

# Talking Points: Alexander Calder

A range of sources designed to help you explore the work of sculptor, Alexander Calder.

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Please [let us know](#) if you find a 404 link, or if you feel content is no longer appropriate.

We strongly recommend as part of good teaching practice that teachers watch all videos and visit all websites before sharing with a class. On occasion there may be elements of a video you would prefer not to show to your class and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure content is appropriate. Many thanks.

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

AGES 9-11

AGES 11-14

FREE TO ACCESS

## Alexander Calder

Alexander Calder (July 22, 1898 – November 11, 1976) was an American sculptor known both for his innovative mobiles (kinetic sculptures powered by motors or air currents) that embrace chance in their aesthetic, his static “stabiles”, and his monumental public sculptures. Calder preferred not to analyse his work, saying, “Theories may be all very well for the artist himself, but they shouldn’t be broadcast to other people.” – [Wikipedia](#)

Explore his work at the [Calder Foundation](#).

[Calder at the Tate.](#)

## Discussion & Sketchbook Work

Watch the video below to introduce children to the idea of “mobiles”. Stop the video frequently and use discussion to help children understand the ideas in the video. In particular draw the children’s’ attention to:

- The idea of slowing down

The relationship of the elements to natural objects

- The relationship of a moving sculpture to dance and music.

Throughout the process, have sketchbooks open on desks with plenty of drawing materials, and pause during the conversations so that pupils can make [visual notes](#).

Watch the video below to introduce children to the idea of “mobiles”. Stop the video frequently and use discussion to help children understand the ideas in the video. In particular draw the children’s’ attention to the idea of “trial and error” (or as we call it Design through Making) as a way of constructing the mobiles.

Throughout the process, have sketchbooks open on desks with plenty of drawing materials, and pause during the conversations so that pupils can make [visual notes](#).

### Sketchbook Development Work

Turn the sound down on the video below, and choose certain frames to stop the video so that pupils can make drawings in their sketchbooks based upon the compositions they see.

At first, you as teacher can choose the freeze frame, but then let the pupils make their own

•

choices.

Encourage them to think of the paper of their sketchbook as the “stage” and invite them to draw the shapes, lines and colours they see, thinking carefully about the white space of the page as well as the shapes they draw.

Invite them to use a variety of different materials to capture the shapes. In particular you might want to invite them to use soft B pencils or graphite sticks in one drawing for example, handwriting pen in another, charcoal or collage in another...

Encourage them to work with momentum – for example tell them the film will be frozen for 1 minute/5 minutes etc. Set a clock and invite them to draw, before moving on.

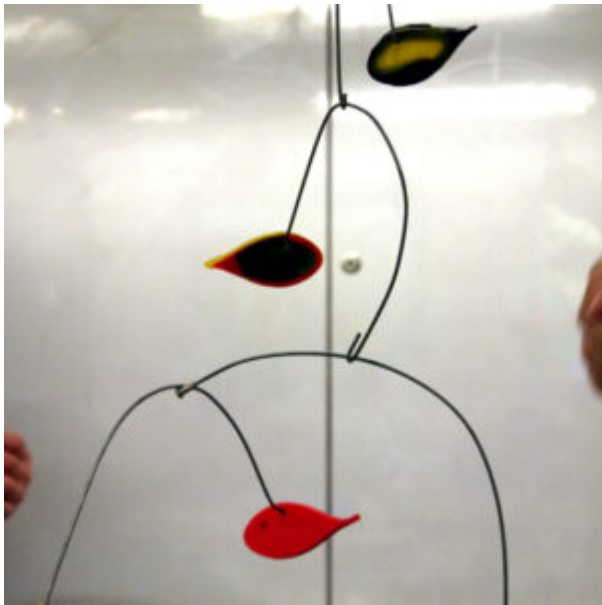
Spend time looking at the drawings they create and invite them to share their thoughts:

- What did they think when they were drawing Calder’s mobiles? How did they make them feel?
- What do they think when they see the shapes they have drawn? What do they remind them off?

You may like to show children [this drawing by Calder](#) of one of his own mobiles.

# This Talking Points Is Used In...

**Pathway: explore sculpture through making a mobile**

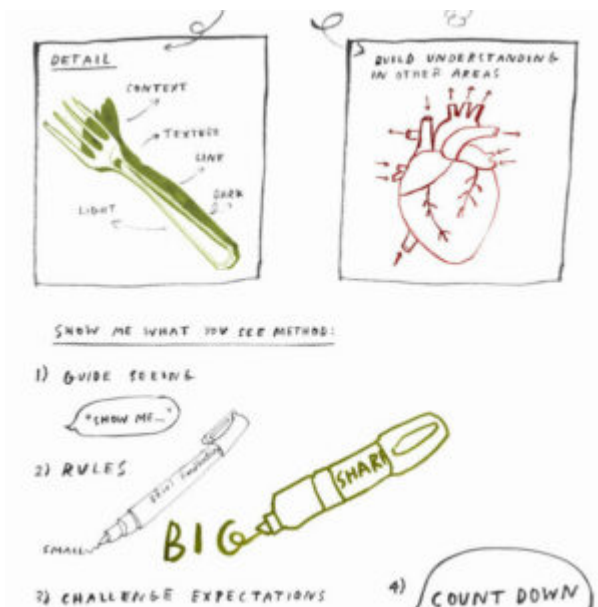


[This is featured in the 'Explore Sculpture Through Making a Mobile' pathway](#)

