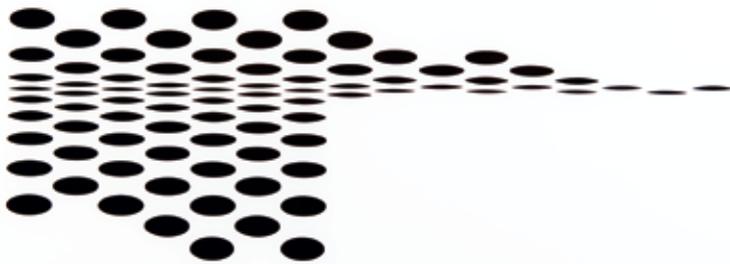


a beginner's guide to modern art at mima



Middlesbrough | modern art | mima

Patrick Caulfield | Tracey Emin | Duncan Grant | Gésine Hackenberg
LS Lowry | Glynn Porteous | Lucie Rie | Bridget Riley

Open your eyes

Look at the piece of art

Decide what you think of it

Never let anyone tell you that you are wrong

Enjoy yourself

William Forbes,
Local creative writer

Modern art is an interpretation of

how you see the world around you.

A personal experience expressed in art form.

Gillian Spensley,
Local creative writer

Cover image: Bridget Riley, *Fragment 1-7*, 1965. Silkscreen print on acrylic.
© Bridget Riley 2013. All rights reserved, courtesy Karsten Schubert, London.
Collection of mima. Purchased from the Rowen Gallery. Photo: Steven Brown.

About this guide

Use this guide to find out more about Middlesbrough's modern art collection at mima, through an introduction to eight artworks.

From LS Lowry to Tracey Emin, from drawings to jewels, there are many surprises and discoveries to be made.

Art historian Gail-Nina Anderson, Laura Degan of Middlesbrough writers' group Writers' Block and a group of local people who attended a creative writing session at mima have helped us to bring these works of art to life. The works in the guide represent the strengths of the art collection at mima and each offers a different 'way in' to experiencing modern art.

While the works in this guide won't be on display all year round, we aim to show them on a regular basis, and pieces from our permanent collection are often included in our changing exhibitions programme.



All non artwork images: eve photography

Did you know that you can come along to one of our monthly behind-the-scenes collection store tours, last Friday of the month at 2pm?

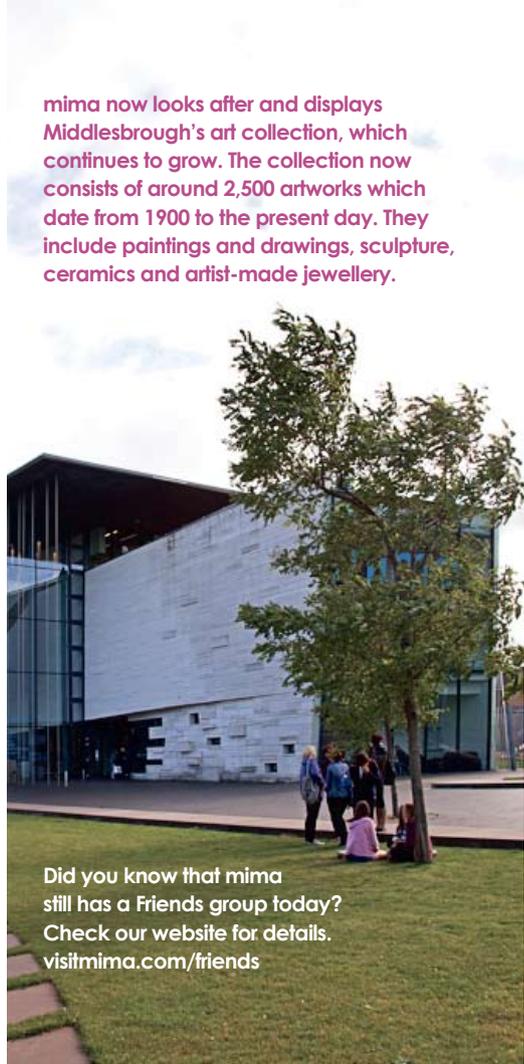
Look out for regular talks and events about modern art throughout the year.

