

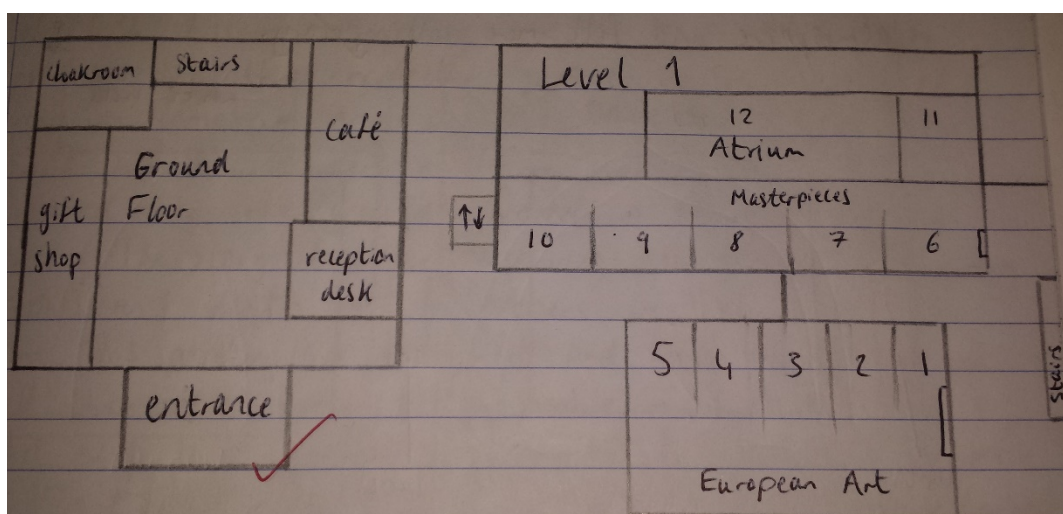
2016 Higher Level Question 16

Architecture, floor plan, lighting and display techniques all influence the overall visitor experience and appreciation of works of art in a gallery or museum. Discuss this statement with reference to a named gallery or museum you have visited. Describe in detail two named works you found interesting and discuss how these works were displayed AND in your opinion, briefly outline two initiatives that would encourage young people to engage with works of art on display in museum or galleries. Illustrate your answer.

I visited the National Gallery of Ireland on November 30th 2016. The gallery is located just off Nassau Street in Dublin city, with the main entrance in use right now being on Clare Street. Architecture, floor plan, lighting and display techniques all influenced my overall experience as a visitor and helped me to better appreciate the art.

Architecture and Floor Plan

My initial response when first entering the gallery was one of comfort and ease. Architectural features such as a high ceiling in the entrance to the Millennium Wing and a small doorway leading into such a large area created a modern feel. The plain white walls, blocky black reception desk and huge amounts of natural light added to this feeling of relaxation. This entrance area led directly to a flight of stairs (or lift for wheelchair users) which then led to the exhibition rooms.

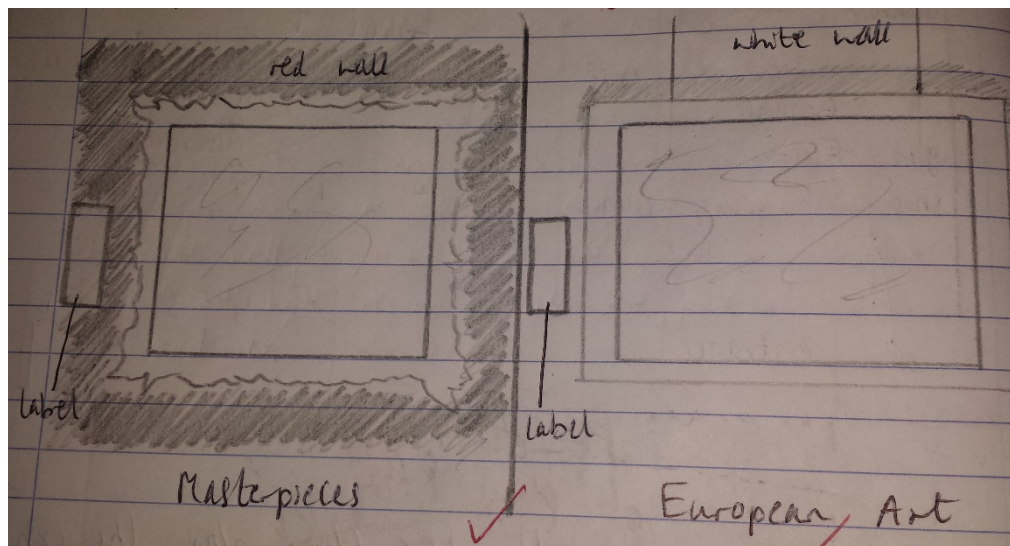


As can be seen in the above floor plan, the exhibition rooms themselves are also very spacious. Both exhibits had five rooms, but they were not fully separated from each other as the walls did

not close off at any point. This created a nice flow in both exhibits, which I felt allowed me to more easily appreciate the pieces.

