

# Interdisciplinary Italy Interart/Intermedia 1900- 2020

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ROYAL  
HOLLOWAY  
UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON

A collaborative project  
funded by the AHRC (Arts  
and Humanities Research  
Council)


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(Birmingham)

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## **Key questions today**

- Why interdisciplinarity in the classroom matters?
- How can we foster interartistic collaboration in schools and universities?
- Our projects

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# Italian Fascism: a Collaborative Project, Farnborough/RHUL

1. First year - 20 students from The Sixth Form College Farnborough, Hampshire, England and 20 students from Istituto Magistrale G.B. Vico School, Ragusa, Sicily
2. Students collaborated on a project examining differences between perceptions of fascism between English and Italian students
3. Students were required to organise themselves between groups of 4 and talk over google chat + email
4. Students wrote a final report on their findings

To explore the ongoing legacy of Mussolini's fascist government in Italy. Ragusa is a town that was shaped by fascist rule, undergoing a considerable redevelopment during the fascist period that continues to have a lasting legacy through the town's architecture to this day.

## Key questions to answer:

- How do the students' families and relatives think of fascism and Mussolini, particularly older relatives who were alive at the time Mussolini was in power? Are there big differences between Italian and English relatives?
- What the big aspects that Italian and English students learn about Fascism when they are studying it? Are they mostly the same or quite different?
- How do the students feel about Mussolini and Fascism? Are the English and Italian student attitudes quite different?
- What do the students think was the most important legacy of Mussolini? Are there big differences between the students?
- How is Mussolini seen in Sicily today? How is Mussolini remembered?
- Do the students think Mussolini was generally good or bad for Italy? How far do the answers differ between Italian and English students?
- -Using all their answers and research the students have to put together a final report and presentation on how far attitudes to Mussolini and Fascism differ between Italian and English students.
- Propose that this is worked on over 2 weeks.

Ragusa is a town that was shaped by fascist rule, undergoing a considerable redevelopment during the fascist period that continues to have a lasting legacy through the town's architecture to this day.

The students from Ragusa have been engaged in a local history project where they were required to explore their town, documenting the various aspects of fascist architecture and propaganda that still can be seen as well as speaking to elderly relatives who experienced life under fascist rule.

Using Google Hangout video conference the students from Ragusa then directly discussed their findings with the students from Farnborough in order to develop better understandings of how personal history, family background, contrasting school curriculums as well as the buildings around us can shape our conception of historical events in the present day.

The project has allowed students from Farnborough to talk with students from a part of Italy that was directly affected by fascist rule, thus helping to expand their studies in an important area of their A Level studies. Beyond this, however, the project has been important in bringing students from different parts of Europe together to explore and discuss history, politics and their own family's' experiences during World War Two.





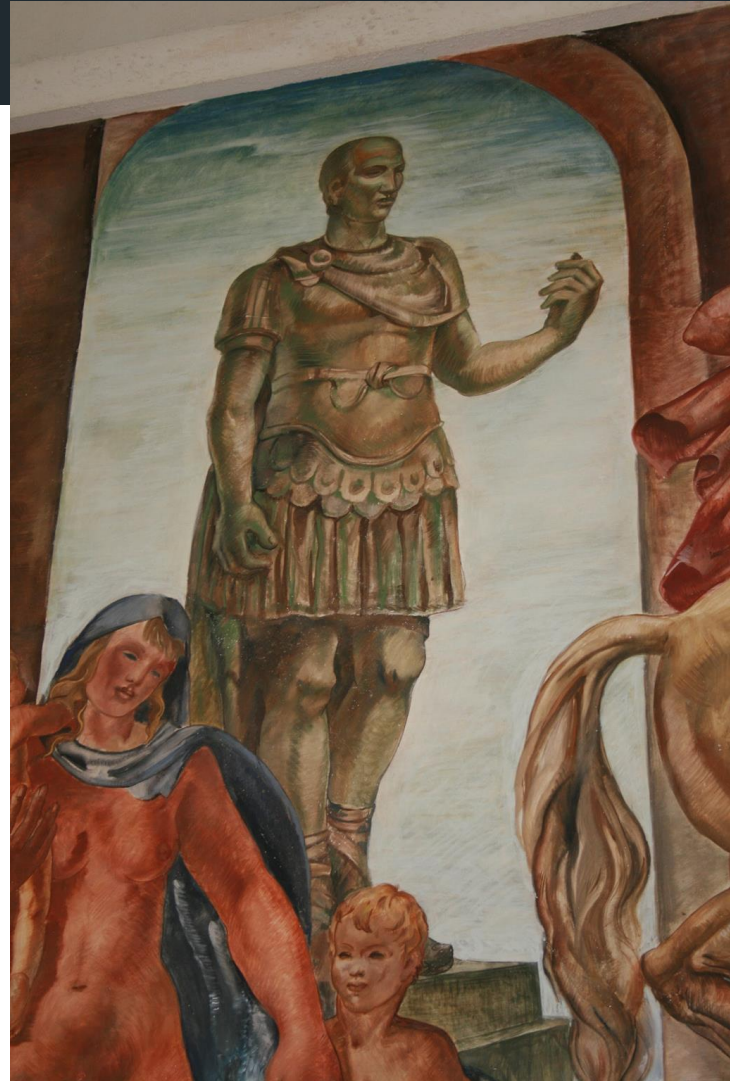
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Students found the process extremely interesting and rewarding - extended their understanding of how history is created by an ongoing process through architecture, paintings or family stories.

