

Teacher Resource Notes – KS3 & KS4 Spring Season

5 February – 2 May 2011

Simon Starling Recent History

The Design Research Unit 1942-72

These notes are designed to support teachers and students as they explore and engage with the art work. As well as factual information they provide starting points for discussion, ideas for simple practical activities and suggestions for extended work that could stem from a gallery visit.

To book a gallery visit for your group call 01736 796226 or email stivesticketing@tate.org.uk.

Season overview

This season Tate St Ives is showing the first major exhibition of Simon Starling's work since he won the Turner Prize in 2005 (tate.org.uk/Britain/turnerprize/2005) and includes new work commissioned for Tate St Ives.

The exhibition provides an opportunity to consider how Starling's installations, objects, film and photography (often recording his own journeys) have complex stories behind their construction, often including hidden discoveries about objects and events. It examines how these narratives interrogate and re-negotiate the histories and connections between globalised systems of manufacture and labour, technology, consumption, transport and the consequences for the natural world. The exhibition invites considerations of visual links between artists, science, geography, history and economics.

In Gallery 1 Tate St Ives shows the first public exhibition to survey the history of the Design Research Unit, which is the oldest industrial design consultancy in Europe (now merged with Scott Brownrigg and Associates). DRU originated in 1943 with critic Herbert Read, art collector and advertising executive Marcus Brumwell and architect Misha Black.

DRU was founded on the concept of collaboration between artists, designers and architects and was an important contributor to the 1951 Festival of Britain and the modernist ideals of art and design principles in a post-war society. The display is complemented by a selection of works from the Tate Collection, reinforcing links between artists and designers and drawing attention to the involvement of St Ives artists.

Ways of Looking: ideas for KS3-4 groups

Listening to others/responding personally/sensory experiences

A huge amount of information can be revealed just by asking the question 'what do you see?'. Once a few ideas are circulating, 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?

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?