Just check our website or What's On guide for more details, or ask a member of staff.

The growth of Middlesbrough's art collection

Middlesbrough has had an art collection since the 1950s. It was previously housed and shown across the town's three main arts venues, Middlesbrough Art Gallery, the Cleveland Craft Centre and the Cleveland Gallery. When the collections outgrew these venues, Middlesbrough Council and the Arts Council decided that the town needed a new art gallery, and mima was born, opening its doors in 2007.

The Friends of Middlesbrough Art Gallery, who came together for the first time in 1952, were vital to the growth of the town's art collection. They saw Middlesbrough's potential, they had a vision for it and its people, and they determined to put the town on the art map. The Friends accumulated a collection of diverse and experimental works by the most exciting, groundbreaking artists of the time. What the Friends started, mima continues today.



Did you know that mima still has a Friends group today? Check our website for details. visitmima.com/friends

mima now looks after and displays Middlesbrough's art collection, which continues to grow. The collection now consists of around 2,500 artworks which date from 1900 to the present day. They include paintings and drawings, sculpture, ceramics and artist-made jewellery.

Modern art – where it all started

In 1563, Cosimo de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, founded the first academy of art in Florence. Students were taught that art should offer a faithful copy of nature – and this opinion prevailed for hundreds of years. Art had strict rules, and the most successful artists were those who could paint and draw with painstaking accuracy.

But with the invention of photography in 1839, traditional painting and drawing began to be marginalised and from the 1870s, revolutionary artists set out to rewrite the rules.

Art, they said, is about capturing and expressing the human experience. Artists aimed to capture their subjects in ways that would also contain their thoughts, emotions and ideas about the world around them.

Modern and contemporary art is incredibly varied, and includes many different styles. From Lowry's urban scenes to Bridget Riley's optical illusions, from Tracey Emin's unmade bed to Carl Andre's piles of bricks, modern art can be revealing, surprising and yes, sometimes controversial.

'Modern art is the girl who refuses to wear school uniform.'

Helen Anderson,
Local creative writer



Advice to travellers:

**You are entering a
preconception free zone.**

Please leave behind:

**Your ideas of what art should be,
Your picture of a technically
brilliant representation of a horse,
or a landscape, or a portrait,
Your prejudices about unmade
beds, divided cows and
squiggly lines.**

Bring in:

**An open mind and open eyes,
Your memories, your stories,
your ability to associate
and connect,
Your understanding
of the human race
And our endlessly
varied journeys.**

