

Nature in Art and Architecture

Lissie Starkie

Week 1: <i>A History of Art in 10 Objects</i>	Wednesday 26th April
Week 2: <i>The Elements – Earth, air, wind and fire. The overwhelming forces of nature</i>	Wednesday 3rd May
Week 3: <i>Landscape – The Sublime to Starry Night, giving landscape painting a new meaning</i>	Wednesday 10th May
Week 4: <i>Animals – Man’s best friend or feared foe?</i>	Wednesday 17th May
Week 5: <i>Politics and Plants – Artwork in the age of Green</i>	Wednesday 24th May
Half Term	
Week 6: <i>Our relationship with Nature – Who is more powerful?</i>	Wednesday 7th June
Week 7: <i>Architecture and Nature – A relationship for the ages.</i>	Wednesday 14th June



An Overview of History of Art in 10 objects



The Pantheon
C.130, travertine, brick, lava-stone (tufa), pumice, marble, Rome



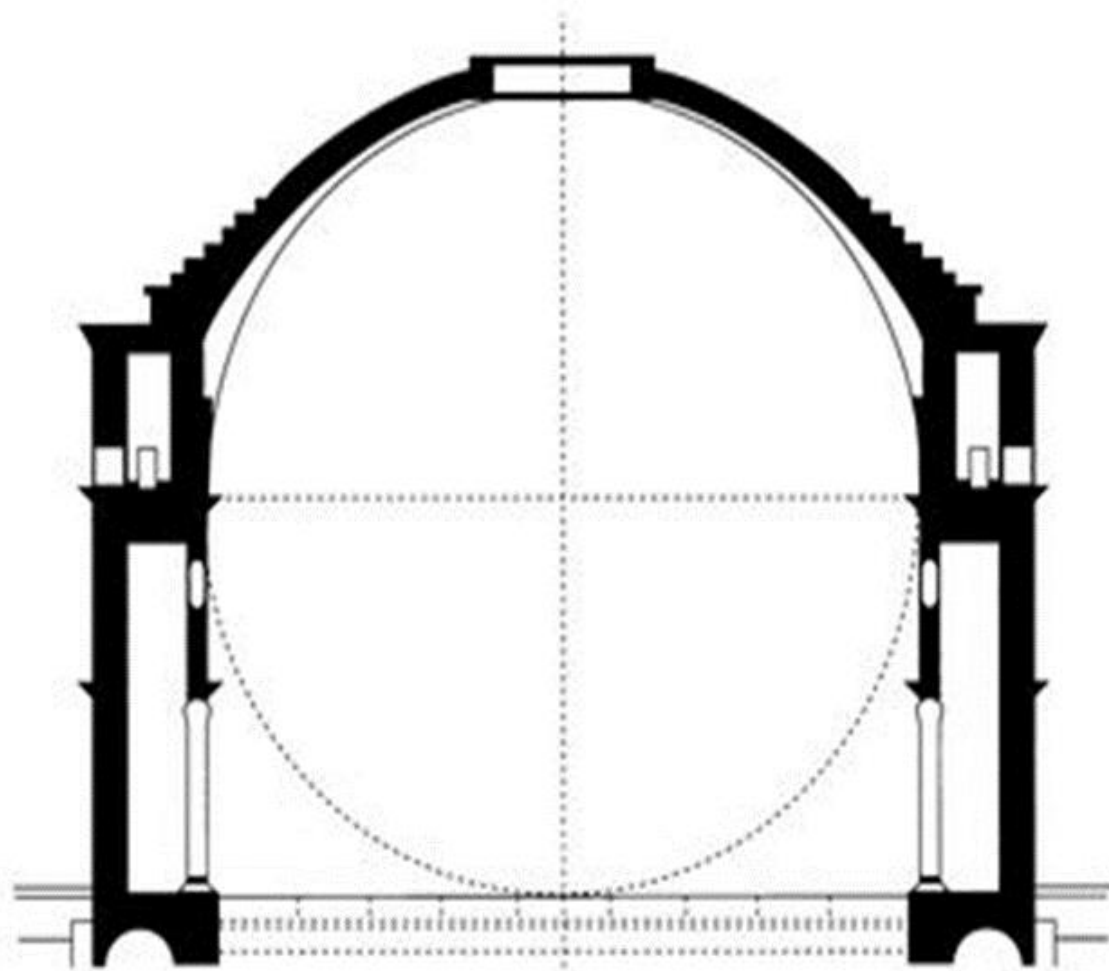
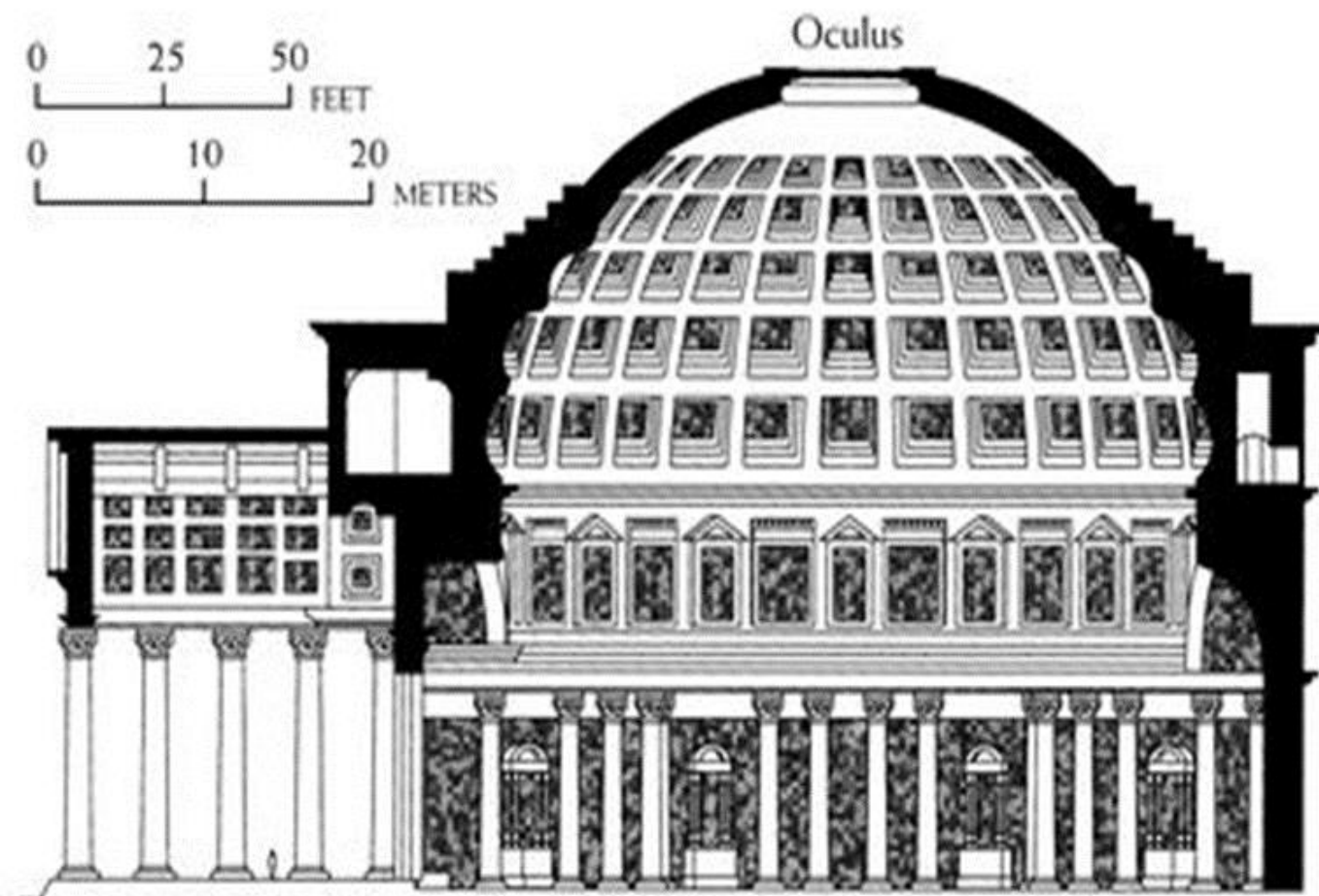
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Key points for *The Pantheon*