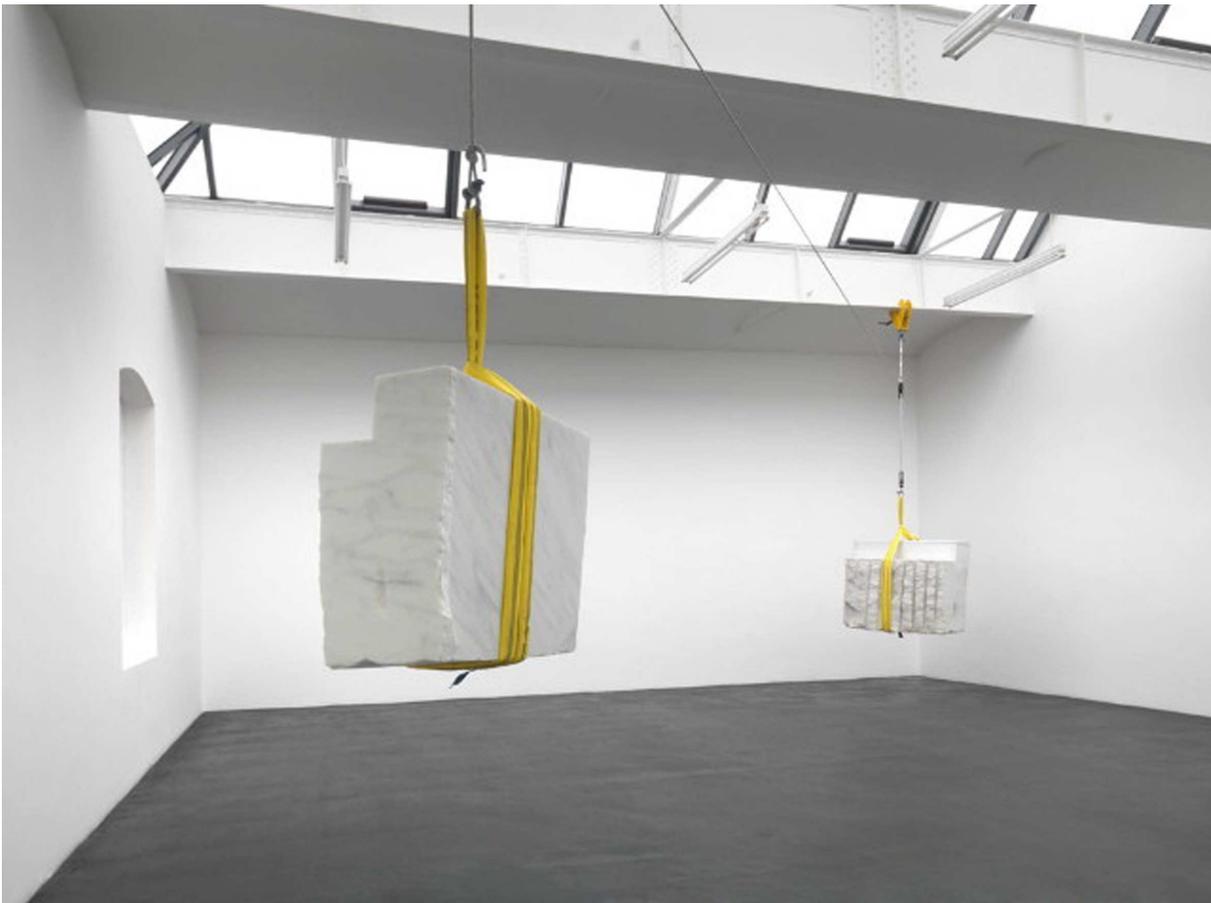
Communication of ideas and meaning

- 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?
- Who is the artist? Is it important to know who created the work? Does the artist's background inform the work?
- Is the work site-specific?
- Has the work reinvented art from other times and cultures?
- Does the work comment on contemporary society?

Gallery 5



Simon Starling

The Long Ton 2009

Courtesy the artist and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

Photo: Jens Ziehe

Two blocks of marble are installed in this gallery; the smaller ¼ tonne (250kg) Italian laser carved Carrara marble replica appears balanced in front of the unworked 1 'long ton' (a British Imperial measurement, equivalent to 1,016 kg) Chinese marble, so at first glance they may appear identical. Although the Chinese stone has travelled much further, the economic value of both blocks is the same.

Visual and verbal encounters. Do you think art should need text interpretations? Ask yourself whether you remember what you see more than what you read; do you remember better after a visual experience? Without looking at any text in the gallery describe this artwork to a partner, then read about the sculpture. How important is the text to your appreciation of this artwork? What do you think Simon Starling is communicating?

Mind mapping. In small groups produce mind maps on large paper, exploring your responses and interpretations of this artwork in text, symbols and drawings.

Originals and copies. St Ives artists, such as Barbara Hepworth and Sven Berlin, made originals by hand-carving marble. Consider how computer and laser technology make producing copies of art works possible; imagine owning a tiny copy. How do we value mass-produced art and design?

Gallery 4



Simon Starling
Installation Image
© Tate

Works in the gallery draw attention to Starling's concern with micro/macro scale comparisons: the enormity of open-cast mining and huge expense involved in the production of tiny amounts of platinum. He also contrasts the working memory of early, physically huge computers and the digital image production capabilities of modern technologies. The subject of mining is explored both on the environmental scale and in the production of artworks composed of the mined material itself.

Scale comparisons/mathematical ratios. Consider how Starling uses scale and ratio in the transformation of raw material into finished artwork. What other examples of scale and ratio can you discover in the artist's work? Look closely at the fine detail of the artworks in this room – what similarities and differences can you see? Make comparisons between the physical scale of early and contemporary computers and the size of their working memory.

Energy consumption/sustainability. Huge amounts of energy are needed to mine ore; consider the carbon footprint of extracting platinum in South Africa or china clay in Cornwall. Where does china clay travel after being mined in Cornwall and what is used for? Is the artist stimulating our interest in economy, labour and material processes with these thought-provoking encounters? If so, how will interpretations be different for other audiences?

