



Sutton Trust  
Summer School  
2020

# Day 3

## History of Art: The Power of the Image

Three ten-minute exercises which intersperse the video





## Five minute exercise: 1A

### Visual analysis:

1. Is the woman in the painting a real figure or allegorical? How can we tell?
2. How does Delacroix use colour in this painting to create a sense of unity?
3. How does he create a sense of stability in the composition?
4. How does he represent the unity of the French people?

### Contextual research:

- a. What do the flag and the cap that Liberty wears represent?
- b. Are there any Classical references in the work, and if so why do you think they are they used?

Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, Oil on canvas,  
260 × 325 cm, Louvre, Paris

## Five minute exercise: 1B

### Visual analysis:

1. How does Friedrich create a feeling of stability in the composition?
2. How does he evoke a sense of mystery?
3. Do you think this represents man as master of nature, or man's insignificance in the face of nature? Why?
4. Are there any similarities in composition with *Liberty Leading the People*?

### Contextual research:

- a. Friedrich was a 'Romantic' painter. What are some characteristics of Romanticism in art?
- b. Is this a real or imagined landscape?

Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the sea of fog*, 1818, oil on canvas, 95 x 75 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Germany

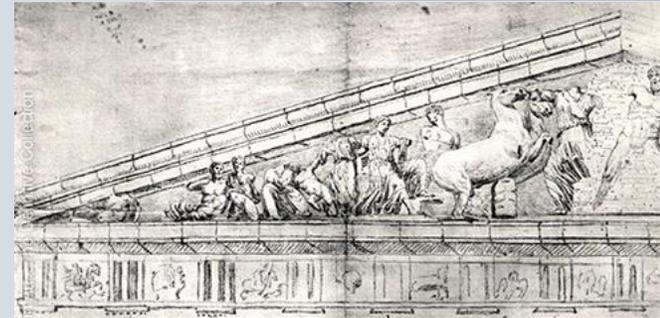


## Ten minute exercise 2: ART, POLITICS AND CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

From 1799 to 1803, Lord Elgin was the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. During his time there he gained the permission of the authorities to remove sculptures and reliefs from the Parthenon and over half of those which remained on the structure were taken down and transported to Britain. They went on display at the British Museum in 1817.

For many years they were known as the Elgin Marbles, but they are now referred to as the Parthenon Marbles. The ownership of these works of art has long been an extremely contentious issue, with Greece calling for their return and Britain refusing. On the following slides are extracts from the British Museum website <https://www.britishmuseum.org/parthenon-sculptures-british-museum> and a very recent article written for the *Guardian* newspaper. There is a great deal more to be found online.

**QUESTION:** Read the following extracts and think about these questions: What key arguments are being used? Do you think they are reasonable arguments? Where do you stand on the debate?



The following extract is taken from <https://www.britishmuseum.org/parthenon-sculptures-british-museum>

## The question of where the surviving sculptures from the Parthenon should be displayed has long been a subject of public discussion...

- **What has the Greek Government asked for?**

Since the early 1980s, Greek governments have argued for the permanent removal to Athens of all the Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum. The Greek government has also disputed the British Museum Trustees' legal title to the sculptures.

- **What is the British Museum's position?**

The British Museum tells the story of cultural achievement throughout the world, from the dawn of human history more than two million years ago until the present day. The Museum is a unique resource for the world: the breadth and depth of the collection allows the world's public to re-examine cultural identities and explore the connections between them.

Within the context of this unparalleled collection, the Parthenon sculptures are an important representation of the culture of ancient Athens. Millions of visitors from around the world admire the beauty of the sculptures each year – free of charge. They also gain insights into how ancient Greece influenced and was influenced by the other civilisations it encountered.

The Acropolis Museum allows the Parthenon sculptures in Athens to be appreciated against the backdrop of ancient Greek and Athenian history. This display does not alter the view of the Trustees of the British Museum that the sculptures are part of everyone's shared heritage and transcend cultural boundaries. The Trustees remain convinced that the current locations of the Parthenon sculptures allows different and complementary stories to be told about the surviving sculptures, highlighting their significance for world culture and affirming the universal legacy of ancient Greece. More about the Parthenon and its history can be found at [theacropolismuseum.gr](http://theacropolismuseum.gr) ([Opens in new window](#)).



