

Be Inspired by Flowers in a Glass Vase by Jan Davidsz de Heem

This resource looks at 'Flowers in a Glass Vase' by the Dutch painter, Jan Davidsz de Heem (1606-1684), on permanent display at the [Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge](#), and how it might inspire your own creative responses and experimentation with colour.



Flowers in a glass vase. Heem, Jan Davidsz. de (Dutch, 1606-1683/4). Oil on panel, height 93.2 cm, width 69.6 cm. Dutch/Flemish School. (c) The Fitzwilliam Museum

Setting the Scene

In February 2020, a group of primary school teachers explored the oil painting **Flowers in a Glass Vase**, by the Dutch painter **Jan Davidsz de Heem**, at the [Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge](#) with the museum's education officer, [Kate Noble](#), the museum's Senior Research Scientist, **Paola Ricciardi**, and [Sheila Ceccarelli](#) from **AccessArt**.

We hope that the resource below will inspire open-ended, creative responses to the painting, from a distance. The ideas are suitable for exploration by all ages and abilities and on the kitchen table or anywhere.

Still Life

Flowers in a Glass Vase is a Dutch [Still Life](#) painting that was painted in the 1660s 'when there was a growing interest in the natural world'*. You can read more about it [here*](#).

Looking and Drawing Challenge

Exercise 1: Pointing and Looking

Look at the close-ups of **Flowers in a Glass Vase** below and choose one to work from.

With one eye squinted, point, with your index finger at a flower - you might feel silly, but this is a really good way to slow down your looking and concentrate on what you are **seeing**. Slowly move your index finger around the contours of the flower and, with your open eye, follow your index finger's journey around the rest of the painting. ***What do you see?***



Teachers pointing at flowers in a glass vase by de Heem at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge



Detail from *Flowers in a Glass Vase*, by Jan Davidsz. de Heem
(c) The Fitzwilliam Museum



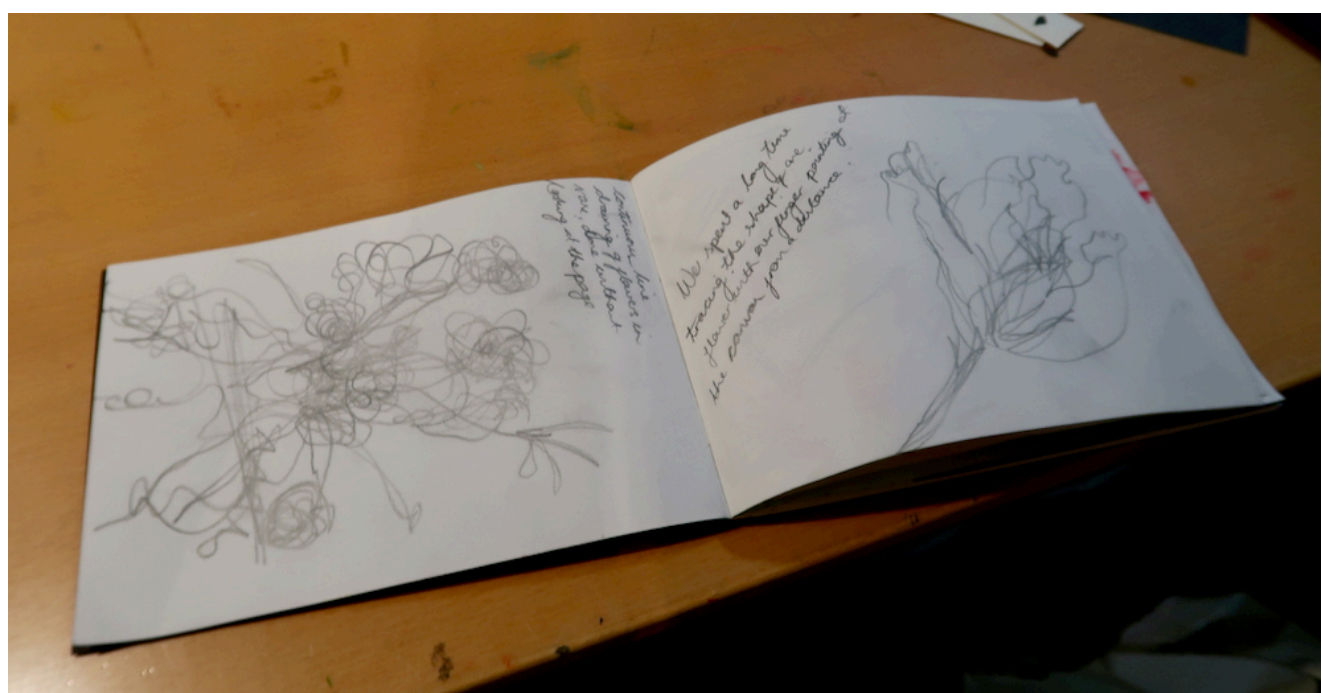
Detail from *Flowers in a Glass Vase*, by Jan Davidsz. de Heem
(c) The Fitzwilliam Museum



