

# Shells: Observational and Imaginative Drawing

By [Rachel Thompson](#)

In this post, AccessArt team member Rachel demonstrates an activity that introduces both observational and imaginative drawing when looking at seashells and pebbles. The aim of the activity is to engage with these contrasting drawing methods and to compare and observe the results.



This activity was delivered over two sessions during 'lockdown' and forms a 'table top' collection for the Early Years age group. Still, the process and methods used are very much transferable to older age groups.

You will need:

- A selection of sea shells and pebbles
- Drawing paper, preferably A3 or larger
- A range of drawing and mark-making materials (soft pencils, chalks, pastels, wax crayons - whatever you have lying around and the more choice the better!)

### Session One: Observing Shells

Place your collection of shells and pebbles in front of you and take a few moments to observe their shapes, textures and colours. What differences can you see? How many colours can you count on each one? How do the upper and underside compare?





Move on by asking your child to select three or four shells that they find particularly interesting. If they find this hard, or would rather choose a larger number, then that's fine too - keep it open.



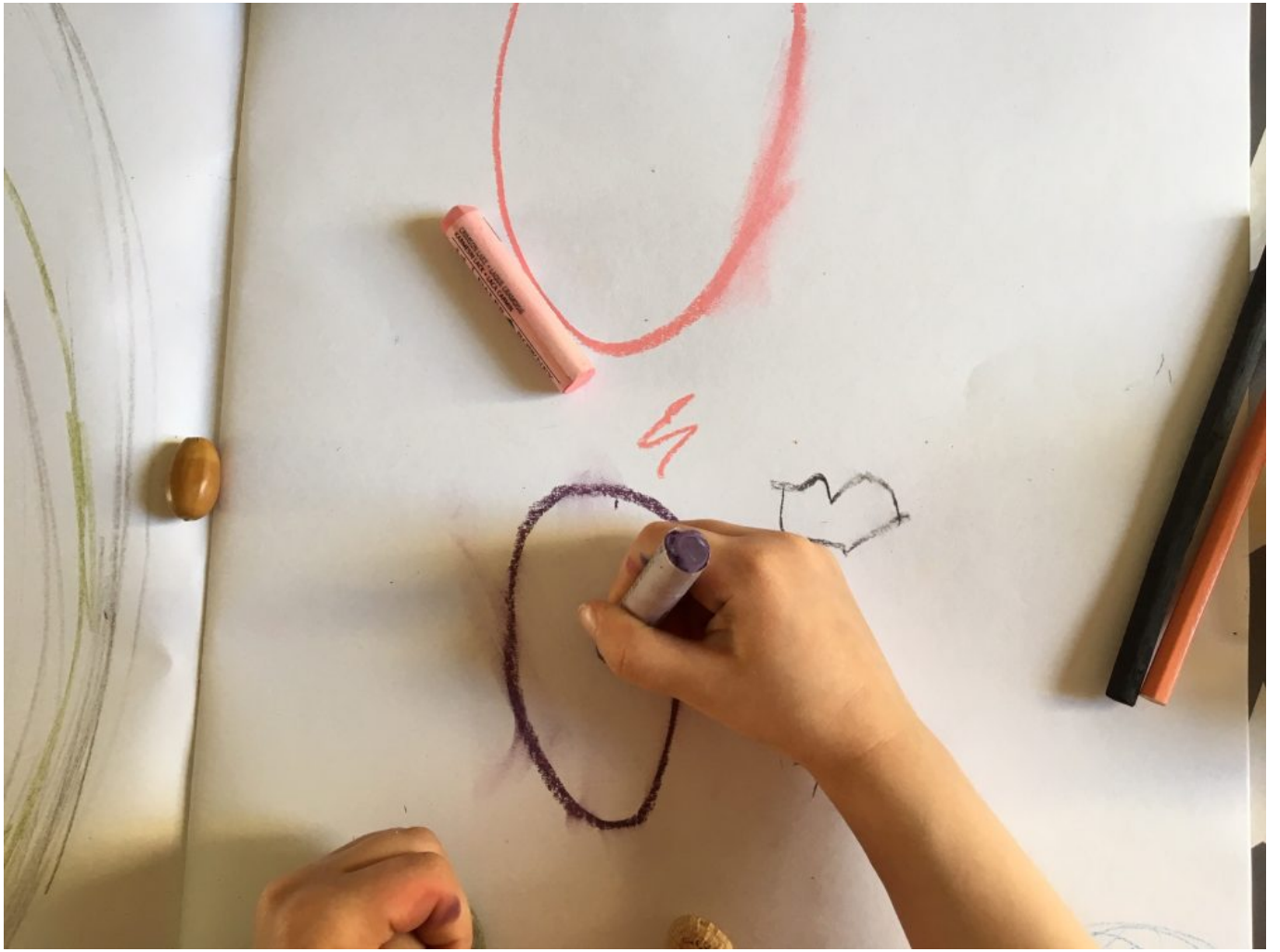
A rogue acorn made its way into our bowl of shells and turned out to be a favourite.