**using sketchbooks to make visual notes**



Show me what you see



# Adapting AccessArt: Playful Making Inspired by Nnena Kalu

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## Prompt cards for making



## coat-hanger shells



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## **Session Recording: Primary Art Curriculum Celebration**

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**Adapting AccessArt: Monoprint  
and Painting: The Great Fire  
of London**

**You May Also Like**

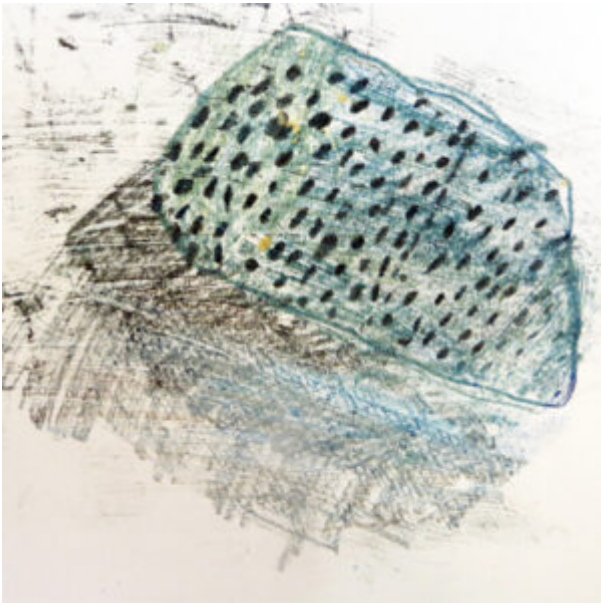
**7 & 8 Year Olds Explore MonoPrinting &**



## Oil Painting



## Monoprinting with Oil Pastel and Carbon Copy Paper



# AccessArt Session Recording: Sketchbook Share

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**AccessArt Value #3: Having  
the Confidence to Hold Ideas  
Lightly, Enables us to Create  
Space for Everyone to Reach  
their Potential**

[AccessArt Core Value](#) #3 “Having the Confidence to  
Hold Ideas Lightly, Enables us to Create Space for  
Everyone to Reach their Potential” illustrated  
by [Jagoda Sadowska](#).



**Jagoda** is a Polish illustrator and designer based in Glasgow, Scotland. They are a big advocate of joyful colour palettes and a great enthusiast of textures. Jagoda's work is full of juvenile sense of humour and hopeless romanticism. They enjoy exploring narrative abilities of illustration and tell absurd stories or complex feelings through their work. They find a lot of beauty and inspiration in mundane, day to day life.

At AccessArt we love the colour, energy and humour that Jagoda pours into their work. The playfulness of their artwork brings a real joy to the viewer and we are really excited by the clever way in which Jagoda has communicated the core value 'Having the confidence to hold ideas lightly, enables us to create space for everyone to reach their potential'.

We feel that this illustration really resonates with the AccessArt core value highlighting that there is importance in giving people the freedom to face the unknown, get lost in their ideas and pave their own path. Existing in a space of 'not knowing' and finding your own way will result in a journey that is authentically yours.

## AccessArt Value #3

When we feel threatened, or lack confidence, we have a tendency to hold things tightly. They might be entrenched ideas, beliefs, behaviours – even loved ones – fear of uncertainty keeps us tense, rigid, small.

But the opposite is also true. It's so much easier to be open and embracing towards others when we ourselves feel at ease. Think power pose – body open, strong, reaching outwards. Taking up as much space as can be taken up at that moment. But remember there is no aggression in power pose – the body is actually exposed and vulnerable, but there is no fear – instead there is courage to be

open enough to be strong.

When exploring ideas and practices in art, holding ideas lightly is such a helpful process. When artists make work, they often start from a position of “not knowing” – that is why they make the work – to explore, to find out, to uncover, and they can’t access that journey if they are not willing to hold their thoughts loosely, letting them ravel and unravel.

Through holding lightly, art can help us feel safe in the territory of “not yet knowing” which is a useful place to be, a place which helps us to learn to feel safe in the face of uncertainty.

And when we facilitate that exploration in others, holding ideas and preconceptions lightly allows space for our learners to make ideas their own. Art is all about experiential understanding. As facilitators we can help our audiences grow, and we can hint and tempt and signpost them towards discovery and understanding, but if we can do this by offering rather than telling, then we leave space for the learning to be truly theirs. By growing our own knowledge as facilitators we build our confidence to not be afraid, not be threatened and not hold tightly. We are able to see the teaching of art for what it really is – a service which taps into fulfilling a human need for expression and empathy.

