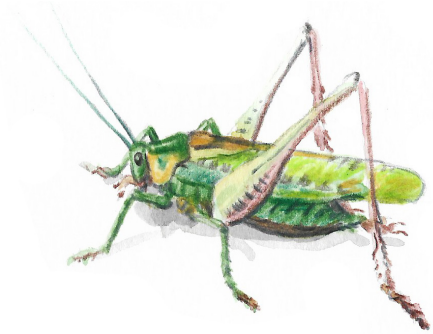
The Courtauld



A Collection of collections

This resource presents a series of curated selections exploring The Courtauld Gallery and making new connections beyond it.

The first - **'A collection of collections'** - is an attempt to understand the many different sources and routes into the collection that artworks have had. The second - **'A collection of artwork by women?'** - highlights the work of female artists and some barriers to their inclusion. Finally - **'A collection of affection'** - explores signs and expressions of affection shown through art.

Each collection includes explanations of why particular artworks have been selected and is followed by some talking points that are intended to prompt further individual thought or class/group discussion. These might well lead to more questions than answers. There is also a suggested activity and an invitation to curate your own collection.

The collections were curated by Toya Walker, Sarah Carne and Jhinuk Sarkar and illustrated by Toya and Jhinuk.

A collection of collections by Toya Walker

The Courtauld Gallery is often described as 'a collection of collections' because it is made up of works of art that have been donated by many different collectors over time. Some of these are on display in the gallery, some are in storage or lent to other galleries and many are available to see by request. As an illustrator and member of The Courtauld learning team, I have selected the pieces below in an attempt to understand how works of art in the collection have ended up here, why they might have been chosen for display and to prompt thinking about why others have not.

In the collection and on display in the gallery

1. OUTSIDE WING OF A TRIPTYCH REPRESENTING BIRDS IN A TREE
around 1375, Germany

3. TURQUOISE VASE
1914, Omega Workshops

4. GEORGE II TEAPOT
1765-1766 Louisa Perina Courtauld

5. SELF PORTRAIT WITH BANDAGED EAR
1889, Vincent van Gogh

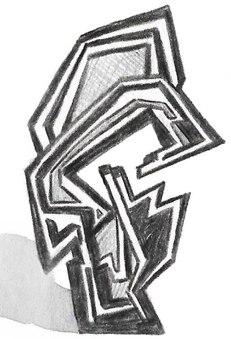
2. DEEP DISH DEPICTING CROSSING OF THE RED SEA
1560, Giovanna Battista dalle Palle

In the collection and stored in the Print room

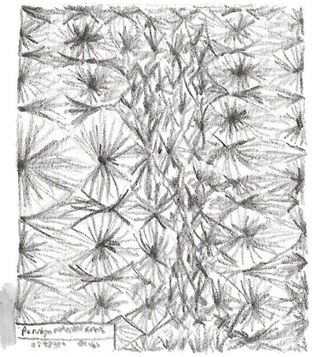
6. DESIGN FOR A TAPESTRY
1936-1937 Noémi Ferenczy

8. POSTER FOR 'LA REVUE BLANCHE'
1894 Pierre Bonnard

7. GRASSHOPPER
Maria Sybilla Merian 1647-1717

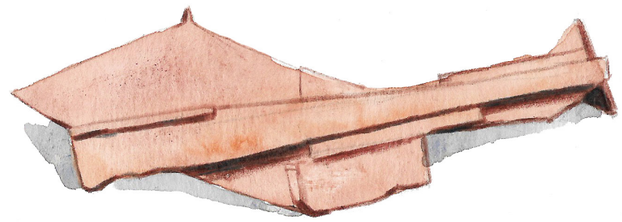


9. VORTICIST COMPOSITION IN BLACK AND WHITE
1914, Helen Saunders



10. PENRHYNDEUDRAETH 16.9.96
1996 Chris Ofili

In storage



11. TABLE PIECE CLXXXV
1974, Anthony Caro

Not in the collection

12. MY CUP
1960, Mark Walker

1.This painting came from the collection bequeathed by **Lord Lee of Fareham**. One of the founders of The Courtauld, Lord Lee valued the role of the private collector buying things they liked.

