

WHITSTABLE 2008 BIENNALE

Teachers Resource Pack

Contents

CONTENTS.....	2
PACK INTRODUCTION	4
CLIO BARNARD	5
'PLOTLANDS'	5
1) <i>Object Inventory</i>	6
2) <i>Inside - Out</i>	7
3) <i>Peculiar Placards</i>	8
4) <i>Interior - Exterior</i>	10
JANANNE AL-ANI.....	11
'THE GUIDE AND FLOCK'	11
1) <i>Journey</i>	12
2) <i>Cut-out Characters</i>	13
3) <i>A Woven Story Board</i>	14
4) <i>Matrix Tea Time</i>	15
MIKE CHAVEZ-DAWSON	16
'THE MIND PROJECTED CINEMA (WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU THINK AND WHAT YOU THINK IS WHAT YOU SEE) PART 1'	16
1) <i>Chinese Whispers</i>	17
2) <i>Sub Titles</i>	18
3) <i>Back to Back Drawing A and B</i>	19
4) <i>Dream Gazette</i>	20
NICK CROWE	21
'THE DROWNING OF TUVALU'	21
1) <i>Forgotten Sounds</i>	22
2) <i>Past and Present</i>	23
3) <i>Video Time Machine</i>	24
4) <i>Beach Museum</i>	25
OREET ASHERY	26
'THE SAINTS OF WHITSTABLE'	26
1) <i>Make Your Own Festival</i>	27
2) <i>Poster Power</i>	29
3) <i>Mini Demonstration</i>	30

PERFORMANCE ON FILM	31
1) <i>Roll It</i>	31
2) <i>Turn Table Portrait</i>	32
3) <i>Changing Backgrounds</i>	33
4) <i>Film Club</i>	34
 RYAN GANDER	 36
'AS IT PRESENTS ITSELF - SOMEWHERE VAGUE'	36
1) <i>Phenakistoscope</i>	37
2) <i>Flat-Bed Animation</i>	38
3) <i>Swarm Animation</i>	39
4) <i>A Silent Conversation</i>	40
 SERENA KORDA	 41
'THE LIBRARY OF SECRETS'	41
1) <i>Contemplation and Communication</i>	42
2) <i>Memory Bank</i>	43
3) <i>Secret Locations</i>	44
4) <i>Directions and Signs</i>	45

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Teachers Resource Pack

Pack Introduction

The Whitstable Biennale Teachers Resource Pack has been designed to encourage schools to use both the Biennale and the town itself as a creative resource. It includes an extensive selection of activities devised in response to the exhibiting artists and utilising a variety of techniques including video, performance and construction.

In keeping with the work in the Biennale, students will in particular, be encouraged to explore possibilities for socially engaged practice. A primary aim of the pack being to challenge the notion of artist and viewer, students will explore ways in which to create interventions, at school and in the wider community, that invite public contribution and comment.

Whilst the pack has been compiled with the Whitstable Biennale 2008 in mind and provides a useful counterpart to visiting the show, it can be used as an educational resource well beyond the timeframe of the exhibition.

You will find that the pack is divided into sections, each relating to one of the Biennale artists. Each section is headed by a brief description of the artist, followed by a short overview of the practical activities. Each activity is numbered and may include references to other relevant artists.

More information about each of the Biennale artists can be found through the website. Furthermore, all of the artists mentioned have an extensive practice, which can be accessed through a regular web search.

We have endeavoured to include a wide range of activities, which explore the use of a diverse variety of materials and are suitable for a range of age groups. You may choose to adapt and develop these ideas for application across the curriculum.

Education Co-ordinator

Alice Walton

Contributing Artists

Abigail Hunt

Abi Gilchrist

Alex Schady

Clio Barnard

'Plotlands'

Clio Barnard is an artist and filmmaker, based in Whitstable. Her work often explores the relationship between documentary and fiction.

The train that runs between London and East Kent travels through Seasalter Levels. At one time there was a thriving plotland community on this stretch of marshland, but in the last six years the shacks, livestock and caravans have gradually disappeared, leaving only a few abandoned and burnt out caravans, wooden huts and overgrown plants marking out what were once gardens.

Clio Barnard's *Plotlands* project, consisting of a book and a site-specific film that can only be viewed from a train window, explores this now defunct, makeshift and marginalised community. Barnard invites us to imagine the problems and possibilities that such an unofficial and invisible lifestyle might afford us nowadays.

As dusk falls on Friday 4th July, the passengers on three trains traveling as usual between London and East Kent will witness the project in its entirety, as all its elements come together. A copy of the artist's book will appear on each seat and, as the train passes through the Seasalter Levels, a huge screen will show the ritualistic burning of a caravan.

The burning of the caravan marks the 'death' of the marshland community, and also acts as a potent symbol, explored from various angles in the book.

Activities

The following set of activities look at what site-specific means and how placing an artwork in a particular context affects how we respond to it. Taking the school environment as the location, pupils will be encouraged to think about the familiarity of their surroundings in order to play with their peers' expectations of the space.

1) Object Inventory

Spend some time looking at the objects in the classroom. There are lots of simple activities that can encourage students to look at familiar things in a different way. Start by asking volunteers to describe something without naming it or resorting to talking about its function. For example, how do you describe a chair without talking about it as something that you sit on?



Suggest that pupils move some of the things in the room in order to confound expectations. What would happen if a class entered a room and found all the chairs facing the wrong way or the teacher's desk upside down?

You might suggest that each pupil chooses and makes a replica of one simple object such as a light switch, mug, textbook or pen. These could be made out of plasticine or plaster or simply photographed and mounted on foam board. What happens if these are positioned in alternative places around the school or even made slightly too big or too small? You might want to look at the work of Claes Oldenburg who is famous for making oversized everyday objects such as cakes and tools.

Another interesting way of positioning familiar objects in unusual places is to take slides or photos of each item and then project the images on to their new homes.

2) Inside - Out

This activity attempts to turn the classroom inside - out by positioning the objects in the room beyond the window. It can be done in a number of ways.



Try asking pupils to make detailed drawings of the things around them on to sheets of acetate. These can then be positioned and repositioned on the windows to, in effect, place the objects in a new, external context. Alternatively, suggest that pupils use non-permanent pens to draw the objects directly onto the windows. Encourage them to think carefully about how they place each image and how it relates to its new setting.

3) Peculiar Placards

Clio Barnard's work is particularly interesting in terms of the role of the audience. Ask the pupils to think about how and if the piece functions if each of the trains happens to be empty. The fleeting nature of the work, married to its out of the way location, means that the piece is only activated for short periods of time. Unlike visiting a gallery where you'd expect to find art, this piece relies on a chance sighting, taking place when the viewer is otherwise engaged in an everyday activity, namely traveling from one place to another.



This activity will result in a series of text signs that can be flashed up to people as they pass by, whether walking along a road, traveling by train or simply passing along a corridor. Pupils will each create a sign that can then be used as part of a collaborative performance designed to intrigue and confound.

