

***A Discipline of the Mind* The Drawings of Wilhelmina Barns-Graham**

Educational Resources

These resources are designed to provide a simple and effective support to the exhibition *A Discipline of the Mind*, drawings by Wilhelmina Barns-Graham.

The activities take as their main focus the 'energy' drawings and are designed to use visual imagery as a stimulus for developing creative use of language.

They have been developed to work alongside the *Curriculum for Excellence* which is currently being implemented in Scottish schools.

Introduction

This exhibition brings together a large group of rarely seen drawings by one of the most significant British artists of the 20th century.

The writer and critic Mel Gooding has curated the exhibition which is the first major survey of drawings produced by the artist between 1938 and 1993.

Wilhelmina Barns-Graham was born in St Andrews in 1912 and studied painting at Edinburgh College of Art from 1932-37. She became one of the central figures in the St Ives Group, arriving in St Ives in 1940. Since 1960, she divided her time between St Ives and her home in St Andrews where she died in January 2004.

The drawings in this exhibition have been selected from the Trust's collection, and were mostly made by Barns-Graham while on her travels – Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Orkney – and reveal her constant and consistent exploration of the structures of landscape, seen and unseen. The exhibition is augmented by a collection of more tightly knit drawings that explore the mass and swell of the sea.

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of informative texts prepared from short essays by Mel Gooding. A fuller version of these and an extended essay on Wilhelmina Barns-Graham also by Gooding are contained within an illustrated catalogue.

The exhibition has been originated by the Barns-Graham Charitable Trust in collaboration with the Pier Arts Centre in Orkney.

Gallery based workshop for Schools

'words and pictures' - descriptive landscape line poems

- aim of the workshop is to use visual imagery to stimulate the use of language and explore the relationship between image and word

An introductory tour of the exhibition is followed by a short practical workshop.

Both of the workshops are similar in focus and content: Activity 1 is designed as a group activity, Activity 2 as an individual activity.

Each workshop take approx 1 – 1.5 hours and involve looking at the *Energy* drawings of WBG, and in particular *Seven Lines No 2*, (1982, pen, ink, oil on card).

The workshops are suitable for all ages – scale of work and materials should be adapted according to age group

Materials

Paper – good quality cartridge is recommended size can be altered to suit age group – younger children (under 7) may find it easier to work on a larger scale of paper.

Activity 1 per child – 1x half A3 sheet (horizontal) folded in 4 to form a concertina.

Activity 2 per child – 1x sheet 210mmx420 folded in half

Drawing pencils, rubbers and sharpeners
(older children could work with pen and ink)

Colouring materials, preferably chalk pastels or a material that will smudge well.

Introduction to the Exhibition:

The workshop should begin with a brief tour of the exhibition (approx 20mins) encouraging the children to talk about what they see.

Suggested topics for discussion:

- The variety and contrast of places that WBG visited to make work
- Volcanoes and glaciers
- WBG's approach to observing the landscape – concentration on mid and background – lack on detail in foreground.
- The patterns and underlying forms within the landscape and their fascination for WBG.
- Geological sites and structures in local area

Tour should finish with *Energy* drawings with pupils considering what kind of landscape the drawings are based on. Note the simple and limited use of colour to suggest source land, sea, sand etc.

There are two options for the practical activity

Activity 1: Concertina book

Pupils should work in small groups of no more than 4.

Each child requires one of the 'books' and access to the drawing materials

Pupils draw a series of up to 7 lines on the first 'page' based on a 'landscape' of their own imagination and use colour to suggest context.

When completed 'book' is passed to pupil on right hand.

A new set of lines etc are created on page 2 – which in turn is again passed to pupil on the right for page 3 to be completed... and similarly with page 4.

Each pupil should end up with a completed book of 4 drawings, which when opened out has a form of 'landscape' running through the 4 pages.

Follow up: If time allows pupils can create a simple word poem that reflects the image in their book.

Activity 2: Seven Lines

Pupils working individually.

'Book' should be opened out – working on left hand page create a 'seven line landscape' using pencil. Introducing colour with chalk pastel to suggest context (land, sea, shore etc). On the right hand side pupils should write a 7 line poem that reflects the 'landscape' that they have drawn.

Things to consider:

Refer to WBG drawings

Quality of lines – thick, thin, dark, light

Pattern

Use colour sparingly

Monoprint workshop

This is best led by an artist educator with some printmaking experience.

Materials – relief printing inks, rollers, polystyrene sheets, pencils, range of other 'tools' for 'drawing/markmaking, scissors, thin paper, such as newsprint or layout paper approx A3 size.

NB Workshop area will be required to be laid out with some 'print-benches' covered with glass or perspex for inking up blocks and 'clean' table areas for working on blocks.

The workshop should start with a brief tour (approx 20mins) of the exhibition, using the suggested discussion points above. Focus on the few monoprints in the exhibition

Participants create their own prints using monoprint and simple relief techniques using polystyrene blocks.

Approx 2 hour workshop

Suitable for different age groups (recommended no of participants 8)

5-11 years

12-17 years

Adult

Self-directed Gallery Activity

This activity is for use by visitors to the exhibition, especially children and young people.