But few of us can thrive when there is too much

space. We do need structures to help us think and operate, so the question for facilitators (and for AccessArt) is how do we provide enough structure to help people feel safe, and enough space to help facilitate exploration.

So next time you feel contraction from fear or uncertainty, think about the confidence and openness of power pose. Better still, visualise yourself holding your hand out, palm upwards. What sits on your palm? And how loosely can you hold it?

[See all our core values here.](#)

Paula Briggs, April 2023

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## Session Recording: Connecting Approaches

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**AccessArt      Value      #2:  
Enthusiasm is Infectious and  
We Can all Play a Role in**



# Fuelling or Stalling the Creative Potential of Others

[AccessArt Core Value](#) #2 “Enthusiasm is Infectious and We Can all Play a Role in Fuelling or Stalling the Creative Potential of Others” illustrated by [Lizzie Lovejoy](#).



Lizzie Lovejoy is a North East based working-class Poet, Performer and Picture Maker who loves stories. They believe that everyone deserves to experience art and everyone has a tale to tell.

With community and culture being at the core of Lizzie's work, we felt that they would be a perfect fit to work on the core value 'Enthusiasm is infection and we can all play a role in fuelling or stalling the creative potential of others'. We love the playful outcome of the illustration, symbolising the enthusiasm, playfulness and creative potential that can be found in all young people, and should be nurtured through the communities around them.

## AccessArt Value #2

What is our individual responsibility to those around us? What do we do, to encourage or interrupt positivity? How might we enable a more curious and playful approach?

*"85% of the men and women who I interviewed remembered an event in school that was so shaming, it changed how they thought of themselves for the rest of their lives. Fifty percent of that 85% percent, half of those people: those shame wounds were around creativity. So fifty percent of those people have art scars. Have creativity scars."* – Brene Brown, Magic Lessons

The statistic from Brene Brown's research are



staggering but not surprising – we all have examples in our own lives of when we have been “stopped” by an often casual comment by someone about the way we express ourselves. These stray comments about creativity seem to cut straight to the quick. For me, it was when I was eight. Until then I had sung out loud happily enough. But then one day, a boy I was sitting next to in assembly at school asked me why my voice had a weird “lining” to it when I sang (I imagine I was out of tune and merrily unaware). So from that day on – I mimed. Happy to say I’m over it now and singing to my baby daughter proved to me I could hold a tune “enough” and that was all that mattered.

But many of us are stopped before we even get started, and we don’t recover. Luckily the opposite is also true, and we can SO easily be enabled by others, and enable others, by thoughtful, careful approach.

It’s easy to fall into the mindset whereby we wait for things to improve, but there is a greater reality at play: while we actively campaign and patiently wait for things in art education to bloom, we don’t want to let down whole generations by not doing the very best we can do for them now.

So, positivity is important. Not a mindless positivity but an intentional and insightful positivity which makes people around feel safe, supported and carried.

For AccessArt, that means a few things. It means reassuring our users that their heartfelt instinct is to be followed, even if it doesn't always chime with the "systems" around us. It means acknowledging overwhelm in the face of inexperience is valid and to be expected, but that there are people around who can support and guide. It means nurturing environments in which learners and educators have a safe space in which to explore their creativity, supported by stepping stones or a framework they can hold on to. And it means lightening up – remembering that as humans we are SO privileged to have access to this thing we call creativity – so let's be playful and celebratory – and most of all gentle. These are big aims, but they are made real by tiny everyday actions and intentions...

[See all our core values here.](#)

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## **Adapting AccessArt: Making Birds Pathway for Pupils With Special Educational Needs**

# You May Also Like...

## Pathway: Making Birds



## Flying Minpin Birds



## Visual Arts Planning: Birds



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# **Key Differences Between Sketchbooks and Exercise Books**

## **You May Also Like**

**Sketchbook pedagogy**



visual arts pedagogy



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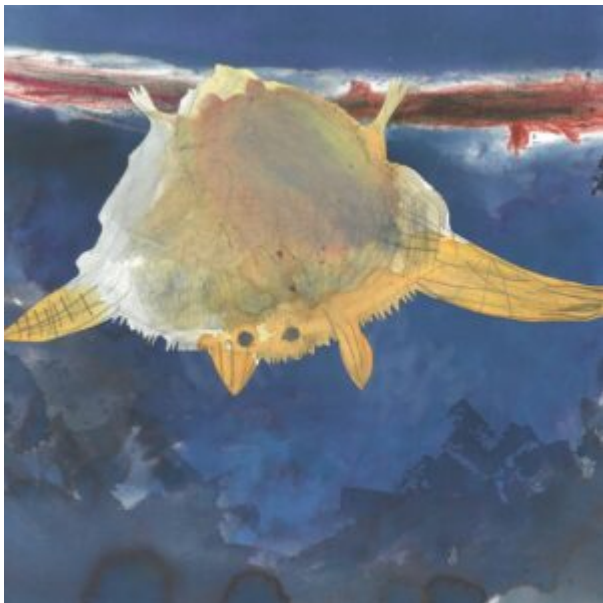
## Session Recording: Managing a Creative Classroom