Global connections. Labour used in South Africa for an Anglo-American company produced one ton of ore, from which a tiny amount of platinum could be extracted; only enough to make only five very expensive photographic prints. Starling draws attention to how commodities are transported from regions of poverty to those of wealth. Consider other examples of global economies suggested by the display.

Transformers. Discuss how materials have been transformed in these art works; ore from the land becomes photographic prints, china clay from the ground becomes a part of a paper sculpture. Can you find other examples of transformation?

Gallery 3



Simon Starling

Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi) 2009

Photo: Cary Whittier, Kasper Akhøj, Simon Starling

This gallery contains a 24 min video called *Red Rivers* 2009 referring to two journeys: one made by the botanist/naturalist Herbert Lang in 1909, tracking the rare okapi in the Belgian Congo (this story is retold in an audio narrative) and another made by Starling and a friend on a tributary of the Hudson river. The screen shows photographic stills of Starling's journey being developed in a dark room. This gallery is a darkened space.

The Red Filter. The red filter refers to the red light used in a darkroom in a pre-digital photography age; a fast disappearing technology. It could also refer to the okapi being on the red endangered species list. What atmosphere does the red light create? How do you feel in this space?

Journeys. Starling makes comparisons between an Edwardian journey in the Congo and his own seven-day canoe trip. The canoe was made with African hardwood, striped like the okapi, and its design was based on a Native American canoe. Why do you think Starling chose these two journeys for his video? Discuss a comparable journey you would like to make in response to an historic event; how would you travel?

Ethics. On the 1909 journey a hunter killed an okapi to be photographed. A diorama (see additional resources on p6) was produced, fashionable at this time, which made a theatrical spectacle from dead animals, displayed in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. (www.amnh.org). Discuss how this work could be commenting on the ethical issues raised. Consider how artists like Starling use their work to communicate their social conscience.

