

# Opening Out: Shells and Sketchbooks

By [Tobi Meuwissen](#)

*In this activity, learners experiment with a range of drawing tools and materials to create both observational and experimental mixed-media drawings.*

*In the session, they begin by making a concertina sketchbook using tracing paper, before experimenting with ink and a range of drawing materials, moving onto close observational drawing of shells, to fill their concertinas with drawings in inventive and creative ways.*

*The three drawing exercises, along with the warm-up activity, are carefully scaffolded to help children develop their skills step-by-step. Each activity builds on prior learning, reinforcing understanding of both the subject matter and the materials, while encouraging children to make connections and informed choices about their next steps.*

*This activity was facilitated with Year 4 learners at [Beaver Road Junior School](#) over a 1.5-hour session, but it can easily be extended or adapted, with opportunities to use the exercises as warm-ups across different sessions. It also comes with plenty of scope to adapt the exercises to the*

***needs or aims of your learners.***

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*AccessArt is a UK Charity and we believe everyone has the right to be creative. AccessArt provides inspiration to help us all reach our creative potential.*

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# Adapting AccessArt: Woolly Scarves and Long Sketchbooks

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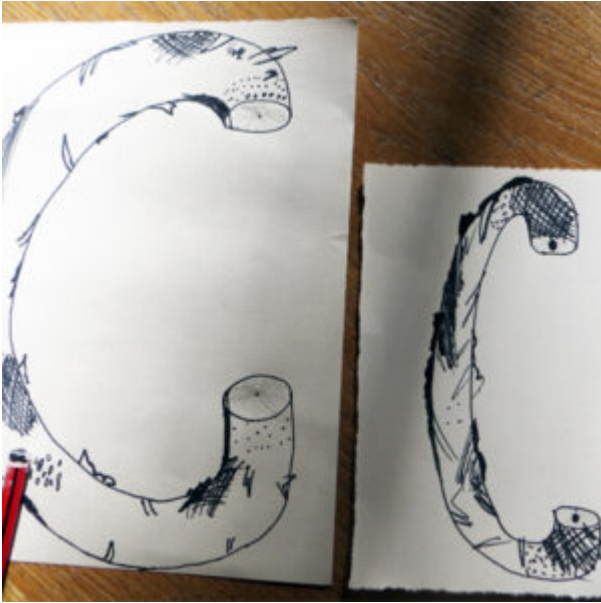
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## AccessArt Birds

At AccessArt, creativity is at the heart of everything we do. So, when it came to refreshing our team page, we wanted to reflect the imaginative, playful spirit that connects us all.

The AccessArt bird has been part of our logo since 1999. It was inspired by a wire bird created by a child during one of our early workshops. Therefore, instead of using traditional photographs, we decided to introduce ourselves through images of birds. Each bird was carefully chosen by a team member to represent a personal connection, a memory, or a specific personality trait.

Beautifully illustrated by [Tobi Meuwissen](#), this joyful and diverse flock reflects not only who we are as individuals but also the collaborative spirit that defines AccessArt.

Once we'd each chosen our bird, it was over to Tobi to turn our ideas into beautiful, characterful illustrations. Using a blend of traditional drawing instincts and digital tools, Tobi captured the spirit of each bird and each team member. Below, she explains how the process unfolded.



As a trained illustrator, I love it when projects where I can use my skillset come up, and this was no different – spending hours drawing away on my iPad brought me lots of joy. Usually, I would begin all of my illustrations on paper in [my sketchbook](#), but I felt that with so many birds to

do, Procreate would be my friend.

[Procreate](#) is a creative app that acts as a digital sketchbook; with many different pens, colours and textures to choose from, it makes the drawing and editing process quick and polished (although it doesn't compare to the joy and discovery of working with real materials).

We began by inviting each team member to choose which bird they would like to represent them, and then I started one-by-one with the drawings.