Each student will need a word or short phrase. These could be generated in a number of ways, linking to an existing lesson, taken from lists or created as the result of a brain storming activity. For example, you might suggest that each pupil invent a question that they would like to ask each of their classmates as members of the community, such as *'Has Whitstable Changed?'* or *'What will be here in 100 years time?'* Equipped with a pad, the class should then move around the room, asking each individual their question and noting down all the answers.

Pupil's should choose, scale up and paint one of the answers in the middle of a piece of grey-board. This can be done freehand or by tracing the word onto acetate and using an OHP to enlarge, a process that retains the handwritten quality of the text.

This activity is designed to appropriate the aesthetic of signage or protest banners but far from confrontational slogans the texts are curious or even questioning. Find a place from which to flash the boards by standing in a line and raising each, one after another, like a Mexican Wave. You might even be able to do this along the school wall. If at all possible, try and gauge or record the public's reaction.

Have a look at the work of *Gillian Wearing* whose text signage pieces inspired a Tesco's advert.

4) Interior - Exterior

In a development of the Inside - Out theme, this activity uses and subverts the environment in a playfully way. Once again, pupils are encouraged to consider context and placement; what happens if you exchange a section of one environment or community with another?

Acting as alternative archaeologists or botanists pupils should be asked to stake out a 1m sq area of Whitstable (the beach, section of pavement or alternatively part of the school grounds). Using a combination of observational drawing, measurements, descriptive text, labelling and tracing each pupil can categorise and record with detailed accuracy their own 1m sq.

The activity should then be repeated, this time working indoors (a classroom, hall or at home for homework). Playfully subverting the categorisation and recording of natural habitats this activity will use the same tools as before. The resulting drawings can be exhibited together with a description of the sites that have been exchanged.

Done on a smaller scale, these drawings could be photocopied (possibly with exterior and interior on either side) and folded into mini maps to hand out to other pupils or to the public.

In the late 1960's the Boyle Family created a work called 'Journey to the Surface of the Earth'. Their aim was to duplicate 1,000 randomly selected portions of the earth's surface by throwing darts blindfold into a map of the world to select the sites. They would then travel to each location and throw a T-square into the air and make an exact duplicate - usually a six-foot by six-foot square - of the spot where it had landed. In this way, they worked as 'art-archaeologists', isolating a fragment of the past and returning it to public attention.

Jananne Al-Ani

'The Guide and Flock'

Jananne Al-Ani was born in Iraq and currently lives and works in London.

The Guide and Flock form a two screen video work installed in a sea container on Whitstable's main beach. As a desolate desert track comes in to focus on a large screen, an unidentified man dressed in traditional Arab clothing walks away from the camera, eventually fading into the distance. In contrast, a postcard-sized monitor shows a herd of sheep grazing on the edge of a busy highway. The calm image is interrupted repeatedly by heavy traffic passing closely in the foreground.

The piece, intentionally ambiguous, allows the viewer to meditate on what might be taking place - who is the man and where is he going? While inventing and testing possible narratives, questions arise about the timeless quality of the figure in the landscape. We are confronted by our own assumptions and associations prompted by the desert setting and traditional clothing. Al-Ani purposely plays with notions of the biblical figure or the lonely shepherd and his flock but the presence of the constant traffic reminds us that we are in the present day, bringing our thoughts back to the Middle East as it is today.

Locating the piece on the beach in Whitstable suggests a possible parallel between the scrubby landscapes of a far away desert on the one hand and, on the other, the local beach.

Activities

The following activities explore the narrative content in Jananne Al-Ani's work. Pupils will be encouraged to draw on their personal experiences to create a number of works that, although evocative of a story or journey, result in an image that is open to interpretation.

1) Journey

For this activity you will need to organise the desks in one long, continuous line.



Position the students along either side of the desks, each with a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to close their eyes so that they can best use their memory to recall images from their everyday journey to school. Recalling, step-by-step, as much as possible about what they see and hear on this journey, from the moment they leave the house to entering school, they will be asked to make drawings and notes. Students should be encouraged to keep their eyes shut and to keep their pens on the paper, even when not drawing.

Following this initial recall, a long roll of paper should be stretched over the length of the table. One person (perhaps the teacher) can then slowly reel in the paper as the students repeat the above activity working with coloured marker pens. As the paper moves beneath them, students will describe their journey using one continuous line. The different coloured lines will overlap and interlock to create an alternative class portrait that suggests the movement of the student's respective journeys.

The resulting image relates to the moving image used in Al-Ani's work and is reminiscent of a strip of film. An additional activity that might be useful in making links back to Jananne Al-Ani's films is to use a video, mounted on a tripod positioned over one end to record the drawing as it moves beneath the camera frame.

2) Cut-out Characters

Thinking about the timeless quality of Al-Ani's films and the variety of stories that one might build around the images, pupils will create miniature scenes or film sets that play with notions of timeframe.



To do this they will ideally need a small photographic image of themselves. Imagining what they would like to be doing in 20 years time, ask them to make a background for their figure. They can do this by cutting images from a variety of magazines and collaging them on to blank postcards. The finished collages could be used as the backdrop as they are or traced and painted to produce a more cohesive whole. They will then create a small structure to stand the image of themselves a few centimetres from their background.

At this point you could ask the pupils to create a narrative around their own or one another's scenes. Alternatively, extend the session by creating a film using the collection of scenarios. Try positioning the sets around the edge of a circle of board placed on to a record player or a Lazy Susan. The video camera can be static on a tripod, recording the characters in their scenes as they pass by. Finally, watch the film and, with Al-Ani's disappearing figure in mind, think about the stories suggested by the transient glimpses of the characters.

3) A Woven Story Board

Working in pairs, ask pupils to each recall an everyday activity that took place in the morning, between getting up and leaving the house. With the support of their partner, each student will attempt to act out the scenario in order to identify six key movements. These key components can then be storyboarded. Suggest that pupils annotate each frame under the image.

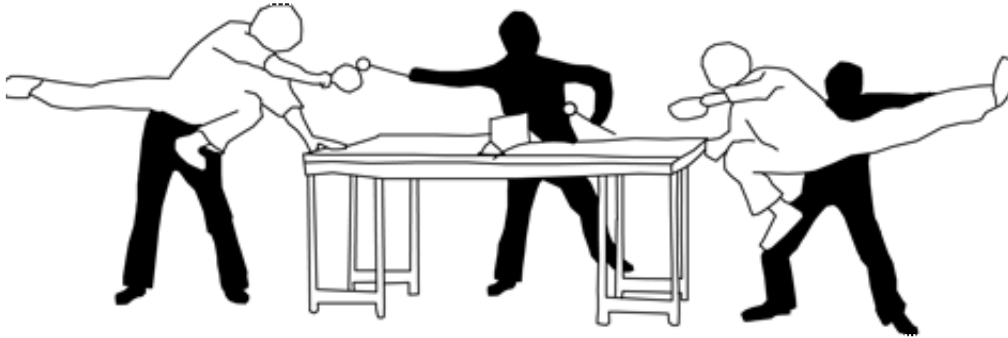
To contextualise this activity you could show the class the recent *Orange* advertisement, which uses a choreographed everyday scenario to great affect.

