

Dear teacher,

These art-chat cards will help you and your class practise language skills based on selected works in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent (MSK). Art and design teachers can also use the cards to initiate dialogues on art-related themes. You and your students can talk about everyday subjects from clothes to hobbies, parties to vacations, the five senses or anything else that comes to mind. What's more, this is a great way to become acquainted with art and the MSK collection.

The art-chat cards are a tool intended to spark lively discussions. The concept is simple: look at the work of art on the card, take inspiration from the example questions, and engage each other in conversation. The art-chat cards serve as a stepping stone between experiencing art and learning language skills. Since they are designed for use with no need for help from museum staff or a guide, you and your class can use them in any way you like.

Have fun looking and chatting!

MSK Ghent

**Practise
languages
with
our**

art

chat

cards



Notes for teachers

- Look through the cards beforehand and select the art, topics and questions that are most suitable for your class, for example based on the level or the amount of time you have. You can also opt to change or leave out certain questions or themes, or to add your own. Try to formulate open questions, which will encourage students to come up with a more extensive response than simply 'yes' or 'no'.
- Each work of art is accompanied by a brief explanatory text with background information.
- The following themes are covered: hobbies, parties, love, music, childhood, portraits, the city, seasons, the senses, food and drink, vacations, art, school, clothes, stories and animals.
- Print the art-chat cards and decide how you want to display the images: printed, on a computer screen, projected?
- Choose a discussion format, for example with the entire class or in smaller groups.
- Ask students to look carefully at the work of art, and then to read the questions to each other out loud.
- Give everyone a chance to speak, and take time to look at and listen to each other.
- Make sure everyone has the same amount of speaking time. Mistakes are allowed!
- You can also ask students to come up with additional questions for each other based on the works of art or the themes. Encourage them to formulate open questions.

Information

- The art-chat cards are available in Dutch, French, English and German. You can download them from our website for use in the classroom.
- The works of art depicted on the cards can all be found on our website.

Want to see the art 'for real'?

You are very welcome to visit the MSK. Entrance is free for everyone aged 18 and younger. For those aged 19 to 25, a ticket costs €2. You can come to the museum with your class, but you can also come alone or with friends or family.

- Complete visitor information for the MSK can be found at www.mskgent.be.
- If you have any questions, comments or suggestions regarding our art-chat cards, please let us know. You can reach us at msk.educatie@stad.gent.

Museum voor
Schone Kunsten
Gent

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mskgent.be

Hobby



What do you see?

What colours do you see?

What is the woman doing?

Which room is she sitting in? How can you tell?

Do you like to read?

What kind of books do you enjoy reading?

What is your hobby? What else can you say about it?

How often do you practise your hobby?

Where do you practise your hobby?

What title would you give this painting?

Torajiro Kojima, Woman Reading, 1921

Japanese artist Torajiro Kojima was enchanted by the city of Ghent and its mediaeval buildings. From 1909 to 1912 he studied at the Ghent Academy for Fine Arts, where he met an artist who had a significant influence on him: Emile Claus (see *The Kingfishers*). Various European movements inspired Kojima, including Impressionism and Fauvism. Taking its name from the French

word for 'wild beasts', Fauvism is a style of art that features bold colours, or *fauves*. While he was in Europe, Kojima collected paintings by his contemporaries in Paris and his friends in Ghent. The paintings he took back to Japan – by artists including Claus, Delvin, Monet, Matisse, Marquet and Rodin – formed the basis of the collection of the first museum for modern Western art in Japan, the Ohara Museum of Art in Kurashiki, which opened in 1929.

Party



What do you see?

What colours do you see?

What kind of celebration is this? How can you tell?

What are they eating?

Have you ever been to a wedding?

How do you like to celebrate?

What do you celebrate?

What is your favourite celebration? Why? Who else is there?

What was your favourite birthday party?

What title would you give this painting?

Pieter Brueghel the Younger, *The Wedding Feast*, 1616

This work, set in a barn, shows a 17th-century Flemish peasant wedding. The bride is positioned in the middle, in front of the white cloth on which her paper bridal crown is pinned. Traditionally, only the bride was allowed to wear her hair loose during her wedding celebration. It is not entirely clear which man is the groom. Is he the one seated opposite the bride,

leaning back with a jug in his hand? Bagpipers play music, and in the foreground a child laps up a bowl of porridge. Above right, two bundles of corn and a hoe are symbols of a fruitful harvest. This painting is a copy of the original one by the artist's father, Pieter Breughel the Elder. In this later version a courting couple has been added, half hidden in the hayloft at the left. The peasant wedding is a genre piece: a representation of day-to-day life.

