

Sketchbook Pathway Step 2: Energy of the Group

[<< Back to The Sketchbook Pathway <<](#)

Use the "energy of the group," guided by *you* the facilitator, to expand how we *understand* the question.



Kick-start momentum by working as a group to find points of access for the whole class.

The Aim: To help **EVERYONE** start to identify things within the topic which excite them. To provide lot's of ways in so that exploration can be owned.

Try the ideas below.

Class Brainstorm: Re-Shape the Question Until it Resonates



"Open up" the question or provocation to help pupils own it. Turn the question upside down, inside out, and examine it from all angles. Don't assume anything without questioning it.

"How Much Does A Cloud Weigh?" might become:

How heavy is a cloud to YOU?

How heavy is THAT cloud?

How does it feel to carry a cloud?

Could you hold that cloud?

How LIGHT is a cloud?

How does that heavy cloud make you feel?

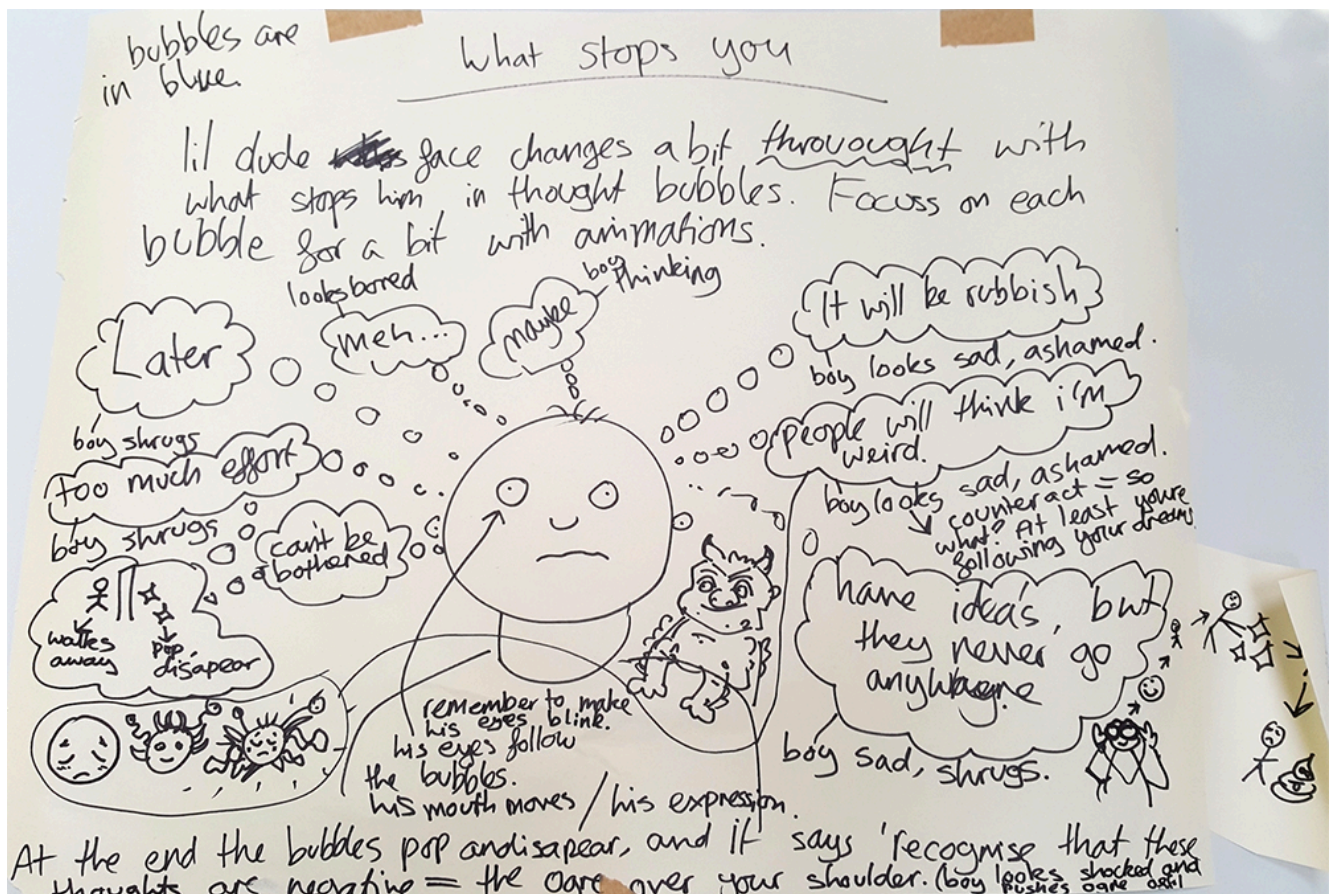
How do YOU experience CLOUD?

