



**A DUCK FOR MR. DARWIN**

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This resource is in presentation style, for use with Power Point or as a printed handout. It can be used as part of pre-visit preparation, to accompany a visit, or can stand alone. It consists of 2 parts:

## Part One

Information, images and ideas for students

- About the artist
- About the work
- Things to think about
- In my opinion
- Here's one I made earlier...
- Further research

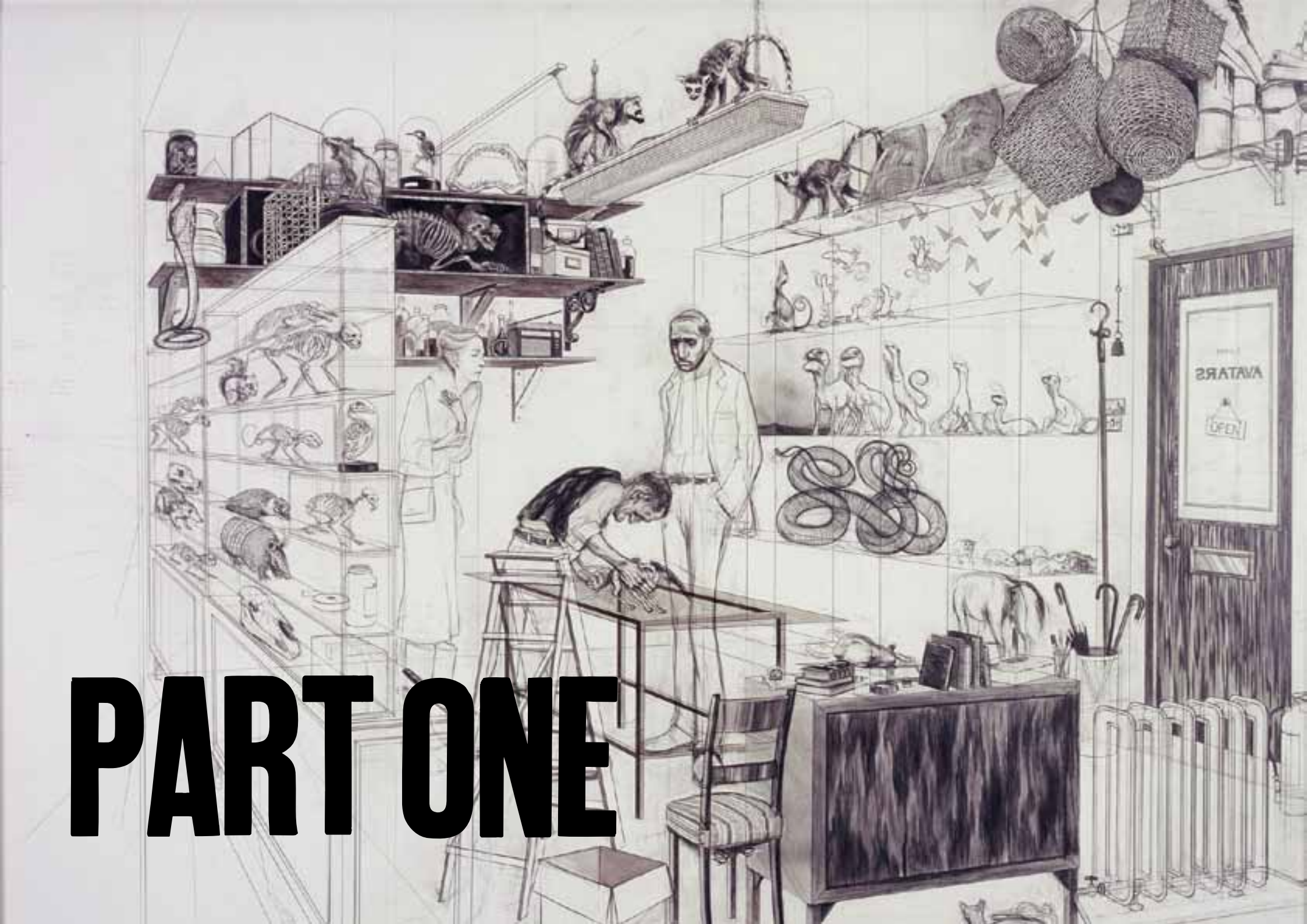
## Part Two

Notes for teachers

- Learning experiences
- Useful links and additional resources

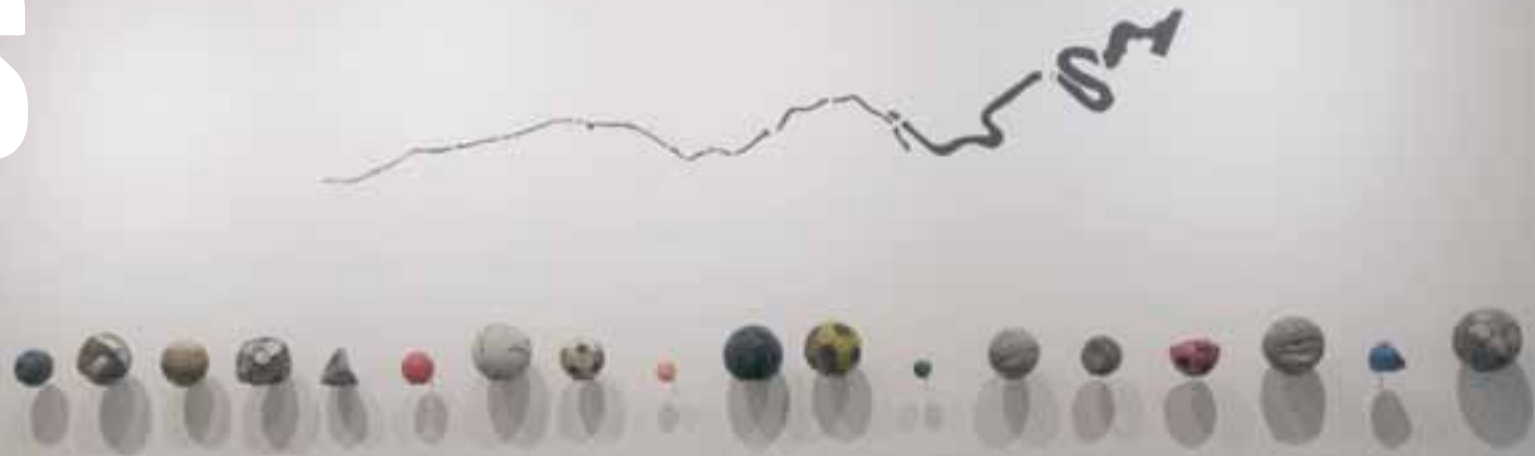






# PART ONE

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS



*A Duck for Mr. Darwin* is an exhibition at BALTIC which features work by nine contemporary artists from Britain, Ireland and the USA. They are Charles Avery, Marcus Coates, Dorothy Cross, Mark Dion, Andrew Dodds, Mark Fairington, Ben Jeans Houghton, Tania Kovats and Conrad Shawcross.

The exhibition coincides with the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin.

Darwin developed the important scientific theory of evolution by natural selection. He is pictured on the reverse of the £10 note.





# ABOUT THE WORK



*A Duck for Mr Darwin* is an exhibition which includes sculpture, installation, drawing, painting and film. The work of nine different artists has been brought together because it relates to the ideas of Charles Darwin. After a five year voyage around the world, during which he observed and collected specimens of plants and animals, Darwin developed his ideas about the ways in which life on earth naturally develops and adapts over time. Darwin's theory was presented in his book, 'The Origin of Species by Natural Selection' in 1859. His new ideas challenged the widely held view at the time, that all life on earth was made by one creator. Darwin's ideas have been very influential in the world of science and beyond.

# ABOUT THE WORK



Some of the art works in the exhibition have been specially commissioned by BALTIC. This means that the artists have been invited to make new work, in response to aspects of Darwin's life and ideas which interest them.

