

THE ARTICLE

Chimpanzee art up for sale

BNE: Three pieces of abstract art painted by a chimpanzee are to go under the hammer at the London auction house Bonham's next month. Works by Congo the chimp will be auctioned alongside other paintings by Renoir and Andy Warhol. The pictures, marked by their vivid colors and striking contrasts, are estimated to be worth around \$1,500 each, but such is the interest, they may fetch record prices for chimpanzee art. Bonham's art director Howard Rutkowski said the auction would be a first for the art world: "I would sincerely doubt that chimpanzee art has ever been auctioned before." The chimp does have bona fide artistic credentials: fellow abstract painter Picasso had a framed Congo painting on the wall of his studio.

Congo shot to fame in the 1950s when he appeared on a British TV show called *Zoo Time*. The show's host Desmond Morris, also a renowned anthropologist, was researching into animals' sense of creativity. He instantly recognized that Congo had special artistic sensibilities. Dr Morris said the chimpanzee was an "intense" artist who was "focused on what he was doing" with his bold brushstrokes. Congo went on to become a prolific painter and a household name. He churned out over 400 abstract paintings in his formative years. In 1957, his works were showcased at London's prestigious Institute of Contemporary Art. Although it received mixed reviews, the public went bananas and enthusiastically snapped up the paintings.

WARM-UPS

1. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics you are interested in, which do not look interesting and which look really boring:

abstract art / chimpanzees / auctions / Renoir / vivid colors / Picasso / British TV / artistic talent / bananas

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

2. CHIMPANZEES: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with chimpanzees. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

3. ART: What kind of art is your cup of tea? Are you interested in modern art? Do you paint? Do you have any paintings on your wall? What is art?

Look at this list and decide which of these pieces of modern art is art:

- a. A pile of house bricks arranged in a rectangular shape
- b. Different colored photographs of a can of soup
- c. Foul language painted on a vase
- d. Splashes and lines of color made by a chimpanzee
- e. A dead cow cut in half and preserved in a transparent plastic case
- f. An empty room in which the ceiling light turns on and off at random intervals
- g. A cartoon comic strip
- h. An all black painting

4. OPINIONS: Look at the following comments on art and talk with your partner / group about whether you agree or disagree with them. Change the comment so that it reflects your opinion.

- a. Art doesn't matter.
- b. Art is for rich people.
- c. A chimpanzee attacking some paper with a paintbrush is not art.
- d. Art is the most beautiful thing created by humans.
- e. Children should spend much more time at school painting.
- f. Everyone is an artist.
- g. Modern art is rubbish.
- h. Movies are the greatest forms of art.
- i. You need to be crazy to become an artist.
- j. A chimpanzee is not an artist.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| a. Some art painted by Congo the chimpanzee will be smashed with a hammer. | T / F |
| b. Paintings by a chimpanzee will be sold at a London auction house. | T / F |
| c. The paintings are expected to fetch \$15,000 each. | T / F |
| d. Pablo Picasso owned a painting created by the chimpanzee. | T / F |
| e. Congo the chimp became famous after he was shot on British TV. | T / F |
| f. A British anthropologist believed animals were not artistic. | T / F |
| g. Congo the chimpanzee held an exhibition at a prestigious London gallery. | T / F |
| h. British people went bananas and bought many of Congo's paintings. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| a. go under the hammer | bright |
| b. vivid | produced |
| c. fetch | genuinely |
| d. sincerely | famous |
| e. bona fide | be sold |
| f. shot | bought |
| g. a household name | genuine |
| h. churned out | crazy |
| i. bananas | rocketed |
| j. snapped up | bring |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. go under | years |
| b. auctioned | record prices |
| c. estimated to | painter |
| d. fetch | to fame |
| e. bona | the hammer |
| f. shot | fide |
| g. prolific | alongside other paintings |
| h. He churned | bananas |
| i. in his formative | be worth around \$1,500 each |
| j. the public went | out over 400 abstract paintings |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces in the text.

BNE: Three _____ of abstract art painted by a chimpanzee are to go under the hammer at the London auction house Bonham's next month. Works by Congo the chimp will be auctioned _____ other paintings by Renoir and Andy Warhol. The pictures, _____ by their vivid colors and striking contrasts, are estimated to be worth around \$1,500 each, but such is the _____, they may fetch record prices for chimpanzee art. Bonham's art director Howard Rutkowski said the auction would be a _____ for the art world: "I would sincerely doubt that chimpanzee art has ever been auctioned before." The chimp does have bona fide artistic credentials: _____ abstract painter Picasso had a framed Congo painting on the wall of his studio.

fellow
alongside
first
pieces
interest
marked

Congo shot to _____ in the 1950s when he appeared on a British TV show called *Zoo Time*. The show's host Desmond Morris, also a _____ anthropologist, was researching into animals' sense of creativity. He instantly recognized that Congo had special artistic sensibilities. Dr Morris said the chimpanzee was an "intense" artist who was "_____ on what he was doing" with his bold brushstrokes. Congo went on to become a prolific painter and a _____ name. He churned out over 400 abstract paintings in his _____ years. In 1957 his works were showcased at London's prestigious Institute of Contemporary Art. Although it received mixed reviews, the public went _____ and enthusiastically snapped up the paintings.

