Sean Snyder

Index

12 February — 19 April 2009

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www.ica.org.uk/education
ICA Education Programme:

Our dynamic, artist-led Education Programme provides opportunities for schools, families and community groups to engage in creative ways with the ICA’s exhibitions. The gallery is open for school visits between 10am and 12pm, Monday – Friday.

This pack is geared towards secondary school students pursuing Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. Teachers may find it useful to visit the exhibitions before bringing a group. If you would like to plan a trip to the ICA, get in touch and find out how we can meet the needs of your group.

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email: emma-jayne.taylor@ica.org.uk

For more information and to view our archive of previous learning activities, please visit: www.ica.org.uk/education

What We Do:

Artist Led Projects: Our programme includes artist-led workshops with schools and innovative collaborations between artists and community groups.

Teachers Packs: These are available with each exhibition and include exhibition notes, suggested discussion points and activities for your visit, how to prepare before attending the exhibition and proposed activities for the classroom.

Insets: The ICA offers professional development sessions for teachers as an opportunity to meet with artists and gallery staff, and discuss how best to incorporate contemporary art into young people’s education.

Schools Mailing List: Keep up to date with the exciting education projects, events and workshops happening at the ICA by signing up for our mailing list.

Teachers Previews: These private views are dedicated to education resources and offer ideas for your pupils’ visit to the ICA. Come as a teacher or as yourself to enjoy a relaxing evening in the gallery.
Exhibition Concept:

*Sean Snyder, Index* is the first solo exhibition in a British institution by this leading American artist. Snyder is one of the most important proponents of the research-based artistic practice that has emerged in the last decade, and the exhibition includes three of his film and video installations, exploring representation and propaganda from the Cold War to Gulf War Two. Snyder’s work is concerned with the ongoing re-interpretation of information and images, and the exhibition also includes an important new project for which the artist has radically reworked his own back catalogue.
Exhibits:

Index
The exhibition takes its title, *Index*, from a major new project by Snyder that makes its debut at the ICA. In 2008 the artist began the process of digitising the archives that he has amassed while making his works, and this year has created a website to allow access to this digital resource – which at one level is an exercise in information-sharing. The exhibition contains works relating to this project, including photographs, films and other materials that document the re-formatting and eventual destruction of Snyder's physical archive – a process in which the artist's interest in the flux of information and images reaches its natural conclusion.

Exhibition
*Exhibition* (2008), uses a Soviet documentary film from 1965 as its starting point. The original praises an exhibition of contemporary Mexican art at a village museum in the Ukraine, but Snyder has re-edited the film, hinting at the failure of educational projects that are based on the supposedly 'universal' nature of artistic value and aesthetic experience. Propaganda also forms the basis of a second installation, *Afghanistan, circa 1985*.

*Afghanistan, circa 1985* (2008-09). This work uses footage shot during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, including an awkward sequence of occupying troops and Afghans joining in a celebratory dance.

*Casio, Seiko, Sheraton, Toyota, Mars*
*Casio, Seiko, Sheraton, Toyota, Mars* (2004-05), involves material of a more recent date. This video looks at the operation of journalistic conventions – and the role of corporations and consumerism – in the context of the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Combining footage and still images from amateur, government and journalistic sources, this powerful work explores the ethics of reportage, the staging and manipulation of images, and the changing role of photojournalists in the era of consumer digital imaging.
# Themes and Activities: Key Stage 3

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<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Suggested Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Visual Technology</strong></td>
<td><strong>Before the exhibition</strong> choose a famous painting of a battle scene (e.g. J.M.W. Turner’s <em>The Battle of Trafalgar</em>). Choose a war photograph from a recent newspaper or newspaper’s website. Compare the two pictures thinking about who made the image and why; who would see the image; where would the image be seen; what is included in the image; and what might be happening outside the frame? Keep these things in mind when you watch Snyder’s film <em>Casio, Seiko, Sheraton, Toyota, Mars</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. The Archive</strong></td>
<td><strong>After the exhibition</strong> use online archives to research a topic of your choice. Keep your research material (either on the computer or on paper) and organise it into your own archive. Use your archive to create a poster about your topic.</td>
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<td><strong>3. The Digital Information Age</strong></td>
<td><strong>After the exhibition</strong> use a digital camera to take a photograph of a scene of your choice. Using the computer, enlarge the photograph until it goes as blurry as possible. Print out the pixelated photograph. Get into pairs and swap images. Write down what you see in your partner’s image and write a caption for it. Compare the captions to the original photographs.</td>
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<td><strong>4. Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>During or after the exhibition</strong> take a trip to the National Gallery and imagine the paintings on the wall of a barn or cottage in the countryside. Make your own paintings inspired by your favourite painters and organise an exhibition. Think carefully about where you are going to show your work and what that means.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Media Manipulation</strong></td>
<td><strong>After the exhibition</strong> collect the newspaper for a week. Cut out all the pictures on one topic (e.g. all the celebrity pictures, war pictures, etc.) Cut out parts of the pictures and piece them together into a new picture on a sheet of paper. Ask other members of the class to come up with captions for your scene. Compare these with the captions for the original photos. (This could also be done on Adobe Photoshop, using images from online newspapers).</td>
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### Themes and Activities: Key Stage 4

