



Jem Southam © Artist

Ditchling Beacon, Dew Pond, 1999

Photograph on loan to Towner from the artist

Dimensions 92 x 122 cm



About the artist

Born 1950 in Bristol, Jem Southam is one of Britain's leading photographers famously observing changes in single locations over long periods of time, tracing cycles of life and death in nature. His photography often focuses on the English landscape and man's interaction with nature. Once an artistic relationship has been established with a site, Southam will continue to develop photographic work in that location, often revisiting the same areas over and over in his research and creative process.

In 2000 Southam's work was brought together in an exhibition, 'The Shape of Time', at the former Towner Art Gallery. The exhibition, organised in collaboration between Towner and PhotoWorks, Brighton, included previous work that recorded rock falls, river mouths and dew ponds, mostly around the South West region, but also included new work especially for the exhibition. For these new commissions Southam photographed sites in the South Downs region including Ditchling, Cuckmere, Rye Harbour and New Harbour.



Understand & Evaluate

Composition: look at this photograph in 3 sections: foreground, middle ground and background

Is it divided equally into 3 sections?

What does each of these sections bring to the whole photograph?

Why do you think Southam planned to take the photograph in this way?

Think about how the photograph would look if the sections were divided differently.

Southam has used his vantage point on top of Ditchling Beacon to draw your eye to certain points in the photograph. If he was standing somewhere else taking the photograph what would it change?

How has height affected what we see in the photograph?

What colours and shades can you see?

What season is it?

How does it smell?

What words would you use to describe the feeling of this photograph?

If there were people, buildings or machinery in it, would it change the way you viewed the photograph?

Explore and create

Depth of Field is the area of sharp focus in an image.

Taking a camera on to the South Downs National Park, think of a line in front of you. You can determine where along this line the focal point is and how much will be in focus around that focal point.

You can use this to create emphasis in your photographs – to isolate an object and soften backgrounds. On the other hand, by choosing the greatest possible depth of field, your picture will contain maximum sharp focus and information, therefore allowing the viewer to decide what to focus on.

Using a photocopy of this picture divide it up into sections, finding all the different shapes. Use these shapes as a guide to create your own abstract landscape collage using paper, fabric or different materials from the environment such as grass, mud and water. If you would like your final artwork to be 2d you could photograph the collage.

Are there any Dew Ponds near you in the South Downs National Park? This photograph includes several environmental elements; the dew pond, sea, sky, grass, hedgerow. Can you create a piece of artwork that has all of these elements?

Think about how you want to compose your landscape and what colours and materials you will need to create this.



Further links to the National Park – Jem Southam Ditchling Beacon, Dew Pond

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](#) This Dew Pond is one of the heritage features of the National Park. 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](#) Why not investigate Chalk and its porous qualities which mean these Dew Ponds have to be lined with Clay.

[Farming and Land management](#) knowing where your food comes from makes links to design and technology. This dew pond would once have been here for livestock. Why not use the Why Farming Matters to the South Downs resource to look further at farming in the National Park. [Plumpton Agricultural College](#) is located near to the site of this Dew Pond and might be able to offer further support with your studies.

[Habitats and wildlife](#) Water is essential to the fauna of this downland habitat and the dew ponds create additional habitats on this special chalk downland. Why not do some habitat studies in your school grounds linking to your science and geography studies. This area is particularly good for common spotted orchids and snails. Use the BeeScene resources to study local plants.

[Culture and heritage](#) This dew pond is located on Ditchling Beacon close to examples of an Iron Age settlement on Plumpton Plain and a commemorative woodland for Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887. There are also ploughed out remains of an Iron Age fort due south from the National Trust Car Park. The history of dew ponds themselves dates back to medieval times and they are often designated sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) or Environmentally Sensitive areas (ESA's). This site is above the village of Ditchling which has its own newly refurbished museum, and is able to host schools.

[Access and recreation](#) The National Trust makes a great case study of culture and heritage tourism and is a major landowner in the National Park. The Car Park is owned by them at Ditchling Beacon and is located on the South Downs Way, a National Trail, that can be walked and ridden from Winchester to Eastbourne. Use the Learning Zone to find out more about tourism in the National Park.

[Economy and industry](#) The main industries supported by sites like this are small businesses such as the ice cream man in the car park, tourism, recreation and conservation organisations and the agricultural industry. For statistics use the State of the Park Report data.

