



Exploring psychology

Understanding imagination

Narrator

A first step in understanding imagination is to consider what psychological processes are involved, for instance forming mental images. Artist Issam Kourbaj

Issam Kourbaj

My memories as a child will stay vividly in my mind. The colour of the settee appears every now and again in my paintings. There is a painting called nostalgia and all about the colour, all about the air of that particular memory. Now as a child I used to love to lie down and look at these different shapes and I could see that this is my open book if you like. Here is the chance for me to imagine. This is a cloud or this is a horse or this a conversation if you like. There's endless possibilities.

Woman

One thing which is necessary for imagination is the capacity to mentally represent things so the capacity to run through experiences that we've had or indeed think about experiences that we might have so it's seeing things in the mind's eye or indeed hearing them in the mind's ear.

Woman

Imagination also involves crucially the capacity to conceive of one thing in terms of something else. To think symbolically.

Woman

Imagination also requires the capacity to manipulate mental representations and to form new or novel things so for instance a composer will work with familiar notes or familiar fragments of melody but put them together to produce something which is completely new, and very often do that with a lot of fluidity.

Woman

So he or she may generate not just one composition but many different ones.

Narrator

Issam assembles parts of everyday objects often found in skips to make sculptural forms which have a new identity. Something which they were not before.

Issam Kourbaj

Generally speaking my work is about the unconnectable, the person connections if you like. I'm sure that is for somebody else these are not necessarily connectable things but for me they do connect because for me they reflect particular memories. I like idea of each experience has its own presence but connecting it to another experience, the juxtaposition of two.

Narrator

Imagination then involves the capacity to represent images in the mind, to think symbolically and to operate flexibly generating novel ideas and outputs.