

# Serpentine Gallery

## Teachers' Notes

Anthony McCall

30 November 2007 – 3 February  
2008



Anthony McCall

*Line Describing a Cone* 1973

Installation view at the Musée de Rochechouart, 2007

Solid light installation, 30 minutes 16 mm film projector, haze machine

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

© 2007 Anthony McCall

Photograph: Freddy Le Saux

In association with



Musée départemental d'art contemporain de Rochechouart  
is an initiative of the Conseil Général de la Haute-Vienne, France.

These notes are designed to support your visit to the Serpentine Gallery, including planning prior to your visit and suggestions for discussion and activities back at school when you return. They are aimed primarily at Key Stage 3 but include activities that can relate to all key stages, enabling you to develop them to suit your needs and inspire discussion and practical work.

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## Background Information

British artist **Anthony McCall** (born 1946) has a cross-disciplinary art practice in which film, sculpture, installation, drawing and performance overlap. McCall's earliest films are documents of outdoor performances that were notable for their minimal use of the elements, most notably fire. He was a key figure in the avant-garde London Film-Makers Co-operative in the 1970s. After moving to New York in 1973, McCall developed his 'solid light' film series, conceiving the legendary, *Line Describing a Cone*. These works are simple projections that strikingly emphasise the sculptural qualities of a beam of light. At the end of the 1970s, McCall withdrew from making art. Over 20 years later, beginning with new work in 2003, McCall returned to the 'solid light' form. Since then, with works like *Between You and I*, he has developed a group of important new installations, which further expand the notion of cinema and form.

### ***Anthony McCall***

**30 November 2007 – 3 February 2008**

The Serpentine exhibition offers an overview of early and recent works and features previously unseen drawings, studies, photographs and documents. In darkened, haze-filled rooms, the projections create an illusion of three dimensional shapes, ellipses, waves and flat planes that expand, contract or sweep through space, deconstructing film to its principle components of time and light. There is no screen or prescribed surface for the projection of images.

## Themes, ideas and questions to explore

- **Shape, form and space**



Anthony McCall

***Between You and I* 2006**

Installation view at Peer/The Round Chapel, London 2006. Vertical solid light installation, 32 –minute cycle in two parts. Computer, QuickTime movie file, two video projectors, two haze machines.

Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

© 2007 Anthony McCall

Photograph: Hugo Glendinning

### Keywords and cross-curricular links

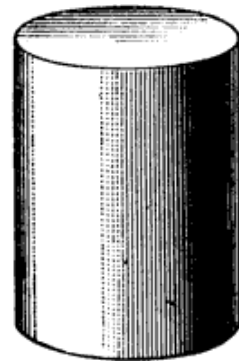
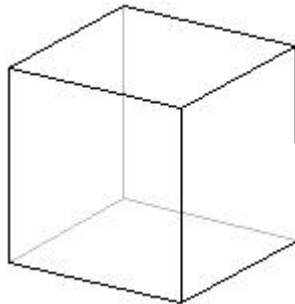
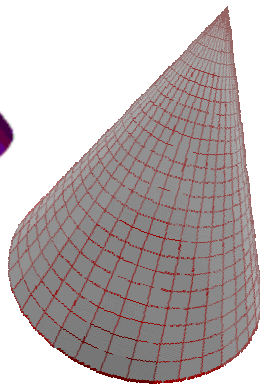
Light – mist - shape – flat planes – edges - corners - fragmented – overlapping – multiple viewpoints – geometry – two dimensional – three dimensional – solid – transparent – form – angles – polygons – abstraction – depth - distance

### Visiting the exhibition

After moving to New York in 1973, McCall developed his 'solid light' film series, conceiving the legendary, *Line Describing a Cone*. These works are simple projections that strikingly emphasise the sculptural qualities of a beam of light. In darkened, haze-filled rooms, the projections create an illusion of three dimensional shapes, ellipses, waves and flat planes that expand, contract or sweep through space. McCall's 'solid light' films appear to fill the gallery space with 'volume' and presence.

- What familiar shapes are represented in the exhibition?
- Can you recognise obtuse, right and acute angles in McCall's drawings, diagrams and light projections?
- Can you identify negative shapes in the gallery space?
- How would you describe the unfamiliar shapes you can see?
- What are the materials McCall has chosen to create 3 - dimensional shapes? Are they unusual? Why has he chosen them?
- What qualities does the work share with film, cinema and sculpture?