Reports on the similarities and differences on study of Fascism of a high quality

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OFSTED requirements for employability - project management, use of technology (video conferencing), report writing, interaction with groups at the college and in Italy to complete the project - all key skills which can be used to demonstrate progress in this aspect

Interest from universities - good way to build links with higher education institutions. Project support of Royal Holloway University who are interested in helping to develop it.

Engages students with higher level historical thinking - good for A Levels but hopefully may encourage them to continue historical studies at a higher level

Participation, commitment, technology

Language

Organisation and time

One sided - as students from Ragusa were from an area important for fascism conversations and project tended to become question and answer sessions - not collaborative in the way we had originally hoped

Differing schooling systems - English students only doing 3 subjects that they have chosen vs Sicilian students doing 12 with history being compulsory

2 year extension project beginning in first year. The first part involves working with art history students in York on futurism and proto-fascist ideas

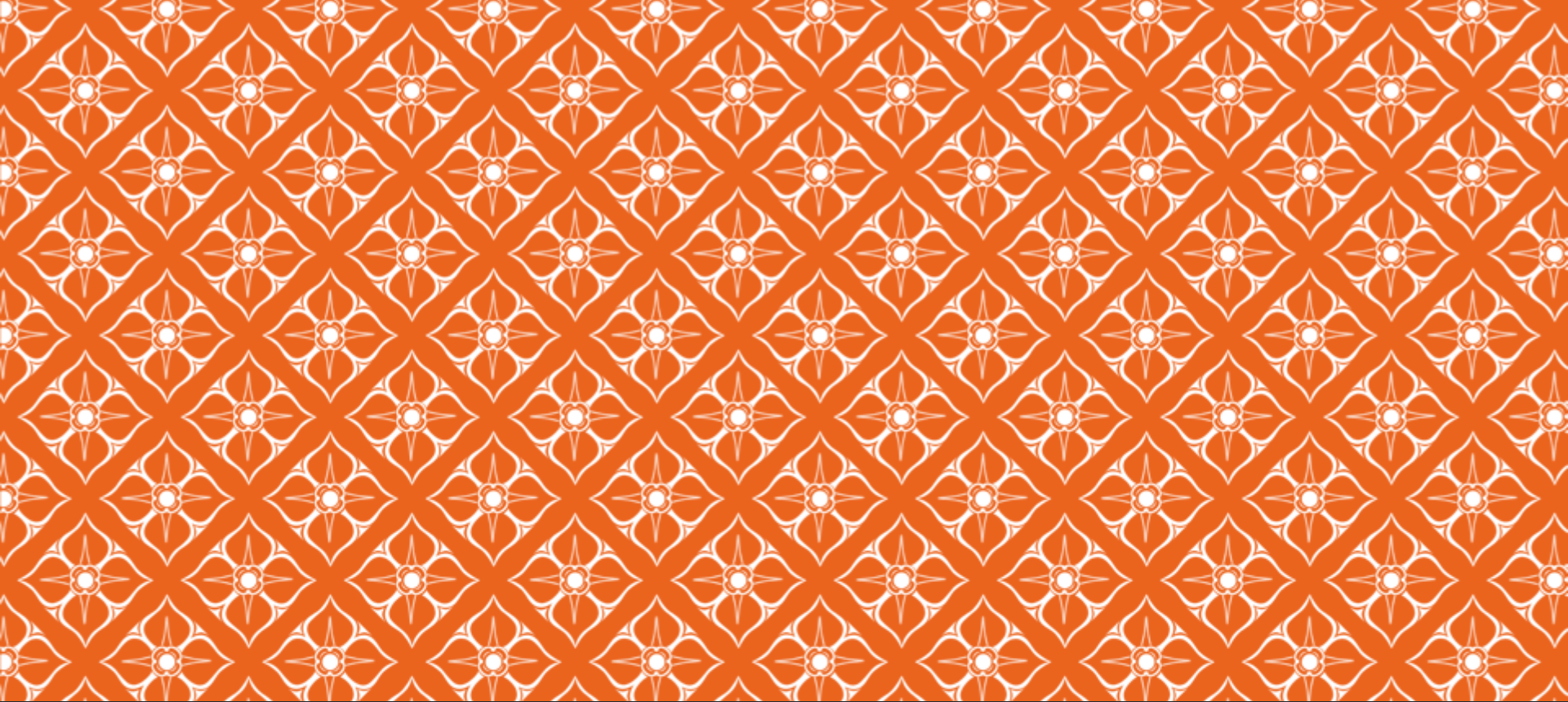
2nd part involves war memorial/fascist history project with school in Sicily

