



Understanding Standards

Support pack for National course assessment

C805 77

**Art and Design (Advanced Higher):
Expressive Portfolio evidence**

Identifier: Life Choices

**This pack contains candidate evidence.
It must be kept securely.**

This edition: October 2019

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Please note:

The materials in this pack were used as part of the (subject) Understanding Standards event in (September 2019).

Overview

Purpose

Understanding Standards packs are intended to provide teachers, lecturers and assessors with a clear understanding of the marks that have been awarded to specific examples of candidate evidence and the reasons why these have been awarded. They may be used in centres:

- ◆ to prepare for the assessment of the relevant course component
- ◆ as benchmarks to help assessors judge the evidence produced by their own candidates
- ◆ for training purposes

The commentary and candidate evidence should be read in conjunction with the relevant coursework assessment task and the marking instructions.

Candidate evidence – contextual analysis

Further expressive portfolio evidence for this candidate can be found here:

<https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/ArtandDesign/AdvancedHigher/ExpressivePortfolio>



Advanced Higher Contextual Analysis

The Eye of the Storm by Michael Craig- Martin Cool, Clean, Colourful

Michael Craig-Martin is a modern, unique and contemporary artist. His still life work seems to contain random combinations, however, there is

often a hidden message or theme. His large graphical paintings are immediately recognisable, as he has created his own visual style.

Michael Craig Martin was born in Dublin on 28th August, 1941, before growing up in Colombia, USA, while his father was employed there. He moved to Washington, where he went to Fordham University for literature and history. This is where he found his love for painting.

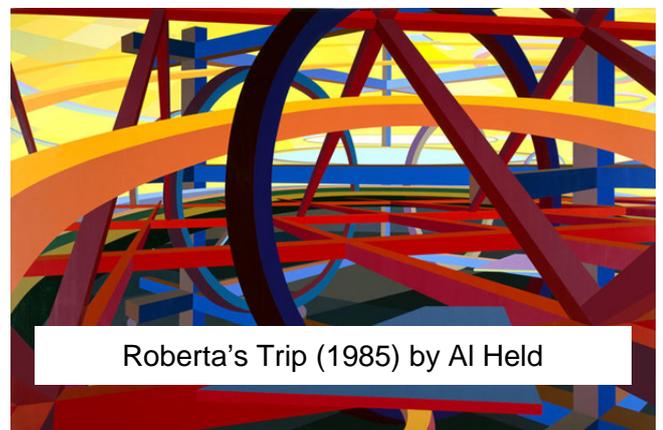
Before creating his so easily recognisable style, he spent time working on traditional paintings called 'Vanitas': still life paintings usually consisting of skulls, rotting fruit and fading flowers, a collection of items to symbolise the sureness of death and vanity in the world. However, it was in the late seventies when he had his breakthrough and found his own unique style.

In 1961, Craig-Martin enrolled on a painting course at Yale, before returning to Ireland in the mid-sixties. He *said 'Everything I know about colour comes from that course'*. Craig-Martin thanks this course for helping him realise the artist he wanted to be and went on to become one of the key figures in the first generation of conceptual artists. Amongst his contemporaries were Alex Katz and Al Held, who he credits with being an influence on him during the course at Yale.



Alex Katz next to a portrait of his wife

Later in his life, Craig-Martin began teaching at Goldsmiths College, London, and became a

