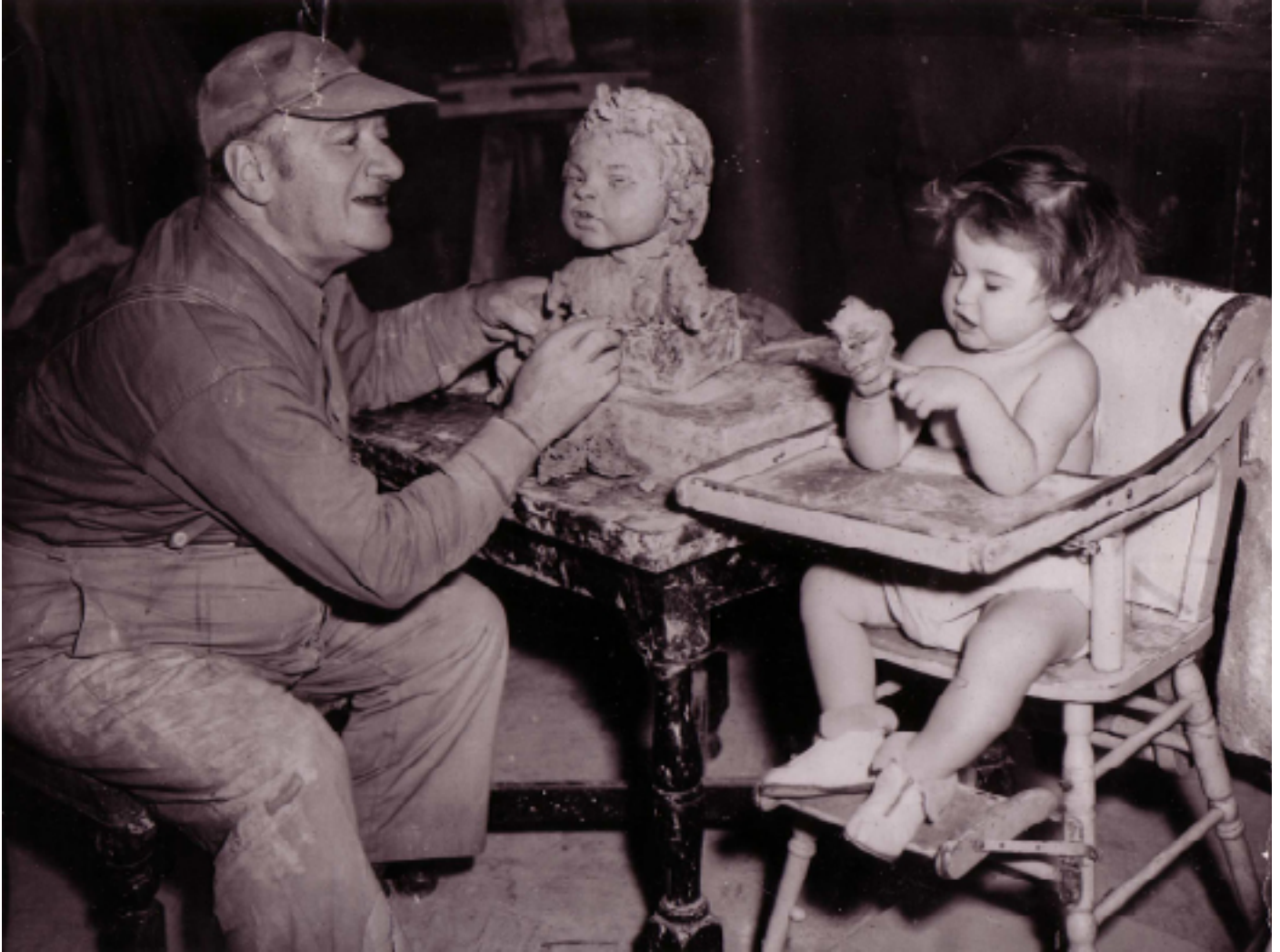

JACOB EPSTEIN: BABIES AND BLOOMSBURY



Jacob Epstein and Portland Mason, c.1952, unknown photographer

EPSTEIN AND HIS ARTWORK:

Sir Jacob Epstein, 1880 – 1959, was a pioneer of modern sculpture and his large-scale public works, such as his series of 8ft high figures for the British Medical Association building in the Strand, were frequently the subject of controversy. He was also credited with making ‘direct carving’ popular among British artists of his time, influencing many artists after him. Direct carving involves chiselling away at a material such as stone and removing bits to create a sculpture as you go along, not using a plan or design. One of his most well-known artworks is an anti-war sculpture titled *Rock Drill*, 1913-15.