What is cloud?

Group: Mindmap

Use a group discussion as a stimulus for creating individual mindmaps. Start by asking questions to "open the theme" and then ask further questions to encourage pupils to explore ideas which emerge. Enable pupil's to think like a "fern fractal" and keep pushing the exploration verbally, the children creating a mindmap as you go. Give them time between explorations to write notes and time at the end to use a highlighter to emphasis ideas which feel exciting to them.

Be creative and experimental, not just with your thoughts but with your environment. How does having different music playing in the background affect outcomes. How does the shape and size of the paper affect the shape of thoughts?



Guided Activity: Practical Ice-Breaker

Sometimes the only way to kick-start momentum is to get your hands dirty. Turn the classroom into a "lab" and use group [ice-breaker and warm-up activities](#) as a way to get pupils to start making marks in their sketchbook, OR making marks with "things". The boundaries set by the activities will offer a structure from which to work, but by inviting pupil's to do something outside of the expected you'll be helping them take on new ideas and start to think more creatively.

Take a look at how you can adapt the following activities to fit your question, theme or provocation. Remember you don't have to make every sketchbook activity directly relate to your topic - sometimes throwing "spanners in the works" can shift and refresh thinking, and ideas and experiences generated will feed through the sketchbook work.

Thinking Through Making

[See the Resource](#)

Inventing

[See the Resource](#)

[<< Back to The Sketchbook Pathway <<](#)

>> Step 3: Let Things Collide >>

This is a sample of a resource created by UK Charity AccessArt. We have over 1500 resources to help develop and inspire 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.

A Sketchbook Pathway Step 1: Open Out & Give Permission

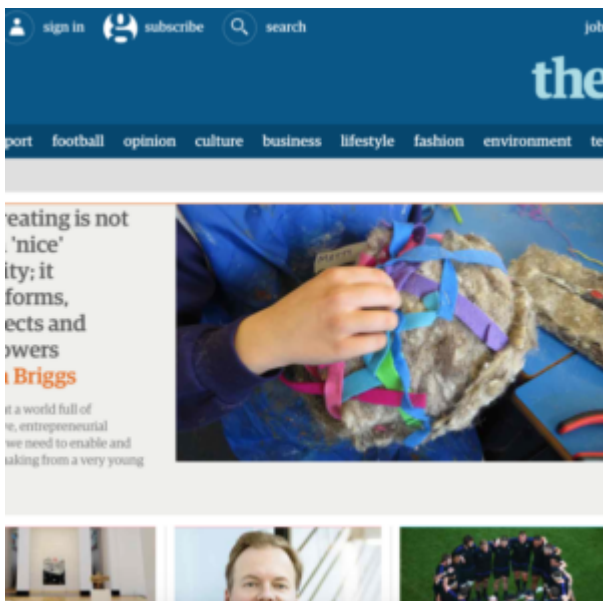
What Are Sketchbooks & What Can They Offer Us?

Making a Backwards Sketchbook

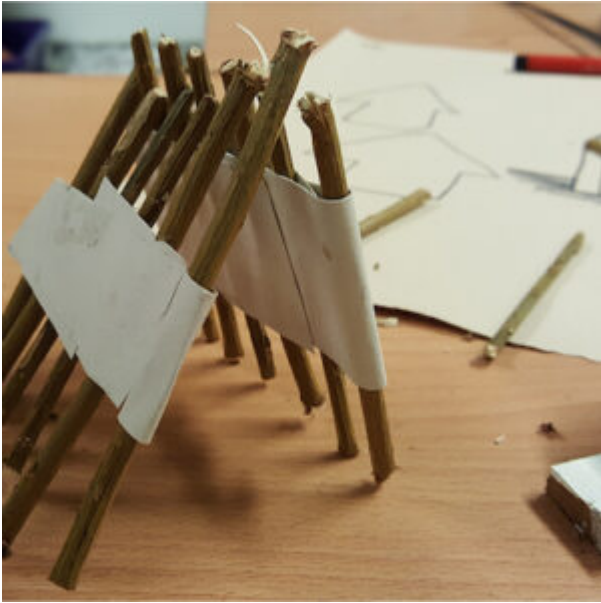
Knowledge Organisers for Art in Primary Schools

You May Also Like

Creativity Connects



Permission to Make



What did my child make this week?



