

ArtSway

Contemporary Visual Art in the New Forest

Teachers Pack

Frank Bowling RA: The White Paintings

13 May – 2 July 2006

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SWAY PARISH COUNCIL



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Exhibition Information for Teachers

Frank Bowling RA

Frank Bowling is considered one of the most influential artists to emerge from the post-war British art schools. He graduated from the Royal College of Art in 1962, alongside contemporaries such as David Hockney, RB Kitaj and Derek Boshier. Over a long and distinguished career Bowling has garnered a transatlantic reputation and has, since the mid-sixties, worked both in London and New York.

Born in British Guiana in 1936, Frank Bowling arrived in England in 1950 to complete his formal education. His work is in many permanent collections, including the Metropolitan Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Jamaica; The Menil Foundation, Houston, Texas; and Tate Gallery, London. Bowling has been awarded two Guggenheim Fellowships and two Pollock-Krasner Awards and was elected a Royal Academician in May of 2005.

The Exhibition

The White Paintings, an exhibition that consists of thirty-two works on display at ArtSway from 13 May to 2 July 2006, represent a superb counterbalance for the large-scale vibrant abstract canvases of intense colour for which Bowling is best known throughout the world.

The White Paintings demonstrate a strand of working practice covering more than 40 years and effectively prove Bowling's dedication to and exhaustive pursuit of excellence in painting. They form an integral part of his oeuvre and, while retaining traces of his trademark colour sensibilities, are both enigmatic and elegant. Bowling's paintings are inspired by British traditions, as expressed by Gainsborough, Turner, Richard Wilson, and Old Masters of the Western tradition, such as Goya, Rembrandt and Titian. Arriving in New York City in the mid 1960s, in the wake of the first generation of Abstract Expressionists Newman, Pollock, Rothko and Still, and his friendship with their Champion Clement Greenberg, freed Bowling as a painter to pursue his own unique vision.

For more information on Frank Bowling visit: www.frankbowling.com

Images of Works by Frank Bowling



***Sheep's Head*, Oil on Canvas, 1960.**



***Birds (diptych)*, Oil on Canvas, 1960.**



From V 2 RS 1, Acrylic on Canvas, 2005



Mirage, Acrylic on Canvas, 2005

Themes for Lessons and Workshops

In a recent interview the art critic Matthew Collings asked Frank Bowling how he came to make his work *Flounder (New Forest Green)* (2005), to which Bowling replied:

Actually I was influenced by the New Forest landscape. I'd been down there doing some work. It was my birthday. I was very taken by the landscape. I looked out the hotel window, I saw the snow and the swimming pool and the tennis court, and I thought I'm seeing marvellous pictures! But I know from experience long ago if you go directly at that kind of thing you end up with a chocolate box type of experience. But now I feel I can accommodate it, as it were, without giving it away or losing it. In the hotel you get a free little packet of sewing stuff, and I put the contents of that packet in the painting. I tried to get the needle to lie as close as possible to a pencil line I'd made to establish a certain proportion. There are materials lying around when you're working – I put them in sometimes. I have an acupuncturist – Dr Wang. I put one of his needles in another painting. There are readings on different levels. If I want to defend the painting you're talking about as something rather than nothing I might say the way the paint spreads – well, I'm conscious when I'm mixing it up that the paint could have a connection with the landscape. But if it turns out to be nothing, well, try again!

As described in the **Exhibition Information for Teachers** part of this booklet Frank Bowling's paintings contain varied themes and ideas – many of which could be adapted for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum for Art.

Some Themes and Ideas to Consider for Lessons:

- **Accident/ Chance/ Intuition.**
- **Use of traditional and unusual materials (gel, cut and torn canvas, objects dropped into the painting, dripped paint.)**
- **Observing from Life.**
- **Art History.**

Accident/ Chance/ Intuition

Frank Bowling's paintings, although they begin with rudimentary shapes – such as a line, rectangle or circle – are very much based on 'happy' accidents, chance and an intuitive response to the canvas the artist is working on at the time. For example, in *From V 2 RS 1* (2005) (which can be seen in the **Images of Works by Frank Bowling** section of this booklet) we can see obvious shapes such as a circle and rectangle – but the work truly comes alive in the various drips and smudges of paint that are laid over or alongside these basic shapes.

