

artlandish

learning resources

The Tour

The House (1a, 3a, 5d)

- Note how many of the family portraits have an outdoor landscape in the background. What kind of landscape is depicted? How has the painter depicted it? Is there anything ugly or disordered? Why not?
- Now look out of the windows.
- What is the relationship of the house with the layout of the grounds?
- Where does the garden end and the countryside begin?
- What patterns can you see in the layout of the avenues and the trees? How has nature been shaped?
- Can you see the Richard Long sculpture? How do you think it fits in with the patterns of the grounds?
- What do you see when you look out of the windows of your house? What is your garden like? How does it differ from Houghton?
- When Sir Robert Walpole commissioned the design of his house and grounds in the 18th Century, what do you think he wanted to convey about himself through the design of the house and its relationship with the grounds?



Things to talk about:

Eighteenth Century landscape design, each view from the house being like a painting, absolute geometric formality slowly giving way to curves and irregularity. The house and grounds were designed as one whole. Everything was for visual effect, even the white deer introduced 100 years ago, were specially bred. In the 18th Century the village was moved because it interfered with the landscaping plans. (It was originally between the house and the church and is now just outside the park gates).

Suggested activities (1a, 1b, 3a, 5a, 5d):

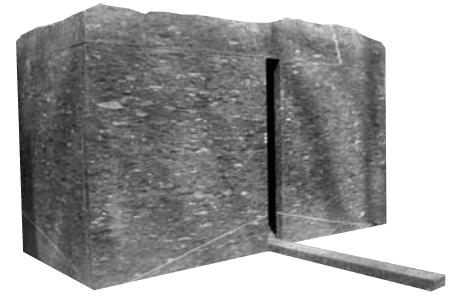
On leaving the house, look at the plans of the house and grounds. Talk about Richard Long and the ways in which he interacts with the landscape as part of his walks, using nothing but what is around him, a pencil and a paper, and sometimes a map (see notes on the artist). Note also that he rarely leaves behind him any mark of his activity. What simple activity would you choose as a way of recording your walk around Houghton that was personal to you? (For example, pick a leaf every 100 paces, make a sketch of the cloud formations every 10 minutes and mark the place of the sketch or leaf-picking on your map.). Take some time to discuss ideas in small groups, including how you will keep the record during the walk. Then, each of you choose an activity and keep a record of it during your walk around Houghton, in the knowledge that when you get back to class you will develop a piece of work out of this. (See follow-up work)

The Haha (1b)

- Did you see it coming?
- What do you think it's for?
- Why do you think they built a wall that's invisible from the house and grounds? Talk about the 18th Century idea that all nature is a garden, and the way in which the ha-ha makes invisible the boundary between garden and countryside, even the sheep becoming a part of the landscape design.
- This ha-ha has recently been restored. It is part of a huge range of work being done to restore many of the original 18th Century landscape design features.



Stephen Cox (1b, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5d)



INTERIOR SPACE

- What do you see?
- What does this work remind you of?
- How do you feel about the interior space?
- Why do you think he chose this site for the work?
- What is the effect of the trees? How do they affect the light?
- Why do you think he chose that stone? (It is called Hammamet Breccia, which is veined marble from Egypt)
- Look at the different surfaces of the stone. Why do you think he left the top edge in its raw, unfinished state?
- Describe the qualities of pattern and light in the sculpture. How do they relate to the natural surroundings?

Things to talk about:

Genius Loci, (or the Genius of the Place) is the 18th Century idea of taking into consideration nature, when planning buildings or plantings (or sculpture), ie a collaboration between place and designer.

Suggested activities (1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 2a, 3a, 3b, 5a, 5b, 5c):

Using the mirrors, work in pairs. One pupil places the mirror face up at nose tip height and walks VERY slowly along through the wood looking into the mirror, watching the changing reflections in it. The other pupil acts as a guide, hand on his/her elbow, to keep the pace slow and to prevent collisions or accidents. Change over. Discuss what it was like, what colours, patterns, qualities of light were reflected in the mirror. How is it different from just looking up into the trees?

Using the frames, work in pairs. Tape a frame to a section of the wall of the sculpture. Now look around and see if you can find small pieces of earth/tree/plant/pebble in the environment that match up with the colours in the framed section of stone. Tape them into your sketch book. How detailed can you get? Please ensure that you remove all traces of tape afterwards.

James Turrell (1b, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5d)

SKYSPACE

- How does the building fit in with the landscape?
Discuss its design, the materials used and its placement within the 18th Century landscape.
- What is the primary element of this work?
- Did you notice the sky before you came in here?
- How is the view different in here?
- What do you notice?
- Why?
- How does it make you feel?



Things to talk about:

Talk about how the mirror changed your perception of the trees, and how the Skyspace might be altering your perception of the sky. Both these ways of seeing arrange the landscape into a square.

Suggested activities (1a, 1b, 1c, 3a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5d):

Take a page of your sketch book and divide it into 9 squares. Then take one of the square cardboard frames and, holding it at arms length, capture a small section of landscape and make a simple line drawing of it in one of the squares. Change the view and fill in the other squares, so that you end up with an abstract record of your surroundings. Make notes about colours.

St Elmo's Breath (1b, 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5d)

Viewing by prior arrangement only

Maximum number inside at any one time: 8

You are about to enter what will at first appear to be a totally black space. You will be led in 2 at a time. You will need to feel your way in by placing your left hand on the wall and following the wall round and into the space. When you enter the room there are two benches, one to your left and one to your right, against the back wall. Find them and sit and watch the space and the light which will gradually grow and change as your eyes get used to the dark. Keep talking to a minimum! After a few minutes, in ones or twos, walk to the wall in front of you and explore it.



