

Notes for Teachers

The Dark Monarch

Magic and Modernity in British Art
10 October 2009 – 10 January 2010

Notes for Teachers



These notes are designed to accompany the KS1/2 and KS3/4 *focus works* for the autumn season at Tate St Ives. The pack provides a summary of the current displays, key themes and information on Tate resources. It also includes 'questions to ask of any artwork'.

Combined with the relevant focus work notes, this pack should help you create an introductory discussion about some of the issues raised by the current displays. It can be used to help focus work in small groups in the exhibition, and allow follow-up within the classroom.

This pack contains material relevant to non-specialist teachers as well as specialist art teachers.

A free exhibition guide can be picked up at Tate St Ives and downloaded from www.tate.org.uk/stives

Exhibition Overview

The show presents artists and themes across the generations, making connections between them, rather than a chronological display. It provides many exciting opportunities to make links between the seeming rationality of modernism and themes of magic, the arcane and the liminal explored in art, especially relating to Cornish landscape and mythology. These themes are presented in a variety of media by historic, modern and contemporary artists, linking the exploration of ancient archetypes, surrealism, neo-romanticism and the arcane in nature with the ideology of modernism and its search for purity and primordality.

Some references are made to the occult throughout the show; as these notes are designed for a wide age range, we would strongly recommend advance viewing of the exhibition and are happy to discuss ways of orienting groups around the building.

The Dark Monarch represents a dark energy at work in the landscape of Cornwall; the counter to its aspect of light and sun. This book by Sven Berlin about his post war experiences in St Ives provides the title for the exhibition, and is a fictional critique exploring modernity, romanticism, and magic encoded within the mystic history of West Cornwall. Written in 1962, it quickly (within 8 days) was withdrawn from print following libel actions from some St Ives artists depicted in the book; not before a number of copies were already in circulation and a reprinted edition coincides with this show. Drawings and sculptures relating to this book are displayed in Gallery 1.

These notes lead you through the galleries and are followed by suggestions of key themes and connections between the displays, then 'ways of looking'. The galleries themselves have been transformed with colour and darker glass; consider the impact of this on the usually white display spaces and the unusual atmosphere these colours create.

The Mall (ground floor)

The Child's Dream 2008 is the first major vitrine work by Damien Hirst to be shown in the south west and has never been displayed in the UK before. It is shown on the threshold of the show, like a magic guardian.

Damien Hirst was born in 1965 in Bristol, UK. He lives and works in London and Devon. He received the DAAD fellowship in Berlin in 1994 and the Turner Prize in 1995. Damien Hirst's wide-ranging practice, which includes installations, sculpture, painting and drawing, has sought to challenge the boundaries between art, science and popular culture. His vitrine pieces in particular, such as *Mother and Child Divided* 1993, recast fundamental questions concerning the meaning of life and the fragility of biological existence.

See the appendix for a 'question and answer' sheet regarding this work.

Key Themes

Dreams and fairy tales. Damien Hirst said: "It's great to be showing *The Child's Dream* at Tate St Ives. The work really lends itself to the themes of *The Dark Monarch*. Children's dreams are more fantastical than adult's dreams and as the sculptor Constantin Brancusi said, "when we are no longer children we are already dead." What dreams would you include in your own art? Does this make you think of any fairy stories.

Mythology Make a collection of images where unicorns appear in art and gather information about the meanings and stories around unicorns, usually depicted as a force for good.

Ethics The Victorians made collections of stuffed animals, seen still in museums; some people stuff their beloved pets when they die. Consider the question of using animals in art, rather than making their image in other materials.

Found objects There are opportunities throughout the galleries to discover how artists across generations have collected, reassembled and transformed meaning of 'found' objects.

Stairwell

Simon Periton's new work *// Cornuto* has been made for this show and creeps down the stairwell as a sinister mix of manmade and natural forms.

Simon Periton was born in England in 1964 and studied at Central St Martin's School of Art, London. He has exhibited widely in Britain and internationally. He often uses paper cut-outs and painted glass in his work. Simon Periton lives and works in London.

Key themes

Gothic Punk Consider how the work appropriates a flowing Gothic dark style of imagery and combines this with Day-Glo colour.

