

# Questioning the Canvas

By Paula Briggs

This resource shares the aims and outcomes of 4 one-hour long sessions with students aged 11, 12 and 13 from the AccessArt Art Lab which took place at Wysing Arts Centre.



Following on from a short warm-up exercise which introduced the children to the question: "[What is a Canvas](#)", I wanted to provide the students with the opportunity to create 2-d or 3-d artwork inspired by the creation of a canvas. Rather than take an off the peg, ready made canvas, or a sheet or paper upon which to paint, I thought it would be interesting if we built up the canvases using other materials, so that the nature and character *of* the canvas could inspire what was then created *on* the canvas.

The sessions were particularly successful in enabling students to take part in a continuous process of reflection and action, as they made decisions, sometimes consciously sometimes not, about their next creative action.

## To Begin

We began our questioning of what a canvas was, or might be, by a gift and an invitation to deconstruct the gift. Each teenager was given an old Observer book, and with the book they were given permission to take it a part, and put it together again in any way they wished...

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## **Animating with Charcoal**

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# Decorative Eggs

A project based on Ukrainian Pysanky eggs using broken beads.

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# Landscape Painting: Plein Air Painting

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# World in a Matchbox

Children love working on a miniature scale where they can create worlds which they can control and oversee. AccessArt and Mencap have devised the “World in a Box” activity to enable children plenty of creative freedom resulting in fantastic autobiographical artwork.

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# Making Finger Puppets

AccessArt and Mencap have got three great ways for you to make finger puppets depending on your time or level of expertise. Starting with a simple print, colour, cut and stick and moving on to a full blown sculptural version, we hope you are inspired to make some puppets and possibly put on a show!

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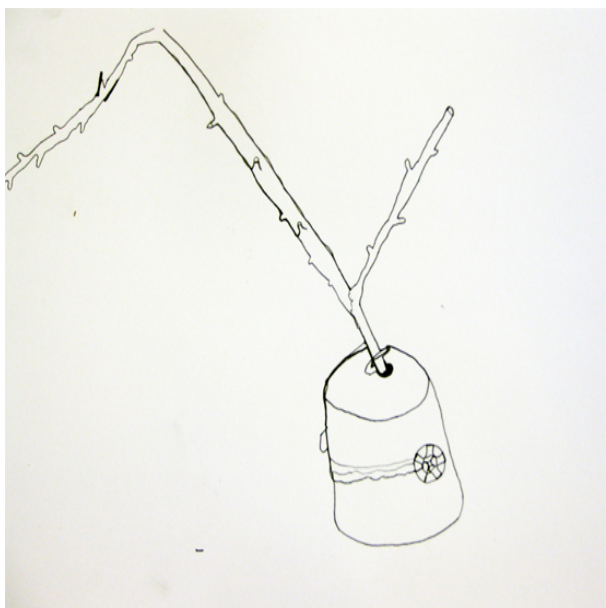
# Drawing with Objects by Melissa Pierce Murray

Teenagers explore ideas of placement with artist Melissa P Murray by arranging or assembling objects to make compositions or maquettes.

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## Visual Arts Planning: Exploring Line

### Continuous Line Drawings (Squiggle Drawings) of Sticks



A great warm-up exercise for all ages – whatever their level of experience, continuous line drawings are a very useful way to get children (and adults) to

tune into their subject matter and quieten ready for drawing.

## Drawing hands



Another warm-up exercise that can be done anywhere! Drawing your own or someone else's hand in continuous line can be a very useful way to explore concave shapes for sculptural/making projects such as nests and bowls.

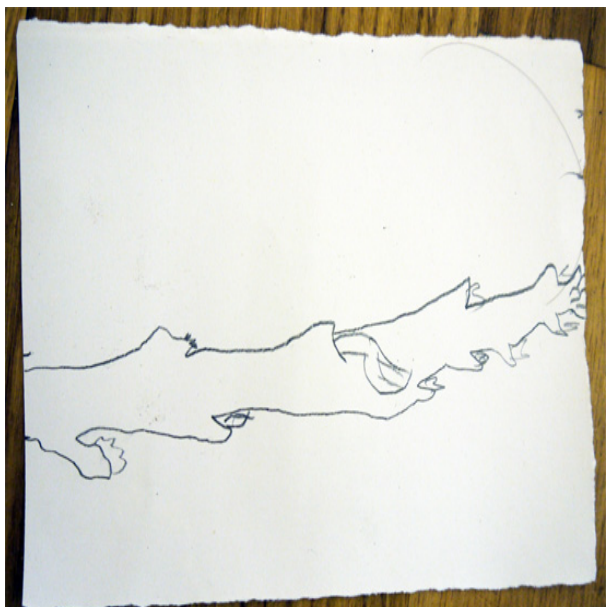
## Warm-Up Drawing Exercise: Drawing Spirals