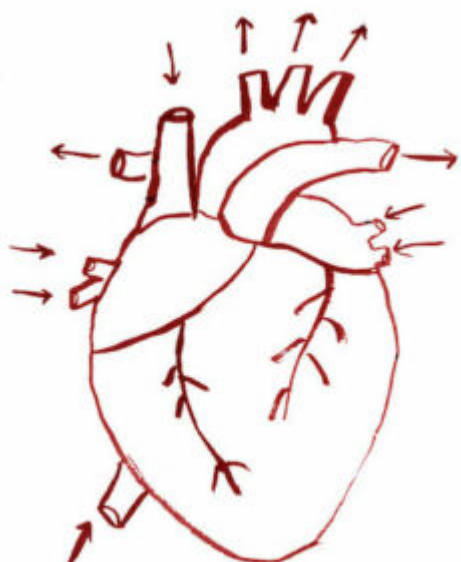
Visual Arts Planning: Light and Dark



Offering to Teachers to ages 4-11



Pedagogy in 250 words



DrawAble: Making a Folded Sketchbook By Paula Briggs

Mark Making & Sound: Part Three

You May Also Like...

Pathway: Music and art



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Mark Making & Sound: Part One



Mark Making & Sound: Part Two



Mark Making & Sound: Part Two

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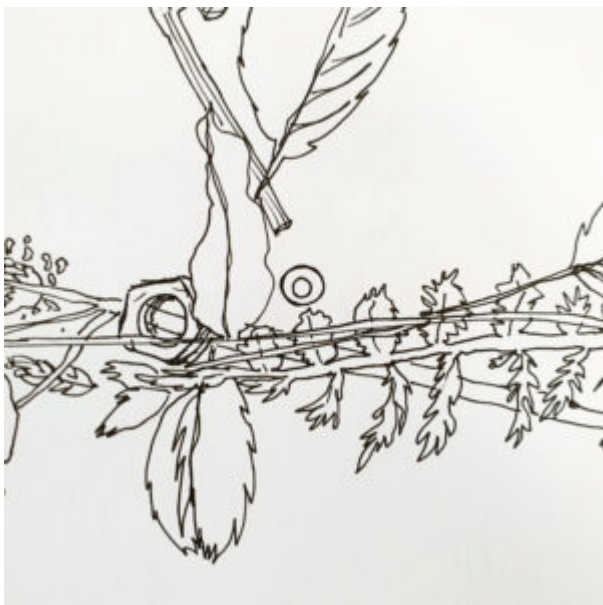


[This is featured in the 'Music and Art' pathway](#)

Mark Making & Sound: Part One



Mark Making & Sound: Part Three



Mark Making & Sound: Part One

You May Also Like...

Pathway: Music and art

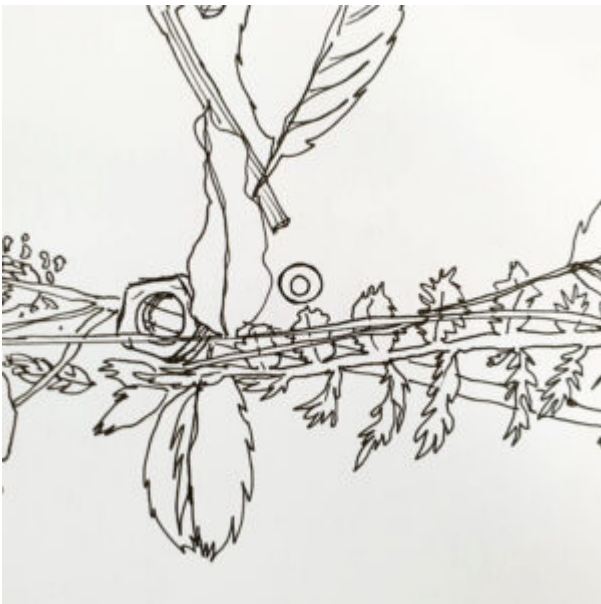


[This is featured in the 'Music and Art' pathway](#)

