

# **HAYWARD GALLERY**

## **Linder: Danger Came Smiling**

HAYWARD GALLERY EDUCATION RESOURCE

**SOUTHBANK  
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# Hayward Gallery Education Resource

In spring 2025, the Hayward Gallery presents the exhibition *Danger Came Smiling* by Linder. In the landscape of contemporary art, Linder has developed a powerful artistic voice that reimagines traditional notions of identity, gender and portraiture.

Known for her provocative 'photomontages' that dissect gender stereotypes, Linder uses art as a critical and playful tool for social commentary. Her practice employs photomontage as an instrument of social critique. By dismantling and reconstructing images from contemporary media, she exposes ideas of gender and the commodification of bodies.



## How to use this resource

Inspired by the artist, this resource supports teachers of Key Stage 4 and upwards to explore the role of art – and the meanings that can be made between artist and viewer – with their students. Students examine how artists can subvert, redress and challenge canonised art, popular imagery and societal views, and are invited to create art that centres and celebrates their own truth, lived experiences and identities.

The activities in this resource are designed to introduce students to Linder's work, the themes and ideas she explores, and the media and techniques she uses to create her art. Students can draw inspiration from this artist research to engage in practical artwork, and discover how mediums such as photography, photomontage, collage and mixed media can help an artist to reframe and redefine, fracture and reconstruct, subvert and abstract meanings. Recommendations for artist research and wider reading inspired or influenced by the work of Linder are included at the end of this resource, where you'll also find further links and an image bank.

### Teacher note:

We recommend Linder's work for Key Stage 4 upwards. We have highlighted where content and conversations in this resource might be more suitable for older students, and if you are visiting the exhibition, there is a map in the image bank to support your visit.

Linder challenges and subverts gender stereotypes in the media through her photomontages. These include idealised feminine depictions of women as symbols of domesticity in home and fashion magazines, as well as the sexual objectification of women through pornographic publication. For you and your students to fully appreciate her body of work and its underlying themes, teachers may decide to engage in age-appropriate discussions about pornography.

Details can be found on page 16 to support this.

# About the artist

# Linder



Linder is a British artist, musician and feminist icon best known for her pioneering contributions to the worlds of visual art and music in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Born in 1954 in Liverpool, Linder became a central figure in the post-punk and feminist movements, and her work spans multiple mediums, including photomontage, photography, performance and music.

Linder was born into a working-class family in Liverpool, and her early life was marked by the socio-economic challenges of post-war Britain. From a young age, she showed an interest in art and was encouraged to pursue her creative ambitions. She initially studied graphic design at Manchester Polytechnic during the 1970s, where she became actively involved in the emerging punk scene. She became famous for her provocative sleeve art for punk band Buzzcocks' debut single 'Orgasm Addict' (1977) and fronted the post-punk band, Ludus. The synchronicity of the punk scene chimed with her interest in photomontage, and 'destroying things to make them right'. Her provocative work combining imagery from gendered publications, including lifestyle magazines, pornography, fashion and advertising creates surreal, often unsettling juxtapositions which critique consumer culture and challenge the commodification and objectification of women in it.

*Danger Came Smiling* is Linder's first London retrospective. It showcases 50 years of the pioneering feminist artist's work, and addresses our fascination with the body and its representation. The exhibition presents the breadth of Linder's artistic output across photomontage, photography, performance and sculpture. The body and its photographic representation is central to Linder's approach to image-making. Often working with a medical-grade scalpel, she draws on the creative and violent power of the cut in her forensic examination of our shifting attitudes to aspirational lifestyles, sex, food and fashion.

# **Women in art: Setting the scene**

The following activities will help you to contextualise the themes presented in Linder's work, and encourage students' critical thinking.

