

Spring 2009

24 January – 4 May 2009

A Continuous Line: Ben Nicholson in England

Luke Frost: Artist In Residence

Bernard Leach & his Circle

KS1 & 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.



Ben Nicholson
1946 (*window in Cornwall*) 1946
Oil and pencil on canvas
The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester
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Some Facts

This work is one of a small group of compositions of the sweeping Penwith landscape depicting farms near Halsetown, above St Ives. These small-scale pictures date from the 1940s and often show still-life elements in the foreground. The still-life of cups and vessels of the foreground interact with the far-reaching landscape stretching away towards the distant sea. Nicholson used the division of the distant fields to combine with his still-life composition, mixing exterior and interior spaces.

Ideas for discussion

Is there a story about this place? Who left the mugs in the window? Who could be working in the fields?

Can you describe the various textures in the work? Do some parts look unfinished?

Imagine the sounds you could be hearing in this place.

What can you say about the colour? Do the colours look like ones you know in the Cornish landscape? Would you like to change the colour?

What is a still-life? What would you like to put in your own still-life?

Does this at first just look like a landscape? Could the mugs also look like rooftops?

Where is the paint transparent, where is it thick and opaque, where is pencil used?

Starting points

Write down words about your first response to the work

Frames; think about how windows frame the view.

Inside/outside. Think of ways of making pictures that combine inside and outside. We can look into as well as looking out. If you were in this picture can you imagine where you would be?

Does this work make you think of different seasons or weather? What mood does it make you think about?

Why do you think the painting does not go to the edge?

Quick & Simple Practical Ideas

Favourite places and things. Make drawings about your own favourite objects on a window ledge in front of your favourite place.

Changing views. Make and set up a still-life of your own mugs in front of a window at school and photograph this everyday for a week, recording how weather and light change the mood of the photograph. How different do they make you feel?

Make a still-life. Use the inside of kitchen rolls to make mugs for a still-life by wrapping these with paper in your own designs. Look at the different shapes of handles Ben Nicholson used and make these in card. Display these in group still-life.

Strange places. Imagine being in some strange and unusual places – in a lighthouse, on a space station, in a plane; draw what you think you would see from your window.

Viewfinders. Cut a square or rectangle in card to use as a viewfinder. This helps a lot to simplify a landscape to draw. Use them also to move up close to a still-life to make an observation drawing.

Extended projects

Group drawings. Produce individual A4 drawings made by each child by setting up a still-life of their favourite objects on a window-ledge at home. These can be developed into a group painting/collage grid or textile with relief printing.

Relief image. Make or select different landscape images for the background. Construct a window frame and window-ledge using card or modelling board – curtains optional – then combine the landscapes with mugs, cups and jugs by making these in different collage materials and sticking them on the window ledge as overlays.

Large group canvases. Make individual drawings of still-life on your own window-ledge, including the view from your window. In small groups select different bits from everyone's drawings and invent a new composition on a large canvas. Paint this using acrylic paints, remembering how Ben Nicholson used layers and textures.

Construction reliefs. Construct the composition as a card or board relief, working from the background to the foreground shapes. Some card will allow you to cut through the top surface and tear back the card to create texture. Glue the shapes together and when they are dry use colour and pencil to complete the work. Develop this further by making small layered collagraphs which can be relief or intaglio printed.

Geography. You could extend work to link to the geography curriculum with the following topics:

- o Images of a country
- o Investigating our local area
- o Exploring England
- o Investigating coasts/coastal environments