Introduction to Charcoal

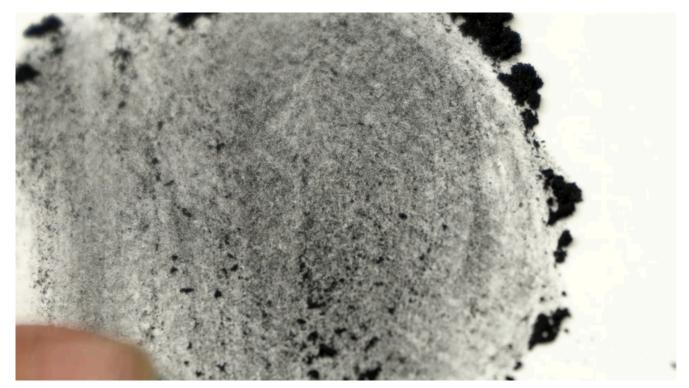
By Lancelot Richardson

In this video artist and tutor Lancelot Richardson takes us through three types of charcoal: Willow, compressed and pencil. Watch this video to find out how different types of charcoal have different uses and can achieve a range of exciting and dynamic marks.

Charcoal is a black media made of carbon from burning wood and it comes in a few different forms. Common forms include willow charcoal, compressed charcoal, and charcoal pencils. (Left to right)



Charcoal does come in other forms, such as powder or inks.



Charcoal is made by burning wood in a way that preserves its structure. This is done using a special kiln. Charcoal is one of the oldest drawing mediums and simple forms of charcoal have been found in cave art at around 30,000 years ago.



Rabah Al Shammary on Unsplash - Cave paintings from Ha'il [northwest of the Arabian Peninsula]

It has been used for drawing and creating sketches ever since, like this little sketch of a cup.



Wolfgang Huber - Eight-Sided Cup (1513) - Cleveland Museum of Art

Charcoal is very versatile. It can make many different marks. It's very malleable. It can be used for sketching or for bigger projects, like producing large drawings or creating planning sketches for our work.



This planning sketch for a painting shows it is easy to change or add and remove elements. It will leave pale marks when it's erased. Charcoal can potentially make really large marks and suits medium and large drawings in particular. It is also very dark, so it creates great contrast.



Elephants in Combat (early 1800s, India (Rajasthan, Kotah)) - New York MET



Louise B. Maloney - An Italian Hilltown, Anticoli, Italy (1930) - Cleveland Museum of Art

The three most common types of charcoal are willow charcoal, compressed charcoal, and charcoal pencils.

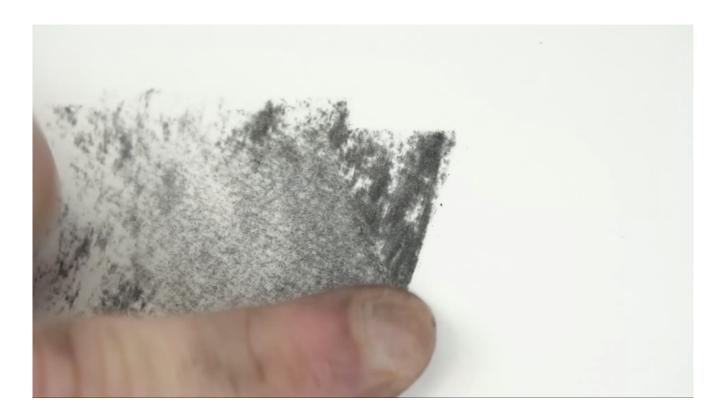
Willow Charcoal



Willow charcoal is made from sticks from the willow tree that are burned incompletely. We can sometimes still see it's like a stick. It is very soft and malleable, so it's really good for a wide range of uses, especially sketching. It's much darker than a pencil, but it's less dark than other forms of charcoal. We can create a lot of different marks with it, such as by using the tip, turning it on its side, and smudging as well. Because it's made from sticks, it comes in lots of different thicknesses.





