



Robert Tavener (1920-2004)

Country Garden and Cottages

Linocut, ink on paper. Gifted by the artist to Towner 1999

Dimensions 53.9 x 67.8 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

Robert Tavener was born in Hampstead, London, in 1920. He attended Hornsey College of Art where he studied lithography, as well as completing an Art Teacher's Diploma. In 1953 Tavener and his wife moved to Eastbourne. He became head of printmaking at Eastbourne College of Art, where he created a well respected printmaking department, and later became the college's Vice-Principal. The Taveners lived in the same house in Eastbourne for 50 years. The house was at the foot of the Downs with a garden gate that opened directly on to the South Downs Way leading up to Beachy Head. He said that the Downs provided him with enough subject matter to last him indefinitely.

Whilst teaching, Tavener continued to produce his own work as an illustrator and printmaker. He gained many commissions from clients such as London Transport, Shell, and the BBC. He was a successful artist during his lifetime, and his work very much in demand. As well as the many in the Towner Collection, his work is held in more than 25 public collections in the UK, including the V& A and the Government Art Collection. Throughout his life he continued his own printmaking, working in a range of techniques including linocut, woodcut and lithography, and carrying out each stage of the processes himself. Whether images of boats, cathedrals, or rolling landscapes, Tavener's prints are varied, beautiful, bold and colourful, and each is unique.

Understand & Evaluate

Robert Tavener's work has a very distinctive style. What do you first notice in this work?

Sometimes an artist will use a technique to frame a scene or to lead the viewer's eye into a scene. How has Robert Tavener framed this scene? What do you think is important in this scene?

Artworks are quite often divided into sections. In this work how much space is taken up by foliage? Do you know what this section is called? Do you know what the top or back section is called?

Why do you think the artist has set the cottages in the top third of the artwork and the remainder of the space he has filled with plants, leaves and flowers?

Where has the artist applied the colour in this artwork? Why do you think that is?

Look at the cottages. How do the cottages stand out from the foliage?

Look at the different mark making which the artist has used. How is the mark making in the cottages different to the mark making in the leaves and flowers?

Do you think the title of an artwork can help us to understand that artwork? Do you think the artist would have created the scene differently if the title had been Country Cottages and Garden? How do you think the artist may have depicted that title? Do you think he would have put as much foliage in the foreground?

If you were to make an artwork of a cottage in the countryside or on the Downs, how would you depict that scene?

Explore and create

Think about perspective and how buildings can be hidden by trees and foliage. Look at buildings in the South Downs which are hidden. Whilst on the Downs, collect leaves, twigs, flowers, grasses and different foliage to take back to the classroom.

Back in the classroom draw or paint a building on a sheet of paper, card or canvas. Take a sheet of perspex which is the same size as your original artwork. Place the perspex over your artwork and stick the foliage which you have collected onto the perspex to frame your building. By lifting and replacing the perspex, you can see how the foliage changes the perspective of your building.

Using found objects from your own home, e.g. balls of wool, material from old clothes, boxes, sponges, etc. build a 3D representation as a class. Create a building and surround it with foliage made with your found objects. Use cameras to photograph different glimpses of your building within the foliage. Don't forget to change your position and levels when taking the photographs in order to get a sense of perspective.

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](#) The landscape around Eastbourne is one of Open Downland and is an iconic landscape that has inspired artists, writers and musicians for generations. The wide open spaces and smooth rolling hills of this landscape reveal hidden valleys and broad rivers. To the east the downs meet the sea creating the white cliffs of Seven Sisters and Beachy Head. You can find out more about this landscape type by looking at the [Sense of Place](#) toolkit that includes fantastic maps and information about each distinctive area.

[Farming and Land management](#) Farming and land management has shaped the South Downs over the centuries and help sustain many of the special qualities for which the National Park was designated. Nowadays around 85% of the land within the National Park is classified as agricultural land. The proportion of grassland to arable has varied through history. Since World War II there has been a shift with the amount of permanent grassland significantly reducing and the area taken up by crops increasing. You can find out more by looking at the [State of the National Park Report](#).

[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](#) The cottages in this Taverner print were constructed using materials sourced from the local area and are typical of the local vernacular. If you look carefully you can make out the use of weatherboarding on the right hand side which is a very typical East Sussex technique. For more information about the building materials used across the national Park see the presentation on [Buildings in the South Downs Landscape](#).

[Access and recreation](#) To see the landscape that inspired Taverner, you can walk part of the 100 mile long National Trail, the South Downs Way, particularly the stretch from the start at Eastbourne through to Beachy Head. This would take you through much of the scenery that provided such an inspiration to Taverner during his 50 years living in the Town. To find out more about the South Downs Way, see: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way>

[Economy and industry](#) Nowadays the industry of the South Downs is dominated by farming and tourist related businesses. There are also a wide range of other businesses, for example new technology and science, which support local employment. You can find out more about these different types of industry in the [State of the National Park Report](#).