

Dawn of a Colony
Picturing the West, St Ives 1811-1888

24 May – 21 September 2008

Notes for Teachers

Information and practical ideas for groups
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Work in focus



Adrian Stokes (1854-1935)

***Uplands and Sky* 1886-8**

Oil on Canvas

Tate

Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1885

For Discussion

- What is the first thing that catches your eye when you look at this painting?
- Describe the different details you can see in this painting.
- How do you think the artist, Adrian Stokes learnt to paint clouds so well?
- Compare *Uplands and Sky* with, for example, Henry Moore's *Catspaw off the Land* 1885 (on display from 10 June). What do these paintings have in common?
- Why do you think so many artists have been attracted to St Ives and the landscape of West Cornwall?
- Why do you think some landscape painters choose to paint out of doors and even from boats?

Things to think about

St Ives past and present. *Uplands and Sky* is one of a series of paintings Stokes made while living in St Ives, where he settled after his return from France in 1886. This is a view of the moor above the town. Consider the range of works included in this exhibition inspired by St Ives and the surrounding landscape. They offer a fascinating historical record of the town. Many of the paintings include familiar landmarks and places such as Smeaton's Pier, Clodgy Point, Porthminster Beach, Godrevy Lighthouse and Tregenna Hill.

Painting out doors. *Plein-air* (open air) painting became fashionable in England and France in the second half of the nineteenth century. Made easier by inventions such as the portable easel and tubes for paint, artists painted complete works, for the first time, out of doors. Instead of making sketches that were taken back to the studio, artists chose to make their 'impressions' directly in-situ.

The floating studio. Some artists used boats as a 'floating studio', depicting the coastline as seen and experienced from the sea. Although it was traditional for specialist marine artists to paint at sea from warships and merchant ships, artists increasingly made use of fishing and pleasure boats. James Clarke Hook, Henry Moore and John Brett were all known to have painted on boats.

Sky, land and sea. The composition of *Uplands and Sky* is particularly striking. The title describes perfectly the emphasis on horizon and sky, punctuated by the grazing cows. Stokes' is evidently more interested in the effect of the clouds than conveying a topographical or picturesque scene. Compare to some of the other landscapes and seascapes in this display.

The symbolism of the sea. For the nineteenth century artist, the sea was heavily charged with religious and emotional meaning. The boundlessness of the sea, as well as the drama and danger attracted many painters. As the century moved on, science and technology gave a new significance to the contemplation of the sea. Rather than a symbol of eternity, it could now demonstrate the underlying principles of waves governing the physical world.

An island nation. It's easy to forget that before the age of air travel all connections with the wider world had to start at sea. Exploration, trade and colonialism all started from our coastlines. And the range of activities that took place on the coast was very wide. For example as well as being the site of scientific investigation, lifesaving and defence it was also the place of traditional work such as fishing and farming.

Atmospheric effects of the coast. The atmospheric effects of the coastline; the dramatic changes in weather and light have drawn many artists to Cornwall. Consider how some of the paintings displayed here capture the changing moods of the sea and sky.

The rural idyll. During the nineteenth century many artists came to St Ives. They were attracted by what they perceived to be the picturesque and unspoilt qualities of this Cornish fishing port. The international art colony that established itself in St Ives was part of a trend, seen also in France, to look to nature and the rural idyll. As industrialisation took hold in Western Europe, remote communities in Brittany and Cornwall were idealised by these artists for their traditional, rural ways.

Seaside tourism. What do these paintings tell us about the seaside past and present? Contrast the scenes of local folk with those of the seaside tourist. Britain has been credited with the invention of the seaside holiday and by the end of the nineteenth century it had become part of most people's experience.

Practical ideas

Quick/ simple activities

Step inside. Imagine 'stepping inside' one of these painting. How would you feel, where would you go and what would you see? Write your own story or poem about your 'visit' to St Ives.

Quick sketches. Create quick sketches of the view from lower gallery two. Contrast line with tone. Experiment in ways to create a mood or atmosphere.

Then & now. Look at one of the paintings of the harbour at St Ives. Compare it to how the harbour looks today. Spot the differences.

Open air versus memory landscapes. How well trained is your visual memory? Try drawing a place you know well from memory then try drawing a new place from direct observation and then check your memory.

Extended projects

Documenting the seaside. How have artists, past and present recorded the seaside. How have our coastal villages and beaches changed in the last 200 years? Why do people go to the seaside? What has been the impact of tourism on our coastline? What aspects of our beaches are timeless? What are the particular threats to our coastline today? Students could document their own favourite seaside place or record their memories of a seaside holiday.

Painting as historical record. Paintings can provide an excellent starting point to discuss the wider history of a country. These nineteenth century paintings can tell us a lot about the life and times. Use one of these paintings as a starting point for a wide ranging discussion about subjects such as, seaside tourism, the role of fisherwomen, advances in lifesaving, the development of lifeboats and lighthouse technology, the fashion for sea-bathing and seaside photography.

