

A PICTURE OF BRITAIN

TATE BRITAIN, 15 JUNE – 4 SEPTEMBER 2005

TATE



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TEACHER AND STUDENT NOTES WITH KEY WORK CARDS

15 DOUBLE-SIDED A4 CARDS WITH INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION, FULL COLOUR IMAGES, DISCUSSION POINTS, LINKS AND ACTIVITIES. FOR USE IN THE GALLERY OR CLASSROOM. SUITABLE FOR ALL KEY STAGES AND OLDER STUDENTS. BY MIQUETTE ROBERTS

1 JAMES WARD (1769–1859) *GORDALE SCAR* C1812–14, EXHIBITED 1815 2 CONRAD ATKINSON BORN 1940 *FOR WORDSWORTH; FOR WEST CUMBRIA* 1980 3 WALTER SICKERT (1860–1942) *BRIGHTON PIERROTS* 1915 4 EVELYN DUNBAR (1906–1960) *A LAND GIRL AND THE BAIL BULL* 1945 5 THOMAS LANDSEER AFTER EDWIN LANDSEER (1803–1873) *THE MONARCH OF THE GLEN* 1852 6 DAVID YOUNG CAMERON (1865–1945) *THE WILDS OF ASSYNT* C1936 7 GEORGE STUBBS (1724–1806) *HORSE FRIGHTENED BY A LION?* EXHIBITED 1763 8 PHILIP JAMES DE LOUTHERBOURG (1740–1812) *COALBROOKDALE BY NIGHT* 1801 9 THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH (1727–1788) *'CORNARD WOOD'* C1746–8 10 CEDRIC MORRIS *LANDSCAPE OF SHAME* C1960 11 PAUL NASH (1889–1946) *EQUIVALENTS FOR THE MEGALITHS* 1935 12 PETER LANYON (1918–1964) *THERMAL* 1960

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition *A Picture of Britain* takes us 'from the slopes of Snowdonia to the chimneys of Salford, from the desolate beauty of the Scottish Highlands to the waves breaking on Brighton beach.' It is a multifaceted project: a six-part BBC television series led by David Dimbleby, a book with 170 colour illustrations and an exhibition at Tate Britain. Its intention is to make us think about Britain and to consider how living in this country may have affected our character and turned us into the kind of people we are. It is selective: the six regions represented do not encompass the whole country. London, for example, is absent. In each area some themes have been highlighted; you may well think of others that can be addressed in the areas that you know best.

THE EXHIBITION LAYOUT

The regions of the country are organised in a sequence as you move through the six rooms of the exhibition. You will start in the Romantic North and move on to the South. Next come the Highlands and glens of Scotland, followed by the Heart of England. Finally, you will visit the flatlands in the East and end up in the mystical West. To get a flavour of each section read the introductions provided on the following pages.

VISITING THE EXHIBITION

Exhibition tickets for school groups of more than ten students are available **in advance only** from Education Bookings on **020 7887 3959** at a cost of £4 per student and teacher so long as payment is received two weeks before the visit. As the available tickets are limited it is essential to book well in advance. All groups with more than thirty students will be split and asked to enter the exhibition at thirty-minute intervals. If you would like to use the Schools Area to have lunch or to use locker spaces please book these when you book your tickets (there is limited space available).

As all exhibitions at Tate can be busy you cannot lecture in the exhibition rooms, but you can discuss works in a conversational manner with groups of no more than six students at a time. If possible, brief your students before they enter the exhibition, and if you have a large group, we recommend that you divide them into smaller groups and follow the suggestions in the pack.

HOW TO USE THIS PACK AND STRUCTURE YOUR VISIT

This pack is intended for teachers of all age groups, as well as for A-level and GCSE students – although you do not need to be a teacher or a student to enjoy it. It is ideal for cross-curricular work, touching on issues in geography, literature, technology, citizenship and history as well as art. A section of the pack is devoted to such connections. Introductions to each section are grouped together, explaining the themes curators have chosen to highlight in that area. You could use this part of the pack before you come, to prepare your students for their visit. General questions supporting the introductions are included, as well as more specific ones to go with each key work. It should be possible for you to adapt questions for the age group you teach. You are encouraged to print out the sheets in this pack and photocopy and laminate them for use in the classroom.

On the principle that it is better to look properly at a few things than to glance at many, the key work pages in this pack focus on only two works in each of the six sections of the exhibition. However, the **for discussion**, **activities** and **links** sections connect the two chosen key works to others in the exhibition room so that you can move out from the paintings you have studied in detail to make links with others, discussing their similarities and differences.

On one of the two cards that deal with each region, you will find a quotation from someone who lives in that area today. The intention is to allow students to compare current experiences of town and country dwellers with the atmosphere of past lives evoked in the paintings. Hopefully it will encourage them to create their own quotes about the area where they live.

FURTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE GALLERY

Your Brain on the Page, a student sketchbook resource, has ideas you could try out in the exhibition. It is available for £2.50 from Tate shops or by calling 020 7887 8876.

The Key Work Cards for Teachers: Landscape and Environment, available for £9.99 from Tate shops, would also be a useful complement to this exhibition.

WEBSITES

Relevant websites are included in the text. They include:

Tate Online www.tate.org.uk

Tate Learning www.tate.org.uk/learning

This site includes a dedicated area for teachers and group leaders, plus teacher resource notes for all major Tate exhibitions.

FURTHER READING

David Dimbleby, Richard Humphreys, David Blayney Brown and Christine Riding, *A Picture of Britain*, Tate Publishing, 2005, available for £19.99 from Tate shops.

INTRODUCTIONS TO EACH SECTION

THE ROMANTIC NORTH

Key Work Cards:

James Ward *Gordale Scar* c1812–14, exhibited 1815

Conrad Atkinson *For Wordsworth; for West Cumbria* 1980

Related Key Work Cards:

Joseph Wright of Derby, *Vesuvius in Eruption, with a View over the Islands in the Bay of Naples* c1776–80, in *Key Works Cards for Teachers: Landscape and Environment*, available for £9.99 from Tate shops. This card is relevant to the notion of the Sublime.

This section covers the landscape of the Lake District and Yorkshire as well as the big cities of Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester and features sites of early tourism. In 1797, as a young man of 22, Turner travelled to the north of England and sketched Norham Castle on the border with Scotland. He later attributed the start of his success as an artist to the watercolours he made of the ruined castle. Eighteenth-century travellers were encouraged by a series of writers to look out for scenes of Picturesque and Sublime beauty on their journeys. While Norham Castle might have been judged Picturesque, Gordale Scar was the epitome of the Sublime. James Ward's massive Tate picture, exhibited at the RA in 1815, hangs outside the exhibition on the Manton stairs. Ward rendered the immense cliffs even more Sublime by exaggerating their scale.

There are important literary connections in this section, ranging from Wordsworth's poetic response to the Lakes to the Brontës' writing, which was based on the experience of their life on the Yorkshire Moors. The mood aroused by the exhibits varies from delight in the beauty of lake and fell and excitement at the achievements of industry (Stanley Royle's *Sheffield from Wincobank* 1923 shows Sheffield steel-making at its height) to despondency at unemployment, as depicted in the work of LS Lowry and Conrad Atkinson.

THE HOME FRONT (THE SOUTH)

Key Work Cards:

Walter Sickert *Brighton Pierrots* 1915

Evelyn Dunbar *A Land Girl and the Bail Bull* 1945

Related Key Work Cards:

Paul Nash, *Landscape at Iden* 1929, in the *Tate Britain Teachers' Kit*, available for £12.99 from Tate shops.

This section sets beauty against fear – the beauty of nature against the fear of an invasion which would despoil it. The south coast of England is separated from the Continent by only a narrow channel of water, making it the most vulnerable to attack of Britain's coastlines. It is this situation that has led artists to produce images of great beauty underscored by fear that such beauty will be transient. Samuel Palmer and John Linnell present nature as a bejewelled treasure trove. William Holman Hunt's *Our English Coasts, 1852 ('Strayed Sheep')* 1852, was partly inspired by newspaper articles that raised the fear that our English coasts were unprotected from the threat of attack by the French under Napoleon III. The sea was no longer a barrier against attack once planes had been invented. They were used in combat for the first time from 1914, and this section has several images of aircraft including Richard Eurich's *Air Flight over Portland* 1940–1, and Paul Nash's memorable *Totes Meer (Dead Sea)* 1940–1, in which crashed enemy planes have become a nightmarish sea of metal waves.

The south of England is also shown in happier, holiday mood. John Constable portrayed a fashionable seaside resort in his *Chain Pier, Brighton* 1826–7, to which he had brought his wife in the vain hope that the sea air would cure her tuberculosis. You can also see Cowes regatta, painted by JMW Turner in 1827 and Philip Wilson Steer's *A Procession of Yachts* 1892–3.

HIGHLANDS AND GLENS

Key Work Cards:

Thomas Landseer after Edwin Landseer *The Monarch of the Glen* 1852

DY Cameron *The Wilds of Assynt* c1936

This section features Scotland, or rather the Highlands, whose steep mountains and many lochs have attracted tourists for centuries. Whereas Scotland can seem like a grey country of never-ending rain, it is also remarkable for its miraculously clear sunny days when the colours in nature are accentuated. On many canvases, the Glasgow Boys and the Scottish Colourists celebrated the colour of those clear bright days. A watercolourist like Arthur Melville and painters in oil such as S.J. Peploe and William McTaggart combined sensitivity to the quality of Scottish light with technical experimentation and ingenuity.