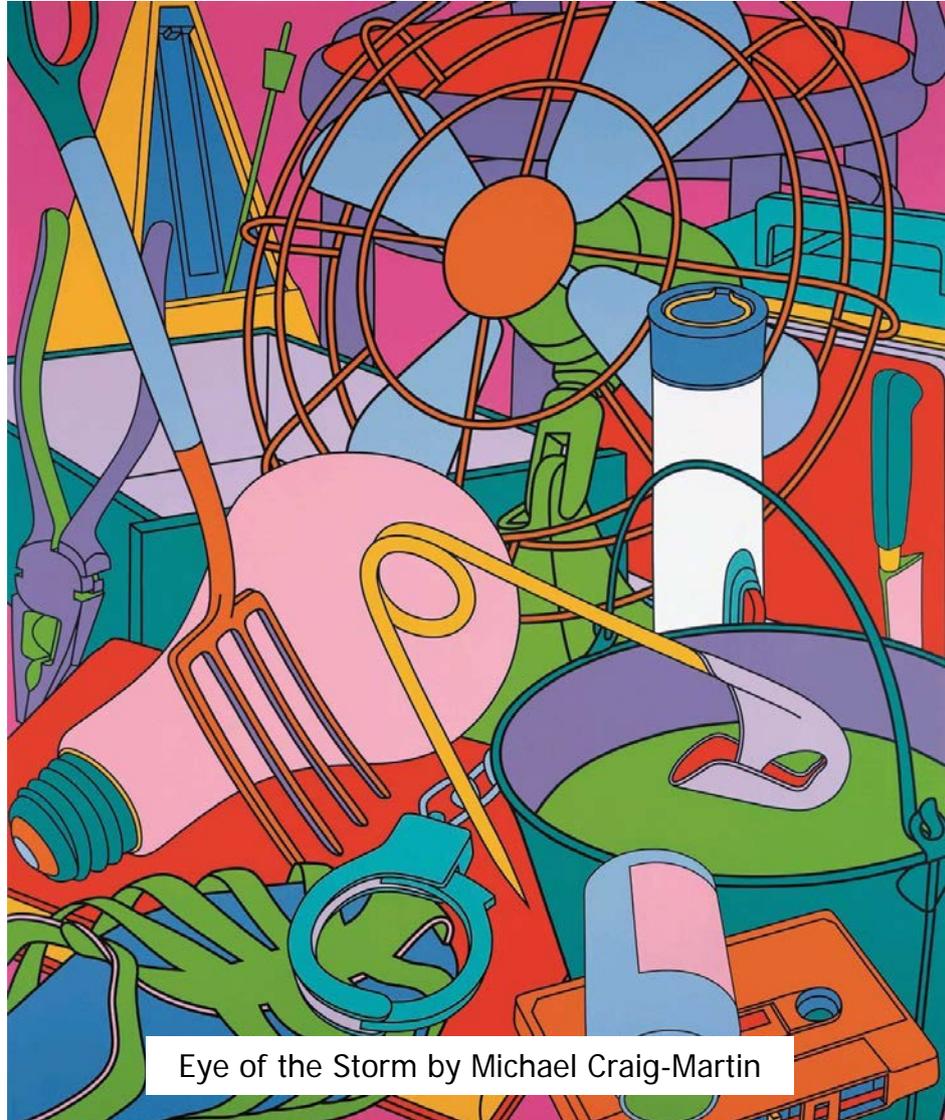


Roberta's Trip (1985) by Al Held

well-known mentor of the group known as Young British Artists (YBA). He has passed his wisdom onto his students, including Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst.

His most fascinating artwork to date is *The Eye of the Storm*, made in 2002. The work displays various seemingly random objects, overlapping and integrating with each other, with a large number of different colours, such as red, blue, green and yellow, contrasting as well as creating unity in the piece as a whole. The irregular scale and size is unusual and

unrealistic, such as a light bulb and a pin shown as being the same size as a bucket and a fan. This gives it a futuristic feel, as it has been said to embody the former artistic trend of Pop Art, a style which emerged in America and Britain in the 1950s. The movement challenged the traditional fine arts through a more simplified effect.



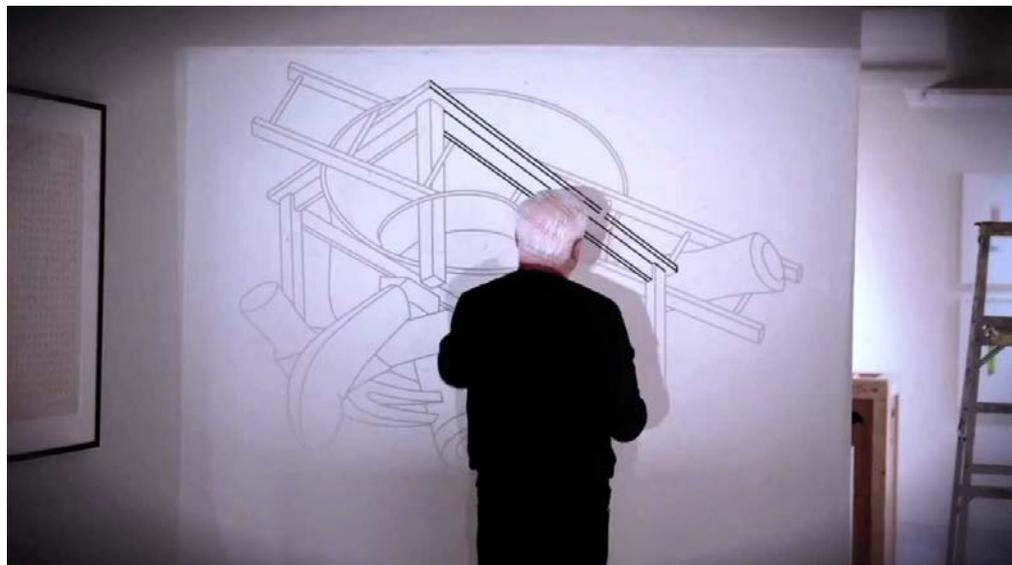
Eye of the Storm by Michael Craig-Martin