A great warm-up/ice breaker to use at the start of a drawing workshop for both adults and children. As well as getting participants to start making marks on the paper without worry or mental blocks, this simple exercise aims to introduce participants to the idea that

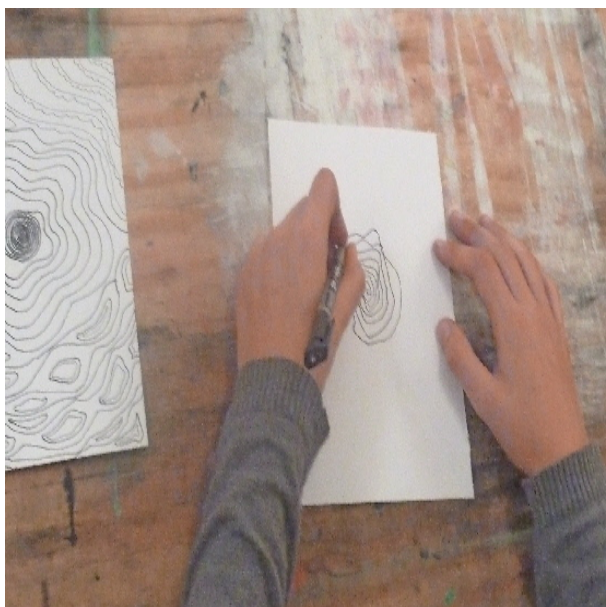
drawing and mark making comes from the finger tip, wrist, elbow, shoulder and whole body.

## **Quick Drawing Exercise: Helping Children to Draw Larger!**



A quick 5minute drawing exercise to encourage children to work large and make their drawing fill the page.

## **Right Hand, Left Hand – Non Dominant Hand Drawing Exercise**



Practising drawing with your 'none dominant' hand, (right hand if you are left handed, left

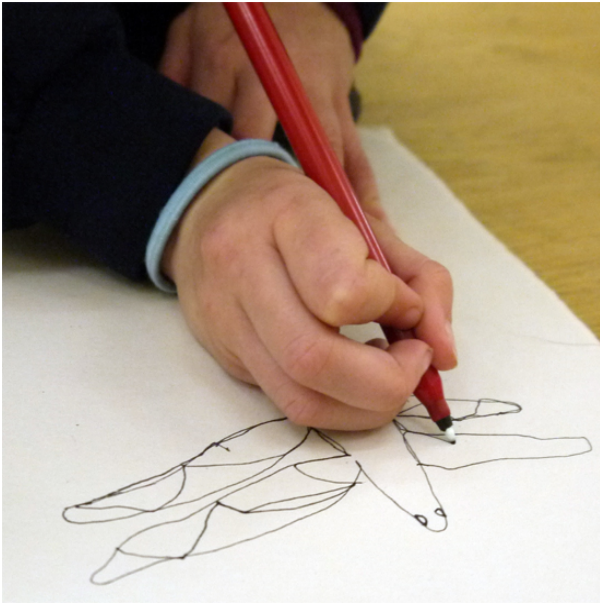
hand if you are right handed), can be a useful strategy for loosening up and for experimenting with the potential of mark making without worrying about the outcome. Another excellent ice-breaker for accessing drawing processes across all mediums.

