

THE MASK SESSIONS - 2



by Go Create for the Tyca Festival

ONLINE ON ARTS TAUNTON – YOUTUBE

The Mask conceals something from view – it can be worn to disguise, to protect, hide, amuse or to frighten others. It may be something we “metaphorically” wear to present ourselves to the world, but use to hide what we really think or feel...

This series of four related (but stand-alone) ‘workshop starters’ are here to hopefully enable creative journeys to be begun, ideas to be explored and new and exciting artworks to be produced...

Workshop 2 – ‘The Cultural Mask’ – design/make a mask for a cultural event, carnival, theatre, show or party or create artwork inspired by masks – this could be painting, printing, collage...

+Explore and develop ideas through investigations, sketches, research into relevant artists’ work. Be inspired to collect images, refine ideas and create!

Explore: THE CULTURAL MASK

Putting on a mask is a transformative experience. It allows us to be someone we’re not for a moment, changing both how we see ourselves and how we behave outwardly. Many of us know this feeling from Halloween in America, but it’s a universal feeling shared across cultures throughout human history.

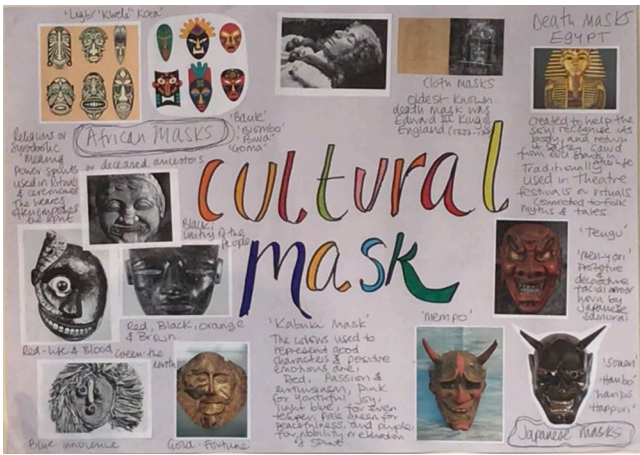
While some masked ceremonies have died out over the years, other cultures have held onto their traditions. Learn the meanings behind some of the most fascinating masks from around the world and find out where and when you can see them.

In cultures in which burial customs are important, anthropomorphic masks have often been used in ceremonies associated with the dead and departing spirits. Funerary masks were frequently used to cover the face of the deceased. Generally, their purpose was to represent the features of the deceased, both to honour them and to establish a relationship through the mask with the spirit world. Sometimes they were used to force the spirit of the newly dead to depart for the spirit world. Masks were also made to protect the deceased by frightening away malevolent spirits.

In the early 20th Century, artists like Pablo Picasso and Andre Derain were inspired by the bold abstract designs that they discovered in African tribal masks. They collected and used these works of art to influence their own styles of Cubism and Fauvism. In effect, they used African culture to refresh the tired tradition of figure painting in Western Art.

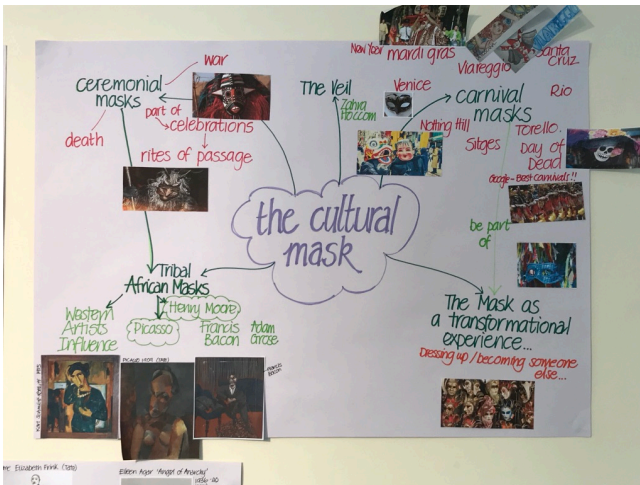
As a result, we now tend to admire the bold design and abstract patterns of African masks through European eyes. We appreciate them as exhibits on museum walls, cut off from their original meaning and magical power. However, this is not how they were designed to be viewed.

