



Open Arts Objects

<http://www.openartsarchive.org/open-arts-objects>

Student handout

Presenter: Gill Perry

Work: Roger Hiorns, copper sulphate crystals from *Seizure*, 2008

<http://www.openartsarchive.org/resource/open-arts-object-roger-hiorns-seizure-2008>

Professor Gill Perry explores an installation in an abandoned flat in Harper Road (SE1) South London, 2008, commissioned by the Arts Charity Artangel. An abandoned ground floor flat was filled with liquid copper sulphate crystals. The building itself, and the estate around Harper Road have now been demolished for as part of a major redevelopment of Southwark, including the flat that hosted *Seizure*. The installation was finally removed in January, 2010.

Before watching the film

1. What do you know about **installation art**?
2. How would you describe this work? Is it a building, installation, sculpture, space etc? Describe what you see on the screen, and say how you might view this work.
3. What do you know (from your science/chemistry lessons?) about the formation of copper sulphate crystals? How are crystals formed?
4. Find Harper Road on a recent map of London and look at its relationship to large estates and areas of social housing in this area. Note that the nearby Heygate Estate, Southwark, was demolished between 2011 and 2014 as part of the urban regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area. [Wikipedia](#)

After watching the film

1. In what ways does *Seizure* belong in the category ‘installation art’? To what extent would you identify it as an art work?
2. How does the carpet of blue crystals relate to the objects and spaces that it covers (i.e. the interior spaces of the bedsit)?
3. How does this crystallised flat relate to the environment of estate around it, and some of the social issues associated with the area?
4. What effects (artistic and social) do you think the artist was trying to achieve in this work?
5. Can you think of any other art works (modern or contemporary) that have used crystals? What can these chemicals, and the processes of crystallisation involved, contribute to art. Is it science, or art, or both?

Online Activity

1. Search the databases of **Artangel**, the arts charity that commissioned the original work in 2008, and **Yorkshire Sculpture Park**, <http://www.ysp.co.uk/exhibitions/roger-hiorns-seizure>, where a partial reconstruction is now housed.

What kind of observations you can make from your searches?

How would you compare the original installation with the partial reconstruction in Yorkshire Sculpture Park?

Does the very different later setting in a sculpture park change the effects of the work?

2. If you are interested in the varied uses of crystals in art you might be interested in an exhibition titled Crystal World, and held at the Royal Society in 2011. Here’s a link to a podcast on this exhibition: www.openartsarchive.org/archive/crystal-world

3. If you would like to learn more about the chemical components of copper sulphate and how it crystallises, Wikipedia is a good place to start: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper\(II\)_sulfate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper(II)_sulfate)

Comparative analysis

Choose another example of **installation** art produced within the last three decades that you are familiar with, and compare the two works:

(Examples: Tracey Emin *My Bed*, 1999: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Bed - or Mona Hatoum's *Homebound*, 2000: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/mona-hatoum-homebound>)

- a) How would you list the materials used in each?
- b) Do they both invite a similar physical engagement from the viewer?
- c) What kinds of meanings are suggested or evoked by both?
- d) What associations or references can find in each? Are there any similarities and significant differences?
- e) These are both works of recent art. Do either have anything to say about contemporary experience or social life?