- Largest dome until Duomo in 15th Cent
- Not a basilica – radial building, all centrally planned and based around central point below oculus – house for the gods
- Geometrically perfect. Central point is midway between ceiling and floor
- Repeated circles, rectangles, squares throughout. All perfectly aligned with one another
- Coffers appear square – are actually trapezoid shape to lead your eye up to the oculus (probably originally had bronze rosettes)
- Built under the emperor Hadrian, contained sculptures of the gods and deified emperors

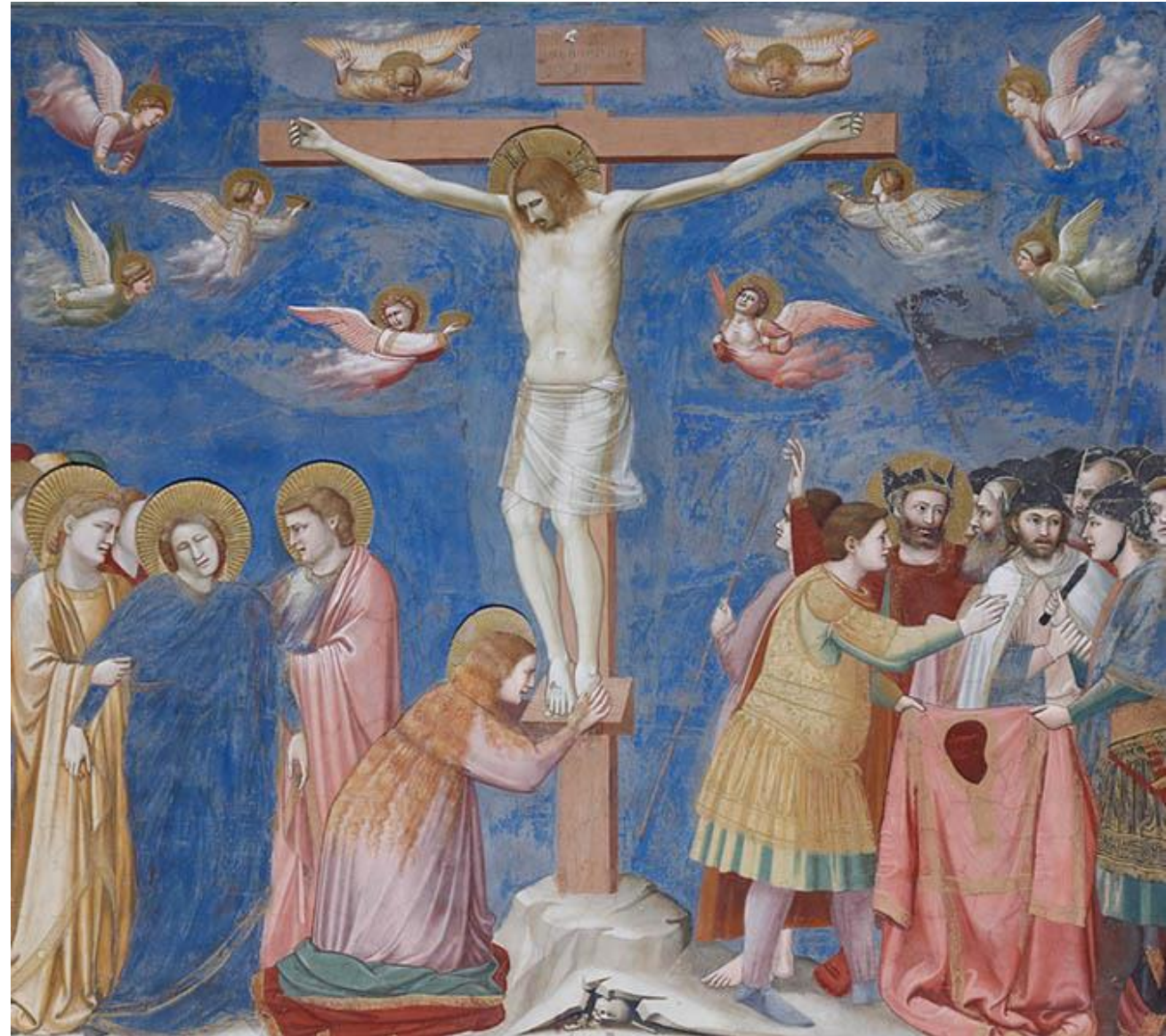
Lamentation, *Giotto*
c.1304-13, fresco, 2.3m x 2.4m, Italy





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Duccio, *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1290–1300



Cimabue, *Virgin and Child Enthroned, and Prophets (Santa Trinità Maestà)*, c.1300

Lamentation, *Giotto*
c.1304-13, fresco, 2.3m x 2.4m, Italy



Key points for *Lamentation*

- For Enrico Scrovegni and family in Padua – shows lives of Mary and Jesus
- Scrovegni family were bankers – a userer/moneylender
 - His father, Reginaldo Scrovegni, who had amassed the family's considerable fortune, was also a usurer, one of such notoriety that Dante reserved a special place for him in his *Inferno*.
 - The frescoes are full of references to the sin of usury. Chapel designed as Scrovegni's admission of past sins, and as an attempt to expiate them
 - Also why MM (prostitute) given such presence - in the medieval mind, there was an equivalence between the two activities
- Revolutionary for its naturalism, compared to what was seen at this time
- Evidence of fresco application

Diana and Actaeon, *Titian*
1556-59, oil on canvas, 184 x 282cm, National Gallery, London





Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, 1550s



Titian, *Danae receiving the Golden Rain*, 1550s



Titian, *Perseus and Andromeda*, 1550s



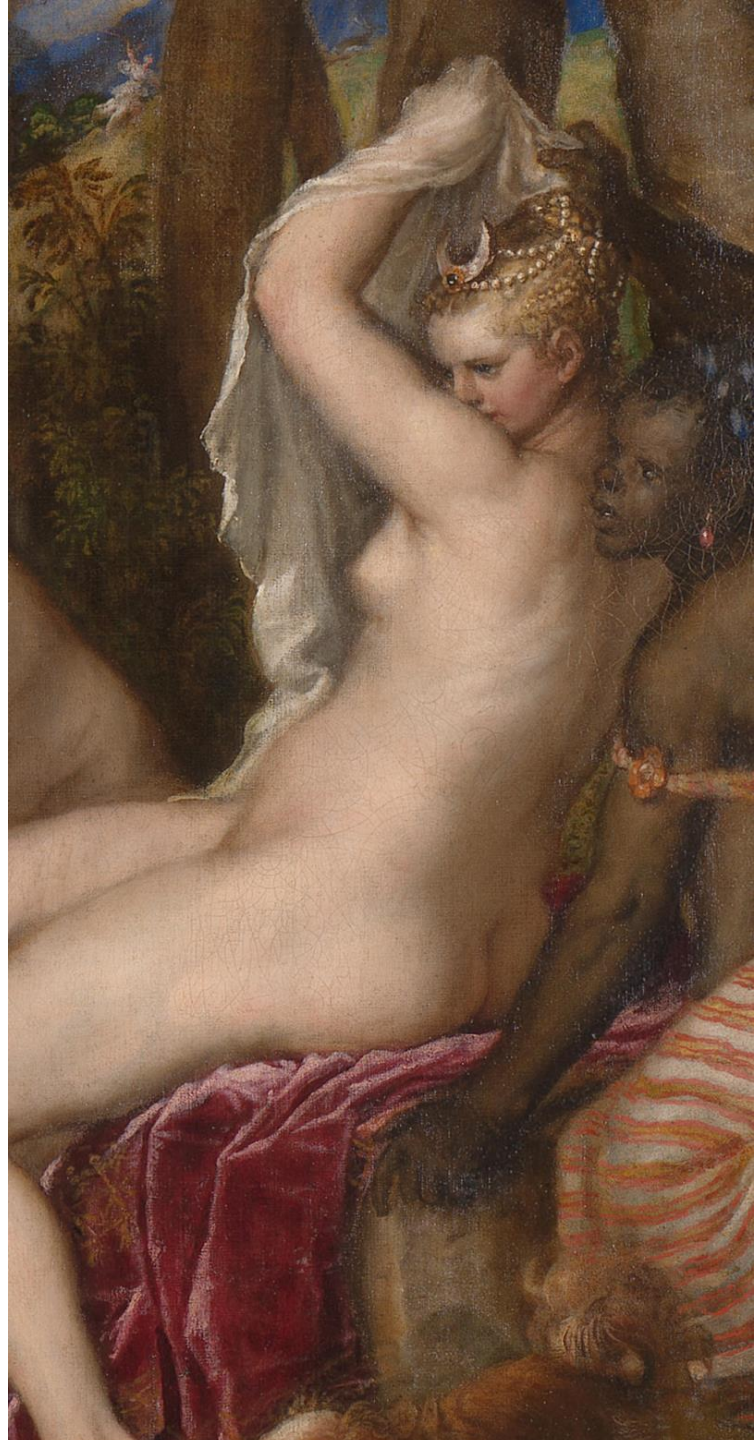
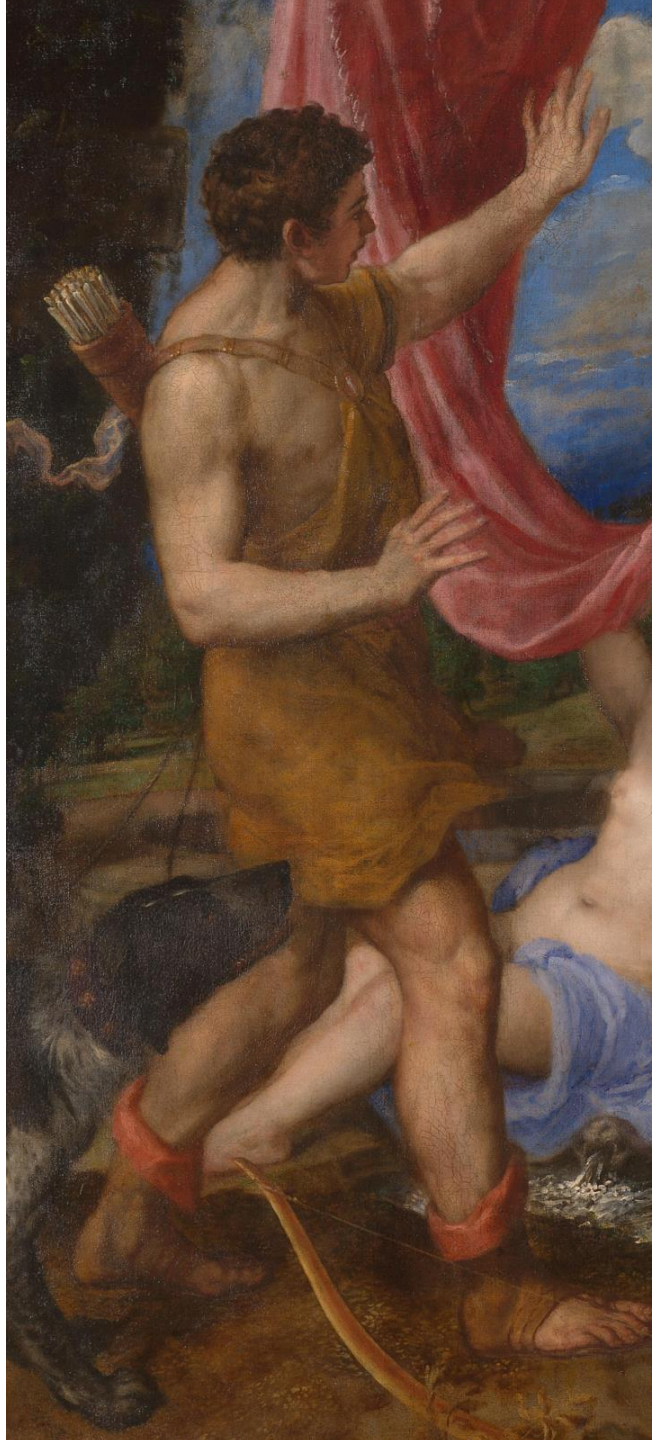
Titian, *Rape of Europa*, 1550s