The Acropolis Museum, Athens

**'PRODUCT OF THEFT': GREECE URGES UK TO RETURN  
PARTHENON MARBLES: The New Acropolis Museum wants to  
display antiquities removed on the orders of Lord Elgin**

Helena Smith, *THE GUARDIAN*, Sat 20 Jun 2020

The New Acropolis Museum was purpose-built to host the one thing every Greek government will always agree on: the Parthenon marbles being returned from London.

On Saturday, as the four-storey edifice marked its 11th anniversary, Athens reinvigorated the cultural row calling the British Museum's retention of the antiquities illegal and "contrary to any moral principle".

"Since September 2003 when construction work for the Acropolis Museum began, Greece has systematically demanded the return of the sculptures on display in the British Museum because they are the product of theft," the country's culture minister Lina Mendoni told the Greek newspaper *Ta Nea*. "The current Greek government – like any Greek government – is not going to stop claiming the stolen sculptures which the British Museum, contrary to any moral principle, continues to hold illegally.

For years, she said, the museum had argued that Athens had nowhere decent enough to display Phidias' masterpieces, insisting that its stance was "in stark contrast" to the view of the UK public. In repeated polls, Britons have voiced support for the repatriation of the carvings, controversially removed from the Parthenon in 1802 at the behest of Lord Elgin, London's ambassador to the Sublime Porte.

"It is sad that one of the world's largest and most important museums is still governed by outdated, colonialist views."

Greece's centre-right administration has vowed to step up the campaign to win back artworks that adorned the frieze of the Periclean showpiece ahead of the country's bicentennial independence celebrations next year. [...]

Well-placed government officials have not excluded the EU pressing for the return of the antiquities as part of an overarching Brexit deal.

The row was injected with renewed rancour when the British Museum's director, Hartwig Fischer, described their removal from Greece as "a creative act". Half of the 160-metre frieze is in London, with 50 metres in Athens and other pieces displayed in a total of eight other museums across Europe. [...]

For those who want the sculptures back in Athens, the Acropolis Museum's top-floor Parthenon gallery is the perfect antidote to the dark Duveen gallery in the British Museum.

Some 2,500 years after its construction, the Acropolis is viewed as Pericles' greatest triumph, testimony, say admirers, to his role in the achievements of the Golden Age.

As a classicist with an avowed love for ancient Greece, Boris Johnson has often paid tribute to the soldier statesman's mastery of governance "by the many, not the few", placing a bust of Pericles – purchased from the British Museum's gift shop – on his desk as soon as he moved into Downing Street.

But the British prime minister remains an ardent supporter of the sculptures remaining in London contending they were "rescued, quite rightly, by Elgin". [...]

## Ten minute exercise 3: ICONOGRAPHY

Art works very often contain objects which have associations that add another layer of meaning to the work. The study of these symbols is iconography and it is an important part of art history. We may have lost touch with the full meaning of some of the symbols used in previous ages but we are still a society driven by symbols and icons. Renaissance man would have looked at a lily in a painting and understood it as a symbol of the Virgin's purity. We can look at a large golden M and understand that it symbolises fast-food, a coffee bean means we can buy a drink.

Grayson Perry's contemporary works are rich in objects which add layers of cultural symbolism, a modern iconography which we understand. This is very visible in his tapestry *Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*, which includes a wealth of details that are part of consumer culture and say a lot about class and politics and how we define ourselves by the things we buy. Perry also likes reference famous works by other artists, in this case Jan van Eyck and Robert Campin.

### Visual analysis:

- 1. What objects does Perry use in the image which are symbols of class and/or culture?**
- 2. Look at the works by van Eyck and Campin; how does Perry reference these in his tapestry?**
- 3. How does the artist reference the Biblical story of the Annunciation?**



Grayson Perry, *Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*, part of the tapestry series *The Vanity of Small Differences*, 2013



Jan Van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434



Robert Campin, *Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece)*, c. 1427-32.