Starting a project can feel a bit like trial and error; going in without a plan and seeing what happens can be enabling to get over the fear of the blank page. I didn't follow the same formula for every bird; some started with bold and loose outlines, and others were tighter and more controlled.



The ease of Procreate is that it works with

different layers, so you can see below how I built up the different marks and colours to create texture and tone.



Altogether, we have 15 different birds representing all team members, founders and trustees, ranging from the quirky, such as the Silver Polish Rooster, to the bright and brilliant Puffin and the familiar-feeling birds that frequent our gardens daily, such as the Sparrow and Blackbird.

As well as sharing the type of bird we wanted to be represented by, we thought it would be nice to share the reasons why that particular bird resonated with us...

**AccessArt Co-Founders**



*“I love watching Sparrows – always on the move and happily chirping together in hedgerows. As CEO of AccessArt, I thought hard about how I wanted the bird I chose to represent the qualities I think I can help engender in the team. I do see us as a flock – and I like that Sparrows symbolise joy, happiness, resilience, adaptability, freedom, and protection – all words I think can be applied to AccessArt as an organisation.” – [Paula](#) (Current CEO and Creative Director)*

*“We’ve put Swift boxes up this year and enjoyed watching them all summer. That’s my favourite bird at the moment.” – [Sheila](#) (Retired 2020)*

**AccessArt Team**



*"I've always loved living near the sea, and the Oyster Catcher has been a constant sentry to my life as a consequence, especially when in the wilder, more northern places. It's insistent, shrill call is oddly comforting, and its stylish orange beak makes me smile." – [Alison](#)*

*"When I'm out walking and hear the Thrush, perched high in the sycamore trees, its song always lifts my heart and brings a small moment of joy." – [Andrea](#)*

*"I love the way Indian Runner Ducks move and interact with each other with lots of energy and curiosity, their oddities make me smile." – [Tobi](#)*

*"My bird choice is a Robin, as my daughter and nieces have always said it's their Grandad's spirit coming back to visit them! I love the constancy of Robins, with their singing and*

*presence felt even in the coldest and darkest times of the year.” – [Rachel](#)*

*“I chose to be represented by a Tawny Owl as I’m always looking all around.” – [Joe](#)*

*“I have unruly grey-streaked brown curly hair, so my son chose the Silver Polish Rooster for me, as it was ‘hairy-headed” – [Mo](#)*

*“I’ve always loved the Blackbird’s song – it’s a reminder to stay grounded, observant and find joy in small, everyday things.” – [Lou](#)*

*“Flamingos are tall (like me), pink (my favourite colour) and spend a lot of time standing on one leg (I do a lot of yoga!)” – [Louise](#)*

## Trustees



*“I chose the colourful Greenfinch because it always makes me think of the joy it brings my parents to see the ‘charm’ of finches that would*

*enjoy the feast they left for them in their garden.” – Kate*

*“Blackcap – Small, not a snazzy dresser, often seen in woodland, and never stops chirping at the top of its voice. A creature after my own heart...”  
– Chris*

*“Their loyalty, unique beaks, and expressive faces make them both adorable and fascinating to watch. I love Puffins.” – Susan*

*“Watching the beautiful Blue Tits zoom and dive in the hedgerows uplifts me and gives me a feeling that all is well in the world.” – Anne*

[<< Find Out More About The AccessArt Team](#)

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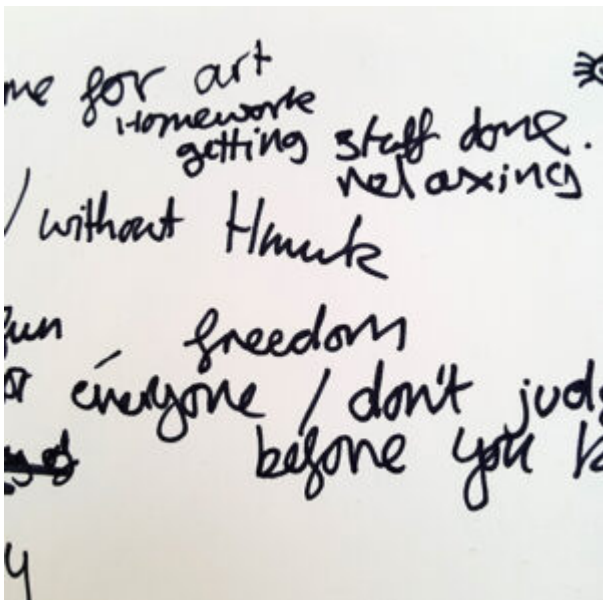


