

How are artists inspired by their surroundings?

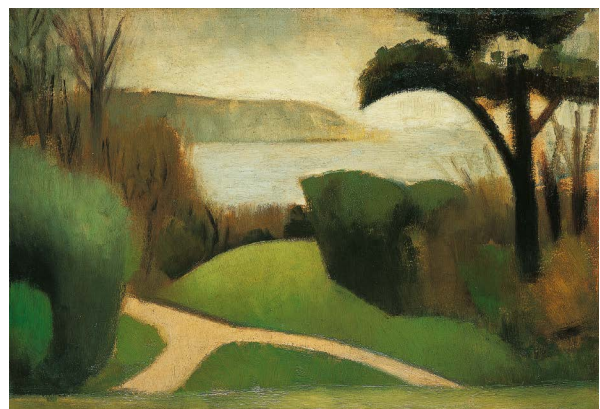


Ivon Hitchens lived in Sussex (near Petworth to be more exact). At first he lived with his family in a caravan in the woods before eventually building a house there. Nearly every day he would gather his paints and easels, put them in a wheelbarrow and walk until he found a good spot to paint. He gradually became less interested in painting exactly how a place looked and more interested in painting how a place felt.

The above painting is called *Distant Hills, Light on Dark & Dark through Light*. Hitchens liked painting pictures horizontally like this one as it encourages your eyes to follow the landscape across the canvas.

Didling on the Downs (right) depicts part of the South Downs, with sheep grazing. What does the one on the right depict? Have a think about how this painting makes you feel, and what kind of landscape it is.

Sometimes artists use a picture of a landscape to show their thoughts and feelings – even about things that aren't related to the place they're painting. *Near Swanage* by Mark Gertler (right) was painted in 1916, two years into the First World War. Gertler was a pacifist and this painting of a tranquil landscape sums up his desire for peace. What kind of landscape would you create to reflect your feelings?



Ivon Hitchens, *Distant Hills, Light on Dark & Dark through Light*, 1968, Oil on canvas, Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council (1985) © Estate of the Artist

Ivon Hitchens, *Didling on the Downs*, 1920s, Gouache on paper On Loan From a Private Collection (1996) © Estate of the Artist

Mart Gertler, *Near Swanage*, 1916, Oil on board, Kearley Bequest, through The Art Fund (1989) © By permission of Luke Gertler

Take a fresh look at your surroundings...

Where you live can affect what you create. Why not try making a piece of art work relating in some way to your location. Ideas for starting points are:

From A to B

Record a journey visually - you could make sketches, take photos, or collect things that you find on your journey.

Present them in an appropriate visual form - this could be a book, a composite picture, a relief or sculpture or even an animated film.

Town Vs Country

Do you live in an urban or a rural environment? How do these environments differ from each other, or are there any similarities?

Create a piece (or a series of pieces) of artwork that reflects your ideas about town and country. You could focus on one aspect e.g. depicting an idyllic rural landscape, like Mark Gertler, or you could contrast the two.

Postcard from an alien

Imagine you are an alien from another planet who has landed on Earth. What would you think about the place where you live? Try and depict your environment through alien eyes - what features of your surroundings do you think an alien would find the most interesting? What would they be puzzled by?

Think about...your background

Paul Nash's status as a British artist is partly influenced by his choice of subject. For Nash, Wittenham Clumps symbolised the English landscape and had ancient associations. It was a scene that he returned to throughout his career.

- How is your identity influenced by where you live?
- How does where you come from affect the art you create?
- How would you create a "British painting?"
- What symbols would you include to suggest contemporary British identity?



Paul Nash, Wittenham, 1935, Watercolour on paper, Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council (1985)