3rd part: History study trip to Ragusa

2 year joint college/Royal Holloway project

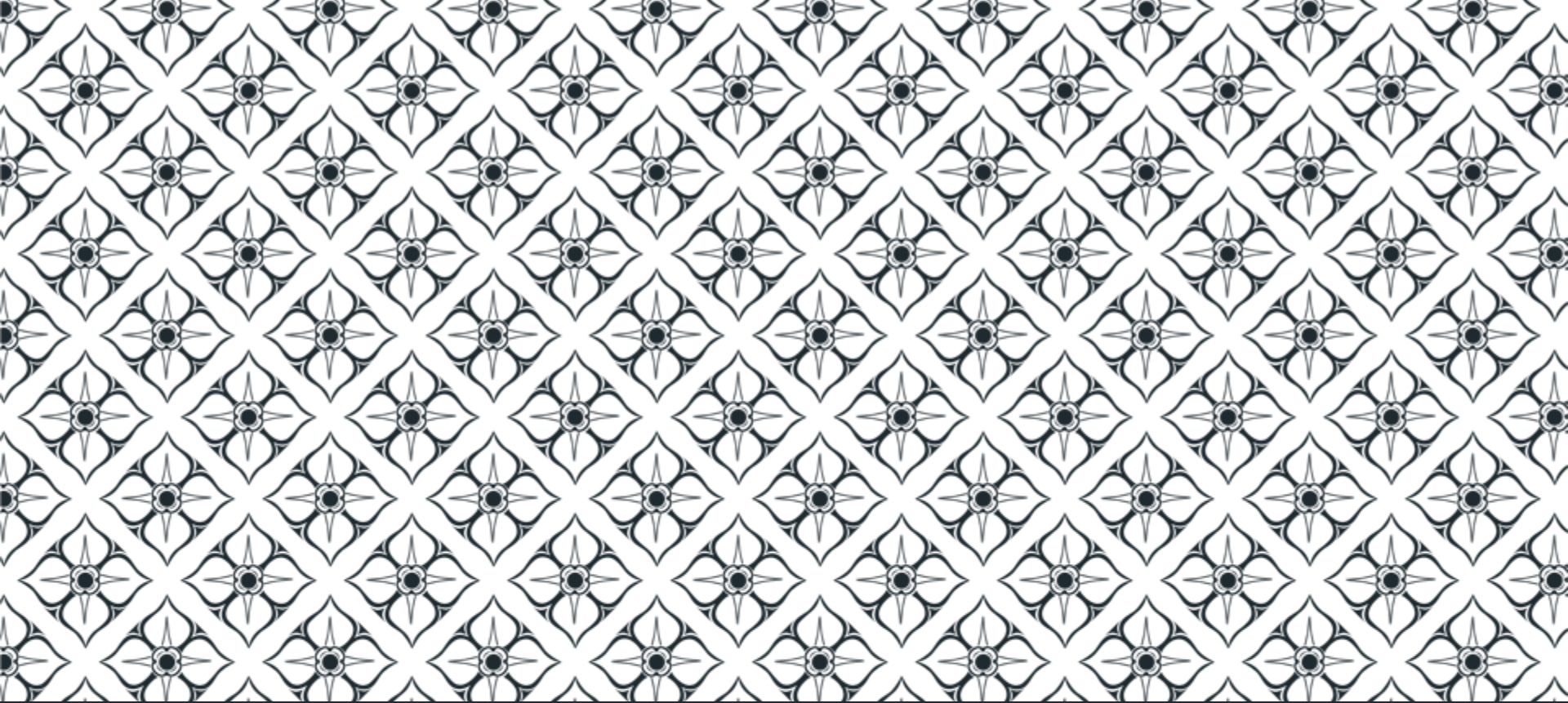
Isabel Aughterson said of the project: I found this study of the different ways we learn fascism most interesting because the views of the students from Sicily on fascism were more complex than I expected and added to my understanding of Fascism. I found the project valuable because it was a different way of learning than studying from a textbook and the anecdotal evidence the Italian students could provide us with was something I would never have accessed otherwise.