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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Visual Technology</strong></td>
<td>On your way to or from the gallery, take a photograph of your choice in the street on your phone or camera. During the exhibition watch Afghanistan circa 1985 and think about who was filming the scene and why. After the exhibition print out your picture and stick it in the middle of a piece of paper. Try and draw what was going on outside of the frame of your photograph.</td>
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<td><strong>2. The Archive</strong></td>
<td>During the exhibition choose a topic or idea from Sean Snyder’s work and write it down. After the exhibition start to collect things relating to your topic (newspaper clippings, photographs, film clips, voice recordings, etc.) Create a way to store your archive, thinking about how easy it will be for you to find things, how long you want to keep your archive for and what you might want to use your archive for. Use your archive to make art work.</td>
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<td><strong>3. The Digital Information Age</strong></td>
<td>After the exhibition get into small groups and plan a 5 minute film. Think about whether you want to act in it, film something from the internet or television, or something you can see around you. Use the video camera on your mobile phone to make the film. When you have finished, upload the film onto YouTube or Facebook and send the link to your friends.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Context</strong></td>
<td>After the exhibition get into groups and, using the art works you made from your archives, organise an exhibition. Think carefully about where you will hold your exhibition, who you will invite, which art works should go together and which shouldn’t.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Media Manipulation</strong></td>
<td>Before the exhibition get into pairs and choose who will be negative and who will be positive. Using video cameras and camera phones, document your trip to and from the ICA. The negatives must use the camera to show how bad the trip was and the positives must do the opposite. After the visit, compare the difference in films and discuss.</td>
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## Themes and Activities: Key Stage 5

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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Visual Technology</strong></td>
<td><strong>After the exhibition</strong> divide into 5 groups. Assign each group one of the following topics: The first photographers, The Lumiere Brothers, Commercial Photography, Film in Art, The Digital Camera. Try and emulate the style and method of production of an element of your topic to present your research to the class.</td>
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<td><strong>2. The Archive</strong></td>
<td><strong>After the exhibition</strong> discuss the archive as a class. Discuss the pros and cons of different archive systems. Using what you think is the best system, archive your visual technology research. You can continue adding to the archive, creating a library of your own research for others to learn from.</td>
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<td><strong>3. The Digital Information Age</strong></td>
<td>Imagine you are an alien in the sense that you don’t know how people live on earth. Using only the internet, find out what the world looks like through the news: gather pictures and put them together in a format that you could use to show others. Reflect on how accurate/sensational this is. What stands out? What is missing?</td>
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<td><strong>4. Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>During the exhibition</strong> watch The Exhibition carefully. Think about the language used during the seminars in the film in contrast with the responses to the art, make notes. <strong>After the exhibition</strong> share your thoughts and discuss ideas of audience, context and culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. Media Manipulation</strong></td>
<td><strong>After the exhibition</strong> get into groups and come up with a news event to stage (e.g. a demonstration, a robbery etc.) Make video clips, take photographs, write articles, and create evidence or materials (posters, flyers, etc.) from your event. Present your material as if it were a real event, perhaps combining your materials from footage or materials from a real event so that the boundaries between real and fictional are blurred.</td>
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1. Visual Technology

Visual technologies have evolved at an astounding rate, as have their methods of distribution. Imagery surrounds us in the modern world and art is often used to make sense of it and question its ethics. This is a primary concern from Sean Snyder but is most prevalent in *Casio, Seiko, Sheraton, Toyota, Mars.*

**QUESTIONS:**

- What role does photography play in articulating experiences of war and conflict?
- What responsibilities do photographers have, and what uses do these photographs have?
- Is it right to present images from other people’s suffering as art?
- How can we tell which photographs or films are real and which are staged?
- How might the rise of citizen journalism affect the profession of photojournalism?
- What is a photograph? (Think about what a film is made of etc. and in terms of digital.)