Each pair will then choose one of their activities to work with, practicing by jointly acting it out until it flows well, for example, making a cup of tea together or washing-up. They will then join with another pair and attempt to weave the two activities together. At this point, they should consider embellishing the movements and introducing new traits to make the performance a little more like dance or theatre.

Returning to the original storyboards, the groups should splice together the various frames to illustrate the new, woven performance. Encourage the group to think about the origin of words such as cut and edit, many of which are now associated with computers but derive from the film industry.

4) Matrix Tea Time

Continuing to explore the medium of film, the group could create playful video works in the style of *Matrix Pong*. A popular movie clip that can be found on You Tube, *Matrix Pong* is a recording of actors recreating a ping-pong game, mixing ideas from the film *The Matrix* with traditional theatre techniques. Stagehands, called *Kurokos* in Japanese theatre, are used to hold the actors and props in place, facilitating humorous and otherwise impossible movements.



Working in teams of four, ask the students to once again use a simple, everyday scenario, namely the act of making a cup of tea, to inform the production of their performance. As with the above activity the groups should spend some time practicing to ensure that every tiny aspect of the scenario is included. Two of the students will need to act as 'props' while the other two literally manipulate them through the task of making a cup of tea. The 'manipulators' will need to wear black gloves and clothes and the scenario should be acted out against a black backdrop if possible.

Once finished and perfected, each performance could be shown to the rest of the group and/or videoed. Part dance, part theatre the resulting tableaux are incredibly affective and enjoyable to watch. You might want to invite the pupils to perform them to other classes or in assembly.

Mike Chavez-Dawson

'The Mind Projected Cinema (What You See is What You Think And What You Think is What You See) Part 1'

Mike Chavez-Dawson is an interdisciplinary artist who works across a variety of mediums including film, performance and installation. His work questions the different interpretations and memories we might all have of a specific event or artwork.

For *The Mind Projected Cinema*, Chavez-Dawson will be creating a temporary cinema environment. The cinema won't be showing films, but will be asking audiences to collaborate with the artist in a series of unique performances. These performances will combine the skills of a local hypnotist and the artist's own ability to visualise an entire film from memory. Participants will be asked to take part in the 'mind projections', helping the artist summon up films.

The mind projection performances will be filmed and shown in the space during the Whitstable Biennale. Each participant in the performances will receive an original Rorschach painting of their own name, made by the artist.

Activities

The following activities are designed to encourage pupils to think about memory and how events are remembered and sometimes misremembered over time. Using the pupils' own abilities to recall events and facts as a creative tool, these ideas provide an engaging way of reinterpreting narrative structures.

1) Chinese Whispers

This activity looks at how a story can change in its retelling. What happens when a story is told again and again by a variety of people and how does time and culture affect the telling of a story?

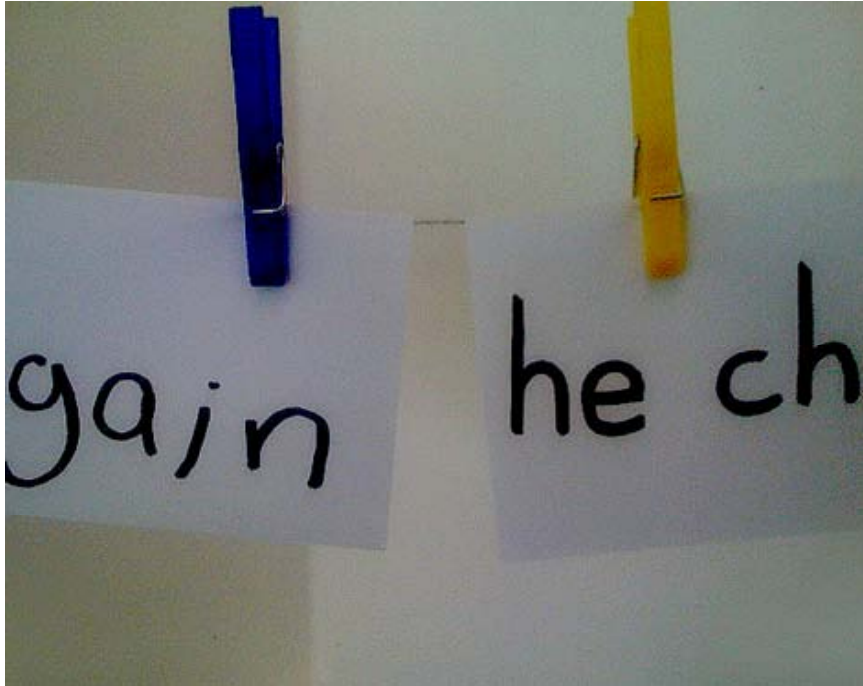
Whisper a story to one member of the class including as much factual detail as possible. Ask this pupil to relay the story to another member of the class and allow this process to continue until all the students have heard a version of the story. Then ask the class a series of precise questions about the story such as *what colour was the little girls dress?* or *How many ducks were in the pond?* Try and map how and when the story altered by asking pupils to stand, sit or signal in some other way if they recognise when a shift took place. You might try handing out balls of wool, one to represent each object in a story - how far do these travel along the line of pupils before the object gets forgotten or left behind?

After a series of playful activities using the entire group, see if its possible to use some of the information to create charts (pie charts, bar charts) by tabulating the different responses to the questions.

Alternative Chinese Whisper games can be used to hold message races between teams or to take a story on a journey around a building. Ask the pupils to line up along a corridor, moving to the end of the line once they have whispered their message in order to receive the changing message a number of times while moving around the school.

2) Sub Titles

This activity explores our ability to remember past events. It plays with fragments of memories in order to try and construct new narratives out of half forgotten stories.



Ask the pupils to recollect as much as they can about the first film they remember seeing, they may remember the story clearly or might only recall a few fragments from half remembered scenes. Using these memories they should then write down a description of the film without mentioning its title or any of the characters by name. This could be done working on a large scale using marker pens and flipchart or newsprint paper.

Suggest that the pupils then cut up their stories sentence by sentence. Either working as a class, in pairs or as small teams, ask the students to arrange and rearrange their sentences into new narratives. When each group is happy with the outcome they could lay it out to see how long (literally) their story is. This would necessitate the reader travelling around the school to follow the story. Finally, ask the pupils to reveal their source and see whether any of the films are still recognisable. You might also ask groups to give their films new titles.

Someone like *Fiona Banner* might be an interesting reference for this activity. She is known for writing up entire books and film scripts on to canvases. She has also made giant letters, commas and full stops, one of which is permanently installed near Tower Bridge in London. Making and using letters and grammar on a large scale in the school hall would also be a fun activity.

