



Module 4

Unit 3

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Module 4

Unit 3: AD for static arts

Task 1: Multiple choice¹

Question 1

Which of the following is not a feature of general audio description?

- a) Exclusive use of present tense.
- b) Subordinate clauses.
- c) Vivid vocabulary.
- d) Declarative sentences.

Question 2

Which of the following is an example of appraisal?

- a) Interpretation.
- b) Objectivity.
- c) Normalisation.
- d) Neutrality.

Question 3

Which of the following descriptions uses appraisal?

- a) ...this magnificent example of Renaissance art.
- b) ...the use of various shades of black and white.
- c) ...a late example of impressionist art.
- d) ...an example of the artist's early work.

¹ The responses are based on the ADLAB PRO core videos. Only one answer is correct.

Question 4

Which type of museum visitor would need a particular kind of AD?

- a) Men.
- b) Women.
- c) Children.
- d) Singles.

Question 5

Preferably, tactile tours...

- a) ...do not need a spoken description.
- b) ...should be preceded by a spoken description.
- c) ... should be followed by a spoken description.
- d) ... should be accompanied by a spoken description.



Module 4

Unit 3: AD for static arts

Task 2

Aim(s):

- Learners can recognise linguistic and textual features of existing ADs for static arts and environments.

Grouping: individual.

Approximate timing: 2 hours.

Material and preparation needed:

- Original audio descriptions.

Development:

Learners view five original ADs of static arts and note the linguistic and textual features, or lack of such features.

Task 2: Handout

Five original audio descriptions

1. Statue of Augustus, Aquileia Archeological Museum

This statue is made of marble and it is cream-coloured tending at times towards beige, with chiaroscuro effects on the folds of the toga and on the locks of the hair.

Augustus is upright and composed. The toga covers his head, as a sign of respect to the gods, and his curly hair, apart from some locks falling slightly forward on the forehead. The central part of his hair is characterized by thick locks. Moving down, Augustus is wrinkling his eyebrows, making the typical frown.

His eyes are looking forward in a serious and solemn expression. The outer, delicate parts have broken off

Augustus's toga or got ruined, together with other parts of the statue. Indeed, Augustus's nose is chipped at its tip. Moving down to the mouth, characterized by full lips, the face has two dimples on the cheeks. This is a typical characteristic of items from the reign of Claudius and the sculptures from the previous years. The chin, like the cheeks, is also characterized by a dimple. The neck, also uncovered, has a marked carotid. All these characteristics of the face are typical of Augustan iconography, from which the piece comes.

The other parts of the body are completely covered by the toga, which is an example of technique and figurative language from

the reign of Claudius. Fine folds of fabric embrace the figure of Augustus. It is the typical costume of *Pontifex Maximus*, the most important priestly position. The purpose of this costume was indeed to distinguish the priests in carrying out their duties.

Moving to the right part of Augustus's body, the toga goes from the head down to the shoulder, it continues behind the arm until it comes to leg height. From here it goes up towards the chest till it meets the left part of the fold, which instead goes down straight from the head to the abdomen. At chest height they then trace an unusual outline. On the left shoulder, the costume and the drapery have a more simple aspect compared to the other parts of the body. The toga, which is a very important element of this statue, is wide and draped, but at the same time it shows agility in motion. It gives the statue a theatrical and refined effect.

The statue is damaged. More precisely, the left arm is broken at the wrist and the hand, together with the forearm and the feet, are missing. According to the interpretations of various researchers and ancient literature, Augustus held a patera or a cornucopia before the wearing down.

The statue is flat at the back. This suggests, according to some researchers, that in the past the statue used to be in a recess.

The statue of Augustus is the most important statue of Julio Claudian propaganda, together with the statue of Claudius. The shape of the toga suggests that the statue comes from the later

years of the Tiberina republic, meaning the first years of the reign of Claudius, but most researchers affirm it comes from the reign of Augustus because of the drapery and the technical details of the face.

