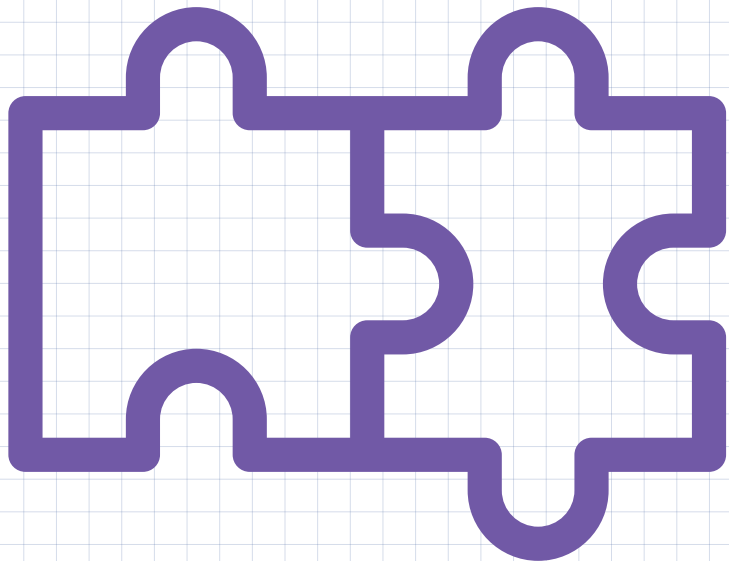




# THINKER

**ART CRACK**  
DIVE DEEPER INTO THE ART



# HELLO ART CRACK!

Today you are the restorer! You will step into the shoes of an art doctor, but before getting down to work, have a good think: what exactly are you going to do and why? What is your action plan?

Restoration issues are rarely black and white. You have to weigh up all your options, think critically and be able to justify your decision.

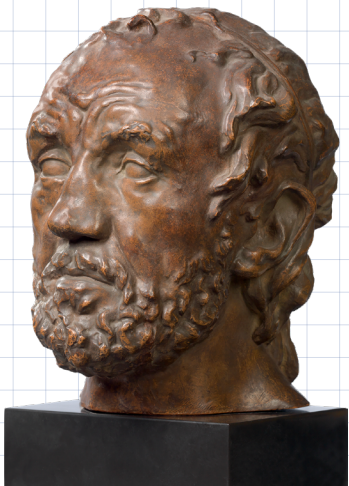
By giving serious consideration to the situation, you will keep art safe. For now and later.

# MAN WITH THE BROKEN NOSE

BUSTE RODIN

In 1921, the KMSKA was gifted this sculpture by the Rodin Museum in Paris as a symbol of friendship between the two museums. But sadly, as you saw on the research table, this sculpture was damaged when it **fell off its plinth and shattered**. The restorer assigned to its repair made it known in letters that repair would be a **near impossible task** and one that stood only a very slim chance of success. The museum nevertheless asked the restorer to try.

There was another option: the museum could buy **a new copy** of the sculpture from the Rodin Museum. That would be cheaper than restoring the broken one.



Imagine you are the boss.  
What would you do?

▲ **I would buy a new sculpture.** Rather than than spend a lot of money on a difficult and possibly unsatisfactory restoration. The most important thing is that visitors can see the sculpture, even if it is not the original.

● **I would first have the original restored.** Only if that failed would I buy a new one. That way, the story of the gift would not be lost and visitors would still be able to see the work.

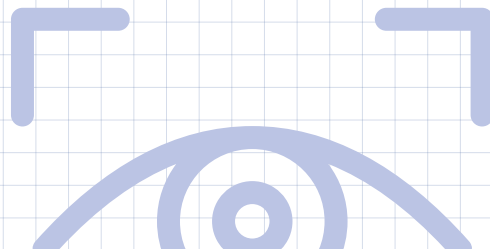
◆ **I would only consider the restoration option.** If that failed, I would not buy a new version either. The original sculpture was a gift and therein lies its value for the collection. Moreover, a replica would not do justice to the quality of Rodin's craftsmanship.



Each of the options shows that the sculpture is important to the museum. But the choice you make depends on what you think is most important.

- ▲ For you, what counts first and foremost is the art itself. Rodin was a famous artist. The bust illustrates his skill as a sculptor and so belongs in the collection, even if it is a copy.
- For you, both the art and the story matter. The sculpture was a gift from the Rodin Museum and that makes it special for the KMSKA. But both the restored original and a copy can tell the story of the gift and demonstrate Rodin's craftsmanship.
- ◆ For you, the value of the sculpture lies entirely in the original. A copy can replace the physical object but not its emotional and art-historical significance.