African masks should be seen as part of a ceremonial costume. They are used in religious and social events to represent the spirits of ancestors or to control the good and evil forces in the community. They come to life, possessed by their spirit in the performance of the dance, and are enhanced by both the music and atmosphere of the occasion. Some combine human and animal features to unite man with his natural environment. This bond with nature is of great importance to the African and through the ages masks have always been used to express this relationship.



The results of our exploration of ideas around the mask as a cultural object, seem to group themselves into areas

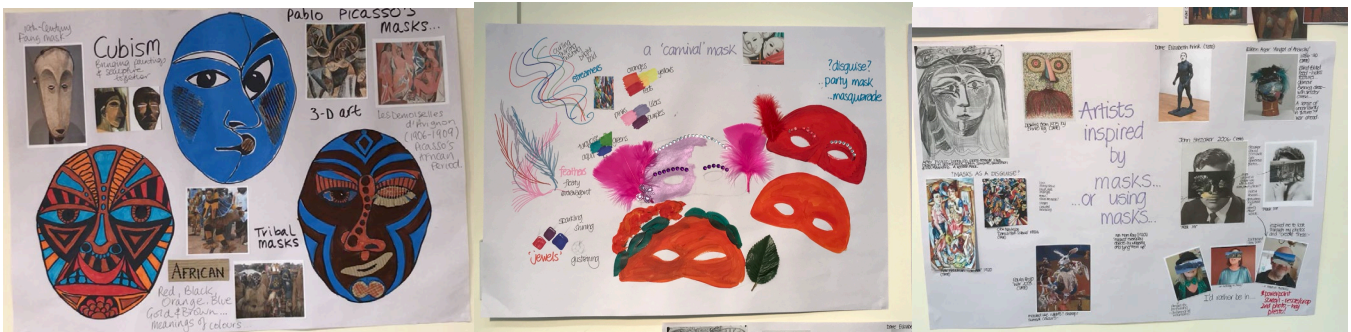
- * **ceremonial masks** – war, death, rites of passage, celebrations
- * **carnival/party masks** – world-wide carnivals, street parades
- * **artwork inspired by masks** – sculpture, carvings, prints, paintings all sorts of artists and works



Research for yourself – print-out a few that appeal to you from all sections and on a large sheet of paper, annotate and start thinking about the kind of mask you might like to design, which area grabs your interest? Carnival style, African style, death mask???

Refine:

Having completed a wide exploration of the cultural aspects of masks, now zoom in on one area, research a bit more, make notes, start sketching, doodling, designing and develop a few ideas.



Its' good to annotate your thoughts at the time...try to come up with a couple of ideas...you can always return to this stage and create more than one mask design or actual mask...

These sheets show how starting with the cultural aspect of masks can lead off into a variety of avenues for design...Picasso-inspired, African tribal-inspired and carnival-inspired...

Create:

Once you have an idea for a design or a creation, sometimes the resources to hand dictate how the design proceeds...you may need to go on a hunt around the house, garage, garden for objects, resources and these may make you adapt the original design – this is exciting – let it happen! (...but do please ask before using objects around the house!!)

Your end-product or piece of art, may be the detailed design or it may be an actual mask – you may even make a fabric mask, or sculpt a mask out of a whole host of materials. We hope you will be inspired to create something new and original... below are some of our creations this week:

You may notice the cardboard box sides, old curtain fabric primed with matt vinyl paint, a balloon papier-mache and some large milk containers being used as well as glittery stick-on jewels and an old paint brush handle attached to a half-mask...



Don't forget to look up **Zahra Hocom**, local young artist – find her on facebook, YouTube; look up her “Veil series” of work...



Share:

Please upload any images of your creations in response to this session, via this link:

<https://tycafestival.co.uk/visual-arts-submission-form>

Thank you – we will return on August 5th with another **Mask Session – Beneath the Mask**

Liz Hutchin & Jenny Keogh, Go Create Taunton CiC