The statue was rediscovered in 1879 in Marignane, in the north-western part of the area, close to the circus. More precisely, the statue was rediscovered in the southern part of Via Annia (Annia Street), at the western door of the republican city.

Nowadays we know that this honorary iconographic statue represents Augustus, but in the past people made a lot of guesses and its chronological framework is very hard to analyse. Indeed there are different opinions of researchers about the identity of the character and about its belonging to a dynastic cycle.

2. The Dining Room, Miramare Castle, Trieste, Italy

Walk straight on for about 15 steps until you reach the dining room. This is the first room of Charlotte's private apartments. Contrary to what one might expect when thinking of a dining room, there isn't one large table, but rather a number of smaller, round tables, both on your left and on your right, each one of them surrounded by two or three chairs. The style of the furniture recalls typical Anglo-dutch designs, largely used by artists since the 17th century. On the walls of the room, the decorative wooden arches frame a blue tapestry, where we find

once again pineapples and crowned anchors, a decorative motif widely used in all the castle. On the wall to your left, positioned against the tapestry, we find a cabinet with glass doors containing little porcelain statues in Asiatic style and miniature reproductions of Ming vases.

3. The Amazon, Miramare Castle, Trieste, Italy

On the side of the colonnade, right in front of you, you can find a second fountain, much smaller in dimensions than the one located in the middle of the square. Set in a white stone wall, the water cascades from the semi-closed mouth of a man down over four concentric pools, octagonally shaped. The man has caricature-like features, with eyes wide open and a prominent nose, while his hair, eyebrows and moustache look like leaves. The fountain, from top to bottom, is about one meter tall. On top of the wall, about half a meter above the fountain, is a small zinc statue, showing an Amazon riding a horse. It was created by artist August Kiss in 1864, and comes from the Moritz Geiss factory in Berlin. The composition of the statue itself is extremely dynamic: the running horse rears up on its back legs while the amazon sitting on its back lifts her right arm as if ready to attack an enemy. The woman's hair is blowing in the wind and the vest she was wearing has pooled around her hips, leaving her chest exposed.

4. Study of the Trunk of an Elm Tree (John Constable), Victoria and Albert Museum, London

This small oil study of the trunk of an elm tree was painted by Constable in about 1821. The painting measures some twelve inches high by ten inches wide - approximately 31 by 25 centimeters.

The trunk of a single elm tree stands centrally in a clearing. At the bottom of the picture, the tree's base - almost as wide as the picture itself - is fringed with grass. The thick column of tree then extends up - leaning slightly towards the left - and continues on out through the top of the painting.

At the top of the picture, the tree's lower branches curl down on either side, weaving in and out of each other, dividing and narrowing - their tentacle like form contrasting with the straightness and solidity of the trunk.

The tree stands in a clearing, and the lower third of the picture shows this flat area of green grass. There's a small bird on the grass to the right. Further in the background beyond this clearing, woodland frames the picture. It's more sketchily rendered than the elm, with dark, almost black, vertical strokes depicting the trunks of younger trees, speckled with dabs of mottled foliage.

Two small patches are all that is visible of the sky through these trees. One area is to the right of the trunk, about half way up the picture. Just visible within this patch of sky is the edge of a building - the red of a roof sloping up to a brick chimney. The

rest of the building is obscured by foliage. The second patch of sky is higher up and to the left of the trunk. Its curved shape fits snugly within the curl of a branch.

These glimpses of sky are a clear, liquid grey-blue. Sunlight breaking through the trees brightens a horizontal strip of the green grassy clearing - throwing the trunk itself into darker relief.

By framing the body of the trunk in this way, Constable is able to focus on the bark of the elm - which is rendered in almost photographic detail.

The roughened bark is speckled grey - with the crazed network of cracks picked out in darker brown. The bark's texture is heightened by flecks of surprising colour - purples, pinks and pale blue. Other patches, near the bottom of the trunk, are stained with dull, mossy green.

