



Exhibition Resource Pack

20 January – 3 March 2018

Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson: In the Family of the Carbons

This resource pack has been designed for teachers and educators. It can be used as part of pre-visit preparation or to accompany your visit. The pack includes a short introduction to the artists and their work, including key themes, and things to think about, do and discuss during your visit and back in the classroom.

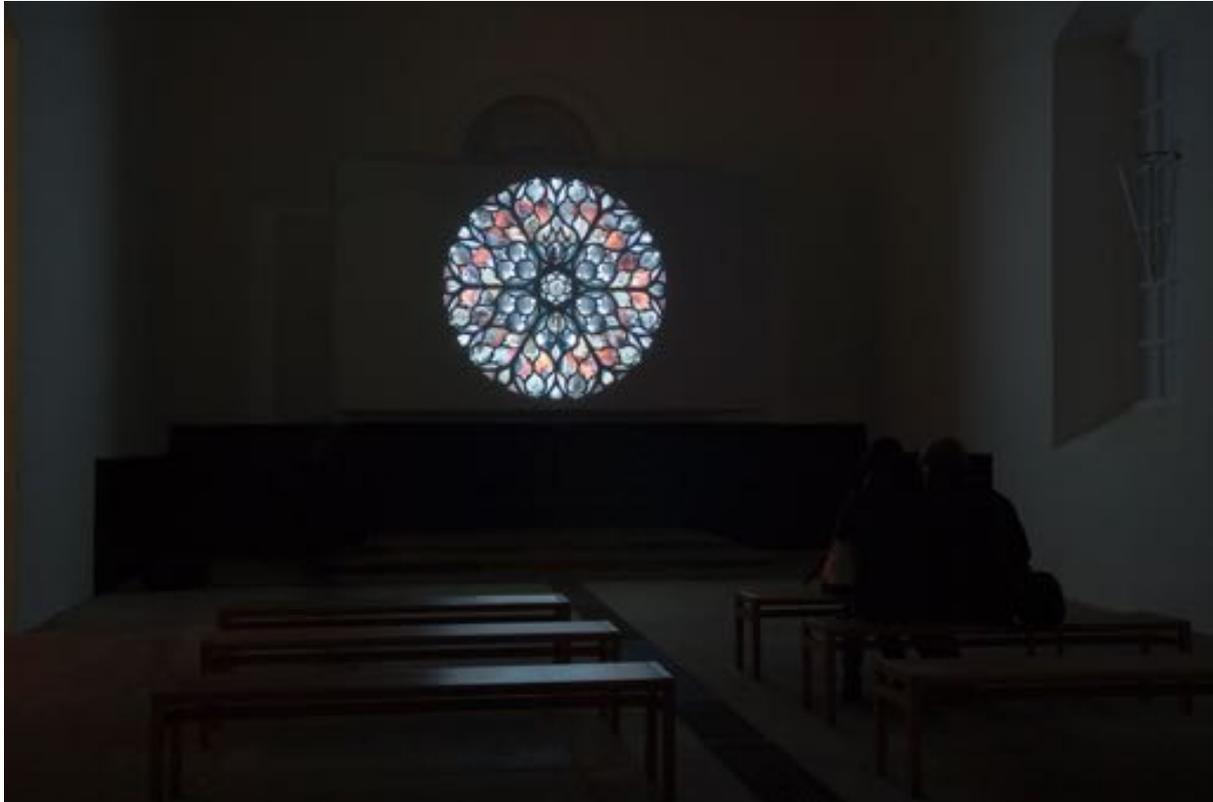
For more information about our programme for schools or to book a visit please contact:

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About the Artists:

Nick Crowe (b.1968) and Ian Rawlinson (b.1965) are based in Berlin and Manchester and have worked collaboratively since 1994. They use video and sculpture to create art installations which explore faith, politics, national identity and the environment.



About the Exhibition:

In the Family of the Carbons includes installation piece *Song for Coal*, a film-projection based on the apocalyptic rose window of Sainte Chapelle, Paris. Broken down into 152 separate panels, each section of the rose hosts its own individual film, creating kaleidoscopic imagery that is visually rich, slowly evolving and meditative. Alongside this, the artists have worked with Opera North singers and Music Director Justin Doyle, to create a traditional plainsong based on *The Coal Catechism* by William Jasper Nicolls – a 1898 publication which provided educational insight into the industrial age by means of question and answer dialogues.