## **Making a Shy Drawing – Drawing Exercises for Beginners**



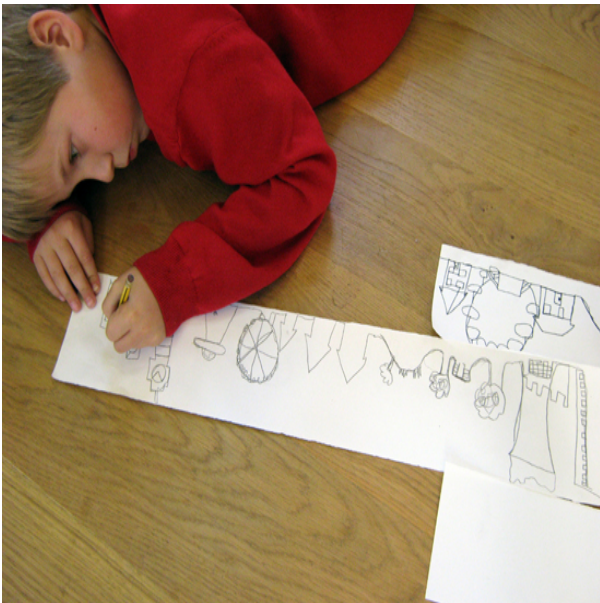
[\\_](#)This resource shares unusual yet accessible drawing exercises for beginners. How can we change the nature of the drawings we make – how would we make a “shy” drawing? These exercises and suggestions provide a focus which enables pupils and teachers to explore different aspects of making a drawing, including sound, action and intention.

## **Drawing Minibeasts – using a continuous line, graphite and oil pastel**



Using images of insects as inspiration, children make 4minute continuous line drawings in pen as a warm-up exercise to encourage close looking and to get their fingers moving.

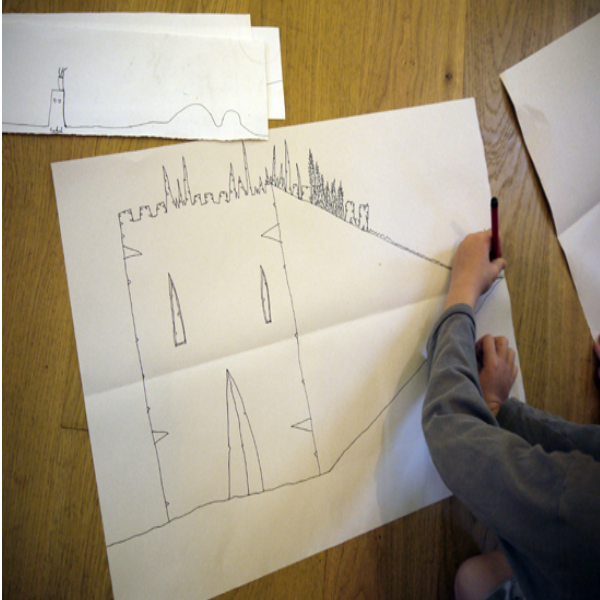
## One Line Street Scene: A Visualisation Warm Up Drawing exercise



Another fun variation on the continuous line warm-up exercise: children made a drawing consisting of a single line, which started at the left hand side of the page, and finished at the right hand side. The subject matter was a street scene, which they visualised by listening to details of the buildings/objects that they would meet. The results were beautiful and the children enjoyed

their journey!

## Simple Perspective Art Lesson for Young Children



Following on from the above exercise, this resource introduces children (aged 6 to 10) to the basics of perspective in relation to drawing architecture. They learn some simple rules of perspective drawing, before being given plenty of opportunity to develop their drawings on their own.

## Making a Blind Contour Drawing



This is a classic drawing

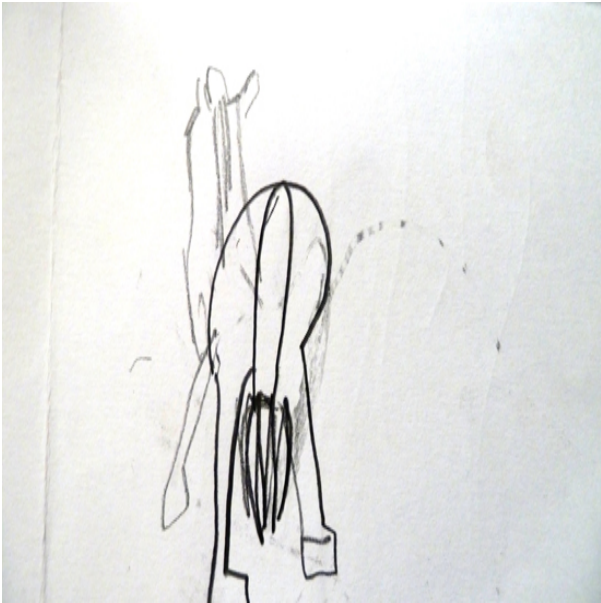
exercise to use with all ages & all abilities and helps you focus upon careful looking, without the worry of what your drawing looks like. In this resource we describe the process and suggest some suitable subject matter and drawing materials.

