



GCSE Art and Design support materials

Project theme: Natural Forms

The following material is designed to support your progress through your GCSE Art and Design coursework. It can be used alongside one of your coursework projects or as a complete project in its own right. By working through this study material you will be gaining marks towards the following GCSE Assessment Objectives:

- **AO1:** Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and cultural understanding.
- **AO2:** Refine ideas through experimenting and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes.
- **AO3:** Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions in visual and/or other forms.
- **AO4:** Present a personal, informed and meaningful response, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual, written, oral or other elements.

Why use Norwich Castle?

- The Castle is a local museum, centrally located, so it is easily accessible to students in the Norwich area.
- There is a **wide range** of artwork and artefacts from a variety of ages, places and cultures.
- There is **readily available information** to help with your research.
- The museum staff are **friendly and approachable** and will try to help where they can.
- Importantly, moderators and teachers love to see **first-hand research!** This includes actually seeing paintings and objects in the flesh - not just from reproductions - and also finding out things for yourself. It also means producing drawings and sketches from life - in other words, having the actual object in front of you!

Please note: not all objects mentioned in these materials may be currently on show. If you want to see a particular item, please check in advance of your visit by calling 01603 495897 / 493636 or emailing museums@norfolk.gov.uk or norwichcastle.bookings@norfolk.gov.uk.

Some general tips to help with your preparatory studies:

- **Try to use a variety of media.** Sometimes a line drawing may be appropriate, so ask yourself - is pencil necessarily the best medium? Might a fine-liner or pen be better? Coloured pencils, good quality felt pens and other media may do a job better for you. However, **if you are drawing in the museum, please only use pencils.**
- **Think about the marks you make.** Try to create a variety of strengths of line (dark, light, dark to light, thick to thin etc)
- **Keep pencils sharp!** Sharp pencils make a range of good quality marks; blunt pencils only produce boring ones!
- **When shading try to use a full range of tone from dark to light.** When looking at your chosen object, do you need your tones to gradually change (as in shading most curved forms) or does it need to jump from one tone to another (as in drawing angular forms such as boxes)?
- **Decide exactly what it is you are trying to record about the object.** You may be concentrating on its shape or form. It may be a very decorative object, so pattern, colour and shape become more important. It may have an appealing texture so a close-up view of part of the object using tone and colour might be best.
- **Don't rub out mistakes!** In fact, don't even think of them as mistakes! It's far better to see them as attempts which you have decided you can improve on. Whoever is looking at your work (including you!) wants to see progress, so it is far better to draw lightly at first and correct an attempt by putting in the new marks and then erasing the old one. Consider not even rubbing out at all. **A drawing is a history of your thinking, not a photograph.**
- **Do you need to finish the drawing?** Sometimes when you are trying to understand the thing you are drawing it may be much better to do a series of sketches rather than one drawing (that you may be putting pressure on yourself to make perfect).
- **Let your eyes and brain work together!** Always draw in a way that allows you to quickly and easily look up to your chosen subject and down to your paper. Do not have either yourself or the paper at awkward, twisted angles. Remember, your brain is very good at comparing but it needs your eyes to see what it is supposed to compare!

Some tips about written and other forms of research:

- **Don't copy information word for word.** This is next to useless! It wastes lots of your precious time and gains you virtually nothing in terms of marks. If you need the information, photocopy it or get a handout.
- **Pick out important and relevant facts.** Most of the displays have accompanying information. These may be dates, titles, artists' details or descriptions of materials etc. Do these facts need to be written in sentences? Probably not. A series of lists or notes will be far quicker and better. If you do need to convert something into your own words, it is easier to use these brief and accurate notes rather than wading through lots of sentences.

- **Where possible, make it visual!** This helps stimulate your creativity and also makes your work look more attractive to others. Would a coloured mind map, spider diagram or annotated picture be a more effective way of note-taking or presenting information?
- **Save time and use reproductions.** Your studies are going to be much more interesting the more variety they have, so you don't have to draw everything yourself. The museum shop has some of the collection available in booklets or postcards. You could include these in your research.
- **Take your own photographs.** This is a form of first-hand observation. You may take photographs outside without permission but if you wish to take photographs inside the museum **please check with a member of museum staff** as some of the collection is vulnerable to excessive light. **Using a flash is not permitted.**
- **Consider using the audio guide.** If there is an audio guide to the museum's collection it will give you lots of background information. This may be interesting to you from a general point of view but may also trigger some inspirational ideas!