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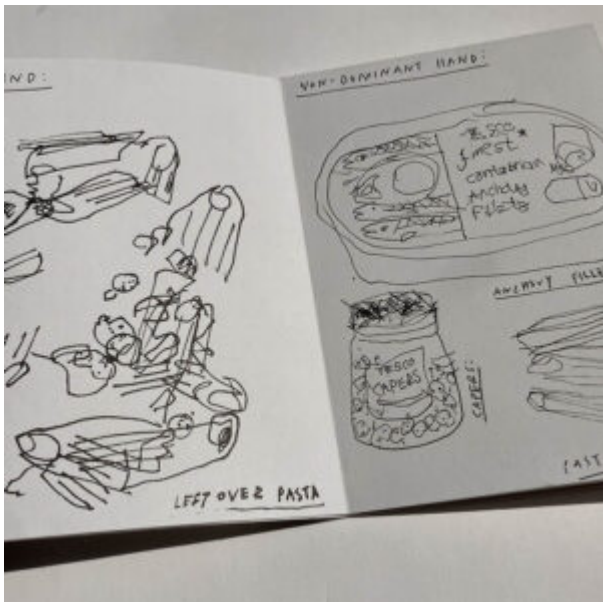
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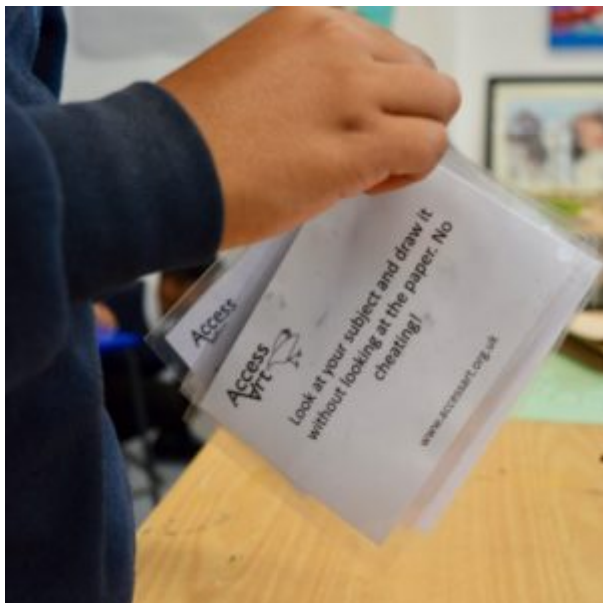