A short clip of *Song for Coal* is available here: <https://vimeo.com/152853419>

The exhibition also includes loans from Wigan Museum collection alongside a selection of sculpture and drawings from the artists' recent work, including figurines created through the rare practice of carving with cannel coal mined from the seams along Wigan and Leigh.



Key themes:
local history
religion
performance
film
industrial heritage
music
sculpture
geology
energy
climate change
geometry
pattern
song
craft

Explore the exhibition:

Notes for a self-guided tour. Pre-visit is recommended.

The artists Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson have explored the technique of carving cannel coal to create a series of 18 figures for the exhibition. They used coal sourced from the Wigan area.

Fact: Neolithic humans started to use cannel coal for jewelry in 3500BC. That's over 5500 years ago!

Look closely at the cannel coal figures, who do you think these people are? What are they doing? Where are they going?

Wigan Museum have loaned us a bust of Henry VIII for our visitor area. He was carved from cannel coal in 1756.

Fact: The bust is actually made of three pieces; a marble base, the cannel coal main body, and the hat.

What do you know about Henry VIII? What else can you learn about him from looking at the carved bust? What differences do you notice between this and the artist's carved figures in the exhibition?



Fact: Cannel coal is a type of coal made naturally when insects, plants and fungi have decomposed in wet conditions over millions of years.



The artists explored this natural process of decay and the link between plant-life and coal production through a series of photographs entitled *Host*.

Look closely at the photographs. What can you see? What do you think these are images of? What words would you use to describe these images?

The photographs were created through a very unusual process: The artists bought bunches of fresh tulips. They then set up a camera and filmed the tulips whilst throwing lit matches at the flowers! The tulips gradually burned and curled away.

The artists then edited the video to create a mirrored effect – so that the image was vertically symmetrical. The *Host* photographs show the tulips at the end of this process.

Cannel coal is made from thousands of decomposed plants. What do you think would happen if you threw a lit match at a piece of cannel coal?

Fact: Coal has been mined in Wigan and Leigh since the 14th Century. Nearby Astley Green Colliery opened in 1908 at the peak the Industrial Revolution, when coal was in demand as a source of fuel for the factories.

Artist Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson are fascinated by coal mining, the impact it had on our environment and the lives of the workers. Using footage and images of coal miners, their tools and equipment, the artists created the film for *Song for Coal*.

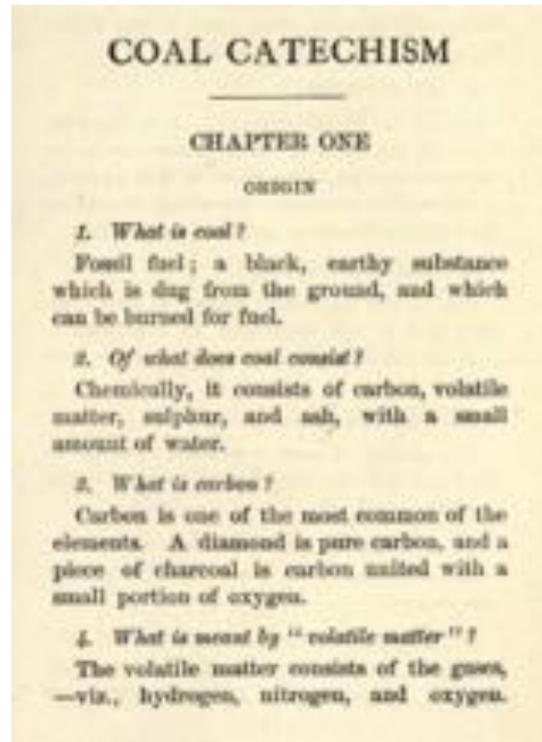


The *Song for Coal* video was inspired by the pattern of a stained-glass church window. Each part of the window contains different images that move and change, like a kaleidoscope.

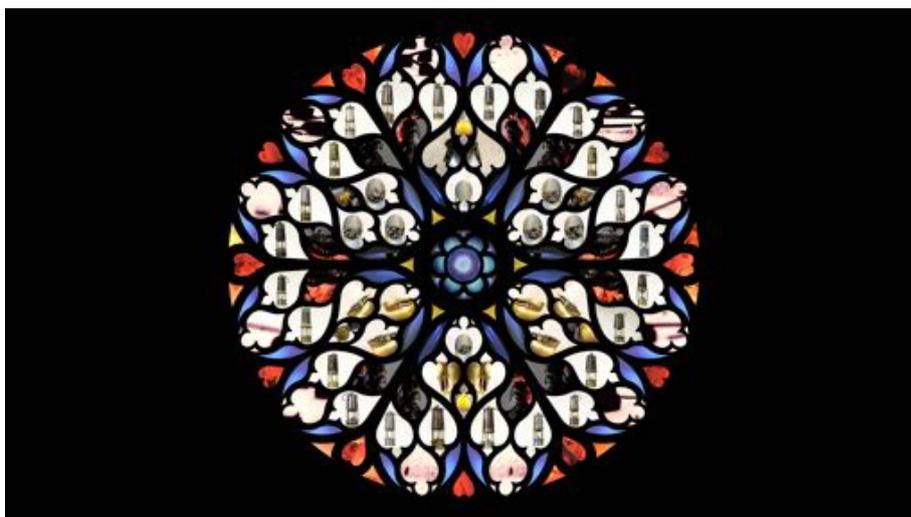
After watching and listening to Song for Coal, can you list what different images you could see in the film?

Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson worked with singers from Opera North to create the soundtrack for *Song for Coal*. The words are taken from the 'Coal Catechism', an 1898 publication by American writer William Jasper Nicolls. The title of the exhibition 'In the Family of the Carbons' also comes from this book. Coal Catechism was designed to give the public an educational insight into the coal industry through a simple question and answer format. This fascinating book can now give us an understanding of the mindset of those living during the Industrial Revolution:

"With Coal, we have light, strength, power, wealth, and civilisation; without Coal, we have darkness, weakness, poverty, and barbarism. The most civilised nations of the world are those consuming the most Coal."



The words were transformed into plainsong, a traditional musical chant from western churches. These songs are sung without instrumental accompaniment, and follow a very simple melody.



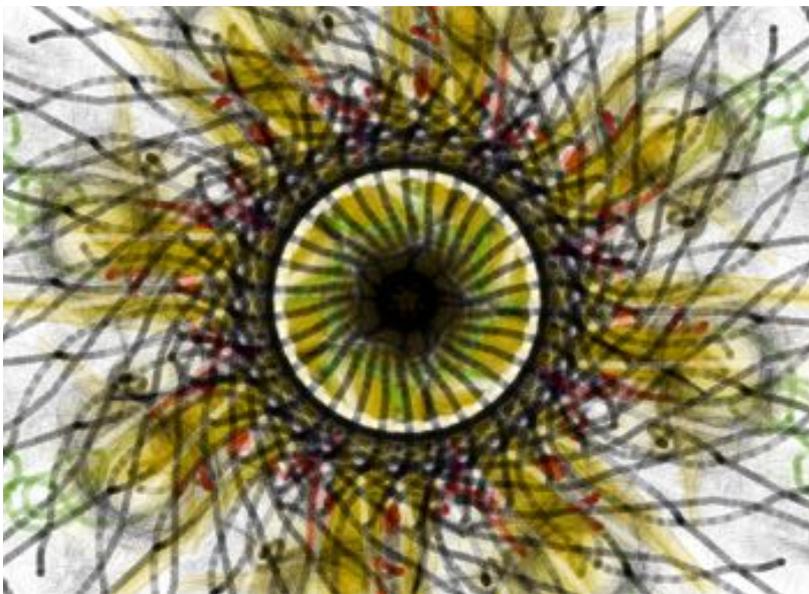
Why do you think the artists used a traditional stained-glass window and the church plainsong to explore the theme of coal? What words would you use to describe the experience of watching Song for Coal?

Dig deeper: suggested activities for back in the classroom

Creative Coal Songs – KS1&2/Music

The audio/visual installation *Song for Coal* was inspired by the 'Coal Catechism' by William Jasper Nicolls. You can read the book online [here](#).

Divide the class into five groups. Select five key phrases from this book and allocate one to each group. Give the groups 10 minutes to create a melody for their sentence, and rehearse it as a group. After sharing the different melodies, work as a class to fit them together into a song – with a chorus and verses.



Kaleidoscopic Dreams – KS2/ Art & Design

The video for *Song for Coal* is a beautiful stained-glass window that evolves and moves.

Explore creative geometric shapes, lines and pattern using the 'Kaleidoscopic' function on this free online [geometric drawing tool](#).

Power Plants - KS3/Science

The artists created photographic prints of burned up tulip plants using a very unusual process. You can watch short films of the artists' process [here](#).

Use this [science resource](#) to experiment with the energy stored in vegetables.

Recommended resources and links:

National Coal Mining Museum, Schools resources (Art, Music, Poetry):

<https://www.ncm.org.uk/learning/learning-resources/art-and-music>

Friends of the Earth Clean Air schools pack:

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/clean-air-schools-pack-103300.pdf>