**Arrange the shells in front of you on your paper or sketchbook and begin some early observational drawing- or "draw what you see". Encourage the use of different materials to see what effects can be created.**





**See what your child's instinct is in terms of how they begin their drawing. If they first draw small, and replicate the real size of the shell, encourage them to go bigger.**





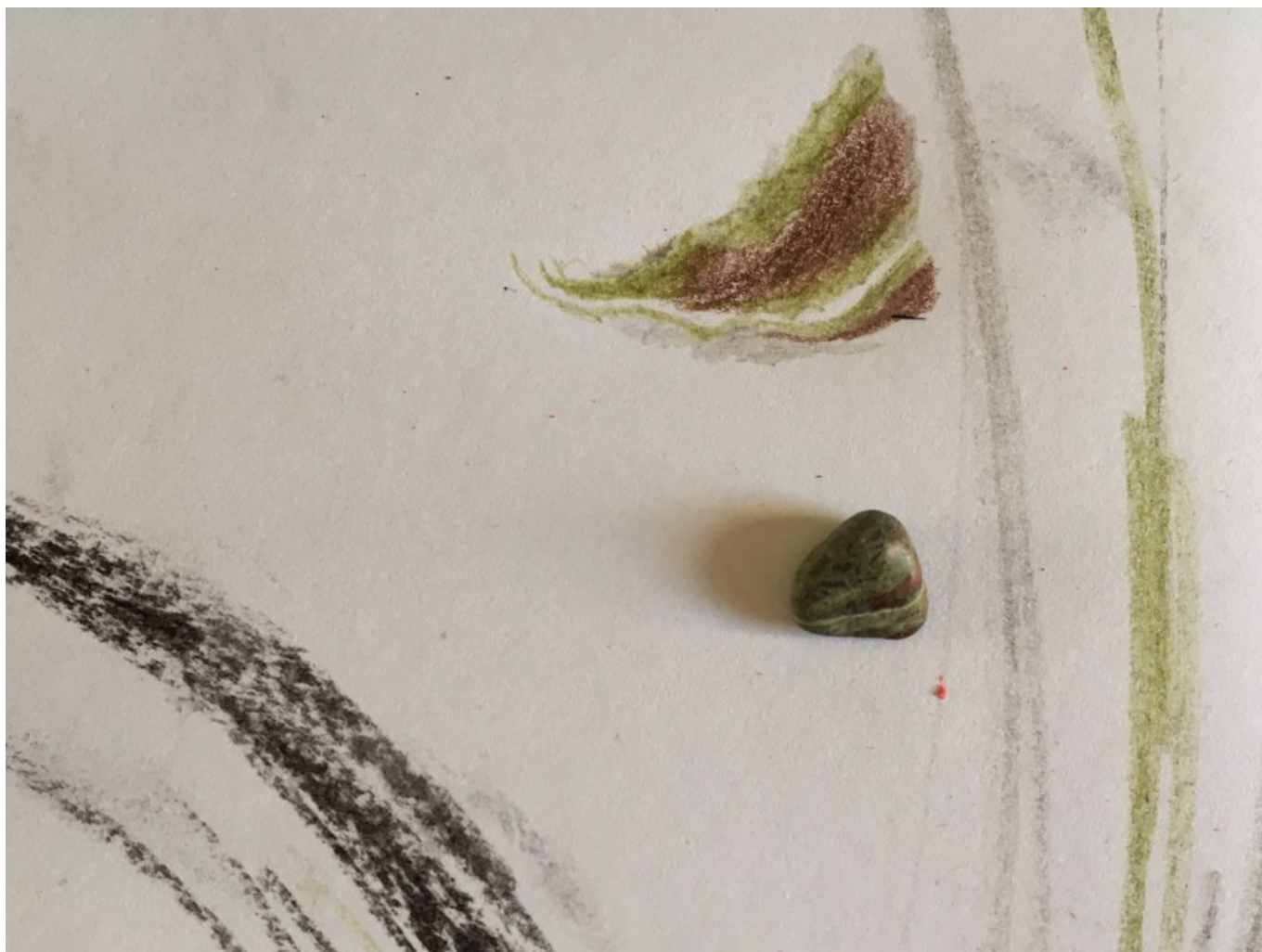


**Working across existing marks and creating overlapping shapes is fine. The objective is certainly to introduce the concept of observation and careful looking, but time and space to explore the page and available materials are equally important!**



**To keep engagement up and to provide some social learning to the activity, have a go yourself. It doesn't matter if drawing isn't something you feel confident with!**





## Session Two: Imaginative Drawing

I deliberately left several days between these drawing sessions as I wanted to ensure the memory of the shells and pebbles had faded into the background a bit!

This time, I used a slightly different combination of materials, introducing some watercolour and poster paints in addition to the drawing materials. We began by discussing the drawing we did previously and how we looked carefully at the shells in front of us - but this time, we were

