwork that the artist cannot predict.

Other examples:

Yoko Ono is one of the most important pioneering figures in the conceptual art movement. (People tend to think of her as the wife of John Lennon rather than a contemporary artist). In 1962 Yoko Ono made an exhibition of 'instruction paintings' that was made up of exhibiting canvases with instructions attached to them. Displaying just the instructions as paintings was going one step further, pushing art to its optimum conceptualism.

Yoko Ono said that the idea for instruction paintings came from the time of World War II when she and her brother had nothing to eat and they 'exchanged menus in the air'.

Two examples of instruction paintings:

- PAINTING FOR THE SKIES (1961) Drill a hole in the sky. Cut out a paper the same size as the hole. Burn the paper. The sky should be pure blue.
- PAINTING TO SHAKE HANDS (painting for cowards) (1961). Drill a hole in a canvas and put your hand out from behind. Receive your guests in that position. Shake hands and converse with hands.

Sol LeWitt

LeWitt's wall drawings are executed by assistants from the artist's instructions. The owner of each wall drawing also acquires a 'certification' executed (on paper) and signed by LeWitt that sets out the drawing in diagrammatic form and gives written instructions for its execution. This certification should be exhibited with the work, but is not itself a work of art or part of one.

1. Discussion: Which bit is the art?

How can something be art when a work is achieved as a result of doing nothing at all or as an instruction carried out by someone other than the artist herself?

Which bit is the art? If the idea or conceptual plan for the work can be sold to the museum and then a suitably trained person makes the work, is it still a genuine work of art?

2. Activity: A machine to make art

Think of an idea that could be 'a machine to make the art'. In small groups set up some rules in relation to making a group or an individual drawing. For example, each mark is made at 45 degrees to the other, each mark lasts for three seconds, each mark is done by the left hand or right hand alternately etc.

Look at each group's resulting drawings and see whether the class can work out what each group's rules were.

Slide 8: Staging an event

Discussion: Ephemeral or 'time based' art

Activity: What happened?

The image on this slide is *Pacific* (1996) by Yukinori Yanagi.

For this work, Yanagi filled a series of interconnecting Perspex boxes with coloured sand to represent the flags of forty-nine nations. These include nations bordering the Pacific, former colonial powers, and native populations without sovereign territories such as the Maoris and Aborigines. Yanagi then released thousands of ants, whose movement distributed the sand from one flag to another, affecting the visual coherence of the original image and establishing new motifs and patterns. 'I question the concept of a nation' Yanagi has stated. 'A nation, its border and national flag, has become an imaginary fiction.'

Other examples:

Richard Long

Since his earliest practice, begun in the late 1960s, Long has based his art on the action of walking in the natural landscape. With his seminal work, *A Line Made By Walking* 1967 (<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=8971>) – a photograph showing a straight line worn in a field of grass by the repeated movement of the artist's feet over it – Long established the simple act of walking as a gesture of primordial mark-making fundamental to the creation of art. In the context of late 1960s conceptualism, Long's act may be seen as a subversion of the traditionally expressive gesture central to painting. Walking is non-expressive, a mechanical movement that permits the body to travel from one point to another. In a similar way, the line joining one point to another is fundamental to the process of drawing.

Artist Robert Morris made a box that contained the sounds of a tape recorder playing the sounds of the artist making the box.

In 1993 artist Gillian Wearing stopped people in the street at random and asked them to write their thoughts on a piece of paper. She photographed them with their thoughts.

The work is called Signs that Say What You Want Them To Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You To Say.

(<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=27083>)

The work challenges stereotypes and offers a way of challenging our assumptions about people's appearance and their interior reality. The work also questions what the artist's role is in making the work. Has she handed her control to the subject?

1. Discussion: Ephemeral or 'time based' art

Some types of art are ephemeral or 'time based', they may happen outside of a traditional gallery. When the artist shows the documentation of what they did, does this become the artwork? Does the artwork only exist when the artist was doing it?