Apse



Simon Starling

Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima) 2010

Installation Image

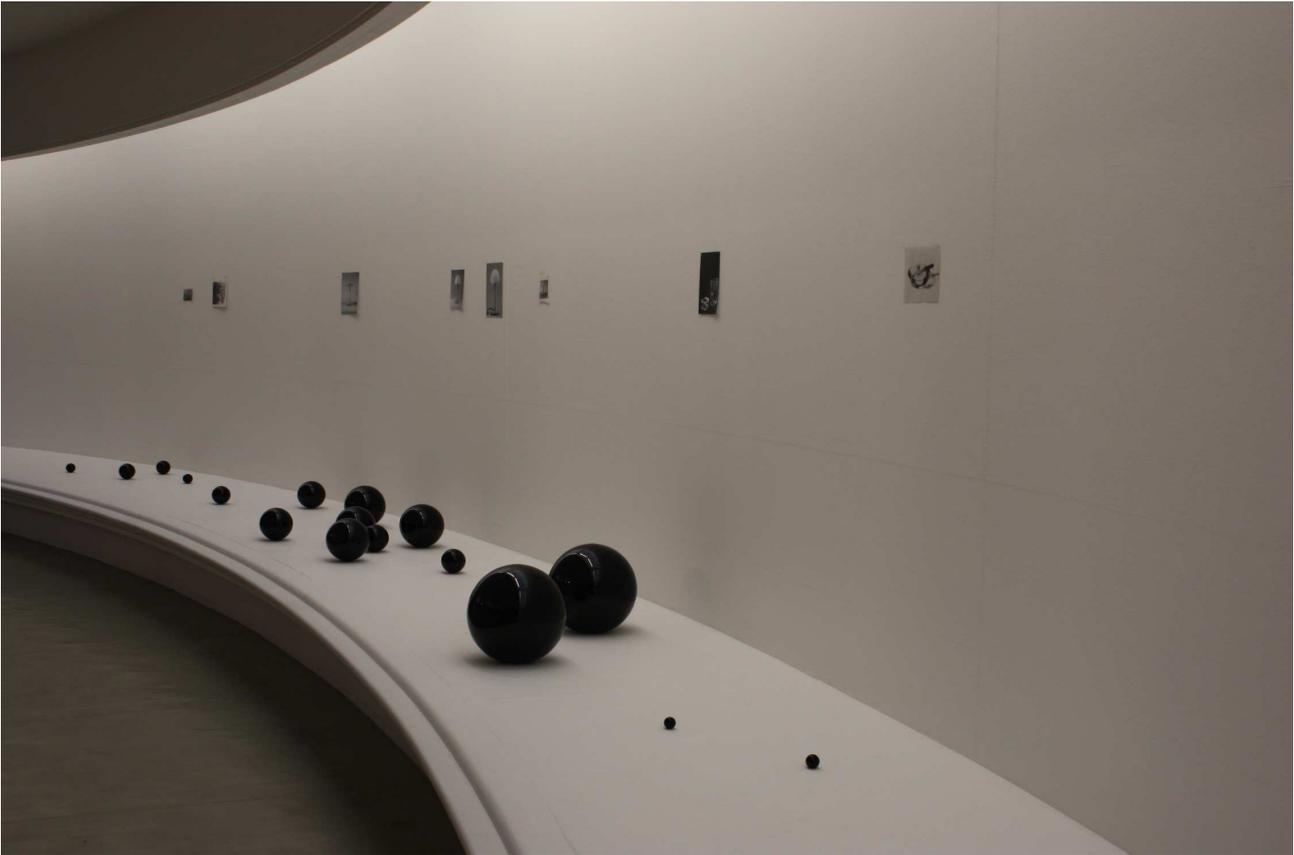
© Tate

This space exhibits cast and carved masks from a version of a sixteenth-century Japanese Noh play (www.japan-zone.com) which Starling has adapted and mixed with modern Western characters. One mask refers to a sculpture by Henry Moore *Atom piece/Nuclear Energy*, which was commissioned by the University of Chicago to mark the site of the first self-sustaining nuclear reaction.

Reinterpretation/appropriation/personal reinvention. The bronze mask is based on Henry Moore's sculpture *Atom Piece*. It is worn by the boy hero of the Japanese play. The original sculpture is ambiguous; it seems to suggest an elephant skull, a human skull and an atomic mushroom cloud. Wearing a mask can transform you into another character; the Hat Maker mask is based on Henry Moore's face. Putting on a mask invites a new identity; how would you like to reinvent yourself? Make sketchbook drawings about your ideas.

East/West links. Starling refers to complex histories in this work: traditional Japanese theatre is interwoven visually with the history of nuclear war and the Hiroshima atom bomb. Discuss how different links exist now between East and West in our post-Cold War era, particularly in the ICT industry: how might you visually interpret contemporary issues?

Upper Gallery 2



Simon Starling

300:1 (After Wilhelm Wagenfeld) 2010

Installation Image

© Tate

This display shows half-tone photographs of modernist glassware by the Bauhaus designer Wilhelm Wagenfeld. Starling has scaled up (300:1) the dots in the areas where the pins obscure the photographic image; the black glass balls on the floor represent the obscured sections three-dimensionally.

Homage to Modernist industrial design. Many designs from the modernist period, especially those from the Bauhaus, are still used in contemporary interiors. Do any of the objects in the photographs look familiar? Consider why a design is regarded as 'classic'.

Low tech/high tech. Starling chooses to emphasise the half-tone printing technique in photographs of objects from design history. Viewed from a distance, these tiny dots, in various sizes, suggest changing tones in the photographic image; Starling has visually interpreted them with hand-blown three-dimensional glass objects. Consider how technologies affect production from low tech handcrafted objects to mass production on a global scale. What values do we place on the 'hand made' and the mass produced?

Studio



Simon Starling

Inventar-Nr 8573 (Man Ray) 4m-400nm 2006

Courtesy the artist and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

The projected slides zoom in on a photograph kept in a storeroom in the Abteiburg Museum in Germany, an underground location that mirrors this enclosed space at Tate St Ives. The image is manipulated by zooming in with an electron microscope until individual silver particles that make up the photograph can be seen.