3) Back to Back Drawing A and B

Back to Back Drawing explores the relationship between spoken descriptions and drawn images. Pupils will be encouraged to consider the function of memory and how we retain certain information literally and other information visually.

BBD A. Ask the pupils to get into pairs and give them paper and drawing materials. Each pair should stand back to back, one taking responsibility for describing the scene in front of them, the other drawing what's being described.

The describer is not allowed to mention any object by name but instead has to describe the shape and form in as much detail as possible. Once the first drawing has been completed pupils can swap roles and a new drawing can be produced.

Alternatively, try describing an image from a magazine or postcard in the same way while all the pupils in the class attempt to draw what they visualise. Encourage the group to discuss the results. What differences are evident in each pupils drawing? How easy is to interpret someone's descriptions and how easy is it to describe something without naming it?

BBD B. Place some big sheets of paper on the walls around the room and once again ask the pupils to work in pairs, this time with one as the drawer and the other as the listener. Facing their partner rather than looking at the paper, the drawer should describe a room in their house in as much detail as possible, drawing it as they talk, while their partner listens. Emphasise the importance of detail to enable the students to transport themselves to the space in question, really looking hard with their minds eye e.g. *I left a book on the corner of the rug that I was reading last night. It was open with the spine facing up. One sock lay near the book.....*

Students should swap roles and repeat the activity before discussing the sensation of drawing without looking at their work. What was it like to attempt to draw while speaking; bringing word and image together simultaneously?

4) Dream Gazette

This activity playfully blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction and encourages pupils to question how context might change our perception of a story. What would happen if instead of reading facts in the newspapers we were to read a collective record of our dreams?



Acting as news reporters ask pupils to get into pairs and interrogate each other on the dreams they had the night before. Through a series of questions they need to find out as many facts as they can about this fictional event (the dream).

Using newspapers and magazines as source material the class could look at how a newspaper is laid out (the use of text columns, headings and subheadings and how pictures and photographs are integrated into the text). Each pupil should then design and produce their own newspaper page based on the story of the dream they have investigated. All the dreams could be collected together into a class newspaper that could be photocopied and distributed around the school.

Collaboration and participation are central to the work of *Jeremy Deller* who often researches a particular story or scenario in depth before working with its protagonists to create an outcome. In 2001 he worked with locals to restage a crucial battle in the Miners Strike of 1984/85. This work asks interesting questions about story telling and context and also challenges our perception of reality and truth.

Nick Crowe

'The Drowning of Tuvalu'

Nick Crowe is based in Berlin and Manchester.

For the Whitstable Biennale 2008, Nick Crowe has modelled the nine islands of Tuvalu out of lime concrete and installed them along *The Street* in Whitstable, a narrow spit of land stretching into the sea and only visible at low tide.

Tuvalu, a group of low-lying reef atolls and coral islands in the South Pacific, will be the first landmass to be entirely lost to the sea due to global warming. Whitstable itself is a low-lying town with a history of flooding, and although sea levels are rising locally at a less extreme rate than in the South Pacific, Whitstable is also likely to feel the effects. Mirroring this impending catastrophe, Nick Crowe's, temporary islands will disappear at every high tide.

There will be a twice-daily performance where visitors will be invited to use the beach as a viewing area to witness the drowning of Tuvalu in an accelerated form. Revealed each day as the tide goes out, the islands will be submerged, or 'drowned', as the tide comes in. The time that the work can be seen will change each day with the tides.

The Drowning of Tuvalu poignantly reflects on loss, as well as subtly raising issues of global importance.

Activities

The following activities explore the subtle changes that accumulate over time; the often small shifts that render things invisible or lost and that tend to pass us by.

1) Forgotten Sounds

Suggest that the class creates an audit of all the sounds that they hear around them on a day-to-day basis. This might be chalked out across the playground or cut out of sheets of coloured paper. Then ask them to remove or erase all the sounds that they think will not, for whatever reason, be audible in 100 years time.

In order to preserve a memory of these sounds for posterity, suggest that pupils work on photocopied maps of the town, marking the precise place where they last heard each of the sounds. This could be done with tiny flags on the heads of pins or with Letraset.

If possible go on a series of site visits to try and record each endangered sound on a minidisc player.

This activity could be developed to involve the local community in a variety of playful ways. Would it be possible to play the captured sounds at the locations of their recording? How would people respond to a recording of a car or bird or would they even notice the addition?

Try making Lost and Found posters, decrying the loss of each sound, to attach to lampposts e.g. *Sparrow song, joyous and familiar, soon to be extinct, concerned member of the community looking for a solution*. Would this capture the attention of the general public more effectively? Try to watch the responses of the reader and note their reactions.

Artist *Hannah Rickard's* made an interesting sound work by using her own voice adjusted back to its 'natural' pitch so that it sounded eerily close to the singing of real birds. Played outside the *South London Gallery*, the work succinctly highlighted man's interference with the fine balance of our natural eco-systems.

2) Past and Present

For this activity you will need to take a series of random photographs of the town.

Give each student an image over which they can lay a sheet of acetate. Using Tippex they should then carefully remove all of the things that wouldn't have appeared 100 years ago.



Then suggest that they lay over a second sheet of acetate, this time using permanent pens to draw futuristic images in to the gaps left in the picture i.e. what might be in the pictures 100 years from now.

3) Video Time Machine

This simple activity would be a useful exercise for a group experimenting with Photoshop.

Suggest that students use the video camera to record 10 minutes of footage of a given scene e.g. Whitstable beach. Then repeat the activity a week later being careful to frame the scene in precisely the same way. Using the IT suite, layer one section of video over the other making the most recent section of video 50% translucent.

In this way two slices of time can be made to interact with one another. The process can be repeated again and again with layers and layers of video footage.

4) Beach Museum

This activity will require permission to take the group to the beach. Thinking about Nick Crowe's site-specific installation, pupils will respond to the natural environment in order to create art objects specific to the beach context.



Ask pupils to comb the beach in a hunt for the most interesting piece of debris. Using the language of archaeology, pupils should clean, photograph and label each object they find with information including the date, time of its find and the location at which it was found.

If you are feeling particularly ambitious and can beg the support of the science technician you might attempt to cast some of these found objects in salt. Through constructing a crystallised object the students will effectively transform their pieces of rubbish in to desirable artworks.

Returning to the sites where the objects were found, suggest that pupils create

plinths for them. Made with whatever is at hand; sand, pebbles, drift wood etc, these plinths will raise the status of the flotsam and jetsam to that of museum artefact. Each plinth could then be labelled with information about the objects, using the language of the museum to further elevate what was once rubbish to the position of treasure or antique.

When the tide comes in the museum will be washed away and returned to the sea, making this a transient installation that echoes the *The Drowning of Tuvalu*.

Oreet Ashery

'The Saints of Whitstable'

Oreet Ashery is a London based artist working mainly in live-art and digital media.