Fairies and barbed wire How does the juxtaposition of seed pods/fairy wings with chains and barbed wire raise responses in the viewer?

Creeping invasions This work might remind you of scenes from Dr Who or scenes or passages in science fiction books or films? Consider John Wyndam's 'The day of the Triffids'.

Rocks and Stones : Gallery one

This display explores work from artists like Hepworth, Moore, and Wells, who lived in St Ives, and other artists like Sutherland and Moore who used the idea of elemental landscape as a place of threat from ancient and supernatural powers, or foreboding about the horrors of warfare. Artists working in Cornwall and elsewhere discovered elements of menace and ancient power in the environment, especially in the context of the events of the Second World War. Drawings and small talisman-like sculptures relating to Sven Berlin's 'Dark Monarch' are displayed with his proof and manuscripts.

Key themes

Sven Berlin's Key Documents for the future: a fascinating document to be opened on Berlin's 100th birthday. Consider what you would seal away to be revealed on your 100th birthday; could you make a personal collection to be only opened with a special key?

Crossing boundaries A liminal spirit in many of the displays challenges the idea of belonging to two worlds; the known, logical world and subconscious or transcendental landscapes; also slippage between history and present. Boundaries between unknown

worlds can be explored by science and belief systems in different cultures.

Landscape, nature and legends Landscape is encoded with mythical, magical and sometimes dark traditions and rituals; Cornwall interweaves many of these narratives with powerful local landscapes and the spirit of place. Peter Lanyon took inspiration from histories and myths entwined within the Penwith landscape. How can legend and folklore inspire your work? Does this display suggest any legends to you?

Ritual and ceremony. Cornwall has many ancient sites of standing stones and circles, often associated with ideas of mystery, strangeness and ancient power. What relevance do these have in contemporary society? Why are we still attracted to these sites? What stories are there about Cornish sites like 'Men-an-Tol' or the 'Merry Maidens'?

Occult Philosophy - A Cabinet of Curiosities : upper gallery two

This 'cabinet' display explores themes including magic, the Gothic, the subconscious, rock music and new age spirituality using ideas including automatic and 'spirit' drawing, photography and assemblages. Ithell Colquhoun's library is displayed as a whole object, together with an original 1551 edition of Agrippa's 'Occult Philosophy'.

Key themes

The living inanimate Objects and forms in a landscape can sometimes appear to have their own presence and characters; 'Mans Head' rock, which can be viewed across Porthmeor beach, is an example of rock being invested with human qualities. Sometimes 'found' objects like rocks and driftwood appear to be creatures; look at work from Nash in this display. [Link to gallery three.](#)

Strange portraits How do these portraits make you feel? Can you imagine the personal stories? Where do you think these people are and what has happened to them? Why do you think the artists have painted the subjects in these ways?

Collage, photography and ICT Artists' use of photography and collaging objects together to create new meanings and to question reality provides many opportunities to consider rearrangement of proportion and visual distortion, and to discuss possibilities of using ICT in making art. Penny Slinger uses the process of photo-collage in her images. Displays may generate ideas for manipulation, displacement and disorganizing of images using computer generated art as well as more traditional photographic methods.

The Mantic Stain : lower gallery two

Works in this gallery explore ritual and magic, including sculptures, effigies and artefacts that link ideas between Henry Moore's and Adam Chodzko's masks. Contemporary sculptures by Eva Rothschild and Mark Titchner suggest protective ceremony and the iconography of magic. Work from artists who lived in Cornwall like Colquhoun, Wynter and Lanyon is juxtaposed with contemporary art exploring related themes.

<p>Ithell Colquhoun (1906-1988) was born in India and returned to the UK as a baby. She worked with Classical/biblical mural themes until the 1940's and then became interested in the esoteric and occult whilst studying at Slade, often using anthropomorphic themes following Dali. She joined the Surrealists in 1939. Colquhoun moved to Cornwall in the 1940's and became an authority on the occult. She died at Lamorna in a fire at her home 11 April 1988.</p>

Key themes

Magic connections consider how unusual objects like books and plants create ritualistic displays that connect them in a language of suggested magic and signs.

Masks do masks empower the wearer with special mystery? Make comparisons between Moore's work and Chodzko's mask; who is the viewer and who is the viewed?

