

End of Engines

An exhibition by Robbie Thomson

This pack will help your class to explore *End of Engines*, an installation by Robbie Thomson in An Lanntair.

The alchemical properties of oil, and the gloaming of the combustion engine are symbols for our age of consumption in Robbie Thomson's multimedia installation, *End of Engines*.

Thomson's exhibition links the deep history of the planet to our contemporary environmental condition and draws on cosmological themes to illustrate the ability of oil to transcend and entangle time. The work meditates on the creative and destructive forces of technology, the allure of the synthetic and the nihilism of industrial exploitation. Although sometimes ominous in tone, the void-like quality of the installation suggests radical re-imaginings of alternative futures and relationships between humans and the earth.

Inspired by the aesthetics of petroleum architecture, mythology, astronomy and car customisation, this installation features a collection of robotic sound and light sculptures. Using liquids, reflection and rotation, the sculptures create intricate interplays of light and motion that animate the walls of the gallery.

This gallery pack is made to accompany the exhibition and has suggested activities and tasks that you may wish to complete with your class.

We hope that these activities will assist you and your pupils to engage in looking and thinking about the artworks both artists have made. Where possible, join in on the activity yourself and allow the pupils to see how you engage with the tasks.

An Lanntair can supply your school with the art materials should you require them.

Curriculum for excellence areas

Expressive Arts

I have the opportunity to choose and explore a range of media and technologies to create images and objects, discovering their effects and suitability for specific tasks. **EXA 1-02a**

I have the opportunity to choose and explore an extended range of media and technologies to create images and objects, comparing and combining them for specific tasks. **EXA 2-02a**

Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through activities within art and design. **EXA 1-05a / EXA 2-05a**

I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings.

I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work. **EXA 1-07a / EXA 2-07a**

Literacy : Listening and Talking

When I engage with others, I know when and how to listen, when to talk, how much to say, when to ask questions and how to respond with respect. **LIT 1-02a**

When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking. **LIT 2-02a**

Literacy : Writing

I can describe and share my experiences and how they made me feel. **ENG 1-30a / GAI 1-30a**

As I write for different purposes and readers, I can describe and share my experiences, expressing what they made me think about and how they made me feel. **ENG 2-30a / GAI 2-30a**

Activity – Time journey cartooning

In this activity pupils will be invited to create their own cartoon strip depicting a journey into the future.

Materials required

Blank cartoon strip (overleaf) or unlined paper, pencils, colouring pens or pencils.

Task

Robbie was inspired by reading a story about a future time when petrol is close to running out. It made him think about petrol and oil and about our relationship with it. It reminded him of old stories of humans going underground into other worlds. It made him wonder what the future will be like – maybe we will run out of oil? Maybe we won't need engines which burn oil? Maybe you will invent a new way of moving around?

Make a cartoon story.

Plan your story first. Have a think about what you want to show and how many boxes or spaces you have to fill in. It might go something like this:

Box 1 – where are you going to travel to – the past? The future? How will you get there- by rocket? Falling down a hole? A magic time shifting stick?

Box 2 – What kind of land do you find when you get there? Has the sea has turned into macaroni cheese? Is it exactly like today but we're all wearing funky clothes? Maybe there are no humans? Maybe we live in treehouses or forts?

Box 3 – Is there any oil or engines being used? If not, how do you travel around or heat your houses? Maybe we each have solar powered jet skis, or wind powered personalised rockets?

Box 4 – Who do you meet there? A friendly or fierce animal? Another kid? Maybe as a species we've evolved again to suit a future world- perhaps humans have extra thumbs or wheels?

Box 5 – Do you decide to stay there or come home? Will anyone back at home believe what you've seen? Maybe you come back and things have changed here?

Discussion questions:

We know that some of the ways we've been living have to change in the future – this is because we are choosing to live in a way that is kinder to our planet Earth.

Can you think of some choices we have in our power and in our homes to live in a kinder way to the planet now?