Children can be encouraged to take risks in making their own work, utilising accidents and chance by simply being creative and experimental in how they

make their own artwork. However, intuition is borne out of a 'happy' accident as well as the chance use of a particular brush mark or use of colour. Children will only learn to become intuitive if they are allowed to make mistakes – to be encouraged to add and take away from an artwork, even one that is intended to be 'realistic', as opposed to 'abstract'.

Use of traditional and unusual materials (gel, cut and torn canvas, objects dropped into the painting, dripped paint.)

Following on from the elements of Accident, Chance and Intuition is the use of traditional and unusual materials in Frank Bowling's paintings. Many of Bowling's recent works are constructed with acrylic paints on canvas – although many also have very tactile surfaces that are built up using acrylic gels and thick impasto layers of paint. Many of his older works are actually collages – sections of canvas that have been cut up (essentially constituent parts of larger canvases) that are then pasted onto a fresh canvas and painted on yet again.

Bowling will also deliberately drop materials and objects that he finds close at hand into his canvases. One work – *Button, Needle and Cotton* (2005) includes a needle, a piece of cotton and a solitary button embedded in a thick layer of acrylic gel.

Observing from Life

Bowling's early works – mostly painted during his time at the Royal College of Art in the 1960s – are directly observed from life. An example of this is *Sheep's Head* (1960) (which can be seen in the [Images of Works by Frank Bowling](#) section of this booklet) and is one of a series of three that Bowling painted in the same year. During this time he also painted the urban environment in which he lived, as well as bottles grouped together on a table and a diptych of dead birds, also on a table. These objects are all painted in a bold, even rough style that are nonetheless more real and authentic for the fact that they were actually in front of the artist, in his studio or at home, at the time. It is only by observing from life that a child can learn to properly depict an object in paint.

Art History

Whilst Bowling was at the Royal College of Art in the early 1960s he found that many of his contemporaries (such as David Hockney, RB Kitaj and Derek Boshier) were influenced by their everyday surroundings, and were at the forefront of the Pop Art phenomenon that referenced popular and mainstream culture. Instead, Bowling's paintings were inspired by the British tradition, such as can be found in works by Gainsborough, Turner. He was also inspired by the Old Masters of the Western tradition, such as Goya, Rembrandt and Titian. One only has to look at a late self-portrait by Rembrandt to see a similar thick layering of paint that can be found throughout Bowling's oeuvre.

Guided Tours and Workshops at ArtSway

ArtSway is always keen to welcome school groups visiting the gallery. Please see the **Information for Schools Visiting ArtSway** section of this booklet for more information. **Please note:** we would only be able to accommodate between 20 and 25 children in the galleries per visit.

Guided Tours

One of the best ways to experience an artist's work, as opposed to looking at images in books or on the Internet, is to actually visit a gallery to see their work in the flesh. ArtSway has hosted many school group visits in the past, offering **Guided Tours** around the gallery by the Exhibition and Education Officer and Audience Development Officer.

The tours sometimes involve power point presentations, but usually consist of ArtSway's Officers taking the students from work to work, explaining the origins and content of the works on display. A tour will usually end with a question and answer session.

On some occasions it may be possible to have the artists present for a school visit.

Workshops

ArtSway employs a wide range of artists to lead workshops. However, they are all professional artists who will charge a fee to lead a workshop. If a school is interested in scheduling an artist to lead a workshop, please contact the gallery. Contact details are in the **Information for Schools Visiting ArtSway** section of this booklet.