For the *Saints of Whitstable* Ashery has invented a series of fictional characters which are in evidence in Whitstable in the form of a set of posters. Through this public artwork the artist hopes to engage the public in a conversation about topics such as celebrity, enigma, faith, values and community.

These posters present information about *The Saints of Whitstable* and advertise events and performances, including study groups, street interventions and collaborations with other artists.

The performances are loosely based on Ashery's research into enigmatic saints, including the cabbalist false messiah Shabtai Zvi, a 17th Century controversial religious figure who gained a following across the Eastern and Western worlds. Zvi's surreal acts included beach rituals, and drumming while walking through cities with a large fish in a baby's cot complete with pillow and blanket. Ashery stages similarly absurdist performances in order to gently question the role of ritual within our contemporary society.

Activities

The following activities are designed to encourage pupils to think about history and how it is made and remembered. Taking the pupils themselves as a starting point, these playful ideas provide possible alternative approaches to talking about the history of a given area or era.

1) Make Your Own Festival

This activity explores the power of ritual and the potential for conceiving new traditions. It playfully reinvents local history in the form of a performance of a fictitious classroom festival.



To begin with students will need to decide on a symbol for their festival, this could be an animal, an object or an abstract shape. Consider ways in which to draw on the students shared history as a means of generating ideas for this emblem.

Using basic construction materials it should then be possible for the class to make a giant symbol, this could be built from card or chicken wire or rolled up newspaper. A good way of decorating your object is to use coloured tape to cover its surface, this not only reinforces the structure but it also adds bright solid colour.

Once completed, encourage the group to consider appropriate costumes to be worn while executing the ritual. This costume need not be very elaborate and might only involve making a mask or a hat or a glove. Every member of the class wearing a version of the same outfit, however small, will increase the power of the symbolism and make for a strong visual impact.

Next, pupils need to decide on a route for the festival parade, this could be round the school building or playground or in a local square. You could ask the class to

draw maps of possible routes and then select one or join several together. You are then ready to dress up in your costumes and carry or roll your festival symbol along the designated route. Encourage the class to think about the tradition of ritual and festival. Where do such events come from and how are they established as yearly activities. Perhaps ask the students to research local history as a way of helping them create a story around their own ritual. How many times would the event need to be repeated before it became a real historical tradition?

2) Poster Power

A poster is usually used to give factual information about an event, product or person. In this activity a fictional character is created to explore how information can be communicated through the medium of a poster.

Give each pupil three pieces of paper on which to write down a) their favourite animal, b) an item of clothing and c) the first place they remember getting lost. Fold these answers up and place into three containers, one for animals, one for clothes and one for places. Pupils can then be asked to pick one piece of paper from each container at random. Using this information, the pupils then have to conceive of a fictitious historical figure incorporating all three elements into the story of their provenance.

The pupils can then use this as the basis for a poster announcing the imminent arrival of their character within the school. Encourage the group to think about what information is essential on a poster and how text and image can be combined for maximum effect. It might be useful to have examples of posters available for the class to look at. There is a huge tradition of poster design that could be tapped into for this activity. Look at the work of John Heartfield, famous for his satirical photomontage commentaries during Hitler's reign. Have a look at examples of old circus or film posters. Artist *Rob and Roberta Smith* made a poster for a project called *Navigating History*, for which he looked at the spoof election posters of Lord Charlie Banks. It might also be worth asking the group to look into visiting local library archive collections to help their research.

Try breaking the making process down into small parts - writing the copy for the poster, making a drawing of their character and adding the typography to their image. The completed posters could then be displayed around the school or produced in a simple, photocopied booklet.

3) Mini Demonstration

For this activity, pupils will appropriate the language of protest in order to stage a mini demonstration.



Using their historical figures from the previous activity ask pupils to create a slogan in support of their character. They should try to consider their characters personality and might even invent a strongly held belief or political party for their individual. Thinking carefully about typography and how text can create a powerful image, the pupils should write out their slogans on to blank postcards. This could be done by using Letraset, cutting out and sticking individual letters from magazines, painting or cutting out the text much like a laser cut. Once these mini banners have been completed they can be stuck on to a pen or pencil to make small makeshift placards.

The class could then stand in a circle around the classroom or playground and slowly walk round lifting their placards aloft shouting out their unique slogans. The event could be filmed or photographed as an absurdist demonstration.

You might want to look at the work of the *Fluxus* group, established in the 1960's to '*promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art*'. In the interests of 'anti-art', many of the artwork's produced by the movement were playful and even silly.

Performance on Film

A rolling programme of film and video was installed on a large screen at the Whitstable Museum & Gallery space. Including seminal artists such as *Bruce Naumann* and *Vito Acconci* this series was compiled to explore the use of film as a means of documenting performance from the early 1960's to the present day.

Activities

The activities in this section are designed to explore the medium of film and video. Students will be encouraged to take a playful approach to using the video camera.

1) Roll It

This activity is a good way to introduce the camera as a versatile tool, which can be used in a variety of exciting ways. It is also a means of using the video camera successfully with a large group.

You will need to buy a medium (approximately 30/35 cm diameter) sized polystyrene ball. Found in most model shops and available from some schools suppliers, these come in two halves. Cut a hole into the side of the ball in which to mount the video camera lenses, holding it in place with gaffer tape and packing securely with lots of bubble wrap. Ask the group to stand in a circle and take it in turns to gently roll the ball between one another. On catching the ball, participants should be sure to turn the lenses towards them before introducing themselves to camera and perhaps answering a question, e.g. an expectation of the session or the meaning of a given word.

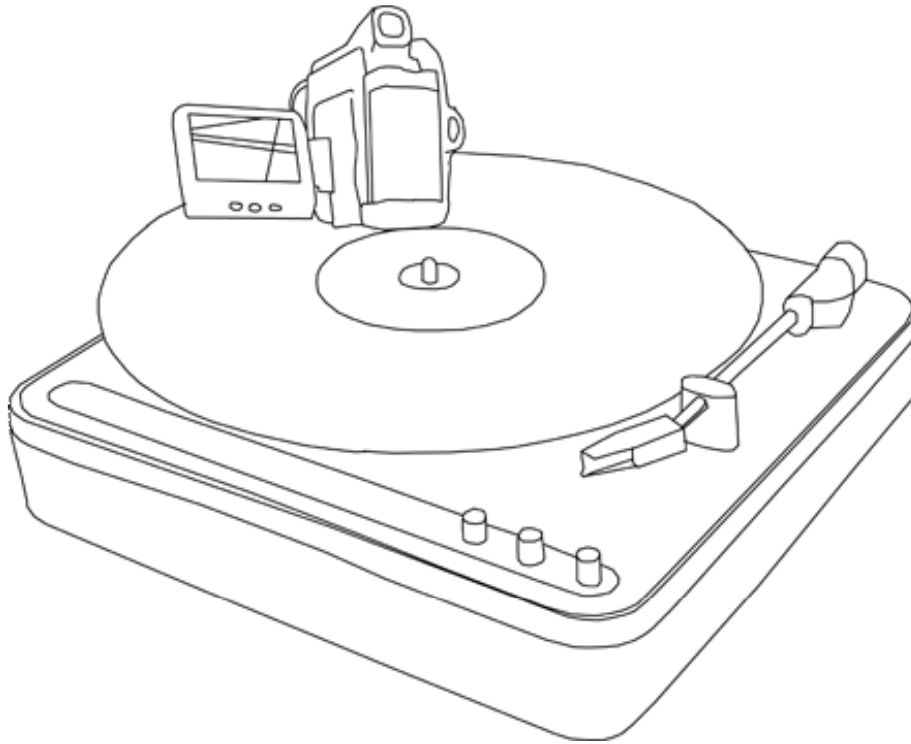
An instant version of this activity would be to ask the group to pass the camera carefully around the circle, introducing themselves to create an alternative group portrait.