Stella Cunningham said: We all found working with the students in Sicily so enlightening on the subject of fascism both during Mussolini's power and in the time since. We have certainly formed a bond with the group both in a way that allows us to learn and as friends. By having such a connection it allows us to see history in a way that is so important as we see its personal effects.



# Interdisciplinary Futurism project: History, History of Art, Italian



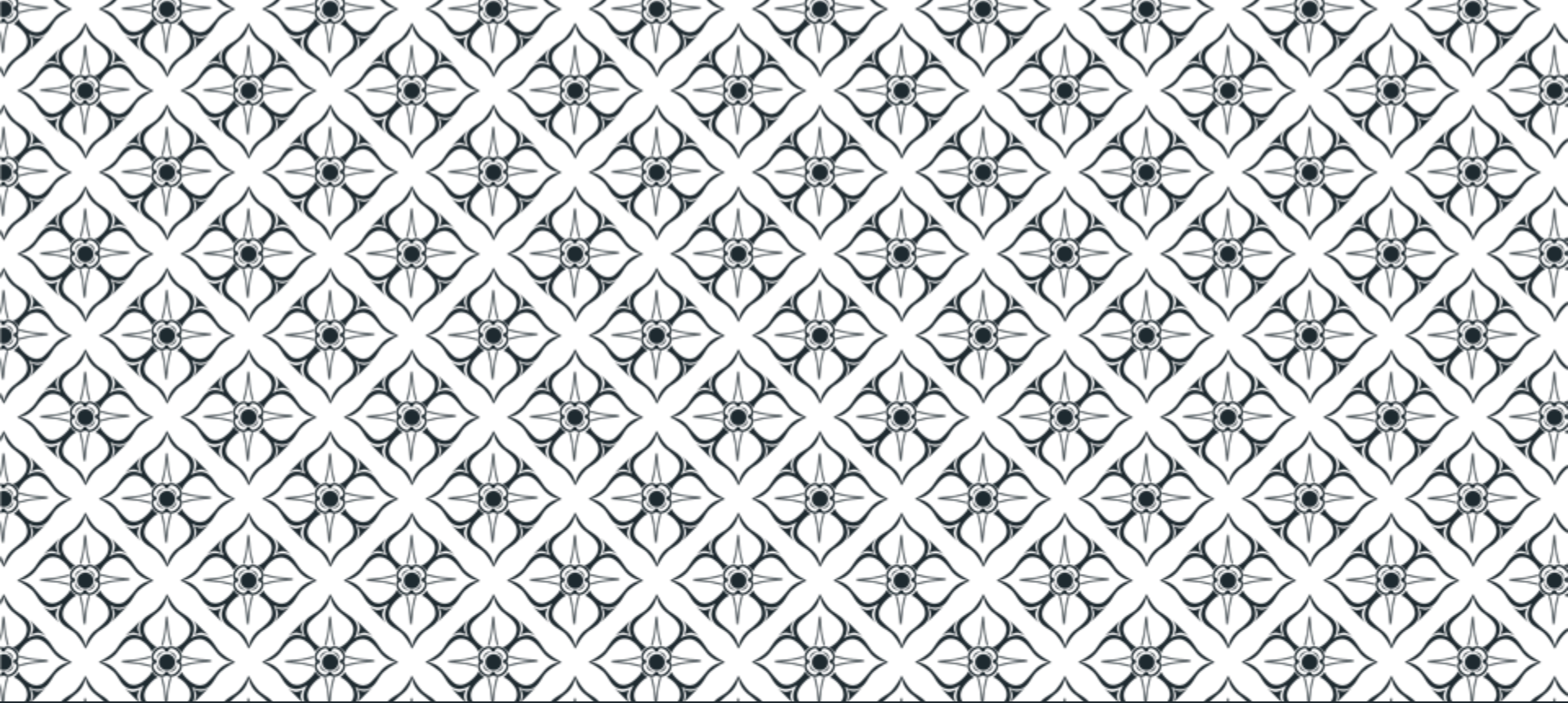


# Teaching Futurism as part of Italian History Course



- In terms of the Edexcel Course 1911-1946 Futurism is studied as part of rising right wing, nationalist movement following World War One that eventually led to the fascist dictatorship
- Idea of Futurists as proto-fascists - alongside D'Annunzio
- Futurists feature mainly in study of Fiume occupation
- Understanding focuses on why there was a growth in right wing nationalism in Italy after World War One
- Students briefly study Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and the celebration of violence, patriotism and destruction - worship as war as means to revolution





# The Futurists

An Interdisciplinary Approach to an Interdisciplinary Movement

Thomas Cooke, Queen Margaret's, York.



## The Context: Queen Margaret's, York

An independent day and boarding school for girls

Key Stages 3-5

Particularly wide range of attainment

The second of the school's main aims:

For girls to **“develop an enthusiasm for independent thought, learning and research”**