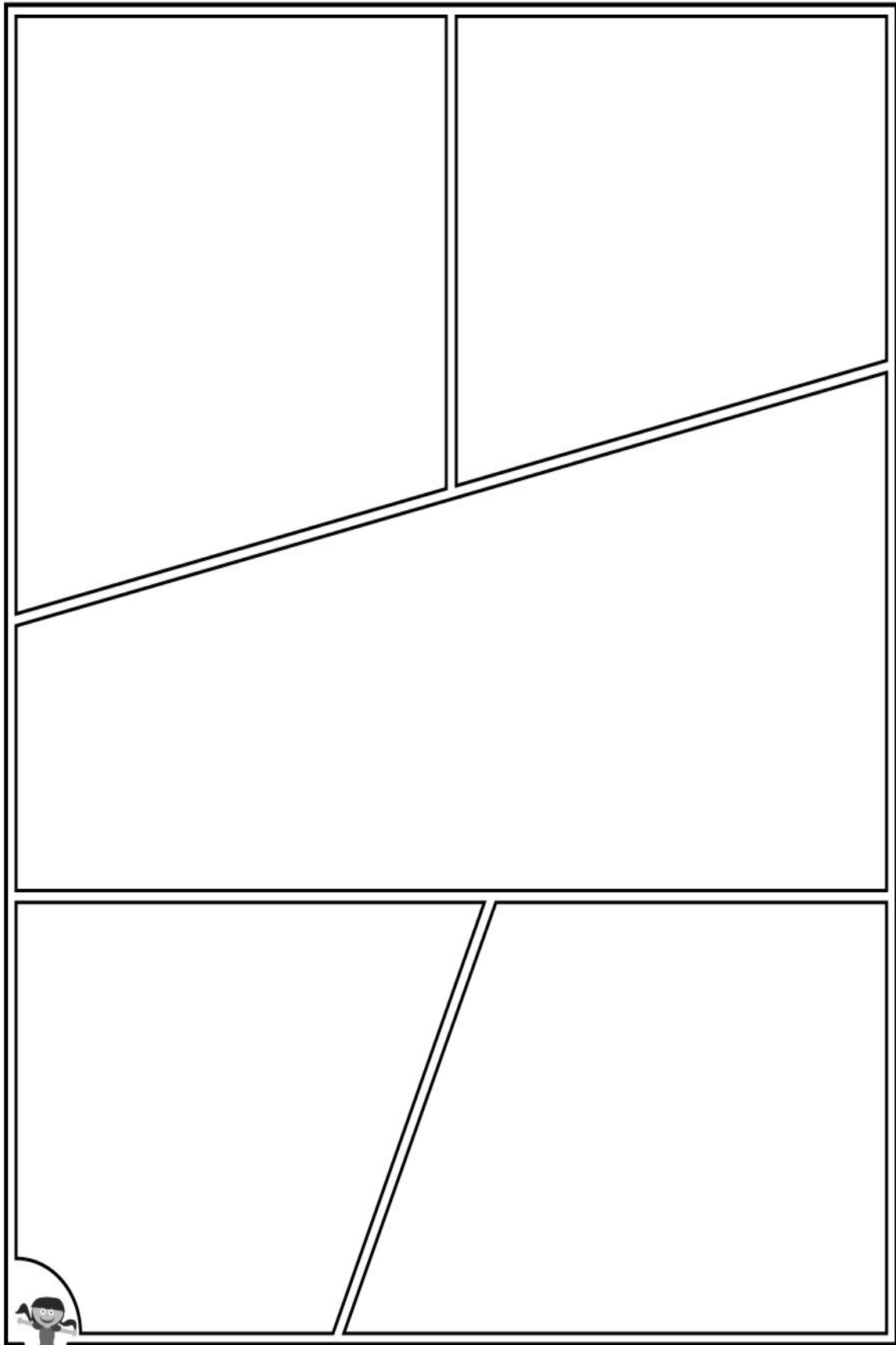
What changes might you make when you are a grown-up?

Observations:

Robbie's exhibition gives us a chance to think about the way we have used oil and the part it's played in keeping our homes warm and transporting us around.

You may know someone who has a job that is connected to oil – someone who works offshore or who drives the fuel van. We rely and depend on these people to help keep things running.

In the future these types of important jobs that help keeping us moving around, warm and safe may be linked to other types of 'green' energy like using wind, waves or the sun.



Activity – to do/to don't list creative writing

In this activity pupils can make a 'to do' list a 'to don't' list for their future grown-up self.

This asks them to think about what changes they would like to see and invites them to think about time.

Materials required

Lined paper, pencils

Task

Robbie's exhibition makes us think about time, the past and the future. Sometimes as humans get older they can forget the things that were important to them and get confused by 'big deals' like paying bills or cooking meals... But you're not going to fall into that trap, are you?! You're going to remember the important things as you get older! Now's your chance to write some of these things down to help you remember.

Write a 'to do' list for yourself? It can be wacky and wild or sensible and clever...

Things like:

Do live in a bouncy castle

Do invent a bubble-gum pogo stick that fires edible bubbles on each jump

Do have midnight snacks every single night

Do invent a new way to make energy

Do live in a kind way to the planet

And now try making a 'to don't' list, you could add things like:

Don't use bows and arrows in your bouncy castle home

Don't swim in jelly or baked beans

Don't force kids to eat things they don't like

Don't let the world get warmer

Don't let any more animals become extinct

Observations:

Sometimes as we grow older, we can forget the important stuff and life can feel complicated. Sometimes grown ups need reminding of their inner child. Art can be one way of letting ourselves play and be someone else for a bit. Exhibitions like Robbie's can help our imaginations grow and allow us to feel like we're someone different or somewhere else. Art can also challenge us and make us feel uncomfortable – that's ok.

It's important to think about our actions at every age, for kids or grown-ups. Your 'to do' and 'to don't' lists can become important if enough people feel the same way. This is how change can happen. Art can be a way of showing or communicating what changes need to happen.

Extension to the activity: Make some posters or signs for your lists like hazard signs for the 'don'ts' and put them up around your classroom.

Activity – 3D paper mobile

Materials required

Paper or card, scissors, glue stick, paper straws, pipe cleaners, tape, hole punch, wool or string.

Task

Looking at Robbie's installation we can see that it is made of the same shape or form which is repeated.

Using paper, we can make something similar that hangs and moves through the air like Robbie's artwork.

To make a solar system:



1. Paint a paper plate to look like the night sky



2. Cut out and paint some circular 'planets' – use your imagination to create new ones, or follow a planetary guide to make the real ones.



How does lava look? Is there a planet of oil? Play with how you add the paint to your planet – you may want to make some using pipe cleaners or bottle tops or other objects you find.



3. When everything is dry, cut a spiral into your plate.



4. Using a hole punch make holes in each planet and along the plate and string each planet onto the plate. If you don't have a hole punch you can use tape.



Extension to the activity: You can also make other paper mobiles using the same principals.

You could choose a simple shape and making several of them – this could be cut out or something folded.



It could be a theme that links to your class project (like animals or environments).

