

St IVES  
**TATE**



# Notes for Teachers

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***please request the Appendix by e-mailing [tsi.education@tate.org.uk](mailto:tsi.education@tate.org.uk) or call 01736 791114***

# Introduction

This summer Tate St Ives presents **David Nash *Making and Placing Abstract Sculpture 1978-2003***.

Also on display,

## **The Apse**

### **David Nash *Artists on Artists***

Paintings and sculptures by Alberto Giacometti selected by David Nash from the Tate Collection.

## **Gallery 5 and The Exhibition Study Point**

### **Mariele Neudecker *Over and Over, Again and Again***

'Tank' works, light boxes and the film *Winterreise* by Mariele Neudecker.

## **Upper Gallery 2 Showcase**

### **Gwyn Hanssen Pigott *Caravan***

An installation of fine porcelain beakers, bottles, bowls, jugs and cups by the Australian potter Gwyn Hanssen Pigott.

## **The Mall and Café Roof Terrace**

### **Mike Marshall *Here is Fine***

Mike Marshall's film *The Earth is Flat* 2001 will be screened in the Mall while on the Café Roof Terrace a new sound piece *The Sound of Bombay (a place not unlike this)* 2004 has been installed.

## **Gallery 1**

### **The Essential Image**

Artists of the St Ives School and the European context from the Tate Collection.

The aim of this pack is to provide information about the exhibiting artists, information about the works on display and suggestions of themes and issues to consider and discuss. Details of resources and further reading are also included together with suggested activities for primary and secondary groups.

## So how do we approach these displays?

The range and diversity of work on display can offer visitors a powerful experience. Not only can you explore the work of David Nash in depth but also consider his work in relation to St Ives artists and European abstraction. It is also interesting to contrast Nash's ideas about landscape with Mariele Neudecker.

This season's displays therefore present us with the following key points:

- An insight into the work of David Nash with a particular focus on the geometric theme
- An insight into the influences on Nash's work including Giacometti and Mondrian
- An insight into artists associated with the St Ives School
- An insight into the work of Mariele Neudecker
- An insight into the ceramics of Gwyn Hanssen Pigott

There are many starting points you could develop according to your group's needs and interests. Consider some of the following,

- Wood
- Landscape
- The natural world (environment/ecology)
- Time, place & space
- The senses
- The forest
- Sculpture
- Geometric versus natural forms
- Abstraction
- Fine art and ceramics
- Still life - ordinary every-day objects
- St Ives artists

Link to Art and Design Unit *Visiting a museum, gallery or site* or more specifically to course work for GCSE and A Level work.

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## Resources available in the Gallery

There is an **Exhibition Study Point on Level 3** that has a selection of books relating to the exhibitions. You can access the **Tate Collection** databases on line at this point. The **Tate St Ives shop** has a selection of books, catalogues, post cards and related materials.

## Websites

[www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

Tate Learning [www.tate.org.uk/learning](http://www.tate.org.uk/learning)

This new site includes the Staff Room, a dedicated area for teachers and group leaders.

Teacher resource notes for all major Tate exhibitions including Tate St Ives can be downloaded from the site.

# David Nash *Making and Placing* *Abstract Sculpture 1978-2004*

*I want a simple approach to living and doing.*

*I want a life and work that reflects the balance and continuity of nature.*

*Identifying with the time and energy of the tree and with its mortality,*

*I find myself drawn deeper into the joys and blows of nature.*

*Worn down and regenerated; broken off and reunited;  
dormant faith is revived in the new growth on old wood.*

David Nash, 1978

**David Nash (born 1945)** is internationally known for his large, dramatic and tactile sculptures in wood. Brought up in Surrey he studied at Kingston College of Art and Chelsea School of Art. In 1967 he moved to Blaenau Ffestiniog, North Wales where he lives and works today. His first one-person exhibition was held in 1973 and since then he has exhibited his work all over the world and it is included in numerous public collections. In 1999 he was elected Royal Academician. He is represented by Annely Juda Fine Art, London.

**Nash's sculptures** combine the remote, rugged environment of his homeland, North Wales, with the ability to work with the subtle nuances of different woods. He is passionate about ecology and the environment, utilising fallen or uprooted trees as source material. He uses the elements of air, water and fire, to alter the form and surface of the (green) wood, often creating dramatic carbonised geometric forms.

**This exhibition** highlights the geometric theme in Nash's work. It includes work from all stages of his career including large-scale sculptures, a film projection focused on Nash's *Boulder* project, photographs and a large wall drawing.

**Lower Gallery 2:** Here you will find dramatic sculpture formed by fire and the chainsaw such as *Extended Cube* 1996 (1996), *Charred Panel: 3 cuts down, 3 cuts across* 2002 (oak), *Three Charred Panels* 2004 (beech), *Sheaves* 2004 (lime), *Coil* 2001 (oak), *Elm Frame, Fourteen Cuts* 2004 (elm) and a large-scale wall drawing inspired by Nash's *Wooden Boulder* project.

**The Studio:** Screened in the Studio is the film presentation of *Wooden Boulder*. This land art project dates from 1978 - 2003 when Nash made a wooden ball (one meter in diameter) from the tree trunk of a stricken oak tree and then placed it a torrent in the nearby river to be 'alive through the continual flow and play of water upon it'. The film documents the passage of the boulder from the river in North Wales, across an estuary and into the Irish Sea. Nash became fascinated by the idea that this boulder could be a 'sculpture on the move' travelling through the landscape and he tracked its 'journey' until it was finally lost at sea in April 2003.

**Gallery 3:** Exhibited in this gallery are *Cracked and Warped Column* 2002 (lime) and *Redwood Capped Block* 1998.

**Gallery 4:** Here you will see the charred and cut sculpture *Three Forms: Cube, Sphere, Pyramid* 2003/4 (oak). This work explores abstract forms through several subtle transformations of the original form.