If anything, this section unfairly emphasises views of Scottish gloom over the Scottish brilliance which is so noticeable when compared to the muddy colours favoured in England by WR Sickert.

THE HEART OF ENGLAND (THE MIDLANDS)

Key Work Cards:

George Stubbs *Horse Frightened by a Lion* exhibited 1763
Philip James de Loutherbourg *Coalbrookdale by Night* 1801

This section features central England, ranging from the wilds of the Derby and Nottinghamshire countryside to the industrialised Black Country and extending as far as picture postcard scenes of a Cotswolds country idyll. The earliest art objects in the exhibition date from the late eighteenth century and reflect early optimism when growth in industry could still be seen as progress – look, for example, at the almost religious atmosphere surrounding the figures of Wright of Derby's iron forge paintings. Then from the 1830s came the spread of the railways as recorded in David Cox's fiery *Night Train* c1850, in which the train terrifies some horses. One of the consequences of better transport was a rush to big cities in search of work, leading to overcrowding and slum housing. An awareness of problems brought by industrialisation informs images of the Bedlam furnaces at Coalbrookdale, particularly in De Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night* 1801. Edward Wadsworth, in the twentieth century, was inspired by the forms of industry to paint near-abstract works. Another trend came into being in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when William Morris, reacting against the monotony and uniformity of factory production, engaged in a nostalgic attempt to retrieve the flavour of a medieval past where everything was handmade. Similarly, from 1884 a group of artists and writers including Robert Louis Stevenson fled from the great cities and congregated in Broadway to enjoy the quiet of the Cotswolds.

THE FLATLANDS (THE EAST)

Key Work Cards:

Thomas Gainsborough *'Cornard Wood'* c1746–8
Cedric Morris *Landscape of Shame* c1960

Related Key Work Cards:

John Constable *Flatford Mill ('Scene on a Navigable River')* 1816–17
Thomas Gainsborough *Sunset: Carthorses Drinking at a Stream* c1760

Both in the *Tate Britain Teachers' Kit*, available for £12.99 from Tate shops.

This section is about the flatlands of East Anglia, familiar to us through the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, John Constable and the artists of the Norwich School. All were inspired by the landscape traditions of another country, Holland, which at the time had close trading links with that part of England. A theme running through the section is the contrast between nature as idyll and as a site of hardship for those who work in it. Gainsborough and Constable often include workers in their landscapes, a tradition continued up to the present day in the photographs of Justin Partyka.

You can choose between Turner's sunny Aldeburgh and John Sell Cotman's bleakly desolate views of the Norfolk shoreline. You can find escapism along with Constable – he banished unrest from country scenes to preserve the Eden he remembered from childhood – or you can protest at the country despoiled to make it more productive. This last was Cedric Morris's perspective when, in his *Landscape of Shame* c1960, he raged against the death of hundreds of birds from pesticide that had been used to spray crops.

THE MYSTICAL WEST

Key Work Cards:

Paul Nash *Equivalent for the Megaliths* 1935
Peter Lanyon *Thermal* 1960

Related Key Work Cards:

Terry Frost *June, Red and Black* 1965
Barbara Hepworth *Sphere with Inner Form* 1963
Peter Lanyon *Portleven* 1951

All in *Key Work Cards for Teachers: Landscape and Environment*, available for £9.99 from Tate shops.

The theme highlighted by the curators in this section is the world of myths and megaliths, which has long fascinated the general public as well as antiquarians, artists and archaeologists. The area covered extends from Stonehenge to North Wales and from the Wye Valley to Cornwall. Nineteenth-century tourists would travel to Wales, calling in at spots with romantic and historical associations such as Tintern Abbey, Stonehenge and Avebury. Among the artists, Turner and Constable, and later Henry Moore, were to create memorable images of Stonehenge, while in 1935 Paul Nash was inspired by the standing stones at Avebury to paint *Equivalent for the Megaliths*. Sometimes, as in the story of King Arthur, myth and storytelling can combine to create a powerful emotional charge while obscuring factual history. Cader Idris was one of several places claimed as the centre of Arthur's kingdom. Welsh painter Richard Wilson painted it around 1774 in an Italianate manner, which he had learned from Claude Lorrain, in order to lend glamour to the British scenery. In *The Bard* 1774, Thomas Jones shows one of the storytellers who perpetuated such legends. In 1941 David Jones was still fascinated by Arthur, as his *The Four Queens Find Launcelot Sleeping* demonstrates. Other twentieth-century artists, including Graham Sutherland, continued to be attracted by the scenery of Wales and its historical past.

In the exhibition, curator Richard Humphreys describes how artists such as Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth were attracted to the "'Celtic' landscape, language and culture which gave St Ives the same exotic allure as Wales', and settled there during the second world war. The work they produced, alongside local artists like Peter Lanyon, combined abstraction with landscape reference.

BEFORE VISITING

- This exhibition will lead you on a virtual journey round the country, mainly showing you images from the past. Does the past seem like another country to you? How interested are you in what it would have been like to live in your area 100 years ago?
- Do you ask your parents about their history? How far back do you know about your family – your grandparents/great-grandparents? Is it important for you to feel that you fit into that history?

FOR EACH SECTION

1. The Romantic North

- Pretend that you are travelling through the north looking for a romantic spot for your honeymoon. Which image of a place would tempt you to go there?
- Now imagine that you are a business person wanting to set up a factory in a thriving industrial centre; where will you go judging by the images in this section?
- Which places will you avoid like the plague?

2. The Home Front (The South)

- Like most of the exhibition this is a heaven and hell section. Find images of paradise and contrast them with paradise destroyed. What has caused the destruction?
- It is worth looking at the date when pictures were painted. Quite often a seemingly peaceful view is underpinned by wartime melancholy. Can you find any of these?
- Other works of art are strict records of what was happening in the war. Which one sends the greatest shiver down your spine?
- Some works celebrate the country as a holiday place. Find some of these. Are the people in these paintings having a good time or has the holiday not turned out as planned?

3. Highlands and Glens

- What is the bleakest image in this section? Which is the most cheerful/brightly-coloured?
- Judging by the scenery, to what kind of people might Scotland appeal? (Think of the kind of hobbies it caters for.)
- Write a description of Scotland, based on pictures in this section, to attract tourists to visit the area.

4. The Heart of England (The Midlands)

- From looking at the images in this section, which is the place you would best like to live in? Where would you least like to live? In each case explain why.
- Which industrial scene most reflects the horrific conditions of work ushered in by the Industrial Revolution? Which new inventions can you see which would have benefited people's lives?
- JR Herbert's *Laborare est Orare* (To Work is to Pray) 1862 could be a scene in medieval England. Does the fact that it was actually painted in Victorian times make you feel uncomfortable?

5. The Flatlands (The East)

- In the eighteenth-century people did not think flat agricultural land was worthy of art. Pretend you are planning a journey either to this area or to Scotland. Look at the scenery in the Highlands and Glens section. Where will you decide to go?
- Are you a realist or an escapist? Find views of paradise as well as of protest and of everyday work. Which category contains the most art objects?
- Judging from the appearance of figures included in the paintings and photographs, in which one would you fare best as a worker?

6. The Mystical West

- Are you interested in legends? Do any places you have visited give you a spooky feeling as if magical Merlin might be just round the corner?
- Have you seen any standing stones? Find an image which best corresponds with the way you felt about them.
- Think about the way tourists travel round the country now, and compare it with the way they did in the past. See the hazards of travelling through wild Welsh mountains in JC Ibbetson's *Phaethon in a Thunderstorm* 1798. (A phaethon was a type of carriage).

ENGLISH

This exhibition affords a wonderful opportunity to compare the way painters have looked at the world they lived in with the way writers have viewed it. For primary children links can be made between descriptions in words and images. You can describe a painting to them and ask them to find it. Similarly, you can buy postcards and ask one set of children to write a description of what they see in the postcard so that others can then identify the work. Secondary students of English can make more detailed analyses, always comparing the effects available to each medium. Here are suggestions for some of the rooms.

In **The Romantic North** look at the portrait of William Wordsworth by Robert Haydon and compare his Lakeland poetry to painted and photographic views of the Lake District. For a poetic equivalent to the painterly Sublime read Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. View Turner's *Norham Castle, Sunrise 1798* in conjunction with lines from 'Summer' in James Thomson's *Seasons*, the most popular nature poem of the eighteenth-century.

The romance of Scotland, so helpful to tourism which promotes the **Highlands and Glens**, has been cultivated in literature as well as art. Inasmuch as the poetry of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley Novels* contributed to the mythologising of Scotland, they were continuing in the spirit of James Macpherson's imaginary ancient poet, Ossian son of Fingal.

In **The Heart of England (The Midlands)** you can brood over industry's transformation of nature into visions of hell in either PJ De Louthembourg's painting *Coalbrookdale by Night* of 1801 or in Anna Seward's poem *Colebrook Dale* of 1785. You can compare *The Night Express*, a poem written by William Cosmo Monkhouse in 1865 with David Cox's *Night Train* c1850. And you can look at John Singer Sargent's *Lady Fishing – Mrs Ormond* 1889, painted near the spot in the Cotswolds where Robert Louis Stevenson had written his *A Child's Garden of Verse* four years earlier.