# Activity 1: Reflecting on the role of art and consumer

Invite the students to reflect on the role of art and artist, and the consumer of art. Offer prompts to stimulate debate and discussion, such as:

1. *Who makes art and why? Why does it matter?*

2. *What does 'great' art mean to you? How do we know what 'great' art is?*

3. *Who looks at and enjoys art, and why? Does it matter?*

4. *Where is art usually seen? Is there a connection between where art is exhibited and how it is accessed by people?*

5. *Who or what is the subject of art? Who gets to decide, and why?*

6. *How does art reflect the world – the cultural or societal beliefs – in which it is made? Can art and images from the past influence our view of the world now?*

- Provide students with visual reference material, such as art books and gallery publications which include a range of artists, to support debate. *What do they notice about: who is featured most commonly as an artist; when and where the art was made; why it was commissioned; what information is included and what is absent; who is featured in the artworks and how they are represented; whose reality and perspective does the artwork reflect and how this might shape or jar with our own world view?*

- Discuss how different people have been represented, excluded, stereotyped or canonised in artworks – or as artists and consumers. This could be personal to their own lives and identities and might include discussions around class, culture, heritage, gender or sexuality, for example.
- Take the opportunity to build on and develop a working vocabulary that students can use to talk about art, such as: the names of art movements, including **classical, impressionist, Dadaism, surrealist**; the language of looking – **observe, analyse, interpret, evaluate**; a lexicon to help explore harmful ideologies – **canon, male and female gaze, objectify, agency, identity**; and terminology related to media and artistic techniques, such as **photography, photomontage, collage, mixed media, recast, subvert, abstract, reconstruct**. Support the students to share what they notice, citing evidence to support or challenge assertions.
- Invite the group to develop hypotheses about the role of art, artists and consumers in reflecting or shaping cultural and societal constructs. *Has our view of the world been influenced or challenged by art? If so, how?*

## Activity 2: Archetypes of women in art

Linder explores the representation of women in art, and the following sections provide some historical context to support your students' understanding before discussing her work.

- Discuss the concept of **the archetype**, using the **'hero'** as an easily identifiable example found in a range of media such as folk or fairy tales, poetry, films, artwork, advertising and music videos. *What kind of characteristics do they demonstrate? What kind of person first comes to mind?*
- Collate examples in which students have identified the hero archetype, and encourage them to discuss their ideas and make connections.
- Identify other archetypes in the hero narrative, such as the **'monster'** or **'maiden'**. *Who are they and how do they compare to the hero archetype? Do they play an active or passive role?*
- Come together to discuss the tropes on which writers, creators and artists might draw to present an idea or drive a narrative. *How are different types of people represented or excluded, and why does this matter? How might it influence our view of the world?*
- Share examples in which such tropes have been subverted and where erasure has been challenged. Invite students to reflect on how creators can take inspiration from their lived experiences to reshape cultural and societal beliefs.

### Who is Venus?

Venus is the mythological goddess of love and beauty. Throughout European art history, she has been used as a symbolic representation of womanhood, specifically as divine female beauty. The archetypal Venus figure is most often depicted as a young white woman, passive in recline or upright and naked. These works of art were mainly created and commissioned by men.



## Activity 3: Exploring the Venus archetype

- Introduce the **Venus archetype** as described on the previous page.
- Present several of the most recognised images of Venus (such as those in the image bank provided) to the students without yet revealing each artwork's title, artist or date.
- Invite the students to share and discuss first impressions about the pieces as a collection of works. *What are your first impressions – what instantly strikes you about this collection? What thoughts or feelings does it evoke? What do you like or dislike? What connections are you making between the artworks or more widely – are any patterns emerging? What questions does it raise?*
- Assign one or two of the artworks to small groups of students to explore in more depth and to examine each piece through **pure observation**. Model to students how they can draw on the **visual elements** used by artists – **colour, line, shape, form** and **texture** – to help them create their observations and annotate each piece.
- Bring the students together to share and document what they have noticed, facilitating discussion which draws together observations and ideas about the Venus archetype. These could include:
  1. Note the youthfulness of the subjects, the pale, white skin in many of the representations of the Venus figure or the way in which Black women are included or represented. *What might this say about the attitudes to women and to Black women at the time the art was created?*
  2. The Venus figure is presented to us fully nude or semi-naked in most pieces, and is portrayed in stillness and passivity, whether standing or prone. *What might this suggest about the way women were viewed at the time the art was made, or about the effect the artists wanted to have on the viewer? Who do you think was the intended audience – male or female – and what makes you think that?*
  3. The way in which we are led by the artist to view the work through the pose or composition – what we see first and why – and whether students think this objectifies and sexualises the female figure.
  4. The gaze in each Venus figure – downcast, directly out or hidden – and discuss what effect this has. *How does this reinforce or subvert what we might expect from the Venus archetype?* Take the opportunity to re-examine the artworks as you introduce ideas about the relationship between the male and female gaze – the latter often being represented by artists as a response to the male gaze ('I know you are looking at me' or 'I see you looking at me'), but sometimes this is interrupted.