**Courtyard:** Here you will see the vast oak *Sphere* 2004.

Don't miss the **Café** where you will find a new set of drawings by Nash to accompany the geometric theme of the exhibition.

## Further Reading & Resources

### David Nash

*David Nash Making and Placing Abstract Sculpture 1978-2004*, exhibition catalogue, Tate St Ives, 2004

*David Nash, Black and Light*, exhibition catalogue, Annelly Juda Fine Art, 2001

*David Nash, Black Below – White Above*, Banque Internationale à Luxembourg, 2002

Andrews, Julian, *The Sculpture of David Nash*, Lund Humphries, 1996

Warner, Marina, *David Nash, Forms into Time*, Artmedia Press, 2001

### Landscape/Environmental art

Davies, Peter/ Knipe, Tony, *A Sense of Place: Sculpture in the Landscape*, Sunderland, 1984

Kastner, Jeffrey, *Land & Environmental Art*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 1998

Tucker, William, *The Language of Sculpture*, Thames & Hudson, 1974

### Wood sculpture

Liebson, M, *Direct Wood Sculpture: Technique, Innovation, Creativity*, 2001

Mcintosh, Hal, *Chainsaw Carving: The Art & Craft: A complete Guide*, 2001

### Film (on view at the Exhibition Study Point – level three)

*David Nash From Capel Rhiw To The World*

This film provides a useful introduction to the working processes of the artist and includes footage of the artist at work and in conversation about the major themes and ideas about his work. A DVD or VHS copy can be made available on loan to any teacher booking a visit to the show. Call 01736 791114 or e-mail [kerry.rice@tate.org.uk](mailto:kerry.rice@tate.org.uk)

***For full bibliography, websites and details of sculpture parks please see Appendix.***

### David Nash Artist/Teacher Weekend

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 June

Venues: Tate St Ives and Trelissick Gardens

Tickets: £60

Sculptor Reece Ingram will lead a two-day course as part of a series of continuing professional development courses designed to enable teachers to reflect on or develop their own personal practice. Over the two days this practical course will explore concepts of landscape in relation to the current Tate St Ives exhibitions with the opportunity to develop a range of responses, including site-specific works. Strictly limited places. For a detailed itinerary and further information call 01736 791114 or e-mail [kerry.rice@tate.org.uk](mailto:kerry.rice@tate.org.uk)

## Key Work



***Three Forms, Cube, Sphere, Pyramid 2003/4*** © the artist  
Oak

Work in progress, courtesy the artist

This work in gallery 4 consists of three geometric forms. Nash has transformed these huge oak forms by charring them to give a deep matt black surface. This work is a variation on a series of works based on these forms, made especially to suit the gallery space here at St Ives. He says that the black surface encourages visitors to look at the form rather than the material and he has carefully placed each one in relation to each other and the gallery space. His purpose is to bring activity to geometric forms and another version of this work is called *Spheres Turn, Pyramids Rise, Cubes Stay Still*. He says, 'it's the poetry and geometry of movement that interests me. When we think of geometry, we don't think of movement. For me it represents a human order, a process of understanding'.

## Trigger Questions

- What is the first thing you think or feel when you look at the work?
- What is it made from?
- Can you tell how it was made and what sorts of tools Nash used?
- Is it made from more than one form? Is it a single form or a group of forms?
- Describe the patterns, textures and colours you can see
- What shapes can you see? Does it have an inside and outside? If so, what shape is the outside edge? What is the shape in the middle?
- How is the space organised? Can you walk right round it and look at from all angles?
- Where is it? Does this setting affect the way you think about it?
- What is it called?
- How does it compare/contrast with other works by Nash?

## Things to Think About

**Time.** Consider how Nash's projects and sculptures explore time in different ways and how his work encourages us to think about the process of time. Trees symbolise the cycle of life, they are growing and changing all the time. Nash describes the tree trunk as a metaphor 'for wisdom and experience, gradually increasing in thickness'. Even when they are cut and 'dead' they are slowly drying out and rotting.

**The elements.** Nash reveals to us through his wood sculptures how the earth, air, fire (light and warmth) and water are woven into the material – they are the life force. In China wood is considered the fifth element and Nash describes wood as the 'communion between earth and light'. Look at the way his different sculptures and projects focus on one particular element such as *Wooden Boulder* project, which is all about the movement of water.

**Scorching and charring.** Fire transforms the structure and surface of wood. Fire creates colour and surface texture and Nash uses it as a shaping and carving process. He says that altering the surface from vegetable to mineral (carbon) creates a different experience when you look at the sculpture. He says you begin to see the form rather than the material. Note that Nash also makes numerous drawings using charcoal.

**Cracking.** Water is the main element of wood and it cracks as it dries out. Nash is interested in the effects of the loss of water from wood and how it modifies the structure and appearance of it.

**Chainsaw art.** Since 1977 Nash's primary tool has been the chainsaw. He says he loves the 'fluidity' of the chainsaw and the fact that he can make objects in one gesture. For Nash the chainsaw is 'all woodworking tools in one'. He says he is not a wood craftsman. 'I leave the work in a rough state showing the mark of the tool, I don't polish the surface...I want the raw substance.'

**Cutting, chopping and splitting.** Nash talks of using the chainsaw to push through the material and cut the shapes out. He uses the chainsaw to carve, cut, hew, scrape, saw and split. He uses green rather than seasoned timber so that it retains its own energy. Nash delights in the cracking, warping, moving and crinkling that happens afterwards. He says 'I keep my mind on the process and let the piece take care of itself'.