Local creative writer



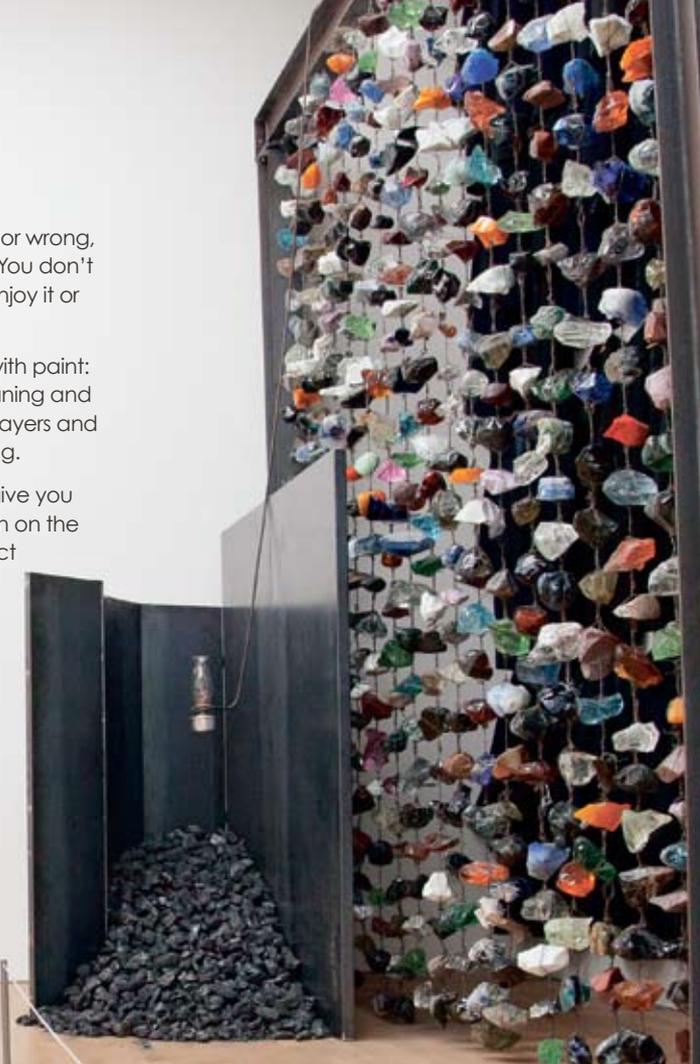
Looking at modern art

In modern art there is no right or wrong, only individual interpretation. You don't need to be an art expert to enjoy it or get something out of it.

Modern artists are like poets with paint: their work is packed with meaning and it is up to us to peel back the layers and start unpicking and interpreting.

The staff at mima will usually give you some background information on the art on show, but how you react to it will be down to personal opinion and taste. If you have any questions, just ask; our staff are happy to help.

**Now find out more about
some of the works in
mima's collection.
They are listed in date
order to show how the
collection spans the
last 100 years.**



Duncan Grant

Design for a plate, 1912



Image left: Duncan Grant, *Design for a Plate, Nude Figure*, 1912. Gouache and watercolour on paper. © Estate of Duncan Grant. All Rights Reserved. DACS 2013. Collection of mima. Purchased from the Mayor Gallery, London, 1978.

Our local writers express what modern art means to them:

Whatever you want it to be

The temperature of the world

Another's interpretation of someone's expression

The baring of the soul for the world to pick over

Duncan Grant was part of the free-thinking Bloomsbury Set of artists and writers, whose privileged yet bohemian lives in the first part of the 20th Century now seem like a distant costume drama. However, in their design firm, the Omega Workshops, they helped overturn the old idea that design was less important than art and that decoration couldn't be taken seriously.

Grant loved the decorated surface, and he painted furniture and walls with exuberant figures, flowers and flourishes. His athletes, dancers and circus performers are lightly sketched to express their energy and gestures.

This watercolour painting is a design for a plate, where against a brilliant yellow background a figure poses, caught mid-performance. Hints of the painting styles of Matisse and Picasso are worn lightly in a design that is unashamedly bright and cheerful.

Glynn Porteous

Scullery Sink, 1954



Image left: Glynn Porteous. *Scullery Sink*, 1954. Oil on board. Collection of mimid. Presented by an anonymous donor. Northern Art Schools Exhibition 1954.

One of our writing workshop participants used this painting as a starting point for their own story:

The tea towel has been scorched. Shoes abandoned on the threshold. Pans boil, their lids jumping and juddering. The tick tock of a clock marks time. Outside someone is shouting. Tea time! Come in Jennifer, and make sure you bring your brother.

Glynn Porteous was a popular local artist and this work was painted in Middlesbrough's Acton Street. Porteous painted *Scullery Sink* before he went to the Slade School of Art in 1957, at a time when artists and writers who were part of the 'Kitchen Sink' movement were celebrating everyday life in art. Porteous was keen to reveal the unexpected beauty in the entirely ordinary and everyday of life.

The artist's palette of greens, greys and yellows, white highlights and tiny touches of red show his wonderful use of colour. You can also see how he has built up his brushstrokes to create something which is both abstract and recognisably real. There is no glamour in the scene, yet it is lovingly painted to be a delight to the eye.