5. **Broadway Boogie Woogie (Piet Mondrian), MOMO, New York**

This painting is titled *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. It was made by the Dutch-born artist Piet Mondrian in New York in 1942.

Here, the horizontal and vertical lines of the painting are actually composed of rectangles and squares of red, blue, yellow and white and gray. And they are navigating you across the canvas much like streets would in a cityscape, or much like dancers would across a dance floor. You have a feeling here too of music, I think. You have a feeling of the way that a canvas,

which is obviously an inanimate thing, could possibly feel if it were animated.

This is strikingly different from the quite ascetic and sober early Mondrian. And it's quite a remarkable thing because Mondrian had come to New York during World War II, as an exile from Europe, to begin a whole new life as an older man and adapted to New York City with such enthusiasm and such alacrity. The title of the painting *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, is a nice collision of two delightful references to things that made Mondrian so enthusiastic about his new life in New York: Broadway, a very busy, broad thoroughfare full of interesting stories, but also full of theatres representing the novelty and the liveliness of the American musical tradition, and boogie woogie, the jazz music that Mondrian discovered here and loved so much. That combination of references in the title is really a tribute to New York City at that moment.



Module 4

Unit 3: AD for static art

Task 3

Aim(s):

- Learners can analyse and criticize existing ADs for static arts and environment.

Grouping: individual.

Approximate timing: 3 hours.

Material and preparation needed:

- Original audio description.

Development:

Learners study the audio description of ‘Virgin and Child in Egypt’ by William Blake. They then write a critical comment on the AD, examining the linguistic features, length, level of detail, degree of appraisal, etc.

Task 3: Handout

Analyse and comment on the following audio description excerpts:
'Virgin and Child in Egypt' by William Blake



Filling the foreground of this picture is the Virgin, shown from head to waist, with the naked Christ-child seated in her lap. The trunk of a palm tree borders the left of the picture, its curving leafy fronds brushing the top of the frame, just above Mary's head. In the middle distance, the River Nile forms a horizontal band across the picture. On its far bank stands a walled city to the left, and pyramids and the sphinx to the right. The picture is stylised, rather than naturalistic. Dark lines are etched on an ivory background faintly tinted with delicate colour.

In Blake's image, a halo of light surrounds the Virgin. She is a young woman with long hair, parted in the centre, framing her face, the wavy tresses outlining her shoulders and arms, flowing all the way down to her waist. The Virgin has a high forehead and a serene expression. She has finely arched eyebrows, a long nose and a contented smile.

The Virgin wears a simple gown, which falls in soft folds from a rounded neckline. The sleeves are gathered, bound by ribbons below

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the shoulder and again at the wrist. She gazes down at the Christ-child in her lap. Her hands are raised either side of his head, but held a little distance away - as though containing an unseen halo. Her long tapering fingers are splayed slightly.

Christ himself is a curious mixture of infant and child. He has tightly curled hair, pressed close to his head. His features are perhaps too strongly defined for a baby – big wide open eyes, with fine arched eyebrows like his mother’s; a prominent nose, and cupids-bow lips. His little torso is muscular. His arms are held out to either side as if for balance, his chubby right leg extended to the bottom left corner of the picture. His left leg follows, but the knee is bent, delicately concealing his genitals. He seems almost to hover, making no indent on the fabric of his mother’s simple gown.

By contrast the palm tree the grows up the left hand side of the picture has a roughened trunk - made from a series of overlapping scales. At the top of the trunk is a bunch of dates, and leafy palm fronds – some extending out of the top of the frame, others gently curving above the Virgin’s head, echoing the halo of light that surrounds her.

For the background, Blake was forced to rely on reports of those who’d returned from travels in Egypt. The Nile is a pale blue-green band that runs across the picture, about half way up, level with the Virgin’s shoulders. On the far bank, to the left of the Virgin, is a gateway into a walled city. Domed and pitched roofs appear beyond the wall. To the right of the Virgin are two Pyramids. In front , as if



guarding the pyramid nearest to us, is the small figure of a lion – Blake’s idea of the Sphinx.