**The properties of wood.** How can the appearance of wood, in terms of shape, structure and colour, be explored and visualised? Nash says he wants to 'make wood speak' and he explores the different qualities of each wood and how it changes over time and in different conditions. He makes use of the knots, irregular patterns and natural grain of the wood. He also encourages us to think about how we respond to this material and the associations we make with different woods. He mainly works with broadleaf trees such as oak, beech, ash, lime, cherry, elm and birch. He talks of the properties of each wood, for example, the purity and whiteness of lime or the rubbery quality of elm.

**The senses.** The material presence of the works in burnt, red, and lime wood creates a tactile and sensual experience. The exhibition has been organised to encourage visitors to think about how proximity, mass and surface texture relate to the body. We are encouraged to respond physically to the work – to look it at from all angles and breathe in the different smells of each wood piece. The black charred wood pieces absorb the light producing a dense surface whereas in others such as the lime *Crack and Warp Column* 2002 we are drawn to the pattern of light across the sculpture.

**Simple shapes and primary forms.** Consider how Nash transforms the natural organic shapes of wood into geometric shapes such the tetrahedron, cube, pyramid and sphere. Nash acknowledges Plato's theory that we recognise these 'universal forms' from the spiritual world. He also refers to the sculptor Brancusi who spoke of the paradox that an art object is a very complex process and simplicity is there as a means to bring clarity to the complex. Nash is interested in creating movement or energy within geometry and he talks of trying to 'enliven' fundamental geometric shapes.

**Large scale/small scale - 3D/2D.** Consider how Nash moves between scales with his 3D forms often providing the source material for further 2D work. See his drawings on display in the café.

**Ascending/descending.** The sense of ascent and descent through the vertical has been a recurrent theme in Nash's work. He talks of 'descending vessels' and 'ascending flames'. He describes the tree as a ladder between earth and sky and talks of the forms of his sculptures overlapping and weaving to create contrasts of light and dark.

**Outside/inside.** Nash encourages us to think about inside and outside space, both around and within the sculpture. Most of his sculptures are made outside but they are intended to be experienced inside. He is very aware of viewers coming to see his work and thinks carefully about each different exhibition, as if it is a stage set. He talks of the gallery setting as a quiet, meditative space, rather like a temple where visitors can view his work and think softly and slowly.

**The artist's studio.** Nash's studio at Blaenau Ffestiniog is a huge former chapel. While much of his work is done out doors his studio plays an important role in his creative practice. He describes the outside as an active space, whereas the studio is a neutralised space, a repository of ideas, an archive, where his wood can 'go to sleep' for a while. Over the years his studio has begun to resemble an installation art work in itself. The accumulation of pieces affects and informs his current work and Nash will often repeat or create different versions of a sculpture to evolve and develop ideas. It is interesting to note that as a student Nash saw Brancusi's work in Paris and was impressed by the idea of the artist living in his studio with an ever increasing repertoire of forms and variations on themes.



David Nash in his studio  
© The Artist

**Landscape.** Nash's sculptures are inseparable from their landscape context and for some of his projects a landscape setting is integral to the work. He says that instead of painting images of the land, he wants 'to be' in a physical sense actually in the landscape itself. The landscape around him in Wales is also an inspiration to his work and he talks of the hills as if they are shapes such as the pyramid, wheel and cube.

**Man and nature.** Nash is passionate about the environment. He talks about developing a healthy partnership between human beings and the natural world. Wherever possible he uses windblown, diseased or thinned out trees making use of wood made available through natural means. He explores the possibilities of shapes and patterns inherent in wood. However, he does not have a sentimental or romantic relationship with nature – he 'controls' his wood and creates tension between natural and man-made forms. You might like to contrast this with Mariele Neudecker's interest to a more romantic and expressionist approach to nature (see gallery 5).

**The Ash Dome.** For twenty five years Nash has been working on a living sculpture near his home in Wales. He has planted and 'modelled' twenty two ash trees to create an ash dome. He sees it as an evolving sculpture, alive and ever changing. Whereas with *The Boulder* project he became an observer, with the *Ash Dome* he is forever intervening and manipulating the trees to create the shape he requires. The unpredictability of growth fascinates him and the *Ash Dome* has inspired many drawings, which record and chart these changes.

## Suggested Activities for Primary Groups

### Gallery-based activities

- **First response.** Take a look at one room/area with your group. Encourage children to think about their senses - how they feel physically in the space. Ask children to contribute one word based on their first response to being in the gallery.
- **Work in focus.** Choose a sculpture and look at it closely together. Try looking at it from different angles and, if you can, walk right around it. Ask the group, in pairs, to look at the work and discuss their initial reactions. Go round the group and get each pair to describe their responses. Ask questions such as, what is it made from, how do you think he made it, what does the shape make you think of?
- **Ten Words to describe sculptures** Ask children to fit the words to the sculptures they have seen. (you could make word cards for children to use in the gallery).

*Stacked*  
*Cracked*  
*Sharp*

*Smooth*  
*Bumpy*  
*Rough*

*Round*  
*Dark*  
*Light*

*Angled*

- **King oak and queen lime.** Extend the above activity to a focused look at the qualities of the different woods Nash uses. Encourage children to find words to describe their qualities and discuss, for example, why they think Nash calls oak wood the 'king' and lime the 'queen'.
- **Capped, coiled and cut.** Nash likes to create an element of drama in the shape and position of his sculptures. Get children into groups of three and ask them to choose one sculpture to describe. Invite them to have a dramatic dialogue between the sculptures/separate parts.