Alchemy how is superstition and belief linked with the properties of materials like obsidian (the dark mirror to another world)? What significance might Chodzko's *Secretors* or Nicholas Byrne's signs painted on copper have?

Ceremony and ritual what is the significance of objects and symbols in ceremonies? How does ritual link people and cultures? Consider what makes an object appear ancient and magical.

Apparitions and Encounters : The Apse and gallery three

This display explores visions of strangeness, encounters and transformations within nature, especially anthropomorphic presence and animism, and juxtaposes modernist images with contemporary work.

Key themes

Light, dark and transformation. Matter becomes light in Jarman's film, which weaves together painterly and mythical imagery; compare this to the mysterious photographic work of Wyn Evans, juxtaposed with 'floating' text of light. How does film and photography use light to produce new meanings for objects and places?

Connections with contemporary artists The displays explore ideas and conversations between the worldly and the unseen in contemporary work of automatic drawing, appropriated imagery, evocative film and postmodernist art. How are contemporary artists relating the past to the present and re-examining modernism, surrealism and neo-romanticism?

The known and the unknown The displays invite debate about secularism and rational analysis and the idea of the disappearance of illusion/delusion in modernist work; surrealists often played with ideas of the perversion of rational culture. How are contemporary artists exploring these themes? Can we link ideas from quantum physics to possibilities of unseen realities explored by artists? Are parallel worlds only a product of the imagination?

Shape shifters The display provides many opportunities to explore how artists use metamorphosis and anthropomorphic forms to express multiplicities of experience and to dislocate objects. Consider how images are separated from their original function. What examples of shape shifters from popular culture do you know?

Unseen presences Link suggestions of presences in Clare Woods work with the monster, inanimate forms derived from nature in the paintings of Nash and Sutherland and the sinister mutations of Noonan and Lindner.

Atmospheres How have different artists evoked a spirit of place; what narratives are being created? What different atmospheres are created in this gallery?

Path through a Wood : gallery four

Paintings in this display are linked with themes of the dark and mysterious side of nature; eerie sites, ancient powers and atmospheres of menace and apocalyptic futures. The display spans the Victorian work of Palmer and Dadd, through the years leading up to and including the the Second World War and allows comparisons with contemporary exploration of the themes in the work of Wiszniewski.

Key themes

Neo-Romanticism Neo-romanticism was a feature of British art in the late 1930s and 1940s, reflecting a romantic vision of heritage in response to the approach of the Second World War and its aftermath. These artists explored themes of reconnection to lost visionary and poetic experience, evoking a feeling of the sense of place in historic landscape and nature. Neo-romanticism often provoked enchanted, Gothic, and restless reactions to ideas of modern urban culture and machinery, linking the work of artists like Sutherland and Ayrton.

Woodlands as enchanted space Consider how woods and forest have been the subject of mythology, folktales as well as adventure and mystery stories; make connections between explorations of magic and the supernatural relating to these places in the work of artists from the 1930s to the present day.

Houses and ruins How many fairy stories or ghost stories set in old houses do you know? What narratives are artists like Piper and Sutherland creating here?

Fairy tales and adventure stories Recall the tale of Hansel and Gretel and consider how many adventure stories use the setting of a wood or enchanted forest. What might happen in your own enchanted forest?

Films Consider the different ways the forest is depicted in films like 'Lord of the Rings' and the 'Blair Witch project'.

Mansions of the Dead : gallery five

The visionary work of Collins, who briefly exhibited with the Surrealists, is displayed with Pomerance's globe and Russell's back-lit digital print, all exploring possibilities of redemption and other parallel worlds.

Key themes

Angels and other worlds Explore ideas of life and death and belief systems in the paintings of Collins and Nash; does their work make connections with other worlds? Make comparisons with Fay Pomerance's work referencing the redemption of Lucifer rising as the Day Star.

Virtual worlds Consider John Russell's light boxes and how our contemporary society allows us to create completely virtual worlds using ICT and on-line communities, which connect people all over the world. Do you think there are links between virtual worlds and science-fiction?

Key Themes and connections across the displays

These displays offer a number of different ways to explore modern and contemporary art. Listed below are some key themes that encourage links across all the displays.