2. Activity: What happened?

Students decide to do something unusual that is not part of their daily routine over the course of a week. They don't tell anyone what it is. They make a document, a photo, a written text or a drawing or diagram. At the end of the week they reveal what they have done and why. Does it matter if people did not notice what happened at the time? It is in the re-telling and representing of the event that it becomes something of significance.

Slide 9: Art as process

Discussion: How long does art take to make?

Activity: Transformer

The image on this slide is of Shedboatshed (2005) by Simon Starling.

This is definitely a sculptural object – but HOW it came into being is just as important as WHAT it is. There is a concept or a conceptually driven process.

For his work Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No 2) 2005, Starling dismantled a shed and turned it into a boat. Loaded with the remains of the shed, the boat was paddled down the Rhine to a museum in Basel, where he dismantled the boat and re-made it into a shed. The artist describes his work as "the physical manifestation of a thought process".

Paul Shephard on Simon Starling

"One of the interesting things about this Shedboatshed is that the thing you're looking at isn't the whole work. Now this is always true in conceptual art generally because conceptual art uses its artwork to illustrate some other idea. I think what's interesting about Simon's work is that he doesn't deal in concepts so much as actions - so the work is evidence of action having taken place which is slightly different".

Michael Landy – Breakdown

In February 2001, artist Michael Landy systematically destroyed everything he owned in the name of art. He spent a fortnight in the window of the old C&A shop in London's Oxford Street destroying all his worldly possessions. The artist took all his 7,000 possessions, arranged them into eight categories and annihilated them in a waste disposal unit. Afterwards, he had to start all over again to replace every single item.

In 1966 the artist On Kawara began his 'date paintings', every day for many years he painted the date meticulously on a small canvas. If he hadn't finished the painting for

that day by midnight, it was destroyed. By 1991 he had made nearly 2,000 paintings, which are sold in a box with a page from that date's newspaper.

1. Discussion: How long does art take to make?

How long does art take to make? Some art is instant and some art might take place over a lifetime. If you were to make a collection of objects for an artwork that grew over time, what would you collect?

2. Activity: Transformer

Think of an ordinary object from around your house. How could you transform it one way and then another way to create a new object? Sketch out some ideas and talk them through with your class.

Slide 10: You, the viewer, make the art

Discussion: What do you think of this type of interactivity?

Activity: Intervention

The image on this slide is Work No. 227: The lights going on and off, (2000) by Martin Creed.

The nature of some conceptual art is to make the viewer self conscious: to think about themselves thinking. Active engagement is demanded on a mental level and the viewer has to become a thinker in order to take part.

For the 2000 Turner Prize exhibition, Creed showed Work # 227: The lights going on and off. Nothing is added to the space and nothing is taken away, but at intervals of five seconds the gallery is filled with light and then subsequently thrown into darkness. We are being asked to look again and to question and evaluate the space and our own reactions to being a part of it.

Following on from the premise set out in Work # 232, (see slide 13) Creed makes the banality of the everyday the focus of an artwork. In manipulating the gallery's light fittings he creates a new and unexpected definition of art.

It is particularly because it is set in the context of Tate Britain, a prestigious art gallery, that this work challenges what we will or will not accept as art. The traditional methods of museum display and the encounter you would normally expect to have in a gallery have been completely disrupted.

Because Creed plays with the viewer's sense of space and time he also exposes rules, conventions and opportunities that are usually overlooked, and in so doing implicates and empowers the viewer.

Other examples:

In 1969 Robert Barry had an exhibition in Amsterdam where he pinned a notice to the door: 'during the exhibition the gallery will be closed!' There was no work on show and the artist presented only the idea that there was an exhibition going on. How would you feel if you came to this exhibition? Were the words on the door part of the art?