## Follow-up Work Back at School

- Take one shape/theme within Nash's art such as the cube, sphere or pyramid and develop work around it. This could include large-scale drawings in different media such as charcoal and paint.
- Develop a handling collection of different types of wood to explore its properties, qualities, history (including the symbolism of the tree) and uses. This could link to a range of cross-curricular work such as a science project looking at materials and understanding the five senses.
- Experiment with the effects of the elements on wood (air, fire and water) by for example, charring, drying out or soaking.
- Explore the range of tools and techniques used to handle and shape wood.
- Changing the natural shape of a branch. Using simple hand tools children can explore and manipulate the shape of branches.
- Collect wood and arrange to make a large sculpture. Pre-make a range of different shapes for children to stack in different ways. Simple columns could be made by discs from the same trunk, pre-drilled and threaded with wire or wooden poles. Children could then make drawings of their arrangement.
- Char wood using handheld gas burners or pre-charred sticks that can then be used to make collage and 3D arrangements.
- Look at the production of charcoal. Use charcoal to make marks, rubbings and drawings on paper, card or wooden slates.
- Develop drawings and collage work based on observation and collection of materials and objects from the natural world (including, stones, moss, leaves, bark etc).
- Flexible freshly cut twigs can be bent and intertwined to form big hollow geometric balls and other shapes. This activity could be extended to construct more elaborate shapes and objects by using twine or green wire to bind branches together.
- Children could design and develop 'landscape sculptures' in the school grounds or local area – this could range from planting a natural hedge to a large-scale wood sculpture. They could also develop a sculpture trail and explore issues related to caring for the environment.

## Activities for Secondary Groups

### Gallery-based activities

**Discovery half hour.** Give students a 'discovery half hour' and encourage them to familiarise themselves with the exhibition and start to identify key characteristics about Nash's work. Ask students to **choose three different sculptures**. Get them to identify the material, how they were made and what they think inspired each piece.

**Line, tone and mark making.** Ask pupils to choose a work and sketch it using,

- a) line only
- b) tone only
- c) external/internal space only in tone to show shape
- d) external/internal space with line and tone to show form
- e) mark making to show texture and surface.

**Twenty words to describe sculptures.** Ask student to fit the words to the sculptures they have seen.

<i>Alive</i>	<i>Smooth</i>	<i>Upright</i>	<i>Worn</i>
<i>Human</i>	<i>Rough</i>	<i>Enclosed</i>	<i>Hollow</i>
<i>Natural</i>	<i>Geometric</i>	<i>Solid</i>	<i>Tense</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>Angular</i>	<i>Light</i>	<i>Balanced</i>
<i>Cold</i>	<i>Circular</i>	<i>Weathered</i>	<i>Stacked</i>

**Words to describe different surfaces and textures.** Encourage students to think of words to describe the textures and surfaces of Nash's sculptures such as, cracked, warped, rough, sharp, pitted, dense and matt.

**Key themes - clue cards.** Use the 'things to think about' section above to develop your own set of clue cards to use in the exhibition. Before the visit, write key words on pieces of card. In small groups students choose a card and find a work that connects with it. Encourage them to share responses and to discuss/write down their ideas.

## Follow-up work back at school

See primary activities above, many of which could be extended to link to the secondary curriculum.

- Experiment making sculptures of primary/geometric shapes. Extend by contrasting natural forms with geometric shapes.
  - Produce charcoal through fire. Use the charcoal to make drawings.
  - Develop a large-scale site-specific wood sculpture for the school/college.
  - Develop a drawing based on a 3D object into a design for a three dimensional piece. On completion of the 3D work students to then draw their designs. Variations on this project could result in collage, printmaking, textiles or digital work.
  - Make use of a field trip to a local garden or site or ask students to collect materials to bring in. Students to make a series of drawings where they gradually simplify the forms and look for geometric shapes. This work could be developed into a collage, textile or 3D project.
  - Extend work with a field trip and that explores issues related to the environment and ecology. Link to geography and science work. Explore rocks, weathering and environmental change. Consider the tension between development and conservation.
  - Look at other artists inspired by the landscape past and present. In particular look at artists who make work directly in the landscape such as Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Robert Smithson, James Turrell and Christo. Extend to look at how people have used objects in the landscape past and present.
  - Look at the history of sculpture past and present. Consider who has influenced Nash and why – for example, Constantin Brancusi, David Smith, Henri Matisse, Donald Judd, Richard Serra, Anthony Caro, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. He also sites the influence of painters such as Paul Cézanne and Piet Mondrian.
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## Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden

Why not include a visit to the Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden. A range of interesting links can be made between Nash and Hepworth such as:

- Sculpture and the landscape
- Geometric versus natural forms
- Spaces within and through forms



- Direct carving
- The different qualities of wood.

# The Apse David Nash Artists on Artists

**Artists on Artists** is an ongoing series of displays drawn from the Tate Collection. David Nash has selected this display of paintings and sculptures by Alberto Giacometti. The display includes the two paintings, *Diego* 1959 and *Jean Genet* 1954 or 1955 and the sculpture *Femme de Venise IX* 1956.

**Alberto Giacometti (1901-66)** was a painter and sculptor best known for his very tall thin bronze figures and intense portrait images. Born in Switzerland he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Geneva and in Italy. In 1922 he moved to Paris where he studied under the sculptors Archipenko and Bourdelle. He had his first one-man exhibition in 1927 and was involved with the Surrealist movement in the early 1930s. In 1934 he began to work primarily from the model making smaller and smaller sculptures that were almost always destroyed. He had no exhibitions between 1935 and 1947. His characteristic style of elongated figures and narrow heads emerged in the 1950s. Towards the end of his life he received many awards including the main prize for sculpture at the Venice Biennale in 1962 and the Guggenheim International Award for Painting in 1964.

## Key Work



***Femme de Venise IX*** 1956

Bronze

© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2002

Giacometti has created a strange emaciated figure with roughly defined outlines. She appears to represent the human figure seen from a distance. He said that when he made large figures, they seemed 'false'. It was only when he portrayed them as 'long and slender' that they seemed true to his vision of humanity. This sculpture was the last of a group of standing female figures made by Giacometti for the French Pavilion of the 1956 Venice Biennale.