Counterpoints. Tensions between progressive modernism and romantic knowledge are explored and reassessed. Can magic have a place in the seeming rationality and intellectualism of modernism in an industrialised world? Can the irrational be threatening to the ideas of order within Modernity, or is modernity itself more threatening to the contemporary world?

The context of history. The displays offer a chance to debate and reconsider how the idea of modern experience and a new visual language was culturally shifted by the events of two world wars and how artists revisited the psychological place of the individual in society, tradition and nature. Reviewing Modernism and Surrealism gives us an opportunity for a new understanding between these avant-garde ideologies of the early 20th century; both had little respect for academic style but produced seemingly different reactions. What is included and what is left out of art as a response to a particular historical time?

Materials and techniques. The displays embrace a range of materials and techniques. Students can make comparisons between modernist sculpture and paintings using traditional materials and the exploration of other materials and techniques in post-modern work; film, photography, prints, collage, glass and mixed media.

Dominant discourses Could both Modernism and Surrealism be said to have challenged the dominant discourses of society? How does Surrealism and Neo-Romanticism relate to post-modern art? The displays offer a chance to debate different approaches.

Folklore, Mythology and Art Many works reference archetypes and narratives relating to folklore and mythology; Cornwall itself has a wealth of stories and myths that provide fantastic opportunities for links.

Mysticism and Art Enchantment, dreams, the arcane and the supernatural provide narratives linking some of the works (Colquhoun, Collins, Hirst), opening up debate around religion, beliefs and unseen worlds.

Psychic space and landscapes The redemptive and spiritual power of art and nature and the possibility of transformation and transcendence invite daydreaming and associations in many of the works.

Absence/presence/allegorical art There are many works across the galleries that use allegory rather than literal illustration. What is represented signifies what is absent; explore what images, presences or narratives are felt but unseen.

St Ives Artists Sven Berlin, resplendent with dark hair, earring and beard, epitomised the image of 'the Romantic Bohemian Artist'; living in 'The Tower' near Porthgwidden beach; he was a dancer, painter, sculptor, poet, and writer. His romantic narratives are juxtaposed with the seemingly cooler and more intellectual work of Hepworth or Wells: Hepworth was a modernist who took inspiration not from the urban or modern machines, but found connections with her perception of the ancient landscapes of Yorkshire and Penwith,

especially the 'magic stones' and mysteries. The critic Lawrence Alloway famously challenged St Ives abstraction for being too derived from landscape. Surrealist artists visited Cornwall in the 1930s and during the Second World War. Colquhoun eventually lived in Cornwall, exploring the arcane in her landscapes of the mind.

Surrealism Linked to France in the 1920's and the theories of Freud and psychoanalysis, surrealism was explored by many artists who visited or lived in Cornwall. Ideas exploring the unconscious by free association and chance, and techniques like automatic drawing provide connections between the work of artists like J D Williams, Colquhoun and Collins. However, surrealism had issues with romantic legacy and mysticism, but cross-overs between boundaries can be discovered in the displays.

Relationship between neo-romantics and eco movement. Is there a sense of nature redefined by contemporary ecological thinking? Is there a sense of disenchantment with contemporary culture? Connections can be made between ideas of technology as progressive or destructive and implicit in the displacement of nature. How is the past recycled?

Technology and control Despite innovations and technology how is the idea that we cannot control our world explored? How do complex meanings derived from the mythological past or the unconscious still inform art?

Ways of Looking

The changes to the National Curriculum, September 2008, have been considered in the following suggestions:

These suggested lines of questioning can be applied to any artwork – not just those you see at Tate St Ives. Having a handful of ‘standard’ questions can help start discussion and encourage lines of enquiry that might otherwise be closed down if just facts about artist and artwork were retold.

Listening to others/responding personally/sensory experiences

Without knowing anything about the artist or the artwork, a huge amount of information regarding the work can be revealed just by inviting the question ‘what do you see?’ Once a few ideas are circulated, this often cascades into very imaginative and perceptive ways of viewing the work. Asking ‘why do you say that’ invites more considerations and sharing of ideas from students.

- What word(s) does the work make you think about?
- Have you seen anything like this before?
- What do the titles tell you?
- What does the colour make you think about?
- Be the curator -select one piece from each display to create a small exhibition and explain why you have chosen them.