Scientific scale/viewpoints. Have you ever looked through a microscope or used Google Earth to make comparisons on a macro/micro level? Investigate how the silver particles change shape and structure as the electron microscope zooms in; make drawings in your sketchbook to develop sculptural ideas.

Digital zooming. Use cameras to present distant and close-up photographs, using a macro lens if available – how much zoom can you achieve? Investigate how images might become abstracted as scale changes.

Scientific viewpoints. Consider how the image of the final single particle of the photograph is only revealed to us by the use of a scientific instrument and how human vision is greatly extended by machines. Do you think there is a boundary between science and art, or are there many ways the two connect?

Lower Gallery 2



Simon Starling

Pier (for Autoxylopyrocycloboros 2006 and St Ives Harbour and Godrevy 1934-8) 2010

© Tate

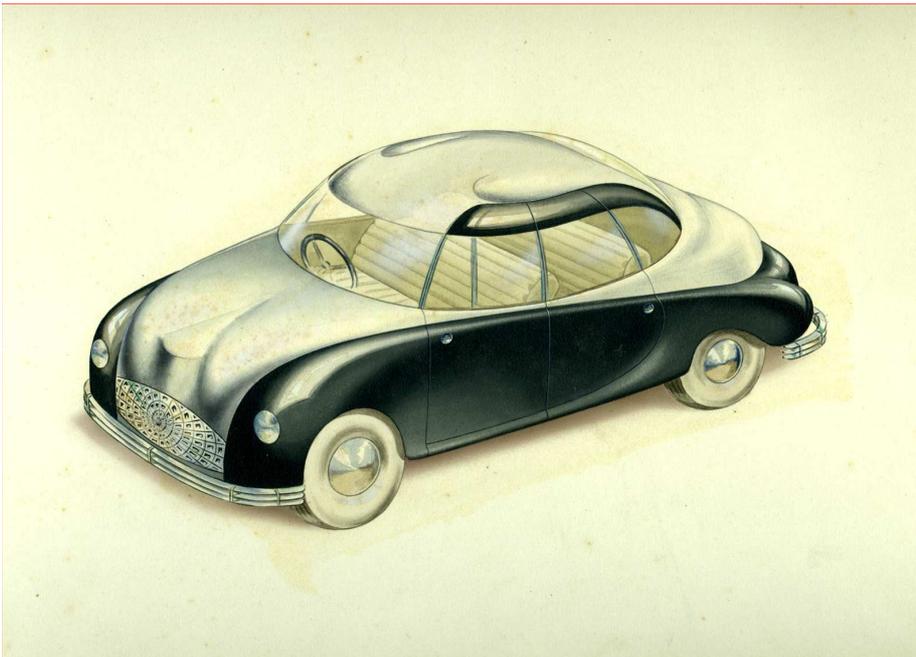
This Gallery contains a major commission for Tate St Ives: an actual size replica of a gallery space from the Pier Art Centre, Stromness (www.pierartscentre.com). Inside this sculpture is an Alfred Wallis painting depicting a steamboat in Cornwall, and a slide projection of a steamboat journey on a Scottish loch with an unusual outcome. Simon Starling exhibited the slide projection work in the Pier Art Centre in 2009.

Cultural connections. Discuss how objects and themes are related in this gallery: boats, art, galleries by the sea (the Pier Art Centre shows a collection of St Ives Art in Scotland). Although very distant geographically, what commonalities, narratives and memories might exist between the two cultural and social experiences? How far would you agree with the idea that everything in our world is connected in some way?

Replacements and replicas. The rough ply outside of this installation may echo the artifice of a film set, but inside the construction is an exact replica of another gallery space, which now looks out to a different sea view. What is displaced, what is surrogate – does anything remain the same? What impact does this installation have on you?

Humour in art. Parts of the steamboat are fed into the boat's boiler until it sinks; the title of this work links this ridiculous situation to the ouroboros, an ancient Celtic motif of a creature with its tail in its mouth, eating itself. Do you think there are any symbolic meanings in this projection?