## A Level History of Art

Narrower focus at A2 but much broader at AS

Western European Art from 500BC to 2000AD

Teacher selected examples give great scope for exploration

A Level Art Historians:

*Fine Art, Photography, Textiles, Drama, Sport*

*History, English Literature, Modern Languages*

Therefore important to accommodate both backgrounds

# Futurism

Taught within wider context alongside other movements such as Dadaism, Cubism etc.

Prep before 1<sup>st</sup> lesson to read and annotate 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism'.

First lesson then begins with discussion.

Principal concerns of Futurists identified.

Foundation for future lessons





Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913 (cast 1972), bronze, 117.5 x 87.6 x 36.8cm, Tate Gallery, London

## Boccioni on his sculpture

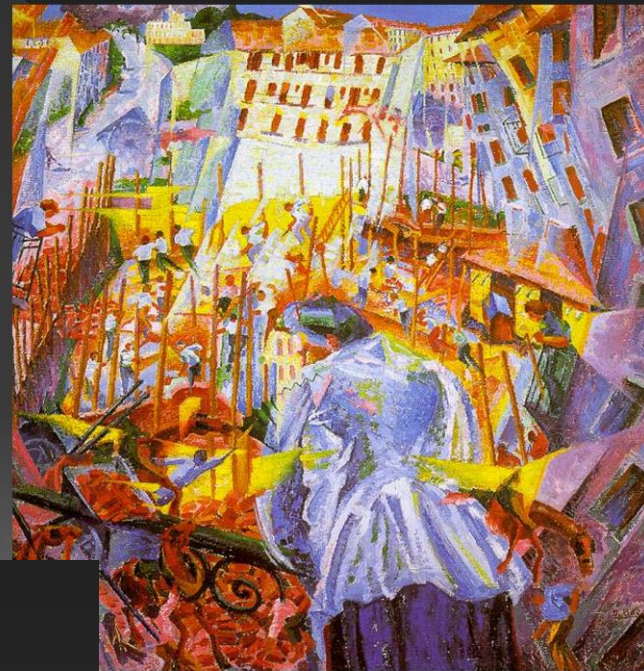
- "These days I am obsessed by sculpture! I believe I've seen a complete renewal of this mummified art."
- "I work a lot but don't seem to finish. That is, I hope what I'm doing means something because I don't know what I'm doing. It's strange and terrible but I feel calm. Today I worked non-stop for six hours on a sculpture and I don't know what the result is... Planes upon planes, sections of muscles, of a face and then? And the total effect? Does what I create live? Where will I end up?"
- "I work, work and work and I don't know what I give... I don't know what the f\*ck it is!...Forms on forms... confusion... The Cubists are wrong... Picasso is wrong. The academics are wrong. We're all a bunch of d\*ckheads!"