Analysing the work of artists and designers

Some students find this difficult, but understanding artwork is important and a little patience in trying to analyse what you are looking at pays dividends. On the next two pages are templates you may use for analysing artwork. You are welcome to print/photocopy the templates.

Template 1

Name of artist:

Name of artwork:

Date of artwork:

Place of origin:

Material(s) used:

Describe the piece of artwork as accurately as you can. Comment on the artist's use of the formal elements of line, tone, pattern, shape, colour, texture and form.

Does the artwork have a narrative (story)? What is it? How has the artist chosen to tell this story? Does the composition of the piece reflect or help tell the story?

How does the artwork make you feel? What do you like best about it? Why?

What do you think the artist has done most effectively? Why?

Template 2

Artist's name:

Title of piece:

Date:

Place of origin:

What has been used to make this piece of work?

In your own words, describe the piece as accurately as you can.

What do you think it may be about?

Why do you think this?

How does this piece make you feel?

What do you like best about it?

Why?

What do you like least about it?

Why?

Some tips as you start to develop your own ideas:

- **Brainstorm possible ideas.** Don't reject ideas, however small or simple they seem to be. It is vital to give yourself a wide choice to start with, so dismiss nothing.
- **Make ideas visual early on.** A simple doodle or quick sketch next to a written idea helps kickstart your creativity, especially if it is in colour (blue, red and green particularly excite the brain).
- **Collect supporting material.** Magazine pictures, postcards, photocopies, photographs, drawings, artists' work... in fact anything in anyway connected with your ideas helps influence you and triggers further areas of development.
- **Develop helpful ways of working.** Pay attention to layout of ideas and studies. Try to arrange them so that you can easily compare similar ideas, eg: across a double page in a sketchbook.
- **Be economical and focused.** In other words, do not waste time on unnecessary detail. Colour studies are about exactly that and not necessarily about tone, texture, form, etc. Composition studies are general studies about what goes where in a picture and not about intricate shapes. Keep focused on what you are trying to work out at any one time and don't get side-tracked.
- **Don't restrict yourself.** GCSE themes are deliberately broad and designed to allow you to show off what you can do, so don't worry if, as your ideas develop, it seems that your link with Natural Forms seems to be getting a bit dodgy. If your studies are thorough, it should be possible to trace and link your thinking about the theme all the way through.
- **Add notes to explain your ideas.** But don't just describe, this will get you next to nothing in terms of marks. It is much better to explain your thinking and to evaluate your ideas and attempts using correct art and design terminology, so referring to technical terms and the formal elements is definitely a good idea.
- **Relate your work to that of other artists/designers.** The more connections you make at any stage of your work the better. You are showing the moderator that you understand a key part of the design process and that you are open-minded.

Exploring the theme of Natural Forms

Definitions from the Penguin English Dictionary, 2nd Edition

“**natural** /nach(e)rel/ **adj** **1** existing in or produced by nature without human intervention: *natural scenery; natural resources*. **2** relating to nature as an object of study or research: *the natural environment*. **3** relating to the physical world: *Natural laws describe phenomena of the physical universe*. **4** in accordance with or determined by nature.”

“**form** /fawm/ **noun** **1a** the shape and structure of something as distinguished from its material or content. **b** a body e.g. of a person, *esp* in its external appearance or as distinguished from the face. **2** the essential nature of a thing as distinguished from the matter in which it is embodied.”

The following tasks explore the theme as follows:

1. Animal forms
2. Maritime life
3. Coastlines and landscapes
4. Artwork based on natural forms
5. Artwork made from natural materials

Important note about using the tasks: The tasks point you towards various items at Norwich Castle that will help you address your theme in a number of different ways and with different materials and outcomes. By following the tasks, you will be covering the examination objectives. Obviously some things will appeal to you more than others and you might not necessarily want to do them. It is strongly recommended that you consider all the tasks, but if you choose not to do one, try to replace it with something similar so that you are still addressing the exam objective.