Mark Making & Sound: Part Two



Mark Making & Sound: Part Three



Drawing to a Slow Rhythm



Inspired by Miro



Drawing to Music



Making a Scroll Drawing

Home: The Little House on West Street LockDown Project

The Language We Use Defines The Society We Create: Taking

Control of the Narrative

Since 1994, AccessArt has worked to shape high quality visual arts education. As a Subject Association, we have attended All Party Parliamentary Groups and Roundtable discussions with various art specialists, organisations and Unions, to come together to advocate for the importance of art education. At these meetings arts organisations and experienced individuals agree:

- We need to better value the arts in education, placing arts subjects on an equal footing with STEM subjects, creating time and space for exploration and experience, as well as knowledge.
- We need to invest in Initial Teacher Training and CPDL.
- We need a reprieve from assessment which creates a climate of fear and drives us towards limited outcomes, in direct opposition to the kind of nurturing space art requires to flourish.
- The current Curriculum needs rewriting to ensure it is relevant, diverse and accessible to all.

Art education has been systematically attacked for

many years. Art educators have had to defend, and therefore our dialogue has been defensive. We have defended the subject by using language we hoped would be understood by those in government – language which asserts itself but is spoken in their terms. We have taken the current model, shown its shortcomings, and the effects of those shortcomings, and suggested solutions. But all that has been done using the existing vocabulary which defines education today. And that is a problem, because it limits ambition and vision. We are driven to talk about assessment, monitoring, progression and knowledge, when the subject we hold needs a very different set of words to describe its rich, organic nature and build understanding of the potential for the subject to change lives.

The accidental or deliberate (depending on your viewpoint) misunderstanding of the subject area shown by those in power has demerited the importance of art education. By pushing a knowledge-rich, assessment-heavy, STEM-prioritised curriculum, the government has created a system in which the very words we need to use, as creative practitioners, teachers and pupils have been taken away from us. There is no space in the current curriculum to use words like “intuition,” “growth,” “personal,” “organic,” and “experimental.” We could hold such a rich, exciting, enabling subject in our hands – a subject which should be oozing with joy and

richness, discovery and vision, but instead the government wants us to grip it as if it were a beast we need to beat down and control; something to be scared of which offers no real benefit to anyone. Is this misunderstanding on the part of the government, or is this fear? Fear that if we enable personal creativity we create a beast which enables free expression, resulting in a population not so easily “controlled”?

The language used by any government creates the culture through, and in which, we act, and in that way we become conditioned. We forget there are always other options, other approaches, and other words which describe other philosophies open to us. All the while we have been trying to defend art education by using the words they want us to use, and in that way we are becoming complicit, despite our intention, because we are not using the words we really need to use.

This struck home, finally, when I realised through conversations with school leavers that they could no longer use words like intuition, entitlement, dreaming, invention, play. These words are unfamiliar to them, and they no longer resonate.

These words, and therefore the ways of being they describe, are not available to them right now. They find it hard to embody these words. (Embody is an important word by the way).

So, yes, let's keep defending the importance of art education, but let's take a much firmer

stance. We need to unfurl our own language – the words we really need to use – the words which more accurately describe an exploration of the future role of education in general and value of art education in particular. I am no longer going to be embarrassed to use the word *love* in relation to *education*. I am no longer going to purposely *not* use the words intuition, passion, fun and play, for fear of making art education seem less than; for fear of being dismissed.

Their words have been hurled at us for years – and now our whole educational and societal bedrock is built on silt. We need to start using words which build a solid place on which our children and young people can stand, and from which they can grow.

The language needs to be visceral. Honest. Brutal. We need to nail it and say it as it is. We have listened to and struggled with their vocabulary, and now they are going to hear ours. Please join us; let's use the words we really need to use, not the language we have been forced to use in a system which has been using the wrong language in the first place. We are artists after all, and we should not be apologetic that our vision, wisdom and insight comes from a very different place, is highly relevant, and to be listened to. Let's use our language, and in doing so say exactly what we need to say.

As artist, educator, CEO and parent – this is what

I really want to say...

Where do we stand, at this point in time?

How are our children standing on the earth, at this point in time?

How are we serving them, in terms of education, health, wellbeing?

Are we helping them build their sense of self? Sense of safety? From which they can grow?

Are we helping them understand the relationship between sense of self and connection with others? The relationship between compassion and action? Action and impact?

Are we helping them understand what makes them human? What makes a community? A society? Are we helping them think about purpose?

Are we showing them what healthy relationships look like? With each other? With themselves? With the planet?