Painting the sea. Many artists have enjoyed the challenge of representing pure seascape. Experiment with different painting and collage materials to make your record of the sea and sky.

Sketchbook art. Make your own sketchbook combining as many different types, colours and textures of paper. Use this sketchbook to record (using a variety of pens, pencils etc) a visit or trip (such as your visit to St Ives).

The poetry of the sea. Why does the sea fascinate poets and painters? Explore nineteenth century poetry and painting about the sea. Develop your own written and visual responses.

Wrecks, rescues and fisher folk. There are so many exciting stories and adventures about the sea. Develop your own stories of the sea using image and text (perhaps as a storyboard or film sequence).

The wonders of the shore. What does our coastline tell us? In the nineteenth century discoveries along our coastline contributed to the development of our understanding of the world. Explore the science, geology, geography and history of a coastal area today. Find different ways to document your discoveries.

Further research

The landscape painter **Adrian Stokes (1854-1935)** was born in Southport. He studied at the Royal Academy Schools from 1872 to 1875. He spent time in Pont-Aven in France before studying with Dagnan-Bouveret in Paris in the mid 1880s. He married the painter Marianna Preindlsberger in 1884. After their return from France in the late 1880s, Stokes and his wife settled in St Ives. Stokes exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy and became a Royal Academician in 1919. He was also a member of the New English Art Club.

The following definitions are from the **Tate Glossary (www.tate.org.uk/collections/glossary):**
Impressionism. New way of painting landscape and scenes of everyday life developed in France by Monet and others from early 1860s. Based on practice of painting finished pictures out of doors, as opposed to simply making sketches (actually pioneered in Britain by Constable around 1813–17). Result was greater awareness of light and colour and the shifting pattern of the natural scene. Brushwork became rapid and broken into separate dabs to render these effects. First group exhibition Paris 1874 greeted with derision, Monet's *Impression, Sunrise* being particularly singled out and giving its name to the movement. Seven further exhibitions held at intervals to 1886. Other core artists, Camille Pissarro, Renoir, plus Degas and Manet in slightly tangential relationship.

Newlyn School. Following the extension of the Great Western Railway to West Cornwall in 1877 the Cornish fishing towns of St Ives and Newlyn both began to attract artists, drawn by the beauty of the scenery, quality of light, simplicity of life and drama of the sea. The artists known as the Newlyn School were led by Stanhope Forbes and Frank Bramley who settled there in the early 1880s. Newlyn painting combined the Impressionist derived doctrine of working directly from the subject, and where appropriate in the open air (plein-airism), with subject matter drawn from rural life, particularly the life of the fishermen.

Plein Air. French term meaning out of doors. Refers to practice of painting entire finished picture out of doors as opposed to simply making preparatory studies or sketches. Pioneered by Constable in Britain c.1813–17, then from c.1860 became fundamental to Impressionism. Important technical approach in development of Naturalism. Subsequently became extremely widespread and part of practice of Rural Naturalists for example. Sometimes taken to extremes e.g. by Stanhope Forbes of whom there exists a photograph of him painting on a beach in high wind with canvas and easel secured by guy ropes.

Dawn of a Colony is a collaborative project with Penlee House Gallery & Museum in Penzance. From 14 June to 13 September 2008, **Penlee House hosts *Dawn of a Colony: Lyrical Light, St Ives 1889-1914***. This exhibition surveys the initial connections of the St Ives artists with the Newlyn School and the emergence of the colony in the two decades prior to the First World War. See www.penleehouse.org.uk Penlee House Gallery, Penzance

www.tate.org.uk/collection for information on works in the Tate Collection

www.tate.org.uk/britain/turner Turner Online, an introduction to J.M.W. Turner

www.stivestrust.co.uk St Ives Archive Study Centre *A loan box and teachers pack focusing on how seaside holidays have changed over the years is available for KS1. It covers the years: 1930s, 1960s and present day. The resource contains the Big Book of Seaside Holidays; photographs; artefacts and notes and is available free of charge.*

www.nmmc.co.uk National Maritime Museum, Falmouth

www.royalcornwallmuseum.org.uk Royal Cornwall Museums, Truro

Tom Cross, *The Shining Sands - Artists in Newlyn and St. Ives 1880 – 1930* (1994)

Laura Newton (ed), *Painting at the Edge* (2005)

Christiana Payne, *Where the Sea meets the Land* (2007)

David Tovey, *St Ives Art pre-1890 - The Dawn of the Colony* (2008)

David Tovey, *Pioneers of St Ives Art* (2008)

Catherine Wallace, *Under The Open Sky* (2002)

Marion Whybrow, *St Ives: 1883-1993: Portrait of an Art Colony* (1994)