1. Animal Forms

In the Natural History and other collections at the Castle, you will find:

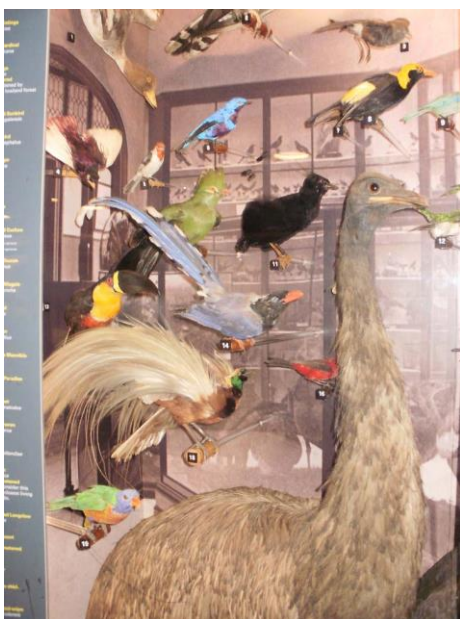
- stuffed birds
- stuffed and preserved animals
- cases of moths, butterflies and other insects
- mummified human and animal remains
- bones and fossils

There are images of some of these on the following page.

Animal Forms: tasks

- a) Produce at least **four drawings** of some these objects. Try to capture their individual qualities of shape, tone and texture. **(AO3) Suggestion:** In the Natural History section, you'll find the skull of a terror bird - one of the largest birds ever! This object already looks like a sculpture and would be a great subject for a strong tonal drawing. Try and use your skills using light and shade to create a sense of three dimensions.
- b) Choose one of these objects that interests you most and produce **at least three detailed studies** of it from different sections and angles. Use at least two different drawing media. **(AO3)**
- c) Make some **accompanying notes** about each object. Include details such as age, date and material. Are there any other interesting facts you would like to record? How do these objects make you feel? What do you like/dislike/think about them? **(AO1)**
- d) Archaeologists painstakingly unearth prehistoric remains and piece together the clues that they provide in order to gain a picture of what life was like for these creatures. Imagine the far distant future - what remains might be left from our generation to be unearthed by future civilisations? Use at least a double page of your sketchbook to **brainstorm** and draw some **ideas** for a piece of artwork called 'Fossils from the Future'. You should consider **at least one 3D outcome**. Add **notes** to explain your ideas. **(AO1/AO3)**
- e) Consider creating a **decorative design** using some of the natural forms you have looked at so far. For example, using the colour, pattern and shape from some of the butterflies and insect collection, you could create a repeat pattern design suitable for a piece of printed textile, ceramic tile or wrapping paper. Using colour and a double page of your journal/sketchbook, explore some possible ideas for a visually exciting and dynamic repeat pattern. **(AO1/AO2/AO3)**

Animal forms: images



2. Maritime life (and marine life)

In the collection you will find:

- shells and other marine life in the Natural History gallery
- preserved fish in the Natural History gallery
- paintings of maritime scenes in the art galleries
- life-size reconstructions of the coastal shorelines in the Ted Ellis Norfolk Wildlife gallery

There are images of some of these on the following page.

Maritime life (and marine life): tasks

- a) There are many different types of preserved fish in the Natural History section. Using a double page in your sketchbook create a series of sketches of parts of fish. **Observe details** such as the shapes of fins, eyes and gills. Also try and record the pattern of scales and any markings on your fish. **(AO3)**
- b) Find the collection of shells in the Natural History gallery. Make at least two **tonal studies** of these. Try and make your drawings look as three-dimensional as possible. **(Hint:** You can do this by making sure that you use a full range of tone from the darkest mark you can make to the lightest). **(AO3)**
- c) Using the studies above and a double page in your journal, develop **ideas for a sculpture** that could be used as a conversation piece at the entrance to a sea-life centre or a maritime museum. **(AO2)**
- d) Find the painting **'Fishing Boat in a Storm'** by **Alfred Priest**. This is a painting of natural forms but ones that are constantly changing. The sea and clouds look like they are in turmoil and the whole scene seems menacing. How has the artist tried to show movement? How has the artist conveyed a sense of light? Why does the scene look so threatening? Try to show some of the movement and atmosphere in a sketch using **strong tones and contrast**. **(AO1/AO2)**
- e) Use a double page of your sketchbook to draw a series of **designs for a clay or papier-mache pot** based on marine forms. **(AO1/AO3)**

Maritime life (and marine life): images



3. Artwork based on natural forms

In the collection you will find:

- examples of still-life painting
- landscape painting and drawing
- domestic and decorative ceramic items
- costumes and other personal accessories

There are images of some of these on the following page.