Are we empowering them to dream, to envision, to imagine? Are we enabling them to communicate so that they can inspire and collaborate? Are we skilling them to affect, enable and build?

Are we enabling them to think critically and creatively, and to understand the difference between the two?

Where do we stand at this point in time?

We stand at a point, caught between the way society has been shaped by previous government policy (or lack of policy), and the future. We are ALL held at that point, no matter our privilege.

But it is not the only way to stand. And we should not accept it, or think we can't affect it.

So how do we enable every person to stand on the earth grounded, belonging, able to dream, empowered to act?

Can we even imagine such a thing, or have we been so stripped of our ability to dream, confidence to be optimistic, ability to think?

Think about it now. Can you even imagine everyone you know being able to feel like they are able to work towards their full potential? Feel appreciated, valued, have something to offer, and able to contribute?

If you can't imagine that, then please get angry and ask if we have perhaps been conditioned?

Don't say it is idealistic.

Why do we stand the way we do, on the earth today? And how can we make change?

When we look, what do we see with our own eyes?

We see teenagers, emerging from their knowledge-

rich, assessed-heavy, education, uncertain. Uncertain as to how they feel about their place in the world and unsure what their entitlement is to dream, act and affect, because they have been stripped of their permission. Ask a school leaver about intuition, and see how they answer. Do they know what that word means? Ask a school leaver about their dreams and hopes, and see how they answer. Ask a school leaver if everyone has equality of opportunity and see how they answer. Have they been enabled?

We see children and teenagers holding so much anxiety. Flight, fright or freeze – sense of self becomes fragmented and constricted and in that state we cannot go out into the world feeling safe and grounded ready to explore and contribute. Ask them if they feel safe and enabled. Ask them if they feel held. Ask them if they understand how what manifests as anxiety often starts as sensitivity – which can be a beautiful and vital thing which in turn can be explored, expressed and shared through art. Sensitivity need not develop into anxiety. It is not inevitable.

We see children and teenagers avoiding school, because their nervous systems know that school in its current state does not feel like the safest place for them. Do we understand what their bodies and minds need, now, to enable them to learn? Ask a child: What would keep you in school? In which lessons do you feel listened to and can flourish?

What does flourish even mean? Has anyone asked you?

We see no time, no space. We send them hurtling, ticking off a list. Towards what? And the existential skills they have learnt are? Have we been brave enough to create generations who are curious? Brave enough to embrace the “other” – to explore differences and yet to be able to connect? Ask a child: Do you feel you have had the space to follow your interests and really understand? Have you ever had the experience of exciting an other?

We see a climate of crippling fear. Everyone looking over their shoulder, or averting their eyes. Ask a teacher: Can you imagine overtly valuing things that can't be measured?

We see everything treated the same. Vanilla subjects. Tidy, neat, convenient. Don't risk, don't dare. Don't create mess. Don't give access to that tool. Don't let them fail. Ask a teacher and ask a child: In what ways is art unique? What does art need to be allowed to flourish in your school? What even is “art”?

We see teachers who cannot find joy and love in teaching, because they are not enabled to find joy and love in teaching. Does Ofsted ask: Do you find joy and love in teaching? Do your pupils find joy and love in learning? What do we feel this takes from us, to ask this question? What are we scared of? Why can't we use those words?

We see young parents and teachers whose own education has not shown them the promise of a more creative, holistic education, so they do not see the possibilities, do not know what their own children are therefore missing. Ask a young teacher: What is art for? How does it serve us? In what ways is it a catalyst? In what ways is it a sensor? In what ways is it a release? How can art make children feel safe?

We see how a curriculum which places emphasis on measurable knowledge which can be pedantically defined and assessed has destroyed the space for exploration, discovery, self-learning. Ask a child: Are you able to explore uncertainty without fear of being judged? Do you feel like you are only valued when you can achieve? Do you feel like you are valued enough for the journey you are on to be the thing which is celebrated? Ask the teacher: How do you feel about the facilitation of an exploration of unknowledge? How do you feel about a child discovering something you didn't know could be taught (or measured)?

We see lack of vision. Our education system is a run-down version of a Victorian model. Does our education system embody aspiration? Just as the language we use reflects and shapes the culture we are in, our schools are a physical manifestation of our educational values. Ask a child: Does the environment in which you learn fill you full of excitement? Does it fill you full of confidence

for the future? Ask a teacher: Does the pedagogy by which you teach stir your soul? Do you believe you are part of a system which is inclusive and aspirational?