Around 1916 Epstein returned to making more figurative work. He also moved into a house opposite the Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury. Epstein would spend his mornings modelling portraits and his afternoons carving great blocks of stone. He made nearly 400 sculptural portraits in his life time, a lot of which were of his friends and family.

EPSTEIN AND HIS FAMILY:

Jacob Epstein was born in 1880, the second son of Orthodox Russian-Polish Jewish refugees in New York. He studied art in Paris and moved to England after falling in love with Margaret Williams. They married in 1906 but never had children together because Margaret was unable to have children.

10 years later, while still married, Epstein met a model called Dorothy Lindsell-Stewart. They had a baby girl in 1918 and made the decision that the baby would live with Epstein and his wife Margaret and be brought up as Margaret's child. They named the baby Peggy Jean Epstein (Peggy was Margaret's nickname).

A year later Epstein fell in love with Kathleen Garmen. They had a family together whilst he was still married to Margaret. They had four children, the first baby died at just a few months old but Theo, Kitty and Esther survived. He effectively had two families in two homes.

In 1934 Epstein had a son called Jackie with art student Isabel Nicholas. Jackie was also brought up by Margaret in the same house as Peggy Jean. Epstein remarried in 1955, eight years after Margaret's death, to his long term lover and mother of three of his children, Kathleen.



The entrance to The Foundling Hospital with Epstein's house in the background, c.1925, courtesy Brian Girling

EPSTEIN AND THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL:

Epstein and Margaret lived in their house opposite the Foundling Hospital for around twelve years. The first floor of the house served as Epstein's studio. Epstein witnessed the last two decades of the Foundling Hospital at its Bloomsbury site, seeing and hearing the children in its care and observing its daily routines. Perhaps there is a link to the stories of the children given up by their mothers to the Foundling Hospital and Epstein's own children Peggy Jean and Jackie, who were given up by their mothers to Margaret Epstein, to be brought up in her care?

The Foundling Museum exhibition *Sir Jacob Epstein: Babies and Bloomsbury* focuses on Epstein's time spent living in Bloomsbury, near the Foundling Hospital, and features his portrait busts of children, particularly his own five children.

ACTIVITIES

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:

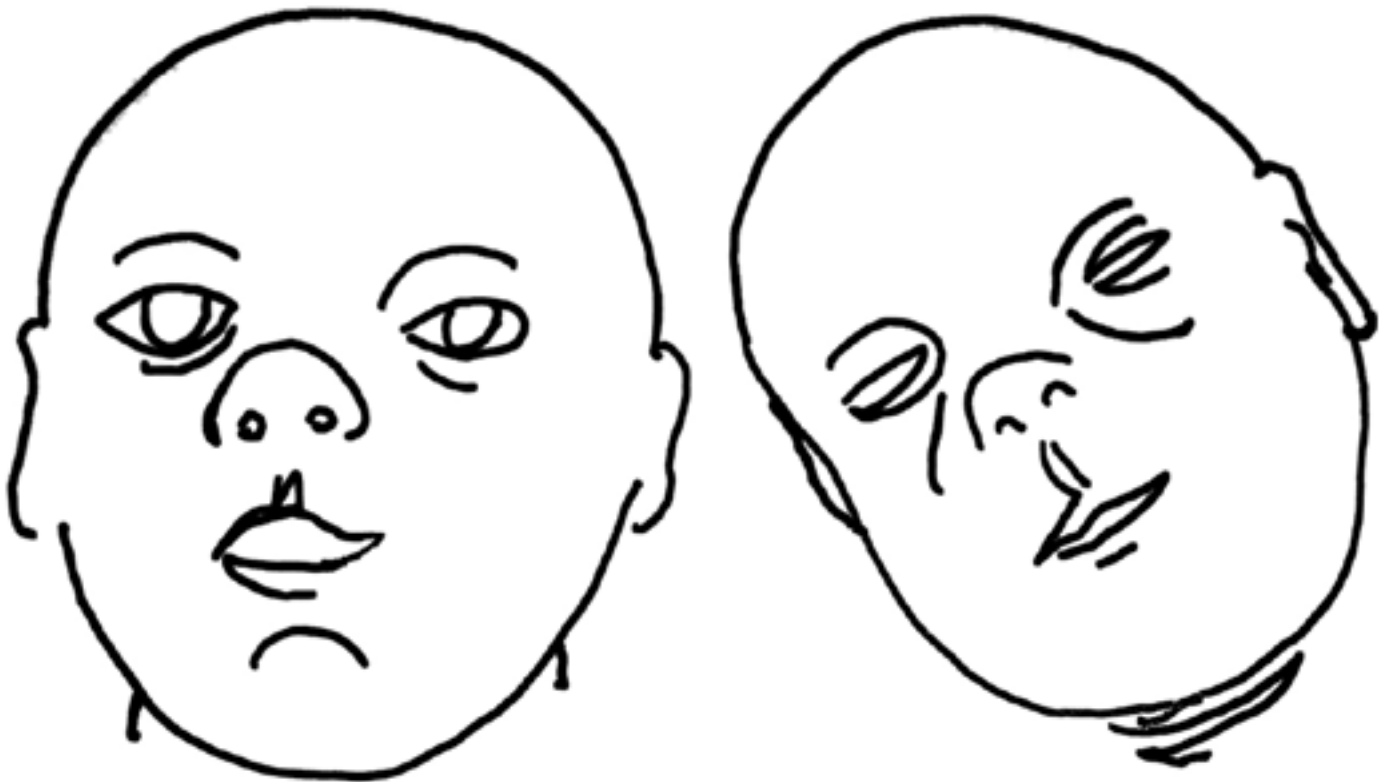
Two of Epstein's sculptures of his daughter Peggy Jean in the exhibition have titles that describe the expression on her face. *Seventh Portrait of Peggy Jean (Pouting)*, 1920/21, and *Ninth Portrait of Peggy Jean (Laughing)*, 1921.

Explore the exhibition. Look at the facial expressions of the sculptures. Now list as many different facial expressions as you can.

On display, are two sculptures from 1904, *Baby Asleep* and *Baby Awake*. (See below for drawings of these sculptures).

The differences in these two busts are quite subtle. Look at the eyes and the angle of the head.

Make a series of simple drawings, like the ones below, of a face where the position of the eyes, shape of the mouth and angle of the head reveal the expressions from your list.



DECORATION AND ADORNMENT:

In *Third Portrait of Esther (with flower)* 1949, Epstein has sculpted his daughter wearing a large flower.

Think of a special object that you would wear or carry that you would include in a self-portrait.

What does the item mean to you?

Where did it come from?

Why have you included it?

The details in portraits are often really important. They convey ideas and messages about the identity and character of the sitter and help to tell a story.