In 1964, the KMSKA chose **answer the rhombus**. In a way, however, all three answers are right, but subjective and food for discussion. So nowadays museums establish exactly why an artwork is important for the collection and what story they want it to tell. This enables museum staff to make decisions more quickly and more objectively.



# ANNUNCIATION

UNKNOWN ARTIST

As the research table showed, this painting was **partially repainted during restoration**. Did you know that the new paint was made 'old' to resemble the original? That's misleading, isn't it? But is it also plagiarism?



## Definition of plagiarism:

Plagiarism means that you present someone else's work or ideas without acknowledging the original author. In art this is not only dishonest, but it can also have legal consequences. Copyrights protect artists and creatives: their work is their property.



## Indicate your opinion:

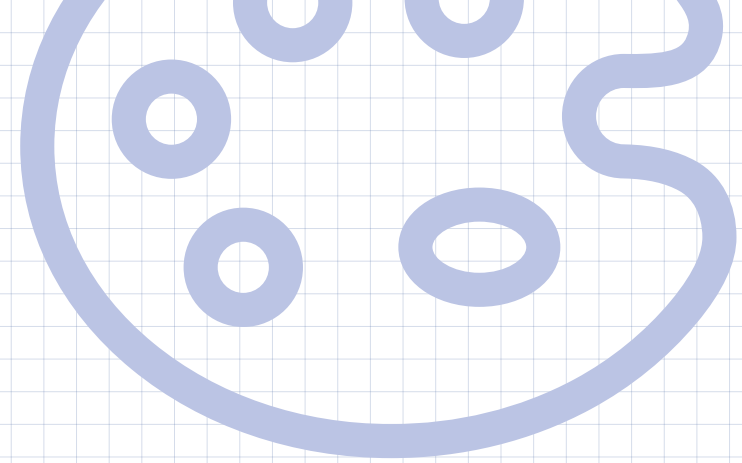
**Question 1:** Do you think this restoration is plagiarism?

Yes  No

**Question 2:** Should restorer Jef Van der Veken put his name under the work?

Yes  No

- 1: yes - 2: no
- 1: no - 2: yes
- The same answer to both



## EXTRA INFO

### For question 1:

The restorer pretends that his paintwork is that of the original artist. He doesn't tell us what he himself added, giving the impression that the whole painting has been this way for centuries. In so doing, he surrenders his copyright. And that is not right either.

### For question 2:

16<sup>th</sup> century painters were essentially craftsmen. A painter was a craftsman, like a blacksmith or a woodworker. Paintings were not usually signed in those days. So in the case of this work, we don't know who painted it. If restorer Van der Veken was to put his name under it now, it would make him look more important, and perhaps do an injustice to the original painter. On the other hand, his signature would show that the work is not entirely 16<sup>th</sup> century.

This is not a straightforward discussion, which is why these days restorers follow a clear principle: that of **'minimal intervention'**. This means that you only intervene if it is **really necessary**: for example, to repair damage and lengthen the life of the work. In so doing, the restorers try and keep as much of the original, valuable material as possible.

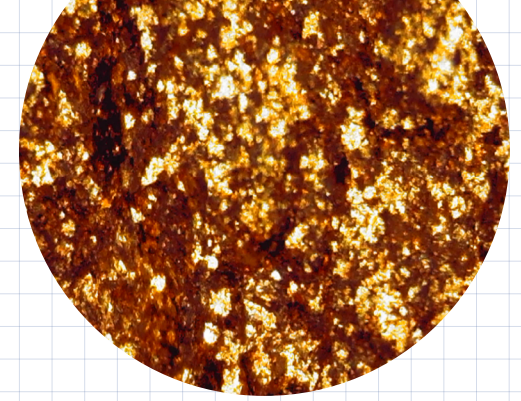
# BUST GEORG PETEL PORTRAIT OF RUBENS

On the research table, you saw that Rubens' sculpture is not made of bronze, even though it gives that impression. The sculpture is actually made of **terracotta** and painted to look like bronze, which is of course much cheaper than real bronze.



Now that this secret is out, how do you feel about it?

- It **doesn't really bother me** that cheap material was used to imitate something expensive. But I would like to know why. Terracotta sculptures can be valuable, too, so long as **the artist has the skills** to make something beautiful out of clay. We should appreciate the craftsmanship rather than judge the choice of material.
- ◆ I **don't think the artist meant to mislead us**. He just wanted to make something more aesthetically pleasing. What matters in my opinion is **who** made it and **why, when** it was made and **who it depicts**.
- ▲ I feel slightly **cheated**. The sculpture looks more expensive than it is, and I don't think that's honest. Now that I know it is made of cheap material, to me it is **less valuable**.



