



Eric Ravilious (1903-1942)

Interior at Furlongs, 1939

Watercolour. On long term loan to Towner

Dimensions 45.8 x 54.4 cm

This work has been chosen to support 'Our Place' – Annual Schools Exhibition 2015 - celebrating the built heritage of the South Downs.

Towner Gallery in partnership with South Downs National Park Authority, Worthing Museum and Art Gallery and the Flora Twort Gallery Petersfield

About the artist

Eric Ravilious was born in Acton, London, and moved to Eastbourne at an early age. After growing up in Eastbourne and studying at Eastbourne School of Art, he gained a scholarship to the Royal College of Art under Paul Nash, and studied alongside a class of remarkable artists. After a period of returning to Eastbourne to teach, Ravilious settled in Essex but made regular trips to the Sussex landscape he grew up in, as well as undertaking painting expeditions around the country.

Ravilious's paintings always develop a very particular sense of place, with his dry brush technique creating the impression that Ravilious depicted his subject with clear precision. This technique contributes to the cool, detached feel many of his works exhibit but he simultaneously reveals a keen sensitivity to his chosen subject, whether it be an iconic landscape or a domestic interior.

The power of the works often lies in their ambiguous contradictions: the coolness of style against sensitivity to the landscape or subject; a surreal sense of permanence or stasis against a sense of particular place and time.

As an Official War Artist, his detached style enabled his work to operate in both documentary and artistic terms. He died in 1942, when the air-sea rescue mission in Iceland he accompanied, in his war artist capacity, failed to return.

Understand & Evaluate

Eric Ravilious has depicted the interior of a room. How would you describe this room? Where do you think it is? What can you see in it?

Do you want to focus on what is in the room or do you find yourself looking outside the room? If so why? How does the artist lead your eye to what is outside? How has he framed the outside scene?

Would it change the feel of the scene if the door was closed and the curtains were drawn? Why?

Having studied wood engraving, Ravilious paid particular attention to surface detail. In his paintings there is a prominence of line and he used a very distinctive style of mark making. What is this style of mark making called?

Ravilious also used a very limited palette. What colours and shades can you see?

There is only one area of bright colour. Where is this? Why do you think the artist has used this colour here?

Ravilious typically avoids painting people in his works, preferring to allude to their presence by revealing evidence of their activity. What evidence of people is there in this painting?

If you were to paint this scene how would you make it different?

Explore and create

From a piece of cardboard, cut out the shape of a door or window. Working outside, take this shape with you and photograph the view which you can see through the door or window. What do you want to see when you open the door or look through the window?

Back in the classroom, divide into groups of four. Print out your photographs and stick onto the four sides of a box to create a view from a room. Think of Ravilious's mark making and use your own mark making to decorate the walls inside and outside your room.

Ravilious used only a small number of objects to depict who lived in his house. As a group, decide what is happening or about to happen with the person that lives in your house. Think about one or two objects or drawings that you could put inside the room to show who lives there and what they are doing.

Further links to the National Park

Use the South Downs National Park Learning zone to explore <http://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/>.

[Learning outside the Classroom](#) including links for health and safety and practical support in planning your work away from the classroom.

[About the National Park](#) The South Downs National Park is the newest of the National Parks established in 2009. All national Parks are special places that are recognised for their stunning landscapes, amazing wildlife and rich heritage, as well as providing fantastic opportunities for enjoying and learning about what makes them special.

[Geology and landscape](#) Furlongs sits below Beddingham Hill on the Firle Estate below the main South Downs ridge. The landscape is one of Open Downland and is an iconic landscape that has inspired artists, writers and musicians for generations.

[Farming and Land management](#) The South Downs has a number of [Great Estates](#), including the Firle Estate, that have been in the same family for generations. Many of these are helping to conserve and enhance important habitats through environmental stewardship schemes. The large estates such as [Goodwood](#), [Cowdray](#), [Petworth](#), [Glynde](#), [Arundel](#) and [Firle](#), with their designed parklands, have a significant effect on the landscape and the rural economy

[Habitats and wildlife](#) Compare grassland diversity on the chalk downland to that in your school grounds, linking to your science and geography curriculum. Chalk specific plants are a great way to give your students a sense of local identity and learn about how important the downland is to conservationists. Scrub bashing with pupils from your school is a great, practical way to demonstrate how the chalk downland is managed to control the succession of more invasive species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and silver birch and can contribute to a [John Muir Award](#) in the South Downs National Park.

[Culture and heritage](#) Furlongs was originally a flint-faced shepherd's cottage. In 1934 Eric Ravilious was invited to visit Furlongs by his artist friend Peggy Angus and this prompted a deep affection for the local landscape. To find out more about how flint and other natural materials were used to create the built environment of the South Downs take a look at the ppt on [Buildings in the South Downs Landscape](#).

[Access and recreation](#) To see the landscape that inspired Ravilious, you can walk part of the 100 mile long National Trail, the South Downs Way, particularly the stretch from Beddingham through to Wilmington. This would take you past Furlongs, which is still a private dwelling, through Firle and to the Long Man of Wilmington. To find out more about the South Downs Way, see: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way>

[Economy and industry](#) People have shaped the South Downs landscape for generations, ensuring it is the special place it is today. In the late 19th and early 20th century, hundreds of men were employed quarrying [chalk](#) from the slopes. This was then burnt in kilns to make lime, which was used in the manufacture of cement, as a soil improver in agriculture and to help soften drinking water. The proximity of the River Ouse to the Chalk Downs gave rise to this once thriving industry as the river was vital for transport. There are more chalk pits on the banks of the River Ouse than anywhere else in Europe! The new YHA South Downs near Southease station includes a café and education room that celebrates the heritage of chalk workers in the area and is well worth a visit.