The money for his collection came from his wife **Ruth Moore**'s family who were bankers.

2. This dish came from the collection of **Thomas Gambier Parry** donated by his grandson Mark. Gambier Parry was a devout Christian and an artist in his own right, painting frescoes in a church on his estate. Much of his collection features works with a religious theme.

The money for his collection was inherited from family who ran the East India Company.

3. This vase was bequeathed by the artist and critic **Roger Fry**.

His collection consisted of objects collected around the world and artworks by himself and friends, including those who worked for the Omega Studios.

4+5. From the collection of **Samuel Courtauld**. Courtauld was a passionate advocate of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism who donated a large collection and his home for the original gallery.

His wealth came from the family textile company which produced rayon. Previous generations were silversmiths.

6. This piece is from a large collection bequeathed by **Count Antoine Seilern**. Seilern was particularly interested in the 17th-century painter Peter Paul Rubens. In addition to finished paintings, he also collected sketches by Rubens as an insight into the painter at work. Other pieces (like this one) reflect his interest in supporting the artists of his time.

His large fortune was inherited from a family publishing business.

7. This watercolour is from the collection of **Robert Witt,** another founding collector. Together with his wife, Mary, he collected prints, photographs, drawings and other works on paper.

8. This piece was part of **Lillian Browse**'s collection. A pioneering female art dealer, Browse's personal collection included several works that reflected her love of dance and her early training as a dancer.

9. A large collection of drawings by **Helen Saunders** was donated to the gallery by her cousin, the art historian **Brigid Peppin**.

10. This print was donated by **Charles Booth-Clibborn** of Paragon Press along with three others. Paragon Press collaborates with invited contemporary artists (often with no previous printmaking experience) and print studios to make new pieces of work.

11. This sculpture was donated by the artist. There are other individual pieces in the collection donated by artists or commercial galleries.

Not all donations are accepted. One criterion is that the work(s) are likely to be displayed regularly and/or used in other ways, such as for study in our Prints and Drawings Study Room.

12.This pottery cup was made by my dad when he was at school. It is not in the collection and wouldn't be accepted as a donation, but it is very special to me.

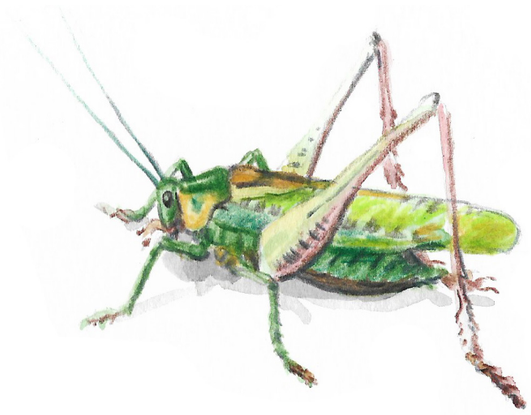
Talking points

The following talking points can be used to prompt further individual thought, or small group to whole class discussion, which might result in more questions than answers.

Possibly influenced by my role as an illustrator, most of my favourite works in the collection are on paper (watercolours, drawings and prints). Very few of these works are on permanent display in the gallery, but they can be seen by request in the print room. **What are the possible reasons* for these works not being on display in the gallery?**

**For example, think about how exposure to light might affect different works.*

Historically, works of art by female artists were far more likely to be in mediums like watercolour or in textile. These mediums are less likely to be on display and are often seen as less valuable. In the gallery there are very few works of art by female artists, but there are many more in the collection in the print room. **Does this change your view on why works on paper might not be on display?**
See 'A collection of work by women?' for further exploration of this theme.



Is it important that artworks on display represent a range of different viewpoints?

Should they be representative of the audience that views them?

This mug is not in the collection (it is in my cupboard), but when viewed alongside some of the other ceramics in the collection it doesn't look so out of place. **How do you think a gallery decides what is worthy of display?**

What do you think should be in the collection, or on display, that isn't?

