

2026 – Time for a New Relationship?



What can art educators learn from non-extractive practices?

As we welcome in a new year, starting a new term and imagining new ways of being, perhaps we can, as art educators, turn also towards new ways of understanding our relationship with our sense of creative purpose.

It would, of course, be ideal to start the new year with a sense of optimism and energy—and for many, that will be the case—and if so, all good. But we do need to recognise that for many people, both educators and those we educate, we ended the year with a feeling of overwhelm and perhaps even

exhaustion.

If we were lucky, it was great to be able to step off our productivity-driven, daily grind. Returning (and again, lucky us to have something to return to) has made me think about how we might begin to look in on this driven culture from a slightly different angle, especially in the light of learning to re-see what the visual arts can offer us, to help us be happier, healthier, more connected human beings. How can we learn to move forward, incrementally, in a way which is more sustainable, to both ourselves (as cyclical beings) and the planet? How can we help lay the groundwork so that the children and young people we teach and care for can imagine a more sustainable approach to their own lives?

The notion of *non-extraction* comes from a critical understanding of extractive economies, as applied to industry, the environment or colonialism. Any mechanism, organisational structure, or way of being which takes more out than it puts back in (intentionally or otherwise), leaving the source or those in its path depleted, might be seen as extractive. Non-extractive practices on the other hand, attempt to preserve, value, and enhance, helping to sustain energy, resources and ways of being.

As we go about our work as art educators and artists, perhaps 2026 can be the year we examine our current attitude to extractive and non-

extractive practices as they relate to teaching, learning and the visual arts. Let's think expansively and become aware of where we might be guilty of perpetuating the myth that extractive processes *are the only way*. Once we become aware, we can then start to use our creativity to make small (or large) changes to our day-to-day practices, which enable the ecosystems in which we operate to function with kindness, energy and sustainability.

AccessArt will be returning to these themes of course, but for now, a few gentle questions to help us start examining our attitudes to extractive / non-extractive practices as teacher, learner and artist. Some of these questions are deliberately tangled to encourage divergent thinking. They are not intended to be used as tools with which to punish ourselves. Instead, enjoy them as challenges to explore. New approaches - new energy.

Physical

- Where do the materials you use come from? How do you navigate the balance between providing enough materials to aid exploration without encouraging waste? How do the things you make exist in the world? What is material value? How much do you talk about these issues with other makers/learners?

Cultural

- How do you relate to the images and ideas you come across from other cultures? How much do you understand and respect the starting points/legacy which created these works? What does “borrowing” look like for you? Does it feel ok?
- How much do you impose on others? Are there ways you could create space for the cultural experiences of those you work with to be seen and heard?

Creative Process

- Is our creativity endless? Is it cyclical? What does creative rest look like? How do we value intention? Do we need to measure? What does respect to ourselves as creative beings look like?

Enjoy the new year. Gently does it.

Paula Briggs, January 2026

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your creative thinking, practice and teaching.

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.

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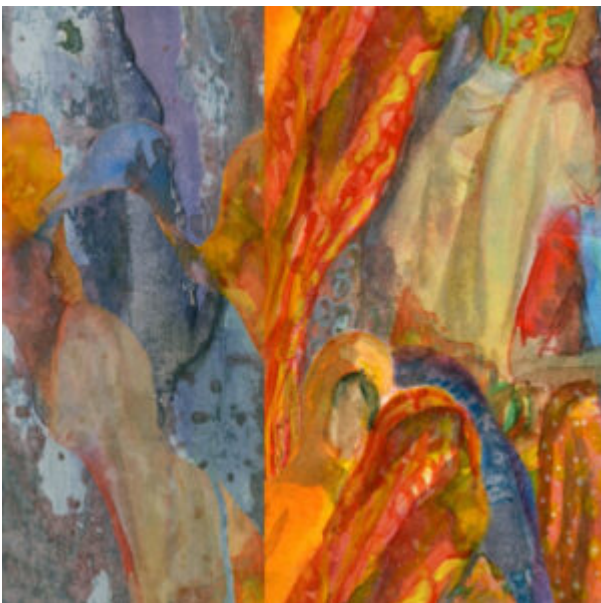
Which Artists: Merlin Evans