going to use our imagination to draw them! This isn't an exercise in memory recall - but more, an opportunity to use our imagination to create more abstract marks and patterns.



Some things to ask: What can you remember about the shells we looked at? Why do you think some of them had marks and scratches on the surface? What did these marks look like? What patterns, shapes and colours can you remember?



Spirals seemed to have resonated, and some time was spent recreating these shapes.







The variation between observational and imaginative drawings may vary according to age. Younger children may produce results that are more similar to one another (as in our case), but older children may have more refined observation and hand-eye skills, so they may produce some really contrasting results. Whatever the results, this activity could be repeated every month or so to keep children 'tuned in' to the different approaches. Vary the materials a little each time,

and encourage choice and expression. Above all - enjoy!

You can find more of Rachel's resources [here](#)

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# Activities

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**Get Connected!  
Cardboard Robots with  
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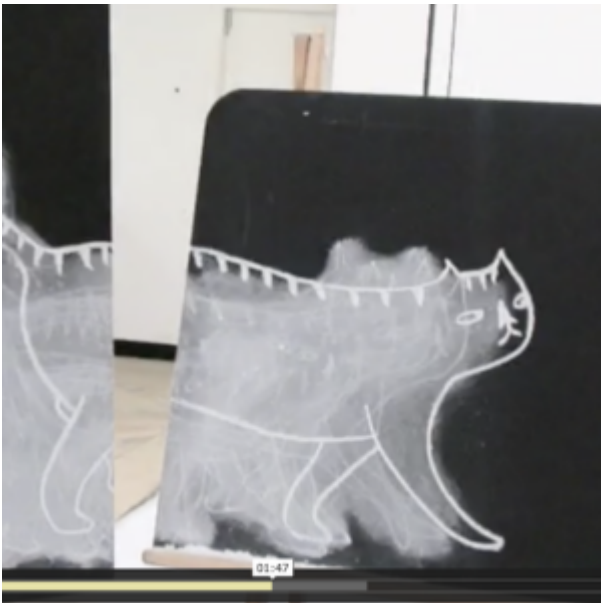
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# Draw your Granny and Grandpa or Any Relative You Love!