# The Urban Environment

Examination of Futurist painting provides students with the opportunity to discuss how technology changed Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and how the Futurists respond to this change in their art

Often opens up discussion points for students with an awareness of the context of Italy at the time- normally those studying History A Level

Giacomo Balla (1871-1958), *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912, oil on canvas, 91 x 110cm, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY



Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), *La strada entra nella casa (The Street Enters the House)*, 1911, oil on canvas, 100 x 100cm, Sprengel Museum, Hanover

"The dominating sensation is that which one would experience on opening a window: all life, and the noises from the street rush in at the same time as the movement and reality of objects outside."

"In painting a person on a balcony, seen from inside the room, we do not limit the scene to what the square frame of the window renders visible; but we try to render the sum total of visual sensations which the person on the balcony has experienced"



Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916) *The City Rises*, 1910, oil on canvas, 119 x 301cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

# Language and Literature

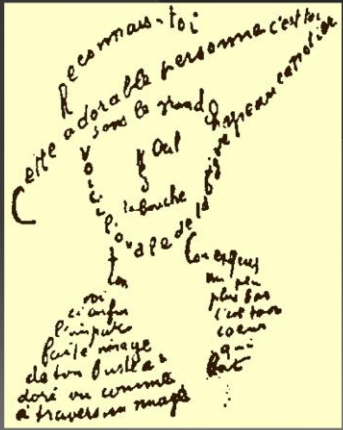
Intersection of literature and art at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Students of English Literature and Foreign Languages can build on their subject knowledge here

History students also able to contribute their knowledge



Some Calligrammes by the writer and close associate of numerous artists from modern movements, Guillaume Apollinaire



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TIRE ET TIRERA  
T O U      JOURS  
AUX      A L  
LEM      ANDS

SOIT  
que

l'Abîme

blanchi  
étaie  
furieux

sous une inclinaison  
plane désespérément

d'aile

la sienne  
par

avance retombée d'un mal à dresser le vol  
et couvrant les jaillissements  
coupant au ras les bonds

très à l'intérieur résume

L'ombre enfouie dans la profondeur par cette voile alternative

jusqu'adapter  
à l'envergure

sa béante profondeur en tant que la coque

d'un bâtiment

penché de l'un ou l'autre bord

A 'shape poem' by the poet Stéphane Mallarmé



# Final Excercise

Students put in pairs, taking into account a balance of ability eg. In each group a French student or a History student working alongside a Fine Art or Photography student for sharing of ideas

Given set of Post-It notes, vocabulary sheet (where necessary for differentiation) and A3 printout of the work

Students annotate image using sticky notes during lesson and then write up a detailed analysis (following AOs) for prep.



Vibrations - Froufroulements  
Pénétration  
100.000 Volt  
Lumineuse  
100.000 éclairs déchirements  
Expansion centrifuge  
Bruit + Lumière  
Anéantissement  
courbe graduelle vers la terre

AVANCER - AVANCER - AVANCER  
courbe graduelle vers la terre  
SOLDATS MACHINES  
CHARGENT  
53 hectomètres  
SYSTEMATIQUÉMENT  
FREMISSEMENTS  
Froufroulements  
FRAÎCHEUR -

SZSZSZZ  
SZSZSZSZSZZ  
EVENTREMENT  
SOULÈVEMENT  
DE LA TERRE  
PROFONDEUR - ANXIÉTÉ - SILENCE  
IMMENSITÉ  
Vibrations de l'herbe vers le canon