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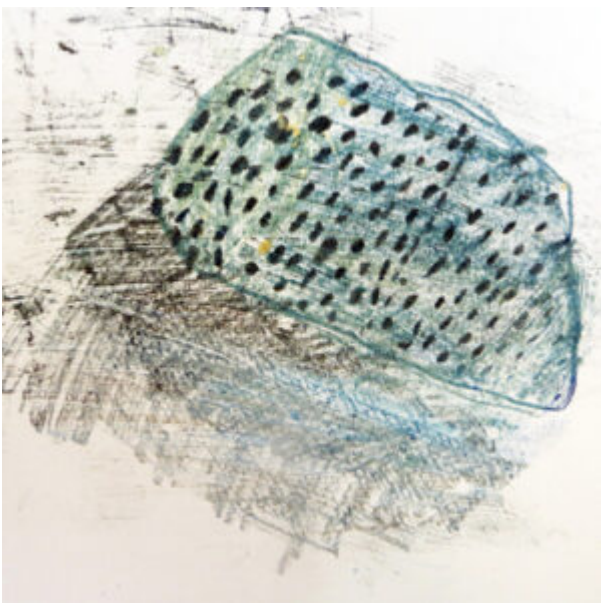
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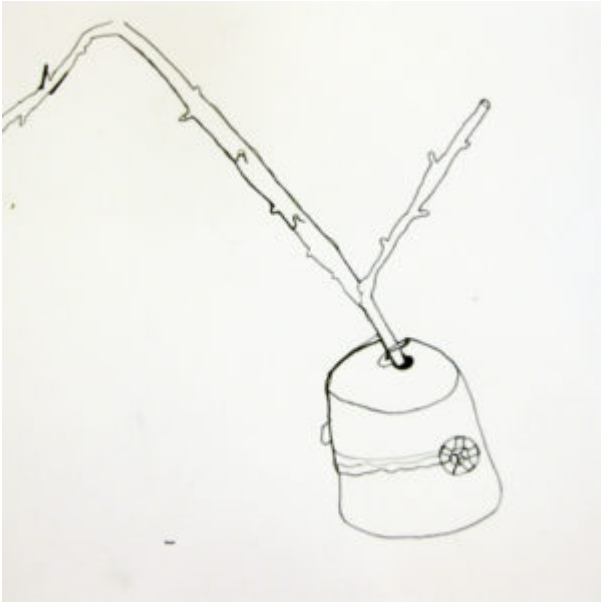
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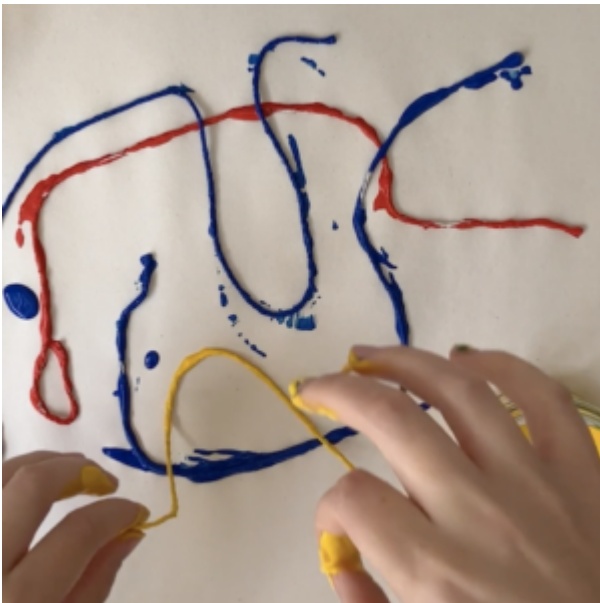
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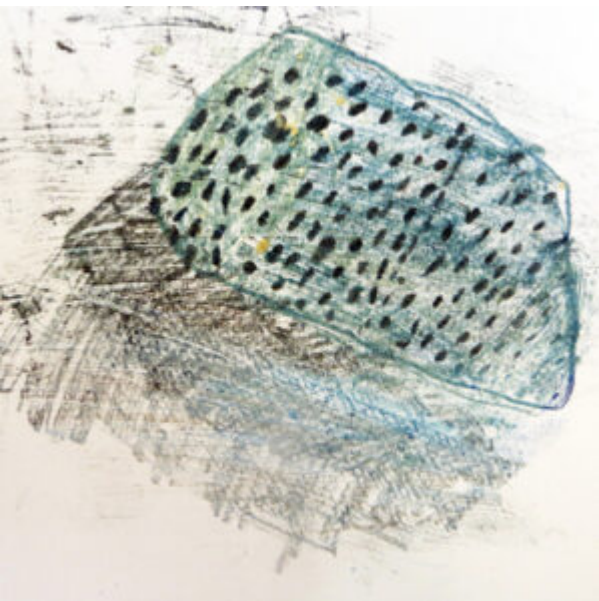


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