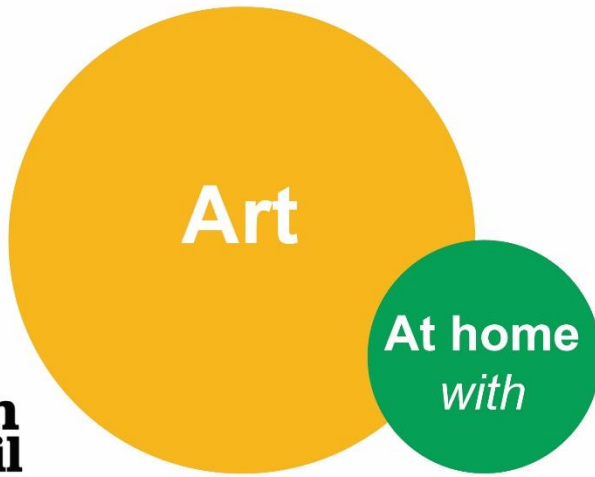


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Bolton Collages by Julian Trevelyan

This is the second in our series of posts about sketching at home. The great thing about drawing is that it's cheap and you can do it anywhere. You don't need expensive materials and you don't need a lot of space.

A drawing doesn't have to be made with a pencil, a brush or a pen. This collage by Julian Trevelyan is a kind of sketch. He made it on the streets of Bolton, with the mills and chimneys in front of him, quickly pasting strips of coloured paper and other scrap material on to a large piece of paper. If you look at the top section of the picture, you'll notice that he's also used a pen to draw in the outlines of some fields and hills, and watercolours to paint the hills green and the sky blue.



Bolton, 1937 by Julian Trevelyan. Courtesy of the artist's estate.

You make the picture

Trevelyan made a whole series of collages during his time in Bolton. Collages are a great starting point if you're a bit hesitant about using a pencil or brush. You can pretty much use anything to make a collage: old magazines, newspapers, coloured paper, kitchen foil, and buttons. As Julian Trevelyan shows, it's a fun, direct way of making a piece of art using recycled materials from your home.

Trevelyan's suitcase

Julian Trevelyan lived and worked in London. So, what brought him to Bolton and how did he make his collages?

Trevelyan was one of the main artists involved in Mass Observation's pioneering study of Bolton in the late 1930s. MO built up a detailed picture of life in the town. They observed their subjects at the factory and in the pub, on the terraces at a football game and shopping at the open market. Tom Harrison, the leader of the study, asked Trevelyan to paint and draw in the streets of Bolton. He recorded what he saw in photographs, watercolours and a series of collages. In his autobiography, he recalls that,

“At this time, I was making collages; I carried a large suitcase full of newspapers, copies of Picture Post, seed catalogues, old bills, coloured papers and other scraps, together with a pair of scissors, a pot of gum and a bottle of Indian Ink. I was applying the collage techniques I had learnt from the surrealists to the thing seen, and I now tore up pictures of the Coronation crowds to make the cobblestones of Bolton.”



Harrison asked Trevelyan to make his collages on the spot, with the suitcase by his side, battling the wind and the rain and his own shyness whilst being watched by passers-by on the street. This way of working placed him in a position where he could not help but engage in conversations with local people, who observed and judged his art and, in turn, made him very conscious of his status as an 'outsider'. 'I began to understand', he later recollected, 'that Tom's purpose in bringing me to Bolton was as much to see how Bolton reacted to me as I reacted to Bolton.'



Bolton Mills, 1938 by Julian Trevelyan. Courtesy of the artist's estate