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Session Recording: Adapting AccessArt



Drawing Fish with Pen, Pencil and Watercolour



**the geometry of chickens**



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**Adapting AccessArt: Telling Stories**

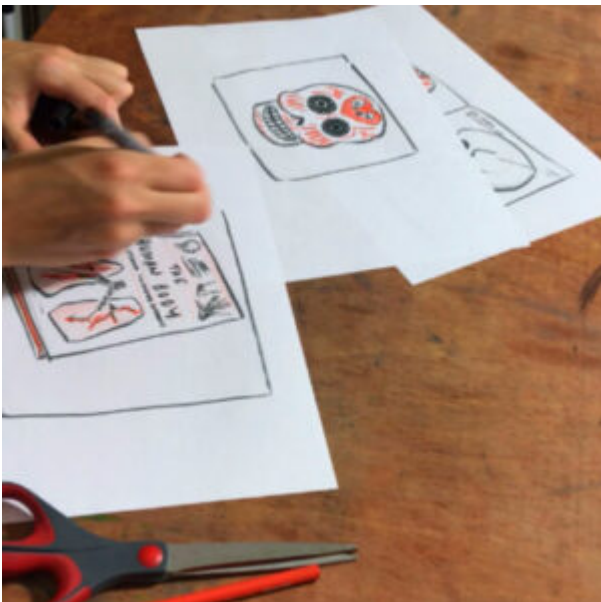


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## Session Recording: Adapting AccessArt



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## Creating Comics inspired by museum collections





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# Pathway: An Exploration of Coal Mining, Inspired By Henry Moore

## Pathway for Years 4 & 5

### Disciplines:

Drawing, Sketchbooks, Construction

### Key Concepts:

- That when we draw, we can use expressive marks to create tonal variety.
- That we can use both images and words as a starting point to create work.

- That we can combine drawing and making to make a creative response.
- That when we photograph 3D work, we can use light and tonal value to capture a sense of space, and we can use the qualities of the material (charcoal) to capture the atmosphere.

In this pathway, children discover how they can combine drawing and making to capture a sense of enclosed space using charcoal and model making materials.

Children are freed from the constraints of creating representational drawings based on observation – instead they use the qualities of the medium to work in dynamic ways. They will also see how 2d drawing can be combined with 3d making to create a sense of space.

**Theme: Coal mining, Relationship of Body to Place, Enclosed Spaces**

**Medium:**

**Charcoal, Construction Materials**

**Artists: Henry Moore**

This pathway will take approximately half a term, based upon a weekly art lesson.

If you use this resource in your setting, please tag us on social media: #InspiredBy @accessart (facebook, twitter) @accessart.org.uk (instagram)

and share the url. Thank you!

This pathway has been made in response to the exhibition [Drawing in The Dark](#), a curation of [Henry Moore's coal mining drawings](#), inspired by the release of a [new book](#) written by art historian (and AccessArt Trustee), Chris Owen.



## Additional Pathway

This pathway is an additional pathway to help you extend, develop or further personalise the [AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum](#).

We suggest this pathway is used to replace a “Working in 3 Dimensions” (Blue) or a “Drawing and

Sketchbooks” (Orange) pathway for ages 7 and above.

It could replace the drawing pathway “[Gestural Drawing with Charcoal](#)” pathway or making pathway “[Set Design](#)”.

You may also like to use the activities in this pathway with a smaller group of children in an after school club or community context.



AGES 5-8

AGES 9-11

# Teaching Notes

Find the MTP for this pathway [here](#).

[Session Recording: Exploring Charcoal](#)

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## Curriculum Links

History: World War II

Science: Rocks, Electricity, Environmental changes

PSHE: Supports Responsibility to the planet, Collaboration, Peer Discussion.

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## I Can...

- I can explore how artists sometimes make art inspired by certain places/experiences
- I have experimented with the types of marks I can make with charcoal
- I can use light and dark tonal values to create atmosphere in my work
- I can construct a model using cardboard and paper, combining drawing and making to make my own creative response
- I can talk about the work I have made with my

classmates, sharing the things I thought were successful and thinking about things I would like to try again

- I can appreciate the work of my classmates and I can share my response to their work, identifying similarities and differences in our approach and outcomes.
  - I can take photographs of my work thinking about presentation, focus and lighting.
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## Time

This pathway takes 6 weeks, with an hour per week. Shorten or lengthen the suggested pathway according to time and experience. Follow the stages in green for a shorter pathway or less complex journey.

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## Materials

Medium/large cardboard box, newsprint, charcoal (ideally both willow and compressed), erasers, black and white chalk, rags.

Construction Materials (see [list here](#) )

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# Pathway: An Exploration of Coal Mining

A PDF of this pathway can be found [here](#).