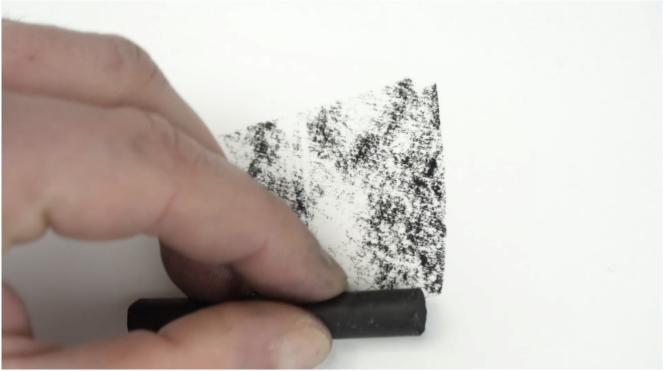


Compressed Charcoal



Compressed charcoal uses charcoal that has been ground up and it's mixed with something to bind it together and then compressed into a stick or block. It is firmer and much darker than willow, with a very similar feel to chalk. It is great for making very dark black tone and produces really bold marks. You can draw different marks with the tip and the sides. It's more permanent than willow charcoal, but it will still smudge a bit.







Charcoal Pencils



Charcoal pencils are similar to compressed charcoal, using ground up charcoal mixed with something to hold it together and it's now bound up into a pencil as well. Charcoal pencils are firmer and quite dark. They're good for making thinner, more precise, or detailed marks, but you can create a lot of different marks by using the side of the pencil too.



Try to experiment by holding the pencil in lots of different ways, such as holding it like a drum stick or holding it sideways. This allows us to make different marks.



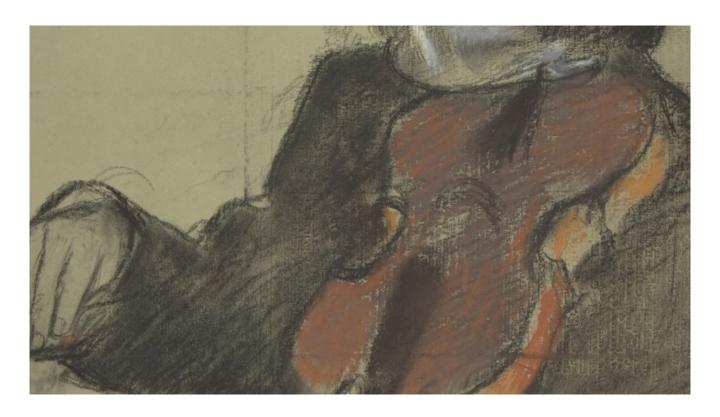
Charcoal readily combines with other drawing or painting media. With other dry media, one option is to layer it on top and it can also draw very well on anything that's dry as well, like ink or watercolour that's dried out. Charcoal can also be rubbed into the paper and layered with lines and other marks on top.



This example by Degas uses pastel on top of charcoal that has been rubbed into the page. Charcoal goes particularly well on coloured papers, especially with a little bit of white chalk or paint.



Edgar Degas - Violinist, Study for "The Dance Lesson" (1878-9) New York MET



If charcoal gets wet using water or ink, it can bleed and is good for expressive effects.



Have fun experimenting and enjoy your journey of charcoal!

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.

Which Artists: Tatyana Antoun

What We Like About This Resource....

"The research phase of a creative project can be presented in many different ways, and can even be

an art form in itself. Here, Tatyana demonstrates how her sketchbooks became a medium through which she expressed her thoughts, refined her ideas and explored materials. We believe sketchbooks to be a powerful tool for children to take ownership of their ideas and travel on their own creative journey, without necessarily knowing the destination. Take a look at our sketchbook journey for more sketchbook inspiration" — Rachel, AccessArt.

You Might Also Like....



Sketchbooks and Thinking Skills



<u>Sketchbooks for Designers — an</u> <u>Introduction for Children</u>



<u>Using Sketchbooks to Take Ownership of</u> <u>Ideas</u>

Home Made Inks

Printmaking By Scarlett Rebecca

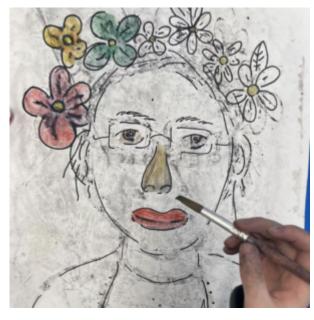
Kitchen Lithography

See This Resource Used In Schools...



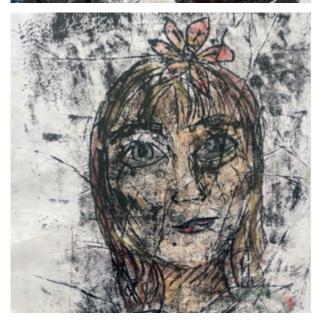














How Do We Look At Contemporary Sculpture: Meg Klosterman

Creating Repeat Patterns With Rachel Parker

What We Like About This

Resource...