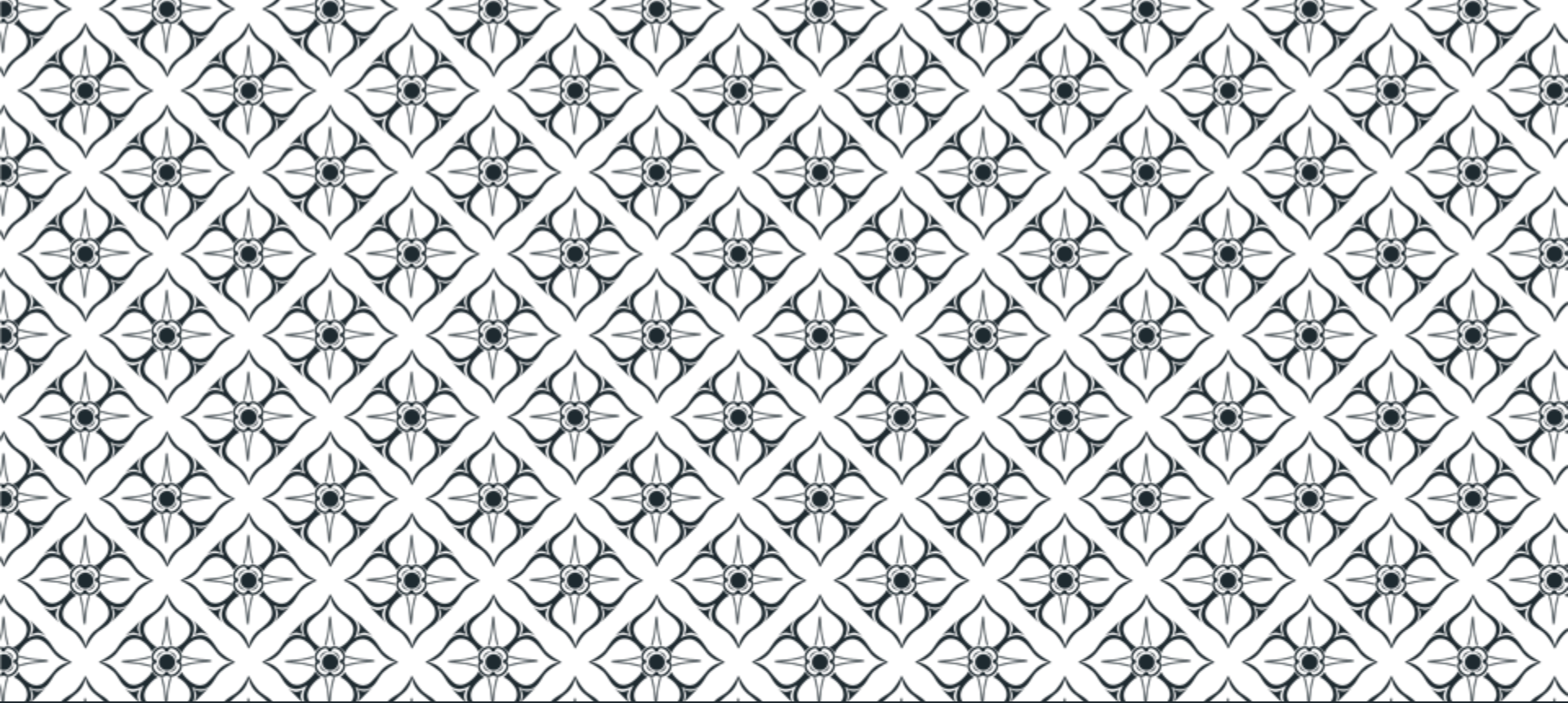
Artilleur chronométré  
PRÉCISION  
Tension des nerfs  
Allez les gars  
EUU!  
Emanation de Gaz puants  
Penetration desagréable  
Puanteur Acide  
oh là là! ça sent mauvais  
Perfection  
Arithmétique  
Rythme  
Géométrie  
PUISSANCE  
LE CANON S'ENFONCE  
DÉSTINÉ DANS LA TERRE  
FRANCE  
LA TERRE MONTE  
en vagues  
VERS LE CANON