Love



What do you see?

What colours do you notice?

How does this painting make you feel?

Have you ever been in love?

What does love mean for you?

What do you think is most important in a relationship?

What colour represents love?

What flower represents love?

Think of five words associated with love.

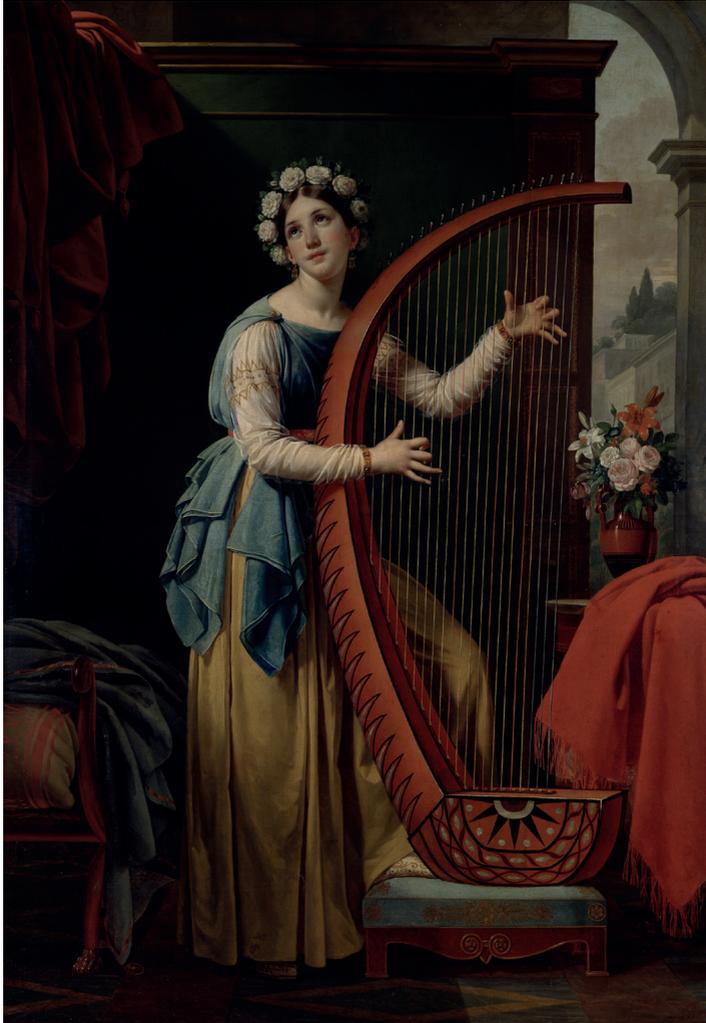
What title would you give this painting?

Léon De Smet, *Interior, or The Lovers*, 1911

A smitten couple seem to melt into each other in this painting. We see light from outside falling on the wall above the pair, which suggests a window. As he often did, the painter has depicted two of his own works in this painting, one on each side of the chimney. There is also a reference to George Minne in the form of one of his best-known sculptures, *The Little Relic Bearer*, on the mantelpiece. This sculpture

also turns up in other paintings by Léon de Smet. Here, the painter has used refined colour and careful composition to create an atmosphere of space and light. An interesting detail is his use of the painting technique of pointillism, in which paint is not mixed on the palette but applied to the canvas as dots of pure colour. When we look at them, our brain registers them as areas of colour, which means we see them as if they were blended together.

Music



What do you see?

What is the woman doing?

How does this painting make you feel?

When do you listen to music?

When do you turn up the volume?

What does music mean to you?

What kind of music do you like to listen to? Who is your favourite artist? What do you enjoy about listening to their music?

Have you ever been to a concert or a festival? What did you think of it?

Do you play a musical instrument?

What title would you give this painting?