## Trigger Questions

- What strikes you first about Giacometti's work?
- Look at the sculpture closely. How do you think it was made? Why is the surface so bumpy and rough?
- Why do you think the figure is so thin?
- Now look at the paintings. What do they have in common?
- Describe the way Giacometti uses line and colour in his paintings?
- What has happened to the head in each painting?

**Consider why David Nash might have chosen these works. Ask students if they can see any links between Giacometti and Nash's work.**

# Mariele Neudecker Over and Over, Again and Again

**Mariele Neudecker (born 1965)** left Germany in the 1980s and now lives and works in Bristol. She studied at the University of Wuppertal in Germany and completed an apprenticeship in architectural model making in Dusseldorf. She also studied at Goldsmith's College and completed an MA in sculpture at Chelsea School of Art and Design in London in 1992. She studied Digital Image Creation/Manipulation at Tower Hamlets College London 1996-7. She has received numerous awards and residencies and has exhibited widely.

**Neudecker creates landscapes**, often evocations of mountain ranges, which are made of fibreglass resin airbrushed with acrylic and placed on glass cases. She also works with new technologies such as video and digital imaging. The essence of her work is an exploration of the territory between reality, imagination, experience and memory, and central to her practice is her interest in German Romanticism.

**This exhibition** presents three existing works and two new pieces in gallery 5 and the Exhibition Study Point. The exhibition includes three tank works (two of which have been made for this exhibition) a light-box piece *Another Day* made at the start of the new Millennium and *Winterreise* (duration – 90 minutes) a filmed work commissioned by Opera North 2002.

## Further Reading

*Mariele Neudecker, Over and Over, Again and Again*, exhibition catalogue, Tate St Ives, 2004, essays by David Blayney Brown, and Douglas Young

*Mariele Neudecker*, exhibition catalogue, *Firstsite*, Colchester, 1999

*Mariele Neudecker, Until Now*, exhibition catalogue, Künstlerhaus, Bethanien, 2001

*Mariele Neudecker, Between Us*, exhibition catalogue, Howard Gardens Gallery, 2003

## Key Work



***Things can Change in a Day* 1998**

Glass, water, food dye, acrylic medium, salt, fibreglass plastic

© the artist

This is one of three tank works on display in gallery 5. The artist has created a strange hypnotic and claustrophobic forest floating in an eerie mist. The trees look as if they are diseased and dying. We are drawn into this miniature murky landscape and encouraged to question what the forest means to us. Neudecker's title adds another layer of meaning to the work suggesting perhaps that as time does not stand still so our perception of landscape can change in a day.

## Trigger Questions

- What are your immediate reactions to the work?
- What does it make you think of?
- What materials has the artist used?
- How do you think the work has been made?
- What is it called? Does the title change your first ideas about the work?
- Where is the work and what is next to it? Do you think its site is important to the meaning of the work?
- What particular issues or themes does the artist seem concerned with?
- How does it relate to the idea of landscape?
- Does it make you consider aspects of life or art in a new way?

## Things to Think About

**Tank works.** Neudecker is most famous for her tank pieces where she creates miniature landscapes in glass vitrines filled with water and treated with salt solutions and dyes. Neudecker often bases her tank works on 2D paintings, which she transforms into 3D spaces. They are like specimen tanks that confine, distort and contain through reduction of scale ideas about the natural and painted world. They often hold a strange, disorientating and mysterious quality – flatness and roundness, solidity and fluidity are blurred. Neudecker has been likened to a medieval alchemist who plays with chemicals to mimic mist and rain.

**Time and space.** Neudecker is preoccupied with ideas about the passage of time and geographical navigation. She explores the relativity of time and space and balances the roles of memory and the subconscious along with empirical calculation. In *Winterriese*, a series of twenty-four short films made in four locations on the sixtieth parallel north in the winter of 2003, latitude is explored. Whereas in *Another Day* 2000, a simultaneous record of the rising and setting sun at opposite ends of the globe, longitude is the determinant.

**Illusionism.** Neudecker plays with illusion. Much of her work is about an enquiry into seeing, observation and perception. Consider how her tank pieces, for example, challenge us to think about the way we see and understand the world. She is constantly playing with the transformation from 2D to 3D and vice versa. She has this ability to make us aware of our own position standing in the gallery. She can also create a sense of distance – as if we are always observing from a long way a way.

**Science and technology.** It is impossible not to be fascinated by Neudecker's technical processes and to ask 'how does she create this or that effect?' Her work is informed by science (her father was a chemist) and she makes use of whatever technology is needed to translate the idea she is interested in. She uses technology to create drama and playfulness. She uses technology, as a form of mediation – she never hides how things are made, saying 'I want the illusion to fail. It's about representation, mediation and artificiality, not nature'.

**Maps.** Neudecker is fascinated by maps and uses them often in her work. She is fascinated by the idea that maps are presented as rational, definitive images of the world yet they are ever changing and modified by geography, history, memory, culture, language, politics and the imagination. Her recent work reveals her concern not just for maps but also for journeys and travelling.

**The Forest.** The forest has been a recurrent theme in Neudecker's work and we can't help but explore its history and symbolism, from the Brothers Grimm to Sigmund Freud – from woodcutters and their daughters to Gothic cathedrals. Within German culture the forest has particular resonance and Neudecker represents this dark, northern place in works such as *Things can Change in a Day* 1998.

**Landscapes of the mind.** Consider how Neudecker uses landscape as a source of inspiration. Neudecker's work explores ideas about the romantic depiction of forest, mountain, sky and weather (especially snow) and the notion of the sublime (see below). For Neudecker landscape is as much about nostalgia, memory and imagination as the real world.

For a long time she has been interested in the art of **Caspar David Friedrich** (1774-1840) a German painter famous for his landscapes and seascapes charged with religious symbolism. Friedrich came to epitomise a tendency in the nineteenth century known as German Romanticism. Neudecker sees Friedrich's paintings as an art of symbol and metaphor. In particular, Friedrich used the dark petrified tree as a symbol for man stripped of his soul. It is interesting to note that Friedrich's paintings were appropriated by the Nazis as a paradigm of romantic landscape thereby fusing politics with landscape. Neudecker's interest in Friedrich has been part of a wider reclamation of this artist in recent years.