Visual experience/what can you see/traditional and new media

What materials and processes has the artist used to make the work? Have you seen this material in art before? Do you think some materials have more relevance to art than others?

- Is the work part of a series?
- Is the work made in traditional or new materials?
- What is it? (Painting, sculpture, drawing, collage etc)
- How is it displayed? What space does it occupy and how does it relate to other work in the exhibition.
- What is the scale of the artwork and how does this affect our relationship to it?
- Does it have a frame or support?
- Is the work made to be permanent?
- What tactile qualities does the work have?

Communication of ideas and meaning?

- What do you think the artist wants to communicate?
- Is it about real life?
- Is there a story or narrative in the work?
- Does it communicate an issue or theme?
- Does it have cultural, social or political meaning?
- Does it relate to contemporary life?
- Does the title affect the meaning of the work?

Art in context/cultures/times. Local/national/global

- Is the work about a particular place?
- Can you tell from the work what nationality the artist might be?
- Who is the artist? Is it important to know who created the work? Does the background of the artist inform the work?
- Is the work site-specific?
- Does the work connect to art from other times and cultures?
- Does the work comment on contemporary society?
- Has the work reinvented art from other times and cultures?

Tate Resources

The Studio Resource Room: located off lower gallery two, this space provides access to Tate online, including the Collections Database and micro-sites for Young People and Children. You can also find accompanying catalogues and texts to support a visit to this show.

Visit www.tate.org.uk/schoolsteachers for up-to-date listings on CPD opportunities and to download resources – including this one – for free.

For definitions of **key art terms and movements** referred to here please refer to the **Tate Glossary** at www.tate.org.uk/collection

Useful Websites

www.tate.org.uk Tate online

www.tate.org.uk/learnonline Tate E-Learning

www.tate.org.uk/schoolsteachers Tate resources for schools and teachers

Contacts

General enquires and group bookings

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Tate publications have produced a series of **Key Work Cards for Teachers** which can be ordered online. These include Portrait, Landscape & Prints.

The **St Ives Archive Study Centre** holds a range of material about artists associated with St Ives. Tel: +44 (0) 1736 796408, e-mail: archive@stivetrust.co.uk, or visit www.stivetrust.co.uk/archivesite

The **Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden**, Barnoon Hill, St Ives, Cornwall, TR26 1AD, Tel: 44 (0) 1736 796226, group bookings: 44 (0) 1736 791114. Open October-March, Tues-Sun 10am-dusk

Further Research

Exhibition catalogue, fully illustrated, with contributions from Brian Dillon, Philip Hoare, Jon Savage, Jennifer Higgie, Marina Warner, Michael Bracewell, Alun Rowlands and Martin Clark. ISBN 978-1-85437-874-3 £19.99

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Morpurgo, M. (2005) **I believe in Unicorns**. Walker Books Ltd

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www.cornwallinfocus.co.uk/history/historic.php

www.cornwalls.co.uk/myths-legends/myths-legends.htm

www.timetravel-britain.com/articles/stones/mystcorn.shtml

www.readprint.com/author-16/Lewis-Carroll-books

www.timetravel-britain.com/articles/stones/mystcorn.shtml

KS3 & KS4

Work In Focus

This pack is designed to complement the **Notes for Teachers** that accompany this exhibition at Tate St Ives.

We have selected one work from this show to enable you to focus in on some key themes relating to this specific work, with ideas for how to extend learning back in the classroom.



Cecil Collins 1908-1989
Hymn (1953)
© Tate

“Images arise from the fountain head of human life, the heart, the solar centre, from ancient memories within the blood, and from the polarity and fire of the spirit.” – **Cecil Collins**

Biography

Collins had Cornish parents (b. Plymouth, 23 March 1908). He exhibited with the Surrealists at the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition, although the mystical and religious content in his work meant he later was dissociated from them. Collins regarded teaching at Dartington Hall, then at the Central School and City Literary Institute, as an essential part of his art practice. Collins became an inspirational teacher, so much so that students demonstrated against his retirement. He was awarded an MBE in 1979 for his contributions to art.