Fanny Paelinck-Horgnies, *Saint Cecilia*, 1829

Most of the paintings in the museum were made by men, but this one is by a woman. It depicts Saint Cecilia, one of the most popular Roman martyrs of the second century AD. Saint Cecilia has been the patron saint of music since the late middle

ages. In this painting we see her playing the harp, which became increasingly popular in the early 19th century. This is a typical example of neoclassical painting, a style inspired by classical Greek and Roman art. A typical feature is the clear representation of reality, achieved through the use of powerful lines.

Childhood



What do you see?

What colours stand out?

How does the girl feel?

How does this painting make you feel?

What is your favourite memory from your childhood?

What toys did you have?
What did you most enjoy playing with?

Do you have sisters or brothers that you played with? What do you still do together now?

What title would you give this painting?

Felice Casorati, *Girl on a Red Carpet*, 1912

Ada Trentini was the model for this painting. A photograph exists showing her in a similar pose, which inspired the painter. Light flows in through the windows, falling in clear shapes on the ground. Ada has spread her treasures on the floor, and they represent both the bygone years

of childhood and the future, her adulthood. The unexpected combination of red and bluish-violet adds to the dreamy mood of the painting. This view is from a bird's-eye perspective, in which the painter is apparently looking down on the subject from above. This emphasizes the distance between the viewer and the girl, who has withdrawn into a world of her own.

Portrait



What do you see?

Is the girl happy or sad?
Why? How can you tell?

How does the painting
make you feel? Why?

The girl is in mourning
after her mother's
death. Have you ever
lost someone you cared
about?

What makes you sad?
What makes you happy?

What do you notice
about the interior? What
furniture do you see?

Which room in your
house is your favourite?
Why?

Is the girl rich or poor?
Why do you think so?

How old is the girl?

What title would you give
this painting?

**Théo Van Rysselberghe,
*Portrait of Marguerite Van
Mons*, 1886**

Marguerite Van Mons looks back at the viewer with a dreamy, absent gaze. Théo Van Rysselberghe painted this portrait of her shortly after the death of her mother. Her dark dress contrasts sharply with

her wan skin and the pale blue of the door, with its gold accents. The girl faces us, standing with her back against the door. With her right hand on the doorknob she seems to have just entered the room, or be just about to leave it. This ambiguous gesture and the melancholy atmosphere set the tone in this painting.

The city



What do you see?

Do you live in a city, or outside of a city? Describe the area you live in.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a city? And of living outside of the city?

How does the city make you feel?

And the countryside?

What kind of buildings can you find in a city?

What are the characteristics of a country landscape?

What is your favourite place in a city?

What title would you give this painting?

Erich Heckel, *The Augustijnenrij in Bruges in the Morning*, 1917

This painting is a cityscape of Bruges. The houses and the trees are at odd angles, which makes them seem alive. Everything is wobbly, and even the air waves and bends and spins. Of course, this is not a realistic representation of the city. Erich Heckel was not a *fijnschilder*, or fine-painter, in the tradition of Cornelis de Heem (see *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit*), painting objects in a highly

realistic and detailed manner. Instead, his cityscape is drawn with rapid strokes. Lines and blocks of colour are not carefully measured out. Rather than painting what he saw, Heckel painted what he felt: agitation. He created this painting in 1917, during the first World War, asking himself countless questions as he worked. How were his friends and family getting along? Were they still alive? What would he find if he could ever return home? The representation of emotions in works of art was a typical element of Expressionism.

Seasons



What do you see?

What colours do you see?

How do you feel when you look at this painting?

Have you ever walked or skated on ice?

Can you name the four seasons?

What is your favourite season? Why?

Which season is your least favourite? Why?

What season were you born in? How do you feel about that?

What title would you give this painting?

Emile Claus, *The Ice Birds*, 1891

It is winter, and so cold that you can walk across the river. The children glide over the ice on sleds, propelling themselves with sticks. Instead of skates they wear wooden shoes, because these are warmer. Emile Claus called these children 'ice birds' instead of playful birds. It is evening, and the setting sun turns the sky pink. In the distance the farm seems to be sleeping among the bare trees, which form a hazy mass. The ice is represented with broader strokes, with white, yellow, pink and blue tints bringing it to life. The sky gives

the best impression of Claus's way of painting, with so many blotches and stripes so carefully arranged. If you stand back from the painting, you no longer see the blotches, and the colours seem to flow together. A few painters discovered that this was a better way to represent light: the Impressionists. They created suggestions, or impressions, of light and colour. The most difficult thing is to paint the light so precisely that you can tell whether it is morning or afternoon or evening. Or spring, summer, autumn or winter. Claus was a master in just this, and we therefore refer to him as a light artist, or Luminist.

