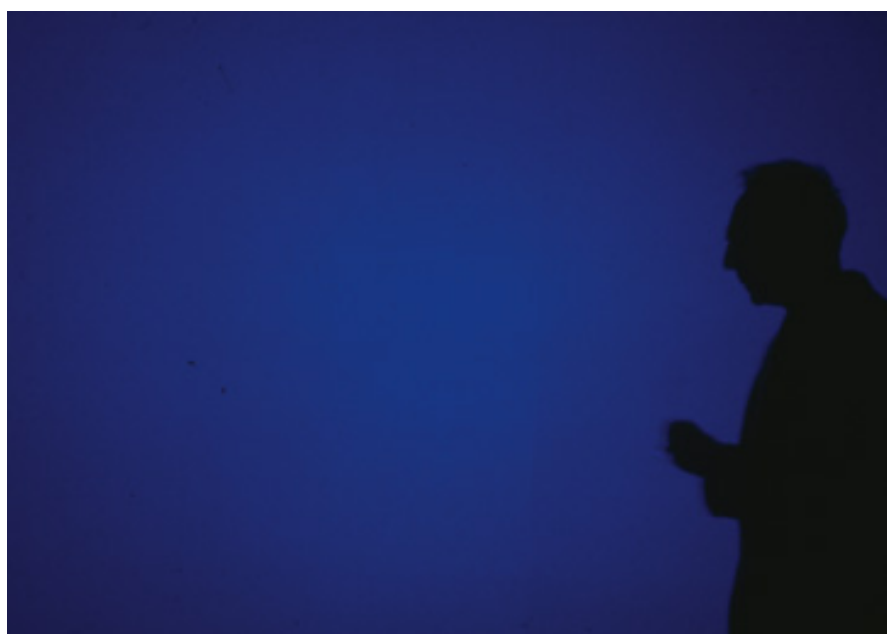


Serpentine Gallery

Teachers' Notes

Derek Jarman curated by Isaac Julien
23 February – 13 April 2008



Derek Jarman
Blue, 1993
Courtesy Basilisk
Communications
Photograph: Liam
Daniel

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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

Artist Derek Jarman (1942 – 1994) was arguably the single most crucial figure of British independent cinema in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. His films, paintings and literature make striking and poetic observations of the decades that passed before him, from punk to Margaret Thatcher, the struggle for Gay Liberation and the impact of AIDS. Jarman observed and questioned British culture, national identity, the media, tradition and civil rights. An inspiration for young artists today, his work provides a vivid, alternative history lesson of British society and personal experience. Throughout his career, Jarman also collaborated with the leading musicians of his day to create documentaries and music videos working for ground-breaking performers such as *The Sex Pistols* in 1976, to *Marianne Faithfull* in 1979, as well as seminal 1980s pop icons such as, *Marc Almond*, *The Smiths* and the *Pet Shop Boys*.

Derek Jarman curated by Isaac Julien

23 February – 13 April 2008

The Derek Jarman exhibition presents a selection of work by the leading British filmmaker of his generation. Curated by the celebrated artist and filmmaker Isaac Julien, it highlights Jarman's work in film and painting. This exhibition is a timely reappraisal of Jarman's work, conceived as an immersive environment by Julien, featuring rarely seen films from the Derek Jarman Super-8 archive, an installation of his film *Blue*, 1993, as well as a selection of his paintings. Julien has also created a series of photographic light boxes documenting Jarman's cottage and garden in Dungeness.

The exhibition will also mark the premiere of Julien's new film about Jarman, *Derek*, the centre of which is a day-long interview Jarman recorded in 1990. The film includes a narration by Tilda Swinton and clips of Jarman's films, juxtaposed with news and footage of the current affairs from the times that this life illuminated. It is a film of Jarman's life as well as the story of England from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Derek is supported by Channel 4, Film London and the Sundance Film Fund. The film will premier on More4 and in the Serpentine Gallery exhibition, as part of a season of events celebrating Jarman's work. This will also include screenings of Jarman's films on More4 and at Picturehouse cinemas throughout London and the launch of the Jarman Award for artist film-makers, presented by Film London and More4, in partnership with the Serpentine Gallery.

Please note that some paintings in the exhibition contain images of an explicit sexual nature.