Some facts

Collins was a visionary artist who made metaphysical and symbolic paintings, exploring realities of the soul and exploring the idea of *The Great Happiness* where we are reconnected to our origins in a lost paradise. His work often referred to archetypes such as the Fool, the Angel and the Eternal Bride, which have connections with Jungian ideas. He envisioned life as a journey quest for Great Happiness.

This painting was originally titled Hymn to Death and is about death as a moment of transcendence and of salvation. The chrysalis shape lying on the strange structure could represent a dead or a sleeping body and the aura in the sky could be seen as an ascending spirit at the moment of death. Or perhaps the image in the sky might be an angelic presence coming to claim the body, which Collins could have used as a metaphor for the contemporary, material world.

Ideas for discussion

Without previous research or knowledge the simple question 'what do you see?' often cascades into a wealth of responses and perceptions. The further question 'why do you say that?' begins the process of reflection and critical thinking about image, connections, titles, colour, process, texture etc.

Some other starting points with this work could be:

- Does this remind you of anything?
- Is this a painting about what the artist is seeing or what he is thinking. Is there a story here?
- Can we judge the reality of what we see and does it matter that you may have a different interpretation to anyone else? Is there more than one meaning here?
- What are the associations between the objects in the work?
- What space and time is this set in?
- Could this be a dream?
- What is about to happen?
- Consider the scale, detail and close brush marks in this painting. How important is craftsmanship in this work?
- Are you drawn close to this work?
- What would be an appropriate soundtrack for this work – or would there be silence?
- Do the colours produce a certain atmosphere or mood?
- Is this painting an opening to another world?

Quick and simple practical ideas

These simple ideas are designed to engage young people practically in front of the original artwork. Only sketchbook and pencil are permitted for use in gallery spaces.

Stop making sense - start with a doodle, then find an image or meaning there and continue the drawing. Maybe do this in partners by quickly making a doodle then passing this to your partner to find an image and complete the drawing. You could make the doodle without looking or with your eyes closed.

Word list - in a group produce a long list of words as a response to looking at the painting. These can be used as a starting point for descriptive writing or poems.

Mind map - on a large piece of paper in the gallery produce a mind map linking ideas from your group about interpretations of this painting. Use symbols and drawings as well as words and allow the map to grow with any connections to other works in the displays or your own thoughts and ideas.

Extended projects

These suggestions are designed to support follow-up work in the classroom and develop ideas from an initial interaction with the artwork:

Controlled/uncontrolled - At times Collins would ask his class to use the tools and media more often associated with classical Chinese brushwork, employing these instruments with one or both hands, the feet, the mouth; and all at great speed, to bring immediacy to visual expression. Using ideas from viewing this painting, try brush and ink drawings using different hands, mouth and feet: analyse the different quality in the mark making when you cannot control drawing as you are used to – allow 'happy accidents' to emerge.

Workbook - Create a workbook which explores world myths/belief systems/traditions about the possibility of an afterlife (e.g Egyptians, Chinese, Catholicism). Use this to inform a finished project in any media, including sculpture, textiles and installation.

Dreams - Use ideas of displacement, compression of time and random associations as starting points.

ICT montages - Use photography, video and powerpoint to produce a collection of images which superimpose and dissolve into each other to produce strange atmospheres and associations.

The Matrix - Collins developed a technique he called 'The Matrix' (long before the film of that name) by which he hoped to allow spontaneous and liberating images to emerge by chance, discovery and by overcoming logic. Collins would improvise paintings using two complementary colours, one on each brush in each hand. Then, with eyes closed he would paint a sequence of random strokes. Then he would gaze at the work, often turning the paper or canvas around, until he would sense an atmosphere or image emerging. This would allow him to consider what images might be in the chaos and to continue the painting to reveal what he saw could be there.

Literature - look at the work of William Blake especially; also Coleridge and Keats.

Monoprints - Collins style in this work provides a good starting point for drawings into foamboard to produce relief monoprints.

Dance/Drama/Music - In response to *Hymn*, what digital sounds could suggest the atmosphere here? Use the painting as a freeze-frame and develop motifs for the low level

chrysalis and the 'floating' angelic forms in dance. Consider space between the forms and how you might use lifts in dance to suggest flight or ascension. How could you use projections and lighting to produce the atmosphere suggested in Collins' work?

