

Spring 2009

24 January – 4 May 2009

A Continuous Line: Ben Nicholson in England

Luke Frost: Artist In Residence

Bernard Leach & his Circle

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.



Ben Nicholson (1894 – 1982)

1947, *November 11 (Mousehole)*

Oil and pencil on canvas

46.5 x 58.5cm

British Council

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Some Facts

The entrance to Mousehole harbour is very recognisable in this work, painted in a cool, low key palette of greys, greens and earths. The loosely defined window ledge or table splits the composition, where a cubist still life of bottles appears to float. Colour and texture are used to bring together these landscape elements of harbour and fields with the geometric still-life; interior and exterior become fused in one image of complex space and perspective.

Ideas for discussion

Write down words about your first response to the work

Describe the various textures; can you work out the process of how they were made?

Does this palette derive from nature?

Does the work relate to the architecture of Tate St Ives? Consider geometry and modernism.

Although there are no people in the painting can you sense their presence?

Can you imagine the story to this work; the noises of the village, the events unfolding?

Nicholson inherited a collection of goblets, bottles, jugs from his father, which he and claimed influenced his move to abstract art. Consider the juxtaposition of the abstract with representation in this painting.

Viewpoint; where are you standing as the viewer?

Quick & Simple Practical ideas

Rework this painting using one continuous pencil line.

Make drawings of the imaginary occupants in this space.

Create texture by making layers of paint, scraped back between each layer, developing, and revealing surfaces.

Make monoprints exploring still-life and landscape juxtapositions.

View from a window ledge – observational drawing. Combine details from the Tate building with the landscape outside.

Extended projects

Workbook. Make a collection of photographs and sketches of landscapes from your local area, and of window-ledges and groups of domestic objects. Develop these in collage and other materials into reinterpretations of Nicholson's work. Use this workbook as a starting point for more developed paintings, collages or textiles, considering space and the illusion of space.

Expand the painting into 3D. Using card, boards, wood, ceramic etc. remake the work in 3D as a starting point for sculpture or installation.

DVD images. Set up a collection of objects in windows in various landscapes and explore these images with a camcorder. Record the images of the collection in different light conditions and times of day.

Group Powerpoint show – Ben Nicholson in your house. Imagine Nicholson had paid a visit! Every student could set up their own collection of objects in a domestic setting on a window-ledge in their home and photograph these. Combine them into a group presentation.

Installation. Build a window frame and make a collection of objects on a table in front of it. Project different landscape images onto the wall behind which explore unexpected different cultures and times; how do these affect the viewing of the objects? Consider place, time and history.

Peep-boxes. Make objects and images that fit inside a box, exploring combinations of still-life and landscape.

Printmaking. Use still-life/landscape juxtapositions to build collographs; or develop a continuous line drawing into a relief or intaglio print.

Photography. There are many opportunities for using digital imagery: juxtaposition of different landscape and still-life elements, using text, altering surfaces to age and distress them, changing colour and scale.

Literacy. There are many opportunities for language work that encourages students to develop their verbal and written language skills and to compare the processes between reading and that of looking at art:

- o Storytelling and memories
- o Creative writing and poetry
- o Writing to describe and explore (imagine stepping inside a painting)
- o Writing to analyse and comment (students could write exhibition reviews)
- o Writing to persuade and argue (link to a group debate about a particular artist or work)

Drama/dance/physical theatre. Using ideas from the painting about events, characters, space and sounds develop an improvisation; this could use speech, sounds, tableaux, characterisation, projections etc.