



John Piper (1903 – 1992)

Newhaven, The Castle, 1936

Ink and oil with collage. Purchased by Towner 2011 with the assistance of the Art Fund, a Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund, The Friends of the Towner, a donation in memory of Helen R Hallier, and additional public donations as part of the John Piper Appeal, September 2011.

Dimensions 37 x 50 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

John Piper was a leading artist at the centre of British Art in the mid twentieth century. His work was varied and included art and theatre criticism, writing, TV broadcast, photography and book illustration, in addition to his more public artistic career which spanned print, collage, stained glass, tapestry, theatre design, painting and sculpture.

Piper was discouraged from a career as an artist by his father who wanted him to study for his solicitors' exams whilst working for the family firm. After his father's death, Piper enrolled at Richmond School of Art then the Royal College of Art which he left in 1929.

Piper felt that his career had been stalled by spending five years at the solicitors so he launched himself into the decade eager to become a professional artist. During these years, Piper travelled from his flat in London or his cottage in Surrey to the south coast of England. Sometimes he rented a cottage in Rye and often he stayed with fellow artist Peggy Angus at Furlongs, her home on the Firle Estate in the South Downs.

During this decade Piper was inspired by the naïve painting style of Alfred Wallis and Christopher Wood but also the artistic developments in Paris, particularly the work of Picasso and Braque.

Understand & Evaluate

When you look at this work do you see a 3D scene or a flattened surface? Why do you think the artist has created his scene in this way?

Where do you think this scene is?

Look at the boat that is going out of the harbour. Does it look as though it is painted or stuck on?

The artist has used a range of materials such as newsprint, marbled end papers and linen scrim to create defined areas of the scene. Can you point out the different areas of collage? Why do you think the artist has decided to use collage and paint? What effect does this have on the way you look at the artwork?

Look at the cliff on the right hand side of the painting. Can you read any of the writing on the newspaper? Do you think the artist has used a particular article from a paper to put into his artwork? Why do you think he may have done this?

There is a lot of detail in this work. Where do you feel yourself looking? How has the artist drawn your eye to this part of the artwork?

The artist has created a lot of texture in this work not just with his use of collage. How else has he created texture? List the different areas of texture that you can see and think about the ways that you would re-create the texture in your own artwork.

We can see a cliff with newsprint, a building called 'The Castle', a jetty and a boat heading away from the viewer. Can you think of a story to link all of these features?

Explore and create

Take a notebook and explore the buildings and places in the South Downs National Park, and choose one that interests you. Look at the buildings that you see and the place in which the buildings are located. Write down ideas that you have for re-creating that scene using collage, e.g. would you use patterned wallpaper, a type of picture from a magazine, a particular newspaper article?

Back in the classroom, discuss your ideas and gather together items to create your collaged scene. Be very particular about the items that you use and their relevance, e.g. if you use a newspaper article and someone can read part of the article, will it add meaning to your scene? Consider how you will create the patterns and texture. Does your scene have a narrative? Could you develop a story from it?

As a class develop some of your ideas into 3D artworks, e.g. textured maps including buildings; pop-up books; a castle, cathedral or church in the Downs. Use your collage ideas to build the 3D artworks into scenes which have meaning and a story to tell.

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](#) Newhaven lies at the mouth of the River Ouse, one of 7 main rivers that drain the South Downs, the others being the Itchen, Rother, Meon, Arun, Cuckmere and Adur. The Ouse is 15.8km long and is home to brown trout, roach, pike, bullhead, brook lamprey and European eel. It is also home to a wide range of other [freshwater species](#).

[Farming and Land management](#) Farming and land management have shaped the South Downs over the centuries and help sustain many of the special qualities for which the National Park was designated. The proportion of grassland to arable has varied throughout history although since the Second World War the area of chalk grassland has significantly reduced while the percentage of crops has increased.

[Habitats and wildlife](#) Castle Hill nature reserve is located just to the west of Newhaven Fort. Much of this reserve is Maritime [Chalk Grassland](#) and there is a large variety of wildflowers including bee orchids, insects and a nesting colony of kittiwakes. This area is very special being both a geological SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and part of a SNCI (Site of Nature Conservation Interest).

[Culture and heritage](#) There has been a defence on the site of Newhaven Fort since the Neolithic period with a continual fort in existence since Roman times. The current structure was built around 1860 and was heavily used during the Second World War. Nowadays it is a visitor attraction and is well worth a visit.

[Access and recreation](#) There is great access along this stretch of the coastline including the newly developing Seahaven trail linking communities from Seaford to Peacehaven. The South Downs National Park is also a very accessible landscape with over 3,000 km of right of way, more than any other National Park in the UK. This includes the South Downs Way, a 160 km National Trail stretching from Winchester to Eastbourne, see: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way> for more details.

[Economy and industry](#) The port of Newhaven is situated at the mouth of the River Ouse and is an important industrial location importing and exporting goods via ship as well as providing a base for a fleet of around 30 smaller sized fishing vessels. The Newhaven to Dieppe (France) ferry runs out of the port and this, combined with the railway connections makes it an important transport hub.