Gallery 1: The Design Research Unit



Naum Gabo

Model for a Jowett car c1943

Courtesy of Tate Archive

©Nina and Graham Williams

DRU was founded on the principles of an integrated practice, including artists, architects and industrial engineers and designers, working in a cross-disciplinary manner. This display includes archive photographs, prints and industrial prototypes and also features related work from St Ives artists in the Tate Collection. St Ives artists who were commissioned by DRU included Naum Gabo and Bernard Leach, who worked on a car design, and Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson, who designed textiles.

Car prototype. This was a collaboration between Gabo and the Jowett car company of Bradford. Investigate the development of the design, from the ceramic prototype made by Bernard Leach, through the industrial drawing to the final model. Discuss how this compares to industrial design on computers today. Can you relate this design to any contemporary cars?

Technology and materials. Gabo was using cutting edge materials developed by science and industry: Perspex from ICI was a new material in sculpture and the car was to include vinyl flooring and nylon seat covers. Relate these to contemporary issues of sustainability and environmental concerns – how might you reinvent these works using different materials and technology?

Crossovers between art and industry. DRU was established with the philosophy of design/fine art collaborations benefiting wider society, such as public utilities and transport services. Can you identify work that accomplished this? Can you name contemporary examples of crossovers between artists and the commercial world?

Festival of Britain. Investigate the ideology behind the Festival and why it was so important to the nation in post-war reconstruction. Research links and connections between St Ives artists and the Festival.

Resources

The Internal Guide to this exhibition provides further information. Pick one up free in the gallery spaces or download from (.....)

Brumwell, M (2010) **Bright Ties, Bold Ideas**

Cox, I (1951) **The South Bank Exhibition: A Guide to the Story it Tells**

Francés, F, Clark, M and Badisa, M (2010) **Simon Starling: Recent History** (exh cat Tate St Ives)

Jackson, L (2008) **From Atoms to Patterns: Crystal Structure Designs from the 1951 Festival of Britain**

Read, H (1934) **Art and Industry**

Rennie, P (2007) **Design: Festival of Britain 1951**

Rosenberg, A, Heynen, J and Eichler, D (2009) **Simon Starling: Under Lime** (exh cat Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin)

Serota, N and Gooding, M (2010) **An Unfolding Gift: The Piers Arts Centre Collection**

Speight, S and Martin, L (1939) **The Flat Book**

Starling, S and Engberg, J (2001) **Simon Starling: Front to Back**

Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig (1999) **Simon Starling** (exh cat)

www.cubittartists.org.uk

www.tate.org.uk/britain/turnerprize/2005/simonstarling.htm

www.themoderninstitute.com/artists/27/bio.

www.tate.org.uk/britain/turnerprize/2005/simonstarling.htm.

www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1905555,00.html

http://diglib1.amnh.org/articles/okapi/lg_1709.html

Simon Starling Biographical Details

b Epsom, Surrey 1967

Maidstone College of Art 1986-7

Trent Polytechnic 1987-90

Glasgow School of Art 1990-92

Committee member of Transmission Gallery Glasgow 1993-9

First recipient Blinky Palermo Grant 1999

2005 professor at Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main

Lives and works in Berlin and Copenhagen

www.tate.org.uk .Visit the Tate website for glossary definitions of Bauhaus, Conceptual Art, Constructivism and Modernism.

Diorama: A three-dimensional miniature or life-size scene in which figures, stuffed wildlife, or other objects are arranged in a naturalistic setting against a painted background.

Bauhaus: Revolutionary school of art, architecture and design established by the pioneer modern architect Walter Gropius at Weimar in Germany (1919). Its teaching method replaced the traditional pupil-teacher relationship with the idea of a community of artists working together. Its aim was to bring art back into contact with everyday life, and design was therefore given as much weight as fine art.

Ideas for follow up and extended projects

Industry and a sense of place. The marble for *The Long Ton* was quarried in Italy and China; Cornish quarries produced granite, notably granite from the Lamorna quarry that was transported to London for Tower Bridge. Identify these places on a map. Can you imagine the hard labour involved in producing materials for sculptures and industry?