The footage, played back through a projector, can be a useful starting point for a conversation about technique and language. For example you might ask the pupils to think about composition or the use of motion in framing a shot e.g. pan, zoom etc.

2) Turn Table Portrait

For this activity you will need an old-fashioned turntable.

Start by asking a couple of the pupils to draw a circle on the floor, as big as the room allows, using tape. This can be done using a pencil tied to a length of string. Position the record player at the centre, placing the video camera on the turntable. Working in small groups of approximately 8 students, invite each team to take it in turns to gather in a tight group on the taped line.



The aim of the activity is to move as seamlessly as possible around the circle while a nominated student slowly rotates the camera in time by moving the turntable. If the students manage to move smoothly, staying together and keeping straight faces, they will appear static in the resulting footage while the background appears to be moving.

Have a look at *Ulla Von Brandenburg's* film, *Around*, which shows a grainy black and white image of a group of people with their backs turned to the camera, slowly shuffling in time with the rotating camera.

3) Changing Backgrounds

This activity is a good way of introducing animation and using programmes such as *iMovie*. However, in addition to using the IT suite, it involves planning, drawing, problem solving and construction.



Split the class into groups of three. The aim of the activity is to design and make a simple brace-like structure that can be worn with the purpose of positioning a disposable camera in a constant relationship to the head and shoulders of the wearer. For example, a strap might be made to be worn around the waist, from which two lengths of wood could be attached to support the camera a metre in front of the wearers face. A second support might be required running from each shoulder. Encourage students to think carefully about their plans, considering ways of attaching the elements and drawing detailed diagrams.

As a group they will then tour the school building, outside and in, taking it in turns to wear the structure and photograph themselves against a variety of backgrounds. The resulting images, once developed, could be exhibited in a line to suggest the moving background and to mirror the frames in a strip of film.

If you have access to computers suggest that each group animates their images by simply dropping the images into *iMovie*. In the resulting film clips each protagonist will appear to be standing still while the background jumps behind them.

Loads of music videos and adverts use similar techniques. Suggest that the pupils look out for examples over the coming weeks.

4) Film Club

The activities below are designed to encourage pupils to consider the nature of moving picture. Something that is familiar to us all, whether in the form of TV, music video or television adverts, we take for granted the complex considerations behind every shot. Armed with even a rudimentary understanding of film, pupils will be able to play with ideas of framing, speed and context.

a) Frame Game. For this activity, ask the students to work in groups of four. Give each group a short description of a scenario that involves at least three characters e.g. woman reading on the bus, second passenger gradually falling asleep and leaning towards woman while third person, a teenager, talks on a mobile.

The scenario will be kept from one member of the group who will take the role of the guesser. The remaining three students will silently act out the scene. By looking through a cardboard tube in order to focus on only one person, the guesser will be asked to say what they think is taking place in the entire scene. The scene will then be repeated to reveal what is really taking place. This could be repeated four times using a different scenario each time.

b) Shot-Put. Suggest that the class works in two teams and ask each team to label a mini DV tape, load the camera and fix it to a tripod. Teams should then mark out a frame (a corner of the room) using electrical tape, within which the following activities will take place. To do this, one student will need to look through the camera and give instructions as to where the tape should be placed on the walls and floor, so that the actors will know when they are entering and leaving the frame.

This lengthy process will help students really understand about framing and composition. Knowing exactly where the frame starts/ends (they will literally be stepping over it) will allow them to play with the edges of their shots.

The groups can then devise a series of 'reverse movies'. This will involve acting out a scenario backwards so that when the video is played backwards the actions look almost normal. For example, suggest that they create a pile of boxes by placing one after another in shot until the frame is full. Act this out normally and watch the video documentation in order to memorise the actions. Attempting to be as accurate as possible, the groups should then repeat the activity, working backwards. Remember that walking backwards is very different to trying to look like you are walking normally but going backwards.

Have a look at *Alan Currall's* version where he moves objects around his studio. Its a really bizarre video, at once mundane but compelling. You are aware that something isn't quite right but it's very difficult to work out why.

c) Motion. *When editing, time can be slowed down speeded up or reversed. Students will explore this through two movement tasks.*

1) Reverse - ask the students to perform a simple task backwards so that rather than walking into the frame they walk backwards out of it. At the same time someone should drop pieces of tissue paper from above. Film this and play it back in

reverse. The person will appear to be walking normally although they might look slightly, inexplicably strange, while 'snow' rises from the floor to the ceiling.

2) Slow Mo - Ask a student to walk down the corridor very slowly, whilst everyone around him/her moves at normal pace. When the footage is speeded up it looks as if the student is moving at normal pace and everyone else is walking at double speed.

After taking part in these activities, students should be able to invent further ways of tricking an audience as well as having a better understanding of some of the characteristics of filmmaking.

You will find further activities exploring film and video in the 2006 pack, also available on line.

Ryan Gander

'As it Presents Itself - Somewhere Vague'

Born in England in 1976, Ryan Gander lives and works in Amsterdam.

As It Presents Itself is a new video installation by Ryan Gander that's made using simple Plasticine animation. The work shows plasticine models of well-known figures (including Spike Milligan and the Lumière Brothers) combined with members of the artist's own family. The characters seem to be auditioning for a piano piece, but they appear nervous and unsure of themselves and their reasons for being on stage.

As viewers of the work we find ourselves in a gallery space looking at a film of animated actors on a theatre stage. The work aims to playfully ask questions about the notion of entertainment and the nature of the relationship between performer and spectator.