In **The Flatlands (The East)** you can compare Constable's vision of rural workers in East Anglia with that of John Clare in his *Poems descriptive of Rural Life by a Northamptonshire Peasant* of 1820. You can look at the hard realism of Suffolk poet, George Crabbe, and compare his description of Aldeburgh in *The Borough* 1810 with paintings of the same country town.

In **Myths and Megaliths: the West** you can find yearning for the past of legend in the poem *Guilt and Sorrow – or Incidents Upon Salisbury Plain* in which Wordsworth addresses the 'Pile of Stonehenge!' or in Robert Southey's *Inscription for a Plaque at Silbury Hill* 1796. Are these emotions that can be created in painted images? You can compare the appearance of Tintern Abbey in paintings with the sentiments it arouses in Wordsworth in his *Lines Written a few Miles above Tintern Abbey*.

HISTORY

The Heart of England (The Midlands) includes images relating to the Industrial Revolution, of specific interest to those studying the KS3 scheme of work entitled *Industrial changes – action and reaction*. There are many images related to the second world war in **The Home Front (The South)**. This section is also relevant to the KS1 and 2 scheme of work entitled *What were seaside holidays like in the past?*

SCIENCE

Some of the first ever images of trains made by David Cox are included in **The Heart of England (The Midlands)** and paintings of Coalbrookdale show developments in the production of iron. There are early examples of planes in **The Home Front (The South)**. For a response to nuclear power see Conrad Atkinson's *For Wordsworth, for West Cumbria* 1980 in **The North of England**.

GEOGRAPHY

Visiting this exhibition and watching the BBC1 programmes which accompany it will help you visualise the geography of the British Isles. It relates well to various KS1, 2 and 3 schemes of work for Geography. But have the organisers divided up the country in the way you feel its geography dictates? This is an exhibition about pictorial and literary ideas: it is these that have dictated its shape. How would you divide the country into six sections in order to draw attention to geographical features?

CITIZENSHIP

One of the bases of this topic is to encourage students to move out from themselves to others, investigating and respecting similarities and differences between individuals and peoples. This exhibition allows students to explore their connection to a specific area and to compare the experience of growing up in different environments. It also allows them to make cross curricular links with geography in topics that support citizenship like KS1 and 2 *Investigating our local area* and *Connecting ourselves to the world*.



'I ADORE THE LITTLE YORKSHIRE ROAD CLIMBING UP FROM OAKWORTH AND THEN DOWN AGAIN TO COLNE, NOT MUCH MORE THAN A COUPLE OF MILES FROM THE BELOVED BRONTE 'ESCAPE WALKS'; THE IMAGERY OF THE MOODS OF HURLEVENT I HAD CONSTRUCTED IN MY HEAD WHEN I FIRST READ THE NOVELS AS AN ADOLESCENT IN FRANCE HAVE BEEN ENHANCED BY GETTING TO KNOW THE REALITY OF THESE LANDSCAPES.'

Noëlle Livingstone, who lives in Shipley, March 2005

JAMES WARD (1769–1859)

Gordale Scar c1812–14, exhibited 1815

Oil on canvas, 332.7 x 421.6 cm

Tate. Purchased 1878

BACKGROUND

It must have been fun to travel in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century when cultured tourists would play a kind of game with real or painted landscapes by fitting them into one of three categories: the Sublime, the Picturesque and the Beautiful. Gordale Scar, for example, epitomised the Sublime, whereas PJ De Louthembourg's *Lake Scene in Cumberland, Evening 1792* would have been regarded as an example of the Picturesque. These categories had been established in 1757 by writer and politician, Edmund Burke, in his *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. In his essay he described how having 'an idea of pain and danger, without being in such circumstances' can be delightful. 'Whatever excites this delight, I call sublime.' He was distinguishing between the way we would feel if we fell off the edge of the high cliffs of Gordale Scar – no delight there – and the enjoyable thrill one might feel looking at a painting of someone standing on the edge of a precipice and imagining such a terrifying event befalling them. There can be pleasure in visualising danger from a place of safety.

Burke explained that the Beautiful was the opposite of the Sublime. It was characterised by small scale, smooth surfaces and gentle luminosity, whereas the Sublime is overwhelmingly large, rough and irregular, broodingly dark or marked by extreme contrasts of light and dark. The Beautiful seems to have been less popular with artists than the other two categories – or maybe it is simply more difficult to identify.

The final category is the Picturesque, in which objects like roughened rocks, uneven foliage and gentle streams are textured rather than smooth. There is contrast of light and shadow – but not in the dramatic way of the Sublime. Whereas the Picturesque is intimate, the adjective 'vast' will nearly always apply to the Sublime.

To ensure that his landscape would be viewed as Sublime, Ward exaggerated the scale of the scar. To see this work you will have to go outside the exhibition and find the vast painting hanging above the Manton entrance stairs. The reason this painting is not included inside is its scale: it measures 14 feet (4.6 meters) wide. There is also an oil sketch for this work in section one of the exhibition, The Romantic North.

FOR DISCUSSION

- What features of the Sublime can you identify in this painting? How can you tell the scale of the cliffs? What other means does the artist use to make you feel pleasurable scared?
- Pretend to be an eighteenth-century traveller. Which paintings in section one of the exhibition are Sublime?
- The Sublime can have political connotations. Ward painted his picture between 1812 and 1814 while England was at war with France. What events in recent history might be considered Sublime? What films or video games create examples of the Sublime?

ACTIVITIES

- Make a guide to the Sublime for the area in which you live. Illustrate it with diagrams or photographs. The Sublime need not be restricted to natural landscape. You can update it to suit elements of the modern city.
- Make a drawing, transforming something small into an example of the Sublime. Seen by an ant, for example, a matchbox would be on a Sublime scale.
- Eighteenth-century travellers fitted landscape into one of three ideal types. Noëlle Livingstone (see quote above) created an ideal from her reading which she later had to modify upon seeing the real thing. Ask a friend to describe in as much detail as possible a place they know and you don't. Compare your dream with their reality.

LINKS

This painting was commissioned by Lord Ribblesdale, who owned the scar. Ward visited the scar in 1811 and made many studies. You can see some of them by visiting www.tate.org.uk/collections. Click on 'Subject Search' and key the words 'Sublime' and then 'Picturesque' into the search box to find examples of both categories of painting.



'THE ONLY MAN WHO EVER BROUGHT WORK TO CLEATOR MOOR WAS ADOLF HITLER.'

Title of an article by Conrad Atkinson in the *Radio Times*, 17–23 October 1981

CONRAD ATKINSON BORN 1940

For Wordsworth; for West Cumbria 1980

Photograph, acrylic and mixed media on board; one of 16 panels, each 20 x 24 cm

Tate. Purchased 1981

BACKGROUND: ART AS POLITICAL PROTEST

Conrad Atkinson was born in Cleator Moor, a small, once prosperous village where his grandfather and father had worked as miners. It lies inland from Whitehaven, once England's third largest port, and south of Cockermouth, birthplace of the famous poet, William Wordsworth. Hard times hit in 1936, bringing an unemployment rate of 82%. Subsequent short bursts of high employment came for the wrong reasons: the second world war and the building in the 1960s of Calder Hall, the world's first nuclear power station (the artist and his father both briefly worked at British Nuclear Fuels at Windscale). A tangible danger to miners' health from coal dust had now been replaced by an invisible danger – one of the panels of this work is dedicated to Malcolm Pattinson, who died of leukaemia at age 36 after working at Windscale. In this work Atkinson draws attention to the stark choice facing the people who live in this area: the choice between life and livelihood. Their isolation is emphasised by the fact that Cleator Moor is so near to the English Lake District which he describes as 'essentially a middle-class, high income bracket, outdoor museum and playground'.

The eight upper panels of this work are mainly composed of photographs, each containing quotes from Wordsworth (whom Atkinson admires for his clear-eyed realism), printed in pink and green to stand for man and nature. Nature is represented by the daffodils of Wordsworth's most famous poem. Hands, big or small, are symbols showing whether man or nature is in control. The final image on the bottom row shows Cleator Moor Job Centre set against an image of dead leaves as nature takes over.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Assess this work as political protest. What has it taught you about Cleator Moor? Are you shocked? Does it make you want to complain to your MP?
- Do you think that art is an effective vehicle for such protest? Would the artist do better to organise a demonstration?
- Do you think that art and politics can mix?
- Were you willing to spend long enough reading and thinking about the sixteen panels that make up this work to understand its message? Do you prefer art to be purely visual?

