

Words Exhibition, Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery

For Museums and Galleries month, young reviewers in Plymouth are satisfied but underwhelmed by a hands-on approach to words in art.

When we walked into the exhibition our first thoughts were that it looked confusing and boring. It focused on the role of language in art and included works from artists like Tracy Emin, Gilbert and George and David Hockney.

A lot of the pictures didn't seem to have any meaning. For example, the exhibit by Tracy Emim was a blanket on a bed which said 'Tracy Emim, Here To Stay', and it had the American flag on it. It was called 'Simple Truth'. We didn't know what she was on about.

After ten minutes looking at the exhibition we went onto the 'Workshop for Words' which was advertised as 'activities for children to complement the Words exhibition'.

It cost £2.50 to attend and was held in a small, not and gloomy makeshift room with no windows. Most of the space was taken up by a central worktable with chairs stacked around the walls, so it was hard to move around. There were lots of materials to work with like newspaper, crepe paper and bits of material, glue, pencils and pens.

First we went back to look at the exhibition with the workshop leader, who asked us to pick one piece of artwork we liked and look for ideas for our own collage. When we asked her about one of the pictures she didn't seem to know much about it and told us to read the label on the wall. This wasn't very helpful, as it didn't tell us anything about the picture, just the name of the artist and the date.

Then we made our own collages to do with words. There were eighteen children as well as several parents; most of the children were about three to five years old. We thought that the workshop should have been aimed at older children because the younger ones weren't really doing anything and it was their parents who were mainly making the collages.

We were left to get on with our collages for about an hour, which was quite good fun. The leader came round to have a look at what we were doing but she didn't help us or talk to us much and she spent more time talking to the little children. She was nice though.

Overall we quite enjoyed it. The room was too small and there wasn't enough input at our level from the workshop leader. We would have preferred more people our age group as it could have been more sociable. We wouldn't recommend it to our friends because they might think it was babyish.

About the team

This review was produced by Adam Barnard, 13, Susan Parnell, 12, Jacob Powell, 12 and Anne-Marie Palmer, 10. It was published in the Museums Journal. For more reviews, see column, left.

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