## EXTRA INFO

The value of a work of art does not depend solely on the costliness of the material it is made of. Nowadays, some **thirteen different elements** determine the value of a work of art. And restorers find these values in **Barbara Appelbaum's** book *Conservation Treatment Methodology*. It provides them with a guideline for making decisions about whether and how to treat a work of art.

For example: How **rare** it is, **who** made it, **what** purpose it served, who **the owner** was, etc.

What makes this sculpture valuable is largely the maker: German Georg Petel was an **important and very talented artist**. Like Rubens, he was responsible for the spread of baroque art. He depicted Rubens because they **knew and rated** each other and that in itself is a pleasing snippet of **Antwerp history**. So the material used to make the sculpture is actually less important than the story that belongs with it.

Now that you know this, do you still feel cheated?

# SKELETONS ARGUING OVER THE BODY OF A HANGED MAN

JAMES ENSOR

As you know, James Ensor's painting 'Skeletons arguing over the body of a hanged man' was damaged by the impact of a **V-2 rocket** landing near the museum on 13 October 1944.



Here in Belgium, we continue to commemorate the Second World War. Plaques adorn memorials on squares, war museums house **damaged helmets** and jackets. While **bullet holes in façades** serve as stark reminders of the conflict.

But in the case of this painting, the war **damage was fully repaired**. The scars have gone.

However, under **ultraviolet light** you saw that there were tears in the canvas and that in some places the paint had disappeared.

Why did the restorers back in 1945 choose a comprehensive restoration? What does that say about our approach to art and history? Should we cover up these war scars?

**Side note:** This missile attack was not a one-off. After the liberation of Antwerp in September 1944, the city remained under attack from V-weapons for months. The Germans wanted to reoccupy the port so as to hold back the Allies. The attacks killed more than 4,000 people and wounded almost 7,000.



Read the definitions and link the different values to Ensor's painting and/or to a WW2 soldier's kit.



- **1. Associative value:** an object's value increases if it once belonged to a famous person.
- **2. Aesthetic value:** Something is valuable because it is pleasing to the eye. It is admired for its beauty and craftsmanship.
- **3. Historical value:** An object is important because it tells us something about the past. This might be a WW2 helmet that saw action in war.
- **4. Emotional value:** The value that something has for you personally, such as a family heirloom.
- **5. Art value:** An object is special because it was designed to be art and to be exhibited in, for example, a museum, like Ensor's painting.
- **6. Commemorative value:** some things are valuable because they help us remember something important like a war.

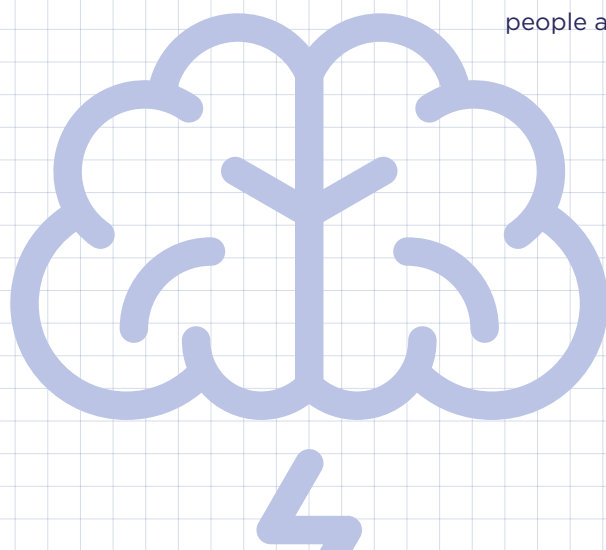
	1	2	3	4	5	6
◆ ENSOR SOLDIERS	×	×		×	×	×
● ENSOR SOLDIERS	×	×	×	×	×	×
▲ ENSOR SOLDIERS	×	×	×	×	×	×

The value of the painting 'Skeletons arguing over the body of a hanged man' lies in:

- **Its associative value:** An object is particularly valuable if it once belonged to a **famous person** or was made by a famous person. James Ensor was a celebrated Belgian artist. His signature underneath makes it more valuable.
- **Its art value:** Ensor made this work **to show as art** in a museum or at an exhibition. We want to respect his intention.
- **Its aesthetic value:** The painting shows how well Ensor could paint. It is widely regarded as a **fine painting** and that makes it special.

The value of the soldiers' belongings and damage to buildings lies in their historical and commemorative value. They were **actually used or damaged** in the war. Without that link with the war, they would not be anything special.