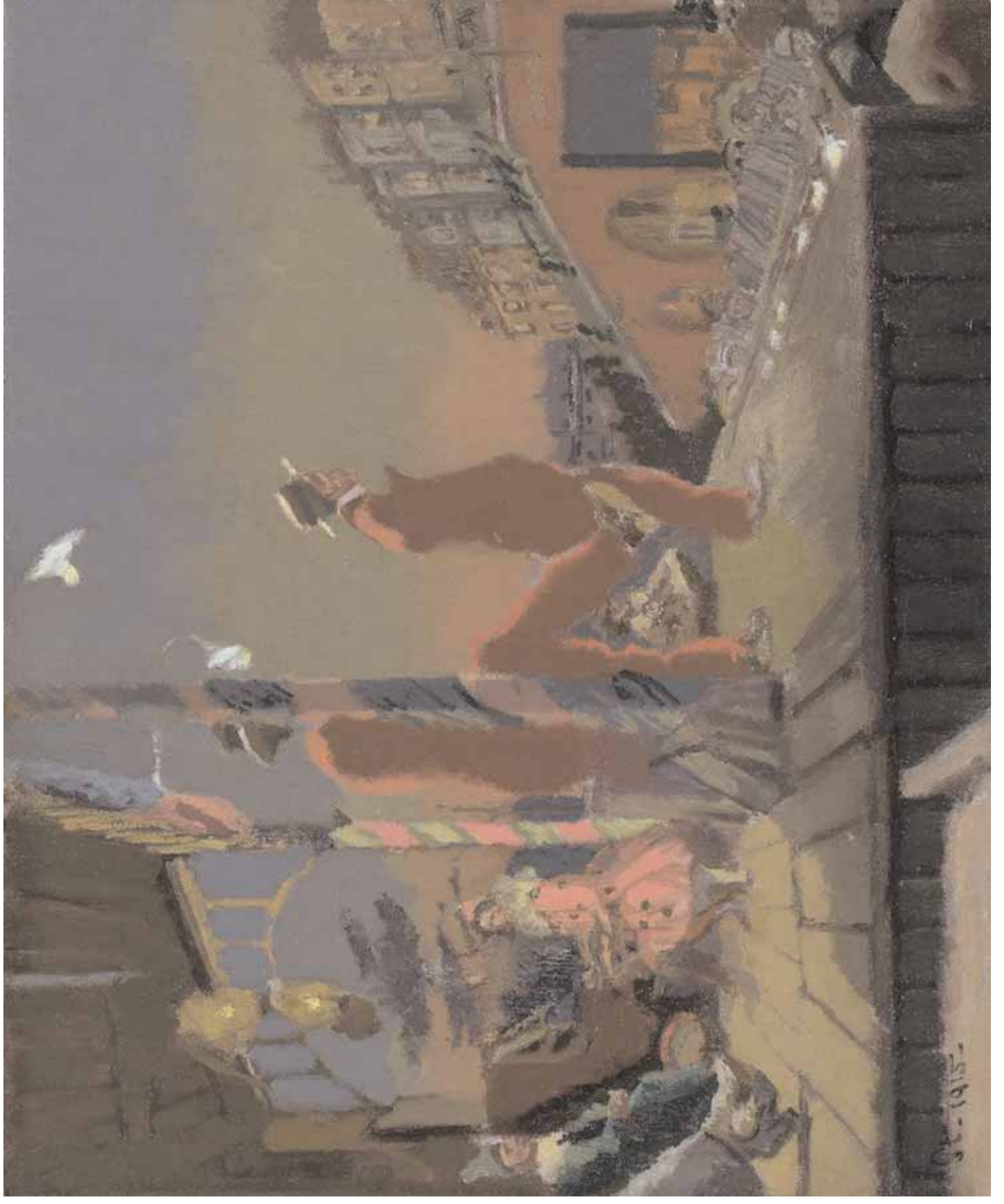
ACTIVITIES

- Organise a debate on the motion *Should art be political?*
- What subject makes you most angry? Will your objections take the form of an art work, a poster campaign, a speech or a demonstration? Plan your protest in detail.

LINKS

Compare this mixed media work with Cedric Morris's painted protest *Landscape of Shame* c1960. Which medium do you think works best?

On the Tate website, research other angry artists such as William Blake and Percy Wyndham Lewis. Go to the artists A–Z to find Jacob Epstein's *Torso in Metal from 'The Rock Drill'* 1913–14. This is a purely visual protest against mechanisation. Does it work better for you than Conrad Atkinson's combination of words and images?



St. 1915-

'I LOVE THAT THE SEA IS A CONSTANT REMINDER THAT NO TWO DAYS ARE THE SAME. I LOVE TO WATCH THE TIDE ROARING AWAY FROM THE BEACH, CREATING THE FANTASY THAT WITH ONE MERMAID LEAP A WORLD OF ADVENTURE AWAITS. BRIGHTON IS PARTY TOWN. OUT OF SEASON IT'S EASIER TO SEE WHEN THE PARTY IS OVER. AS WITH ANY CITY THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH HOMELESSNESS AND DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCY. BUT, AS THE SUN SETS BEHIND THE OLD PIER I KNOW THERE'S NOWHERE ELSE I'D RATHER BE.'

Vanessa Lawrence, from Brighton, March 2005

WALTER SICKERT (1860–1942)

Brighton Pierrots 1915

Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76.2 cm

Tate, purchased with assistance from the National Art Collections Fund and the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1996

BACKGROUND

The party's over. There are more empty deckchairs facing the stage than filled ones. As night falls the pierrots carry on with their act under a lowering sky. What is the underlying meaning of this depressing scene? It is easy to ignore. To find out you need to engage in a little detective work, as is always the case when looking at pictures. Think about the date it was painted, for example. It was the summer of 1915, when news was reaching Britain of a heavy death toll at the Front. We, the spectators, view both actors and audience obliquely from the side of the stage: in other words, we are not directly involved in what is going on. Nor can we see exactly what is happening. Our view of the centrally placed actor who is kicking out his right leg is obscured by a green and white striped column which cuts off part of his face from us as well as much of his body. Could this mirror the way we perceive such world affairs as wars, of which the media provides only a partial reflection? Now think about the colours. Brighter than the artist's usual palette, which was often described as 'Sickert's mud', they are nonetheless far from cheerful. Tate curator Toby Treves calls them acid. He explains that Sickert, for whom surface texture mattered a great deal, has smudged the bright colours flat onto the canvas using touches of dry paint. Is there no hope then? Maybe there is with the two white birds soaring up over the stage.

Sickert was staying in Brighton that summer with a patron. Over a period of five weeks he regularly watched and sketched the pierrots on their stage erected on the beach. Two oil paintings resulted, of which this is the second and more vividly coloured. Sickert admired the work of Edgar Degas and, like him, frequented places of entertainment in search of subject matter.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Compare and contrast this painting with an earlier view of Brighton beach by John Constable: *Chain Pier, Brighton* 1826–7. Are there any similarities at all between the two works?
- John Nash (brother of Paul) painted *The Cornfield* during the war in 1918. As a detective, can you discover any relationship between his choice of subject, the way it is painted and the fact that it was wartime?
- Divide into teams. Each team is given a different painting to investigate. Find out which team contains the best set of detectives!

ACTIVITIES

- Explore Sickert's use of bright colours to create an edgy, doom-filled atmosphere. Create your own palette of colours, related to the ones he chose, but which would create a warm, cheerful painting.
- Copy a section of the painting using firm outlines instead of blurred edges. How does this affect the mood?

LINKS

Visit www.tate.org.uk/collections and find Sickert in the Artists' A–Z section. Find other works by the artist that treat the theme of entertainment. Is their mood very different from this painting? Analyse the ways Sickert creates different atmospheres.



'SOON AFTER DAWN IN THE EARLY SUMMER THE GIRL HAS TO CATCH AND TETHER THE BULL: SHE ENTICES HIM WITH A BUCKET OF FODDER AND HIDES THE CHAIN BEHIND HER, READY TO SNAP ON TO THE RING IN HIS NOSE AS SOON AS IT IS WITHIN HER REACH – A DELICATE AND DANGEROUS JOB.'

Evelyn Dunbar about the land girl in this picture, 1956

EVELYN DUNBAR (1906–1960)

A Land Girl and the Bail Bull 1945

Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 182.9 cm

Tate. Presented by the War Artists Advisory Committee 1946

BACKGROUND

Both world wars helped to change the position of women in society. In wartime their contribution became essential, as was made clear when conscription was introduced for women in the second world war. Freedom to work encouraged them to participate in professions formerly dominated by men. Whereas artists in the past had been predominantly male – with a few exceptions of women artists in families where there were also male artists – this was all beginning to change by 1945.

Evelyn Dunbar had a thorough art education in three different art schools before she was appointed Official War Artist in 1940. This role meant that she had to record aspects of life in Britain during the war. She followed the Women's Land Army, painting them sorting potatoes in Berwick, pruning trees in Sussex and looking after dairy herds on the Hampshire Downs. This painting, in which she imagines a land girl moving up to a bull to catch him, belongs to the last category. The bail is the name given to the moveable shed where cows are milked.

The county of Hampshire lies along the south coast of England, the area most vulnerable to attack because it is closest to the continent. The beauty of nature heightens the horror of a possible invasion. Artists painting in that area during wartime were very conscious of this threat.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Without the artist's quote at the top of the page would you have known what was happening?
- What is the mood of the painting? Does the landscape want to make you go there? What details attract your eye? Is there anything to suggest war other than the uniform of the land girl?
- Storms at sea can be used as a metaphor for troubled times. Does the weather play a part in creating the mood of this wartime painting?
- Compare this painting with those by a male war artist, Paul Nash. Are there aspects of his *Bomber in the Corn* drawing of 1940 that make it seem more male than this painting?