Note: You might like to contrast Neudecker's approach to landscape and specifically the tree with David Nash. An interesting link can also be made to Ged Quinn's painting *Cross in the Wilderness* 2003-4 on display in the Rotunda which is drawn from Friedrich's *Hunter in the Snow* 1813.

**The sublime.** Neudecker's work is often seen to explore ideas about the sublime. Defined as 'excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe', the emphasis is upon wilderness, grandeur and the separateness of nature. In the eighteenth century the politician Edmund Burke set out a theory of the sublime associating it with exaggeration and excess. He argued that great art strives for the infinite and unknown. Burke's theories were to influence the nineteenth century notion of Romanticism that valued the imagination over soulless reason and rejected classical traditions in favour of medieval, archaic and primitive sources.

**The souvenir.** Consider how souvenirs (such as postcards, snow globes, mugs and fridge magnets) function to remind us of distant days and wonderful places. Consider also how souvenirs are usually kitsch and rely on conventional ideas about a place. Do you think Neudecker's work, as one writer suggests, could be an investigation into the idea of the souvenir where personal memory and nostalgia are mingled with stereotypes?

**Titles.** Neudecker has a liking for extravagant and witty titles. She uses titles to add another layer to the meaning of the work – a new twist often to surprise or confuse us.

## Suggested Activities For Primary Groups

### At the Gallery

- Journey of the eye. Start looking at one point in a work and encourage children to travel with their eyes across it describing what they can see as they go.
- Step inside/what happens next. Encourage children to imagine they have stepped inside the artwork. Ask them to describe how they feel and what they can see, hear and smell. You could also encourage them to think about what has just happened or what might happen next.
- Children to choose one work by Neudecker they like. Pretend they are the artist and tell the class why they chose to make this work.

### Follow-Up Activities

- Children to develop 'memory landscapes' or maps based on memories of a landscape they have seen or a journey they have undertaken. Work in 2D and 3D could be developed as well as large-scale versions.
- Use material gathered during the visit to develop stories and poems. Consider using one of Neudecker's titles as a starting point. You could extend this work to link to projects on the idea of memories or journeys.

- Consider ways to take 2D images into 3D. Children could develop models based on drawings/material gathered in the gallery.
- Why not create miniature scenes which can then be photographed with a digital camera

## **Suggested Activities for Secondary Groups**

### **At the Gallery**

- Use the 'things to think about' section to develop your own set of clue cards to use in the exhibition. Before the visit, write key words on pieces of card. In small groups students choose a card and find a work that connects with it. Encourage them to share responses and to discuss/write down their ideas.
- Encourage older students to sketch and write notes on what they see. Ask students to write their own labels and titles for the works.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

- Students could develop video work that explores ideas about time, place, weather and memory. Extend to include an appropriate soundtrack.
- Digital images. Students could experiment in, for example, Photoshop to combine different images to create their own 'Romantic landscapes'.
- Students could develop landscape work in 2D or 3D that symbolises their memories and ideas about a place. They might include symbolic objects, colours and materials. Alternatively they could create 'souvenirs' which symbolise this place for them.
- Students to create 'soundscapes' that evoke a particular place for them. This project could link to video work, 2D or 3D work (see above).
- Explore the idea of the Romantic landscape past and present. Research artists that Neudecker is interested in such as Friedrich or Arnold Böcklin.
- Explore the idea of the model and 'tank' work within the history of art – from Marcel Duchamp to Jeff Koons. Many artists make models such as Robert Gober and Damien Hirst.

# Gwyn Hanssen Pigott Caravan

**Gwyn Hanssen Pigott (born 1935)** is one of Australia's most well-known and respected ceramic artists. She studied at the University of Melbourne and Sturt Pottery, Mittagong, New South Wales. She worked with Bernard Leach in St Ives 1958-60 and then moved to France in 1964 settling in Achères making wood-fired pots. In 1973 Hanssen Pigott moved back to Australia. From 1974-80 she had a pottery with John Pigott in Tasmania. Since 1988 she has been based at Netherdale, central Queensland. She has received many awards for her work and has exhibited extensively worldwide.

Hanssen Pigott is renowned for the abstract simplicity of her off-white porcelain pots. Throughout her career, Hanssen Pigott has worked with many significant potters, including Bernard Leach. Motivated by the Leach philosophy, the modernist forms of Hans Coper and the still-life paintings of Giorgio Morandi, she has evolved 'inseparable' groups of translucent porcelain forms. **At Tate St Ives** you will see *Caravan*, an extraordinary installation of fine porcelain beakers, bottles, bowls, jugs and cups in the Showcase in Upper Gallery 2.

## Further Reading and research

Del Vecchio, *Mark, Post Modern Ceramics*, Thames & Hudson, 2002

*Gwyn Hanssen Pigott*, Tate St Ives exhibition catalogue, text by Emmanuel Cooper, 2004

\**Bernard Leach*, Tate St Ives exhibition broadsheet, text by Emmanuel Cooper, 2004

\**Bernard Leach, Hamada and Their Circle from the Wingfield Digby Collection*, Marston House, 1992

\*Cooper, Emmanuel, *Bernard Leach, Life and Work*, Yale University Press, 2003

\*Wall, Edmund de, *Bernard Leach*, Tate Publishing, 2003

## Key Work



**Caravan 2** 2003

Ceramic

© the Artist

*Caravan* consists of twenty one bottles, beakers, bowls and cups arranged in four distinct groups. Each vessel has been reduced to an elegant simple shape – the only details are the lips of some beakers and bowls and the handle on the far right cup. *Caravan* reads rather like a series of musical notes that change slowly and softly as the light hits the smooth surfaces of the porcelain. The title hints of travellers or pilgrims moving across the desert and suggests a slow procession.