Do you collect anything? How do you decide what to keep in your collection and what to leave out?

Curating your own collection

After viewing my collection I invite you (as an individual, group or class) to curate (carefully choose, arrange and present) one of your own. You can do this in many different ways but there are some ideas below.

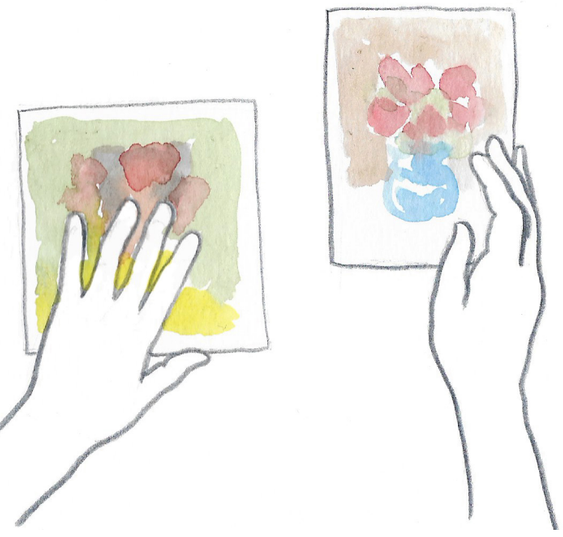
Think of a specific interest you have – it might be political, a hobby, social. Can you find any works of art (or details of) that remind you of it? You don't have to like them but you do have to have a reason for choosing them. You may want to select works of art from the collection of The Courtauld Gallery (see artandarchitecture.org.uk) or works of art from other websites (Art UK, Google Arts and Culture) or things from your daily life.

You might choose to present your collection as a poster or double-page spread in your sketchbook. Perhaps you would prefer to work in digital format (as an image/slideshow/pinterest or padlet board for example). You could illustrate your choices by drawing or painting them in a medium of your choice or by collecting printed or digital images and making a collage.

I invited Sarah Carne (a colleague at The Courtauld) and Jhinuk Sarkar (another illustrator) to curate collections reflecting their own interests. Please see the following pages to view them.

A collection of work by women? page 6-7
by Sarah Carne

A collection of affection page 8-11
by Jhinuk Sarkar



Full list of artworks

If you would like to see the originals or find out more about the objects in Toya's collection you can find them here:

1. ***Outside wing of a triptych representing birds in a tree***, around 1375, West Germany, egg tempera on wood
2. ***Deep dish depicting crossing of the Red Sea***, 1560, Giovanni Battista dalle Palle, tin-glazed earthenware
3. ***Turquoise vase***, around 1914, Omega Workshops, stoneware with turquoise glaze
4. ***George II teapot,*** 1765-66, Louisa Perina Courtauld, silver
5. ***Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear***, 1889, Vincent van Gogh, oil paint on canvas
6. ***Design for a tapestry***, 1936-37, Noémi Ferenczy, gouache on paper (transparent)
7. ***Grasshopper***, date unknown, Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717), watercolour on paper
8. ***Poster for 'La Revue Blanche'***, 1894, Pierre Bonnard, ink on paper
9. ***Vorticist Composition in Black and White,*** 1914, Helen Saunders, ink on paper
10. ***Penrhyndeudraeth 16.9.96*** (Plate 09 from the 'North Wales' series), 1996, Chris Ofili, etching – ink on paper
11. ***Table Piece CLXXXV***, 1974, Anthony Caro, steel and fixative (varnish)
12. ***Cup***, around 1960, Mark Walker/my dad, stoneware

A collection of work by women? by Sarah Carne

Samuel Courtauld's son-in-law said of him that he never collected anything that he didn't love. I am an artist and educator and I have chosen a selection of artworks from the collection not because I love them but because of my interest in raising the profile of other women artists and in highlighting some of the gaps where they are missing or the barriers to their inclusion.

