

Serpentine Gallery

Teachers' Notes

Hreinn Friðfrinsson

17 July – 2 September 2007



A Pair 2004
Mirror with silver wooden frame and shoe
Courtesy of Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin

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These notes are designed for your visit to the Serpentine Gallery, including planning prior to your visit and suggestions for discussion and activities back at school. 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.

Contents

	Page
• Background information	1
• Hreinn Friðfrinnsson – the artist	
• <i>Hreinn Friðfrinnsson</i> – the exhibition	
• Questions and discussion topics	2/3
• Activities for the classroom	4
• Further reading	
• Planning a visit to the Serpentine Gallery	

Background information

Hreinn Friðfrinnsson is one of Iceland's leading conceptual artists. His work is celebrated for its lyricism and stark poetry that transcends the often common-place subjects and materials that the artist uses to create his pieces. Friðfrinnsson's practice is remarkably varied, encompassing photography and drawing as well as installation. His works are linked, however, by a common sensibility and a lightness of touch.

Friðfrinnsson often presents found objects with which he interferes as little as possible, creating new works that investigate ideas of the self and time. He has had several exhibitions in his native Iceland and elsewhere in Europe, where his work has been an important influence on a younger generation of artists.

Hreinn Friðfrinnsson

17 July – 2 September 2007

The exhibition features a selection of key pieces spanning the artist's whole career. Friðfrinnsson is perhaps best known for his focus on the Icelandic landscape. Written words and storytelling figure prominently in his practice. Many of his photographic installations of the 1970s incorporate short narratives and in more recent works he has also applied text directly onto the wall.



Attending 1973

Two colour photographs

Each: 55.5 x 70 cm

Courtesy of the artist and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik

Questions and discussion topics

A sense of place

Keywords

Sky – land – landscape – view – horizon – empty space – open – alone – rocky – fertile – solitude – haven – home – doors – gates – surroundings – environment

Pre- visit discussion

- What's the world like when you step outside the door of your home?
- What colours do you see on a typical day? How do they change over the year?
- Do you find your surroundings peaceful and calm or busy and chaotic?
- What surroundings would you prefer if you could choose?
- On your journey to the Gallery what different places will you pass through?
- How would you represent those different surroundings on a drawn map?

On the visit

- Can you find examples of landscape in Hreinn Friðfrinnsson's images? What environment does he represent?
- In his artwork Friðfrinnsson uses Icelandic landscape for inspiration – what do you think he found inspiring? How does he communicate this in his work?
- What do the landscapes remind you of and what aspects are familiar?

Five Gates for the South Wind 1971-72

Black and white photographs and text

Each: 15.5 x 20.5 cm

Centre Georges Pompidou

Musée national d'art moderne

A series of photographs documenting gates that the artist constructed in a remote location on the south coast of Iceland. The gates were designed to open when the wind blew from the south.

Gates and doors are the way through which we enter and leave spaces. They can also mark the beginning and the end of journeys.

Draw an entrance or an exit to another place. Will the door be open or closed? What will be on the other side? Consider the gates to Kensington Gardens and doors to the Gallery.



Painting, colour and visual poetry

Keywords

Mood – light – out of place – everyday life – dreams – composition – memory – objects – surfaces – reflections - symbolism

Pre- visit discussion

- Explore different ways to capture a moment in time
- Can your class guess the event or memory you have chosen?

On the visit

- How does the artist use paint, colour, objects and text to communicate his thoughts and ideas?
- How does the work relate to memories and time?
- Are any elements surprising or unusual?
- Works to look at include *Suspended 2000*



Suspended 2000 (details)

Stirring sticks

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and i8 Gallery, Reykjavík

Forces of nature

Keywords

Water – earth – fire – wind – energy – nature – light – power – rock – depth
element – formation – transform - atmosphere

Pre- visit discussion

Hreinn Friðfinnsson is described as a poet. He "speaks" to us about light, wind, landscape, about rocks and crystals, about the gravity and about sentiment...

- How do you create a rainbow?

'Last year he put a 30-cm-high prism on a tripod and caught the light of the rainbow with the [his] hands, just as we in our childhood desired to walk beneath the rainbow bridge. The works of Hreinn Friðfinnsson captivate by their conceptual sharpness. Thanks to this, he is able to capture the strongest emotions by the simplest means.'