## **Minimalising: Using Simple Line Drawings to Explore Sculptural Form**



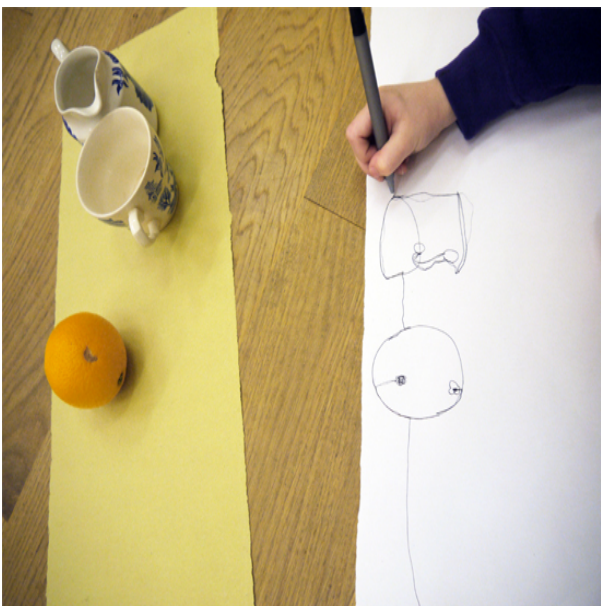
Teenagers explore form using a reductive or minimalising approach to drawing. They were encouraged to create a series of drawings in quick succession, using a limited number of lines to record their objects. For each subsequent drawing, they dropped a line, starting with a seven line drawing and working down to a drawing in one line. This exercise was to get students thinking about essential, sculptural elements in their constructions and drawings.

## **Exercise to Introduce Foreshortening and Volume in Line Drawings**



  This workshop introduces children aged 10 to 13 to foreshortening but can be adapted for groups or individuals and is appropriate for all age groups. The activity enables students to find a way to facilitate the development of volume in their line drawings. They work 'small and quick' to encourage 'doing without thinking' (and worrying!).

## **Tackling Still Life for Children Part 1 – Continuous Line Drawing**



  In the first of a three part workshop on painting a still life, children gain familiarity with the objects by making continuous line drawings. As well as tuning into the subject matter, the drawing exercises also

encourage the children to consider the shape and dimensions of the canvases right from the start.

## **Drawing Skulls in Black Pen**



This workshop on drawing skulls was about looking and the re-examination of marks and lines. Students used black pen to create continuous line drawings on A1 paper.

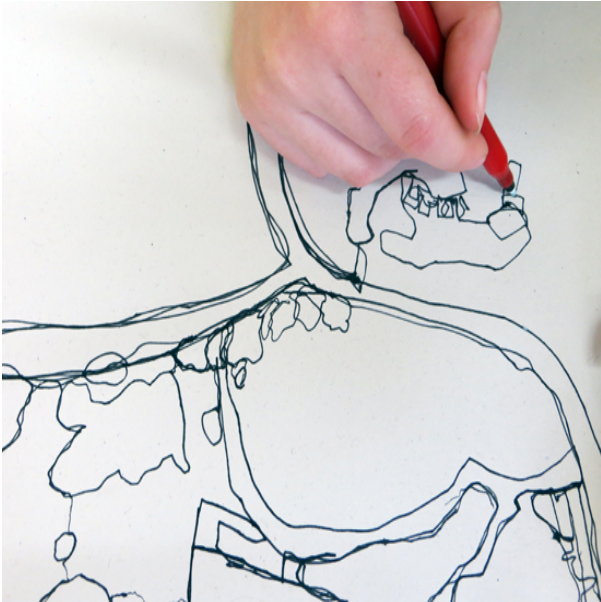
## **Still Life Drawing in a Cubist Style Using Carbon Paper**



A fun workshop and a great way to study still life and explore Cubist ideas of 'temporal

frames' and drawing 'time and space'. Different views of the same glass objects are captured through drawings made with carbon paper, to produce a composite drawing of a still life.