LS Lowry

The Old Town Hall and St. Hilda's Church, Middlesbrough, 1959



Image left: LS Lowry, *The Old Town Hall and St Hilda's Church, Middlesbrough, 1959*.
Oil on Canvas. © Estate of LS Lowry. All Rights Reserved. DACS 2013. Collection of mima.
Presented by the Friends of the Middlesbrough Art Gallery, 1960.

Our local writers created a soundscape for Lowry's painting. The result is a collective mish-mash of thoughts, words and phrases that bring the scene to life and conjure up industry, motherhood, childhood, friendship, loss and community.

I'm late, oh why, why.

why didn't I leave earlier?

I love her, why doesn't she see me?

Woof!

Next year will be different.

I love this place.

I think I'm gay.

I'm the luckiest man alive.

Why can't I make her happy?

I'm tired.

Woof!

Am I a good mother?

I'm lost.

Shall I show you the way?

LS Lowry (1887-1976) is one of the most famous artists of the 20th Century. Born in Manchester, he is famous for his scenes of working class life in the industrial towns and cities of Northern England and for his 'matchstick men' figures. He was influenced by the Social Realist movement, which depicted everyday scenes of working class life without glamour or sentimentality.

In 1958, the Friends of Middlesbrough Art Gallery commissioned Lowry to paint a local subject of his own choosing. The artist chose to paint an everyday scene of the town dominated by the towering shape of St Hilda's Church. In the shadow of the black gothic church, Lowry's human figures live out the soap opera of human life - walking, watching and waiting.

Bridget Riley

Fragment, 1965

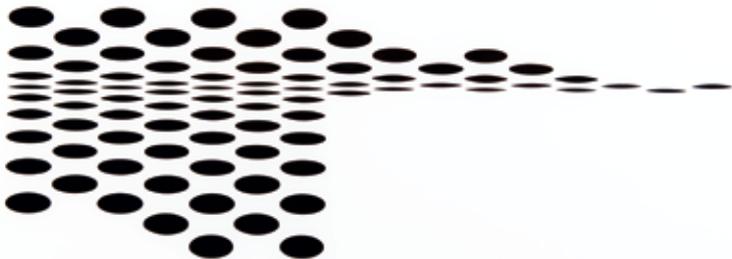


Image above: Bridget Riley, *Fragment 1-7*, 1965. Silkscreen print on acrylic.
© Bridget Riley 2013. All rights reserved. courtesy Karsten Schubert, London.
Collection of mima. Purchased from the Rowen Gallery. Photo: Steven Brown.

Our creative writers looked at the picture and saw:

A sunrise.

A sunset.

A tap dripping.

An unpredictable tide line.

A never-ending journey into the unknown.

Stepping stones to rainbows.

Peep holes.

An exploding firework.

An elephant.

And it's the different things that people see in the piece that make it so interesting.

Bridget Riley's black and white 'Op Art' images are often seen as icons of 'Swinging Sixties' style. 'Op Art' (optical art) is an artistic style used to create an impression of movement by using optical illusions.

Riley believes that looking is "a pleasure – a continual pleasure". She wants us to look and see, and to find something surprising and different with each new viewing.

Fragment is one of a set of screenprints on perspex, a deliberately modern choice of material on which Riley could control the exact placing of the black ovals on the white background. If you study the piece, it seems to move and change shape. As the black ovals become thinner, the surface seems to curve inwards. Looking up and down, the effect is of rising and falling, as though the ovals are travelling through tubes or holes.

You don't need to understand art history to enjoy this artwork. You just need to look, let your eyes do the work and to relax into the shifting patterns it opens up.

Lucie Rie

Bowl, 1977



Image above: Lucie Rie, Bowl, 1977. Thrown porcelain with Manganese glaze and sgraffito. Collection of mima. Acquisition supported by the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

'Say you come into a strange room and in the corner there is this dog, a bit of a scruff, wagging his tail and baring his teeth. Do you remember what you were told, about how to approach a strange dog? It's the same with modern art.'

