

Heinz was one of the founding members of the [56 Group Wales](#), an artists' organisation with the aim of promoting Welsh modernist art and artists.

Heinz died in 1980 aged 61.

2. 'Merthyr Blues' Painting by Heinz Koppel

'[Merthyr Blues](#)' painting is a portrait of Merthyr Tydfil in 1955.

"The style prompts comparison with newspaper cartoons. A woman pushes her pram past the old bus depot, a man on a ladder pastes up an advertisement for Daz washing powder, whilst dogs behave badly on the street. The local blues singer, who hovers above the town accompanied by the lyrics of her song, offers a sense of hope and salvation to the everyday world below."¹

3. Activities

ACTIVITY 1

a) Walk about the space until your teacher calls out a letter of the alphabet. Find a way to create the shape of this letter with your body - you can do this alone or in a small group. Try to remember the sequence of the letters.

b) Discuss as a class:

- What do the letters spell?
- To what do they relate?

ACTIVITY 2

a) Read Heinz Koppel's biography, look at his '[Merthyr Blues](#)' painting, and listen to an [audio clip](#) from an interview with Harry Weinberg. In the clip, Harry talks about his cousin and fellow artist Heinz Koppel.

Oral History transcript:

¹ Art UK, *Merthyr Blues, Heinz Koppel (1919-1980)*, National Museum Wales, National Museum Cardiff <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/merthyr-blues-162225/search/actor:koppel-heinz-19191980-68749/page/1/view_as/grid> [accessed 2 July 2024].

“Heinz [Koppel] was always far more interested than I in analysing work and his always had a psychological slant that had to reflect some very conscious... consciously inner states of mind—that sounds ghastly if I say it like that—but he was very introspective and very analytical about everything, not just his work.

And he had very delicate hands and delicate fingers, and his work had the same delicacy. And I thought it was quite unique.

[...]

We both felt that because of our background and everything that had happened, that we were outsiders and that we couldn’t somehow be accepted by the art establishment.

[...]

And then he bought an old farm in Wales, and finally he left teaching and settled in Wales in that farm, and turned it into his own little empire, where he produced very interesting and intricate paintings that I liked very much.”

b) Consider and discuss in small groups:

- How is Heinz Koppel’s work described by his cousin?
- What was Heinz’s approach to work?
- Why did Heinz feel like an “outsider”?
- How did Wales influence Heinz’s artwork?

ACTIVITY 3

Recreating the [‘Merthyr Blues’](#) painting.

a) As a class, you will now attempt to recreate the ‘Merthyr Blues’ painting: Enter the space and then, either by yourself or as part of a small group, adopt the position of a part of the painting. For example, you could choose to be the person pushing the pram, or, as part of a group, create the shape of the building behind them. There is no right or wrong way to do this.

Be creative in your interpretation and exploration of the painting.

Look around you and consider:

- What are others doing?
- How do you all interact and fit together?

b) Your teacher will now play a piece of music. Use the rhythm and feel of this music to animate your chosen figure.



c) Consider and discuss as a class:

- How does a person move?
- Does a building just stand there, or does it throb or twitch or sway?
- How do all these separate parts interact?
- How do you feel about using movement to recreate the painting?