## Inspired by Google Earth: Drawing



A session suitable for all ages, continuous line drawings are used to gather information taking inspiration was taken from Google earth images. A variety of media were then explored to extend and develop the drawings,

## Drawing and Making Flowers



A beautifully structured resource which shares how drawing can be used to enable children to familiarise themselves with flower anatomy.

Children are given the opportunity to develop their observations and ideas in three dimensions by making flowers with paper and wire.

## **Quentin Blake's Drawings as Inspiration!**



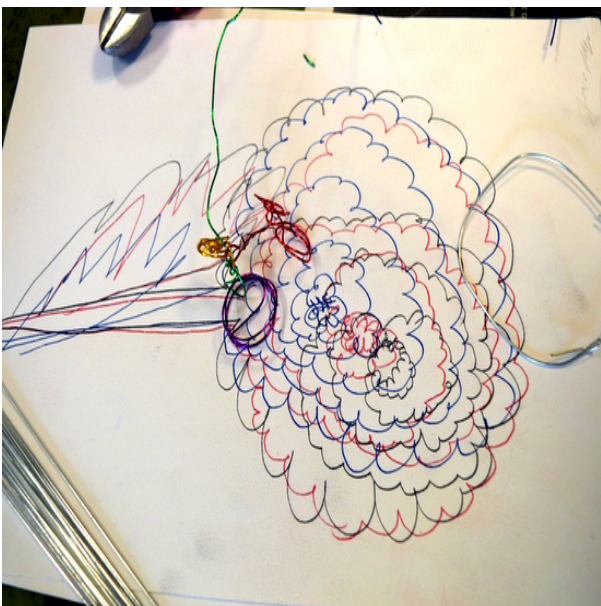
\_Taking Quentin Blake's drawings as a starting point for simple exercises, children make drawings from life using line and explore how they might use exaggeration as a tool to help them convey the intention of their drawing. During the session, the children are encouraged to take risks and try new ways of working.

## **Inspired by Henri Matisse – Repetitive Life Drawing Exercise**



—This workshop encourages students to challenge pre-conceived ideas of what a drawing should be or what finished drawings should look like. By making drawings of each other they can experiment with line and expression, inspired by the working practice of Henri Matisse, who often drew an object or life pose many times in succession.

## **Red to Green: Patterns in Nature, Line and Wire**



—One of a series of workshops by Accessart at Red2Green using drawing to explore designs and patterns in nature, followed by a making session using wire to extend ideas into 3D.

## Drawing Insects in Wire and Tracing Shadows in Black Pen



Students use modelling wire to 'draw' an insect from their first drawings in black pen. The purpose of this exercise was to help them see and draw form and to think about the quality of line achievable in black pen. It was also an exercise in simple abstraction or simplification of subject matter.

## Drawing with Wire



Teenagers in AccessArt's Experimental Drawing Class explore drawing their bodies with wire. They were asked to think about how they feel physically

from within and try and find a way of expressing that with wire. The exercise was about finding a way to 'represent' physical sensations using form.

## **Drawing with Wire like Calder, and Backwards Forwards Sketching**



An exciting resource based on the work of Alexander Calder. Children make drawings of their own toys, which are then interpreted in fine wire – an introduction to the tricky business of drawing in space!

## **Standing Up! – Making Vertical Sculptures and Working from the Base**



Teenagers are challenged to create sculpture that was able to stand up and to explore how tall the sculpture could be before it fell down. They experimented with elegant solutions to make their wire forms stand, considering also the relationship between its base and the surface it was standing on.

This was also an opportunity to explore construction materials and finding the right materials for the job.

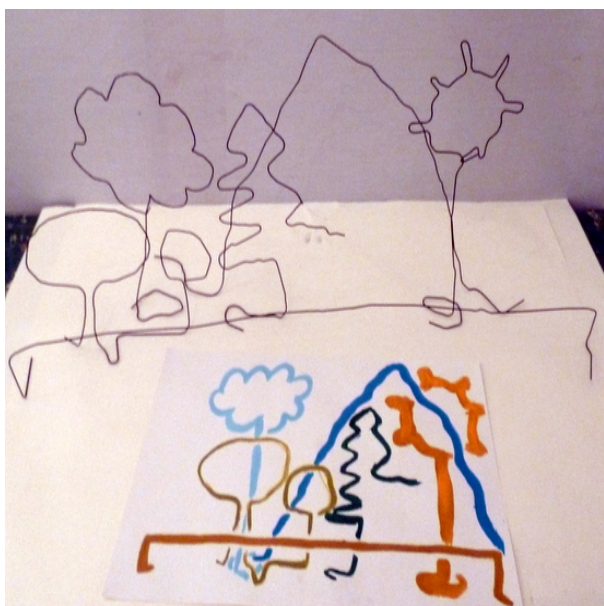
## Reaching the Limit: Making Tall Sculptures and Stretching Materials