Go slow, don't speak, watch – and it will come to you'.

Carmen Thompson,
Local creative writer

Lucie Rie is regarded as one of Britain's most eminent potters. She originally set up her studio in Vienna in 1925. In 1938 she fled Nazi Austria for London, where she continued to work into her late 80s. She is an OBE, CBE and was made a Dame in 1991.

There is a great deal of beauty and skill in this deceptively simple ceramic bowl. The combination of shape, colour and line reveal Rie's level of experience and knowledge as a potter.

The bowl represents a striking design of contrasts, with its lampshade-like shape banded by black and bronze. Between these bands, Rie has scratched lines into the surface to create different layers of colour, using a process called sgraffito. These hand-made lines are repeated inside the bowl, where the bronze coloured glaze changes tone as you move around the bowl, from brown to purple to grey. The fluid marks in the bottom of the bowl suggest a liquid stain, as though the glaze has come to rest there.

Everything about this bowl suggests the attention the artist gave to making it.

Patrick Caulfield

Picnic Set, 1978



Image left: Patrick Caulfield, *Picnic Set*, 1978, Serigraph. Collection of mina. Purchased from the Waddington and Tooth Galleries, London. © The Estate of Patrick Caulfield. All rights reserved. DACS 2013. Photo: Steven Brown.

Asked to write alternative titles for this print, our group of writers suggested:

Display only! Do not touch.

Escapism.

Poster perfect.

Miss Havisham's wedding feast.

If only I was there.

One day.

Love.

Weekend promise.

Precious time.

Their offerings differ wildly in tone and optimism. But that's the point of modern art, it's different for everyone.

Patrick Caulfield (1936-2005) was an English painter and printmaker known for his bold canvasses. He was associated with the Pop Art movement, which appeared in the 1950s as a reaction to the end of the Second World War and the explosion of advertising and consumer culture.

Picnic Set could be seen as a conventional picture, the sort of traditional 'still life' that sets out the food and drink we enjoy and the shapes and colours of everyday utensils and objects. Paintings of this type were popular in 17th Century Holland, where artists made scenes look as real as possible.

However, Caulfield's still life screenprint uses the language of Pop Art, making references to comic book art, posters and glossy magazines.

Screenprinting was a technique often used in advertising; Caulfield uses it here to make reference to the commerciality of modern life. His use of photorealism in the labels on the bottles is another reminder of the sort of advertising imagery that fills our lives.