## • Aims of the Pathway

In this pathway pupils explore the work of Henry Moore made in response to working in a coal mine. Pupils explore how they can create atmospheric marks using charcoal, and use their own drawings as collage material when constructing a model.

• Week

1:

Introduce

## Explore Henry Moore Drawing in The Dark

In 1942 Henry Moore spent one week creating observational drawings down the same coal mine that his father had worked in.

Use the “[Talking Points: Henry Moore Drawing in The Dark](#)” resource to open up discussions about Moore’s coal mining drawings. Invite children to create “[Visual Notes](#)” inspired by the work that they see and the discussions



**that result on loose paper.**

▪ Week 2: Drawing and Sketchbooks

## **Drawing Coal Mines**

Use the “[Drawing Source Material: Coal Mines](#)” resource to get pupils to create drawings of coal mines using charcoal, focusing on light and dark areas.

Choose stills from the videos and give children time to capture the environment of the miners. Consider how erasers might help

to create lighter areas or highlight structures. Explore “[Talking Points: What is Chiaroscuro?](#)” to find out how artists use light and dark to create an atmosphere.

Work on loose sheets of paper and finish the session by creating a “[Backward Sketchbook](#)” from all of the work created in the first two weeks.

- Choose...

## Choose a Stimulus

**Decide if you would like to use visual prompts or a quote as the stimulus for the coal mine structure...**

- Option 1: Weeks 3 & 4: Inspired by Imagery

**Charcoal Cave**



Use and adapt the “[Charcoal Cave](#)” resource to create a coal mine.

Refer back to sketchbook drawings and notes to help capture the sense of place.

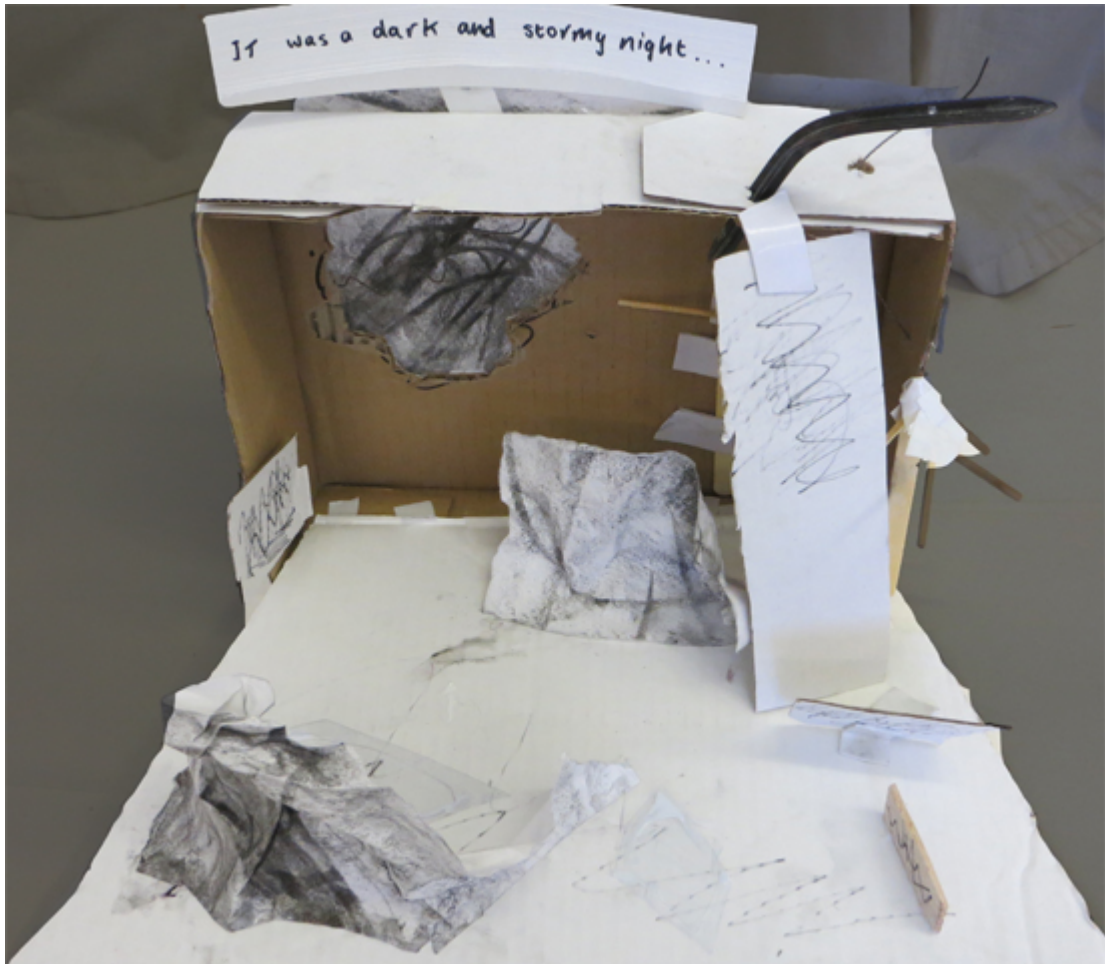
Provide pupils with stills from the films in the “[Drawing Source Material](#)” while they build their sets. Encourage children to build their own props.