1. Discussion: What do you think of this type of interactivity?

Conceptual art is 'Art that tries to "be in your head"' said the art critic Harald Szeeman.

But conceptual art can also be physically interactive in that it asks the viewer to participate in the project, the illusion, the event, the deception or the way of thinking. In this way, it may be considered more, rather than less accessible than other forms of art.

What do the students think about this type of interactivity?

2. Activity: Intervention

Discuss the routine of the school day in relation to the spaces that are used. How could you make a (permissible) intervention into this routine that would have an impact upon people's awareness and perception, possibly even changing their behaviour (in a safe way)?

What could you do to make people see something differently in their familiar environment? For example, it could be something as simple as putting coloured acetate over the windows to change the mood of a room, or rearranging the furniture or putting lines on the ground.

Note down people's reactions to your intervention. What happened? Did you alter their behaviour? What did you achieve? What did the people affected by the change think?

Slide 11: Art without walls

Discussion: Do we only recognise art as art when it is in a gallery?

The image on this slide is a still from *The Battle of Orgreave*, 2001 by Jeremy Deller.

The Battle of Orgreave, 'a piece of living history' was commissioned by Art Angel in 2001. This work brought together veteran miners and members of historical re-enactment societies who restaged the controversial clash between miners and the police during 1984-5. This collaboration resulted in a film, a book and an audio recording that all function to resurrect the raw emotions from the period and provide a fresh account of events that have been distorted by the media. Art stopped being something that hung on the wall or was displayed on a plinth at an early point in the twentieth century, at least from Dada onwards.

Conceptual artists in the 1960s were reacting against the commercialisation of the gallery and art world system. They felt that art could take place outside of this system, for example, in the street, in public places or private places, in the landscape or in the city. Many of the events that took place outside the gallery system were of a political nature.

Other examples:

Gustav Metzger is an important figure in the Fluxus movement noted for his activism in the political and artistic realms. He developed the concept of 'Auto Destructive Art', work that is simultaneously destroyed as it is made. He also carried out the 'Art Strike', a means of drawing attention to the artist's labour by withdrawing it. He stopped making art for a period of three years! Other people also took up the Art Strike and carried it out for themselves.

For many artists, teaching and making art is one and the same thing. In developing a dialogue with people, the artist is creating a social form of art. The German artist Joseph Beuys is a notable example of this principle. Some contemporary artists give public talks or lectures as their art form. Some contemporary artists set up their events in public places such as street markets or car boot sales; there is no single definition of where art can occur.

Lothar Baumgarten made a series of works between 1968 and 1971 that were left in a forest or under the floorboards in a house. The works were abandoned and left at the mercy of time or any other process. The works became something ephemeral and transient.

1. Discussion: Do we only recognise art as art when it is in a gallery?

Many artists now work completely outside the gallery or studio in very social spaces.

Does this mean that when the work comes into the gallery it changes?

Do we only recognise art as art when it is in a gallery?

What about empty art galleries and the streets full of art? Would this be a good idea?

Do you think if you destroyed your course work you could then present it for your assessment or exam? What would happen if you did? What arguments could you make to support the ideas you have?

Slide 12: Life and art

Discussion: Which parts of your life do you think you could transfer to a public space?

Activity: Art from life

The image on this slide shows *Semi-detached* (2004) by Michael Landy.

Semi-detached, by Michael Landy was an exact copy of his parent's house, but built inside the Duveen galleries at Tate Britain. Every single detail, including flaking paint, loose wiring, net curtains and weathered brickwork is visible. The work takes as its focus the artist's father, a former tunnel miner who suffered an industrial accident twenty-five years ago. Through a video of images from DIY manuals and the soundtrack of Landy's father whistling as he works, the artist asks broader questions about value and usefulness, employment and purpose.