Senses



What do you see?

What are all the men in the painting doing?

What objects are they holding?

What do they represent?

Can you name all the senses?

Which of the senses do you think is most important? Why?

Which of the senses do you think is least important? Why?

What different types of flavours can you name? Different scents? Different textures? Different sounds?

What title would you give this painting?

Theodoor Rombouts, *Allegory of the Five Senses*, 1632

In this scene the artist represents the five senses as five men holding various objects. Each man symbolizes a particular sense. We call this an allegory: a depiction in which people or animals personify abstract concepts that you cannot touch or depict realistically, such as time, homesickness, seeing, thinking or feeling. But you can show these concepts by using

props, or specific objects such as the old man's glasses and mirror, which symbolize Sight. The figure who represents Hearing is playing a bass lute. The blind man in the middle represents Touch: he sees nothing, but feels his way through life. The man holding the glass of wine is Taste, and the young man with the pipe and garlic symbolizes Smell. The painter seems to be saying, "Use your senses; you have them for a reason. But don't overdo it."

Food and drink



What do you see?

What colours do you see?

Which ingredients do you recognize?

What is your favourite food?

What is your favourite drink?

Do you like to cook? What is your favourite thing to make? Why?

What food do you dislike? Why?

What is your favourite snack?

What is for lunch today? Did you make it yourself?

Would you say you eat healthily, or unhealthily? Why?

What title would you give this painting?

Cornelis de Heem, *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit*, 1670

This painting shows us a mountain of flowers and fruits: grapes, nuts, peaches, oranges, stems full of blackberries and cherries. In between are red, pink, white and blue flowers, hops and grain and grape leaves. Everything is highly realistic and detailed: you can even see the veins in the leaves and the

antennae on the snails. De Heem was truly a 'fine-painter', using an extremely fine brush to create his works. In his paintings there is no place for the wide brush strokes that Heckel and other artists used. Painting with this much precision is not at all easy, but requires a steady hand and plenty of practice. Cornelis de Heem lived over 300 years ago. He painted only still lifes, his specialist subject.

Vacation



What do you see?

What colours do you see?

Have you travelled?
Where to?

Which countries have
you visited?

What places have you
visited in Belgium? What
is your favourite place in
Belgium?

Do you prefer to stay
home or do you like to
travel?

What activities do you
plan for when you go
on vacation? What do
you like to do when you
travel?

What place in the world
do you think is the most
beautiful?

Which countries would
you like to visit? Why?

How does the idea of
travelling make you feel?

What title would you give
this painting?

Henri Evenepoel, *The Spaniard in Paris, 1899*

This well-dressed man, with his cape, necktie and tall hat, is Francisco Iturrino, a Spaniard. He walks alone in the square. All the people in the background are in a hurry, running to their destinations. The Belgian painter Henri Evenepoel created this life-sized, full-length portrait of Iturrino. The red windmill visible in the painting is the famous

Moulin Rouge, in Paris. Thanks to it, we can immediately recognize the city. Evenepoel studied at the Academy there, together with Iturrino. For ages Paris was known as the city of art, and painters from across Europe travelled to the French capital to work and study. The background Evenepoel chose was not an interior or a landscape, but a slice of Paris. Evenepoel was also a photographer. He used his own photos of the Moulin Rouge to create this painting.



What do you see?

What colours can you see?

What shapes do you recognize?

How does this painting make you feel?

Have you ever visited a museum? What could you see there? Have you been to MSK Ghent before?

If you could think up a museum, what kind of one would you create? What could people do there?

Which real-life museums would you like to visit? Why?

Who is your favourite artist?

Do you like this painting? Why, or why not?

What title would you give this painting?

Victor Servranckx, *Harbour. Opus 2*, 1926

As the title indicates, this work represents a harbour. The Belgian painter Victor Servranckx did not paint it in a realistic way, but as an abstract harbour that is less easy to recognize. If you look carefully, you can make out a boat from the shapes. Servranckx often took inspiration from elements in the world of industry and mechanics, although most of his creations

were purely abstract. The Belgian abstract movement emerged in Antwerp at the end of the first World War, in part in the circle around the well-known poet Paul van Ostaïjen. Victor Servranckx belonged to a different group of abstract artists active in Brussels. Servranckx remained true to his ideas about the visual arts throughout his life. He was undoubtedly the most interesting figure in the abstract movement in Belgium.