Consider the structure of a mine, thinking about the layout and equipment used to ensure the workers were safe.

• Or...

• Option 2: Week 3 & 4: Inspired by Quotes

# **Set Design**



Use and adapt the “[Set Design with Primary Aged Children](#)” resource and give children the opportunity to build a set using quotes from the “[Talking Points: Drawing in The Dark](#)” as a starting point.

Combine this activity with part 1 of the “[Charcoal Cave](#)” to explore mark making with charcoal. Use the charcoal drawings to create an impactful space inspired by a quote.

- Optional:

**Add Figurative Drawings**



Use and adapt the “[Exaggerating to Communicate](#)” resource. Invite pupils to adopt the poses that miners had to squeeze into, to access smaller areas within the mines. Ask them to draw how it feels.

Cut out the drawings and add them to the charcoal coal mining sets.





Or use and adapt the “[Drawings with Mass](#)” resource to create a sense of weight in drawings.

▪ Week

5:

Photography

## **Photograph**

**Invite children to take photos of their sets in a dark room, using a torch to highlight areas of their coal mines and to capture the sense of space.**



Use and adapt this resource to find out how children can take high quality photographs of ["3D Artwork"](#).

Ask children to select their favourite images to print and add to sketchbooks.

▪ Week 6: Present & Share

**Share, Reflect & Discuss**



Clear a space and present drawings, sketchbooks, models and photographs.

Walk around the space as if it were a gallery. Enable a conversation about the journey and skills learnt.

Reflect on the work that has been made by running a class "[crit](#)".

**If      You      Use      AccessArt  
Resources...  
You might like to...**



## Join our Facebook Group



[Join the AccessArt Network group on Facebook and ask questions of others using our resources](#)

## Share and Tag



[Share photos of work made by tagging us](#)

[on social media](#)

## You May Also Like...

**Pathway: How can i use light & dark to create a sense of space, Inspired by Henry Moore?**



[For ages 11-14, explore this pathway inspired by Henry Moore's coal mining drawings](#)

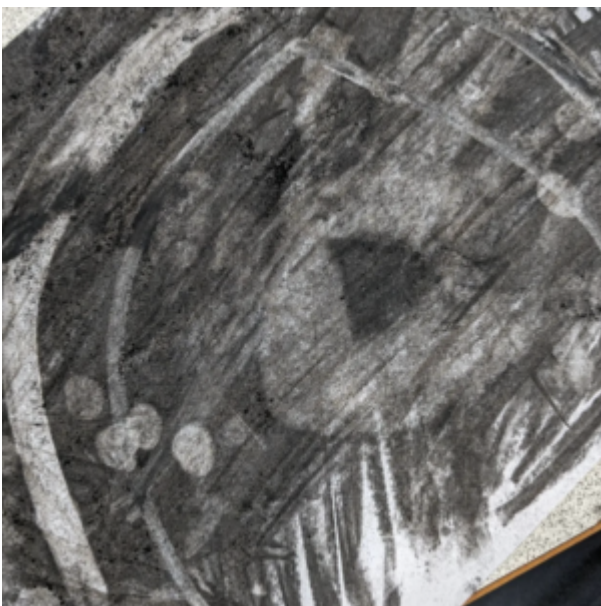
**PATHWAY: HENRY MOORE & THE SHELTER DRAWINGS**





[Explore the Shelter Drawings by Henry Moore with this pathway aimed at Primary ages](#)

**See the Pathway Used in Schools...**







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## **Session Recording: Still Life Pathway**

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# Pathway: How Can I Use Light & Dark To Create A Sense Of Space? (Inspired By The Coal Mining Drawings Of Henry Moore)

**Discipline: Drawing, Collage, Set Design**

In this pathway, suitable for ages 11 to 14, we explore a series of coal mining drawings made by Henry Moore. Use his work as the basis for conversation in the classroom, and then use the AccessArt resources below to enable a contextual exploration of figurative drawing, mark-making and collage, or scratch model design, inspired by Moore's work.

This pathway has been made in response to the exhibition [Drawing in The Dark](#), a curation of [Henry Moore's coal mining drawings](#), inspired by the release of a [new book](#) written by art historian (and AccessArt Trustee), Chris Owen.

