

DrawAble: Exploring Through Watercolour by Emma Burleigh

Part Two

[By Emma Burleigh](#)

Emma is an artist, writer and teacher with a passion for watercolour and the way it links to mental and spiritual wellbeing. As part of the [DrawAble](#) series of resources for learning at home or school, Emma encourages young learners to use watercolour in a loose and intuitive way to help them discover the stories within their mark-making.



Notes for Teachers

What is the aim of this exercise?

This resource encourages children and teenagers to paint intuitively and mindfully. The activity encourages developing new ways of looking at watercolour, and observe the stories that emerge from painting.

What age can this exercise be used with?

This resource is suitable for participants aged 6+ and can be easily adapted for older children, teenagers or even adults.

How long does this exercise take?

This exercise will take between 30 minutes and 2 hours. Children may become engrossed in the activity and continue experimenting to create more complex paintings.

How do I measure success?

Success will be measured by the children's engagement and interest, and their ability to link paintings with stories/narratives.

More able or engaged children may become more adventurous with the way they use watercolour; they may produce a variety of lines and make their paintings more detailed.

Encourage children to look at their paintings from different angles. Help them ask questions about their paintings, and support decision-making about which stories they would like to emerge from their paintings.

What can I try after this exercise

Move on to [Part Three](#) of this project

Exploring Watercolour at the Fitzwilliam Museum: [an introduction to watercolour and exploring watercolour in the studio](#)

[Painting the Storm](#) at Bourne Primary Academy is a weather-inspired exploration of watercolour and graphite

Try other [DrawAble](#) exercises and projects.

Which artists might we look at?

You may want to look at classic and contemporary painters:

[J.M.W. Turner](#) – sketchbooks, drawings and

watercolours

[Talking Points: Paul Cézanne](#)

The dream like pictures of [Marc Chagall](#)

[Emma Larsson](#) takes inspiration from nature for her organic forms

You may also want to look at [Emma's other art and projects.](#)

Introduction

Hi there, I'm Emma, a watercolour artist. One of my favourite ways to create art is to paint with no particular plan in mind. I like just letting the watercolour do its own thing. Often it does things that are much more interesting than I could have thought up by myself. So sometimes I just begin a painting with a feeling, then I choose colours that feel right for that feeling and just play.

Choosing colours for your painting

I wonder what colours you feel like using today? See if you can find two or three colours you particularly feel like choosing right now.

Have you chosen? Good! I've chosen red, blue, and yellow.

Now I'm going to play with these colours and see if a picture starts to emerge. I don't know what that picture is going to be – that's what makes it all so fun and exciting! I'll begin by just painting some stripes onto the paper.



The “wet in wet” technique

Now, I feel like working wetter. So I’m going to use my favourite technique, which is called “wet in wet”.

First of all, I make the paper wet, using just water. I paint a wet shape on a part of the paper. I get some paint on my brush and I touch for wet paper with the brush. See how it spreads. I could add more colours in there now. What happens if I add two or even three colours into one wet area?



I can explore what happens if I move the paint around a bit, I can pick up my paper and let it run in one direction. The one thing I'm not doing is brushing the paint around, because then I might lose all these lovely effects that are happening. Now, I might feel like adding some splatters, or using the wrong end of my paintbrush to make some skinny lines.



Finally, I'm going to use a piece of kitchen roll to blot up a few areas – either because they're very wet or just because I feel like making them lighter. You try it too!

Now we need to let the paint dry. That might take a few minutes or half an hour. It depends where you live and whether it's a hot, dry day or a wet, damp day. If you want to speed things up a bit, you could use a hairdryer, just dry the painting as if you were drying your hair.

Seeing a story in your painting

Is your painting dry? Good! Now we're going to see if any picture is emerging. This is how I make quite a lot of my paintings. I start by just playing and exploring. And then when it's drained, I decide what it is. Try looking at your painting

upside down and from different sides. And just see if you start to see anything. Do you see a face or a person, or an animal, or a monster, or a flower, or a lake, or a castle, or a robot, or something else?



If you do see something, you could use some watercolour to pick out what you see. Make sure there's not too much water on your brush and don't make the paper wet this time, because you're trying to be more detailed. You need to use the paint more crisply. Use a small brush. If you've got one, and see if he can add a few lines or shapes to make it clearer to everybody else what it is that you're seeing in the painting.