**FACTS AND FIGURES:**

- One of the earliest documentary style films was by the Lumiere brothers. It is known as The Arrival of a Train at a Station and, as legend has it, the audience was terrified when they saw it because they thought it was real.
- The first digital camera offered to consumers was only 1.4 mega-pixels and cost around $10,000.
- The Boxing Day Tsunami of 2005 was the first global news event, where the majority of the first day news footage was no longer provided by professional news crews, but rather by citizen journalists, using primarily camera phones.
- Before cameras were invented, people relied on painters to produce images of war and current affairs. Now, soldiers and civilians can photograph or film events on their mobile phones and send them all over the world by pressing a few buttons.

**KEYWORDS:**

Cameras / Fiction / Image / Film / Photographs / Distribution / Digital / Analog / Circulation / Reality / Communication / Frame / Materiality

**USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:**

- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/photography/genius/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/photography/genius/) (BBC site on photography)
- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/wars_conflict/art/act_art.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/wars_conflict/art/act_art.shtml) (BBC site exploring art in war)
2. The Archive

Since the invention of computers, we no longer need to collect and keep information and research. Instead, we can access it online or store it as a computer file. The internet has made some archives accessible to anyone that cares to look. In his work, \textit{Index}, Sean Snyder is computerising his research and destroying his physical archive in the process.

**QUESTIONS:**

- Why do you think an archive is important?
- Do you think the physical archive has any importance anymore? Why?
- Looking at Snyder’s documentation of his archive in ‘Index’, can you list the main concerns in his work?
- Consider how Sean Snyder’s work is about transformation of information and yet it goes through its own transformation into becoming artwork.

**FACTS AND FIGURES:**

The Internet Archive (IA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to maintaining an online library and archive of Web and multimedia resources. Located at the Presidio in San Francisco, California, this archive includes “snapshots of the World Wide Web”, software, movies, books, and audio recordings. To ensure the stability and endurance of the archive, IA is mirrored at the Bibliotheca Alexandria in Egypt, the only library in the world with a mirror. The IA makes the collections available at no cost to researchers, historians and scholars. It is a member of the American Library Association and is officially recognised by the State of California as a library. (Absolute astronomy.com)

**KEYWORDS:**

Archive / Computers / Materiality / Resource / Distribution / Sourcing / File / Privacy / Websites / Store / Copyright / Technology

**USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:**

- [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) (The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty’s Stationery Office)
- [http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/) (The Guardian Newspaper search engine)
3. The Digital Information Age

Sean Snyder claims the global circulation of pictorial information as an area of action for his artistic practice. His working method comprises tuning into the circulation of information distribution, searching for certain information, acquiring it and processing it in a particular way. Sean Snyder’s videos and presentations of text and picture materials in installations and publications are consequently the material evidence of specific processes of information appropriation. (Jan Verwoert The Silent Landscape of Information)

QUESTIONS:

• We live in an age where we can send information across the world with the click of a button, what are the implications of this?
• How has the internet changed how we access news?
• What are the opportunities and problems associated with internet news coverage?

FACTS AND FIGURES:

Sean Snyder draws his informational material from a variety of sources. He is a client of, among others, Reuters, the Associated Press, satellite operators, and uses information that the UN makes available on request. At the same time, he acquires pictures and data through personal contacts, private homepages, digital archives and libraries and from obscure or antiquarian books. (Jan Verwoert The Silent Landscape of Information)

KEYWORDS:
Access / Exchange / Interpretation / Social Networking / Information / Mediation / Circulation / Corruption / Quality / Distribution / Flux / Process

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

• http://earth.google.com/  
  (Google Earth lets you view satellite imagery, maps, terrain, 3D buildings etc)

• http://www.ap.org/  
  (The associated Press)

• http://facebook.com/  
  (An example of a social networking site)
4. Context

Context is ever important when encountering art, whether it be the social or political context (cultural context) or the physical context (i.e. the gallery or other place where the work is exhibited). Sean Snyder examines context in his work *Exhibition* by using footage from a film about a local village community holding an exhibition of Mexican art and also exhibiting works from the Dresden Gallery. Context is also addressed, although more subtly, in *Casio, Seiko, Sheraton, Toyota, Mars*, as journalistic photographs are being used in an art work so instead of appearing amongst the news, these photographs are being shown in a gallery context.

**QUESTIONS:**

- Does the physical context in which a work of art is exhibited make a difference to how you perceive it?
- In what ways does seeing photographs of war in a work of art in a gallery make you think about them differently than if you saw them in the newspaper?
- What are the differences between looking at a painting in The National Gallery and looking at a graffiti painting on the wall of a building?
- How do you feel about watching films a gallery?