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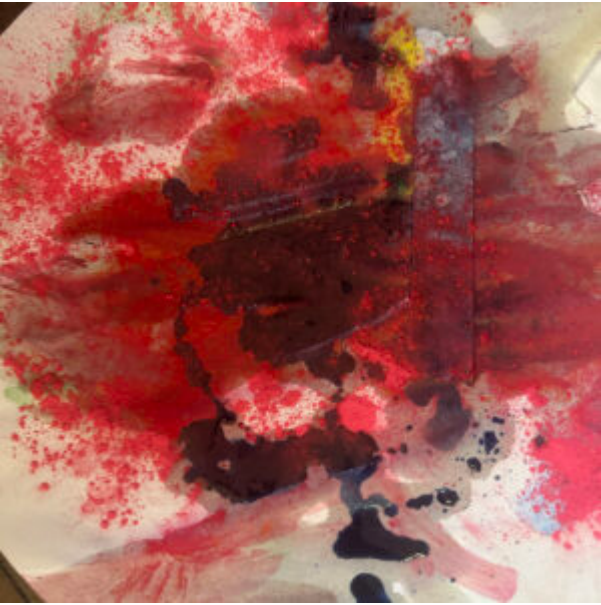


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See This Resource Used in Educational Settings...







How Do We Adapt our Art Teaching to Include Children with Specific Educational Needs?

“Acts of Kindness” Workshop

Collage: Deconstructing, Reconstructing and Abstracting

What We Like About This Resource...

“I really like how this playful resource helps us to make a creative response inspired by a stimulus, ensuring that the stimulus is only an entry point into an outcome that will look totally different. Exploring the themes of colour, texture and composition through the lens of different artists also helps us see how we can interpret (and re-interpret) colours and materials in a meaningful way. Viewfinders and collage are also great tools for those who experience ‘fear of the white page’ and will allow learners to make conscious creative decisions as they go.” – Tobi, AccessArt

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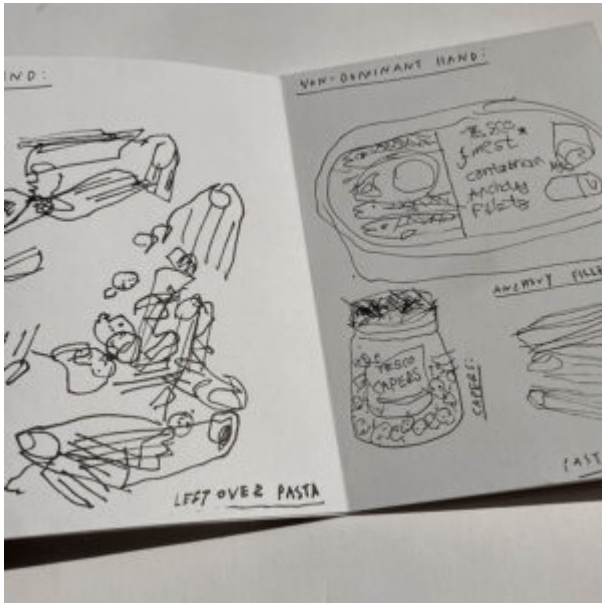
Cooking With Collage

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What i ate in a day



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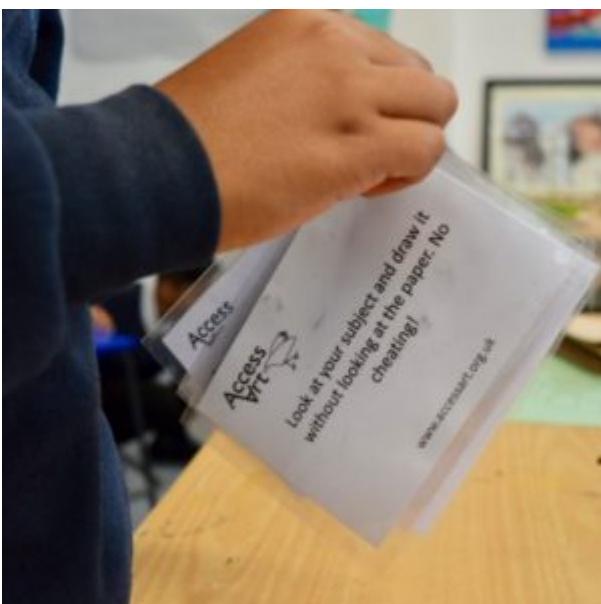
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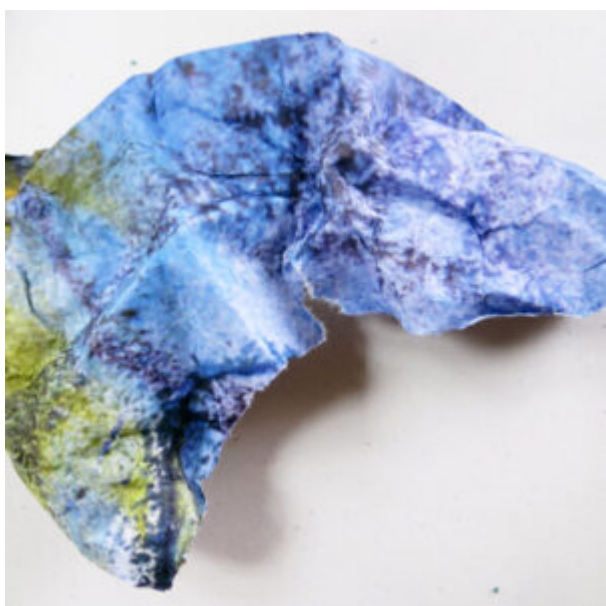
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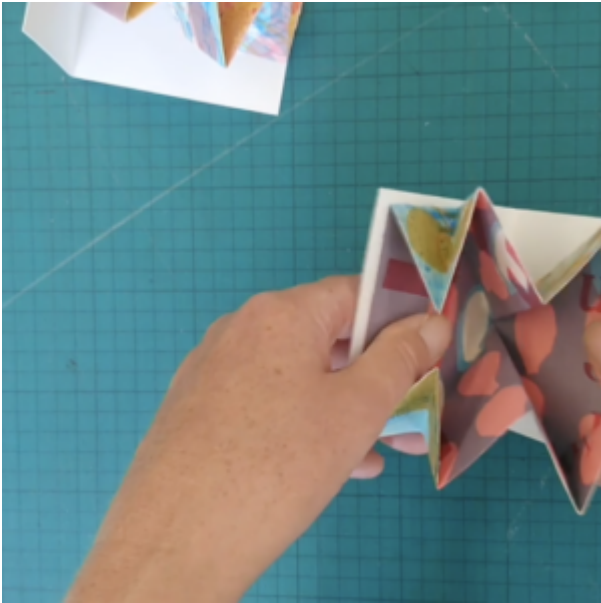
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Deconstructing to Help You See