The angular shape of the buildings contrast with the gentle flowing lines of the Virgin and Child. For example, the curved fronds of the palm tree, follow the curve of the Virgin’s halo, which echoes the shape of her head, her hairline and her finely arched eyebrows. The lower line of her eyelashes, and the rounded neckline of her dress is almost a reflection. The gathered folds of her dress, echo the wavy lines of her hair.



Module 4

Unit 3: AD for static arts

Task 4

Aim(s):

- Learners can collaborate with peers and VIPS in criticising and, where necessary, amending existing ADs.

Grouping: group.

Approximate timing: 2 hours and 2 hours.

Development:

1. Learners are given ADs to analyse.
2. They then make any amendments they consider necessary.
3. They then compare and contrast their results with those of other learners in the class.



Task 4: Handout

ADs to analyse.

Discuss results with class colleagues.

1. John Purling by Thomas Gainsborough

This head-and-shoulders portrait of an 18th century gentleman, James Purling, is painted by Thomas Gainsborough. It's set in an oval frame. Gainsborough was known for his unique ability to capture a likeness. In this case, set against an indistinct dark background, is a middle-aged gentleman, with a noble, sloping forehead, fine arched brows, a long, shapely nose and the gentle glimmer of a smile hovering round his pale lips. His hazel eyes are of the kind that appear to be looking directly at you, from whatever angle you view the picture. His body is turned away slightly, so that the artist captures his left side more fully than his right.

2. The Manby Apparatus by William Turner

The Manby Apparatus was invented by Captain George Manby after he saw a disastrous shipwreck at Great Yarmouth in 1807. It was a way of helping ships which were wrecked in stormy seas but within sight of the coast. A stone with a line attached was fired from a mortar towards the ship. This line was then secured on the ship and pulled taught so that the life-boat

could row out safely along its length to retrieve the ship's passengers or crew.

In this picture, all the chronological events of the rescue - from the sending up of a flare to the setting off of the life boat - are depicted as though they were happening simultaneously.

A wooden jetty bisects the picture horizontally. The jetty starts from the shore to the right of the picture - where the Manby apparatus itself is obscured by a puff of smoke.

The jetty stretches across the painting - its many vertical struts becoming increasingly obscured as it reaches the choppy seas to the left.

Off the end of the jetty, at the far left, is the distressed ship - it's tilting dark blue bulk a blur as chalky-white waves crash against it. Above the ship, the blue distress flare is barely visible in the dark and threatening sky.

3. The Mill by Edward Burne Jones

This large dark oil painting measures some three feet high by six and a half feet wide. It's packed with images: some realistic, some like elements from a dream.

Filling the foreground, on the bank of a slow still river, are three young women in draped robes, their hands linked as if they're dancing. The women are the Three Muses. To the right, standing within a stone, ivy-covered folly is another similar figure, hair wreathed with flowers. Although equally fine-featured, this is not a woman but Apollo, playing a curious

stringed instrument, resembling a lute but with a narrow, triangular shaped body. Beyond the river, on the far side of the bank, is a collection of buildings, face on to us. The mill of the title stands just right of centre, glimpsed between the last of the Muses and Apollo. To the left, glimpsed between the first two Muses, is a brick wall, with small male figures - naked bathers - on the tow path in front of it. One man is sitting with his feet just dipping into the water. Four others seem to have recently emerged from the river. One is rubbing himself with a towel. Their reflections are clearly shown in the smooth, glassy water. The reflections of the buildings are ghostly. Beyond the buildings is a dense woodland - like a deep, dark wood from a fairy tale. To the right, crumbling stonework emerges above the foliage, with a flock of tiny birds circling the top of a square tower. The sky is reduced to a sliver of yellowish brown along the very top of the canvas.



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