# ABOUT THE WORK

## TANIA KOVATS

Tania Kovats has created a piece called *Worm*, which is a large, working wormery. The work will change during the exhibition, as the living worms burrow through the layers of soil behind a large sheet of glass. Earthworms fascinated Darwin throughout his life and were the subject of his last publication.





# ABOUT THE WORK

## ANDREW DODDS

Andrew Dodds has created a sound piece, recorded by a North East youth choir. The work refers to the ongoing debate about which theories concerning the development of life on earth should be taught in schools.





# ABOUT THE WORK

## MARK DION

Mark Dion has created an installation which represents the work of explorers who travelled to South America in the 1850s to collect animal and plant specimens.



# ABOUT THE WORK

## BEN JEANS HOUGHTON

Ben Jeans Houghton has created a building resembling his studio, which he originally built on his allotment out of found windows and timber. The building at BALTIC contains the artists own collection of objects which he will change and rearrange during the exhibition.





# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

As you enter the gallery space listen for the sound piece by Andrew Dodds. You will hear a recording of a song being sung by a North East youth choir.

- Do you recognise the song?
- Listen to the words. What do you think the song is about?

Just inside the gallery space is an art work called *Arcadia Amongst the Ruins* by Andrew Dodds. Put the headphones on to watch and listen to the video which shows a woman carrying out a study of the flora on a piece of land.

- Do you recognise any of the sounds you can hear?  
Make a list of each sound you can name.
- What sort of environment do you think the woman is in?
- Do you think that sound is an important element of the work?

# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Find the art work called *Dear...* by Ben Jeans Houghton. The artist is asking visitors to the gallery to send a postcard to someone they know, inviting them to send an object to BAL TIC. Read the text on the back of one of the postcards and imagine what it would be like to receive it in the post. Which object would you send to BAL TIC? How would you choose?

Look carefully at Mark Dion's installation of suitcases, boxes and other objects in the corner of the gallery space.

- What are the different objects that can you see?
- What do you think the people using the objects might have been doing?
- Why do you think the objects are arranged on top of sand?
- Look at the labels accompanying the work to find out more about it.





# IN MY OPINION

*On the Ark and I* is an installation by Ben Jeans Houghton. A shed built out of reclaimed timber is filled with the artist's own collection of objects, which he has gathered throughout his life.

- Why do you think some people collect things?
- Is it worthwhile to collect some objects more than others?
- Have you ever collected anything?

Look around the exhibition and choose the art work which interests or intrigues you most. It doesn't have to be the one you like the most.

- Write down some keywords which describe your feelings about the work and write down any questions you have about it.
- Discuss your chosen art work with a partner. Share your thoughts and feelings about the work and say why you chose it.

Tania Kovats has created *Worm*, a large glass structure and working wormery. Look closely at the work and watch to see if the earthworms are moving within the horizontal layers of soil. Can art be made from living creatures?



# HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER

Have a go at observing and drawing the natural world in your school grounds.

- Go out and about around your school grounds with a sketchbook or a clipboard and paper.
- Explore different areas and look for plants and other natural things, such as flowers, leaves, moss and berries. You could even use a magnifying glass to help you see small things!
- Sit and draw one of the things you have found. Try to put as much detail as you can in to your drawing, including the shape, markings, colours and patterns on your chosen subject.
- Collect together all the drawings from your class to make a survey of the school grounds.





# HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER

The art work by Marcus Coates called *Human Report 2008*, shows a TV broadcast on local TV on the Galapagos Islands, featuring a report by the artist about human society on the islands from the point of view of the blue footed booby, a bird that lives there.

- Think of a bird that lives in your environment, that you can see around your house or your school.
- Imagine that you are the bird. How might the bird describe the place where it lives and the objects, buildings and people it can see?
- Write a piece of text from the bird's point of view.



