

***Winter 2008***  
**Heimo Zobernig and the Tate Collection**  
4 October 2008 – 11 January 2009

**KS3 & KS4**  
**Works In Focus**

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

We have selected two works from the current displays, one by Heimo Zobernig, the other selected by Zobernig from the Tate Collection. This pack will enable you to focus in on some key themes relating to these specific works, with ideas for extending the learning back in the classroom.



Henry Wallis 1830-1916

**The Room in Which Shakespeare Was Born 1853**

Oil on board 292 x 419 mm

Purchased 1955

Tate Collection

**Ideas for Discussion**

- Heimo Zobernig often uses the concept of the void in his work – why do you think he selected this painting from the collection?
- Can you imagine an unseen presence in this room; who might it be?
- Zobernig has a background in theatre and set design; can you relate this to his selection of this work?
- If this can be viewed as a stage set, what is about to happen, what action may have occurred? Are there traces of the previous occupants?
- Why is the furniture pushed to the edges of the room?
- If you isolated the Elizabethan window design would it look like a grid painting?
- Would you feel differently if this was the birth of another famous person, not involved with the theatre or writing plays?

## Things to think about

### Heimo Zobernig and the void

Henry Wallis's *The Room in Which Shakespeare Was Born* (1853) is one of the images Heimo Zobernig found in the Tate Collection that he has chosen to exhibit at Tate St Ives. An interior, and yet more like a picture of a stage: the furniture—chairs, a lectern, a table—have been moved to the walls to make space in the centre. The room gives a sense of being cleared for an event for which its ordinary use has been set aside; you might think it is prepared, ready for the drama or story to happen. Think about this in relation to Heimo Zobernig's work creating: sites, scenes, stages that await their event. The event of their experience.

### Some facts about Henry Wallis

Wallis launched his career exhibiting a sequence of paintings of interior scenes connected with the life of the great sixteenth-century poet and playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616). This one, showing the playwright's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon, is based on a passage from a contemporary biography by Charles Knight (1842) describing 'the mean room, with its massive joists and plastered walls, firm with ribs of oak'. Wallis has painted the room in remarkable detail. Every nail securing the floorboards is visible. Wallis has even taken note of Knight's passage describing how 'hundreds amongst the hundreds of thousands by whom that name is honoured have inscribed their names on the walls of the room.'

Consider why Wallis chose to make work about Shakespeare's life and to look back in history.

## Practical Ideas

### Quick & simple activities

Make a drawing of imaginary occupants of this space

Recreate this space using your own home and make comparisons in sketches

Using ICT, superimpose contemporary furniture on the image

Make drawings about this work and link ideas with the unoccupied chairs in Gallery 2

### Extended projects

**3D boxes.** Make a 'peep-box' that evokes an atmosphere of something waiting to happen, or recalls the presence of somebody... Maybe a large box could be used to create a theatre that combines ideas from Shakespeare with Zobernig's hangings of chroma-key fabric.

**Creating the unseen presences.** Research the life of Shakespeare and use this as the stimulus to create 3D images of the imaginary occupants of the room. Reflect on how people may have inhabited the space and the costumes they may have worn.

**Window grids old and new.** Look at the window design and make a workbook using

contemporary window designs as the stimulus for a series of paintings or prints

**Rooms and missing occupants.** Create a workbook about rooms in your home, school and local area which are empty of their usual occupants. What mood does the lack of humans create? What dramas could be waiting to happen?

**Reduction and reinterpretation.** Using this painting as a starting reference, redraw it reducing all detail and minimise the shapes. Make decisions about how to reinterpret the work in a new medium, developing several outcomes in 2D and 3D in unusual materials, experimenting with materials you would not usually associate with art.

**Stage sets.** Research the plays of Shakespeare and produce drawings and models for a stage set.

**Group drama/dance project.** Use this painting as a starting point to develop a play which references the work of Shakespeare but perhaps places it in a contemporary setting. Or use no spoken language but communicate through physical theatre or dance. Imagine the sounds within this room. Create a video about the performance.

**ICT Tableaux.** Reference Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* and Peter Blake's design for the Sergeant Pepper Album and superimpose figures from cultural and social history who you imagine should gather in Shakespeare's room.