ACTIVITIES

- The south coast is an area of holiday resorts. Find paintings that celebrate leisure activities. Which one best suggests a relaxed holiday mood?
- Which is the most terrifying image of war in this section?
- How unusual is this painting in being the work of a female artist? Check how many other works by women are included in the exhibition.

LINKS

William Holman Hunt's *Our English Coasts (Strayed Sheep)* 1852, is another coastline painting of the cliffs near Hastings. It was painted at a time when there was fear of a French invasion under Napoleon III. Here again, nature is so beautiful that the fear of its being spoilt becomes all the more intense.

Visit www.tate.org.uk and look under Collection / Insight / History / Military World War II / Home Front to see other records of life in Britain during the war. Look up Evelyn Dunbar in the Artists A–Z section to see other works by this artist.



'THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE TOIL AND TROUBLE, THE WILD WEATHER AND SAVAGE SCENERY THAT MAKES BUTCHERS OF US ALL. WHO DOES NOT GLORY IN THE DEATH OF A FINE STAG? ON THE SPOT – WHEN IN TRUTH HE OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED OF THE ASSASSINATION.'

Edwin Landseer in a letter to Lord Ellesmere, 1837.

THOMAS LANDSEER AFTER EDWIN LANDSEER
(1803–1873)

The Monarch of the Glen 1852

Mezzotint, 59.7 x 61.3 cm

British Museum

BACKGROUND

This is an engraving of Edwin Landseer's famous painting, made by his brother Thomas. Before photography became widespread, engraving was one of the few ways an artist could reproduce his image to make it more widely available. Edwin Landseer imposed high standards on engravers, including his brother, anxious that the print should be as faithful as possible to the original artwork.

An animal-lover from an early age, Landseer's first drawings date from when he was four or five. As an adult he visited menageries to make sketches and studied anatomy like the artist George Stubbs before him. Landseer owned some of Stubbs's drawings of the anatomy of the horse.

It was on his first visit to Scotland in 1824, when Landseer met the novelist Sir Walter Scott, that he fell in love with that country. From then on he visited it every year to shoot, hunt and sketch. The quotation above makes clear the conflict he faced between his enjoyment in hunting and his empathy with the deer.

Landseer became a friend of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, first visiting them at Balmoral in 1850. By the time of his death in 1873 he had become England's most famous painter, as well known as a very different kind of realist in France, his contemporary Gustave Courbet. On the day of Landseer's funeral, the bronze lions in Trafalgar Square, which he had designed, were given mourning wreaths to hold in their jaws.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Can you understand how Landseer could love animals and yet enjoy hunting and shooting?
- What mood is created by the stag? What part does the landscape play in creating that mood? Pretend that the stag is a human being. What are his or her characteristics? Can you think of someone you know who has these characteristics?
- What do you think Landseer liked about this landscape? Look at other prints after him in the exhibition to help you decide. How different is this landscape from the natural landscape where you live?

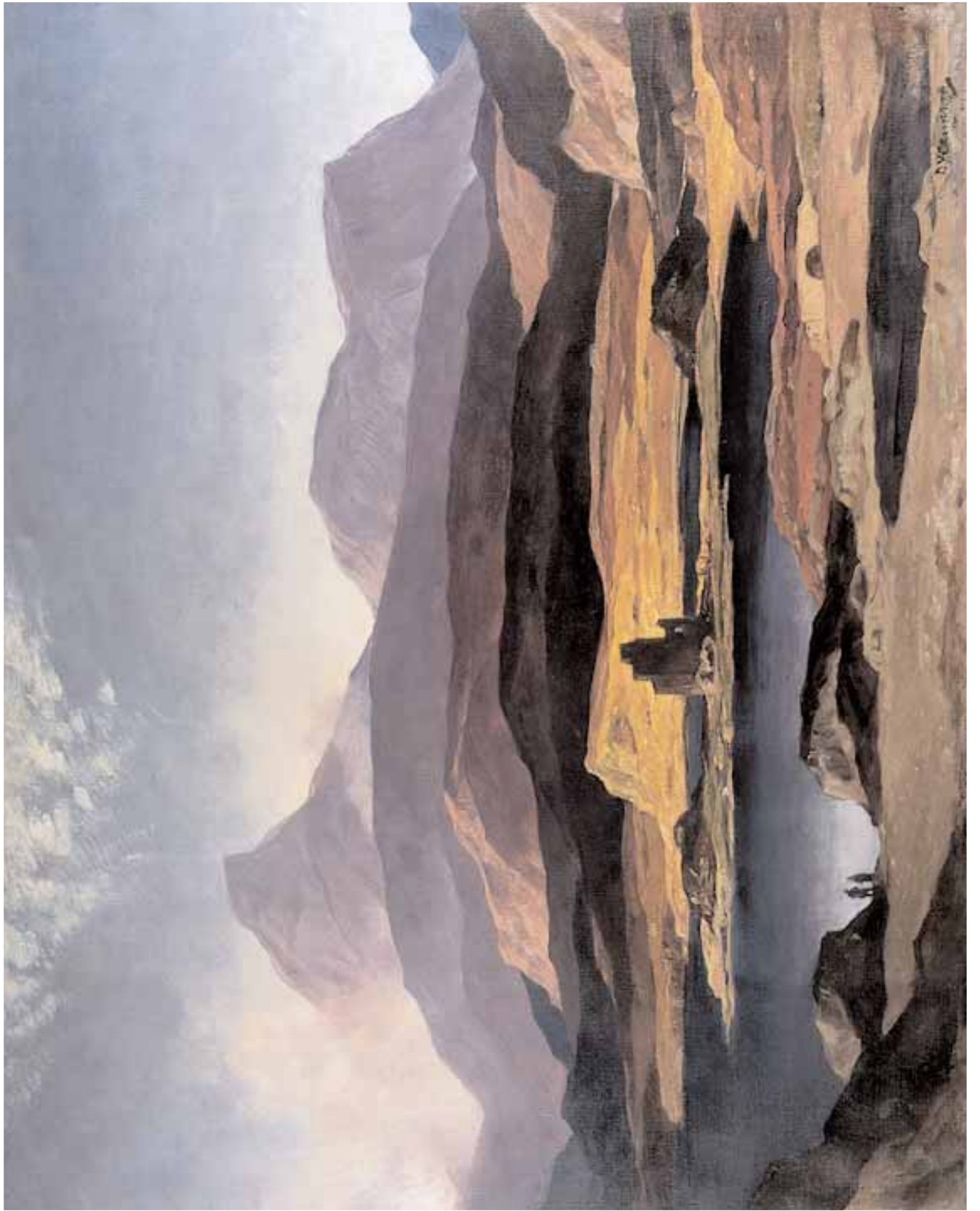
ACTIVITIES

- Landseer evokes loneliness in a sparsely inhabited landscape. Look in section 1, The Romantic North, to find an artist who paints loneliness in crowded streets. With which type of loneliness do you identify more?
- Look at other animals shown in the Scottish landscape such as Gourlay Steell's *A Highland Parting* 1885. Do these create a similar emotional impact to the stag?
- Look up close at an engraving to see the pattern of lines used to create variations in tone from light grey to velvety black.

LINKS

Compare Landseer's stag with paintings by Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) by visiting www.musee-orsay.fr and looking at Collections. Courbet also painted stags, but while Landseer is sometimes considered outdated Courbet is seen as a precursor of modern art. Can you understand why this should be?

Compare this image with the hunting paintings by contemporary artist Michael Andrews. Does Andrews retain any of the character of Landseer's lonely stag in his work? Is there the same sense of Scottishness about his paintings?



'O NATURE! A' THY SHEWS AN' FORMS
TO FEELING, PENSIVE HEARTS HAE CHARMS!
WHETHER THE SUMMER KINDLY WARMS,
WI' LIFE AN' LIGHT,
OR WINTER HOWLS, IN GUSTY STORMS,
THE LANG, DARK NIGHT!'

Robert Burns To William Simpson, 1785

DAVID YOUNG CAMERON (1865–1945)

The Wilds of Assynt c1936

Oil on canvas, 102.1 x 127.9 cm

Perth Museum and Art Gallery

BACKGROUND

Born in Glasgow, DY Cameron trained as an artist in Edinburgh and then lived in London before returning permanently to Scotland in 1899 and settling in the village of Kippen near Stirling, where he remained until his death. Barbara Rait, who lives there, describes it as it is now: 'From my kitchen window, the mountain of Ben Ledi [frequently painted by Cameron] appears as a far-off pyramid, over the winter months sifted with snow. Kippen is cradled by mountains and the church which played such a large part in DY Cameron's life is surrounded by the village.'

Cameron was skilled as an etcher, producing sets of prints on various themes, such as the *Clyde Set*, following the example of J McNeill Whistler's *Thames Set*. You can see his etching of *Ben Lomond* 1923 in a showcase in this section. Until the depression of the 1920s, prints were relatively inexpensive and many people collected them. As a result Cameron became so wealthy that he was able to travel abroad with his wife in a chauffeur-driven Daimler! The bright colours revealed to him by the warm sun in the South of France and in Italy led him to turn away from the grey and earth tones of earlier paintings to the rich plums and ochres of this work, considered by the artist as his finest large oil.