The Nonna Maria Drawing Challenge by Luca Damiani

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## Be Inspired by Flowers

# **in a Glass Vase by Jan Davidsz de Heem**

This resource looks at 'Flowers in a Glass Vase' by the Dutch painter, Jan Davidsz de Heem (1606-1684), on permanent display at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and how it might inspire your own creative responses and experimentation with colour.

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# Drawing Large

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## **Inspired! Making at Linton Heights Junior School**

Anna Campbell shares how a whole school engaged with making projects integrated across subjects in response to the Renaissance painting of Cupid and Psyche by Jacopo Del Sellaio at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and how she used the project to progress pupils' making skills throughout the year groups.

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# Sculptural Challenge No 1: Colourful Walls

A sculptural challenge encouraging the exploration of colour.

AGES 9-11

AGES 11-14

Artwork by Krijn de Koning

## Questions for Children

How would it feel to be in the spaces Krijn creates?

How do you think he chooses the colour for each wall? How do you think the shape and size of the wall affects the colour too?

Find more of Krijn's work [here](#).

## Sculptural Challenge!

Use Krijn's work as your inspiration, think about how you might make a series of colourful walls. You won't be building a life-size sculptural installation (not today anyway!) but instead you can either make a model or create a piece of 2d artwork which shares your vision. Remember, because you are not creating the artwork then you can really be imaginative and dream!

Here are some clues, but you may have your own ideas too:

Use your sketchbook to "collect" colours that you like. Find them in magazines by cutting swatches out, find them by mixing paints, find them by mixing other materials. Record them, test them, label them, make notes (what colours did you mix?), name them (the names you give them might help you to describe the

affect they have on you).

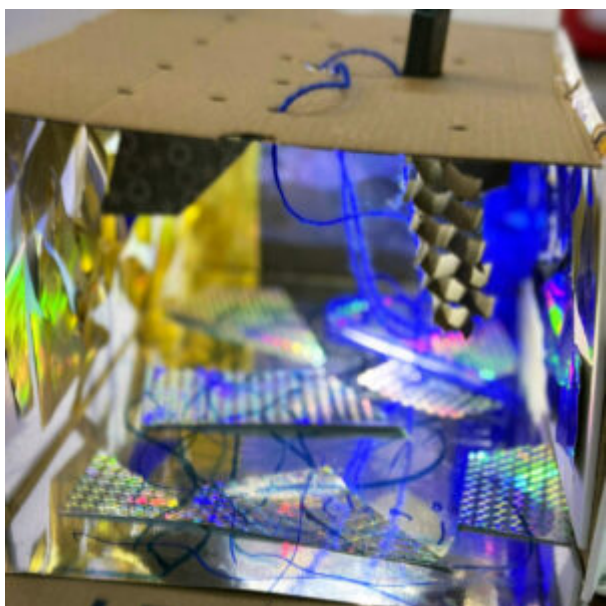
Next think about what the “walls” would be like. What shape? What size? Would they enclose? Would they have holes? Would there be a roof? How do they connect? How would the person get in to the space? How would you want the person to feel? Again, use your sketchbook to plot and plan.

Think too about the location or context you would like your sculptural installation to be in. Would you like it to be in the Antarctic? The jungle? The high street? Again, use your sketchbook.

Think about how you would apply your colours to the walls? Would each wall be one colour? Would you introduce pattern? Images? Again, use your sketchbook.

Finally, either make a model using card, paint, fabric etc to share your vision, or make a 2d artwork.

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[This is featured in the 'Brave colour' pathway](#)

**Talking Points: Yinka Ilori**



**Talking Points: Morag Myerscough**



AGES 11-14

## Questions for Children:

Can you imagine what it would be like to be in a room with the installations in the videos above? How would it make you feel? What do they remind you of?

How do you think the colour affects the mood?

