

## Curious Creatures – Frans Post & Brazil

### Looking and Responding Drawing Workshops

Primary Teachers' Notes

<b>Session duration</b>	2 hours
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Discover how and why Post observed and recorded animals in this practical workshop. Students will develop critical thinking and observational drawing skills with artist Mags Harnett.</p> <p>The children will learn about the context in which Frans Post created these works in 17<sup>th</sup> century Brazil. They will imitate Post's artistic process; firstly they will visit the exhibition and explore it with the workshop facilitator. They will then draw a subject in pencil from observation in the exhibition. In the studio they will choose a 'master' drawing from their work. They will then add colour and writing to their drawing. Finally they will copy their 'master' drawing into a larger collaborative piece with their classmates to imitate Frans Post's method of using his observational drawings for later pieces.</p>
<b>Year groups suitable for</b>	First class to Sixth class
<b>Session itinerary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit exhibition with workshop facilitator</li> <li>• The children draw from observation in the exhibition room</li> <li>• Move to Millennium Wing Studio to develop drawing, adding colour and writing</li> <li>• Copy this drawing into larger collaborative pieces in groups</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop knowledge and awareness of Post's artwork and of his artistic process</li> <li>• Use this as a stimulus for their own personal creativity</li> <li>• Develop knowledge and awareness of Brazil and its environment; and knowledge and awareness of this time in history</li> <li>• Develop drawing skills</li> </ul>
<b>Themes explored</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How Frans Post worked: from observation to sketching, and from drawing to painting</li> <li>• Brazil and its environment, especially animals</li> <li>• Colonisation in general</li> <li>• Colonisation at this specific time and place; Brazil/Dutch colonies 17th century</li> </ul>
<b>Methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through discussion and observation in the exhibition itself including object handling</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through observational drawing and then painting in the studio</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum links</b>	<p><b>Geography and Science</b>  <b>Environmental awareness and care</b>  <i>Specifically;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of Holland and of Brazil</li> <li>• Animals native to Brazil</li> <li>• Current and past environment in Brazil-changes</li> </ul> <p><b>History</b>  (5th and 6th Class)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life, society and culture in the past</li> <li>• Eras of change and conflict</li> </ul> <p><b>Visual Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing and Painting and colour</li> <li>• Observational drawing</li> <li>• use of imagination for environments</li> <li>• fine-motor skills for cutting out stencil animal</li> </ul>
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Exploration, experimentation and making</li> <li>• Being inspired and stimulated by art to create own art</li> <li>• Learning facts and information about the specific place, time and artist</li> <li>• Deepened understanding of an artist's process</li> <li>• Increased empathy through understanding of animals</li> </ul>
<b>Background information to share with students before your visit</b>	<p><b>Frans Post 1612-1680</b></p> <p><b>Who was he?</b>  A Dutch artist of the 17th century. He had a famous brother called Pieter Post who was an architect and who possibly taught him to draw and paint. While Frans was in Brazil, Pieter was supervising the construction of Mauritshuis in the Hague, now an important museum (<i>Girl with a Pearl Earring</i> by Vermeer is there). Frans Post was a wonderful draughtsman (good at drawing) and painter. He wasn't famous before he went to Brazil. His paintings were unique because he painted things no one in Holland had ever seen before.</p> <p><b>What was he doing in Brazil?</b>  He was invited there by a man called Johan Maurits</p> <p><b>Who was Johan Maurits?</b>  He was Governor-general of the Dutch colony in Brazil from 1637 to 1644. He was quite a character. He created South America's first museum, first observatory, first botanical gardens. His motto was <i>Qua patet orbis</i> meaning 'as far as the world extends'. He was endlessly curious and enthusiastic. He brought scientists and</p>

artists with him to Brazil so they could record, learn and share their knowledge of the 'New world', that is to say a world that was new to them. Some of this knowledge was shared by the publication of books and also by works of art, such as Post's paintings.