## Trigger Questions

- What sorts of things can you see in the showcase?
- Can you tell how they were made?
- What colours can you see?
- Why do you think the works are displayed in groups?
- Why do you think the display is called *Caravan*?
- What do you think of the titles of the groups?
- Do you think these objects ever get used?

## Things to Think About

**Wood-fired porcelain.** All the works in this display are porcelain – they have been thrown on a wheel and fired in a wood kiln. Hanssen Pigott shows extreme mastery of handling porcelain under extremely variable processes.

**Ordinary everyday objects.** Hanssen Pigott is interested in ordinary objects. She says she makes pots because they are part of daily life, crowding kitchen shelves and set out for conversations and meals. However, it is this 'ordinariness' that fascinates her – she speaks of pots as though they are animate. She describes, 'A silent line of porcelain beakers waits in the window for the light to hit their rims and their ordinary beauty to become radiant'.

**Use and beauty.** Hanssen Pigott is testing the boundaries of ceramic art. Since the 1980s she has begun stripping away all detail to create vessels that are more about beautiful objects than functional pots. She tries to achieve what Bernard Leach described as 'truth beauty' – 'honesty, ordinariness, nobility, simplicity, humility and astringency'.

**Colour.** Look at Hanssen Pigott's subtle, soft glaze colours. She restricts her palette to a series of shifting soft-hued whites, blues, greys, buffs and creams. She describes her colours as 'pale like memories, matt like frescoes'. She is more interested in tone than colour, and the smooth surface of her works have an extraordinary translucent quality.

**Silence.** The colours, shapes and graceful profiles give a sense of quietness and silence. They create a sense of meditation and calmness.

**3D still lifes.** Consider the tradition of the painted still life (often of pots) exemplified in the work of, for example, Pablo Picasso, Giorgio Morandi, Vincent Van Gogh, George Braques or Ben Nicholson. Still lifes, often set on tabletops, depict domestic everyday objects that are close at hand. Hanssen Pigott has reversed the situation drawing inspiration from paintings in which these pots appear – returning them to the 3D realm but retaining some painterly associations.

**Arrangements/series.** Consider why Hanssen Pigott works in series. Repeating a shape again and again allows the potter to understand the form more intimately. It is also natural for a potter to work as a serial maker, throwing the shape again on the wheel. Notice how each pot is individually shaped and none of the rims are perfect circles. She is also interested in how pots relate to each other and in this installation the placement and spaces between the pots seems as important as the objects themselves. She talks of grouping pots 'uncomfortably close but quiet. So that glimpses of the interiors become finely outlined' and she is meticulous about display and viewing level.

**Families and tribes.** While we are used to groupings of pots, such as in tea and dinner sets, Hanssen Pigott's pots have a different feel. Her objects are no longer functional (although they could be) but rather arrangements or assemblages that are symbolic. She has described some of her arrangements as 'families' or 'tribes' and talks of processions and trails.

**Caravan.** The title of this display and the individual titles of the groupings suggest passage and travel. Taken as a whole the installation presents a long horizontal procession of groupings or 'tribes'. She says, 'a struggling line of jugs, cups and tumblers become an assorted tribe journeying somewhere'.

**Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964).** Hanssen Pigott first saw Italian artist Morandi's paintings, prints and drawings in Paris in 1972. Morandi's studies of close groupings of everyday objects such as bottles and jugs and his subtle combinations of colour and narrow range of tones have been an inspiration to Hanssen Pigott. She said she 'loved his searching, excessive describing of the common objects that were his subject'.

## Activities for Primary Schools

### At the Gallery

- Journey of the eye. Start looking at one end of the Showcase and encourage children to travel with their eyes across it describing each object as they go.
- Look at Hanssen Pigott's titles such as *Caravan*, *St Ives*, *Trail with Blue Bowl* or *Fade* and *Pause*. Discuss why they think she gave the works these titles. Can they think of better ones?
- Drawing activities could include memory drawings, thumbnail sketches of one 'arrangement' or particular vessels. Alternatively children could use simple viewfinders/frames to draw details. They could also draw the 'negative shapes' – the spaces in between the vessels to create a pattern across a large sheet of paper.

### Back at School

- **Favourite pots.** Children to bring in their own favourite pot and discuss why it is important to them. This could lead to a wider discussion on the uses and histories of ceramic pots within different cultures. Children could then make their own pots using clay, plasticine or dough etc.
- **Still life arrangements.** Children could collect or make objects to create their own displays. Children then to draw and paint their still lifes using a limited range of tones.

## Activities for Secondary Schools

### At the Gallery

See 'Activities for Primary groups' above. Many of the drawing activities can be adapted and developed for older students.

### Back at School

- **Serial ceramics.** Students to make a series of ceramic pieces. Encourage them to refine and perfect their pieces and to consider how each one functions in relation to the others.
- **3D to 2D and back again.** Students to make their own ceramic 'still lifes' which they then in turn draw and paint. Encourage them to think carefully about the relationship between each pot/vessel and to consider a limited tonal range.
- Look at the **artists who have inspired Hanssen Pigott**, for example the painters Piero della Francesca, Giorgio Morandi, Pierre Bonnard, Juan Gris and Ben Nicholson, the sculptor, Constantin Brancusi and potters such as Ivan McMeekin, Lucie Rie and Hans Coper.
- Look at the **history of still life painting**. Look also at contemporary ceramicist such as Elsa Rady, James Makins, Emil Heger and Andrew Lord.