**Theme:**

**Mining**

**Medium:**

**Paper, Charcoal, Cardboard**

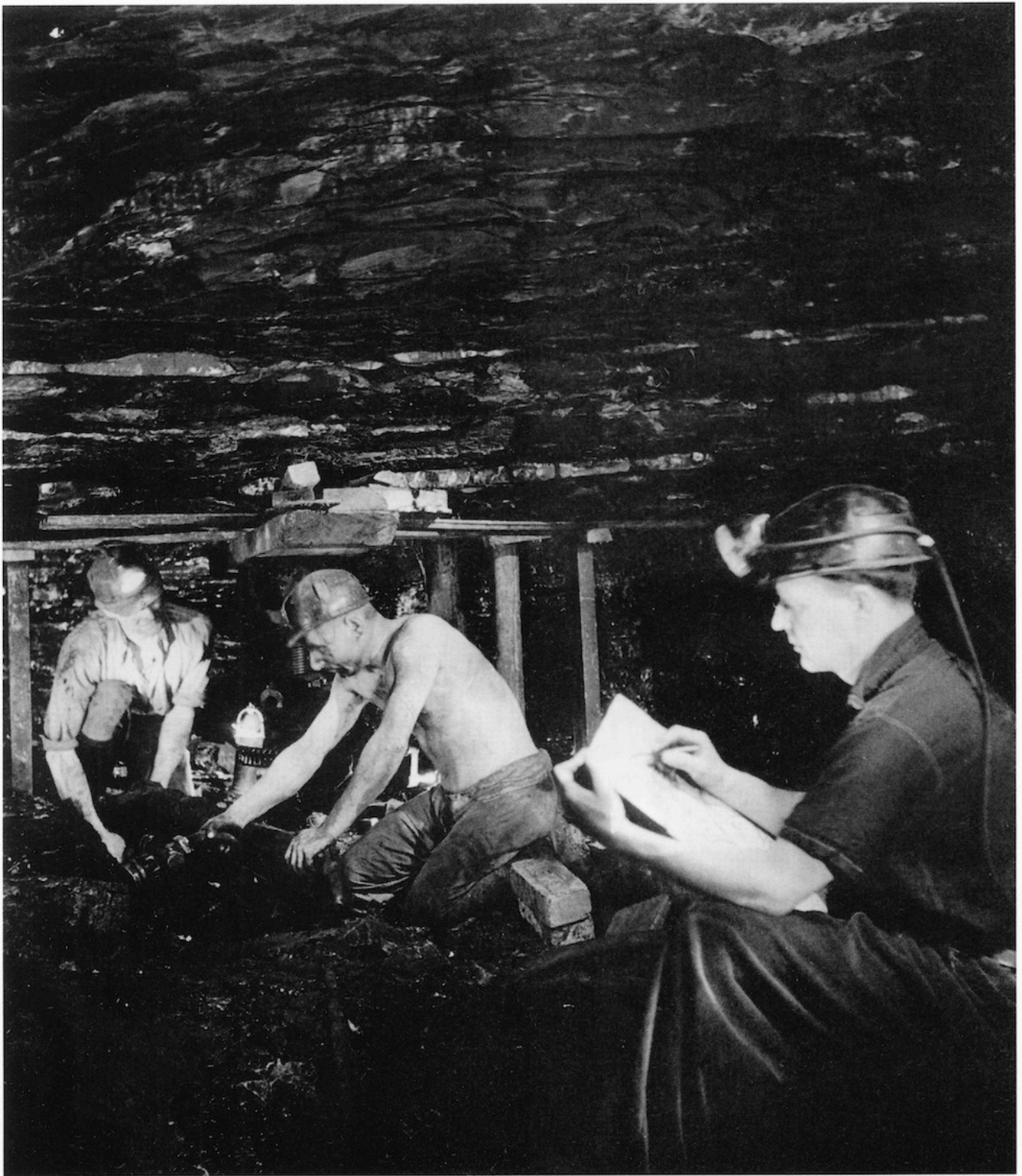


**Artist:**  
**Henry Moore**

If you use this resource in your setting, please tag us on social media: #InspiredBy @accessart (facebook, twitter) @accessart.org.uk (instagram) and share the url. Thank you!



Four Studies of Miners at the Coalface, 1942, drawing. (HMF 2000a). Photo Michael Phipps. Reproduced by permission of The Henry Moore Foundation copy



1942 Henry Moore sketching two miners at Wheldale Colliery  
Henry Moore Foundation archive 7 x 8" black and white print.  
Photo: Reuben Saidman

AGES 11-14



# Explore an Artist...

## [Talking Points: Henry Moore](#)

Explore “[Talking Points: Henry Moore](#)” to introduce the artist and his ‘Pit Project’ to students. Use the questions to prompt discussion about the processes used by Moore and the work he created.

Invite students to make some “[Visual Notes](#)” as they watch the video.

## A Brief History of Coal Mining

Watch some videos depicting the day-to-day life of a coal miner at “[Drawing source Material: Coal Mining](#)”.

Pause the films on interesting compositions and invite students to draw in sketchbooks. Take inspiration from the “[Show Me What You See](#)” resource to guide the session.





Pit Boys at Pit Head 1942 by Henry Moore, Wakefield Permanent Art Collection Image Courtesy of The Hepworth Wakefield LR copy



**Figurative Drawing**

Henry Moore created drawings of coal miners as they worked. You may want students to create some figurative drawings of classmates in sketchbooks.

A photographer once captured images of Moore drawing the miners as they worked. Use the [“Drawing Someone Drawing Something”](#) resource to emulate this idea.