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the drawing journey



all drawing resources



The Blood Bag Project

What We Like About This Resource...

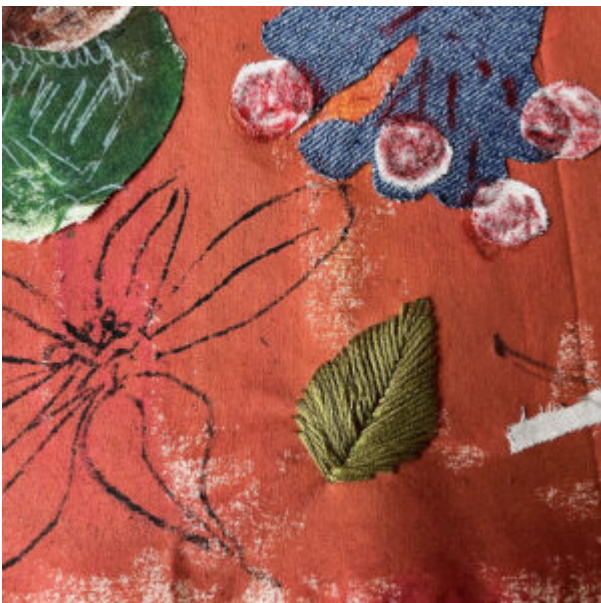
This project combines art and science in innovative and creative ways. It engages children with simple and more complex sewing skills, both hand and machine. The fact that a local artist collaborated on this project, bringing her own set of skills and experience is so valuable for any extended art project, and the children were able to connect with the sensitivity of the subject matter and to empathise with it's message.

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Cloth, Paint, Print: Inspired by Natural Objects



Making Painted & Sewn Landscapes



which artists: merlin evans



Which Artist: Leigh Bowser

Escaping Wars and Waves – Encounters with Syrian Refugees

What We Like About This Resource...

'This resource really demonstrates how art can successfully bring awareness to important humanitarian issues, promote inclusivity and can give a platform to those who otherwise wouldn't be heard. The links between text, photos and drawings are really strong and demonstrate the creative process used by Olivier from start to finish. I really like the inclusion of suggestions for students within the post, which encourage students to learn more about their community and to understand the experience of being displaced. This in turn will hopefully inspire the next generation to be part of an inclusive and empathetic society.' – Tobi, AccessArt

Analogue Drawing

What We Like About This Resource...

“This activity highlights how visual communication can be used to convey emotion. When artwork is relatable in a human and emotive way it can be really powerful. Learning how to translate feeling into mark-making is a really important skill and can help children break down the essence of a range of their own emotions, and communicate it to others. Explore colour and a range of materials to enrich this experience.” – Tobi, AccessArt.

Drawing With Your Feet

What We Like About This Resource

“I love this resource because I can picture the energy in the classroom whilst students enjoy the process of mark-making using their feet. Creating drawings with parts of the body other than hands can be really freeing; students will hopefully look at their drawings in a less critical way, with the emphasis of the activity being more about

the process than the outcome. It might be a nice addition to use a viewfinder to zoom in on areas where the marks collide in interesting ways” – Tobi, AccessArt.