Personal promise collection - what symbols from your personal world of private dreaming and imagining would you want to communicate? Collins attempted to make connections with his private imaginative world and an inner world he believed was shared by all humanity. Produce a box or display made by your personal collection of ideas and objects.

Chance/order (Ideas from the Surrealists) - 'Ecremage' use a tray of water and drop splashes of dilute oil colour into this— drag stiff paper over the top to collect the oil marks and interpret and develop what you see here to make some sense or order. 'Decolomania' cover one sheet of paper with paint, press another onto it then lift this off - use the image to interpret the marks and stains and to develop the work further.

Further research

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www.tate.org.uk Tate online

KS1 and KS2

Work In Focus

This pack is designed to complement the **Notes for Teachers** that accompany this exhibition at Tate St Ives.

We have selected one work from this show to enable you to focus in on some key themes relating to this specific work, with ideas for how to extend learning back in the classroom.



Karl Weschke
Pillar of Smoke 1964
© Tate

Biography

Weschke was born near Gera, Germany and came to the UK as a POW in 1945 and afterwards began to learn to paint and to carve. He later settled in a remote cottage at Cape Cornwall. Weschke was a largely self taught artist, friends with Bryan Wynter and the poet W S Graham, but stayed remote from the St Ives artists. Geographical and psychological isolation can be felt in his work, together with a personal narrative about the human condition. Weschke died in 2005.

Some facts

On a literal level this dramatic and dynamic painting represents a huge pillar of smoke, resulting from gorse burning on the Penwith moors; Weschke lived at isolated Cape Cornwall and would have seen moor fires. It also could be reminiscent of Weschke's personal experiences in the Second World War, re-imagining the trauma of war, conflict and the aftermath of violence in this black threatening mass.

Karl's son, Ben, remembers sitting with his father at Cape Cornwall, the setting for *Pillar of Smoke* and watching in horror, as out to sea the huge pillar of smoke erupted from the ship Torrey Canyon, split in half by the Seven Stones Reef between the mainland and the Isles of Scilly. The RAF had bombed the ship in an attempt to sink her, but a terrible environmental disaster was not prevented. This disaster happened in 1967, three years after Karl had painted this work; it was as if Karl, who had been in the Luftwaffe, had imagined this environmental disaster in his painting.

Ideas for discussion

Without previous research or knowledge the simple question 'what do you see?' often cascades into a wealth of responses and perceptions. The further question 'why do you say that?' begins the process of reflection and critical thinking about image, connections, titles, colour, process, texture etc.

Some other starting points with this work could be:

- What do you think happened here?
- Does this remind you of anything?
- What is this painted on?
- What colour do you think smoke is? How many colours are in the smoke?
- How many layers of paint can you find? What sort of layers and marks are there?
- Imagine how noisy this fire would be – what would you hear? Can you imagine voices? This could be developed later into a percussion/voice soundtrack.
- Where do you think this is? Why aren't there any people?
- What happened next? How did the fire get put out?
- How heavy does that smoke look?
- Imagine being there; how hot would you feel?
- Where would you choose to put this in the gallery? What would you hang next to it?
- Is the title important?
- What type of landscape is this?

Starting points and cross-curricular links

You could use this artwork as a stimulus for discussions around the following topics:

The Environment – moorland, coastline, Cornish landscape, The Torrey Canyon

Rescue services
Ecology/biodiversity
Second World War – particularly the RAF and Luftwaffe

Quick and Simple practical ideas

These simple ideas are designed to engage young people practically in front of the original artwork. Only sketchbook and pencil are permitted for use in gallery spaces.

Back to back Stand back to back and one person describes the work with the other drawing from their description.

Observation Make a drawing that shows how huge the smoke is compared to the land. Fold an A4 sheet into a book and make more drawings about what happened next? How high did the smoke get? Did it blow away? What happened on the land? Did the fire service put the fire out?

Adjectives Try to create a huge list of words that describe this pillar of smoke. Use these later to write poems about the painting.

Stories Make up the story of this pillar of smoke – how did it start and what happened? Make a storyboard about this event using speech bubbles.