"This is a great activity for really tuning into colour and shape. The process is ultimately quite a refined one (ie making a pattern balanced and repeated 'correctly') — but there's plenty of scope for exploring pattern in a more experiential way prior to the refinement page. Try one of the recommended resources below to introduce pattern and begin with some open ended activities to build skill and confidence." — Andrea, AccessArt

You Might Also Like...

Pathway: Exploring pattern



This is featured in the 'Exploring Pattern' pathway

Talking points: Andy Gilmore



talking points: Louise Despont



Inspired by Rachel Parker



Teachers Explore Pattern, Shape and Texture



Block Printing Repeat Patterns



AccessArt's Prompt Cards for Making

You Might Also Like...

Pathway: Music and art



This is featured in the 'Music and Art' pathway

Pathway: Playful Making



This resource is features in the 'Playful Making' pathway

Manipulating Paper



Cardboard Sculptures



The Chair and Me



Still Life Compositions: Inspired by Cezanne

What We Like About This Resource....

"This activity walks through a number of different processes and taps into multiple skills. This provides a rich exploratory project for children to fully immerse themselves in. Cezanne was the focus artist for this project, but other contemporary still life painters could be used as starter inspiration. We actually advocate showing the work of more than one artist as this builds

knowledge of how approaches to painting, drawing etc differ. This also helps children move towards a personal response rather than creating a 'copy' of one particular artist's work" — Rachel, AccessArt

You Might Also Like....

Pathway: Exploring Still Life



This is featured in the 'Explore Still Life' pathway

Talking Points: Paul Cezanne



talking points: Contemporary still life



talking points: Flemish and Dutch Still Life Painters



Remembrance Day Peg Soldiers

What We Like About This Resource....

"It's great to see a different approach to thinking about remembrance day. These peg soldiers are a refreshing alternative to artwork inspired by poppies. The processes involved encourage children to focus on fine motor skills: wrapping embroidery thread around the peg and creating small detailed clothes and helmets. These dolls look particularly effective when standing as a collection and would make a poignant alternative to a standard display board" — Rachel, AccessArt

See This Resource Used In Schools...





You Might Also Like....



An Exploration of Paul Nash



For Remembrance Day



World War l Mail Art

Making A Banner At Woking College

What We Like About This Resource....

Working collaboratively towards a shared aim provides an alternative experience to working on individual projects. Creating together encourages listening, peer feedback and creative problem solving — all of which are hugely valuable in all

areas of education" - Rachel, AccessArt

You May Also Like....



Animal Habitat Mural



Collaborative Public Mural



Mural and Workshop Project

Outdoor Art In Urban Gardens

Which Artists: The Life & Works of Madge Gill

What We Like About This Resource....

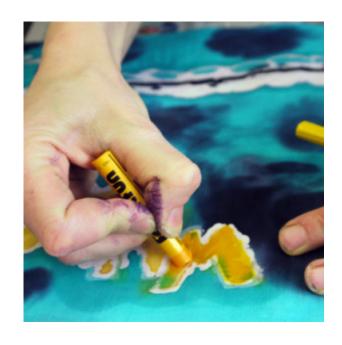
"The life of Madge Gill that Sophie Dutton

recounts here gives us real insight into the challenges that Madge Gill experienced, and how these challenges would have been common among women at the time. When we study the work of Artists, it adds a rich context to our experience of their work to consider their personal history, and helps us ask questions like 'why do you think the Artist painted in this way or was inspired by this subject matter?' If you introduce your class to Madge Gill, begin with looking back over her younger life to try and better understand her motivations as an Artist" — Rachel, AccessArt

You May Also Like....



I am AccessArt: Ann Rippin



Making Batik Textiles in the Classroom



How I Use Drawing and Sketchbooks

Transformation of Materials

Inspired by El Anatsui

See This Resource Used in a Pathway...



Transforming Materials into Sculpture

This pathway shares how teachers might take inspiration from El Anatsui and encourage pupils to think how they might disassemble objects around them to transform them into sculptural pieces.

Read More.

The Transformation Project

You May Also Like...