### Classroom discussion and activities



- Wherever we look we see **3 – dimensional shapes**. Can you represent **everyday objects** or **architecture**, that remind you of the above shapes as 2 – dimensional drawings using
  - a) Only lines
  - b) Only tone, light and shade?
- Can you find out about Greek mathematician **Euclid**, and his book *Elements*?
- How are geometric shapes and forms used in the work of other artists such as Robert Morris and Sol LeWitt and Andy Goldsworthy?

- **Performance, participation and movement**

**Keywords and cross-curricular links**

**The human figure – the body – motion – actions – kinetic - task - performance – audience – interrupt – interact – participate - adapt - change - light - fire - landscape**



Anthony McCall  
Stills from the film *Landscape for Fire*, based on the performance of *Landscape for Fire II* 1972  
Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York  
© 2007 Anthony McCall

**Visiting the exhibition**

McCall's earliest films are documents of outdoor performances. *Landscape for Fire* is incorporates performance, installation, sculpture and images in movement using a series of small fires and creating a grid formation across the landscape

- How does *Landscape for Fire* convey a sense of mood or feeling of landscape through actions and movement?
- What does the work remind you of?
- How does the work compare to other artworks described as Land Art?

McCall's light projections shift the relationship of audience and film, as viewers become participants, their bodies intersecting and modifying the shapes and forms in

the gallery space. McCall creates a dramatic sense of involvement with the audience. The solidity of the light is enhanced by the misty air and figures seem to become part of a performance.

- Describe how McCall implicates the viewer in his work
- What you think his reasons are for doing this?
- How does the work make you feel as you move through the gallery space?

#### **Classroom discussion and activities**

- Investigate methods and approaches used by artists to show figures and forms in movement
- **Find out about** Land Art – Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*

- **Film and Cinema**



Anthony McCall

***Line Describing a Cone* 1973**

Installation view at the Whitney Museum exhibition *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964 – 1977*, 2002. Solid Light installation, 30 minutes. 16mm film projector, haze machine.

Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

© 2007 Anthony McCall

Photograph: Henry Graber

#### **Keywords and cross-curricular links**

**Process – projection – light – time – movement – screen - documentation – reality – fantasy - perspective – illusion – atmosphere – installation – images - sound**

#### **Visiting the exhibition**

McCall uses film to explore its own components - space, light and time. He also uses moving image to consider the impact of cinema on our perceptions and the ways in which we interact with film and technology, illusion and reality. In the gallery space, work appears to occur in the space between the film projector and the screen or surface it lands upon. Through this deconstruction, McCall's films become an event, or a sculptural, experience for the audience in the space.

## Classroom discussion and activities

- **Creative experiments with light**

Create your own moving images by drawing and mark-making directly on to clear and coloured acetate and making slides to project at different angles and different places around school.

- **What is expanded cinema?**

*Expanded cinema describes film and performance that don't conform to a traditional single-screen cinema format. It is a style of presentation that can be used for films or performances made for a wide variety of aesthetic, personal and political reasons. A common link between them is that they fit into the usual mode of presentation of a single, continuous film projected onto a screen in front of an audience. Projectors are often placed in the space and become part an integral part of the participatory event.*

Can you make your own Expanded Cinema event, in which your audience interacts with the art work?

- **Find out about** Malcolm Le Grice's *Castle One* (1966), William Raban *Take Measure* (1973)

## Further Reading and related links

### **Anthony McCall *The Solid Light Films and Related Works***

Branden W. Joseph, artist interview by Jonathan Walley. Ed. Christopher Eamon  
Published 2005 by Steidl Publishers, Germany  
ISBN 3-86521-141-0

### **Folding Architecture: Spatial, Structural and Organisational Diagrams**

Sophia Vyzoviti  
BIS Publishers 2003  
ISBN 978-90-6369-059-5

Interpret your surroundings in new ways using drawing, sculpture and installation.  
Find out about these artists and artworks:

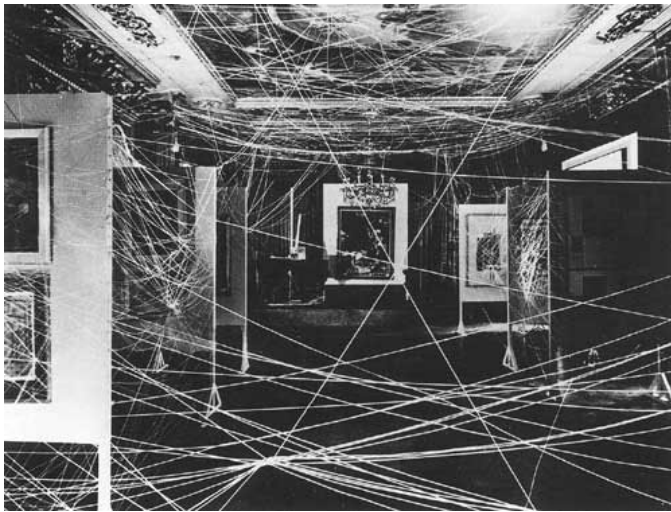


***Merzbau Hannover 1933,***  
**Kurt Schwitters**  
Hannover, Germany

*Merzbau* was an abstract, constructed interior. The starting point of the work was Schwitters' studio in his house, in which the walls and ceiling were covered with a collection of layered, three-dimensional shapes and the room itself was crowded with materials and objects.

**Sun Tunnels 1974, Nancy Holt**  
Great Basin Desert,  
Utah, USA

Holt created huge concrete tubes placed carefully on the landscape, marking the position on the horizon of the sun during the winter and summer solstices. The tubes are drilled with holes that correspond to celestial constellations.



**Mile of String 1942, Marcel Duchamp**  
New York

In 1942, Andre Breton organised a retrospective exhibition of Surrealist art in New York: *First Papers of Surrealism*. Marcel Duchamp created this installation – a gigantic web – called the *Mile of String*.



**Coloured Fog 2005, Ann Veronica Janssens**  
Bennebroek, Germany

Ann Veronica Janssens creates mist installations, focusing the viewer's attention on the process of perception rather than a specific object.

## Web links

[http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2007/04/anthony\\_mccalldecember\\_2007\\_ja.html](http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2007/04/anthony_mccalldecember_2007_ja.html)  
<http://www.anthonymccall.com/>  
<http://www.skny.com/artists/anthony-mccall/>  
[http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/expanded\\_cinema\(1\).html](http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/expanded_cinema(1).html)  
<http://www.merzbau.org/Schwitters.html>  
<http://www.mathsisfun.com/geometry/index.html>  
<http://www.mathsisfun.com/geometry/cone.html>

## Planning a Visit to the Serpentine Gallery

### Contact Details

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Fax 0207402 4103  
[www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org)

### Transport

The nearest tube stations are South Kensington (1.25 km walk), Knightsbridge (1.25 km walk) or Lancaster Gate (1 km walk)  
Bus routes 9, 10, 52, 452, 94 and 148 stop near the Gallery

### Group Visit Guidelines

To make your visit as enjoyable as possible, please read the following:

#### Before your Visit:

- Adult supervision of students under 16 is required at all times, including in the shop. An adult student ratio of 1:5 for under 5's, 1:10 for 5 - 11 year olds, 1:15 for 11 - 16 year olds and 1:20 for 16 - 18 year olds is required.
- We recommend a preliminary planning visit, as for some exhibitions there may be works that you consider unsuitable for your group.

#### During your Visit:

- Teachers/group leaders and accompanying adults are responsible for their group's behaviour whilst at the Serpentine Gallery.
- Please make sure your group is aware of the following Gallery guidelines:
  - No running
  - No touching
  - No leaning against walls or plinths
  - No shouting
  - No photography
- Many contemporary artworks are fragile and damage easily. Please make sure that your group understands that this is why they are not allowed to touch the art.
- Lecturing: If your group is larger than 30 please split them into smaller groups in the exhibition space and do not lecture in rooms where talks are already in progress.
- Drawing: If you would like to do some drawing please check with the gallery what materials you will be able to use in the exhibition

### Education and Family Events

Education is at the core of the Serpentine Gallery's activities. Through practical, artist led workshops and discussion, talks, events and projects the Education Programme offers a diverse range of innovative ways to engage with modern and contemporary art and architecture for all ages.

Please refer to the Serpentine Gallery Diary or [www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org) for information on events and activities taking place as part of the Education Programme during the *Anthony McCall* exhibition