The painting shows the ruins of Ardveck Castle on Loch Assynt with the distant peaks of Quinag. The castle was the scene of a dramatic event in Scottish history during the time that Cromwell ruled England. James Graham, first Marquis of Montrose, a supporter of King Charles I, arrived there while fleeing from Cromwell's Parliamentary Troops. The owner of the castle was away but his wife, Christian McLeod, took in the starving fugitive and under the pretence of hospitality ushered him into a dungeon while she sent for troops to take him into custody.

DY Cameron had an intense love of Scotland but the picture might also contain a more personal element. Painted five years after the death of his wife of thirty-five years, it could reflect his state of mind at that time. The inclusion of the castle suggests that, like Constable, the artist might have felt that the death of his wife had left him a ruin.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Imagine yourself to be one of the foreground figures. How do you feel standing by the loch, far away from the nearest shop, with a ruined building opposite and high mountains on the horizon?
- Compare this Scottish landscape with the artist's etching of Ben Lomond (in a showcase). What features of his country are promoted in both works?
- In a country like Scotland, with historically uneasy links to central government in London, the countryside can come to stand for innate qualities in the inhabitants. (Think of the difficulty of living in a cold, sparsely inhabited country). Can you guess what qualities you would need to survive there?
- In terms of colour, what is the focal point of the painting? Discuss the way the artist uses colour to lead your eye into depth.
- Does your 'feeling, pensive heart' respond more to scenes in nature or the town?

ACTIVITIES

- As a member of the Scottish Tourist Board you have to promote the attractions of the country. What features does this section highlight? Does it tell you anything unexpected about the region? Do you think Scots might feel that it repeats clichés rather than providing a fresh assessment?
- One of the most noticeable features of late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century Scottish painting is the artists' use of bright colour. Is there much evidence of that in this section?

LINKS

Visit www.tate.org.uk to compare this painting with *Ben Ledi* 1914 by the same artist. Describe the typically Scottish colours of this landscape, which snow has blotted out in *Ben Ledi*.

Compare the way the sky is painted in *The Wilds of Assynt* with John Constable's skies – see *The Flatlands (The East)*. What is the difference?



'IN THIS PART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE TIME MOVES SLOWLY. MUCH OF THE LAND IS STILL OWNED BY ARISTOCRATIC FAMILIES AND LEASED TO TENANT FARMERS. WE PAY RENT AND IN EXCHANGE THE LANDOWNER PROVIDES US WITH A HOME WITH ITS OWN SUPPLY OF MINERAL WATER AND PROTECTED BY A HANDY TEAM OF GAMEKEEPERS.'

Veronica Pickering, who lives in Nottinghamshire, March 2005

GEORGE STUBBS (1724–1806)

Horse Frightened by a Lion ?exhibited 1763

Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 101.9 cm

Tate. Purchased with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the National Art Collections Fund and the Friends of the Tate Gallery, 1994.

BACKGROUND

The Pickeringings (see quote above) live next to Creswell Crags, the area in Nottinghamshire that inspired Stubbs's late-eighteenth-century picture. Archaeologists have been exploring the caves for more than 100 years, discovering traces left by the animals and people who passed through in the ice age. Recent finds include stone tools and the skeleton of a baby hyena that had died in its burrow. They have also found the earliest, most northerly images ever discovered in Britain cut into the limestone walls, including outlines of ibex, bison, a horse and birds. It is likely that Stubbs knew of the spot's ancient history, but not the drawings.

During Stubbs' lifetime, before the advent of railways, the area was too remote for many tourists to reach. Because public transport was limited, people travelled much less than now and many would have feared the unknown. The frightening scene depicted by Stubbs might well have confirmed such fears. The subject was one that fascinated the artist, perhaps because he had seen an antique sculpture on the same theme when he was in Rome in 1754. He made many versions of it, including one for a black pottery relief produced by Wedgwood. Before embarking on the paintings he sketched caged lions in several places including the Tower of London. His versions illustrate different stages of the drama; here, the terrified horse has just sensed the predator stalking it, in others the lion has already dug its teeth into the horse's flesh.

GEORGE STUBBS'S FASCINATION WITH SCIENCE

George Stubbs is known for his paintings of animals and was, according to curator Richard Humphreys, 'the most brilliant horse painter of his, or indeed any, age'. He achieved his skills by adopting the scientific habit of close observation, respecting knowledge gained from experiment rather than that handed down by tradition. Born in Liverpool, he was the son of a leather seller. The first part of his career was spent in the north of England but around 1758, aged 35, he moved to London where he spent the rest of his life. Having studied anatomy at the County Hospital in York, he engraved illustrations showing his own dissections for John Burton's essay on midwifery. Around 1756 he spent sixteen months dissecting horses and drawing each stage of the process for *The Anatomy of the Horse*, which was praised by anatomists when the engravings were published in 1766. Once established in London, Stubbs invited surgeons William and John Hunter to dissect a human body in front of the members of the Society of Artists. Stubbs's investigation into the structure of both animals and humans, fifty years before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, might have led him to ponder over similarities between them. Certainly his paintings encourage viewers to identify with the horse's emotions as the lion moves towards it.

FOR DISCUSSION

- In pairs where one person takes the part of the lion, the other of the horse, describe what it would feel like to be the animals. Can you think of parallel situations in which both aggressor and victim are humans?

SECONDARY STUDENTS

- In the eighteenth century, artists were encouraged to present dramas of extreme emotion in their paintings like those in Shakespeare's tragedies. It was believed that such dramas were the proper subject of art and would provoke noble thoughts in the spectator. Do you think that certain subjects are right for art and others not? Visit www.tate.org.uk and browse through Tate Collection Displays to help you decide.
- How has Stubbs matched up the landscape to the animal drama? What are the lines in the landscape and how do they relate to those of the animals? Look at how the animals are positioned in relation to the cave and the sky. Does this tell us anything about who is the good guy and who the bad?

DRAWING ACTIVITIES

- It is thought that cave artists made images of what they needed most – the animals they wanted to eat for food, for example. Make drawings of the things you consider most vital to your life.
- Stubbs's lion intent upon attacking a horse expresses our fears of the unknown with the domestic (human) horse confronted by a dangerous wild animal. Is there any place that you are frightened of visiting? Is it a far off country or is it just down the street from where you live? Draw an animal, real or imaginary, to encapsulate your fears.
- The twentieth-century Surrealists knew that precise drawing and observation of the real was the way to make imaginary objects seem more frightening. Make life studies from a real animal and see whether it helps your imaginary one come to life.

LINKS

Visit www.creswell-crags.org.uk to find out more about the area's rich history.

Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–97) was a contemporary of Stubbs who was also very interested in developments in science and technology. Like Stubbs, Wright was excited by positive aspects of technology. Both of them painted before suffering caused by long hours, poor pay and slum housing became a widespread consequence of the industrial revolution.



'COLEBROOK DALE ITSELF IS A VERY ROMANTIC SPOT ... TOO BEAUTIFUL TO BE MUCH IN UNISON WITH THAT VARIETY OF HORRORS ART HAS SPREAD AT THE BOTTOM.'

Arthur Young in 1776

PHILIP JAMES DE LOUTHERBOURG (1740–1812)

Coalbrookdale by Night 1801

Oil on canvas, 68 x 106.7 cm

National Museum of Science & Industry (Science Museum, London)

BACKGROUND: TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Iron has been made along the banks of the river Severn in Shropshire since at least the time of Henry VIII because the area is so rich in all necessary raw materials. Iron ore must be roasted with carbon to set free the iron metal; limestone is added to take off impurities such as slag, which floats to the surface on the liquid metal pool. From earliest (Iron Age) times, charcoal had been used, by slow-smouldering the wood of plentiful local trees. But charcoal fires cannot be made to burn hot enough as charcoal is not strong enough to keep the fire open to bellows of air. In 1709, Abraham Darby began experimenting with harder coke, made by driving off volatiles from coal. At high temperatures carbon monoxide from the coke reacts with oxygen in the ore to release liquid iron and carbon dioxide. The painting shows the moment when the furnace, in the buildings on the right hand side where the iron ore has been smelted with coke and ground limestone, is tapped to let out the liquid. A hole is drilled through the furnace bricks and a flood of white hot iron whooshes out. Pig iron is the crude iron which cools down in sand moulds. It is brittle as it contains too much carbon, and must be laboriously heated until almost pure 'wrought' iron collects as lumps in an open hearth. No steel – which contains precise amounts of carbon – could be made in those days. It was either brittle cast iron (as in the Iron Bridge or our drainpipes) or expensive wrought iron used by blacksmiths to make fancy gates for the rich or horseshoes for everybody. In this painting, flames and smoke are issuing from hearths in the middle distance. In the foreground are iron castings and horses pulling a cart full of timber.

HOW DOES THE ARTIST PRESENT THIS INDUSTRIAL SITE?

De Louthembourg has divided his painting into three distinct sections rather like the flats in a stage set, following the model established by Claude Lorraine in the seventeenth century. In the foreground, where dark buildings are outlined, there are people and a horse and cart; the factories are in the middle ground and red and yellow flames fill the background. The subject matter forms a strong contrast with Claude's idealised landscape, well known to art lovers at the time. You can either see this place as a noble product of man's technical ingenuity or, in contrast to its prototype, as the hellish deformation of a beautifully wooded river landscape.