It can also be interesting to ask yourself: what's the mood or the atmosphere of this painting? Has it got a stormy feel, or is it peaceful? Does it feel sad or funny? What's the feeling? Maybe if you don't see anything in particular, you could keep your painting abstract. But if, for example, you see a stormy sea, perhaps you could put a little boat in the waves to enhance that sense of storminess.



Have a go at creating your own painting – and see what stories emerge from it!

Exploring Through Watercolour Part One





[Exploring Through Watercolour Part Three](#)



[Let me inspire you by Emma Burleigh](#)

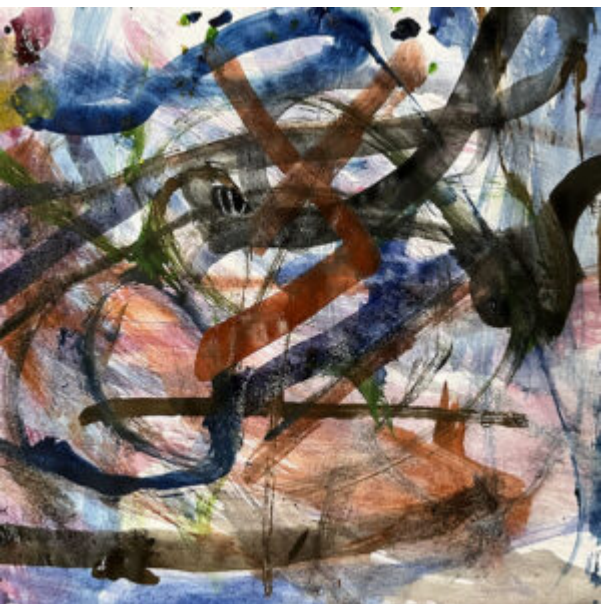
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DrawAble: Exploring Through Watercolour by Emma Burleigh Part One

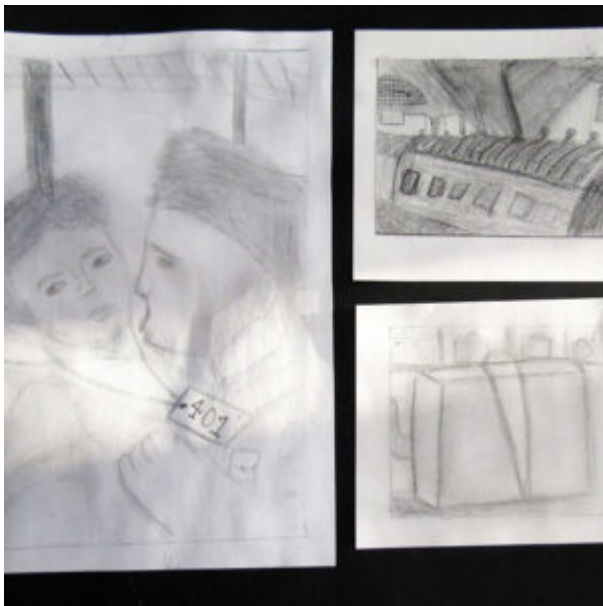
DrawAble: Making a Folded Sketchbook By Paula Briggs

**DrawAble: Straight Line
Drawings with Lorna Rose**

**DrawAble: Making GIFs with
Lizzie Knott**

**Drawable: The 3 Panel Drawing
Challenge with Rozi Hathaway**

**See This Resource Used in
Schools...**



**Drawable: Globe Paintings by
Stephanie Cubbin**

Let Me Inspire You: Tonka Uzu

**Let Me Inspire You: Rozi
Hathaway**

**Let Me Inspire You: Isobel
Grant**

Let Me Inspire You: Jo Blaker

Let Me Inspire You: Rose Feather

Introduction To Forest Of Imagination

You And Me Make Tree

Talking Points: Faith Bebbington

A collection of sources and imagery to explore the work of sculptor, Faith Bebbington.

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external websites and has videos from external websites embedded. At the time of creating, AccessArt checked all links to ensure content is appropriate for teachers to access. However external websites and videos are updated and that is beyond our control.

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This resource is free to access and is not a part of AccessArt membership.