Jean-Christophe Ammann, April 2000

www.anhava.com/exhibitions/fridfinnsson/index.html

Galerie Anhava, Helsinki

On the visit

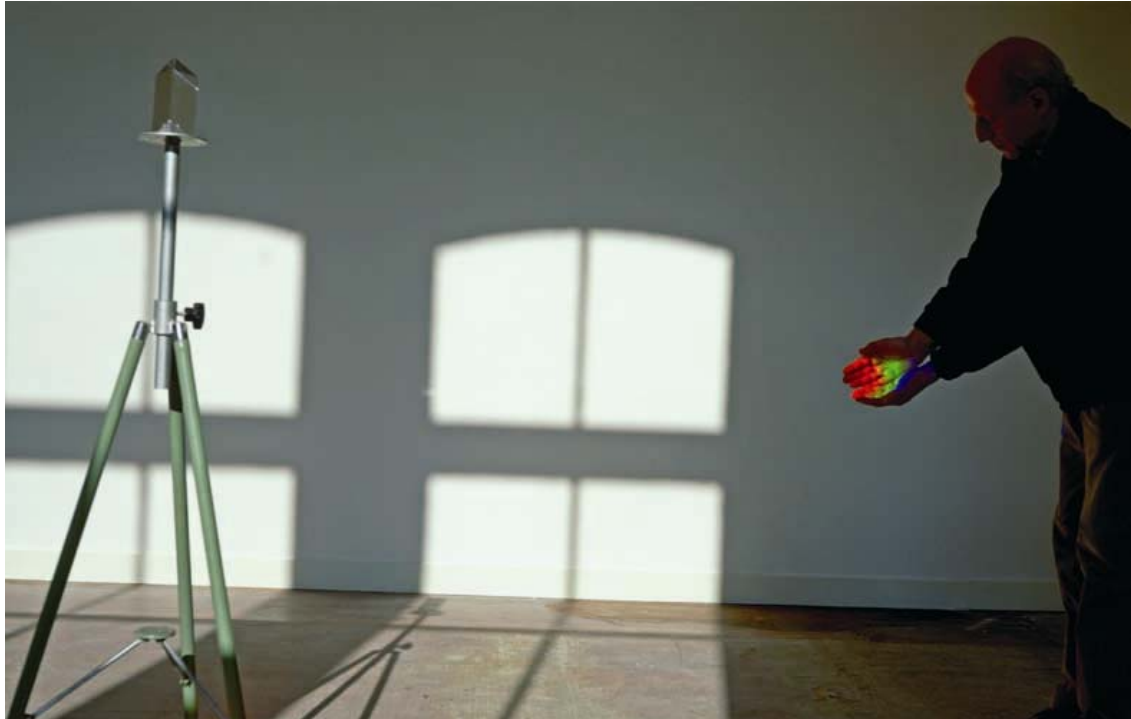
- What other symbols or ideas can water represent?
- What are the qualities of water?
- How is water transformed by light?
- How are other objects transformed by light?

Untitled 1999-2000

Colour photograph

124 x 190cm

The Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki



Activities for the classroom

Key Stage 2

Memory, objects and places

Taking the *House Project 1974* as a starting point, create an image that represents someone real or imaginary who has lived, or still lives, in the local area.

'Taking his cue from an Icelandic story, the artist constructed an inside-out house in the hollow of a hill. In consequence, the house contains the whole world with the exception of its own interior. The central image of the work refers to the desire of Sólon Gudmundsson, an aristocrat who, having sold his old house, wanted to build a new one which would give the world something of the warmth people experience inside a house. He had already begun work when he was persuaded to give up the plan and, due to his advanced age, move into an old people's home. Sólon died on 18 October 1931. As a conceptual artwork – it exists as photographic documentation and text – Friðfrinsson's *House Project* possesses a poetic, even romantic, essence which would normally be ignored in the discourse on conceptual art.'