**But what were the Dutch doing far away in Brazil at that time?**

The Dutch had colonised a part of Brazil. They left their own country in ships, travelled as far away as possible and landed in Brazil. They had more powerful weapons than the people who lived there already and they took over part of the country by force. Portuguese ships had already landed there too and taken other parts by force. They wanted to own the country so they would have power and money which they made from taking the land and using it to grow crops or take out minerals from the ground. They also took things from the people there and enslaved them. This made the Dutch people very rich. Nowadays colonisation is of course morally wrong.

**What are these drawings?**

These drawings were found in a place called Haarlem in Holland. There is a special library there called the Noord-Hollands Archief. A folder was found in 2010 with 34 drawings. There were no signatures on the drawings. A man called Alexander de Bruin decided he would find out who they were done by. He recognised the animals from Frans Posts' paintings. He was a kind of art detective.

**How did Frans Post do the drawings?**

Since it was such a long time ago we cannot be sure, but we can look closely at the drawings and make some good guesses. We know what materials he used, for example gouache, watercolour and graphite. Gouache and watercolour are types of paint which dry quickly, graphite is more or less pencil. As for how he went about drawing the animals, again we can guess; some of the animals were dead, we can see that in the drawings, some were in captivity. Some were possibly stuffed.

**How do you know?**

Well two reasons. Firstly we can see a rope around the neck of the capybara for example. And secondly, in the case of an animal like a jaguar it would be too dangerous and impossible to draw it unless it was in a cage, it would eat you or run away.

### **But in the watercolour of the capybara there is no rope**

The artist decided not to put that in in some pictures. He used the animals in paintings of the landscape so it wouldn't look natural if the animal had a rope around its neck in the painting.

### **So he drew some animals more than once?**

Well we think he did one drawing and used it a number of times because the drawings and paintings are identical. Sometimes the drawings are reversed so the animal can look upside down.

### **What about the writing on top of the drawings? What does it say? Why did he put it there?**

Well the writing is in Dutch because he was a Dutch artist of course. Apparently he wrote some information about the animals on the drawings so that the information and the image stay together. We can put that information into a few categories;

- **Size** (to give us the size he compared the animal to other animals that people in his country would recognise eg. It's bigger than dog but smaller than a pig);
- **Friendliness/cuddliness**
- **Dangers**
- **Edibility** (if you can eat this animal or not!)

### **How did Frans Post work as an artist?**

*"He took in and depicted what he saw"*

*"Someone who looked and painted with such infinite care. .."*

So Frans Post looked with great care at what he was drawing.

*"A characteristic of Post's sketching style is the combination of different techniques-pencil, pen, brush- to describe the object exactly"*

### **Discovering Brazil**

FAST FACTS

OFFICIAL NAME: Federal Republic of Brazil

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: Democratic federal republic

CAPITAL: Brasilia

POPULATION: 183,888,841

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: Portuguese

MONEY: Real

AREA: 3,286,470 square miles (8,511,965 square kilometers)

MAJOR MOUNTAIN RANGES: Serra do Mar, Serra do Espinhaço

MAJOR RIVERS: Amazon, São Francisco, Paraná, Tocantins

### **NATURE**

Brazil has the greatest variety of animals of any country in the world. It is home to 600 [mammal](#) species, 1,500 [fish](#) species, 1,600 [bird](#) species, and an amazing 100,000 different types of [insects](#).

Brazil's jungles are home to most of its animal life, but many unique species also live in the pampas and semidesert regions. In the central-western part of Brazil sits a flat, swampy area called the Pantanal. This patchwork of flooded lagoons and small islands is the world's largest wetland. Here live giant [anacondas](#), huge guinea pig relatives called capybaras, and fierce South American alligators called [caimans](#).

For thousands of years, people have been exploiting the jungles of Brazil. But since Europeans arrived about five centuries ago, forest destruction has been rampant. Most of Brazil's Atlantic rainforest is now gone, and huge tracts of the Amazon are disappearing every year. The government has established many national parks and refuges, but they only cover about 7 percent of the country.