**Group room installation.** Invent, research and make objects which you imagine could exist in this room and then become a curator and design an installation to exhibit them, perhaps as a museum display. Use made and found objects, copies and ICT.

**Your room revisited** Rearrange your own room to create a feeling of the void, absence, or an event about to happen. Use this to develop a finished painting.

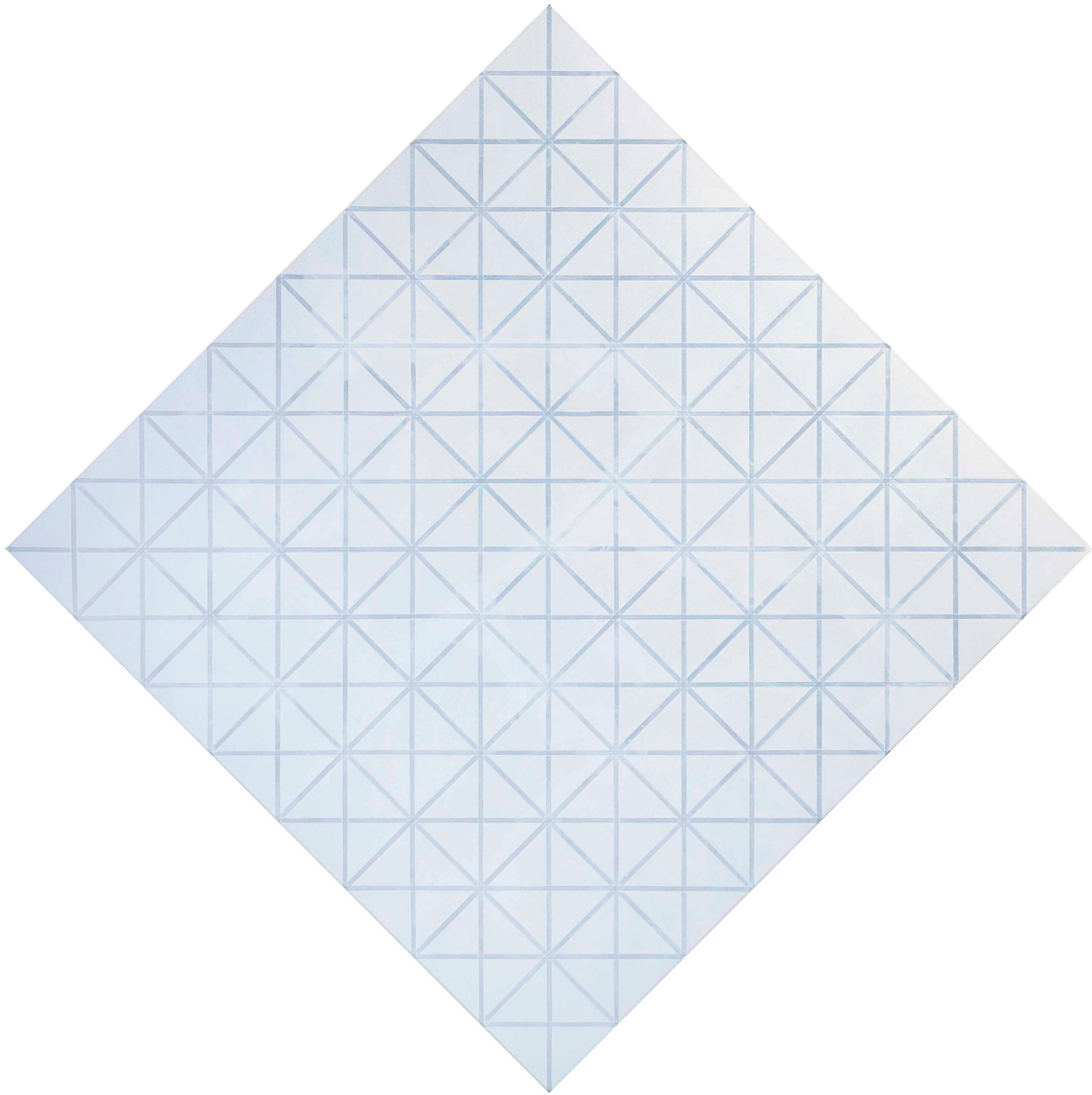
## Further research

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

[www.oxforddnb.com/public/sgtpepper/](http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/sgtpepper/)