Lighting and Display

These two exhibitions that I visited were both lit differently and displayed artwork in different ways. In the “Masterpieces” rooms the lighting was very dim and there were no windows. The walls were painted a dark red, almost maroon, with the pieces in elegant gold frames. These lighting and display techniques certainly added to the feeling of sophistication, thus highlighting the magnificence of the masterpieces. In the rooms of European Art, the walls were pure white and the paintings were hanging from wires on the ceiling, just resting against the walls at an angle. There was also a large window at the back, flooding all the rooms with natural light. These techniques created a more welcoming, open atmosphere and felt more contemporary

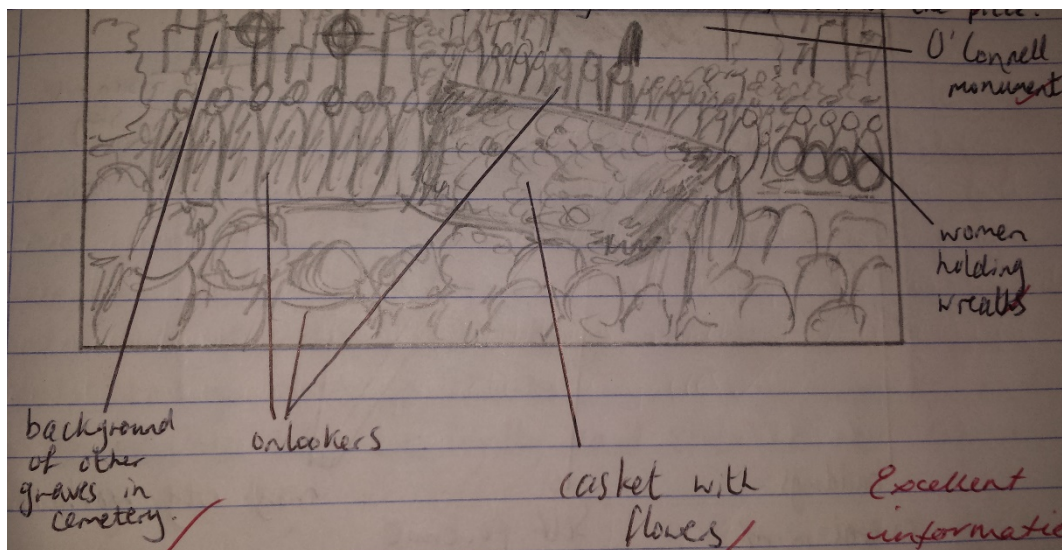


Individual labels were also on the left of all paintings and contextual labels were in both exhibitions to give extra information. The individual labels gave plenty of information on the paintings and although I found the writing hard to read, they still helped me to understand the history of the painting better. The contextual labels in the masterpieces rooms were particularly helpful because they explained the different themes of each room.

The Funeral of Harry Boland

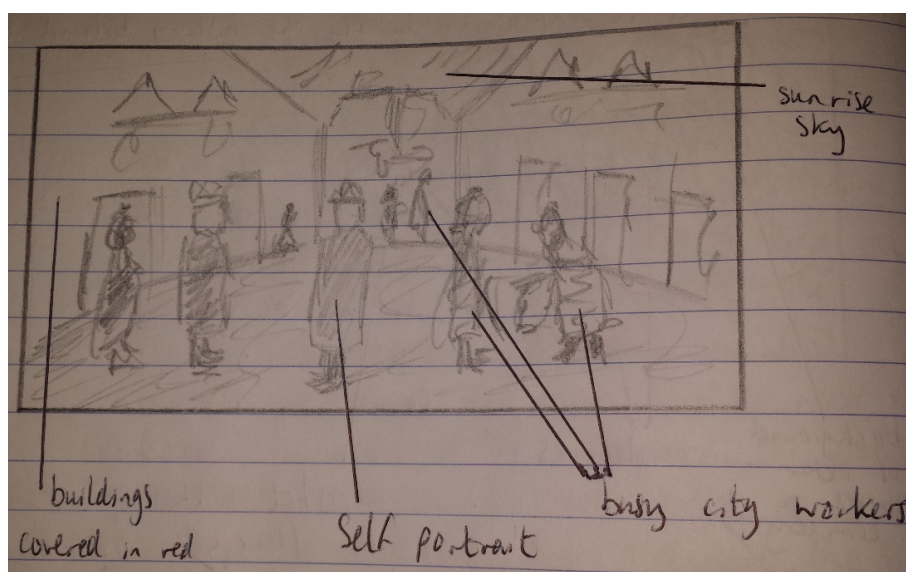
One piece of work I found interesting was “The Funeral of Harry Boland” by Jack B. Yeats. This piece was in the last room of the “Masterpieces” exhibition. The theme of this room was lament, which I think describes the painting perfectly. This Yeats piece caught my attention because I found it to be recognisable as his work, with thick and layered brush strokes, known as impasto technique. I also liked it because I found the subject matter of Irish history interesting. Yeats uses dark colours to show the grief of the onlookers as the casket is lowered into the ground. This

painting was dimly lit and hung on a dark wall, which added greatly to its sombre mood. It also had a label next to it, briefly explaining the history behind the piece.