Artwork based on natural forms: tasks

- a) Look at Lewis Hubner's painting **A Parakeet Perched on a Basket of Mixed Fruit** and Emily Stannard's **Still Life - Dead Ducks and a Hare with a Basket and a Sprig of Holly** (see images on following page). Each artist has used quite a different style to depict their subjects. Make a composition sketch of each picture. Add some detail and tone in places but don't feel you have to complete the whole picture as this isn't necessary. Add notes to your drawings, pointing out differences and similarities between the two pieces. **(AO1)**
- b) The ceramic collection in the Decorative Arts gallery features many items that use illustrations and patterns derived from natural forms as decoration. Using designs and motifs from some of these items, make at least four colour studies developing your own repeat pattern for possible use as wrapping paper, a decorative tile or fabric print. **(AO2)**
- c) In the Natural History section you will find a curious object: a seated human skeleton holding a book! This is almost like a piece of contemporary art in itself. In your sketchbook, draw some studies of the hands, feet or skull. Concentrate on the form and use tone. Consider creating your own sculpture or painting based on this seated skeleton. What book would you choose for it to be holding? The meaning and interpretation of the piece would subtly change depending on what you choose to place in the skeleton's hands. With a combination of notes and sketches, put down some ideas for this piece. **(AO3)**
- d) Throughout the Natural History galleries you will find many natural and organic textures and surfaces. Using a double page in your journal, produce a series of studies of different textures using line, colour and tone. Use a further double page to produce some ideas for an abstract sculpture suitable for the entrance to the natural history section of a museum. You should concentrate on trying to use some of the textures you have studied in your designs. Add some notes that explain how you might make your sculpture and what materials you would use. Consider also how the scale of your piece might affect the impact it has. **(AO1/AO2/AO3)**

Artwork based on natural forms: images



4. Coastlines and landscapes

The coastline and the landscape in general are clearly natural forms (excluding man-made constructions of course). Artists have been fascinated with them for hundreds of years.

In the collections you will find:

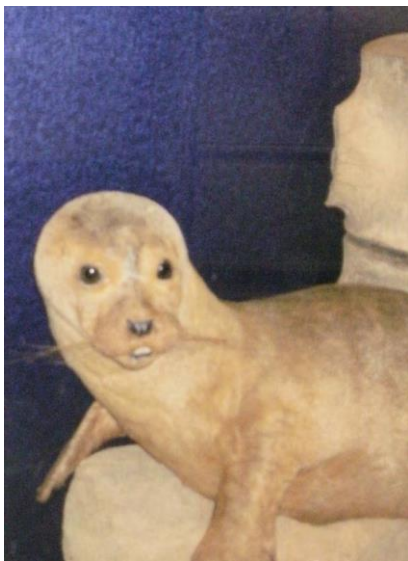
- reconstructions of shoreline and estuary scenes in the Ted Ellis Norfolk Wildlife gallery.
- landscape and coastal paintings in the art galleries.

There are images of some of these on the following page.

Coastlines and landscapes: tasks

- a) Make **two coloured drawings** in your sketchbook from one of the reconstructions in the Norfolk Wildlife gallery. The first drawing should include a **foreground, mid-ground and background**. Try to compose the area you choose in the same way an artist would frame a view for a painting. The second drawing should be a small detail from the reconstruction - for example, a bird on a rush. **(AO3)**
- b) Choose two landscape or coastal scenes from the art galleries that you find interesting, unusual or skilful. Make a brief sketch of each (perhaps using one page for each one). Add details about **colour** and **add notes** pointing out **similarities** and **differences** between the two. **(AO1)**
- c) Think about your **local area**. Is there a view near where you live (man-made or natural) that you could draw, paint or photograph? This will only be rough at the moment, of course, but so you don't forget, sketch out this possible scene from memory. The examination encourages you to make **connections between your work and that of others**. So here's the challenge: could you paint or draw a local scene but **imitate the composition** and perhaps the **style** of one of your chosen artists? **(AO1/AO3)**

Coastlines and landscapes: images



5. Artwork made from natural forms

In the Fitch Room area of the collection, you will find:

- shields from South Africa
- decorative platters, woven from fibre, from Nigeria
- carved wooden figurines from Cameroon

There are images of some of these on the following page.