School



What do you see?

What do you remember about kindergarten? What about primary school?

What is your favourite school subject? Why?

What is your least favourite subject? Why?

Which subjects are you good at? Which ones less so? Why is that?

What do you want to study when you finish school? Why?

What job would you like to do later? Why?

What title would you give this painting?

James Guthrie, *Village Children*, 1884

James Guthrie painted these village children in Cockburnspath, a small Scottish village where he lived among the local people. He depicted rural life as plainly as possible. That was a characteristic of naturalism, a movement in which people tried to paint as 'close to nature' as possible. In this

painting the children wear their poverty with pride, looking straight ahead and not at each other. The artist's decision to paint them in profile reinforces this, making their daily trek to the schoolroom appear rather like a ritual. The children's faces are painted in a highly photographic, realistic and detailed way, while their clothes, the country lane and the landscape are depicted more as a sketch.

Clothes



What do you see?

What colours do you see?

What differences do you notice between the styles of clothing in the painting and today's fashion?

Can you also see any similarities?

When do you think this painting was made? What makes you think that?

Which of your clothes are your favourite? Why?

What are you wearing today?

Have you ever designed a piece of clothing yourself?

What title would you give this painting?

Cornelis de Vos, *Family Portrait*, 1630

We don't know who the people in this painting are. But we can see that they are very wealthy. First of all, it would have cost a lot of money to have a portrait painted. And it took months for a painter to finish the work. Children would have found it difficult to sit still for hours every day, so the painter may have made a number of drawings of each family member beforehand. But for him to get the lighting and the composition just right, the family had to pose together. Another way

we can tell that this is a wealthy family is that their clothes are made of extremely expensive fabrics such as lace, satin and velvet. The outfits are trimmed with gold buttons and pearls. Based on the clothes, you might think that the portrait depicts only two male figures. But that isn't the case: in this era it was common for boys under seven to wear robes. Another interesting part of the outfits is the little helmet that the youngest child is wearing. Cornelis de Vos has not only painted this family's outward appearance, but he has also tried to show us how they feel.

Stories



What do you see?

What story do you think is depicted here?

What is this story about?

What stories did people tell you when you were little?

What character from a story would you like to be? Why?

What is your favourite fairy tale? Can you give a summary of the story?

Why is this your favourite fairy tale?

What title would you give this work?

Emile Namur, *Cinderella*, 1881

Emile Jean François Namur was a Belgian sculptor. Throughout his life he sculpted mainly nudes and busts. But he also worked on historic buildings, for instance designing decorative figures for the Brussels city hall. This figure of *Cinderella* was his most successful work, being not only simple but also elegant. Namur learned to combine

these two characteristics by being a good observer of nature. He did not aspire to create difficult, intellectual sculptures or to be highly original. Instead, he wanted observers to enjoy the experience of looking, and to note a reference to history. This work's title refers to the well-known fairy tale about a girl whose life consisted of performing chores for her stepmother and stepsisters – until she met her dream prince.

Animals



What do you see?

Which colours do you notice?

Which animals can you see in this painting?

What is your favourite animal? Why?

What is the most interesting animal you have ever heard of? Why?

Do you have pets at home? How do you take care of them?

Have you ever been to a zoo? What did you see there?

What title would you give this painting?

David de Coninck, *Animals in a Garden*, 17th century

David de Coninck was a painter who lived in the southern Netherlands in the 17th century. He travelled extensively in Europe, working in Rome for a while. He painted mainly still lifes, landscapes with animals and hunting scenes. But he also liked to paint animals in the garden. People have kept animals in their gardens since the middle ages. In this painting you can see a peacock, a parrot, rabbits, guinea pigs and

various fowl. These animals were native to Europe. At that time some people also kept exotic animals in gardens, such as monkeys, lions, camels and ostriches. So in a sense, there were already zoos of a sort during the late middle ages. The animals in this painting catch the eye because they are painted in lighter tints and stand out against the darker background. Various animals and objects in this painting also turn up in other works by David de Coninck.