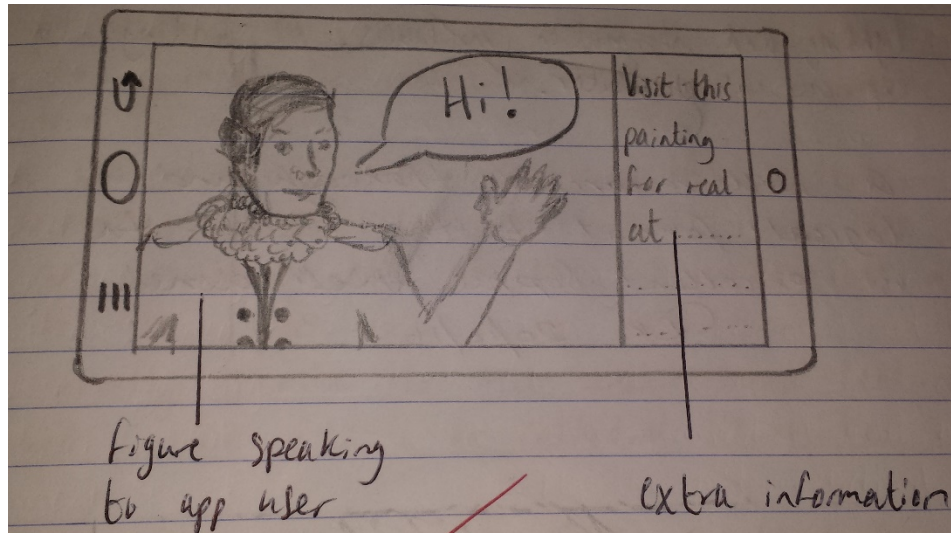
Morning in a City

Another piece of art that impressed me at the gallery was “Morning in a City”, once again by Jack B. Yeats. This painting was hanging in the first “European Art” room and drew me in because of the beautiful colours of early morning light used in it. I liked how Yeats showed the buildings of the city covered in the reds and oranges of the sunrise. Finding the different busy figures rushing about in the painting was interesting and after reading the label to the left of the piece I discovered that the male figure standing in the middle of the chaos is a self-portrait of Yeats. I found this very interesting because I think it was clever the way he showed his isolation in a place so full of life. This painting was lit well in the exhibition, which helped to make the colours stand out, especially against the white wall. I also found the label useful, as I would not have recognised the self-portrait if I had not read it.

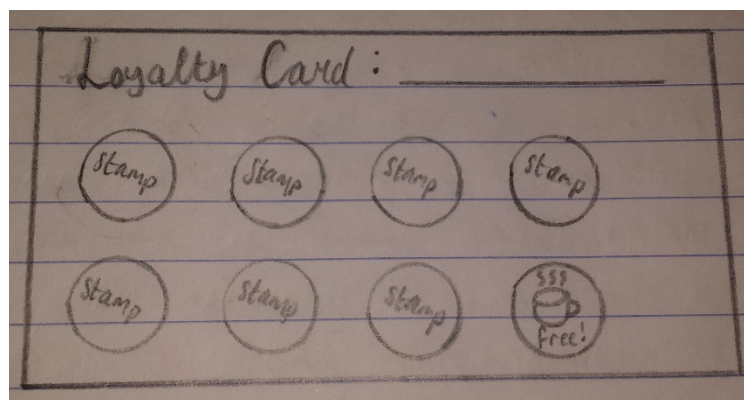


My Two Initiatives

An app could be developed in order to encourage young people to engage with works of art on display in museums or galleries. In this app, the paintings could be viewed and the figures in them could come to life using animation. The figures could speak, giving facts on their painting and the artist. Most young people now own mobile phones so I think it would be effective.



A second initiative that could be taken to get young people more engaged is a loyalty card. If young people were given a loyalty card that was stamped at a reception desk for each visit and then used for rewards once full of stamps, then they would be much more likely to go and see works of art in museums and galleries. Once full, the loyalty card could be used for a free guided tour or coffee/tea.



Conclusion

I feel that when I visited the national gallery, the architecture, floor plan, display and lighting techniques helped me to appreciate the artwork better, with open spaces, easy to follow floor plans, sufficient lighting and information on labels, all adding to my overall experience as a visitor.