# Mike Marshall

**Mike Marshall (born 1967)** studied fine art at Reading University and Chelsea School of Art and is currently working on a PhD at Goldsmiths College, London. His work has been shown in a number of group exhibitions both in the UK and internationally. His first solo exhibition, *Planisphere* (2001), was held at The Economist Plaza, London, followed by *The Earth is Flat* at the Ikon Gallery's Project Space (2002) and *Lizard Afternoons* (2002) at VTO Gallery. Marshall lives and works in London.

Marshall's work is often conceived while travelling abroad. He uses audio, video and photography to examine overlooked aspects of the places that he visits. Marshall focuses on activities that appear banal and inconsequential and he talks of 'focused daydreaming' and a desire to locate interest in seemingly unremarkable situations.

**Included in this exhibition** are: *The Earth is Flat* 2001 (The Mall, ground floor) that features the artist running through a desert reciting jokes from memory. *The Sound of Bombay (a place not unlike this)* 2004 (Café Roof Terrace) which records the ambient sounds of the terrace of a public art gallery in Bombay, creating a sense of kinship between these two unused corners of art galleries.

## Further Reading

*Mike Marshall Here is Fine* Exhibition Broadsheet, Tate St Ives 2004

Nesbitt, Judith & Watkins, Jonathan, *Days Like These, Tate Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary British Art*, Tate Gallery, London, 2003

## Things to Think About

**The unremarkable.** Marshall likes to explore the unremarkable or overlooked aspects of human experience. He seems concerned to reveal beauty in what initially appear to be uninteresting places. For Marshall the ordinary and everyday can be fascinating.

**Here is fine.** Marshall deliberately uses prosaic titles for his work in order to reinforce his interest in the banal and inconsequential. He seems to repeatedly imply that what is appropriate to know and explore is just what is here, in this place, right now.

**The Earth is flat.** For this work the artist recorded himself running through the desert, breathlessly reciting bad jokes such as 'what do you call a deer with no eyes? No idea'. The jokes are the sort we all groan over in our Christmas crackers. The horizon line of the desert jerks around with the movement of the camera and the jokes become more difficult to hear against the wind and Marshall's breathing. It is a fruitless exercise and we are left thinking 'if a joke is told in a desert and there's no one there to hear the punch line is it funny'? And what happens when this video is replayed in a gallery – why do we find it funny?

**Merging of different places and spaces.** The audio piece on the roof terrace invites us to contemplate the different contexts of urban Bombay and seaside St Ives. The view of Porthmeor beach and the sound of the seagulls contrasts with the audio sound of traffic and hustle and bustle of city life. We start to 'see' gallery goes in this distant location and a strange merging of different places takes place in our imagination.

**Video and photography.** Marshall deliberately chooses video and photography to explore his interests. He avoids complicated techniques focusing on simple camera shots and soundtracks. He also avoids physical human presence in his work encouraging us to identify with the camera's point of view. Although we assume that it is the artist telling the silly jokes in *The Earth is Flat* we never see him.

# The Essential Image Artists of the St Ives School

In this gallery you will find works that have been selected from the Tate Collection which explore the development of abstraction in Europe in the twentieth century and particularly in relation to artists associated with St Ives. The display includes work by Piet Mondrian, Naum Gabo, Barbara Hepworth, Wilhelmena Barns-Graham, John Wells, Patrick Heron, Terry Frost, Marlow Moss, John Tunnard, Mary Martin, Roger Hilton, Victor Pasmore, Ben Nicholson and Peter Lanyon.

## Key Work



### Piet Mondrian

**Composition with Grey, Red, Yellow and Blue (1920-c 1926)** 1920-c1926

Oil on canvas

© 2002 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o Beeldrecht, Amsterdam, Holland & DACS, London

This is an early example of Mondrian's pure geometric abstraction where he has used only horizontal and vertical lines and primary colours with black and grey. The composition has a quiet sense of balance and harmony. This work is an example of Mondrian's pure painting in which he developed a set of principles to achieve an austere form of geometric abstraction.

Mondrian was a major figure in twentieth century European art and one of the pioneers of abstraction. Initially based in the Netherlands where he was associated with the *De Stijl* group. Mondrian spent time in Paris and London before moving to New York in 1940. He was an important influence on a number of British artists including Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Roger Hilton. He has also been an inspiration to David Nash.

## Trigger Questions

- Look around the room and find a work that catches your eye – look at it closely. Why do you think you noticed it more than the others? Can you find words to describe it?
- Now glance around the whole room again. What sorts of things are these artists interested in? Make a list.

## Things to Think About

**Abstraction.** This room shows how artists in the twentieth century explored abstraction. It includes a range of paintings, sculptures and reliefs by artists who have in various ways developed an abstract language. It provides a good introduction to the ways artists use line, colour, texture, transparency, shape and form to play with the illusion of space. It also demonstrates the wide range and, often experimental use of materials.

**Space.** These artists explore and describe space in different ways. All the works play with pictorial space and illusionism denying traditional perspective and depth. They create a sense of space and surface tension through colour, shape, surface and texture. For some, relief or construction is used to create real space.

**St Ives.** The majority of artists exhibited in this room have been connected with St Ives. A study of this room might form a wider project looking at the history of St Ives art.

**Link to David Nash.** Some interesting links can be made between this display and Nash's exhibition. For example, see Nash's *Charred Panel: 3 cuts down, 3 cuts across* 2003 in Lower Gallery 2. Nash states, '*Geometry represents an order in nature, a path – like my line of cut...here it's just a simple progression if direction, then it's burnt – this gives a lot more depth and the cuts speak much more profoundly when they are black. Mondrian noted horizontal line has a stillness about it, a gentle spreading, whereas the vertical is awake, it has a bottom and a top, by contrast a horizontal line has above and below, it's dividing. A vertical does to a certain extent divide but really it is a dynamic upwards force it's still but it's alert. Horizontal is asleep. Diagonal is dynamic...Mondrian led me to where he started as a landscape painter, with a fantastic journey towards abstraction*'.