1. FOX MASK STIRRUP CUP
1773-1774,
George Cowles/Louisa Perina Courtauld

2.#TitlesAreArchaic
2020, Sarah Carne

3. WOMAN TYING HER SHOE
1918, Pierre Auguste Renoir

4. WHITE VASE WITH MOTTLED
IN DECORATION IN MANGANESE
AND A TURQUOISE RIM
1914, Omega Workshops/Vanessa Bell

5. A CONVERSATION
1913-1916, Vanessa Bell

6. CHAIR WITH EMBROIDERED BACK
1913, Roger Fry / Vanessa Bell/Winifred Gill

1.This silverware cup was made by the partnership of Louisa Perina Courtauld and George Cowles. Louisa Courtauld originally ran the silver business after her husband's death in 1765 but after a couple of years she went into partnership with Cowles.

2. In this ongoing project I question whether titles are still necessary. Having HON and HRH stitched onto a pair of Nike trainers references monograms whilst undermining the supposed authority of the three letters.

3.This painting by Renoir was the first modern painting in the Courtauld's collection and was purchased by Elizabeth Courtauld. The Courtauld was named for Elizabeth by Samuel after her death but has become more associated with him because of his passion for the Impressionists whilst her main interest was music.

4+5. There are two works of art by Vanessa Bell in the current display. She worked as an artist and designer and was involved in the Omega Workshops. Set up by Roger Fry, they were intended as a commercial enterprise to help artists earn more than a minimum wage and to bring the aesthetics of modern art into interiors.

6. This chair was designed by Roger Fry and made by a furniture designer. The tapestry panel is by artists Vanessa Bell and Winifred Gill. Fry thought the objects on sale at the Omega Workshops should be valued for their beauty rather than the status of the people who made them so designs were unsigned and marked only with the symbol Ω.

Talking points

There weren't many artworks on display that fitted my requirements when I was choosing. Women historically had far less access to art training and artistic professions so the collectors were limited in their choice and the majority of their collections, though not all, were by European male artists. This is changing and we look forward to having a more diverse collection in the future but it is worth considering whether works of art by women would have been held in the same regard as those by men even if they had been available. I have contributed a work of my own. **Which of your class's artworks would you like to include in your collection and why?**

Is it important for artists to sign their work?

How would you feel if your work was credited to an organisation or business name rather than you?

Lots of artists have teams of craftspeople who produce or help construct their work. **Does this change how you feel about the value or ownership of those artworks?**

Although their names are usually written with George Cowles before Louisa Courtauld you can see her initials are actually first on the silver mark.

In the 21st Century is it still usual to put a man's name first? Can you think of any examples?

Do you think it is easier these days for a woman to run her own business?

What might some of the issues be even now?

Full list of artworks

If you would like to see the originals or find out more about the objects in Sarah's collection you can find them here:

1. ***Fox mask stirrup cup***, 1773-74, George Cowles and Louisa Perina Courtauld, silver (on long-term loan from AkzoNobel)
2. ***#TitlesAreArchaic***, 2020, Sarah Carne, embroidery on leather (not in the collection)
3. ***Woman tying her Shoe***, around 1918, Pierre Auguste Renoir, oil on canvas (collected by Elizabeth Courtauld)
4. ***White vase with mottled decoration in manganese and a turquoise rim***, around 1914, Omega Workshops (1913-1919)/Vanessa Bell, tin-glazed earthenware (collected by Roger Fry)
5. ***A Conversation***, 1913-16, Vanessa Bell, oil paint on canvas (collected by Roger Fry)
6. ***Chair with embroidered seat back***, 1913, Artist – Roger Eliot Fry, Embroiderers – Vanessa Bell and Winifred Gill, painted wood, leather; chairback worked in cross-stitch with coloured wools (collected by Marianne Rodker)

A collection of affection by Jhinuk Sarkar

The collection of The Courtauld Gallery is drawn from periods in history that can feel disconnected from our own but, for many people the experience of restrictions and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a reconnecting with the small things that we may have previously taken for granted. For example, hugs have risen in value over the last year. For my collection I have focused on signs of affection. As an illustrator and educator I have chosen a selection of artworks from the collection because varying signs of affection reflect the British and Indian cultures I grew up with. I hope these spark interest in you to explore more signs of affection too.