Themes, ideas and questions to explore

Derek Jarman, the painter

Keywords and cross-curricular links

Painting – scratched surfaces – mark making – found objects and text – collage – mixed materials - layers - fragments – hidden messages – viewpoints – abstraction – symbolism – depth – mood - expression - order – chaos



Derek Jarman *Dead Angels* 1992
Oil on canvas
251 x 149 cm
Derek Jarman Estate courtesy Orchard Fine Art
LLP London

Visiting the exhibition

Derek Jarman used a diverse range of different ways to make art, interchanging paintbrushes for cameras and using them in a similar way. However, he began his career as a painter, studying at the Slade School of Art in the 1960's. In his work an idea, object or place that occurs in a film can also resurface in a painting, a sculpture hung on the wall, or on the page of a book.

His paintings seem dark in mood, using thick black paint, tar and dishevelled everyday objects including driftwood, feathers, bedclothes, buttons and old photographs. Depth, hidden messages and movement are created in the paintings as forceful marks and sometimes words have been scratched into the surface of the canvas, revealing layers underneath.

- What references to **childhood, religion, life** and **death** are found in Derek Jarman's paintings?
- Why has Jarman chosen to use particular colours and include certain objects?
- What qualities do Jarman's' paintings share with his films, theatre and sculpture?

- How would you describe the mood of the paintings and how do they make you feel? Do they convey sadness, anger, hope, despair, loudness, quietness, passion, fear, freedom?
- How do Jarman's' *Bed (IV)* 1988-89 and *Bed (VII)* 1988-89 compare to Tracey Emin's *My Bed* 1998?

Classroom discussion and activities

- Do Derek Jarman's paintings link to paintings by **Robert Rauschenberg** or **Francis Bacon**?
- Using a newspaper headline and image to inspire your own painting. Include found objects and consider mark making to represent your feelings and opinions about your chosen text and image.
- Create a painting or collage about your experience of living in London - what might you include? What message would you like to convey to the viewer about the place and about your experience?

Super – 8 Film archive



Derek Jarman, *Journey to Avebury*, 1971.
Courtesy James Mackay



Derek Jarman, *B2 Movie*, 1982.
Courtesy James Mackay

Keywords and cross-curricular links

Places – friends — memory – landscape – surroundings - romanticism - traditional - atmosphere – gothic – dreams – wordless - soundtracks - mood

repetition of motifs - slow motion – portraiture - colour filtering - reflections
dreams - magic – alchemy - poetry – cultural identity

Visiting the exhibition

The exhibition presents Jarman's experimental and colourful Super-8 films in which the boundaries between painting and film appear to blur. He made his first Super-8 films while working as a set designer on Ken Russell's "The Devils" (1971). Super-8 film was an easy and accessible film making tool for artists in the 1970's and 1980's, designed to be used quickly and rapidly and the editing could be done by the artist at home. The films include intimate, moving sketches of his friends and the urban setting in and around his studio in a derelict wharf on Bankside in London. They record visits to New York, Fire Island, Avebury and Florence. The films have a dream like quality, and recall painting, sculpture, theatre, gothic and romantic Englishness. This imagery resurfaces in his film *The Last of England*, reflecting on contemporary and historical English culture and providing a dramatic contrast to the desolate vision he described in his later work.

- How does Jarman convey a mood or feeling of tradition, history and British culture in his Super-8 films?
- What does the work remind you of and how does it make you feel?
- If you had to choose sound tracks to play to accompany Jarman's Super-8 films what would they be? What type of musical genre does this imagery bring to mind and why?

Classroom discussion and activities

- Create a diary or series of portraits of the people and places that surround you.
- If you were going to make a collection of objects and images showing contemporary culture that is relevant to you what would these objects and images be? Create a memory box of objects to describe your personal thoughts and ideas about contemporary British society.

Film and Cinema

Keywords and cross-curricular links

Film – projection – colour – time – memory – screen - diary – poetry – personal experience - blindness – visibility – atmosphere – installation – sound

Visiting the exhibition

As Derek Jarman's sight and health deteriorated, he made his final and most radical film *Blue* (1993) was first shown at the Biennial in Venice in 1993. As a metaphorical reflection of his own blindness, caused by his disease, Jarman presented just a blue frame, a monochrome surface - inspired by French painter Yves Klein. The blue frame was accompanied by Simon Fisher Turner's synthesised music and words (including extracts from Jarman's' diary) spoken by Nigel Terry, John Quentin and Tilda Swinton, three of Jarman's favourite actors.



Derek Jarman, *Blue*, 1993. Courtesy Basilisk Communications. Photograph: Liam Daniel

- Make a list of the things that the colour blue brings to mind. Do you associate the colour blue with a particular person or place? What kind of mood or meaning is conveyed by Jarman using the colour blue? - power, wealth, royalty?
- What is the symbolism of blue in this instance?
- How would the meaning and mood of the image be affected if Jarman had used an environment such as a street scene/home environment or a landscape?
- How does Jarman implicate the viewer in the film?