Following on from working with the vertical in Standing Up! – Introducing the Vertical and Working from the Base, students were pushed to further develop

their understanding of sculptural relationships such as balance, the object's relationship with the ground and how to build elegant, vertical structures. They were set the challenge of building a sculpture or structure, which was as tall or taller than themselves, working with basic (and quite flimsy) construction materials, in an hour.

## **Landscape Sculptures in Wire and Mixed Media: Working Through Ideas**



Teenagers work from the theme of landscape exploring rhythm and movement in wire, drawing from their sculptures and making simultaneously. They were introduced to modelling wire and modroc as construction materials – paper, drawing and collaging materials were also readily available.

## **Withy Sculptures**



Traditionally used for basket weaving and garden sculpture, withies, or willow sticks, are a versatile construction material, ideal for exploring sculptural form and 'drawing in space' with line.

## **Drawing with Wire: The Polymeric Approach by Julie de Bastion**



Artist Julie de Bastion shares a wonderful workshop that enabled participants to create a "drawing within a drawer" making delightful "Story Boxes" involving 3D drawing with flexible black wire, and drawing with mono-printing.

## Drawing Space/Drawing in Space



In Western art, we use the term 'negative space' to talk about the areas between objects on the page/canvas but this tends to convey quite a static idea of space. There is a Japanese word, 'ma' (間), that suggests a more evocative and dynamic spatial experience and it was this concept that inspired this workshop, in which teenagers made three dimensional line drawings to explore the space around them.

**Teachers Explore 'Line and Shape' at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge with AccessArt**



In the spring and summer of 2016, Paula Briggs and Sheila Ceccarelli from AccessArt and Kate Noble from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge to create and deliver a series of InSET sessions (in-service-training) for primary school teachers.

The aim was to fuse top Museum Education practice with practical, hands on learning in Fine Art disciplines including: drawing, printmaking, sketchbooks, collage and sculpture.

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## **Making Elastic Band Sketchbooks with Pupils at Philip Southcote School**

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**Teenagers Paint a Canvas with  
Scolaquip**

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**Mayan Tabletop Eraser  
Printing Project**

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**Landscape Painting: Colour in  
the Landscape**

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**Using Mobile Phones to Make  
Animated Films**

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**Make a Stitched Drawing of a**

# House in an Hour

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## Mural and Workshop Project at Chesterton Community College in Collaboration with Jon Bates from Blight Society

This project started out as getting Blight Society back to Chesterton Community College, Cambridge to do a mural

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## Making Paper Masks for Carnival and Mardi Gras

Making a Carnival Mask with the help of an AccessArt Template.

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## Teenagers Experiment with Glow in the Dark Paint and

# Rice with Artist Melissa Pierce Murray

teenagers at AccessArt's Experimental Drawing Class, I brought in UV reactive paint and markers, and surprised students by turning off the lights and shining a UV torch on the palates.

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## AccessArt helps teachers at Belvue School to get ready for a Drawing Week

[Back to InSET & CPD](#)

### Teachers Battle it Out in Conversation with Marks on Paper



Teachers embarked on an exercise whereby they made marks on paper to have a conversation with a partner. This was a playful and fun exercise and teachers very much enjoyed both the process and outcomes.

## **Teachers Explore Pattern, Shape & Texture with Charcoal, Graphite, Masking Tape and Pastels**



This was the second session in the series and an introduction to pattern, shape and texture with charcoal and graphite, and an opportunity for teachers to break down any preconceived ideas about what drawing is and who drawing processes is for.

## **Play and Placement: Teachers Explore Approaches to Drawing**



This was the third and final session in the series, and an opportunity to play with creative mark-making and explore context and placement as an introduction to larger scale drawing and concepts around installation art.

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