Ironbridge soon became a tourist attraction for many artists including Turner, who came for the spectacles of both the iron bridge and the Coalbrookdale manufactory. Whereas in 1776 Arthur Young had described the 'humble but happy inhabitants of this romantic spot', by 1801 it had become an industrial site and the effects of pollution were beginning to be felt. People's early optimism that industry would benefit the poor was clouding over.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Think about the scale of people and horses compared to flames and smoke. Which are more impressive? Can you see the heavenly moon? How important is its light in comparison with that of the furnace?
- Discuss how you would feel about the place if a) you had lived there when it was unspoilt nature or b) were the foreman of the factory. Organise a debate in which representatives of Telford (the site of the ironworks) defend the ironworks against protesting local residents.
- De Louthembourg started his adult life as a theatre designer. How might that training have influenced the appearance of the picture? How do you think he viewed this place – as a triumph of industry, as hell on earth, or as a combination of the two? Find evidence in the painting to back up your conclusion.

ACTIVITIES

- Can you think of a contemporary industry which brings benefits to the region, such as employment, but also pollutes it? (The stench produced by smelting was horrific). Create a design for a mug to promote the industry as an attraction (in the exhibition you can see the mug with an image of Ironbridge produced by John Rose and Co.). Now design a poster drawing attention to the damaging pollution caused by it. Could you create an image that draws attention to both of these aspects?

LINKS

Find Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site on an internet search engine to access more information on Coalbrookdale.

Which image is more frightening – Stubbs's painting of nature red in tooth and claw or De Louthembourg's man-made inferno?



'AS AN EARLY INSTANCE HOW STRONG MY INCLINATION STOOD FOR LANDSKIP, THIS PICTURE WAS ACTUALLY PAINTED IN SUDBURY IN THE YEAR 1748; IT WAS BEGUN BEFORE I LEFT SCHOOL AND WAS THE MEANS OF MY FATHER'S SENDING ME TO LONDON.'

Thomas Gainsborough

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH (1727–1788)

'Cornard Wood' c1746–8

Oil on canvas, 121.9 x 154.9 cm

National Gallery

BACKGROUND

Curators question the accuracy of these recollections by Gainsborough, which he wrote at the end of his life. They believe that this painting dates from slightly earlier than 1748. They do agree with his judgement that in 'closeness to nature' this work equals his later productions.

In the absence of a native landscape tradition, Gainsborough looked to Holland, a country of flatlands like East Anglia, for models. For a long time there had been close trading ties with Holland – Dutch engineers had drained the fens – and in 1821 George Vincent would paint the *Dutch Fair on Yarmouth Beach*, also included in the exhibition. Such ties led Englishmen to buy Dutch paintings so that an artist did not have to travel to Holland to see Dutch art. The composition is based on a painting *La Forêt* c1747, by the Dutch seventeenth-century artist Jacob van Ruisdael which Gainsborough had previously copied – you can see his chalk copy in the exhibition.

Gainsborough transposes the rough ground and paths meandering through woods – features characteristic of Dutch art – onto a precise location, the hillside above Great Cornard, which he had known since childhood. Figures are shown exercising their rights to use common ground and the painting shows just how useful such rights were. They meant people could bring animals to graze, they could dig up manure and collect sand for construction or they could gather firewood to heat their cottages. Such benefits were withdrawn from them as landlords broke up their land into enclosures, leaving no space for the villagers.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Take an imaginary stroll through the landscape. Which way would you want to explore? How many animals can you see and what kind are they? Is everybody working? What are they all doing?
- In later life, when he lived in big towns like Bath and London, Gainsborough would make still-life models to remind him of nature before painting a landscape. In these models, he used broccoli to stand for foliage. Do you think these trees are based on broccoli or do they look too real for that?
- Compare Gainsborough's clouds with those in Constable's paintings. Which artist do you think had read scientific books about cloud formation?

ACTIVITIES

- Isolate a small foreground detail and copy it in pencil. Why did you choose that particular detail? What would the landscape look like without it?

LINKS

Look at Thomas Hearne's watercolour *View in Suffolk* 1776. It shows that Gainsborough was not exaggerating the messiness of nature in Suffolk. Do you like it that way or do you prefer nature neatly organised for agriculture as in John Constable's *Flatford Mill* ('Scene on a Navigable River') 1816–17?

Constable admired Gainsborough's early landscapes very much. Can you see similarities between his work and Gainsborough's?

Compare the paintings in the exhibition with recent photographs by Richard Billingham. What characteristics do they have to indicate that this is East Anglia?

Compare the activities of figures in the Gainsborough with those in Justin Partyka's photographs.



'FRESH TREES FIELDS BRIGHT SKY BEACH GOING IN THE GARDEN
PLAYING GARDENING BIKING CO-O-O-LD WHEN WINDY AND
IN WINTER PEOPLE PLACES'.

Stella, aged 8, about living in Norfolk, March 2005

CEDRIC MORRIS

Landscape of Shame c1960

Oil on canvas, 76.5 x 100.2 cm

Tate. Presented by the Friends of the Tate Gallery, 1987.

BACKGROUND: A LANDSCAPE OF PROTEST

Like Cedric Morris, eight-year-old Stella has lived both in London and in the country. In her stream of consciousness list of words she pinpoints qualities of life in Norfolk. Cedric Morris moved from London to a house in Suffolk in 1929. He loved the countryside and all that grew in it and as a skilled gardener he was visited by horticulturalists and garden lovers. Artist Glyn Morgan commented that 'Cedric liked animals and plants much better than people on the whole'. In London he had even been seen painting with a pet rabbit on his shoulder. He had made paintings of birds from as early as the 1920s so when in the mid 1960s they began dying in large numbers in the fields around him he became extremely upset. For some time the reason for the deaths was unknown; it was thought they might have a disease. The actual reason proved to be sprays and pesticides used to improve crop yield from the 1940s onwards. In spring 1960 there were widespread reports of bird deaths. 'The place is like a battlefield', one Norfolk landowner wrote, 'the destruction of wildlife is quite pitiful'. It is not known exactly when Morris painted *Landscape of Shame*. He would have known about a chapter called 'And No Birds Sing' in a book by American biologist Rachel Carson, entitled *Silent Spring* (published in Britain in 1963), in which she correctly identified the chemical treatment of seeds as the cause of the bird deaths. Although spraying of pesticides was restricted in England from 1962 it was not banned entirely until 1981.

The mood of the picture is set by muted colours. A rook and a moorhen lie motionless in the foreground with a plump male partridge in the centre. More dead and dying birds are spread lifeless over the earth as far as the eye can see. Whereas ploughed fields are usually fertile, nothing grows in this brown earth. The juxtaposition of rich soil with dead birds is particularly shocking.

FOR DISCUSSION

- What was your immediate response to this painting when you saw it? Could you guess what had killed the birds?
- Create a stream of consciousness list like Stella's to describe the painting.
- There is a long tradition of animal painting in British art because many English people are animal lovers. Are you? Do you find the plight of these animals as moving as you would paintings of human tragedy?
- With the recent passing of the Hunting with Dogs bill through Parliament the countryside has once again become the focus for scenes of protest. Do you think painting is a good vehicle for political protest or do you feel, along with artist Peter Blake, that we should keep politics out of art? What might be more effective ways of expressing outrage?