Focus on drawing faces using the [“Portrait Club”](#) resource as inspiration for a classroom set up.



## Mark-Making and Collage

In this resource, artist Laura McKendry demonstrates different ways to make expressive marks using charcoal, in order to create a collage of a coal mine scene.

Use the [“Expressive Charcoal Collage: Coal Mines”](#) to encourage students to explore ways of working

expressively and abstractly using charcoal, and explore different mark-making processes to portray the enclosed space of a coal mine.



## Set Design

Use and adapt “[Introducing Set Designing – Exercise to Respond to Text](#)” to create scratch set designs inspired by texts about Henry Moore’s coal mining experience.

Refer to “[Talking Points: Henry Moore](#)” to find texts to inspire the creation of scratch models.

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## AccessArt Session Recording:

# Sketchbook Share

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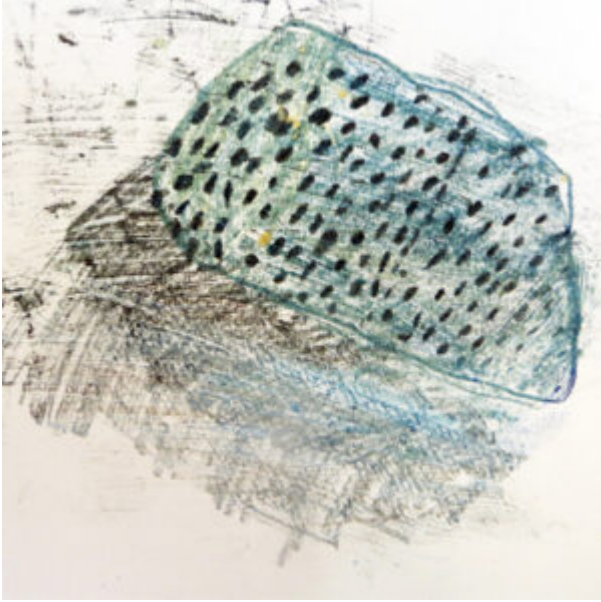
## Cloth, Paint, Print: Inspired by Natural Objects

### You May Also Like

#### Making Painted & Sewn Landscapes



#### Monoprinting with Oil Pastel and Carbon Copy Paper

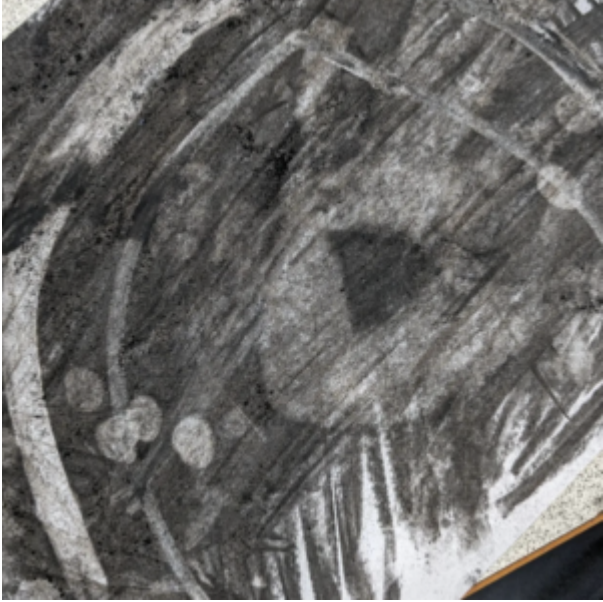


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## **Expressive Charcoal Collage: Coal Mines**

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



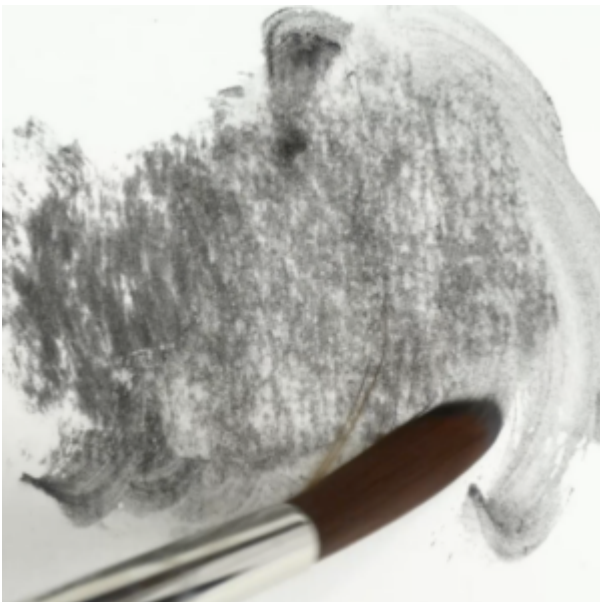


# You May Also Like

charcoal cave



introduction to charcoal



**Pathway: An Exploration of Coal Mining,  
Inspired By Henry Moore**





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# **AccessArt Session Recording: Screenprinting Hack**