AGES 5-8

AGES 9-11

AGES 11-14

FREE TO ACCESS

Faith Bebbington

Faith Bebbington is a nationally renowned sculptor based in Liverpool. Faith has worked with a range of big name clients, from the Football Association to campaigning for endangered species. Faith is best known for her sustainable practise; her large sculptures utilise lots of waste materials, with her biggest sculpture to date re-using over 2500 deconstructed plastic milk bottles!



itv Reindeer For itv Creates reimagined Brand Identity by Faith Bebbington (Illuminated Plastic Milk Bottles)



Polar Bear In The Studio (Created With 3000 Plastic Milk Bottles) by Faith Bebbington



Recycled Plastic Bengal Tiger for Veolia Environment by Faith Bebbington

Find out more about Faith Bebbington's process in this ["Which Artists?"](#) post.

Questions to Ask Children

What materials can you spot in the sculptures?

Why do you think that Faith has used recycled materials to make her sculptures?

How would you describe the sculptures?

Which sculpture is your favourite? Why?

This Talking Points Is Used In...

Pathway: Using Art To Explore Global Issue

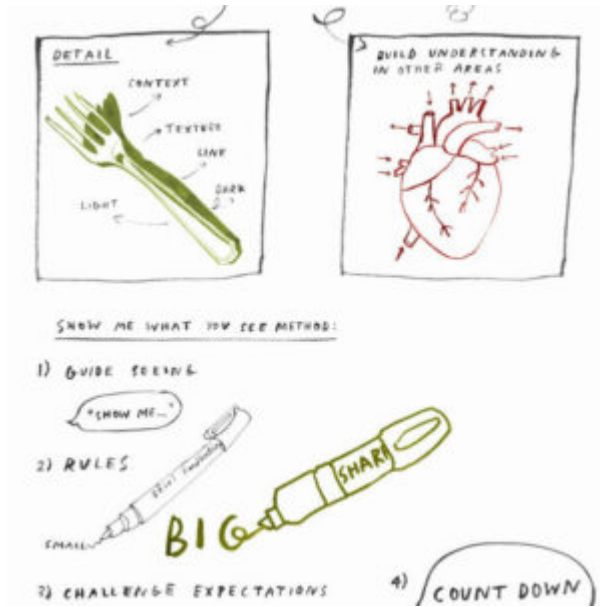


[This is featured in the 'Using Art To Explore Global Issue' pathway](#)

using sketchbooks to make visual notes



Show me what you see



Drawing Large

See This Resource Used in Schools...





You Might Also Like...

Pathway: Gestural Drawing with Charcoal



[Featured in the 'Gestural Drawing with Charcoal Pathway'](#)

Session Recording: exploring Charcoal



The ancient art of konan



Molly Hausland



Drawing Source Material: Nests

A collection of imagery and sources which you can use to prompt drawing in schools and community groups.

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Nests

Use the film below to enable children to explore drawing nests. Try to create a sense of momentum – for example you might pause the video 4 times and ask the pupils to make a 1 minute, 2 minute, 3 minute and 4 minute drawing at each pause.

Encourage close and slow looking by talking as they draw – use your voice to attract their attention to qualities of the nest.

Try the same exercise using different materials, ie handwriting pen, ink and nib, pastel, watercolour...



Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Davis, United States. Original public domain image from Wikimedia Commons



Bird nest hanging on a tree. Free public domain CC0 photo.



Birds nest in tree, nature photography. Free public domain CC0 image.



Birds nest in tree, nature photography. Free public domain CC0 image.





You May Also Like...