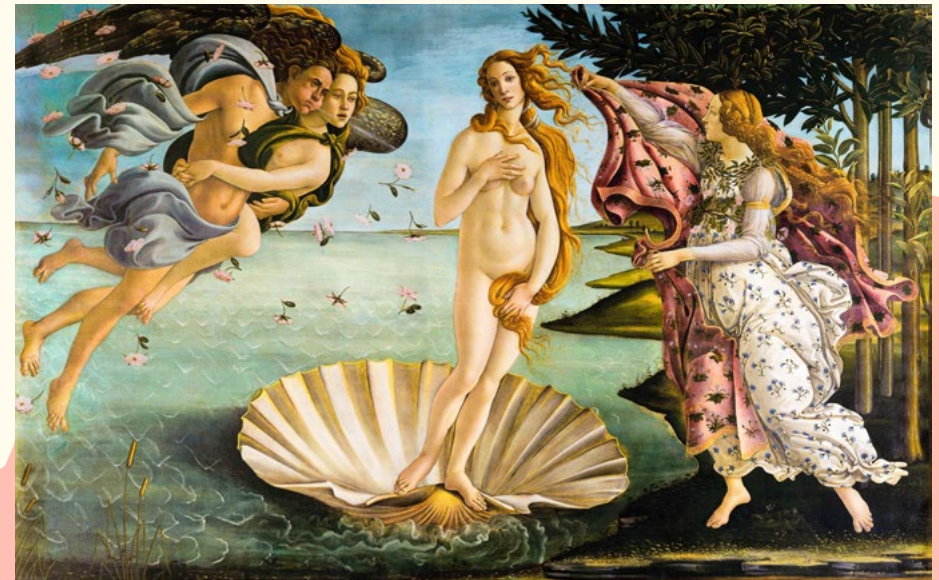
## Activity 4: Evaluating the use of the Venus archetype

Now share the details of each artwork and their artists with the student groups to engage them in **analysis and interpretation**. Reveal the artist, title, date, medium and size of the work. You might provide biographical information about the artist's life; the circumstances and time in which the art was created – political, societal and cultural; their motivation for creating the piece; an artist quotation outlining intent; details of who commissioned the art and why; information about the subject/s of the piece; where the work was/is exhibited and curatorial text; and public reaction to the piece initially and since.

Give the students time to study and discuss the material together before inviting them to revisit the artwork with this new information in mind, adding their analysis to their observational notes. *Is this what you expected? What does this tell us? What does it mean to you? Is anything of particular significance to you – if so, why? How has it confirmed or changed the way you view the piece?*

- Come back together to discuss and compare interpretations before inviting students to **evaluate** the role and use of the Venus archetype in art, drawing on what they now know. *What do you think is at the heart of these artworks? What does it tell us about power or the way women can be portrayed? How does this compare to the hero archetype, traditionally portrayed by a man, or other female archetypes like the maiden and the monster?*

- Return to pupils' previous ideas about the role of art, artists and consumers in reflecting or shaping cultural and societal constructs. *Do you think this kind of art adds value to the world of art, design, culture and media – and to society more generally? What influence does the gendered, objectified body seen in the Venus portrayals have on the visual culture we consume or create today?*
- Provide time for students to explore ideas in notebooks or sketchbooks. *What are you inspired to think about or create yourself in response to exploring these artworks?*



**Exploring  
Linder: Danger  
Came Smiling**

## Activity 1: Introducing Linder

Introduce Linder to the students by showing them the piece *Untitled* (1976), without revealing the date it was made.

