

Money, Power, Politics.



Picture Resource

Mark Titchner

Plenty and Progress, 2012

Mark Titchner was born in 1973, in Luton. His work presents, through the use of text and design, concepts and ideologies which encourage the viewer to form their own conclusions. *Plenty and Progress* is thought-provoking but non-committal, neither for nor against. As such, it sets the tone for open discussion.

Titchner's texts are taken from sources as diverse as Victorian socialist writing and self-help mantras. Presented as slogans they are immediate and attention-grabbing. Set against ornamental backdrops they also appear timeless and, in the case of *Plenty and Progress*, almost heraldic.

The polished stainless steel, which is back-painted in red, creates a work that is both sumptuous and austere and reflects the financial environment surrounding Guildhall Art Gallery – thrusting and forward looking but also staid and traditional.

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Discussion points

- The artwork is purposely ambiguous, leaving the viewer to draw their own conclusions as to the meaning of the words and the comment they make. **What is your immediate response to the piece? What words, feelings and associations are brought to your mind by the words plenty and progress?**
- How does the choice of materials (polished stainless steel and red paint) affect the way that you interpret the meaning behind the words? **For example, the polished stainless steel may be seen as reminiscent of silver, therefore wealth, or perhaps as representative of industry. However the red background could be viewed as brash, confrontational, or even as representing blood. The reflective material enables the viewer to see themselves as part of the artwork.**
- What would be the impact of the artwork without the words? **Would it still carry the same meanings? Consider how integral the inclusion of the words is to the piece.** Similarly, imagine the words are presented on a plain background. **Would the viewer's interpretation of their meaning alter?**
- How does the 3D form affect its overall impact? **Consider how the artwork encroaches into the gallery – 'plenty' and 'progress' are taking up more than just wall space. The artwork is reaching out towards the viewer. The depth of the artwork might be seen to echo or represent the history behind the City and its 'progress' into the future.**
- What impact does this work have being displayed in the City of London? **Would you view the artwork differently if it were displayed in a different setting, such as a school, a woodland, or a place of worship? Would your perception of the meaning of the words 'plenty' and 'progress' alter, depending on its setting?**

Activities

Around the City

- Take sketchbooks, or cameras, into the area of the City around the Guildhall Art Gallery. Make sketches or take photos that, to you, represent plenty and progress – whether that be in a positive, negative or ambiguous way. Back at school, curate these images into your own Plenty and Progress gallery.

In the classroom

- Inspired by Titchner's use of 'found words' in his artworks, take a short phrase from a song, book, poem or article that you like or find powerful, and use it as the foundation for a new piece of art. How will you emphasise, or perhaps twist, the meaning of the words, through your artwork?

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Mark Titchner, *Plenty and Progress*

Polished stainless steel, fixings, acrylic spray paint and lacquer, 2012.
Guildhall Art Gallery