household
renowned
bananas
formative
fame
focused

AFTER READING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'abstract' and 'art'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare and talk about your answers to this exercise. After you agree, check your answers against the text.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT ART SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about art.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

hammer

shot

alongside

sensibilities

fetch

focused

first

household

bona fide

formative

fellow

bananas

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you saw the article's headline?
- b. Did you like reading the article?
- c. Which adjective would you use to describe the article?
- d. Did you openly laugh or laugh to yourself at anything you read in the article?
- e. What do you think of the idea of chimpanzee art?
- f. Do you think a chimpanzee is an artist?
- g. Who would create more "artistic" paintings, a chimpanzee or a five-year-old child?
- h. Would you be interested in buying one of Congo's paintings?
- i. Do you think Congo deserves recognition as a bona fide artist?
- j. Do you think animals can be, or are, creative?

STUDENT B's questions (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Can you think of any other examples of animal art?
- b. Do you think there could be a new trend in animal art?
- c. Do you think Congo actually painted or just played with paints?
- d. What is art?
- e. What do you think of modern art?
- f. Do you have a favorite artist?
- g. Do you think art is important?
- h. What kind of paintings do you have at home?
- i. Who are the famous artists in your country?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

POST DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: Role play the following people in a discussion over the question of whether Congo's paintings is real art. Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and "strategies" before the role play begins.

Introduce yourself to the other role players before the role play begins.

Role A – Xavier de Jude

You are a famous abstract artist. You put your whole body, mind and effort into producing a painting. You are shocked and offended that a chimpanzee can be called an artist.

Role B – Desmond Morris

You are the famous anthropologist who "found" Congo. You are convinced he has extraordinary creative sensibilities. You believe Congo is one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century.

Role C – Dr S.G.K. Van den Berg

You are a world renowned expert on chimpanzees and chimp behavior. None of the research you know of proves chimpanzees are artistic. You think the anthropologist is just trying to make himself famous.

Role D – Quentin Smythe

You are the owner of the auction house. You desperately need the money from the sale of Congo's paintings and therefore need the paintings to be recognized as art.

Role E – Congo the chimpanzee

You are a famous artist. You put your whole body, mind and effort into producing a painting. You are shocked and offended that anyone can say chimpanzees cannot paint.

Role F – Jo Bananas

You are an average member of the public. You do not understand modern or abstract art. You think real art is paintings of people or still life or landscapes. Attack anyone who thinks chimps can paint.

After the role play, discuss whether you really believed what you were saying.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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Congo shot to fame in the 1950s _____ on a British TV show called *Zoo Time*. The show's host Desmond Morris, also a renowned anthropologist, was researching into _____. He instantly recognized that Congo had special artistic sensibilities. Dr Morris said the chimpanzee was an "intense" artist who was "focused on what he was doing" with his bold brushstrokes. Congo went on to become a prolific painter and a household name. He _____ 400 abstract paintings in his formative years. In 1957, his works were showcased at London's prestigious Institute of Contemporary Art. Although _____, the public went bananas and enthusiastically snapped up the paintings.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information on chimpanzees. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. REVIEW: Choose a piece of art you really like. Write a description of it for an imaginary auction house brochure. Read your article to your classmates in your next lesson and show a photo of the piece of art. Ask your classmates if they think your description is accurate.

4. LETTER: Write a letter to a British newspaper. Explain your thoughts on Congo and his paintings. Show your letter to the class next lesson and see if your classmates wrote similar things.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE

a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH

a. go under the hammer	be sold
b. vivid	bright
c. fetch	bring
d. sincerely	genuinely
e. bona fide	genuine
f. shot	rocketed
g. a household name	famous
h. churned out	produced
i. bananas	crazy
j. snapped up	bought

PHRASE MATCH:

a. go under	the hammer
b. auctioned	alongside other paintings
c. estimated to	be worth around \$1,500 each
d. fetch	record prices
e. bona	fide
f. shot	to fame
g. prolific	painter
h. He churned	out over 400 abstract paintings
i. in his formative	years
j. the public went	bananas

GAP FILL:

BNE: Three **pieces** of abstract art painted by a chimpanzee are to go under the hammer at the London auction house Bonham's next month. Works by Congo the chimp will be auctioned **alongside** other paintings by Renoir and Andy Warhol. The pictures, **marked** by their vivid colors and striking contrasts, are estimated to be worth around \$1,500 each, but such is the **interest**, they may fetch record prices for chimpanzee art. Bonham's art director Howard Rutkowski said the auction would be a **first** for the art world: "I would sincerely doubt that chimpanzee art has ever been auctioned before." The chimp does have bona fide artistic credentials: **fellow** abstract painter Picasso had a framed Congo painting on the wall of his studio.

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