- Invite the students to share their initial impressions. *What does it make you feel or think about and why? What meaning or connections are you making?* Value all responses and note this around a printed version of the image, on a whiteboard or in a student reflective journal.
- Provide time for groups to engage in the artwork through pure observation. Ask them to make detailed annotations and to be ready to give feedback.
- Come together to discuss and document the students' observations, paying close attention to the scale of the work, the material and the compositional choices Linder has made, and how the combination of the background and photo-montaged elements create the meaning of the work:

1. *How do the objects, colours or textures in the background image help to set the scene?*

2. *Can you describe the pose of the figure in the foreground? Who might this person be? What might they be thinking or feeling?*

3. *How many different viewpoints are contained within this image? The camera is directed at the figure and the transistor radio in the bed suggests surveillance – in the context of a bedroom, what does this make you think of?*

4. *How old do you think the images in this photomontage are? How does this translate to your own experience of technology in private spaces today?*

5. *What do the photo-montaged elements on the figure conceal and what do they reveal? The figure faces us but looks to one side with oversized eyes and a smile – how similar or different is this to how you imagine the original face might have looked? How does the addition of the vacuum-cleaner arm change the meaning of the figure in the image? How different would the work be if this, or another photo-montaged element, had not been added?*



## Activity 2: Reflecting on artistic intent

Share the details of the artwork and artist with the students so that they can begin to interpret and consider Linder's intention.

Draw attention to the date it was created and the ways in which it still resonates today. Reflect on the ownership and objectification of bodies and the risks of sharing images of ourselves or our private lives online – how can they be altered and shared widely without consent?

- Establish whether Linder is familiar to the students and share the introduction about her provided. You might select a quote from Linder herself, such as:

'I just began to cut out from the women's magazines and the men's magazines – like a sort of jigsaw puzzle – so began to collect all the pieces and I cut out lots of mouths and eyes, the women I saw in all those kitchens and all those living rooms, and those bedrooms. And then of course, turned my attention to the female forms as I saw within the men's magazines, pornography, and cut those out as well. And then it was quite a simple act. It was, "What happens when you put those two together?"'

*Meet the artist: Linder Sterling, Bloomberg TateShots, 2017*

- Discuss the printed source material that Linder uses to critique gendered imagery and consumerism, glamour photography and pornography through her photomontage. If linking to her use of pornography, we advise conversations with Key Stage 4 students only. *How might we translate this to images in everyday visual culture today? Where do we see the objectification or gendering of women and men and how could we use photomontage or other techniques to create new compositions which challenge and subvert?*



## Activity 3: Exploring and evaluating Linder's artwork

Share that the exhibition title, *Danger Came Smiling*, was taken from Linder's band Ludus' album, and named after a 1970s romance novel. *What does 'danger came smiling' mean to you? How does the exhibition title relate to this work in particular? What or who do you think presents a danger in this context?*

- Provide the students with a small selection of works by Linder spanning her 50-year artistic output, so that they can explore them together and engage in artist research. See more examples in the image bank.
- Engage the students in evaluative discussion. *What do you think is at the heart of Linder's artwork; what is most important about it to you?* Her artwork emphasises how visual image can be manipulated and how desire that drives consumer capitalism can be influenced – *how does it contribute to art and what value does it add to society more generally? What difference could her artwork make to the way we and others think or feel? How might it inspire people?*
- You might discuss Linder's own reflection on her artistic process:

The cuts made by my blades and scissors are perpetually liberating. Each restores agency across print and page. The found images in my work are often quite fragile both materially and conceptually, it doesn't take much then to hijack them and to take them somewhere far more surreal.'

Linder, *Art Plugged*, March 2024

### Responding creatively to Linder's work

- Watch a film of Linder discussing her process [here](#).
- Make materials such as photos, magazines and marketing content – and tools to cut and stick them – available so that students might practically try the techniques the artist herself uses.
- Help students to explore how her artistic process, materials and techniques can be used to subvert meaning and create new meaning.



**Visiting the exhibition  
and further reading**

## Teacher note: Talking about and understanding pornographic images and consumerism

In exploring Linder's work, teachers may decide to engage pupils in age-appropriate discussions around pornography.

- Linder challenges and subverts gender stereotypes and reveals the omnipresence of the sexualised male gaze through her photomontages using popular media. This includes idealised feminine depictions of domesticised women in homemaking and fashion magazines, as well as consumer objects of male desire in pornographic publications.
- She has been working with contemporary glamour photography and pornography for five decades, from the 1970s to the present day, combining it with contemporary material from other publications, like 'men's interest' magazines and adverts to form her critique. She says:

'Pornography is such a fragile construct – fashion photography too. It doesn't take much to hijack an image. You can glue a cut-out of an iron onto a woman's head and suddenly the image is going off in a totally different direction.'