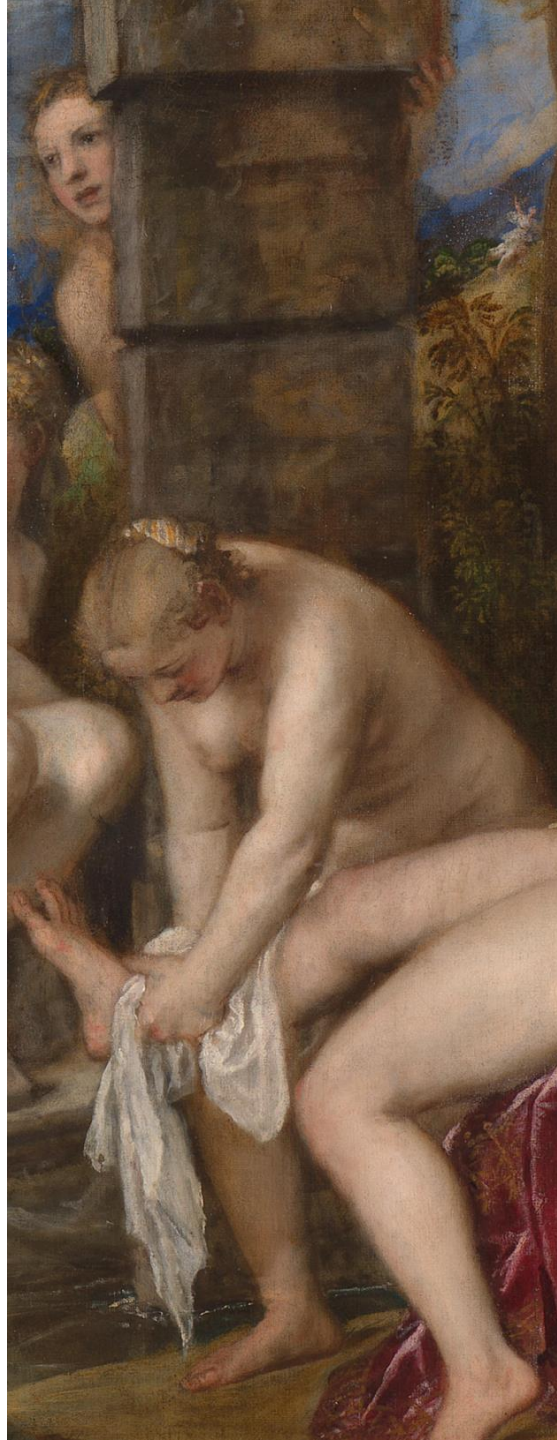
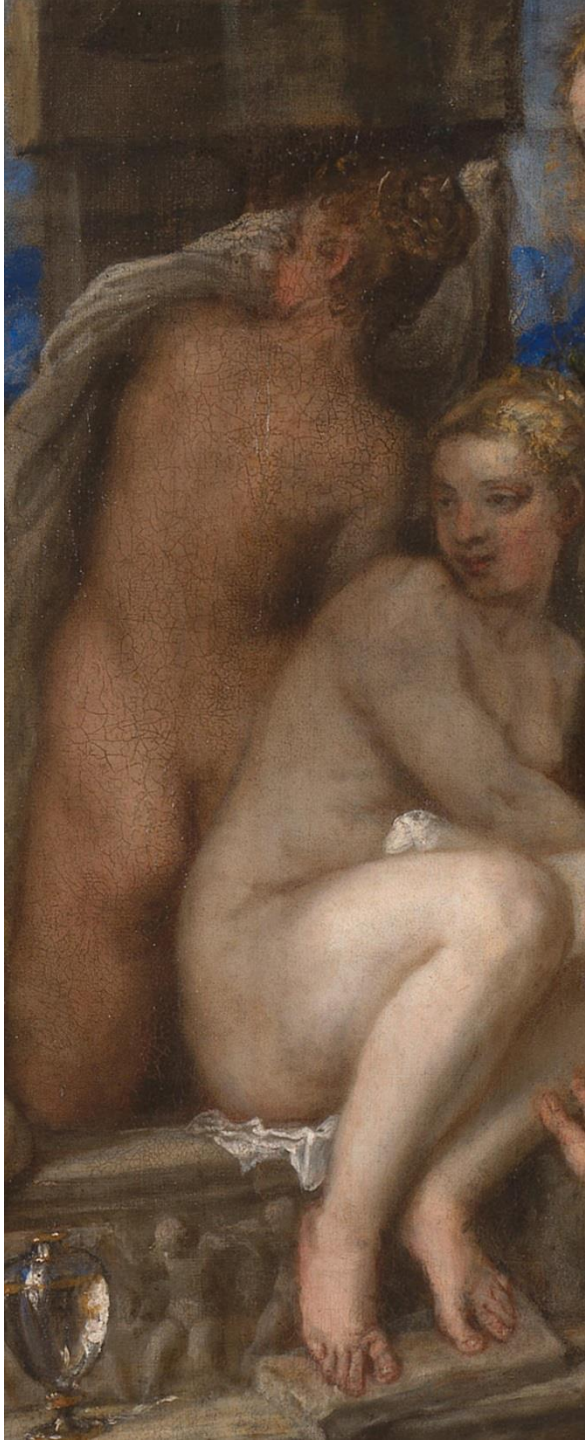


Titian, *Diana and Callisto*, 1550s



Titian, *Diana and Actaeon*, 1550s









Key points for *Diana and Actaeon*

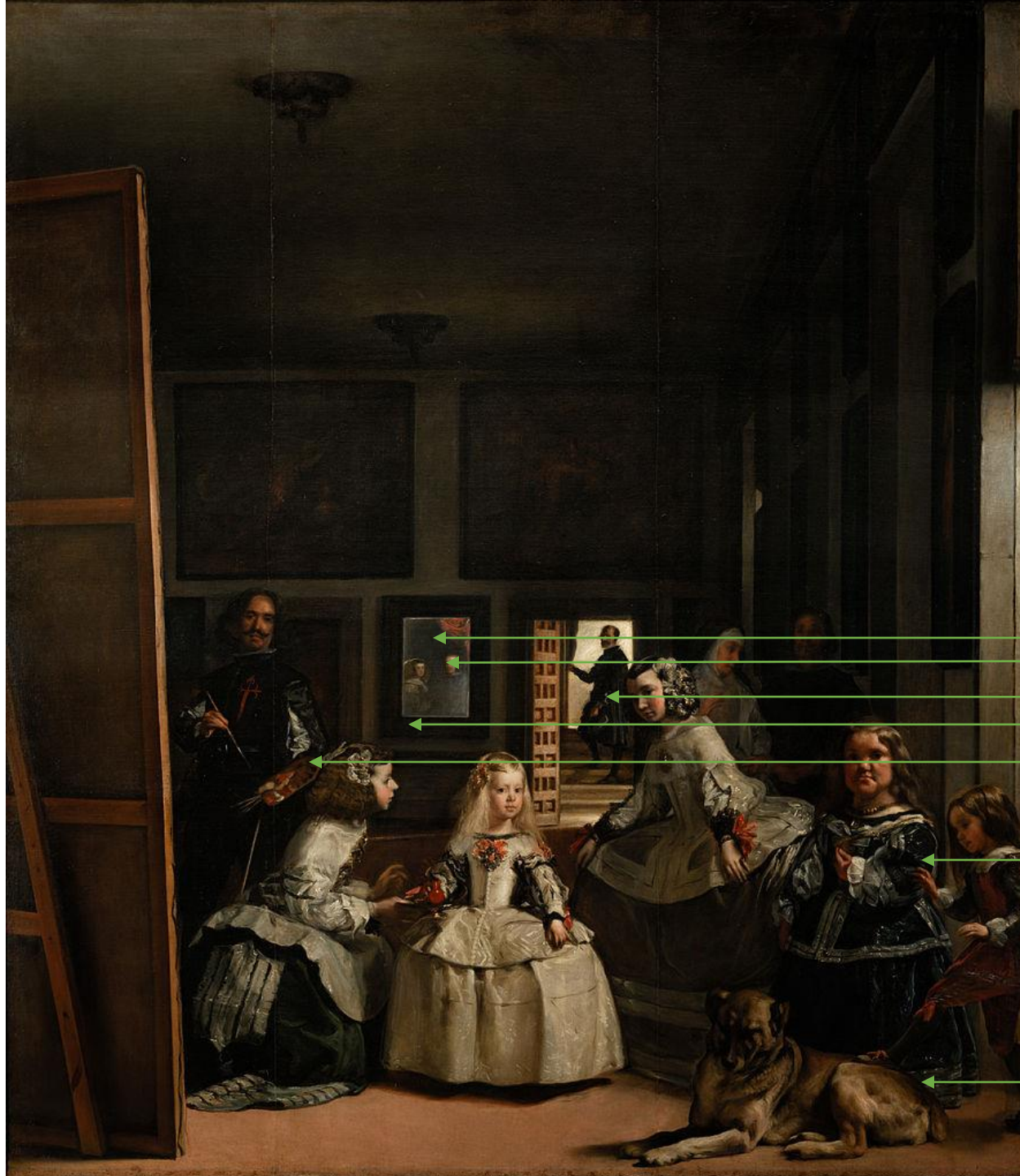
- Commissioned for Phillip II of Spain
- Titian met him eight years before he came to the throne. Prompted him to commission a set of six paintings referred to as a poesie – visual equivalents of poetry
- Taken from Ovid's Metamorphoses, Actaeon stumbles across scene of chaste Diana bathing with nymphs
- She will turn him into stag – killed by his own dogs
 - Hanging cloth, antlers etc
 - Vignette behind