## Sculptural Challenge!

Using the artwork in the videos above as your inspiration, think about how you might design a sculptural installation which involves light, form and colour.

You won't be building a life-size sculptural installation (not today anyway!) but instead you can either make a model or create a piece of 2d artwork which shares your vision. Remember, because you are not creating the artwork

then you can really be imaginative and dream!

Here are some clues, but you may have your own ideas too:

Use your sketchbook to “collect” colours that you like. Find them in magazines by cutting swatches out, find them by mixing paints, find them by mixing other materials. Record them, test them, label them, make notes (what colours did you mix?), name them (the names you give them might help you to describe the affect they have on you).

Think about the kinds of forms (shapes) you would like the coloured light to fall on to. Would you like the coloured light to surround a person, or would you like the person to pass near the objects? How would the person enter the space? Would the space be very small or very large? How would you want the person to feel? Again, use your sketchbook to plot and plan.

Think too about the space you would like the coloured light to be in. Would you like it to be a dark space so that the lights show up against the darkness, or would you prefer a light space, so that it feels floaty and ephemeral?

Think about how you would apply your colours to the walls? Would each wall be one colour? Would you introduce pattern? Images? Again, use your sketchbook.

Finally, either make a model using card, paint, fabric etc to share your vision, or make a 2d artwork. If you make a small space, you might like to be inspired by the [Mini Art World](#) Resource and use coloured filters and torches to replicate the space.

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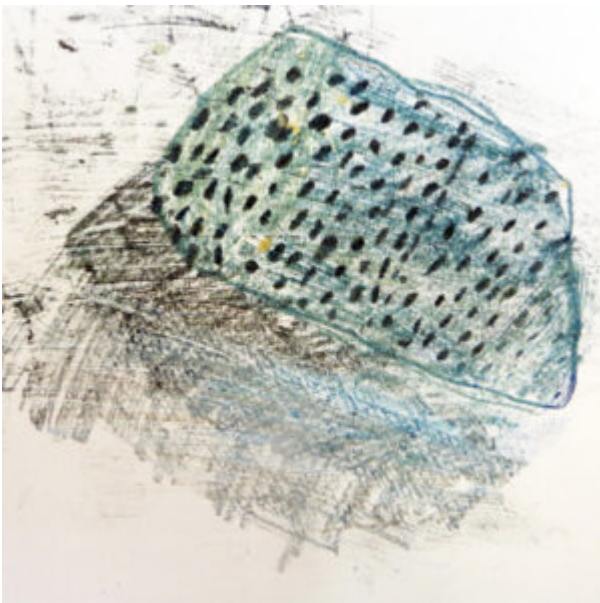
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**Rainbows and Waves for**

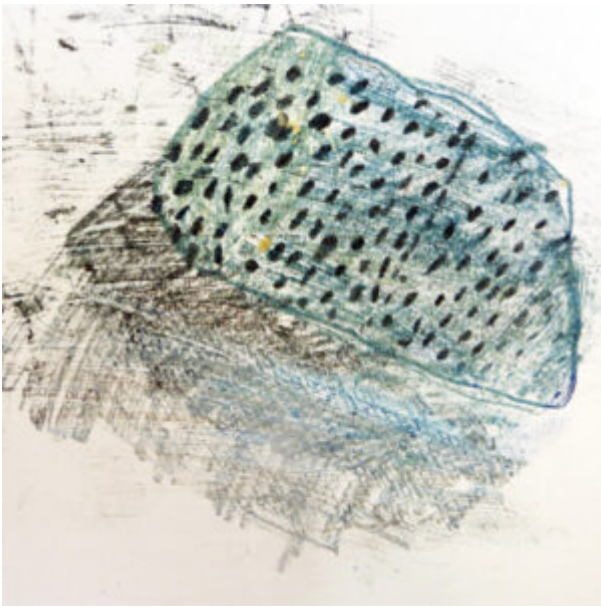
# Grey Days

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## Drawing Small

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## Drawing Large