**FACTS AND FIGURES:**

Marcel Duchamp submitted a urinal for an exhibition organised by the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. He called it *Fountain* and signed it ‘R. Mutt’. The board refused to exhibit it as he had not made it but simply taken out of its original context. Duchamp was believed to have written the following as a protest to the board’s decision: “Mr Mutt’s fountain is not immoral, that is absurd, no more than a bathtub is immoral. It is a fixture that you see every day in plumbers’ shop windows. Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view - created a new thought for that object.”


**KEYWORDS:**

Context / Culture / Misrepresentation / Environment / Society / Distortion / Gallery / Framework / Perception / Selection

**USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:**

- [http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9807E3DE113AF934A35751C1A9659C8B63](http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9807E3DE113AF934A35751C1A9659C8B63) (an article from the New York times entitled ‘When Political Art Mattered’)
- [http://artthreat.net/](http://artthreat.net/) (Art Threat is a blog about politics and the arts)
- [http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server.php?show=nav.206&PHPSESSID=8ea946db6d54d1433b80943da9f9ef59](http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server.php?show=nav.206&PHPSESSID=8ea946db6d54d1433b80943da9f9ef59) (The imperial war museum’s art collection online)
5. Media Manipulation

We live in an age surrounded by media, whether it be radio, television, newspapers, magazines, or the internet. We have easy access to all of this and it is often unavoidable on our daily routine. The media is a very powerful tool for persuasion and it is difficult to know what to believe.

QUESTIONS:

• How influenced are you by what you see in the media?
• Think about your own gullibility; do you believe everything you read, see and hear?
• What forms of media do you most trust and why?
• What is propaganda and what is advertising?
• How do we know if photographs are telling us what really happened?

FACTS AND FIGURES:

Often the media mute or downplay truly sensational (as opposed to sensationalistic) stories. Thus, in 1965 the Indonesian military—advised, equipped, and financed by the U.S. military and the CIA—overthrew President Achmed Sukarno and eradicated the Indonesian Communist Party and its allies, killing half a million people (some estimates are as high as a million) in what was the greatest act of political mass murder since the Nazi holocaust. The generals also destroyed hundreds of clinics, libraries, schools, and community centers that had been opened by the communists. Here was a sensational story if ever there was one, but it took three months before it received passing mention in Time magazine and yet another month before it was reported in The New York Times (April 4, 1966), accompanied by an editorial that actually praised the Indonesian military for “rightly playing its part with utmost caution.”

http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/wp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&folder=193&paper=1211

KEYWORDS:

Misrepresentation / Advertising / Corporation / Gullibility / Consumerism Communication / Power / Influence / Society / Propaganda / Politics / Conflict

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:


• http://www.channel4.com/programmes/unseen-gaza/episode-guide/series-1/episode-3 (a link to the tv series 'Unseen Gaza' aired on channel 4, exploring media coverage of Gaza)
Your Contribution:
In the true spirit of collaboration we asked teachers at our most recent Teachers Preview to comment on and contribute to this pack.

Upcoming Events:

Artists’ Talks:
• 9 April: Sean Snyder in Conversation – 7 pm, Nash Room, Admission free, but booking advisable (call 02079303467):
  Sean Snyder will talk about his work in conversation with Mark Sladen, the ICA’s Director of Exhibitions.

Gallery Talks:
• 19 March: Marcus Verhagen – 7 pm, meet in Lower Gallery
  Admission free: Art Historian and critic Marcus Verhagen will give a talk on the exhibition. The talk will be signed in British Sign Language by Roger Beeson.
• 16 April: Kit Hammonds – 7 pm, meet in Lower Gallery Admission free: Independent Curator and RCA tutor Kit Hammonds will give a talk on the exhibition.

Young Peoples Programme:
• Snyder’s favourite films:
  Snyder has selected some of his favourite films especially for young people. All screenings are free, in cinema 2 at 12.30pm.
  Children will be accompanied by an adult.
• 7 March: L’Argent:
  Adapted from a story by Tolstoy, in which the passing of a forged banknote leads to theft and corruption. Here money truly is the root of all evil. 1983, 81 minutes, PG certificate.
• 28 March: Vai Viegle but jaunam? (Is it Easy to be Young):
  The story of several young Latvians and their struggles to understand the world of confusion that surrounds them. 1987, 83 minutes, no rating.

Other Artists:
More to look at:

Alfredo Jaar  Mark Wallinger
Jana Seehusen  Simon Starling
Jeff Wall  Francisco Goya
Cindy Sherman  Martha Rosler
Yasumasa Morimura  Dr. Fdl Fakhouri
Walid Raad  Thomas Hirschor
James Coleman  Omer Fast
Zofia Kulik  Coco Fusco
Ursula Biemann  Gerhard Richter
The Atlas Group  Katya Sander