Suspension/mobiles. Further extend the workbook by building card or *papier mâché* objects derived from ideas of global products and trades. Use these to develop a large group mobile; investigating the work of Alexander Calder and Cornelia Parker may provide inspiration.

Scale and reproductions. Use ICT to copy an image and to scale it up or down. Develop this idea into a photographic, painting or sculpture project that explores the idea of rescaling.

Balancing acts and equilibrium. Using found objects and recycled materials construct a series of sculptures which develops the idea of balance/imbalance.

Global connections. Develop a workbook exploring your own personal ideas of values and equivalents from objects around the world. What would you balance in equilibrium – how can you measure value? Extend these ideas into a PowerPoint presentation using images, maps and text.

Shaping the landscape. *China Clay Stack* is formed from a photograph Starling took at clay pits in Cornwall, printed on paper with high kaolin (china clay) content, bringing together this small sculpture and the environmental scale of the landscape. Research examples of how human activity shapes the environment, both locally and globally, as the starting point for a finished art work.

Historical narratives. *Archaeopteryx Lithographica* makes connections between quarrying for lithographic stone in the nineteenth century, and an ancient fossilised feather discovered in this stone. This important fossil proved to be the missing palaeontological link between birds and dinosaurs. Invent a narrative about your own locality. What might be hidden, waiting to be discovered?

Transformers. Discuss how materials have been transformed in these art works; ore from the land becomes photographic prints, china clay from the ground becomes a part of a paper sculpture. Can you find other examples of transformation?

Technologies in time. The display includes an installation of a retro Dresden D1 film projector, which projects a digital animation of part of the first Z1 computer. This 30-second computer-generated animation uses 22,686,575 times more memory capacity than the Z1 had. Starling emphasises the way changing technology impacts on people and the environment; the projector is mechanical yet projects images generated digitally, then transferred to 35mm film. Use ICT to develop these ideas into a piece of art.

Time Zones. Consider the two time zones in *Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi)*; the voiceover is about 1909, but the images are contemporary. Make a short video using your phone or a camera, then record a voiceover on a voice recorder that refers to a different event. What effect does this have on the way you view this?

Imagining the view. Describe the view you imagine from the Pier Art Gallery in Stromness; what colour is the sea there? Do you imagine rocks, cliffs or sand dunes? Do you think the gallery is in a town or in the countryside? What's the weather like outside? How is it different from St Ives? Use your sketchbook to make drawings of imaginary views from the windows of the original building.

Cornish lives and Orkney lives display. Make a group display that investigates the similarities and differences of lives at these extreme ends of the UK. What are the landscapes/seascapes like? How does the architecture look different? Find out what work people do in the areas. Look at weather and temperatures in the areas. How different are names of places? What sports do people do? Use maps to work out how far away from each other these places are. Look at the places on Google Earth. What wildlife would you find on the two seashores? Make a display that uses text, maps, photographs, drawings, objects and models.

Literary connectives. Within a group describe an artwork, taking it in turns to add a statement without repetition – how can group discussion extend our interpretation and responses? Are you influenced by what someone else has said?

Mind Mapping. Using the 'literary connectives' activity, this time nominate one person to draw the description as it unfolds without seeing the original artwork. Use this technique to practice your interpretation of word to image.

Changing spaces. Take a photograph of your own room using your digital camera or phone, then use ICT to research places and maps where you would like your room to be replicated. Imagine what the new view would be like from your window. Create photocollages or make drawings and paintings from your research.

Excavation encounters with nature. *Undercroft /Inversion* 2011 continues the theme of strata and excavation deep in the voids underneath Tate St Ives. Imagine digging deep into the layers of a familiar landscape. Discuss what human history you might discover in the excavation. What might have happened in this space in the distant past?

Commercial icons and logos. What would you consider to be iconic branding and why do you think some designs have great longevity? Research artists like Andy Warhol who made connections between graphic design and fine art and develop a project from your workbook.