In the case of such objects, restorers deliberately leave the damage visible because it tells **the story of the war**. In the case of Ensor's painting, **the damage was removed, because its value lies elsewhere**.



# ALEHOUSE SCENE

JOOS VAN CRAESBEECK

In the 17th-century wooden panels on which artists painted were made by panel makers. To make solid, smooth panels required skilled craftsmanship. Panel makers joined forces in guilds, and painters of fine art were their clients. Seventeenth-century painters would either be commissioned to make an artwork or they would sell their work on the open market. Both panel maker and painter learned their **trade from a master** and worked with their hands in a **workshop**. So both were craftsmen.

They needed each other: without the panel maker no painting, and without the painter no art. And yet it was **only the painter who sought recognition as an artist**.



**Question 1: But who do you think left the greater mark on history?**

- The painter, because he had more creative freedom and influenced the artistic style of his time. His work is exhibited in museums and he may come to be seen as a 'genius'.
- ▲ The panel maker, because without his craftsmanship, the paintings would never have survived.
- ◆ Of equal importance: without collaboration between craftsmen and painters, we would have had no heritage to admire today.

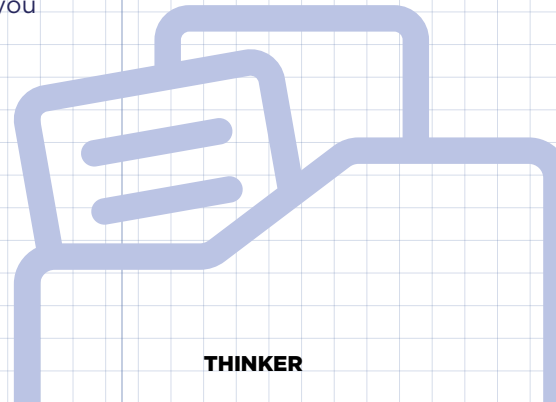
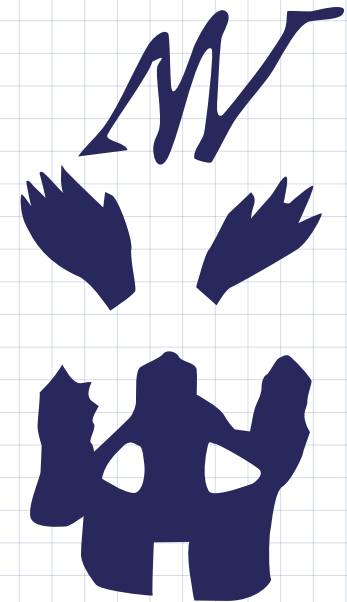
Every trade involves years of experience, building on both mistakes and improvements. Everything that artisans do today is based on what people discovered and tried out at an earlier date. So a trade is a way of preserving and passing on history and culture.

**Open question:** Which trade(s) are you familiar with? What would you like to have a go at?



**Question 2: What do you regard as most important when it comes to passing on know-how?**

- ▲ Making more sustainable choices: do you think it is important to choose good quality, natural materials sourced locally, as craftsmen once did?
- Producing a unique piece of handiwork: every object is distinctive and personal. A lot of time and attention goes into making it. And that is very different from mass production.
- ◆ Stimulating competency and creativity: trades teach us to think with our head and our hands. We can pass on these skills to the next generation.



Wow, you thought deeply about the 5 assignments: each time, you carefully weighed the artwork's value, story, and preservation. With a sharp eye, you examined the restorations of Ensor, Rodin and Van der Veken. And you discovered how essential craftsmanship is within the art world. Perhaps a career as a restorer might be something for you?



## THINKER PERSONALITY TYPES



**You chose mostly rhombuses on this journey.** This means that **you put a lot of thought into various possibilities** before making a choice. You listen to everyone and always try to be fair and not exclude anyone. You know what the rules do not allow and always find a clever solution for tricky questions relating to heritage.



**You chose mostly circles on this journey.** You are **a philosopher who likes to listen to the story behind a work of art.** You also attach importance to where and when it was made. You find the history of art super interesting and you are quick to understand why art is important for a culture. You prefer to look at heritage questions from different sides, because you know that there is no one right answer and that everyone is entitled to their view.



**You chose mostly triangles on this journey!** You are **a philosopher who thinks like a true artisan.** You believe it is important that works of art are properly preserved and handled with care. You see artworks first and foremost as things to hold and look at, as things we should protect. You understand that a work of art can only tell a story if it is kept in good condition and not allowed to deteriorate, so that future generations can also enjoy it.

