

Rites Of Passage

The Unilever Series: turbinegeneration Project Pack 2009–10

Introduction to The Unilever Series: turbinegeneration

The Unilever Series

www.tate.org.uk/modern/unileverseries is an annual commission, sponsored by Unilever, that invites an artist to make a work of art especially for Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. This year's artist is Miroslaw Balka. Comprising installation, sculpture and video, Balka's work explores themes of personal history and common experience, drawing on his Catholic upbringing and the fractured history of his native country, Poland. Intimate and self-reflective, his works demonstrate his central concerns of identifying personal memory within the context of historical memory.

Every year, the turbinegeneration project pack is developed around themes in the work of the current Unilever Series artist and so this pack has been inspired by Balka's work. Ideas of memory, history and identity reflect the artistic preoccupations of Balka. The turbinegeneration project pack has been developed around the theme 'RITES OF PASSAGE', and has been divided into three project areas:

- **Project 1: Objects of Memory**
- **Project 2: Images of History**
- **Project 3: Identity of Space**

As well as taking Balka's work as a starting point, this pack makes connections between his ideas and the artwork in the Tate Collection. All artworks mentioned in the pack have an image and a link to the Tate website www.tate.org.uk. This approach reflects the key idea behind turbinegeneration: that artists make artwork within the broad and varied context of contemporary art and the art world. Artists stay connected and active by looking at historical artworks and current exhibitions and art practices. They also look at other aspects of the contemporary world including the sciences, current affairs, globalisation and history.

Turbinegeneration supports your group to make a partnership with another group in a different country. This partnership between young people from different cultures and with different contemporary contexts is carried out through an exchange of artwork and ideas. Artwork your group will make in response to the themes and ideas in this project pack is uploaded to a safe and secure folder on **Skydrive** - <http://windowslive.com/online/skydrive> that can be viewed by your partner group who then make artwork in response. This process mirrors the particular way artists make work, in response to each other across cultural boundaries and social histories in a cross-cultural world of international exhibitions and exchanges.



The Project Pack and working with your partner school

This project pack has been developed by practising artists and offers a number of different approaches including video, photography, sound and installation. More traditional forms of art such as painting and sculpture are also included although these will need to be scanned or photographed in order to share them with your partner school. It is important to remember that these project ideas are starting points only. You can follow one of these closely or 'pick and mix' to create your own individual response. Your project will develop as you exchange your work with your partner school and react to and build upon each other's ideas, creating work collaboratively. If possible, take your students to exhibitions at your local gallery in order to see how contemporary artists are using sound and vision in their work.

Working method

- Explore the project pack with your group, decide on an area of investigation and discuss this with your partner school via email.
- Research artists who have worked with video, photography and sound connected to your chosen theme (e.g. 'Objects of Memory'). There are plenty of internet links in the project pack to start your research.
- Use video, text, photography or sound to record your group's thoughts and ideas.
- Present this work to your partner school via Skydrive and discuss further possibilities. Skydrive is the internet programme where you will be uploading your digital artwork and looking at your partner school's artwork. To use Skydrive, go to **www.skydrive.live.com** and simply follow online instructions to share and download files. For instructions on how to use Skydrive, contact Naomi.Ellis@tate.org.uk
- Respond to or manipulate each other's artwork by combining visual, audio and textual languages.
- Explore how the images you produce could be interpreted in another medium: dance, drama, poetry, performance, animation or installation.
- As your work develops, consider presentation. Visit your local gallery to gain inspiration. Some galleries may have staff who are dedicated to working with school groups and could provide advice.
- Display the work of your collaboration in your school; share your project with the rest of your school.

Get Help

- Consult colleagues in your school and your partner school throughout your collaboration.
- Consult and visit your local gallery and use their expertise to find art and artists to inspire you.

Project 1: OBJECTS OF MEMORY

Mirosław Balka's sculptures and installations often contain everyday objects, many of which may seem familiar to us. Central to Balka's work is the use of materials of humble quality such as ash, felt, soap, salt and hair which give a sense of spirituality through their association with lives lived and memories left behind. For example the delicate arrangement of soap in *480 x 10 x 10 2002*, a sculpture of pieces of used soap strung together and hung from a ceiling, suggests a timeline, perhaps symbolic of the passage of life and its various significant moments and banal repetitions through time.

How do we begin?

This project suggests how your students could explore their own everyday objects and present these through sculpture, photography, sound or by creating an installation.

These objects could be something they use every-day at the same time, for example a toothbrush or pillow; a significant object which they feel a strong attachment to, for example an object given to them by a family member or an object they have known since they were very young; an object they found and know nothing about but which they find intriguing, for example an old photograph or strange object they cannot identify or an object that has some kind of resonance for them, for example perhaps because they feel it has brought them luck.

Ask your group to bring their objects to school. Perhaps they could conceal their objects at first and simply describe their object without identifying it. They could be asked to make connections between their object and someone else's.

Research and development: How do we develop our project further?

Remember that it is unlikely that you will be able to physically send these items to your partner school. You need to be creative about how you share this information. Begin with photography and video and then consider the addition of sound: for example the ambient noises of the places the objects were found or interviews with the owners of the objects.

Below is a series of examples of how artists have used objects and developed artwork from the ideas and connections they have made. Explore these examples with your group and try some of the suggestions.