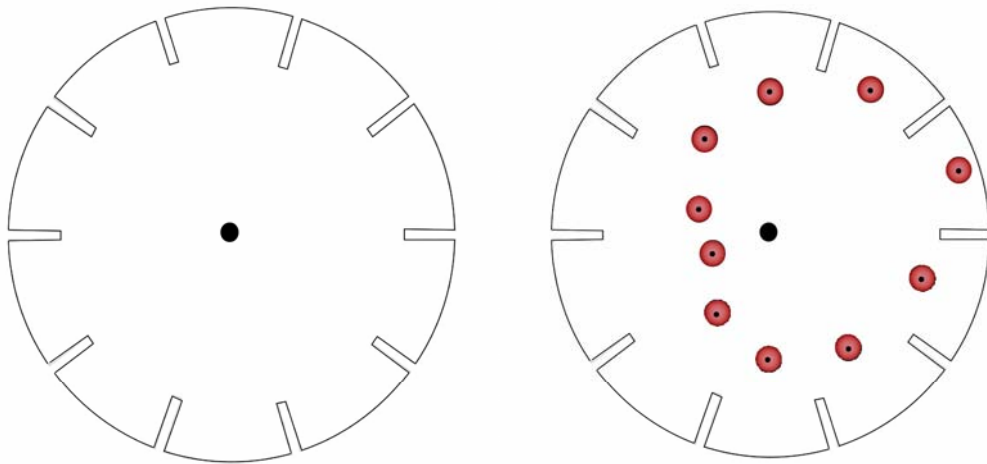
Richard Briers provides a voiceover that acts as the work's narration from the perspective of the characters involved, but simultaneously questions the intentions of the work. This rambling voiceover mirrors our own uncertainty as spectators. The characters seem to be in search of an author and meaning, lost in a theatrical loop. The work is subtle and understated, as funny as it is unsettling.

Activities

The following activities are designed to explore animation techniques. Using the school and the people within it as subject matter, pupils will be encouraged to employ a variety of skills, both analogue and digital. The activities have been conceived as simple starting points, which can be elaborated and developed as the students become more proficient in each new technique.

1) Phenakistoscope

This activity uses an analogue process for producing a very simple animation. For it you will need to print out the template provided (fig 01) and glue it to a piece of stiff card. Cut out the disc shape and make a small hole in the centre (the black spot), you can now push a pencil through the hole to act as an axle.



Ask the pupils to hold the disc in front of a mirror. Make sure you can see through the slits and that the image is facing the mirror. Now spin the disc, if you look through the slits at the edge of the disc it should be possible to view a moving image on the surface of the mirror.

Once you have mastered making the basic disc it should be possible to print out blank templates (fig 2) and draw your own images onto the disc for animation.

2) Flat-Bed Animation

This activity is a basic animation technique that can involve the whole class at once. It is designed to introduce basic skills and incorporates the motif of the school building as its central image.

Before you can start animating you will need to make a backdrop or set for your film. Ask the group to make a line drawing of the school or classroom onto a large sheet of paper (A0 would be perfect). Alternatively you could take a photograph and get it photocopied to A0 size. You can then get the class involved in completing the backdrop, either by using paint or coloured paper.

Ask pupils to make a small drawing of themselves on card and cut it out. For more able/older students it is possible to cut out arms and legs separately so that they can be individually articulated.

Place the school backdrop flat on a table or directly on to the floor and set up a stills camera on a tripod so that only the backdrop is in shot. The pupils stand around the backdrop with their figures and the first shot is taken. The figures can then be arranged around the edge of the frame and the second shot taken. The figures are then moved (no more than 5mm) and the next shot is taken. This process is continued until all the figures have moved up to the front of the school. You might decide to make them climb the school and end up on the ceiling or enter the building through a door/aperture.

This process could be developed by suggesting that the pupils create 3-dimensional sets and models. They could work in small groups to create storyboards before shooting more elaborate stills. This is, inevitably, time consuming and can be tricky with so many young people and limited equipment. It might be worth having a number of activities happening so that the students don't get bored while waiting for their turn.

There are many animation programmes that could be used to animate this sequence of still images. The instructions that follow are only one simple way of doing it.

Using Quicktime Pro to make an animation

Ask pupils to download their images onto a computer, saving them all into a folder named *my animation*. Open Quicktime player and go to File > Open Image Sequence. A window will open from which you can select the folder *my animation*, select the first picture in the folder and click OK. You will then be asked how many seconds you wish to allocate for each frame, select 2 frames per second and let the computer animate your film.

3) Swarm Animation

This activity is designed as a very simple group animation that requires little precision but gives very effective results.

Ask pupils to draw a simple head shape directly onto the floor using electrical tape. They should add facial features but no hair. It is easier for the whole class to take part if the drawing is relatively large (1m x 1m).

The pupils can then tear up sheets of tissue paper to create a substantial pile of confetti. This should be used to cover the head in hair. Once again, set the camera up on a tripod so that only the image of the head is in shot and take the first picture. The hair can then be moved about a little and another picture taken. This process can be continued with the hairs movement becoming more and more dramatic as the animation process continues. It would be possible for example to have all the hair migrate across the face to form a beard, make it appear to grow or for the swarm to leave the head all together and move out of frame.

The still images can then be animated using the method outlined in the previous example.

4) A Silent Conversation

This activity uses plasticine animation to explore the boundary between fantasy and reality.



Ask each student to make a set of their bedroom inside a cardboard box, using basic construction materials. Encourage them to pay attention to detail, trying to include as many factual elements as possible. Using plasticine they should then make two models, one of themselves and one of a fictional character they would like to meet. This might be a character from a book or film, a mythical creature a superhero etc.

Once the elements have been made the scene can be animated using a stills camera and tripod as described above. It would be possible to add a clear narrative by inserting shots of text (describing the actors conversations) as in a silent movie. Bear in mind that (using the Quicktime method) if you want a shot of text to stay on screen for three seconds you will need six still images.

As well as Ganders work, have a look at *Nathalie Djurberg's* animations, which also use plasticine to create very comical (and sometimes rude) works.

You will find more analogue animation activities in the Whitstable Biennale 2006 Teachers Pack, still available online. Happy animating!

Serena Korda

'The Library of Secrets'

Serena Korda lives and works in London. Since 2004 she has been making work that responds to the social history of an area, often working closely with a community group to gather and celebrate the personal histories of the residents.

Constructed lovingly from olive wood and teak, *The Library of Secrets* is a hand-made mobile unit. It houses an eclectic mix of books that have experienced many different lives and have finally found their resting place upon its shelves. Contained within its structure are two writing booths, where visitors can find everything they need to express their thoughts; pens, paper and privacy. In its way, the Library serves as a collection point for knowledge, thoughts and secrets, an archive that accumulates ideas and information through its travels.

The Library of Secrets has been resident in Whitstable for the last year with Korda responsible for organising a programme of events, including a book club which has met monthly to discuss a series of books that relate to films starring Whitstable's much loved and now deceased resident Peter Cushing, including Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*.

The installation also includes lost property found in books by Whitstable Library over the past year, a sound work and a series of photographs. Serena Korda, as Head Librarian of *The Library of Secrets*, will be in residence Thursday - Sunday each week of the Biennale.

Activities

The following activities are designed to explore socially engaged practice - art that encourages direct involvement from other people in order to be realised. Participants will experiment with notions of memory and archiving in order to create ephemera objects to place within everyday situations.