Before you go in, think about these questions. Be ready to give answers to them when you come out:

- What do you see?
- How does it change?
- Do you have a sense of the physical space?
- What colour is the light? (There is no one answer here. Discuss how we each perceive light and colour in a different way).
- Where does the space end?
- What do you find disturbing about this space?
- What do you like about it?
- What do you think St Elmo's Breath is? (Turrell has flown aeroplanes since the age of 16. How do you think this might have inspired this piece?)
- What was this building originally built for? Is it a surprise to find a space like this inside it?

Things to talk about:

Allow plenty of time to discuss the above

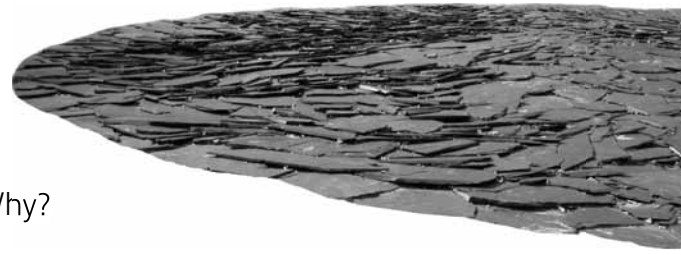
Suggested activities:

For additional activities, see Back in the Classroom activities

Richard Long (1b, 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5d)

FULL MOON CIRCLE

- What do you see?
- What does it remind you of?
- Why do you think he chose this site?
- How well do you think it fits into the landscape? Why?
- Why do you think he chose Delabole slate?
- Why do you think he overlapped the slate in that way?
- What effect does it have upon the light and texture of the piece.
- Why do you think he chose to make a circle? When asked, Richard Long once replied "because it does the job". What do you think he means by this?
- Do you like it? If so why, and if not, then why not?



Things to talk about:

Talk about how Richard Long works with just a few basic shapes: the circle, the line, the spiral, the cross. Working in small groups, collect some materials and make one of these shapes on the ground – what shape are you going to choose and why? Where are you going to place it? Go around and look at the shapes that have been made. Do you like them? Do they work? Why? Why not? Photograph the finished piece for your records.

Suggested activities (1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d):

Walk around the sculpture and at 3 different points, make a rapid sketch of the textures and light/shade in the piece. How does it change as you go round?

Back in the Classroom

(1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5c, 5d)

Suggested follow-up work on:

LANDSCAPE

- What is the landscape that you experience every day like? How does it differ from Houghton? What issues are important to you about the landscape? What would you like to highlight about your everyday landscape? How might you do that?
- Look at 18th Century landscape painters – discuss the ways in which nature is idealised, and the ways in which light is used.
- Make an idealised painting of a view out of the window.
- Make an idealised landscape collage using pictures from glossy magazines.
- Look at contemporary photographers like Jeff Wall http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/contemporary/highlight_item?acc=2001.161&page=4 who meticulously sets up a tableau and photographs it (displaying it on a huge light box),
- or Andreas Gursky http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/3823854704/ref=sib_dp_pt/103-8811846-7999028-reader-link <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/gursky/> who manipulates his photos (as opposed to the real world) to create a false symmetry or colour scheme. Paintings as photographs, photographs as paintings.
- Set up a photograph of the landscape, or of people in the landscape, as if it were a painting – what do you want it to say? Will there be people in it? What is the message?
- Look at the paintings of Julian Opie <http://www.julianopie.com/paintings/landscapes/index.htm>

particularly those of motorways. What kind of landscapes are these? Discuss the “non-landscapes” of today - motorway service stations, airports, supermarkets (see also the photographs of Andreas Gursky).

Richard Long

Make individual visual works using words and maps, sketches, things that were collected etc, recording the walk around Houghton. Discuss fonts and colours and their different associations. How would you record the journey you make to school every day in a way that is meaningful to you personally?

Choose one of the shapes Long uses in his sculptures and make a series of them. Try to think of a different material for each one, something that relates to your school environment (eg, books, pencils, scissors, sweet wrappers, materials from the school grounds or from the waste paper bin or the recycling bin). How does the choice of material affect them? What do they say about your school environment?

James Turrell

Using the line drawings made in the 9 boxes, make an abstract landscape painting. You could use some or all of the drawings, rearrange them, turn them round.....

Play with colour. What happens to the same blue when you put it next to yellow, red, green, black, white? Does it look different if you cover a page with the colour, or just put a tiny dot of it onto the middle of the page? How can this knowledge help you in your painting??

Use the camera to record a place or a still life in different lights: different times of day, daylight/artificial light etc.

Make a series of cardboard spectacles using pieces of different coloured lighting gels for the lenses (you can buy a whole range of coloured gels from stage lighting businesses). Then make a series of paintings of one subject, each person wearing a different set of spectacles.

Make paintings of the sky.

Stephen Cox

Work with the “colour chart” of natural objects. Use them to make from memory a painting of the wood they came from.

Set up a mirror next to your drawing board and make a drawing of what you can see in the mirror. How is it different from looking directly at the scene? (Many painters have used mirrors like this to help make their paintings)

Sculpture from cardboard – laminate layers of cardboard from old boxes, then carve into it. Think about how you use the smooth, straight sides of the boxes and the rough areas of the laminated sides.