
Joseph Mc Williams - Biography

Joseph McWilliams was educated in the Belfast College of Art and the Open University. He was senior course lecturer at the University of Ulster and has been president of the RUA from 2000-2004. He has exhibited in Ireland, Britain and throughout Europe and the USA.

Try to consider these questions about *My Green House*

1. Why do you think this painting is so big?
2. Look at the red bits, how important are they?
3. How is the balance of light and dark managed in this painting?
4. How necessary are the elements of sharp focus in this painting? If one of them were changed, what would be the effect?
5. The technical expertise of this artist is employed to bring us a painting of what appears to be an ordinary suburban scene. Why is the artist so concerned with what appears to be such a normal picture and why is this method of image making chosen over the use of a camera?
6. This is a painting of reality. As such we recognise all the elements and are even invited to impose our own experience or reality onto it. This painting has a clear foreground, an intact if slightly blurred midground (through the glasshouse) and a pinpoint sharp background (the house in the top left). We immediately understand the image and the space the artist has produced on the picture plane, but the clarity of this image comes with the contradiction that what is close to us cannot be in focus simultaneously with what is far away. Why has the artist produced this juxtaposition?

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.