Other examples:

Rikrat Tiravanija

Tiravanija has most famously cooked Thai curries in galleries and held parties instead of exhibitions, leaving the rubbish in the gallery for the duration of the show. At the Serpentine Gallery, Tiravanija remade a replica of his flat in the gallery. Members of the public were allowed to cook, eat, wash, watch videos or do anything they wanted to in 'his space' throughout the period of the exhibition. His aim, in part, is to throw the established relationship between artists and institutions, art and its public into confusion.

Vito Acconci – Room Situation <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=27383>
Room Situation documents a performance entitled Room Piece that was staged over three weekends in January 1970. Each weekend, Acconci moved furniture and objects

from his New York apartment to a gallery eighty blocks uptown. If he needed any of these items, he would return to the gallery to borrow them and take them back when he had finished using them. The distinction between the artist's home and his gallery, and between his private and public activities, became increasingly blurred.

1. Discussion: Which parts of your life do you think you could transfer to a public space?

Some parts of life are very private and some parts of life are lived out in public. Which parts of your life do you think you could transfer to a public space? Or vice versa? What would you do? Are people so used to looking at weird and wonderful scenes in everyday life that they wouldn't notice that something unusual might be art and not life?

Discuss unusual things you have seen and whether they could be art or not.

2. Activity: Art from life

Set up a team of people to take notes of random fragments of conversation at regular intervals over the course of a lunch break. Use these fragments as the basis for an idea for an artwork, text, image or performance.

Build upon the fragments to create a new artwork, drama performance or piece of creative writing.

Slide 13: What do you think now?

Discussion: What do you think now?

Activity: Brainstorming words

The image on this slide shows Work No. 232: the Whole World + the Work = the Whole World, (2000) by Martin Creed.

This work made of words in neon was displayed on the façade of Tate Britain in 2000. The statement is tricky and puzzling! It forces us to weigh it up in our mind as it is presented as an equation to be balanced. The words seem to suggest that art is inextricably part of life – as indeed it is, sitting on the front of a building for every passerby to see. At the same time however, the words seem to suggest that art is redundant, that it makes no impression upon the world or any difference to it. Can both interpretations of the statement be true or do they cancel each other out? Creed's work is economic; he suggests, rather like Duchamp, that a work of art could arise as the result of doing nothing at all!

1. Discussion: What do you think now?

Discuss with your class how their understanding of conceptual art has developed. Review some of the previous slides.

Conceptual art does not have to use conventional forms of representation (image or language) it can exist only in the mind, the art object may be autonomous, and there is no constraint upon style, look or philosophy.

'If conceptual art exists at the level of an idea, nevertheless the idea has to be completed in order to become art'. Sol Lewitt, Artist

What's the difference between anyone claiming they make conceptual art and an artist making conceptual art?

In general an artist would:

- Complete the idea.
- Have an audience or a public viewing in mind.
- Have a history of making art and a track record of working through different concepts and styles.
- Put their work into the context of the art world.
- Be prepared to receive criticism and/or praise as a result of sharing the work.
- Have a professional career i.e. be paid or commissioned to make art most of the time or make art as their main occupation above all others?!

2. Activity: Brainstorming words

Make a list or brainstorm lots of words or names remembered from this PowerPoint presentation.

Write each word on a separate piece of paper and put them in a lucky dip bag or box. Ask each pupil in turn to take out a word and to say one sentence about something to do with the word. If they are stuck, pass it on.

Summary

Would the class agree with the following definition of conceptual art?

- Conceptual art usually begins with the question 'what is art'?
- By eliminating the art object, artists can escape being assessed in terms of style or quality.
- When we talk about conceptual art we may suspend some of our conventional thinking about what art is.
- In conceptual art the concept takes precedence over the traditional materials and techniques associated with art.
- In conceptual art we may be presented with games, puzzles or questions about the nature of the world itself and the role of the art object in the world.
- Conceptual art is reflexive; it refers back upon itself and to other art works.

Which art and which artists would you suggest as examples to illustrate some of the points above? Look back over the slides and discuss.