# FURTHER RESEARCH

Cornelia Hesse-Honegger

Jyll Bradley

Suky Best

Jeremy Deller

Ilana Halperin

Diane Thater

Catherine Chalmers

Henrik Hakansson

# LITERACY KEYWORDS

anniversary

natural selection

species

collection

contemporary

natural

publication

specimen

collector

drawing

evolution

observation

sculpture

theory

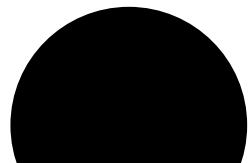
video

commission

environment

installation

painting





# **PART TWO**

## **NOTES FOR TEACHERS**

# LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Contemporary art is incredibly diverse and wide ranging and can be used to support teaching and learning as part of an entire learning experience. It can be used to generate creative thinking in all subject areas and to support learning across curricular dimensions, as well as contribute to personal development and personalised learning.

Cross curricular opportunities include:  
Art and Design, English, Science, ICT

# LINKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## BALTIC

[www.balticmill.com](http://www.balticmill.com)

## Quay

[www.balticmill.com/quay](http://www.balticmill.com/quay)

## Library and Archive

<http://archive.balticmill.com>

'In my opinion' toolkit to help pupils approach artwork,  
formulate questions and contribute opinions

<http://www.balticmill.com/learning/Downloads.php>

Blank presentation template: pupils can use this to present their  
own research and ideas

<http://www.balticmill.com/learning/Downloads.php>

BALTIC Secondary Resources Bank: pupils can use this  
to search for and download images and other information

<http://www.balticmill.com/learning/Downloads.php>

## Darwin Today

[www.darwin.rcuk.ac.uk](http://www.darwin.rcuk.ac.uk)

## Darwin 200: Celebrating Charles Darwin's bicentenary

[www.darwin200.org](http://www.darwin200.org)

## Natural History Museum: educational resources about evolution

[www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/evolution/index.html](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/evolution/index.html)



# IMAGE CREDITS

## Slide 1

Artist: Ben Jeans Houghton  
Artwork: Taxonomy of Transit Objects, 2008  
Courtesy of the artist and the GLOBE GALLERY

## Slide 2

Artist: Mark Dion  
Artwork: Tropical Collectors  
Photographer: Colin Davison  
Courtesy of the artist

## Slide 3

Artist: Charles Avery  
Artwork: Avatars, 2005  
Courtesy of the artist and Museum Boijmans, The Netherlands

## Slide 4

Artist: Conrad Shawcross  
Artwork: Pre Retroscope  
Photographer: Colin Davison  
Courtesy of the artist

## Slide 5

Artist: Dorothy Cross  
Artwork: Jelly Fish Lake  
Photographer: Colin Davison  
Courtesy of the artist

## Slide 8

Artist: Andrew Dodds  
Artwork: Alive!  
(Recording session, London, 2007)  
Courtesy of the artist

## Slide 9

Artist: Mark Dion  
Artwork: Tropical Collectors  
Photographer: Colin Davison  
Courtesy of the artist

## Slide 10

Artist: Ben Jeans Houghton  
Artwork: On the Ark and I (2009)  
Photographer: Colin Davison

## Slide 12

Artist: Ben Jeans Houghton  
Artwork: On the Ark and I (2009)  
Photographer: Colin Davison

## Slide 12

Artist: Mark Dion  
Artwork: The Desk of a Tropical Ecologist (Guyana Field: Semang Creek), 1999  
Photographer: Marc Damage  
Courtesy of in Situ fabienne leclerc, Paris

## Slide 13

Artist: Ben Jeans Houghton  
Photo of Ben Jeans Houghton's Shed in situ  
Courtesy of the the artist

## Slide 14

Artist: Ben Jeans Houghton  
Artwork: Wood For The Trees, May 2008  
Courtesy of the artist and 'Enchanted Moment Festival' WAYGOOD

## Slide 15

Artist: Marcus Coates  
Artwork: Blue Footed Booby (Performance Still from 'Human Report', a film for Channel 9 News, Santa Cruz, Galapagos, Ecuador), 2008  
Photographer: Elke Hartmann  
Courtesy of the artist and Workplace Gallery