Artwork made from natural forms: tasks

- a) Produce **at least a double page** of drawings of a selection of these objects. Try to use a combination of **appropriate drawing techniques**, such as colour, pattern, line and tone etc. **(AO3)**
- b) Using the **fibre platters** as a guide, sketch some ideas for a **geometric woven design**, possibly for use as a wall hanging. These ideas could be worked on at a later date using graph paper. The design could possibly be based on an **abstracted or stylised natural form**. Consider using a colour scheme based on natural earth colours. What natural materials could you weave with? **(AO1/AO3)**
- c) Look at the **carved figurines** from Cameroon and make a tonal study of one of them. Look how stylised and exaggerated the features are. Think about how to put this idea into a contemporary context and try to sketch out some design ideas for a **modern figurine** imitating some of the stylistic features of the African carvings. Consider what natural materials you could use and whether you will be carving or using another process. **(AO1/AO3)**
- d) The museum features hundreds of natural objects, both large and small. **Shells, dried beans, seed pods** and other small natural forms can be used decoratively for their **textural** and **patterned** qualities. Using a double page, map out some ideas for an abstract sculpture or wall-mounted piece using collections of similar forms. **(AO3)**

Artwork made from natural forms: images



What have I achieved and what should I do next?

If you have followed these materials thoroughly and have tried to do your best, you will already have accumulated a significant number of marks towards your overall total. However, you may not be clear on where to go from this point and it would be unwise to think that what you have done could not be improved upon. Remember: your marks can only carry on going up from this point, not down!

Some tips on what to do next

Look through your work so far. Are there any drawings that you need to add to? Could you add, say, more colour or make an aspect clearer? Do your notes really explain clearly? Are you particularly pleased or less pleased with anything? If so, say why. And very importantly, as you look through, do you have any further ideas or thoughts? If so, put them down immediately!

So far, we haven't touched on **AO4**. This is to do with **developing your final idea(s) and final piece(s)**. This is where you can make your work really **personal and different** from other students. This will need to be done in your own time or back in the art room at school.

Pick a few of the ideas that you like best or that you feel have the most potential. You will need to add to these in a number of ways:

- **Collect more supporting material.** This could take many forms, so keep a look out for pictures in magazines, articles, adverts, packaging – anything that is connected either visually or content-wise with your work. These show that you can make connections and select material to inform your work.
- **Research the work of other artists and designers.** The museum's collection is, of course, not exhaustive and the ideas you are already developing will be leading you in new directions. There are many more artists who can influence you and help you develop and further your work. **Be open-minded** about this. You are looking for artists who work with the **same subject matter** as you or who work **in a style that helps** you. It is not enough to search for artists who deal with Natural Forms.
- **As a result of the above, brainstorm some further ideas.** If you are being open-minded about the various new sources you have discovered, you will want to refine or add to your chosen ideas.
- **Plan further experimentation.** This is a crucial stage in ensuring a quality outcome. You are trying to finalise everything that you are going to do. What is your final piece going to look like? What **size** is it going to be? How are you going to use the **formal elements** of pattern, shape, line, form, texture, colour and tone? What **materials, tools and processes** are you going to use? You can only find out the answers to these questions by exploring them in your studies.

The Final Piece

You should be able to approach your final piece with confidence because, by now, you have amassed a lot of marks and you know what you are doing, with what, and why you are doing it. You may want to work from a plan that gives you a disciplined sequence of actions to help you meet your deadlines, but this is up to you.

Remember - at all stages you are allowed to discuss your work with your teacher. The examination and coursework rules encourage this. Your teachers are experts - use them and trust them!