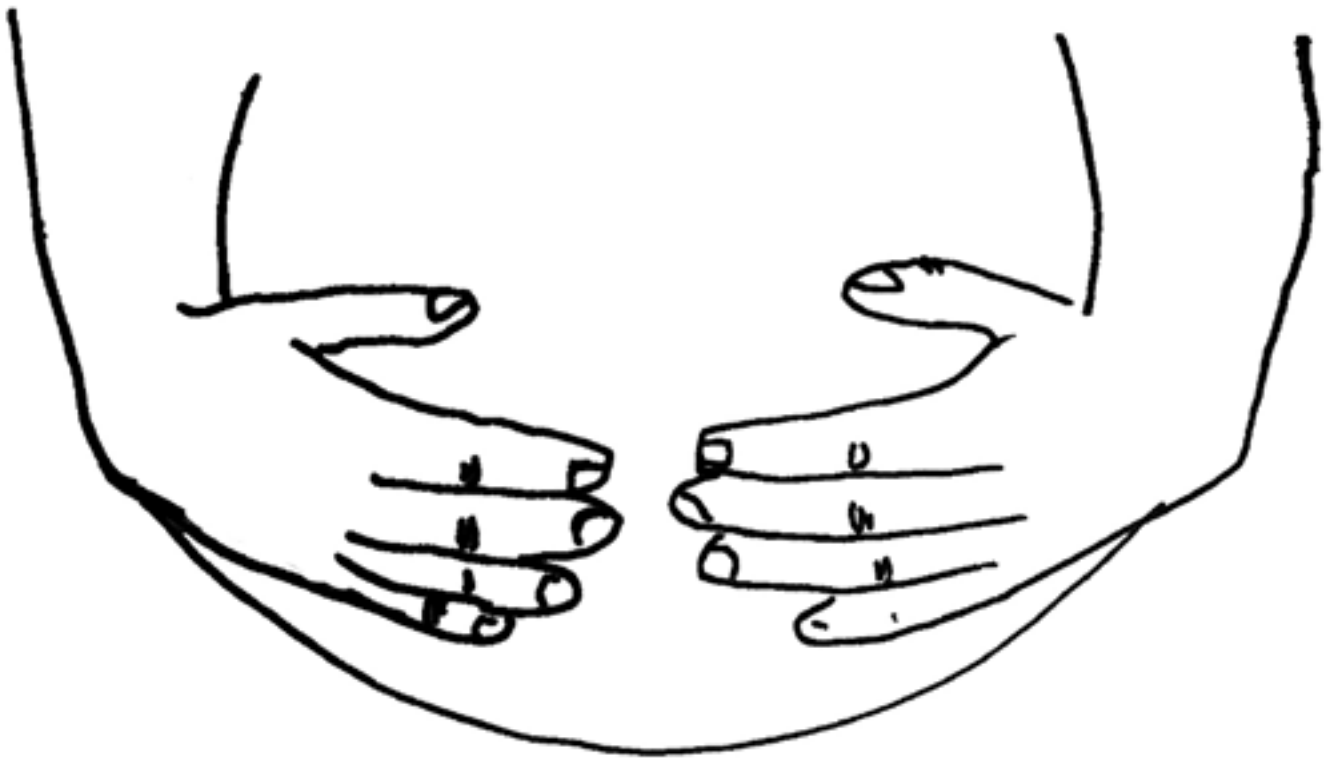
How would your special item be decorated?

What colour would it be?

What is it made from?

BODY LANGUAGE:

Epstein often made study drawings before making his sculptures. Look at *Study for the Arm and Hands of Maternity*, 1910 (the drawing below shows a similar pose). What does this title mean? How does this pose reveal maternity?



Now get into pairs. In your pairs, try positioning your arms in different poses. One person can be the model, while the other sketches or photographs the model's arms and body. Don't draw the head or legs. Try focussing in on just the hands, like the drawing above.

Think about how body language can communicate ideas, stories, meanings, emotions and feelings, professions...

Now try some poses. Try posing some freeze frame moments from stories. See if you can communicate a message or emotion just by using body language.

CURATING AN EXHIBITION:

Curating an exhibition involves selecting artworks and organising how they are displayed, often to create a narrative, idea or reveal links between them. The *Sir Jacob Epstein: Babies and Bloomsbury* exhibition has been divided into sections themed around his children and their mothers.

Looking at the gallery space as a whole, pick two or three portraits that are near each other or looking at each other. Imagine what they are saying to each other. What story could be happening between them?

Back at school do some research online of sculpture portraits.

Cut and paste them onto a large sheet of paper to 'curate' your own exhibition.

How do the images work together as a group?

What pieces work best next to each other and why?

Think of a theme to link the works together, and a title for the exhibition. Now plan the explanation writing for the walls of your exhibition and the colour the walls will be painted. (You will notice that the walls in the exhibition at the Foundling Museum are a slightly different colour to denote the different sections of the show).

PERSONALITY:

Sometimes Epstein has given his sculptures titles that describe the personality of the model. For example *Third Portrait of Jackie (Ragamuffin)*, 1939, and *Fifth and Sixth Portraits of Peggy Jean (The Putti)*, 1920. (Putti is here used to describe a cherub-like child).

Look around at the busts that don't have titles like this. Think of a subtitle you could give them. It could be a simple description of their job, e.g. Epstein (the artist), or it may describe their personality. What are the differences in doing this with someone you know really well (a friend or family member) and the portraits in the exhibition of people you don't know? In the exhibition, the only information you have is the portrait's facial expression, their body language and their clothes.