Linder, in conversation with Dawn Ades, *Linder* (Ridinghouse, 2022)

- *How does this kind of deconstruction help us to understand pornographic images and the motivations for creating them? What questions does it raise around ownership and consumerism? What does it suggest about sex and the objectified, gendered body both in pornography and more widely, in everyday popular culture?*
- You might revisit commonly accepted, even revered, representations of women in art, such as the Venus image, posing the question to stimulate debate: *When does art become pornography?*

*Information to support this discussion can be found via the Children's Commissioner website, including a [report](#) conducted by them, which you can use to inform your own background knowledge.*

## Further developments: Responding to the exhibitions and artists' work

This section can be used if you're visiting the exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, or as further provocations with your students to support analytical thinking and their creative responses in the classroom.

- Encourage the students to explore the artworks, drawing on their own pure observations and any curatorial information provided.
- Provide them with sketchbooks so that they can make drawings and notes to support evaluative discussion with peers.

1. *What more have you learned about the artist and her art through this exhibition?*

2. *What questions have been raised? How do you think her work has evolved?*

3. *What do you think is at the heart of her work? How does the medium or technique used support her intent or create impact on you, the viewer?*

4. *Is there a piece of particular interest that you find evocative or inspiring? Why?*

- Reflect with students about what they noticed about the way the art was curated at the Hayward Gallery (if visiting the exhibition). *Did this influence their experience as art consumers?*

1. *What information was presented alongside the artwork or in the room?*

2. *How was the viewer encouraged to move around the exhibition and why do they think it was designed that way?*

- You could also explore the theme of gallery spaces and what factors make a welcoming and engaging environment. *How have artists sometimes made their art accessible by showing it out of gallery spaces?*
- Invite students to reflect on their responses to each of the artists' works. *What feelings did it evoke and why? What impact did it have on you? Do you still have questions? Does anything still puzzle you? How does it compare to other artists or exhibitions that you have visited before? What does it inspire you to think about? What connections do you make to your own life?*
- Ask students to work up ideas and intentions in their sketchbooks towards finished pieces of their own, drawing on the inspiration they are taking from a single piece of art or body of work. They might take inspiration from the medium or techniques used, the visual effects created, or be drawn to the meaning that is being made and messages shared. *How can they influence others as these artists have? What will they call their own pieces? What difference will this make to the viewer?*
- Exploration of the artists could lead to an exhibition of the student's own artwork which they have been inspired to create. Make a gallery space in the school so that their work can be displayed and viewed by others as a celebration of artist voice, identity and inclusion.

## Further reading and links

- *Art Monsters: Unruly Bodies in Feminist Art*, Lauren Elkin (Penguin Random House, 2024)
- *Gender and the Media*, Rosalind Gill (Polity Books, 2006)
- *Hannah Höch: Works on Paper*, Dawn Ades, Daniel F. Herrmann, Emily Butler (Prestel, 2022)
- *Linder*, Linder Sterling, Dawn Ades (Ridinghouse, 2022)
- *Linder: Danger Came Smiling*, Gilly Fox (Contributor), Chris Kraus (Contributor), Rachel Thomas (Contributor) and Marina Warner (Contributor) (Hayward Gallery, 2025)
- *Perfect: Feeling Judged on Social Media*, Rosalind Gill (Polity Books, 2023)
- *Photomontage*, Dawn Ades (Thames & Hudson Ltd; 1986)
- *Sex is a Funny Word*, Cory Silverberg (Seven Stories Press, 2015)
- *The Story of Art without Men*, Katy Hessel (Hutchinson Heinemann, 2022)
- [Venus Along Art History](#) (Google Arts & Culture)
- *Women in Revolt*, Linsey Young (Ed.) (Tate, 2003)
- *Women in the Picture: Women, Art and the Power of Looking*, Catherine McCormack (Icon Books, 2021)
- *You Know Sex*, Cory Silverberg (Triangle Square, 2022)

## About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, and produces great cultural experiences that aim to bring people together and open up the arts to everyone. Its artistic venues include the award-winning Hayward Gallery, which has been presenting thought-provoking contemporary art exhibitions for over 50 years.

Find out more about the Hayward Gallery

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/venues/hayward-gallery>

We deliver a year-round programme of creative learning activities for teachers and schools.

Find out more about the Southbank Centre's Creative Engagement programmes

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/creative-engagement>



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# Image credits

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