MARK DION

collected items from the shoreline of the River Thames in London and arranged them in a cabinet. This work elevates objects such as bones, teeth and pipes to the status of museum pieces.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/artnow/markdion/default.shtm>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/thamesdig/flash.htm> interactive video link



Mark Dion *Tate Thames Dig* 1999 Tate
© Mark Dion. Photo: Tate Photography Installation view



Collect objects from a shoreline, a river, or the school grounds. Photograph these and share them with your partner school. Use the photographs as starting points for discussion and storytelling. Arrange the objects in an 'archive'.



Ask your group to photograph ornaments in their homes and to ask their family to tell them of their significance. Ask your group to record or video this activity if possible. Share the recordings with your partner school. Create an installation or photographic exhibition that uses the information gathered.



Michael Landy *Semi-detached* 2004 Tate Installation at Tate Britain. © Michael Landy. Photo: Tate 2004

MICHAEL LANDY

arranged the contents of his father's workshop. He videoed these and accompanied the film with a soundtrack of his father whistling a tune that he remembered from his childhood.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/landy/makingof.htm>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/landy>

Project 2: IMAGES OF HISTORY

Mirosław Balka often uses photography and video works that have a connection to his family history or to his native country, Poland. He works into and adds to photographs, such as in *A Crossroads in A* 2006. He projects video and film footage onto objects, doorways and floors such as in *The Walk* 2001. In works such as these, Balka attempts to transport us and include us directly within an historical moment.

How do we begin?

In this project your students will refer to historical information, for example photographs, videos and letters from their family or cultural archives. This information will form the basis of a collaborative piece exploring an aspect of history. This may be connected to personal histories or the social, cultural and political history of your country. This project could begin with scans of photographs and move to interviews or recordings connected to the imagery. Consider the possibilities of creating new, collaborative stories that can be expressed not only through art but also through music, performance, dance or drama.

Research and development: How do we develop our project further?

Below is a series of examples of how artists have used information from personal and social histories and developed artwork from the ideas and connections they have made. Explore these examples with your group and try some of the suggestions.

Record your ideas and send them to your partner school. When they send you their ideas, you can discuss what they might mean and respond to them in your work.

Project 3: IDENTITY OF SPACE

Mirosław Balka's installations not only include visual elements; they also incorporate sounds, smells and textures. This creates an environment that draws us into a sensory experience. Objects such as soap, pine needles, ashes and shoes all have smells that we often have strong associations with and which connect with our memories of place and time, as well as with people we remember.

How do we begin?

In this project your students will work with their partner school to produce a multi-sensory installation that can be reproduced in both schools involving any combination of images, sounds, smells and textures that work together to produce a sense of place and time. This can be based upon real events or particular people, but emphasis should be placed upon objects that have a specific meaning or story connected to them, for example a birthday, a friendship or a home. These sensory objects in combination will work together to explore a common theme.

Research and development: How do we develop our project further?

Decide on a theme or on two contrasting themes to explore with your partner school. Below is a series of examples of how artists have created installations and used sound to develop artwork from the ideas and connections they have made. Explore these examples with your group and try some of the suggestions.

CILDO MEIRELES

has created a tower of radios from many different eras that explores the timeline of technology but also the familiarity of household radios. These radios play static in reference to the loss of language over time but they could be used as the inspiration for combined music or spoken word.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/cildomeireles/rooms/room6.shtm>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/tateshots/episode.jsp?item=17125>



Cildo Meireles *Babel* 2001
© the Artist



Ask your group to choose an object that is easily available as a multiple, for example shoes, books or a table.

Experiment with creating a tower with all the gathered objects. Write directly onto these objects or use recordings played over several audio players to accompany the objects. You could make walls of clear plastic with images of the objects and written words over the top.



Ask your group to have a look in their own sheds or outhouses. Ask them to bring into school a selection of objects that they find. Suspend these objects together to produce an installation in space. Video this and share the video with your partner school.



Cornelia Parker *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* 1991 Tate © Cornelia Parker

CORNELIA PARKER

destroyed the contents of a shed and arranged these burnt and blackened objects in space to create a moment in time resonant of the explosion itself, thus suspending physically the final moment in the existence of the objects.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/colddarkmatter/>

http://www.tate.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/talking_art/cornelia_parker/default.jsp

Final Thoughts

The ideas and examples above are designed to provide starting points for your project. The development of your group's ideas and artwork will come through the online exchange you will have with your partner school. Each time your partner school responds to the artwork you have uploaded online, and you share this response with your group, they will have an opportunity to reflect on their work and consider ways of moving it forward. It may be that your partner school has made their own artwork as their response.

Your group will benefit enormously from having a chance to engage with this new artwork in relation to their own. As this online creative and visual dialogue develops and your group shares their artwork with their partner school, they will be developing their ability to engage with artworks, reflect on their meaning and use this reflection to move their ideas on further. In this sense turbinegeneration supports your group's collaboration with another group to make artwork.

The Unilever Series: turbinegeneration is an online educational partnership linking schools and galleries internationally. The turbinegeneration project is produced by Tate and sponsored by Unilever. Unilever is a global manufacturer of leading brands in foods, home care and personal care. Unilever places great emphasis on education and helping local communities through a variety of projects around the world.