Mark Kremer, *Art and Suburbia: A Small Test for the Planners*, Public Art II 2001



House Project 1974 (detail)
16 colour photographs and typewritten text
Each 33 x 40 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Art & Design – representing and creating real or imagined places and spaces
Citizenship – the individual’s responsibility for their environment – how we look after and improve our communities
English – How do we use language to create and describe places?
Geography – places, spaces and people. How does the environment impact on the way people live, and how does the way we live impact on the environment?
History – How have rural and urban landscapes changed? How are memories captured in time?

Key Stage 3 **Sharing the unusual in the ordinary**

Starting with a simple everyday material or object such as wood or a pencil, discover people’s associations with it. Create a sculpture to reflect or challenge one or all of those ideas

‘Icelandic conceptual art is marked by an extremely refined and usually meagre form: severity and lyricism. Hreinn Friðfrinsson is one of the leading classics of Icelandic conceptual art. Another Icelandic artist, Sigurður Gudmunðsson, has, with due cause, remarked: ‘Hreinn Friðfrinsson’s art is pure poetry.’ It is both pure – lucidly thought out, scant and even mundane in its themes – as well as lyrical. It is able to evoke strong feelings of wonder, recognition and communality.’

Ilona Anhava, 2001
Translation: Jüri Kokkonen
www.anhava.com/exhibitions/fridfinnsson/index.html
Galerie Anhava, Helsinki

Art & Design – exploring alternative views and approaches to representing images
Citizenship – sharing and responding to the ideas and opinions of others
Design & Technology – researching a range of aesthetic and functional qualities of materials
ICT – researching, collecting and analysing information from a variety of sources
Science – weather experiments, how do you create a rainbow?

Key Stage 4 Comparative Studies

Compare Friðfrinsson's use of landscape, text and photography with works by Richard Long and Ian Hamilton Finlay

Look specifically at:

- The artists' relationship with their local environment
- The legacy they leave from their creation of work in that place, and how the interaction is recorded
- The permanence of the mark they make on the landscape
- The methods of displaying work in a gallery environment
- The use and source of text that is included

In the grounds of the Gallery is a permanent work by artist and poet Ian Hamilton Finlay, dedicated to the Serpentine's former Patron Diana, Princess of Wales. The work comprises eight benches, a tree-plaque, and a carved stone circle at the Gallery's entrance.

More information

http://www.ianhamiltonfinlay.com/ian_hamilton_finlay.html

<http://www.richardlong.org/>

Further reading

Paul F. *Hreinn Friðfrinsson (Relié)* Domaine de Kerguehenec, 2002

Articles and reviews

Katja Reissner: Das Sublime eines Fingerabdrucks, *Der Tagesspiegel*, Berlin, 2.10.1999

Miriam Rosen: Hreinn Friðfrinsson, *Artforum International*, No. 6, 1991

Hervé Legros: Hreinn Friðfrinsson, *Artpress*, No. 154, 1991

Laufey Helgadóttir: *Hreinn Friðfrinsson*, The Nordic Arts Centre, Helsinki, 1988

Jean Hubert Martin and Hreinn Friðfrinsson: *Hreinn Friðfrinsson*, Le Magasin/Centre National d'Art Contemporain de Grenoble, 1987

Weblinks

<http://www.anhava.com/>

<http://www.arsfennica.fi/2000/fridf-en.html>

<http://www.carnegieartaward.com/artist.asp?ArtistID=6&Year=2000&PageID=1>

<http://www.galerievangelder.com/artists/fridfrinsson2.html>

<http://www.volumeproject.org/plain/object.php?object=975&year=&num=>

Planning a visit to the Serpentine Gallery

Serpentine Gallery
Kensington Gardens
London
W2 3XA

Tel 020 7402 6075

Fax 0207402 4103

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, 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 mobile phones
 - 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.
- Sketching: If you would like to do some sketching please check with the gallery what materials you will be able to use in the exhibition

Contact details

Eleanor Farrington, Education Organiser
Serpentine Gallery
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London W2 3XA
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Email eleonorf@serpentinegallery.org

Education and family events

Education is at the core of the Serpentine Gallery's activities. Through workshops, events and projects, the Education Programme offers a range of innovative ways to engage with modern and contemporary art and architecture.

Education Projects in 2007 supported by:

Bloomberg

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 exhibition *Hreinn Friðfrinsson*.