Las Meninas, *Diego Valàzquez*
1656, 318 x 276cm , oil on canvas
Museo del Prado, Spain









7
6
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1





Las Meninas, *Diego Valàzquez*
1656, 318 x 276cm , oil on canvas
Museo del Prado, Spain



Key points for *Las Meninas*

- Velazquez leading court painter for King Philip IV of Spain
- Compositionally incredible
- Infanta (princess) is centre stage surrounded by maids (las meninas)
 - Artist off to the left
 - Chaperone and bodyguard off to the right
 - Painting/mirror of King and Queen
 - Man standing in doorway
- X shape leading to her
- Light used to focus on her

The Hay Wain, *John Constable*
1821, 130 x 185cm, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London









THE
NATIONAL
GALLERY



Key points for *The Hay Wain*

- Based on the River Stour near Flatford - where Constable grew up
- Hay Wain – type of horse and cart, stand in river.
 - Cottage was rented by farmer – Willy Lot
- His views were that of Tory Anglicanism
 - Idyllic idea of the countryside was a place of wealth and social harmony.
 - Rural workers produced goods to local markets and were tenants on land owned by a wealthy landowner who saw it as his responsibility to house his workers.
 - However, this work is on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution and changes to methods of agricultural organisation and production which threatened the livelihoods of some communities
- Painted clouds so meticulously, meteorologists have been able to decipher the weather at the time as a result
- Huge



Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917



Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

Magritte

Rene Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*, 1928-9, oil on canvas

Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919





**"everyday
objects raised
to the dignity
of a work of
art by the
artist's act of
choice."
Duchamp**

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917

Key points for *Fountain*

- Dadaism emerged in WWI - allegedly word taken from random in dictionary, means 'hobby horse' in French
 - Dadaists proclaimed that all received moral, political and aesthetic beliefs had been destroyed in the war.
 - Advocated a destructive, irreverent and liberating approach to art.
 - Shock was a key tactic
 - Chance and nonsense were key elements
 - Submitted for an exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists.
- When explaining the purpose of his Readymade sculpture, Duchamp stated they are "everyday objects raised to the dignity of a work of art by the artist's act of choice."
- Fountain was not rejected by the committee, since Society rules stated that all works would be accepted from artists who paid the fee, but the work was never placed in the show area.

Villa Savoye, *Le Corbusier*
1929, 9.4m high, reinforced concrete, steel, glass, Poissy (outskirts of Paris)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQZ81TwFqE>