Tracey Emin

It Never Felt Like This, 1999

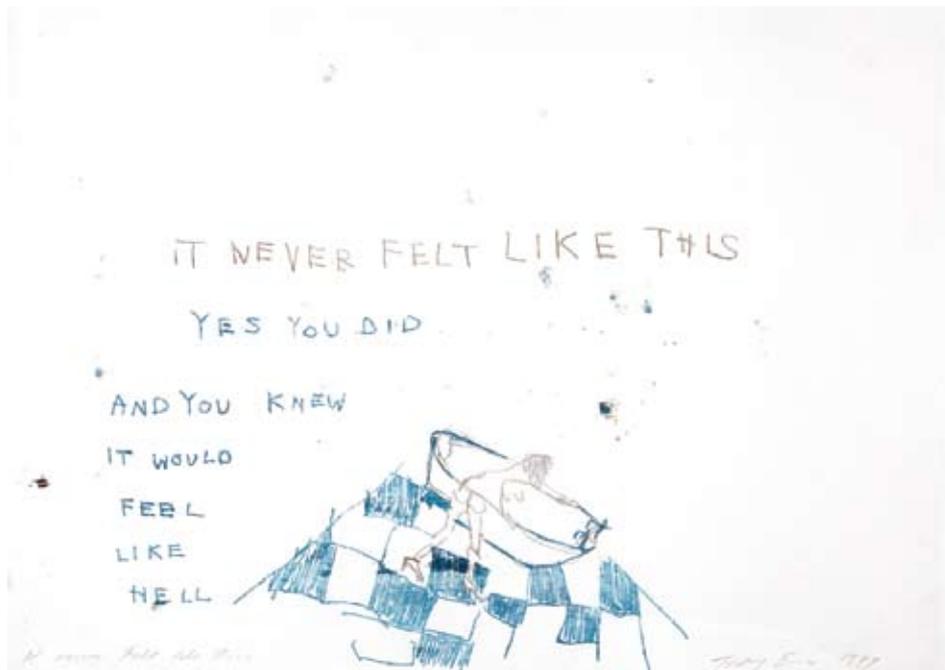


Image above: Tracey Emin, *It Never Felt Like This*, 1999. Monoprint on paper. © Tracey Emin. All rights reserved, DACS 2013. Collection of mima. Purchased through the Contemporary Art Society Special Collection Scheme with Lottery funding from Arts Council England.

Looking at this work, local writer Ray Murphy created his own response to what he felt was going on:

I want to be loved and understood

I need you to love me if you would

I try my best

And I do what I do

I don't need to stand out from the rest

I want to be like you

Tracey Emin, born in 1963, was a member of the Young British Artists (YBAs), a group of artists to emerge from Goldsmiths College in London in the 1980s, championed by the well-known art collector Charles Saatchi.

Emin is the 'bad girl' of the British art world, a celebrity artist who uses her life in her work and wears her heart on her sleeve. Her art delivers a heady mix of sex and alcohol, early traumas, family life and famous friends. Looking at one of her drawings can feel like having a really edgy conversation with someone who isn't quite in control.

Don't be fooled, though. This art is designed to deliver maximum emotional impact, to work its way under your skin and remind you that the human condition is messy and dangerous.

Bathrooms and bedrooms loom large as the private places where we may abandon control. Indeed, Emin's most notorious work is still her unmade bed.

It Never Felt Like This is a monoprint, a drawing that is printed only once. It looks like something jotted down in a notebook, a record of a conversation or maybe an internal monologue.

Gésine Hackenberg

“Big Makkum” Kitchen Necklace, 2009



Image above: Gésine Hackenberg, “Big Makkum” Kitchen Necklace, 2009. Earthenware & thread. Collection of mima. Acquired through the Northern Rock Foundation Craft Acquisition Scheme. Photo: Steven Brown.

Our local writers created a list to sum up what the plate represented to them:

Life. Circle of life. Food.

Wheel of nourishment.

Togetherness. Bringer of unity.

Family. Holder of love.

Plant pot holder. Dust collector.

Wealth. Ostentation.

'It's interesting how things can change. The most obvious is caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. But it can happen in unexpected ways. Take a band of metal and add to it a rock. Suddenly it can become a promise of life or of a promise broken. A piece of cloth, dyed the right colour and adorned with a badge becomes a symbol of unity, of joy or despair.'

William Forbes, Local creative writer

Gésine Hackenberg is a German artist living in the Netherlands, and her ceramics often reference traditional Dutch pottery, still life paintings and symbols of trade. Many of her objects and jewels ('kleinoden', Dutch for 'little treasures') involve interlocking themes of the household, kitchen, table and food.

This decorated plate is traditional in its floral design, and was probably intended to hang on a wall, bright and cheerful. The act of cutting out the small round discs from the plate to make a necklace gives an entirely new meaning to the object, making it something much more personal and precious. Hackenberg makes us consider how our lives are full of precious objects, layered with meanings and memories that we rarely explore.

a final word...

This guide has given you a brief introduction to the modern art collection at mima, owned by the people of Middlesbrough.

The works we have included will be displayed on a rotating basis at mima. Just ask our staff for the latest information.

On the second floor, you can also view a film by Writers' Block featuring some of our local creative writers' responses to the works and modern art in general.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to mima and will come back soon.

We would like to thank art historian Gail-Nina Anderson, Laura Degnan of Writers' Block and our group of local writers for their contributions to this guide.

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