## Other Italian Interdisciplinary opportunities in History of Art

*Rosetti's Beata Beatrix or Dante's Dream at the Death of Beatrice*, alongside extracts from *Divina Comedia/Vita Nuova*

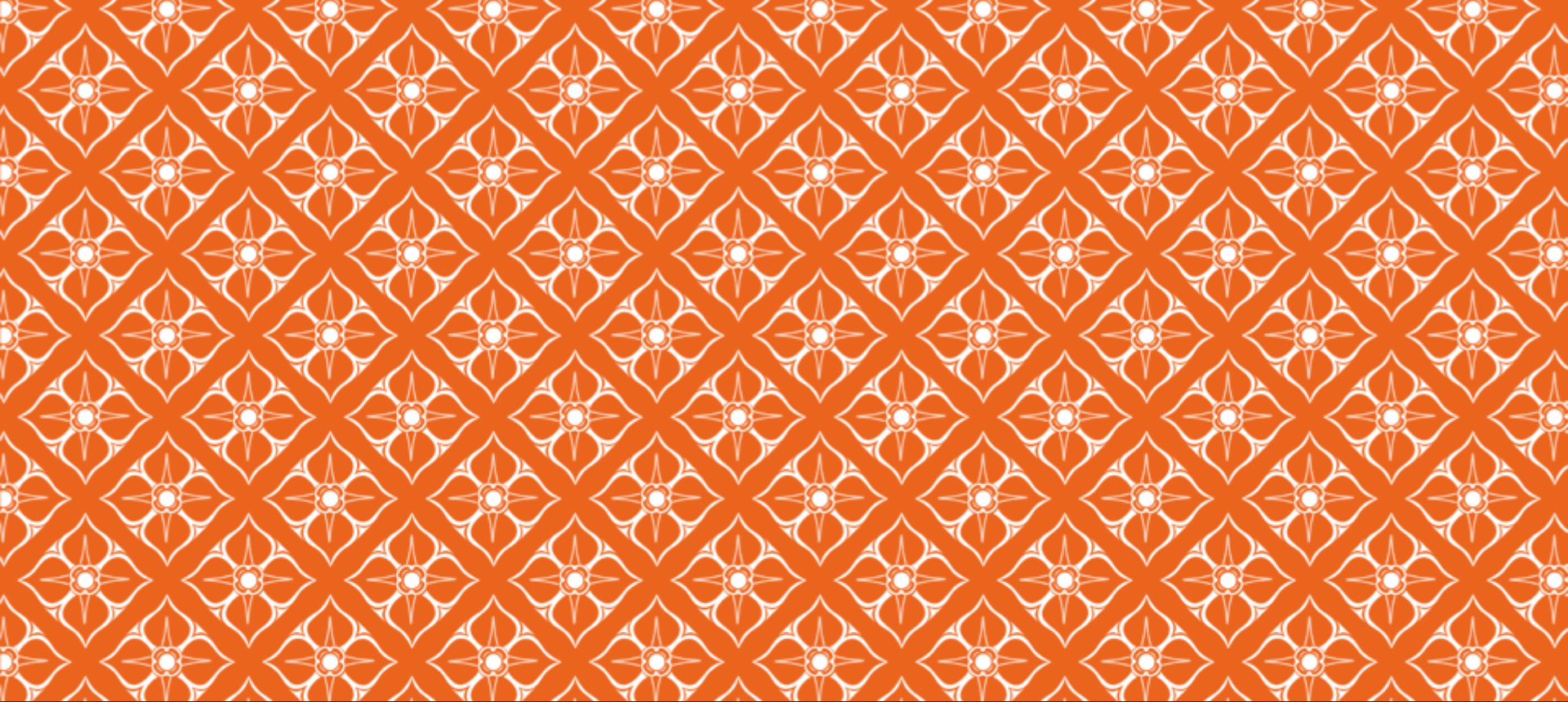
*Spalliera panels with Story of Patient Griselda* alongside copy of original story from Boccaccio (or Chaucer, if desired)

*Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* (and wider EUR site) when considered from perspective of Mussolini's actions in 20s and 30s (GCSE and E Level syllabus content eg. the term '*trasmigratori*' when considered alongside Mussolini's foreign policy)



Any questions?





Thank you!