We see whole communities who don't feel any sense of cultural entitlement. It starts with valuing finger painting which seems so throwaway. Anyone can finger paint. But if you don't let the exploration follow and grow, art remains just finger painting and of course we can do away with that. We see a basic misunderstanding that art cannot be facilitated with as much rigour as any other subject. That if we assume art is just "nice" then it is a luxury we don't need. Ask a child: When was the last time you (choose a word: made, drew, painted, sung, acted, were introduced to an artist who shared your values, celebrated your creativity...)?

We see a culture in which we are embarrassed to use words like love, play, curiosity, and nurture in schools beyond EYFS. We have been disempowered to use language which celebrates individuality, and which acknowledges what it is to be human in schools. Ask a child and a teacher: Do you feel better after your day of education than you did before the start? Does the environment make you feel cared for and supported? Do you feel emotionally and intellectually richer? Was it fun? Do you feel fulfilled? Do you even know what that means?

Does this sound idealistic? Too big a job? Shall we just continue as we are? Turn our cheek. If being brave, visionary, radical feels hard, even impossible, then please understand the way we currently stand on the earth has not encouraged that kind of approach. By taking away our right to nurture our creative and critical thinking skills, we are being disempowered. It's happening already. The books are already burning – smouldering rather than flames so we do not notice.

Being brave can be small and quiet. We don't have to shout. It doesn't have to take years (it can't).

*More heart. Less arrogance, less bullsh*tness, more listening. More seeing with our eyes wide open. Less measurement. More holistic approaches. Less binary choices. A big re-think about what purpose education serves. Radical rethink about what a curriculum is. Greater ability to understand education has a responsibility to go beyond knowledge, which can be googled or accessed in the blink of an AI. More recognition that we are humans and we have traits, needs, desires which can be developed and tapped into. More modelling of who we would like to be as a society. More emotional intelligence to counterbalance artificial intelligence. More problem solving through experience. And willingness and ability to see the far, far bigger perspective.*

So that one day, we might look on this point in

time, as we stand upon the earth, and see it for what it is: a very small contracted dot, tight and defensive, that we have been engineered into through lack of vision, insight, confidence and love. From here we have to feel able to relax and expand outwards. To use the word love in education without embarrassment, and in doing so ensure we give opportunities to teachers and pupils which enable them to feel grounded, appreciated, empowered, connected and safe. And from there, we can all move forwards.

Which words would you like to use?

Paula Briggs, CEO & Creative Director, AccessArt,
April 2024

Explore...

Not just ideas: Action Too



“One cold, rainy morning in January 1999, I received a phone call from the then DfES. The woman started the call with the words: “What is the best news someone could call you with on such a rainy January day?”

Explore and understand all that AccessArt has achieved and the impact we are making

Why AccessArt Can't support oak national academy



[“Like many educational publishers, we were concerned at the time about both the nature and quality of the resources created, the ethics of the creation of a curriculum by government, and also the potential impact of a so called “free” curriculum on commercial and charitable educational suppliers...”](#)

Read why we think Oak is a flawed idea...

David Parr House – “What’s Your Space?”

In celebration of the opening of David Parr House in Cambridge, this resource aims to inspire children aged 8 to 12 to explore design.

Inspire 2020: Teachers

This post is based on CPD (Continued Professional Development) sessions in February and March 2019, hosted and delivered by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge in collaboration with AccessArt, for Cambridgeshire teachers participating in Inspire 2020 Project.

The Making of: “Being Creative Builds Your Sense of Self”: A Simple Building Block Animation

Be inspired to make a simple stop motion animation using building bricks!

Simple Animation: Making a Flick Book

Flick books are a great way to make simple animations.

Animation Software

Simple advice to help you chose and use accessible animation software and hardware. No experience needed!

The Making of: “Everyone Else is Better Than Me!”

Simple animation technique using a vegetable, but a great example of how a clear message and thoughtful animation can communicate emotion.

Making A Creative Response –

Physical to Aural

As part of the teenage #BeACreativeProducer Project, we have been exploring how we can trust and use “instinct” in relation to finding starting points to generate ideas and enable creativity. In this post, AccessArt Young Artist Alex Tunstall shares what happened when he received a “box” of physical stimuli to inspire an aural response.

Animating Hands!

Using image frames from video to create quirky animations of hands moving!