**For more information and images go to National Geographic Kids-Brazil**

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/brazil/#brazil-soccer.jpg>

### **BRAZILIAN WILDLIFE**

#### **Three-toed sloth**

What? These slooow, furry, long-limbed mammals spend 80% of their time snoozing; when they do move it's at a heady two metres a minute. They sleep curled up in trees or hanging from branches.



How to spot it: The two three-toed species are the types most frequently seen; they are well camouflaged (algae grows in their fur) and largely stationary; they favour trees of the Cecropia genus. Sometimes they're seen crossing rivers (they're good swimmers).

## Jaguar

What? Resplendent rosette-spotted cat, the largest member of the panthera family on the continent – males weigh up to around 110kg. The name comes from the indigenous Guaraní word yaguar – ‘he who kills with one leap’.



How to spot it: Be very, very lucky.

**Watch this Video** about jaguars in Brazil

National Geographic Episode 1

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGOCxMUBg\\_k&t=](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGOCxMUBg_k&t=)

### **For more information about animals in Brazil**

go to this site National Geographic Kids Mammals

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/hubs/mammals/>

**Before your visit** – suggested activities for students

- Locate Brazil on a map of the world
- Locate Holland on a map of Europe
- Ask the children to find out five facts about Brazil

or

ask these questions

- Find out where Brazil is on the map.
- What is its population?
- What size is the country?
- What language do they speak there?
- What is the climate like?
- What crops grow in Brazil?
- Which animals are native to Brazil?
- Differences between Brazil and Ireland.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Knowledge and understanding of the location of Brazil and Holland

Knowledge of Brazil and its environment

See also

	<a href="https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/brazil/#brazil-soccer.jpg">https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/brazil/#brazil-soccer.jpg</a>
<p><b>After your visit</b> – suggested activities for students</p>	<p><b>1. Art activity</b></p> <p><b>Imagined environments</b> The children use their imagination to create another environment for their ‘master’ drawing they have made at the workshop. They can create anywhere they want. Here are two ideas for possible environments:</p> <p><b>At home or somewhere else familiar</b> e.g. a jaguar in my bedroom! Would you like to have a jaguar in your bedroom? Will you be in the picture too? How will you react?</p> <p><b>Reverse the subject/object</b> The animals have captured you! How do you feel? What kind of enclosure have they put you in? Are you dangerous, cuddly, how will you taste?!</p> <p><b>Learning Outcomes:</b> using colour; using imagination to be creative and to encourage empathy</p> <p><b>Curriculum links</b> Visual Art: Drawing and Paint and colour; Use of imagination</p> <p><b>2. Create a Cabinet of curiosities for your area</b> Imagine explorers arriving from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to Ireland today What do you think they would want to bring back from here that is rare? Put the items into the categories of <i>Artificialia</i> and <i>Naturalia</i> Either collect these actual items and make a still life, or draw them from your imagination and memory <i>I would put in a bag of Tayto crisps and a turf briquette...</i></p> <p><b>What is a Cabinet of Curiosities?</b> Maurits was a collector of things. This was very fashionable in the 17th century in Europe. His collection could also be called a Cabinet of Curiosities. The rarer the items in the collection, the more interesting and valuable they would be</p> <p><b>Included in such a cabinet were two types of things:</b> <i>Artificialia</i> eg furniture, utensils <i>Naturalia</i> eg mammal skins and stuffed fishes and birds, most especially rarities!</p>

**Where did the items come from?**

Gifts from vast number of collectors in return for favour because the owner had power, and taken from the local people and environment

**Why did they keep such things?**

- 1.They functioned as a treasure trove in the aristocratic world of the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- 2.A tool for the enlightenment and elevation of the owner
3. As an asset;

Part of the Maurits collection was given to Fredrich Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg, in exchange for aristocratic honours and a large sum of money. A large number of Post's paintings were presented to Louis IXV of France

**Learning Outcomes:** Knowledge and understanding of 17th century science and culture; Awareness of own contemporary environment

**Curriculum links:**

History (5th and 6th Class)

Life, society and culture in the past/ Eras of change and conflict

*Specifically;*

The 17th century 'explorers', traders from Europe

Development of classification