

# ACTIVITIES

## Discussion

- Give some quick, one-word responses to the painting. How does it make you feel? What is it about the painting that brings about these feelings?
- Does knowing a little about Neuschul's turbulent life change the way you view this portrait? Can we tell enough about a person from a portrait or is it important to have more information? Why?
- Does the time and place inevitably influence the artist's work? Is your work influenced by what you see around you, what you feel inside, a world you would like to exist or something else?
- How do you feel about the artistic journey ahead of you?

## Making Comparisons

- Look at some of the other portraits in the exhibition; are there styles that you prefer to Neuschul's? Why?
- What would you say are the main differences between Neuschul's work and the work of other New Objectivity painters such as Dix, Beckmann and Grosz?
- Find 'Negermutter' by Neuschul, what kinds of emotions does he express here? Do you agree that his work shows compassion?

## Follow Up

- Think of an emotion and create an image of yourself that embodies this emotion. Repeat the exercise with an opposing emotion. Have you achieved the opposite effect?
- Think of an event that has affected your life, or something about the world today that concerns you. How could you express this in an artwork? What colours and materials would you choose? Would your marks be soft and calm or hard and angry?
- New Objectivity artists often used exaggeration and distortion in their portrayal of people – often to make a point about how corrupt or evil they felt these people were. Choose some images of people in the public eye and think about how you could distort these in order to draw attention to certain aspects of their characters.

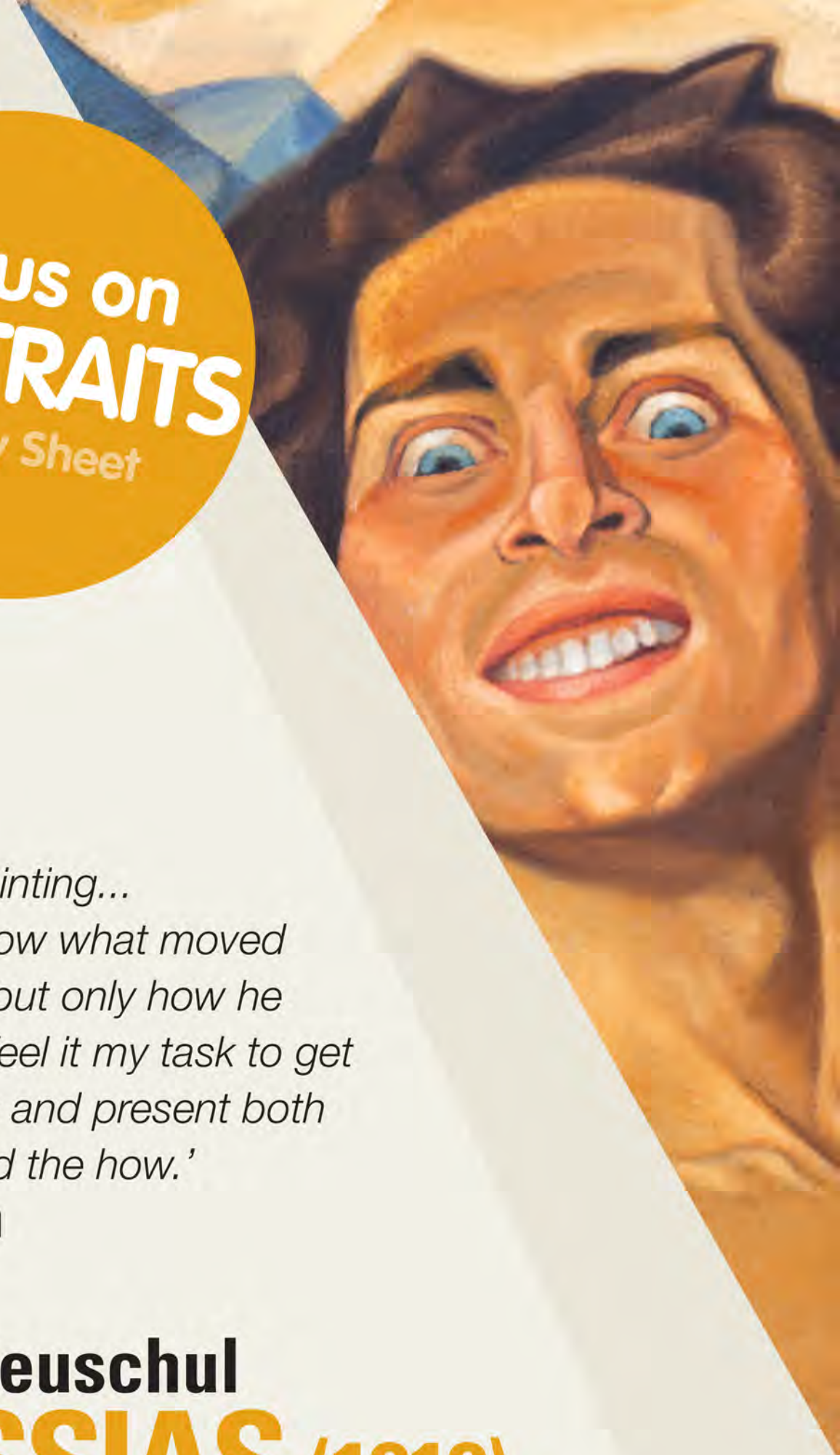


## Focus on PORTRAITS Activity Sheet

*'Abstract painting... does not show what moved the painter, but only how he is moved. I feel it my task to get to grips with and present both the what and the how.'*

Ernst Neuschul

## Ernst Neuschul MESSIAS (1919)







## About The Artist

Neuschul was born into a Jewish family in Czechoslovakia. He studied in Prague, Krakow and Vienna and early in his career he was influenced by unorthodox painters of the time such as Klimt and Schiele.

Neuschul led a very eventful and turbulent life. He managed to avoid conscription into the First World War only by feigning insanity and by starving himself, he then fled to Poland. In the lead up to WWII he had an exhibition closed by the Nazis and lost his position as Professor of Fine Arts at the Berlin Academy because of his political views and his Jewish birth. At a later exhibition in Czechoslovakia in 1939 his paintings were slashed and defaced with swastikas.

He managed to escape further persecution by taking the last train out of Czechoslovakia and settled in England, Neuschul died in London in 1968.

Neuschul was a painter of the New Objectivity movement. This movement both grew out of, and in opposition to, expressionism. It was not concerned with the natural utopia of the Blue Rider group or the inner emotions of Die Brücke but in showing a harsher reality. Artists painted maimed veterans returning from world war one, and unflinching observations of the realities of life in bars, parks, streets and cafes. This art had a harder edge and reflected the inequalities of society. However, unlike other New Objectivity painters, Neuschul often showed a compassion for his fellow humans in his paintings.

## About The Artwork

Messias (Messiah) is a very early self-portrait, which uses oil on card. It shows that even early in his career Neuschul believed he would be a powerful and successful painter. He highlights his own physicality in a sparse background and stakes a powerful claim to life as he points directly at his own chest.

His gaunt figure may reflect his previous starvation and the ordeal of escaping from war. But his determined face shows that he is declaring himself to be strong enough to continue on a journey of artistic exploration, no matter how tough this becomes.