1. The Nerli Wedding Chest
1472

3. The Kiss (recto)
Circa 1778-80

2. Metalwork bag
1300-30

4. Woman sewing whilst being courted
1871

5. Anthony & Cleopatra
1640

6. Incense Burner 1280-90

7 Dudan's textile (not in the collection)

1. Weddings can be occasions for flamboyant spending.

During the Renaissance in Italy, wealthy husbands-to-be commissioned pairs of sumptuously decorated marriage chests. Newlyweds and the groom's family would bring these from the bride's family residence to her new home. The chests might contain linen and fine clothing. Both families' coats of arms are displayed on the corners of each chest to mark their joining.

2. This metalwork wallet is one of the most exceptional pieces of its kind. Discs on the bag's body feature musicians, revellers and horsemen. The key to the bag's function is found on its lid where a courtly feast is illustrated, framed by a band of inscriptions praising the ruler. Attendants in minutely patterned coats and sumptuous hats bring food and drink in luxurious vessels of the type found across Asia and the Middle East. An attendant at either end offers courtly entertainments of music and hunting.

3. This scene shows awkwardness and possible reluctancy towards receiving affection. Costume reveals the time period captured, indicating reasons for the reserved behaviour. Body language and postures also bring possible stories to life about their relationship.

4. Similarly to 3, this scene reveals some of the realities of dating during the1800's!

5. Taken from the gallery's collection of works on papers, notice the gestures and facial expressions on both Anthony and Cleopatra's faces - how this shows their interactions. Even the show of skin and detail in their clothing suggests the emotion being communicated between the two.

6. Originally this incense burner contained a small central cup to keep the fragrance level. Incense burners came in different sizes and could be held in the hand, or rolled across the floor from one person to another.

The decoration here interlocks hemispheres featuring the sun surrounded by the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter. References to astronomy and the related popular practice of astrology were customary decorative themes.

7. This object is a framed piece of delicate textile. It originates from Kolkata, India and was made in the 1940s. The textile is a personal object of mine that shows a sign of affection. In my family, Indian cultures show signs of affection in subtle ways, often through food and gifts instead of kisses, hugs and smiles!

The textile piece was made by my grandmother, who I called 'Dudan', She made this using torn up strips of old sari material when she was pregnant with my mother. When my mum was born it was one of the first things she wrapped her in.

Talking points

Using objects from The Courtauld Gallery highlighted here, pick a question below to discuss with a friend, group of students in your class, your family or teachers. Note down the differences and similarities, the surprises and the period of time these stories were set in. Use this to help you uncover more stories about affection and how you would describe what affection means to you.

The metalwork wallet reminds me of food as a sign of affection in my family, which in turn, reminded me of the textile piece made by my grandmother.

What signs of affection can you take from 3 of these objects?

Can you put them into a story of affection you've experienced in real life?

Can you imagine a story with the person or group you are talking to that involves these objects?

Is there a unique sign of affection in your family that these objects remind you of?

Can you imagine showing your love or affection for someone via an object like the marriage chest?

What object would you choose to give to someone to show your affection?

How might you feel if you received an object like this?

