

# ***Beyond the Visual***

## **Audio guide**

**HENRY MOORE  
INSTITUTE**

### **Stop 4. Track 2.**

#### **David Johnson, *Nuggets of Embodiment* 2024–25**

An abundance of biscuits. They spill onto a wide white shelf from an open biscuit tin full to the brim. The biscuits are pale golden brown in colour, but the tin has been painted a deep, matt black. It sits on a slight platform, with its lid abandoned to one side. Some of the scattered biscuits are glued down, some are loose, so that they can be picked up, examined, and then put back down again. The temperature and hardness of the biscuits, and their clink as we put them back down, reveal that they aren't real, crumbly biscuits that can be eaten but are made from a hard plaster. But they seem remarkably real, the size and colour recalling a certain brand of digestive biscuits. And there's a game being played here with things that seem to be one way but are in fact another, throwing us off-balance: a biscuit which is not a biscuit, where any nourishment is intellectual rather than literal. There's a playfulness in making an artwork about something so ordinary and so familiar as sharing a biscuit.

If we are in any doubt as to what type of biscuits these refer to, each of the biscuits has a sheaf pattern indented into the top, and a familiar pattern of inset dots; but feeling their surface also reveals raised braille dots in the middle, and then a word underneath stamped into the surface in lowercase letters. The indented text repeats the word spelled out by the braille dots. The translation feels this way round because the braille dots are sharper than the indented text. In the mould, of course, the

words would have been positives, and the dots negatives. But the resulting cast privileges braille – which the artist uses in his everyday life – over the written text. The words on each biscuit vary: apex, currency, comma, attunement, anamnesis. This is definitely a work about language, which seems to be a common feature in a lot of the artist's work.

Are the words significant? Attunement suggests a kind of alignment. To the artwork? To each other? What does anamnesis mean? A dictionary reveals it is to do with memory or recollection: to recall, or a calling to mind. But it also has a medical use, referring to a patient's account of their own medical history. Maybe the artist is using it in a double sense, referring to his own medical history and the retinitis pigmentosa that resulted in his blindness? They're clearly words that mean something to him, playing with double meanings. Currency might refer to an intellectual capital but also to the biscuit as a kind of currency: an exchange between the artist and the visitor, who can literally take a biscuit away with them as a kind of gift, exchanged for filling out a feedback form.

Gallery staff tell us that there are 10,000 of these biscuits, of which the display before us is just a small selection. Making these has been a collaborative venture, with workshops and volunteers. A cottage industry. But the finished work also gathers people together, where they exchange ideas, but are also aware of each other as embodied, sensory beings. Perhaps that is why the piece is called *Nuggets of Embodiment*; used metaphorically, they are nuggets of wisdom.

End of Stop 4, Track 2.

This is a transcript of an audio guide produced by Henry Moore Institute for the exhibition *Beyond the Visual*, on display from 28 November 2025 to 19 April 2026. For more information visit [henry-moore.org/beyond-the-visual](https://henry-moore.org/beyond-the-visual)