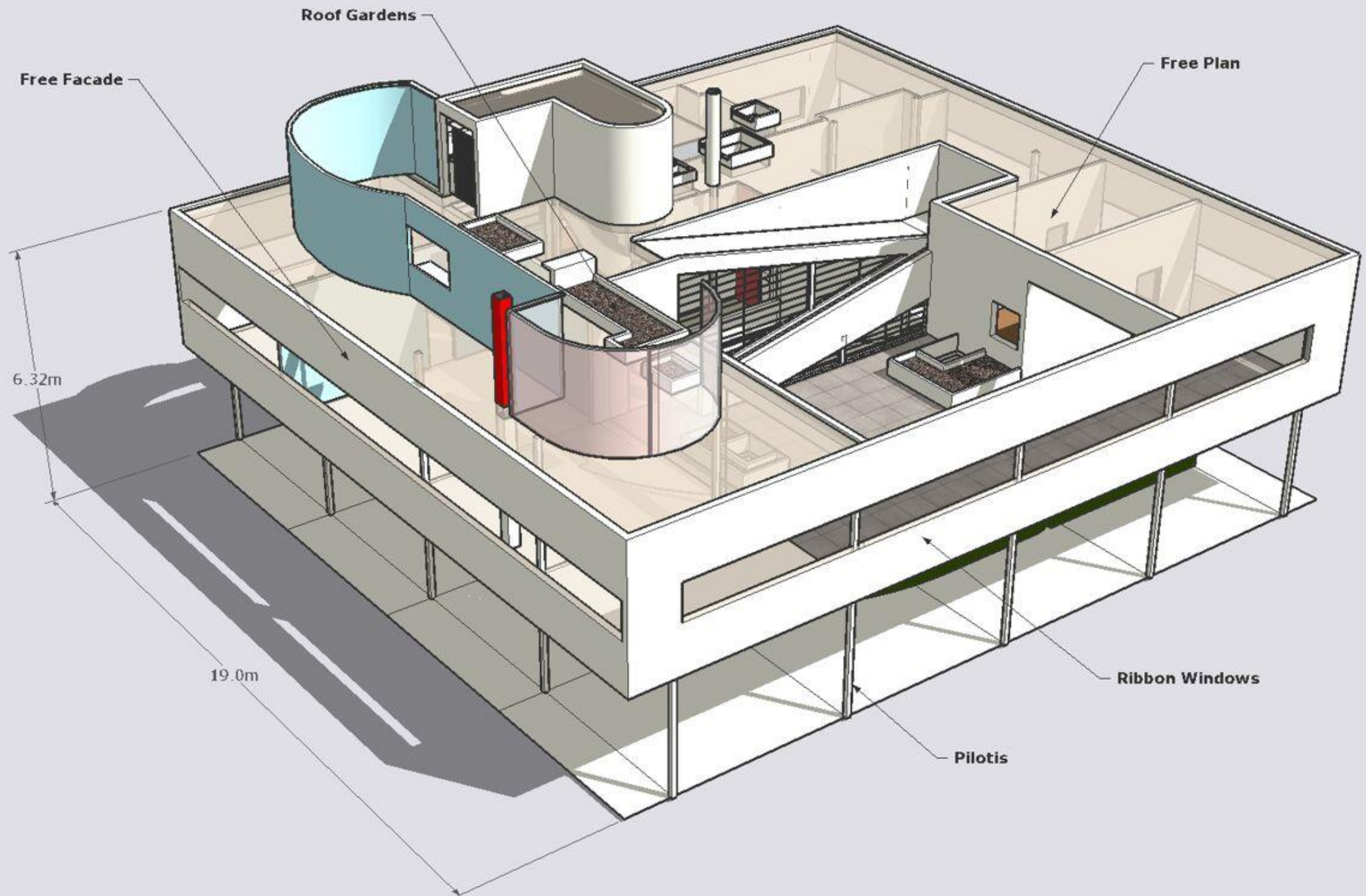


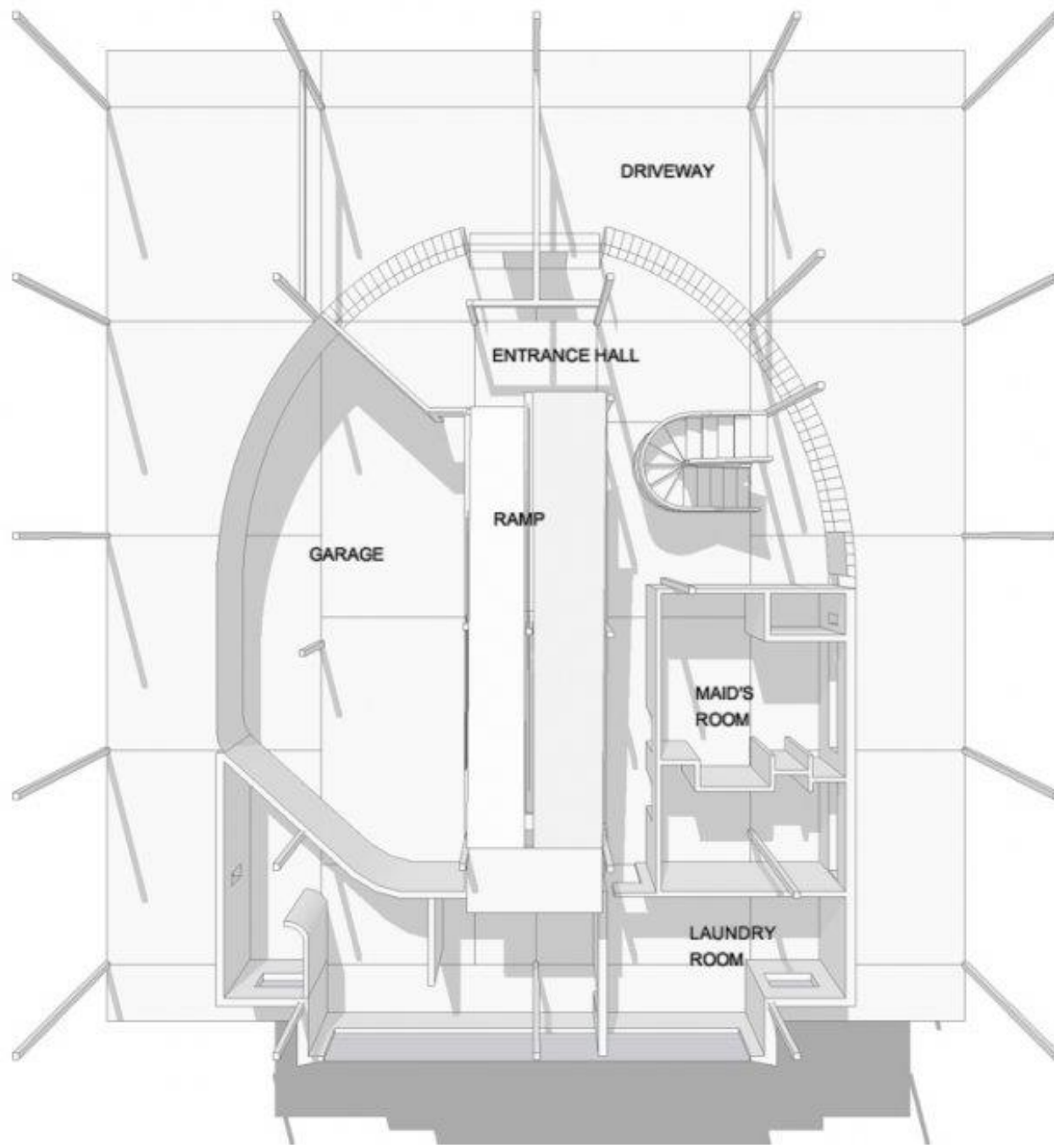
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Key points for *Villa Savoye*

- For Pierre Savoye and his wife, wanting a weekend house outside of Paris
- Believed house was a 'machine to live in'
 - Influenced by ocean liners, racing cars, even grain silos
 - 5 points of new architecture
 - Pilotis – raise house
 - Free internal layout
 - Beam/column structure – allows for liberal use of glass
 - Habitable flat roof – outdoor living room
 - Ribbon windows
- Role of car v important

Man Pointing/L'homme au doigt, *Alberto Giacometti*
1947, 178cm x 95cm x 52cm, bronze, Tate, London







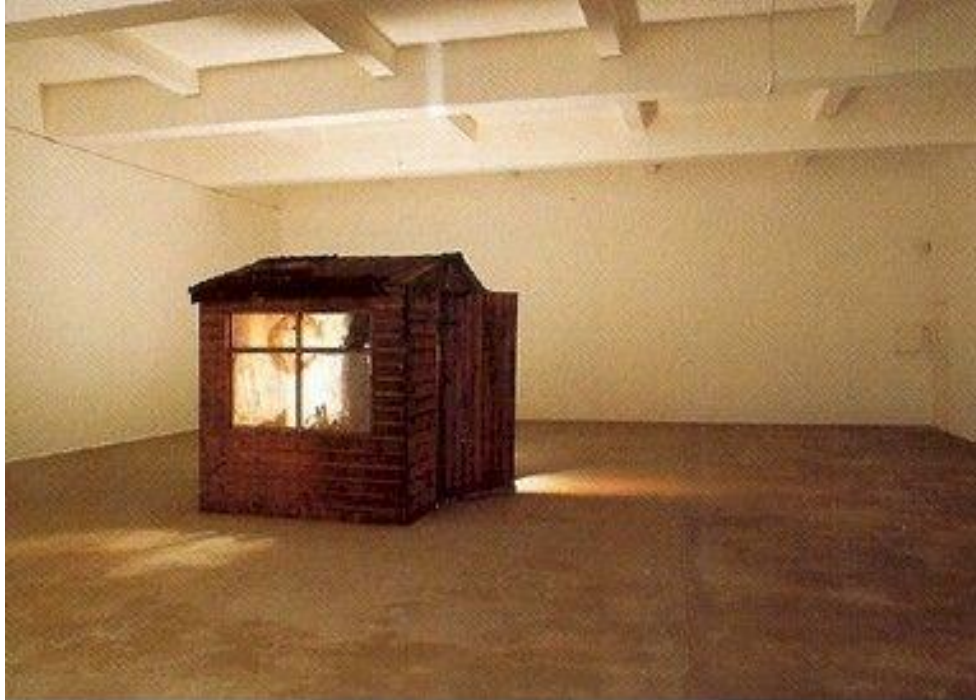


Key points for *Man Pointing*

- Over life-sized emaciated man appearing charred – recognisable human shape
- Everything dramatically elongated
 - Sense of movement – twisting body
- Treatment of bronze makes man seem almost scarred
- Originally intended to be part of larger composition, with arm around second figure
- Post-war – takes a departure from classical bronze Poseidon
 - Much more fragile yet still has strength
 - Orator addressing troops
 - Link to starvation and horrific conditions of WW2
 - Highly expressionist
 - talks about human vulnerability, despair, compassion, and could represent an effort to imagine some direction in an absurd inhuman world