Transforming Cardboard with Andrea Butler

Artist Andrea Butler shows how to explore simple design and construction using cardboard and jewellery. Read More

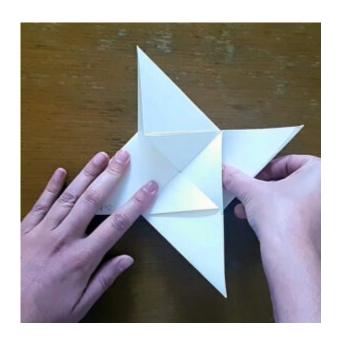
Turkish Map Fold

What We Like About This Resource....

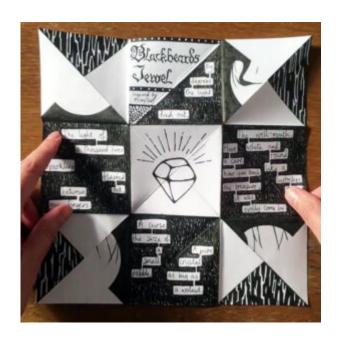
"This activity is a great example of how we can use paper as the focus of creativity. Often we use paper purely for drawing or painting on, but here, it is central to the activity itself. While these particular folded sculptures have their roots in Turkish culture, you could still deliver the activity if looking at things like Origami too, thus linking it across different cultures" — Rachel, AccessArt

You Might Also Like....

Puzzle Purses Part 1



Puzzle Purses Part 2



Paperback Figures



Collage Streets

What We Like About This Resource....

"This project provides a real opportunity for children to engage with a range of different processes to produce truly individual final results. Jan Miller is an experienced teacher and connects her projects well with learning outcomes. In this case, children are encouraged to have a loose approach and to make their own creative decisions — which is such a valuable part of any child (or adults!) creative education". — Rachel, AccessArt

You Might Also Like....

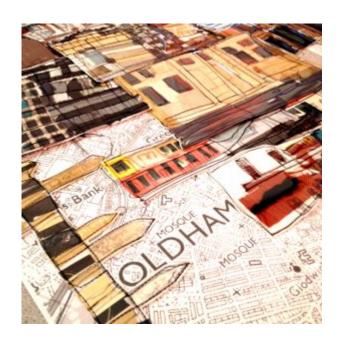
Painted Houses



One Line Street



Responding to Place



World War I Mail Art

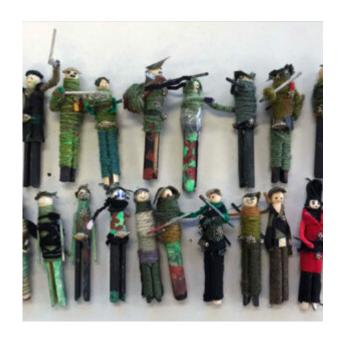
What We Like About This Resource....

"This project links poignant subject matter with meaningful art processes and local history. What we learn about the re purposing of materials, (in this case spent ammunition) re affirms how we can use what is around us as a starting point to making and creating. You could extend or adapt this project by looking at broken pottery, re purposing that into new sculptures that link with Roman or other local historical cultures" — Rachel, AccessArt

You May Also Like....



<u>Henry Moore's Shelter Drawings</u>



Remembrance Day Soldiers



For Remembrance Day

Which Artists: Claire Harrup

What We Like About This Resource....

"We really enjoyed reading about the process of creating art work according to a design brief and how the experience of this differs to when an artist begins with their own idea or concept. That's not to say an artist can't approach a brief with their own individual style and ideas, but what this post shows us is that there can be a balance between the two. This would be a great

resource to show older KS pupils who may be beginning to consider their options beyond Primary School". — Rachel, AccessArt

You Might Also Like....

Pathway: 2D Drawing to 3D Making



This is featured in the '2D Drawing to 3D Making' pathway

Talking Points: Packaging Design



What is Typography



Which Artist: Rachel Parker



Repeating Patterns



Block Printing Repeat Patterns



Which Artists: Theresa Easton

What We Like About This Resource....

"It's interesting to hear Theresa describe Printmaking as a social activity, with the shared use of materials and equipment so central to the practice. This could be a positive way of working for lots of children in school, where instead of just working on individual art work, they can collaborate and embrace the creative sharing experience!" — Tobi, AccessArt.

You Might Also Like....



Monoprint Animals



<u>Screen printing Inspired by Matisse</u>



An Exploration of Shepherd Fairey