1) Contemplation and Communication

Ask pupils to sit in a chosen place for five minutes simply to contemplate. After the time is up, they should each write down something about the place or the thoughts had while there, leaving this note for someone else to discover. Suggest that pupils rotate around the given spaces, adding their own post-it note thoughts to the growing list. The resulting texts could form the basis for extended memory games or poems; *I sat down and scratched my head; I sat down and scratched my head and looked out to sea; I sat down and scratched my head and looked out to sea and thought about...* etc.

This activity could be developed by using Letraset to write on to the fabric of the building or by installing a blackboard to encourage passing teachers and pupils to add their thoughts. It is a good way of encouraging pupils to think afresh about an environment in which they spend a lot of time. Take time to discuss the spaces/places that the pupils respond to. Where are the quiet, intimate corners? Where do pupils feel most secure and which spaces do they feel a sense of ownership over?

Thinking about Korda's *Library of Secrets*, you might consider allowing the pupils to leave notes in the school's library books. A safe way of achieving this would be to work as a class to decide on one note or question to photocopy, fold up and deposit in the books. You might wish to encourage the recipients of these messages to respond in some way.

It might be interesting to look at the work of Romanian artist *Dan Perjovschi* who creates huge installations by drawing directly onto the walls of galleries and museums.

2) Memory Bank

Suggest that the pupils work in pairs to generate a series of questions, each starting with *When was the first time you.....?*

The questions should then be written out on blank postcards and each sealed in a brown envelope.

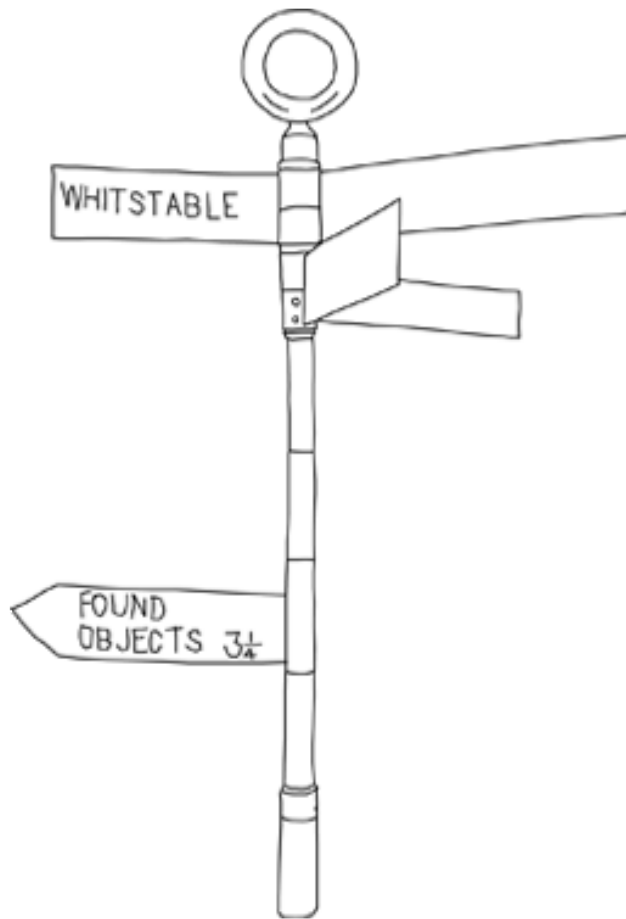
Then facilitate an activity that enables the class to move around the room, swapping their envelopes as they go, for example this could be done to music like a game of Musical Chairs. Encourage them to consider themselves as an artwork or performance - what do they look like if they move very slowly and seriously? Try using a video camera to document this activity, playing it back using the Whiteboard. Look at the work of seminal dancers like Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Rainer who's work references mundane, everyday activities.

Once envelopes have been exchanged, invite the students to open them and answer one another's questions, working on the back of the postcards. Cards can also be rotated to gather answers from each pupil. Further questions can then be framed for the students to take home. Encourage them to get answers from as far back as their family history allows.

Collecting the answers together, the group can begin an archive of memories past and present, arranged chronologically. Where local places are mentioned photographs could also be included in the archive.

3) Secret Locations

Using a classroom as 'base camp' split the class into small groups and ask each group to find a secret location somewhere in the building or grounds, marking it with a ribbon or badge. Each group must then create a map from memory of the journey from base camp to this location, using only symbols and pictures. This could be done using pens and collage or by working 3-dimensionally using cardboard and other materials.



Once completed, the groups should swap maps and try and use them to discover another group's secret location. Use this activity to generate discussion: How easy were the symbols to understand? How difficult is it to communicate without using words or language? How accurate was each group's memory? Were you good navigators? What other methods could be used to communicate directions?

Alternatively, suggest that the groups do use text, this time leaving instructions along the route of the journey to their secret location e.g. *turn right at the goal post, follow the desire-line through the field, head towards the green fence*. Find a way of monitoring how other students in the school use these directions and how successful they are. You might decide to leave a prize at the location to help you record how many people manage to

get there. For example, everyone wearing a certain coloured sticker or sucking on a lollipop has reached the destination.

4) Directions and Signs

Think about the different ways text appears around Whitstable and how it functions. Whilst out and about, encourage the pupils to look for text and signs around the school or in the streets near where they live. Examples might include finger-post direction signs, road traffic signs, restaurant menus, house names or road markings. Once pupils start looking they will realise that text appears everywhere, playing a huge role in our day-to-day lives.



Ask pupils to keep a visual record of the words that they encounter around them. Suggest that they gather all the words from one particular day. This could be done by simply note taking or by using photography, drawing or by taking rubbings.

Using this collection of found text, which might include an odd array of words from *car park* to *sardines*, *50% off* to *public right of way*, pupils should start to think about designing their own, alternative signs. What would you like to point out in your area? This might be an insignificant item that is important solely to you, like a corner of the beach or your favourite sweet shop. How would you like people to 'experience' a space? Encourage the group to think about how signage traditionally operates and how this function could be subverted or played with. Maybe your signs speak only to the individual or lead the public on a wild goose chase. Maybe your signs are intriguing but useless, offering for example, *50% off* but not stating what the reduction refers to.

If possible, make and paint some of your signs using cardboard or wood and put them up around your school. The simplest method is to scale up a word, by hand or using an overhead projector, and paint the word centrally on to a sheet of grey board.

If time and budget allows, spend a little longer trying to make them look like some of the original signs, so that when they are up they appear to be part of the urban

fabric. Try and copy the text exactly and leave them in position for people to find and follow. If you are not allowed to leave them there permanently, then consider the possibilities of artworks that exist only for a short time. Think about how you could document or photograph them. Do you think the artworks continue to exist if people see them and continue to talk about them after they have gone? Would people remember your signs if they followed them only once?

Have a look at Pierre Vivant's traffic light tree situated in the middle of a roundabout near Canary Wharf. Standing over eight meters high and consisting of 75 fully functioning signal heads the piece is designed to bemuse unsuspecting motorists. Appropriating a familiar and everyday object, the work plays with our expectations of the mundane act of driving to work.

WHITSTABLE 2008 BIENNALE