[arthistory.about.com/cs/leonardo/a/last\\_supper.htm](http://arthistory.about.com/cs/leonardo/a/last_supper.htm)

[www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-theatre.htm](http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-theatre.htm)



Heimo Zobernig

**Untitled 2007**

2000x2000 mm

Acrylic and tape on canvas

Photo © Archive HZ

*Displayed in the Apse on level three*

## **Ideas for Discussion**

- Compare the processes used in Zobernig's grids. Look at ground/image, overpainting, removal, and use of industrial and domestic materials.
- Look at the painting using 'Swarovski' round stones; is there still evidence of a grid structure here?
- Consider how Zobernig displays his grids; is this how you would expect to see them?
- Contrast the grid paintings with Carl Andre's grid sculpture; do you feel comfortable walking on Andre's art? Would you walk on a painting?

## Things to think about

**Grids revisited.** Zobernig reinterprets the grid in art, experimenting with different processes and materials. Consider the work of artists such as Mondrian, Ian Burn, Blinky Palermo, Kenneth Martin and Carl Andre. Can the grid be free of all meaning or personal content and therefore have no narrative?

**Grids in different cultures/times.** Investigate the use of grids and repetition in Islamic ceramic tiles, where no human form can be represented. Look at grids in textiles, especially quilting, which is usually made by women. Why are some grids considered craft and some art?

**Grids from poor materials.** Investigate the work of the Arte Povera artists and look at the way Sandra Blow used masking tape in her paintings. Consider whether we are admiring an artist's functional skills in a painting, or are we admiring the manipulation and representation of real materials used in a new way – or both?

**'it is the aesthetic interpretation not the artistic production that makes it art'** - discuss and comment on this statement, using your argument to produce a piece of art, considering especially how it might be presented and displayed.

## Quick & simple activities

**Readymades.** Appropriate a readymade grid and design invites, posters, and a setting that presents the object as art. This could be a small group project. Combine text, ICT, drawing, found images and model making.

**Painted illusion and real space and materials.** Make a grid from scrap materials and then use this as a starting point to produce a painting. Are they both art, is one a copy..?

**Ground/image.** Make two paintings; one where the grid lines are painted in and the background is left the colour of the support, and one where masking tape is painted over with the background and later removed to reveal the colour of the board/paper/canvas. Make comparisons about the processes and decisions about the method you prefer.

## Extended projects

**Overlaid grids.** Use different coloured electricians' tape on acetate to make grids of varied proportions. Overlay these to create complex layers of grid colours and dimensions. How would you present these in an exhibition?

**Suspended textile grids.** Use 'found' grids such as metal kitchen grids, or grids from builders merchants. Or weave grids using organic materials such as withies. Add texture by weaving in found industrial materials like cable ties, wires and cables, or fabrics, wools, silks etc, or organic materials like feathers and plant materials. Suspend these and shine a single light source through the grid to make the shadow a part of the work.

**Printed grids.** Use a square plate for either relief prints or intaglio. Create an off centre grid on the plate then overprint and rotate the plate to make a multi-layered grid print. Select opaque and transparent inks and investigate the different qualities of these.

**Grid series.** Make a series of paintings using different materials as supports, which investigate ideas of ground/image, presence/absence

**Modernism and the grid.** It could be argued that the grid structure is the quintessential form of modernism. Consider how designs from the Bauhaus and De Stijl, especially modular architecture, interior design and space and light relate to contemporary living, and produce a multi-media workbook or presentation.

**Grids for walking on and living in.** Make a series of digital photographs exploring grids in the urban environment (architecture, paving etc) and create a way of presenting these. Look at repetition/equality of parts, and the way in which colour and texture are created by building materials. Develop this into a powerpoint presentation or video.

## Further research

[www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/zobernig\\_heimo.html](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/zobernig_heimo.html)

[www.tate.org.uk/stives/exhibitions/heimozobernig/default.shtm](http://www.tate.org.uk/stives/exhibitions/heimozobernig/default.shtm)

[www.petzel.com/artists/heimo-zobernig](http://www.petzel.com/artists/heimo-zobernig)

[www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk) this site will provide information on individual artists, such as Mondrian and grid images in the Tate Collection.

Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Grids', in: *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1985