Eyes closed drawing Keep looking at the painting without looking at your sketchbook – compare this to a drawing where you looked.

Continuous line Don't look at your sketchbook and make a drawing about swirling smoke without lifting your pencil. Have a look – can you find pillars of smoke there? Use a different colour to draw over the pillars you find.

Speeds of drawing Make a drawing using a slow, dreamy line in a pillar of smoke shape then compare this with one draw at top speed, where the smoke is exploding out.

Links to other rooms Can you make connections to other works in this exhibition that might have a similar colour, atmosphere or story.

Extended projects

These suggestions are designed to support follow-up work in the classroom and develop ideas from an initial interaction with the artwork.

Colours of fire photomontage: Collect photographs and images of fire and smoke and organise them into piles of different colours. Draw a huge pillar of smoke and paste these images into shapes of smoke, rising and swirling upwards. Cut or tear the smoke shapes.

Pillars of smoke sculptures Use card tubes to make columns of smoke using textiles and recycled materials; tie, wrap, fold, pierce and glue these to make smoke. Or scrunch chicken wire into a 'pillar of smoke' then use scrapstore materials or paper-mache to cover the pillar – remember to make a firm base so the sculptures stand and rise up.

3D drawings Use pipe cleaners or florist wire to make drawings in space about the pillar of smoke.

Smoke and fire masks Scrapstore materials are great for mask-making; these can be used in drama and performance

Group drawings Glue muslin onto large sheets of paper to make smoke pillar shapes. When it dries, use chalks, conte and charcoal to draw the smoke movement.

Large group canvases Use the sketches made in the gallery and collected images of fire

and smoke to select and make a group composition; choose parts of sketches from everyone in the group. In groups of four work on a large canvas in acrylics from all four sides, using colour, shape, scale and viewpoints to produce more 'pillars'. Limit the paint colours used so you produce colour from investigating colour mixing.

Relief prints Use card and glue string to it to make a printing plate of lines of swirling smoke. PVA over the whole plate. Roll printing ink over the printing plate, to produce prints using different coloured paper backgrounds. This can be done without a press, using pressure from hands or a spoon to produce a low-tech print. Or ink up the head of a broccoli and press this onto different coloured papers.

Comparisons and Connections Wall Display Research the work of Paul Nash, another artist in the display, who painted *Cumulus Head* and *Battle of Germany* and compare these to Weschke's painting. Investigate and make comparisons with man-made disasters, such as the Torrey Canyon or moorland fires in Cornwall, and global disasters like volcanic eruptions or the burning of the rain forest. Look at different cloud formations and storms. Find out about the fire service. Make a cross-curricular display that uses photographs, maps, writing and poetry, together with drawings, paintings and models.

Shape poems Draw the outline of a pillar of smoke and use words from the gallery visit to make shape poems

Email chain Describe this painting in an email to somebody else in the class. Add more to it and send it on.

Drama/ soundtrack/dance Use the painting as a stimulus to write and perform a drama about a moorland fire. Make a soundtrack from ideas about how the painting would sound or sample music about dramatic events like fire. Use dance to dramatise the movement and travelling of flames and smoke across the moor. Invent characters that were caught up in the fire. How did it start? Who was involved in the rescue? How did the moor recover? What were the sad moments? What were the happy moments? Use ICT to produce posters, tickets and invitations to your performance.

Torrey Canyon project Use voice recorders to interview people who saw the 'pillar of smoke' blowing from Seven Stones Reef. Collect memories of how the beaches were covered in oil, how many seabirds were killed or injured and how people tried to collect and rescue them. Investigate the story of the disaster and make comparisons between Weschke's painting of the pillar of smoke over Kenidjack valley and the terrifying smoke pouring from the ship on Seven Stones Reef. Produce newspaper accounts imagining interviewing the Captain of the Torrey Canyon or the pilot of the plane who bombed the ship.

Ecology/biodiversity Investigate how to keep the moorlands safe from fire and make comparisons with countries like Australia, where there is a strict fire code in the bush. Land management: find out how local farmers used gorse burning to manage their land and look at recent news items about grazing cattle on the moors instead of these traditional methods. Develop a project looking at both viewpoints. Local schools could interview moorland farmers about their viewpoints on a voice recorder and find out how they manage their land.