

**CORNELIA
PARKER**



PART ONE

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Cornelia Parker was born in Cheshire in 1956. She studied Fine Art at Wolverhampton Polytechnic and Reading University. Her work has been exhibited widely in the UK, and internationally. Parker was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1997. She lives and works in London.



ABOUT THE WORK

Cornelia Parker works with sculpture, film, drawings, photographs and objects. Her work reveals a fascination with both the physical properties of objects and their historical associations and meanings. Parker frequently transforms objects by using techniques such as exploding, crushing or stretching and uses elaborate ways of displaying these objects in the gallery, for example, by suspending them in midair. Her work is also concerned with the relationship between object and text and the significance of language in affecting our understanding of the world around us.



ABOUT THE WORK

Doubtful Sound, an exhibition of Parker's work at BALTIC, includes the first showing in the UK of her sculptural work *Perpetual Canon*, in which 60 silver plated instruments from a brass band have been flattened and suspended in midair. Lit from the light of a single bulb, the suspended instruments throw shadows that replace the sound. Although the crushed instruments can no longer be played, they have been hung in an upright position, with all the mouthpieces facing in the same direction, and with a gap between each instrument, drawing attention to the absence of the musicians who once played them. In the *Avoided Objects* series, the artist presents drawings, photographs and small objects, often accompanied by text. The series began after Parker, searching with a metal detector, found an object which was mysterious and had no obvious use. *Avoided Objects* includes 'embryo' works, which present objects not yet fully formed, with their recognisable details missing. In her recent work, *Bullet Drawings*, the artist has taken the lead obtained by melting down one bullet and stretched it into a line of wire, which she has shaped and presented between two sheets of glass.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Walk around the artwork called *Perpetual Canon* and look at the brass instruments hanging in midair.

- Would the work seem any different if the instruments were displayed on the wall, on the floor, or in glass cabinets?

The brass instruments are no longer capable of making a sound.

- Do you think you would look at these objects differently if you saw them being played by a brass band?
- In what ways has the artist changed the objects?
- Has anybody in your group ever played one of the brass instruments you can see?
- Does this affect how they feel about the work?

Cornelia Parker is interested in the use of silver as a material. Look closely at the silver plated brass instruments in the gallery.

- What words would you use to describe the qualities of the material?



IN MY OPINION

‘...in much of my work what’s not visible or what’s not there is just as important as what is there.’ *Cornelia Parker*

- Work in pairs or small groups and discuss this statement in relation to the artwork called *Perpetual Canon*.
- What do you think is absent or missing from the work?
- What could be described as not being there?

‘The formal arrangement of a piece, comes from a combination of the idea, the material itself and as a response to the space.’ *Cornelia Parker*

- Think about this statement by Cornelia Parker.
- How do you think her work relates to the gallery space?



HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER

Choose a familiar object , for example, something that you see or use every day, or an object that is special to you.

- Make a quick, simple drawing of the object to show the outline and the key shapes within it.
- Think about the different ways in which you could transform your object and make a quick drawing to show each idea. For example, what would the object look like if you stretched it? or changed its shape? cut it up and rearranged all the pieces? cut it in half? squashed it? made it twice as high or six times wider?



HERE'S ONE I MADE EARLIER

Think of an idea for a sculpture you can hang in mid air.

- Will you use found objects or make a sculpture using raw materials? Which materials could you use? What type of objects do you think will look good hung in midair?
- How will you attach thread to each object to hang it? Try making a hole in the object or tying the thread around it.
- Use a range of materials and objects to try out several of your ideas.
- Attach a cane or sheet of wire mesh to the ceiling in your classroom so you can hang them up and see what they look like. Walk around the room so you can see your work from different angles.
- Try using paper, wool, carrier bags, fluff, artificial flowers, bus tickets, boxes, second hand books... or anything else you can think of.



FURTHER RESEARCH

Anya Gallacio
Helen Chadwick
Mona Hatoum
Mark Dion
Rachel Whiteread
Simon Starling

LITERACY KEY WORDS

absence

instrument

photography

shape

arrangement

crushing

language

properties

stretching

suspension

association

drawing

film

materials

response

suspending

transform

change

exploding

flatten

object

sculpture

PART TWO

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

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

- Art and Design
- Design Technology
- History
- Science

USEFUL LINKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BALTIC

www.balticmill.com

QUAY

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>

IMAGE CREDITS

Slide 2

Cornelia Parker *Perpetual Canon* 2004

Photographer: Colin Davison

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Slide 4

Cornelia Parker *Perpetual Canon* 2004

Photographer: Colin Davison

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Slide 5

Top: Cornelia Parker *Perpetual Canon* 2004

Photographer: Colin Davison

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Bottom: Cornelia Parker, *Bullet Drawing*

Photographer: Colin Davison

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Cornelia Parker *Perpetual Canon* 2004

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Cornelia Parker *Perpetual Canon* 2004

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Slide 8

Cornelia Parker *Perpetual Canon* 2004

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Slide 9

Cornelia Parker *My Soul Afire* 1997

Courtesy of the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London