**Pathway: Sculpture, Structure,
Inventiveness & determination**



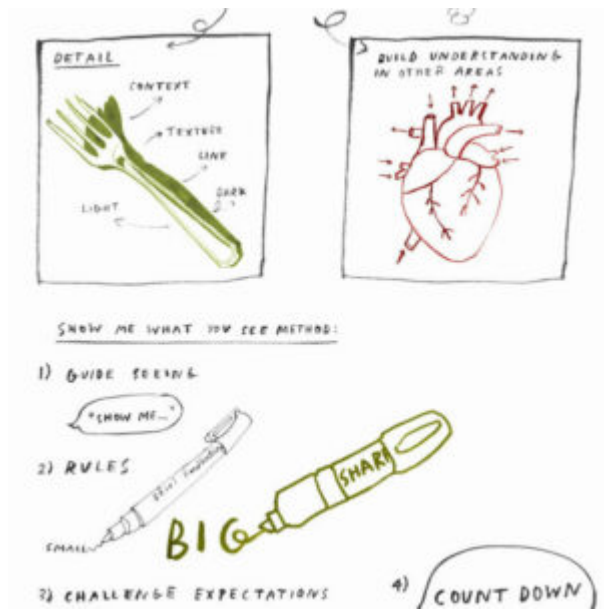
This is featured in the 'Sculpture, Structure, Inventiveness & Determination' pathway

using sketchbooks to make visual notes



Find out how pupils can respond to artists work in sketchbooks

Show me what you see



Enable close looking and drawing with this exercise

Talking Points: Hormazd Narielwalla

A collection of sources and imagery to explore the work of Hormazd Narielwalla.

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AGES 9-11

AGES 11-14

AGES 14-16

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Hormazd Narielwalla

Hormazd Narielwalla works across a number of artistic disciplines including printmaking, sculpture and artist's books but he is best known for his intricate paper collages and assemblages, which are made on the surfaces of antique, vintage and bespoke tailoring patterns. – [Hormazd Narielwalla](#)

Explore more of Hormazd's figure work on [his website](#) including his [Diamond Dolls](#).

Questions to Ask Children

What do you like/dislike about Hormazd's work?

Why do you think that Hormazd works on brown paper/used patterns?

Are there any collaged designs that stood out to you? Which ones and why?

This Talking Points Is Used In...

Pathway: Fashion Design



This is featured in the 'Fashion Design' pathway

using sketchbooks to make visual notes



Show me what you see



Talking Points: The Art of Nature

A collection of sources and imagery to explore artist Laura McKendry's love of nature.

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AGES 11-14

AGES 14-16

Laura McKendry

Laura McKendry is an artist who lives and works in London. She takes her inspiration from wildlife and nature.

Explore more of Laura's work on her [website](#).

In this video Laura McKendry explains how the natural world inspires every aspect of her work – from the art itself to the materials with which

she works.

Questions to Ask Children

Which season is your favourite? Why?

Is there a space in your local area where you would like to sit and draw?

How do you think sitting in nature whilst drawing differs to working in a studio?

Drawing Source Material: Drone Footage over Natural Landscapes

A collection of imagery and sources which you can use to prompt drawing in schools and community groups.

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Drone Footage Over Natural Landscape

Use the film below as source material to enable an exploration of drawing natural landscapes. You can also try to find drone footage of your own environment, or that of areas relating to projects you are covering in school.

Pause the footage at points which catch your eye and invite the children to make timed drawings – 15 minutes, 10 minutes, 5 minutes, 2 minutes or 1 minute.

Vary the drawing materials you use and work in sketchbooks or sheets of paper of different sizes and textures. You may also like to make multiple

line drawings over one page – each with a different colour or line weight, to describe different pause points in the same film to capture a moving landscape.

Dixie National Forest, Utah

Howqua Hills, Australia

Reading, UK

The Netherlands

This Source Material Features in...

Pathway: Cloth, thread, paint



[This is featured in the 'Cloth, Thread, Paint' pathway](#)

Pathway: Mixed Media Land and city scapes

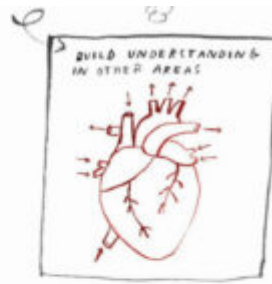
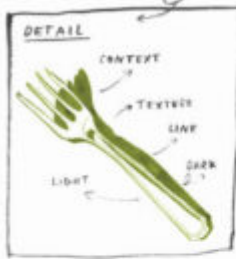


This is featured in the 'Mixed Media Land and City Scapes' pathway

using sketchbooks to make visual notes



Show me what you see



SHOW ME WHAT YOU SEE METHOD:

1) GUIDE SEEING

"SHOW ME..."

2) RULES



3) CHALLENGE EXPECTATIONS

4) COUNT DOWN