There are a series of one-hour workshops available, taking place after the tour of the exhibition that are lead by ArtSway's Exhibitions and Education Officer. These workshops, that will involve simple drawing and paintings techniques, will be based on the themes outlined in the **Themes for Lessons and Workshops** section of this booklet. These themes will be relevant to the Frank Bowling exhibition and are: **Accident/ Chance/ Intuition; Use of traditional and unusual materials (gel, cut and torn canvas, objects dropped into the painting, dripped paint.); Observing from Life; Art History.**

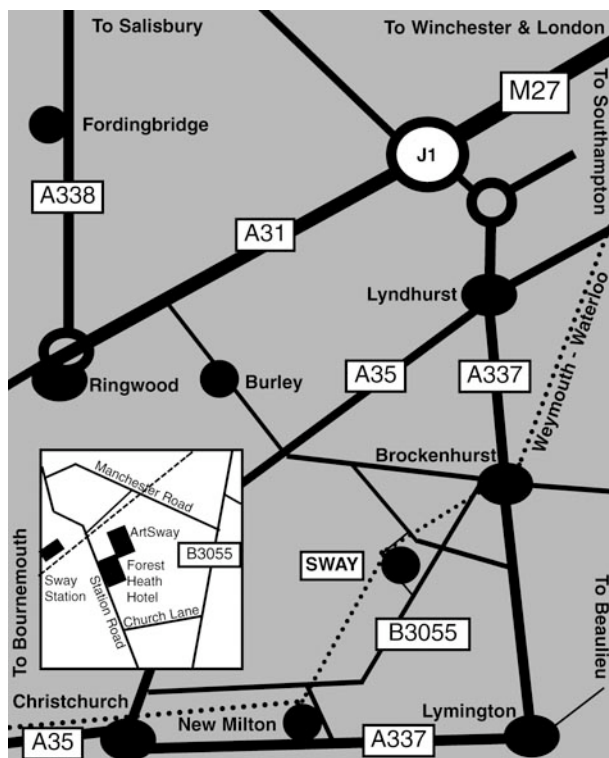
A Timetable of a Typical School Visit to ArtSway

- 10.00am – 10.10am: **Introduction and welcome to ArtSway.**
- 10.10am – 10.30am: **Tour of the exhibition.**
- 10.30am – 11.30am: **Workshop activities.**
- 11.30am – 11.45am: **Discussion and round up of activities.**
- 12.00pm: **End of workshops and school visit.**

Information for Schools Visiting ArtSway

The following is information for school groups visiting ArtSway for **Guided Tours and Workshops**.

Getting to ArtSway



By Rail: Sway Station is on the London Waterloo to Weymouth Line.

By Car: Follow signs to Sway from Brockenhurst, Burley or Lymington, and then follow signs for Village Centre & Train Station. ArtSway is just behind the Forest Heath Hotel on Station Road.

Access: All parts of the gallery are accessible via level access.

Parking: ArtSway has its own car park that is reached along the access drive between the surgery and chemist on Station Road in the centre of Sway

In the Galleries

Works of art, especially Frank Bowling's paintings, are very fragile and cannot be touched. We ask that children visiting the gallery take care both of their own safety and of the artworks on display. Teachers and their assistants are responsible for their groups. At the beginning of the tour the relevant ArtSway Officer will give a brief explanation to the visiting children of what they can and cannot do in the gallery.

Contact Details for ArtSway

If you would like to discuss a visit to ArtSway, or what we could offer in terms of educational resources, please contact:

Exhibitions and Education Officer Peter Bonnell on Telephone: 01590 682260 (extension 14), or Email: peter@artsway.org.uk

Address: ArtSway, Station Road, Sway, Hampshire, SO41 6BA
Telephone: 01590 682260 **Fax:** 01590 681989

Email: mail@artsway.org.uk **Web:** www.artsway.org.uk

Opening Times: Tuesday to Sunday, 11am – 5pm. **Admission is FREE.**