
John Shinnors - Biography

John Shinnors was born in Limerick in 1950 and studied at the Limerick School of Art and Design. He has had regular solo exhibitions and has exhibited in many group shows since the 1980s. His work is represented in many public and private collections and has received a number of awards. He was the subject of the RTÉ1 documentary *Split Image John Shinnors*. He is involved in the promotion of the arts through the Shinnors Scholarship. Represented by the Taylor Galleries, Dublin. He lives and works in Limerick.

Try to consider these questions about *Circus Form 1, Circus Form 2 and Circus Form 3*

1. These small paintings use the same colours, tones and shapes, but no two are the same. What do you think it is that the artist is trying to paint?
2. Why do you think the artist did three paintings?
3. Looking at this series of work gives us the opportunity to consider how artists work through their ideas. How do you think the titles of these paintings relate to their images?
4. If you were in one of these paintings where would you be? Try and assess this question in a forensic way. Look for evidence, consider terms that will help you to remember the work.
5. 'Circus' could be a travelling company of acrobats, trained animals and clowns, or as a scene of frantic activity. 'Form' is harder to pin down, but generally we can understand it as the visible shape or arrangement of something. Given the painstaking processes that artists go through to title pieces, what (if anything) is Shinnors trying to communicate with us by assembling these elements.
6. Is this work abstract?

On the reverse of this sheet is a short one-page exercise to assist you while looking at the painting. It comprises of five questions. Feel free to fill it out and take it home with you or you can simply use the questions in your mind as prompts to look at the painting more thoroughly. (If you do fill it out, please tell a member of staff so we can replace it for the next visitor)

1. Answer the first question, "Like/Dislike", with just one of these two words.
2. The next one is "Description", here describe all the physical details you can about the painting such as the name of the artist; the title; medium; dimensions as well as how the paint is applied and so on.
3. For the next one "Imagery", note down what the painting is of. For example Barrie Cooke's *Two Lough Key Islands* might include, "an island in mist, sort of abstracted, out in the lake but sort of floating in the painting" or Blaise Drummond's *Wreck of Hope* might include "a passenger aeroplane flying through a circular gap in stormy clouds in the centre of the painting. The plane is very small for the size of the painting" Describe as much as you can, everything you notice such as the choice of colours, the position of things in the painting and so on.
4. In the next one "Interpretation". Try to figure out what the artist was trying to communicate, what they meant by putting these things on the canvas, why are they there, what does the choice of colours signify, how does one bit relate to another, what was the artist feeling? Think about this for a couple of minutes before you come to your conclusions.
5. Finally you come to "Like/Dislike" again, but this time rather than just one word, give a sentence or two about your answer.