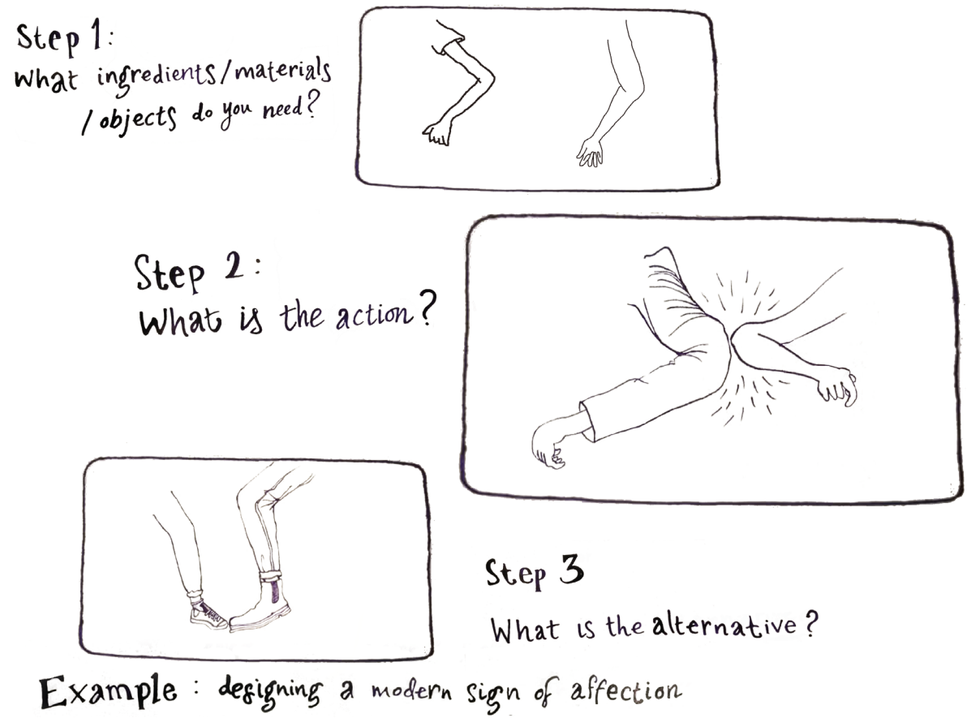
It might be easier to spot the signs of affection in some of the objects I have chosen than others. They may be subtle or you might think they are obvious. **What do you think the signs of affection in these objects are and how will you label them?** For example it could be 'touch', 'music', 'a gift', 'food' and more. Put them into categories and into two groups: 1. Subtle and 2. Obvious.

Are signs of affection always mutual? Is there a universal sign of affection?

Activity

Now you've had a chance to explore the 'collection of affections' choose an object (either of your own or from the collection) to help you design a new sign of affection. Will it be subtle? Or obvious? Will it be something inspired by the collection or your own family story, partner, friendship? Will it be based on a recently created sign of affection such as the elbow kiss commonly used in 2020? Or something you discovered from the collections like the reluctant kiss or getting on with your daily tasks (maybe sewing in the 19th Century = emailing in the 21st century!)?

You could explain your idea as a set of instructions, with or without illustrations as shown.



Full list of artworks

If you would like to see the originals or find out more about the objects in Jhinuk's collection you can find them here:

1. ***The Nerli Wedding Chest***, 1472, Jacopo del Sellaio and Zanobi di Domenico, egg tempera and oil paint on wood with gold leaf. (Collected by Lord Lee of Fareham)
2. ***Metalwork bag***, 1300–30, Ilkhanid dynasty (1256–1353), brass, hammered, chased and inlaid with silver and gold. (Collected by Thomas Gambier-Parry)
3. ***The Kiss (recto)***, Circa 1778-80, Thomas Rowlandson, inscription and drawing. (Collected by Sir Robert Witt)
4. ***Woman sewing whilst being courted***, 1871, Luke Fildes, ink on paper. (Collected by Sir Robert Witt)
5. ***Anthony & Cleopatra***, 1640, Guercino, pen and ink on paper. (Collected by Sir Robert Witt)
6. ***Incense Burner***, 1280–90, Mamluk Sultanate, brass, hammered, pierced, chased and inlaid with silver. (Collected by Thomas Gambier-Parry)
7. ***Dudan's Textile,*** circa 1944, Sudharani Roy, cotton. (Collected by Jhinuk Sarkar)

A Collection of collections was devised by Toya Walker in collaboration with Jhinuk Sarkar and the Courtauld Learning team.

In our learning resources we invite illustrators, artists and art historians to respond to the collection, bringing a range of views and voices into dialogue with the works of art and their histories. We would like to include your voices in the conversation. Please share your responses with us at:

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