In *Eye of the Storm* he is seen to experiment with the use of colour. This is shown through an unlimited colour palette and vibrant samples, and because of his selection, his work has been described as mixed, random and childlike. In this piece, it is primarily pink due to the bold background with a mixture of green, red, blue and yellows. It has been said to be chaotic due to his colour choice, bearing no real relation to the object he has drawn and simplified, such as the pink and blue lightbulb. As well as being random, his colour selection is also very childlike, being mostly primary and secondary colours, which helps make sure the piece is bold and bright. The clash in warm and cold colours gives this piece a noisy, busy and active feel. His use of primary colours creates a fun and exciting artwork. Due to the vibrant colour choice, Craig-Martin's work has a Pop

Art feel – a trend which is based on simplified and bold images of everyday items, although the most famous ones are usually portraits.

When asked why he decided to paint in this colourful, simplified way, instead of the hyper-realistic artwork in today's society, Craig-Martin said *'You can't force yourself to be something you're not.'* Even though people were sceptical at first of his different and unusual take on art, he stuck with it and remained true to himself.

In this painting, Craig-Martin used acrylic paint onto a larger canvas. The acrylic paint gives the piece a smooth texture while embracing the vibrant colours. When he started drawing, it was all about making the painting realistic and 3D, therefore he decided to stray from the norm and remove all shadows and lighting. This made the artwork look flattened. Craig-Martin also works with computers and loved the copy and paste tool. He scans all his individual pieces into the computer and therefore can make as many changes as he wants without having to redo 100 paintings. However, he prefers craft painting over digital printing. He works everything out digitally first, ie, the colours, the positioning, the overlapping, and then he paints it by hand. Therefore he knows what the final outcome will look like before it's finished. He used just a few precise outlines creating an almost elegant feel, however, this clashes with his childish choice to use fierce and radiant neon colours. For the sharp and clear corners of his artwork, he uses tape – by taping all around his objects, painting over and then removing it to leave the intense cut edges to his work, and then re-tapes the outline with thin black tape.





Craig-Martin has been known to experiment with his methods broadly through his constant change of digital, canvas and wall art.

While Michael Craig-Martin likes to express himself through his colour choice, it is understandably seen in the subject matter of *Eye of the Storm*. The objects seem random however aren't: *'I thought the objects we value least because they were ubiquitous were actually the most extraordinary'*. He uses the seemingly boring everyday objects to draw out attention to the true beauty and amazement for the items we see all of the time. It is objects you see in everyday life sat next to others you don't see every day. This could suggest the differences in someone's life that not everyone knows about, and therefore why the unusual objects are hiding or integrating with the normal ones. Craig-Martin realises that the world is constantly changing rapidly therefore uses the focus of everyday objects to keep his pieces up to date and fashionable and to avoid the once popular things turning into antiques.

Craig-Martin has been known to hide messages such as painting fast food chips green to emphasis the destruction fast food and radioactive snacks are causing. Another take on this piece in particular is that it represents crime and addiction, with the hand-cuffs and the pill bottle, it is a questionable theory? Within his everyday objects, Craig-Martin has placed hand-cuffs, a pill bottle, a needle and a knife suggesting the likes of crime and drugs in a person's life, therefore conveys hidden messages within the piece.

From subject matter to his choice of quirky compositions, Michael Craig-Martin has been described as a unique all-rounder. The composition of *Eye of the Storm* is very condensed and central within the piece, however, could also be said to be scattered as there is no visual formula or plan to where Craig-Martin has decided to place each object. This is seen due to the objects repeatedly overlapping with one another. The composition looks like it has been thrown into chaos which makes no sense due to the title, *Eye of the Storm*. It reminds you of the mess you leave behind after searching for something, therefore, their storm is a mess. I sit his storm? And is it the storm of his life? All the objects seem random before you look into it in more depth, this piece gives an insight into someone's life and personality to whoever's storm it is.

Sources

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