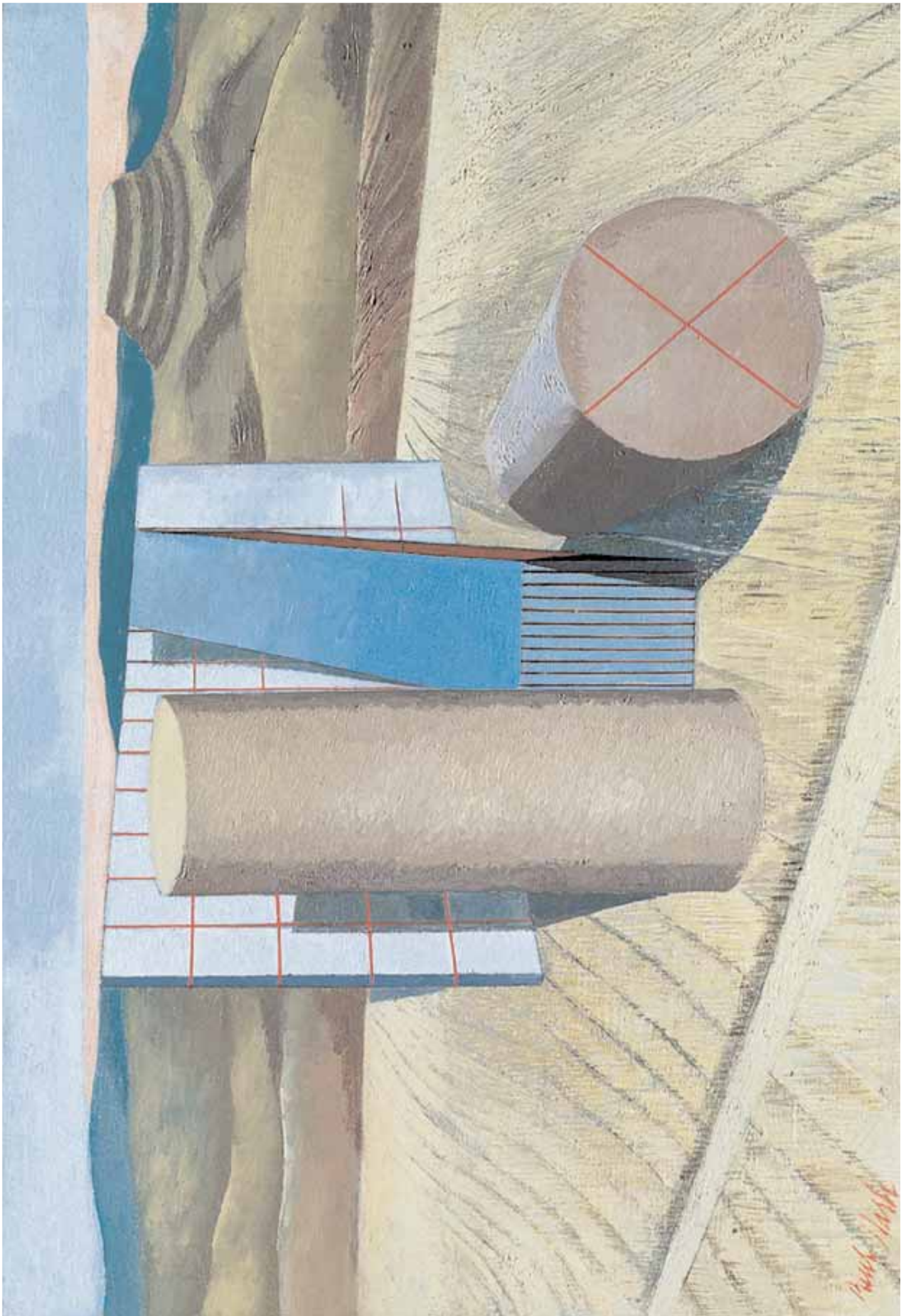
ACTIVITIES

- Is there any particular maltreatment of animals which has shocked you? Make a protest poster by making a painting or using photographs cut out of newspapers or magazines.

LINKS

Compare this painting with Conrad Atkinson's *For Wordsworth, for West Cumbria* 1980. Which do you think is most effective as a protest?

Look at Constable's peaceful views of the East Anglian countryside. In order to paint them he ignored the fact that all was not well in the country where workers were breaking tools. Are you a realist or an escapist? Which type of art do you prefer?



'VIEWS SHAPED BY NEOLITHIC, ROMAN AND MEDIAEVAL HANDS INTO HILL AND RIDGE, FORT AND FURROW. SMALL, IMPERFECT TOWNS WHERE BREWERY AND PARISH CHURCH CROUCH COMFORTABLY SIDE BY SIDE.'

Rosemary Macdonald, Ridge, Wiltshire, March 2005

PAUL NASH (1889–1946)

Equivalentents for the Megaliths 1935

Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 66 cm

Tate. Purchased 1970

BACKGROUND

Paul Nash was extremely sensitive to the atmosphere of places, believing, like William Blake, that England possesses great spiritual personality. As a child he discovered special places in nature that moved him. One of these was in Kensington Gardens. When he was twelve the family moved to Iwer Heath in Buckinghamshire where Nashes had lived since the sixteenth century. Aware that some of the trees in the garden had been there when earlier members of his family were living, in his earliest drawings he tried to suggest that there was more to nature than surface appearance by juxtaposing mysterious figures with nature scenes. Then in 1933 he discovered Avebury on the Wiltshire Downs and was struck by the power emanating from the rectangular standing stones. Like Rosemary Macdonald today, he was already aware of the imprint left on nature by ancient peoples, but standing stones are especially impressive because of their size. In this painting he creates an equivalent to those megaliths using the forms of the most advanced art of the time; his friend Ben Nicholson had begun making images composed of completely abstract geometric forms. Only once did Nash paint a total abstraction, but in a letter to *The Times*, published on 2 June 1933, he explained: 'We are frequently invited to admire the 'unconscious' beauties of the British School – 'so faithful to Nature'. Nature we need not deny, but art, we are inclined to feel, should control.' On country walks he would collect shells, bones and driftwood, becoming sensitive to qualities of form and studying their individual personality.

It is the disjuncture between the geometric forms in *Equivalentents for the Megaliths* and a recognisable landscape background that creates the feeling of mystery in this painting. At the time Nash had become interested in Surrealism and in 1936 he would be one of the organisers of the International Surrealist Exhibition in London. Surrealists were inspired by the world of our dreams in which apparently unrelated objects and events are juxtaposed, creating a climate of magic or mystery.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Are there places that send a shiver down your spine, that seem special to you? Do you collect objects because of their shape or the feelings they arouse in you?
- Are you conscious of old places (buildings or elements in the landscape) near where you live? Do you wonder about those who lived there in the past?
- What did you notice first in this painting, the shapes or the landscape? Do you think this is an imaginary or abstracted landscape or a real one that Nash knew?
- How well does the painting work for you – do you respond to its atmosphere?

ACTIVITIES

- Collect natural objects that attract you. On a sheet of paper, write at least three words to describe one of them. Now draw the object and, in the background, either emphasise qualities you have noticed in it, or create a setting for it which is completely different in mood. You could compose your background from a pattern of lines, colours and shapes or you could create a collage out of images torn from old magazines.

LINKS

Compare Paul Nash's photograph of Avebury with the painting. What qualities seen in the photo has he developed in his painting?

Look at other representations of ancient sites made in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth centuries by Henry Mark Anthony, Thomas Robert Guest, John Constable and Henry Moore. Which of these best communicates to you a feeling of history?



'THE AIR IS A VERY DEFINITE WORLD OF ACTIVITY
AS COMPLEX AND DEMANDING AS THE SEA.'

Peter Lanyon, 1960

PETER LANYON (1918–1964)

Thermal 1960

Oil on canvas, 182.9 x 152.4 cm

Tate, Purchased 1960

BACKGROUND

If you saw this work included in an exhibition of 1960s abstraction, you might think for a moment that its subject was form and colour alone, the immediacy of gestural marks. And, of course, formal qualities in *Thermal* are crucial. But these are forms made by the artist as a direct response to the daily experience of being surrounded by nature. Peter Lanyon was born in Cornwall. Growing up there with the sea, grass and cliffs around him, the wind and sun above, it is no wonder that these fed into the substance of his paintings. As well as looking down at earth and sea, Lanyon, like Constable before him, looked up at the clouds in the sky. But unlike Constable, who could only study cloud formations from the ground helped by recently published scientific manuals on their structure, Lanyon was able to get right up into the sky in a glider. And once he had done so it profoundly affected the way he looked at landscape. Constable had criticised artists who regarded the sky simply as a white sheet against which to set off the details of nature. Lanyon discovered from gliding just how much action there is in the sky. The subject of this painting is the thermal which, in the artist's words, is 'a current of hot air rising and eventually condensing into cloud. It is invisible and can only be apprehended by an instrument such as a glider'. Painting the invisible in the heavens could be seen as introducing a religious note to the work. Sadly, a gliding accident was to cut short Peter Lanyon's life before he was fifty.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Getting close to a thermal taught Lanyon things about it that he would not have discovered otherwise. Think of examples in science (or other subjects) where looking at something up close, through a microscope for example, has allowed you to discover another world.
- Look at the work of untrained St Ives artist Alfred Wallis who began painting 'for company' in his late sixties when his wife died. He was discovered by Ben Nicholson in August 1928. Discuss qualities in *The Hold House* c1932 that could have attracted Nicholson, Hepworth and Lanyon. Look at work by these artists in this section to help you decide.

ACTIVITIES

- In the exhibition, get as close as you are allowed to one of the paintings in this section to discover things you missed when looking at the work as a whole. Draw the detail, especially emphasising brush marks and colour, two aspects of the painting that reproduce least well.
- At home or school, make a sketch in pastel or charcoal or a painting to describe a physical experience like being buffeted by the wind or trying to swim in a stormy sea. (If you choose the latter you should first look at Turner's sea paintings in the Clore Gallery).
- Using a microscope (or, if that is not possible, a magnifying glass), draw something that is not visible to the naked eye.

LINKS

Compare Lanyon's response to painting the sky with John Constable's in paintings in the section The Flatlands (The East).

Look, in this room, at the way Barbara Hepworth translates her feelings about living at the edge of the sea into a piece of sculpture, *Pelagos* 1946. Peter Lewis, a friend from those days, talked about Hepworth's feeling for 'the insideness of landscape, the thrusts of sea into land, the endless rubbing of wind on rock, rock against rock, sea on rock, rock against rock in the surf creating concave and convex surfaces'. What seaside experiences does *Pelagos* evoke in you?

Look also at her then husband Ben Nicholson's response to St Ives in *1943–45 (St Ives Cornwall)* 1943–5. Before settling in St Ives Nicholson had been an abstract painter and relief sculptor. Can you find lingering abstraction in this work?

Visit www.tate.org.uk to compare Patrick Heron's *Horizontal Stripe Painting: November 1957–January 1958* 1957–8. Like Lanyon's painting, this is an abstract work that can also be linked to an event in nature. Which one?

Also on the Tate website, compare Lanyon's work with that of his friend, American artist Mark Rothko. Rothko visited St Ives in summer 1958. Patrick Heron later suggested that he and other American abstractionists had developed ideas they had found in St Ives' art in their own work.