



Harold Mockford © Artist

Chalk Pit in the Downs, 1969

Oil Painting, Towner Collection

Dimensions 92 x 122 cm

About the artist

Born in 1932, Harold Mockford found a natural talent for painting at an early age, producing accomplished works from his teenage years. He claims that art was the only school subject he was good at.

Mockford has nearly always lived in East Sussex, first in Eastbourne, then moving to Newhaven in 1996. He was temporarily evacuated during World War II and recalls one of his clearest memories being his return to Eastbourne on the train, seeing the South Downs and the strong feeling of coming home. He began his working life as a dental technician and continued this job alongside his artistic career. As an artist Mockford is mainly self-taught apart from a brief period of training at the Eastbourne School of Art.

The Sussex landscape is ingrained in Mockford's psyche, providing a continual and ongoing source of inspiration. Whilst the subject matter for his paintings is varied, they are based almost entirely in the local area, and are easily identifiable by those who know Eastbourne and the Sussex Downs. He paints places he has walked, visited and that are known to him from memory, but transforms these familiar, ordinary locations into mystical and dreamlike landscapes through his use of deep, rich colours and surreal perspectives.



Understand & Evaluate

The title of this work is Chalk Pit in the Downs. How has the artist depicted a chalk pit?

What style of painting do you call this?

What colours has he used?

The top of the painting looks very grainy and textured. How do you think the artist has achieved this effect?

Do you get a sense of depth or is the painting flat?

Would you know what this painting was about if you didn't have a title?

If you were to paint a chalk pit in the downs, how would you paint it?

Explore and create

Create a palette of colours like Mockford's palette (perhaps browns/creams) to represent your visit in the Downs. Make six colours, all must be mixed, and make notes about how much of each colour you use so that you can make them again.

Look at a view or think about a view – either your own experience from a family walk or your class trip to the Downs. From memory, sketch a view, think about the shapes you remember but try to avoid using too much detail. Think of dark and light. In your mind, zoom into different parts of the view. Use the different textures you recall to fill the different shapes in your drawing.

Now imagine you are a bird flying over your view. How will your perspective change? Draw what you can see as a bird. Use paint to fill in the different shapes to create the textures. Use your brush in different ways: stipple, splatter, use solid strokes, fingerprints.



Further links to the National Park – Harold Mockford Chalk Pit in the Downs

Use the South Downs National Park Learning Zone to explore <http://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/>. All resources mentioned below can be found through the Learning Zone.

[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](#) This picture was chosen to enable schools who do not want to relate their work to a specific location within the National Park. Flint can be found in nearly every area of the National Park and was a popular building material in many of the surrounding towns and villages. The South Downs National Park is the newest of the National Parks designated in 2009. It makes links to the geography curriculum in comparing and contrasting here and abroad. Why not look at Droxford Primary Schools or Rydon Community Colleges scheme of work to see how they do this and work with artists. If you are interested in this aspect of study please explore the John Muir award in the South Downs National Park.

[Geology and landscape](#) This painting used sand in its construction and could offer opportunities for further rocks and soils science through hands on artwork. The geology of the National Park is reflected in the building materials, for example in Midhurst and Petworth you find much more sand stone than you would on the outskirts of Brighton where flint was used from the nearby downland. Explore where these chalk seams can be found on the learning zone.

[Farming and Land management](#) Flint is a by product from arable farming where it often gets in the way of farming equipment. Many of the buildings, including farm buildings, are made of flint along with church and garden walls that protected valuable vegetables from livestock herded along roads and tracks. Why not listen to find out how modern farming shapes the South Downs, the history of farming on the Downs and clues to past landscapes.

[Habitats and wildlife](#) The flints are found in layers within the chalk and are thought to have derived from sponges. The chalk of the South Downs was formed by marine deposits laid down when this part of Britain was covered by warm, tropical seas between 65 and 100 million years ago, during the Cretaceous period. This offers opportunities to look at marine life and sponges. There are 23 miles of coastline in the National Park and much of the coast by Brighton is set to become one of the first Marine Conservation Zones. Use the learning zone to research these habitats further.

[Culture and heritage](#) Flint was used for tools and weapons from the early stone age and flint tools are commonly found on arable fields in the South Downs. There are a number of museums that hold examples including Brighton Museums Chilled to the Bone: Ice Age Sussex exhibition which illustrates the Victorian 'great bone rush' and discusses the evolution of humans and the use of tools. Listen to stories on how the South Downs was world famous for high quality flint tools and learn about this characteristic building material.

[Access and recreation](#) Flint as a building material is distinct to the chalk downland villages and towns and helps to draw tourists and day visitors to the area. Explore how one farm turned its flint barns into a business - Pitlands Barn - Self-Catering Farmstay.

[Economy and industry](#) The flint in the picture has been knapped and gives opportunities to explore the life of knappers, chalk workers and other associated trades. The Buriton heritage bank has resources on the learning zones chalkworkers page.