Classroom discussion and activities

- Using the words from the film *Blue* as inspiration create your own colour poem based on a vivid memory or experience

(Excerpt :)

The doctor in St. Bartholomew's Hospital thought he could detect lesions in my retina - the pupils dilated with belladonna - the torch shone into them with a terrible blinding light.

Look left

Look down

Look up

Look right

Blue flashes in my eyes.

Blue Bottle buzzing

Lazy days
The sky blue butterfly
Sways on the cornflower
Lost in the warmth
Of the blue heat haze
Singing the blues
Quiet and slowly
Blue of my heart
Blue of my dreams
Slow blue love
Of delphinium days

Further information and related links

Derek Jarman: Brutal Beauty

Published on occasion of the exhibition Derek Jarman at the Serpentine Gallery

Exhibition curated by Isaac Julien

Published 2008 by Koenig Books, London

ISBN 978-3-86560-397-5

Derek Jarman Films



Derek Jarman, *Jubilee*, 1978.
Courtesy of the BFI

Serpentine Gallery Film Programme: *It's A Sin: The films and inspirations of Derek Jarman*

On the occasion of the Serpentine Gallery exhibition *Derek Jarman* curated by Isaac Julien, *It's a Sin*, is a season of feature-length films by Derek Jarman as well as films that influenced his practice. In addition an exciting short film programme has been selected by installation artist and film-maker Tina Keane featuring works by Jarman's contemporaries and younger film-makers. Screened at Gate Picturehouse, Notting Hill, Greenwich Picturehouse and Ritzy Picturehouse, Brixton, the series celebrates the work and legacy of this pioneering film-maker.

For full details please visit www.serpentinegallery.org

Tickets: £11/£9 for Picturehouse members and concessions

Find out about these artists, film makers and their work:

Kenneth Anger

Film maker Kenneth Anger is a pioneer of independent film making, exploring taboo subjects, popular culture and iconography, In his films Anger subverts conventional filmmaking, by sampling, mixing, recycling, re-editing or restaging the tenants of mainstream cinema and culture.

Ken Russell

The Devils (18) made in 1971 became Ken Russell's most controversial film, a powerful and original British film of its era and a multi-layered study of political and religious conviction and excess. Jarman worked as a set designer on this film.

Victor Flemming

The Wizard of Oz (U) made in 1939, is one of the most powerful dream worlds created on celluloid, *The Wizard of Oz* was a particular favourite of Derek Jarman, influencing his ideas about the possibility of cinema. The vibrant layers of music, set and colour, along with the powerful performance of a young Judy Garland, was a pivotal experience for the film-maker.

Isaac Julien

Julien's tribute to Jarman *Derek* will be screened on the UK national television network channel, *More4* in 2008 and will include footage of Jarman talking about his life, shot two years before he died in 1994. Isaac Julien has received widespread critical acclaim for his experimental films such as, *The Long Road to Mazatlan* and *Vagabondia*, and sites Jarman as a source of inspiration and strong influence on his practice.

Jean Cocteau

Le Testament d'Orphée (15) made in 1960 is the last film made by Cocteau is a visual summing up of the poet's own life. Gazing one after the other into the multiple mirrors of his loves and his works, the film re-creates his personal myth.

Tina Keane

The Storm (2007) is a short film in which a car makes its way through the storm, lost in a recollection of memories.

Brad Butler and Karen Mirza

The Space Between (2005) is a short film, in which time and space are shattered into shards of light. Featuring footage shot in India and reworked in the optical printer into a rigorous, flickering duality.

Artist film-makers shortlisted for the Jarman Award:

Andrew Kötting

Emily Wardill

Duncan Campbell

Luke Fowler

Poets:

Allen Ginsberg

***Howl* (1956)**

Extracts are included in the film *The Last of England* (1988)

(Excerpt):

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by
madness, starving hysterical naked,

dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn
looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection
to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night...

TS Eliot

The Hollow Men (1925)

Extracts are included in the film *The Last of England* (1988)

(Excerpt):

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us - if at all - not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

Web links

<http://www.serpentinegallery.org>
<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/index.html>
<http://www.lux.org.uk/>

Planning a Visit to the Serpentine Gallery

Contact Details

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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 for information on events and activities taking place as part of the Education Programme during the *Anthony McCall* exhibition