Here are some quotes from Epstein and people who modelled for him that reveal how he got to know his child subjects. What do they tell us about Epstein and his process of making portraits?

I never tired of watching her, and to watch her was, for me, to work from her. To make studies in clay of all her moods; and when she tired and fell asleep, there was something new to do, charming and complete. To work from a child seemed to me the only work worth doing, and I was prepared to go for the rest of my life looking at Peggy Jean, and making new studies of her.

... the child cannot sit still, and to compel a child to be quiet is at once to destroy the spontaneity and charm which lie in its frank and natural expressions. Yet I have attempted time and time this most difficult subject for sculpture ... I know I have by no means exhausted the subject.

Children I love to do, but not at the command of their parents. They likewise want to see them as angels with wings on, and not just lovely and charming, or roguish and capricious.

When a sculptor sculpts a child, he has to have endless patience. He must wait and observe, and observe and wait.

John Lade, whose four year old daughter modelled for Epstein, recalled how friendly Epstein was and how children liked Epstein because he:

Respected them (more, I think, than he did many grown-ups) and he took an interest in what they had to say, and in return that child came to feel for him, I think, with very real affection.

Judith, who posed for him as a child, reflected back on her memories for the exhibition:

When I arrived at his studio, he wanted me to pose for him sitting in a high chair, presumably this was so I would keep reasonably still. However, I was incensed by this as I had outgrown my high chair at home and didn't think I was a baby any longer. I also remember his partner Kathleen telling me stories while I posed, which I enjoyed very much.

HAIRSTYLES:

In both *Kitty*, 1937 [drawing in pencil], and *First Portrait of Kitty (with curls)*, 1944 Epstein has made a feature of Kitty's hair. Perhaps Epstein was trying to express Kitty's personality through her flowing curls and exaggerated them in order to convey this message. Look closely at the way Epstein has drawn and sculpted Kitty's hair.

Now think about mark making. Think about how:

Using a pencil gives a different mark to a pen, crayon or chalk.

Using a different brush size changes the effect.

Pressing harder or lighter with a pencil changes the mark you make.

The surface texture and background colour used makes a difference.

Create either a portrait or a self-portrait where you exaggerate someone's hair in order to express their personality. Start by listing words that describe the individual (or use the words from the personality activity), then make marks for the hair to represent each of these words. Now finish the portrait by exaggerating other elements of the face.



Sir Jacob Epstein, *First portrait of Kitty (Kitty with curls)*, 1944, bronze © The estate of Sir Jacob Epstein

MODELLING AND CARVING:

Back at school use plasticine, clay, or similar to explore two different sculpture techniques that Epstein used.

Model by adding parts:

Start with a block of clay or plasticine then add little pieces of clay onto it to create a figure. Once you have added a section you cannot remove anything you have added.

This could also be created using strips of paper in different dimensions and assembling them to create a 3D figure.

Model by removing parts:

Start with a block of clay or plasticine, then remove little pieces from it to create a figure.

Once you have removed a section you cannot add back anything you have removed.

This could also be done with an A4 sheet of paper, tearing away at it to make a figure shape.



Sir Jacob Epstein, *Baby Asleep*, 1904, bronze © The estate of Jacob Epsiten, photograph: Leeds Museums and Art Galleries (City Museum) UK



Sir Jacob Epstein, *Peggy Jean Laughing*, 1921, bronze © The estate of Jacob Epsiten, photograph: Leeds Museums and Art Galleries (City Museum) UK

Resource written by Daniel Wallis.

Enquiries:

Emma Middleton
Curator: Artists' Projects
The Foundling Museum
40 Brunswick Square, London
WC1N 1AZ
T:+44 (0)20 7841 3610
F:+44 (0)20 7841 3607
emma@foundlingmuseum.org.uk
www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

Elizabeth Lee
Learning Co-ordinator: Schools & Families
The Foundling Museum
40 Brunswick Square, London
WC1N 1AZ
T:+44 (0)20 7841 3595
F:+44 (0)20 7841 3607
elizabeth@foundlingmuseum.org.uk
www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk