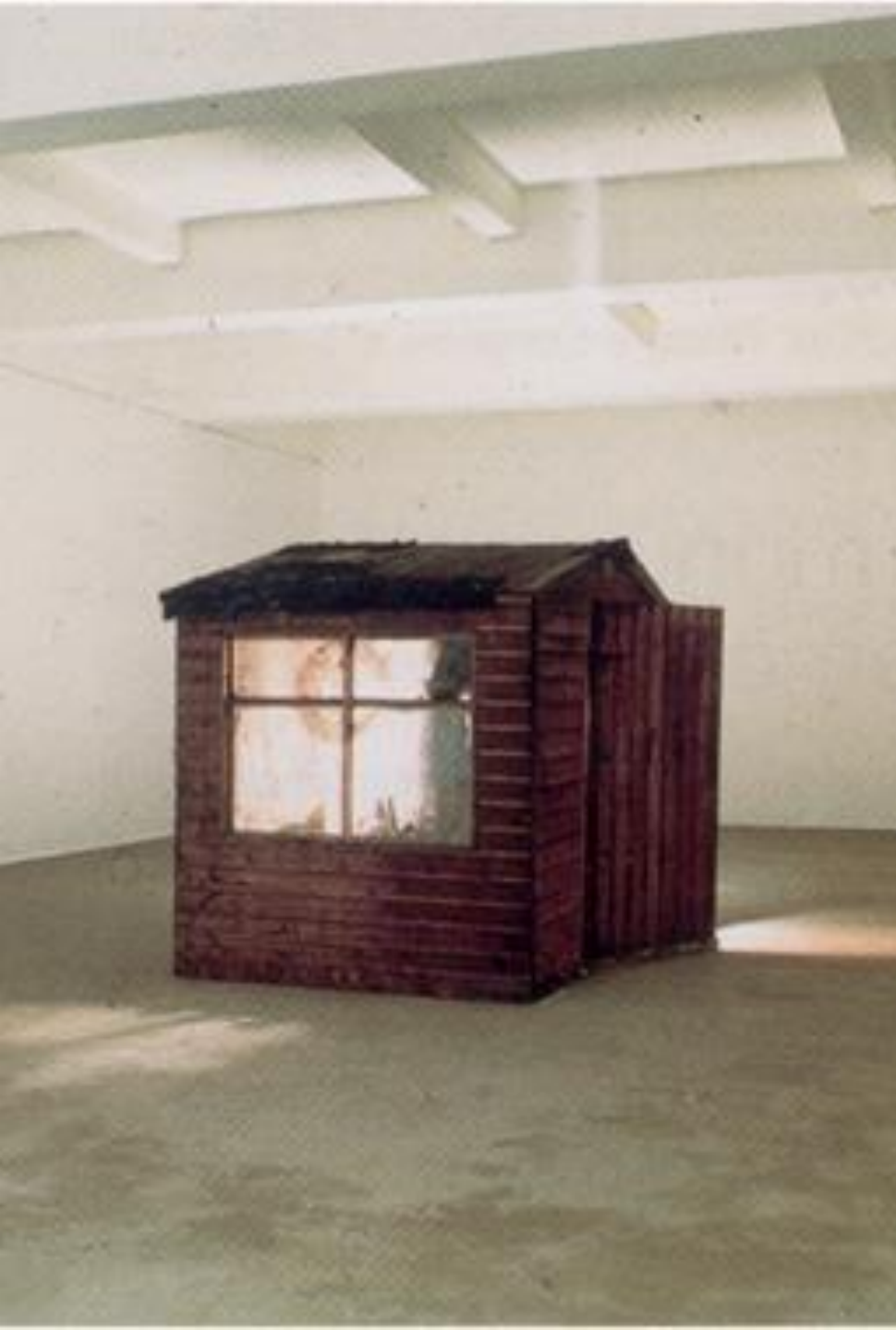


Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, 1991
(Wood, metal, plastic, ceramic, paper, textile and wire) Dimensions
Unconfirmed: 400 × 500
× 500 cm



“Somehow the idea and imminence of the ‘explosion’ in society seemed such an iconic thing. You were being constantly bombarded with its imagery, from the violence of the comic strip, through action films, in documentaries about Super Novas and the Big Bang, and least of all on the news in never ending reports of war.”

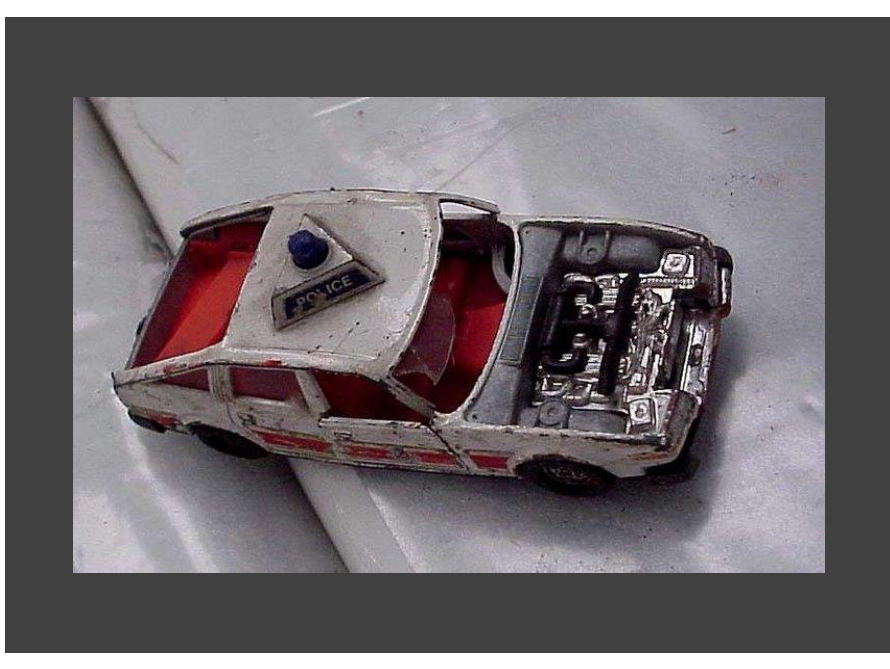
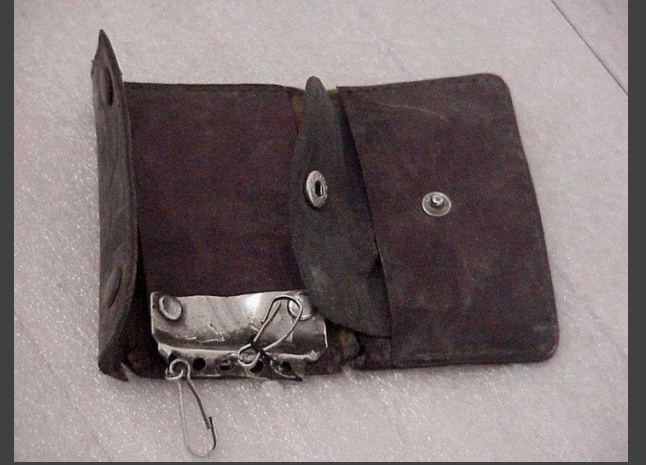




“I wanted it to be an archetypal shed because originally I was looking for a shed any old shed – I was going around all these allotments looking at sheds and they were all too romantic in a way ...you know, if you blew up somebody’s specific shed it became too biographical, so I thought I’d get this kind of constructed shed.”









THE EXPLOSION









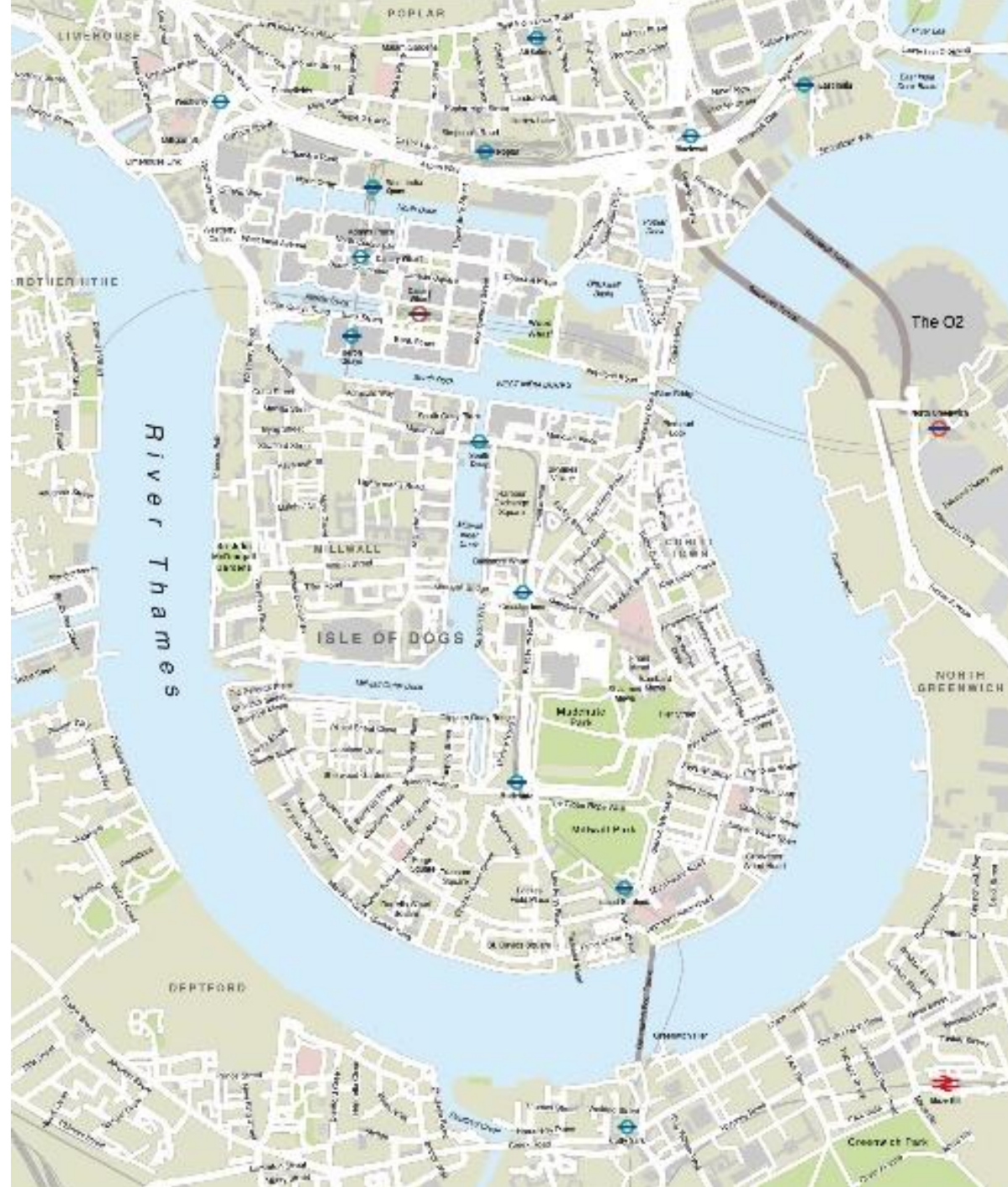
Key points for *Cold Dark Matter*

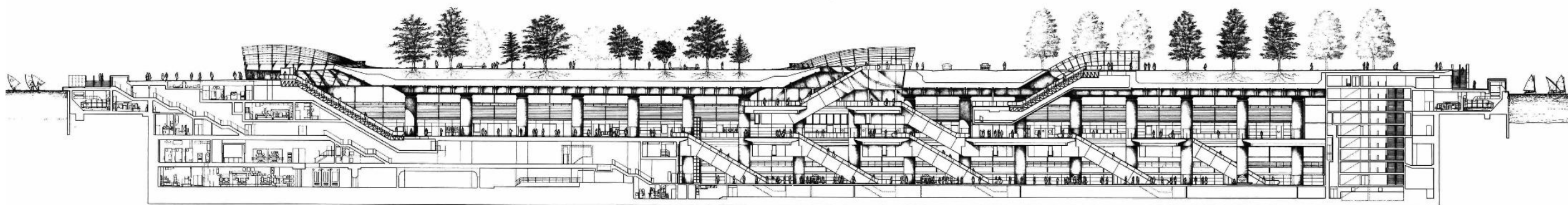
- Restored contents of a garden shed exploded by the British Army at the request of the artist
- The surviving pieces have been used by Parker to create an installation suspended from the ceiling as if held mid-explosion.
- Lit by a single lightbulb the fragments cast dramatic shadows on the gallery's walls.
- Objects are a real range from children's toys to tools – some are personal
 - Gathered over a three month period. Some from friends, some car boot sale
- Name of work leads us to make connections between the work and the world of science and space
 - Cold Dark Matter can be seen as a domestic scale Big Bang.
 - The work is also about violence

Canary Warf Underground Station, *Lord Foster (Sir Norman Foster)*
1991-95, concrete, stainless steel, aluminium, glass, Docklands, London

Drop in [here](#)





















Key points for *Canary Warf Underground Station*

- station is on the 'Isle of Dogs' which is a peninsular
- showpiece of the Jubilee Line Extension
 - symbolic of the revival of British economy in the later 20th century
- homage to the giant New York railway stations of the 'Golden Age' of American capitalism, such as Grand Central Station and Pennsylvania station
- 20 banks of escalators
- Whether alighting at platform level or entering the station at ground level, there is a single, clearly defined route for passengers, which minimises the need for directional signage.
- Trains arrive at the bottom level, and are screened by glass and steel screens, whose doors are aligned with the doors of the train, as a safety precaution
- transparent glass lifts are designed in order to deter vandalism
- Reinforced-concrete columns, elliptical in plan, stretch from platform level to roof where elliptical bearings allow the station to move in response to geological pressure



Next Week: The Elements – Earth, air, wind and fire.
The overwhelming forces of nature