Detail from *Flowers in a Glass Vase*, by Jan Davidsz. de Heem
(c) The Fitzwilliam Museum

Exercise 2: Contour Drawing

On a piece of paper or sketchbook and with a pencil or drawing tool of your choice, continue your exploration around the painting. Try not looking at your drawing but continue your search for details in the painting. ***What do you see?***



Sketchbook pages looking at de Heem's Flowers in a Glass Vase at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Exercise 3: Drawing the 'Negative' - or - Spaces 'In-between'

After having explored and considered the contours of the flowers you will have discovered many details.

Now we are going to construct a drawing using a different approach. Instead of drawing around the flowers, we're going to draw the shapes in-between them. This can be tricky but use the strong contrasts in the painting and the dark background to look at the shapes between the flowers and build your drawing by looking at, and drawing these spaces. ***What do you see?***



Drawing the shapes between the flowers looking at de Heem's flowers in a glass vase at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge



Drawing the shapes between the flowers looking at de Heem's flowers in a glass vase at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Painting Flowers



You Will Need:

- **Flowers** - Either cut flowers or flowers growing in the garden or your surrounding area;
- **Primary Colours (Primary Yellow, Primary Red or Primary Blue) in:**
 - Powder paint, or
 - Watercolour paint, or,
 - Gouache paint, or,
 - Acrylic paint, or,
 - Watercolor pencils.



Primary Colours - primary blue, primary red and primary yellow in powder paint at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Exercise 1 - Colour Matching

Choose a flower and choose your painting medium.



Explore mixing colours you are drawn to and make colour swatches of them.







Exercise 2 - Colour and Form

As you start to gain confidence and pleasure in exploring colour, you might want to start to experiment with form. Remember your drawing exercises and how to look and see what's in front of you and enjoy experimenting with mark making with liquid paint. If you want to add line, you might want to experiment with water-soluble graphite and watercolour pencils too. Enjoy!















Many thanks to the teachers who participated in this CPD training session for sharing their processes with AccessArt and The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Many thanks to the museum's education officer, [Kate Noble](#), the museum's Senior Research Scientist, **Paola Ricciardi**. Many thanks to **Lynda Clark**, Image Library Manager at the museum, for providing AccessArt with images of Flowers in a Glass Vase. This post was written by [Sheila Ceccarelli](#) for AccessArt with photos by **Sheila Ceccarelli** and [Rachel Thompson](#).

Supporting Resources

The Wildflower Meadow by Rachel Burch



[The Wildflower Meadow](#)

Rachel Burch, Head of Art at Burton Hathow Preparatory School and her pupils explore simple drawing, collaging and painting techniques to create beautiful artworks inspired by a summer meadow.

Minibeast Artwork by Tracy McGuinness-Kelly



The Minibeast Project

Tracy McGuinness-Kelly creates a beautiful collaborative piece of work with children for permanent display inside a school.

Painting a Bluebell Forest in Cyan, Magenta and Process Yellow on a Large Scale



Painting a Bluebell Forest in Cyan, Magenta and Process Yellow on a Large

Scale

Inspired by the spring, teenagers work on a large scale in red (magenta), cyan (blue) and process yellow.

Look, Think, Do by The Fitzwilliam Museum Education Team

Vanessa the Lost Butterfly written and narrated by Nicola Wallis

This story is based on 'Flowers in a glass vase' by Jan Davidsz de Heem at The Fitzwilliam Museum. It links with a Look, Think, Do Activity on the painting fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/work/flowers-glass-vase Written and narrated by Nicola Wallis.

UK Charity AccessArt created this resource in collaboration with the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

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AccessArt welcomes artists, educators, teachers and parents both in the UK and overseas.

We believe everyone has the right to be creative and by working together and

sharing ideas we can enable everyone to reach their creative potential.