

Inspire: Teachers

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[The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge](#) and AccessArt bring you [Inspire](#), celebrating and supporting the creative journeys and processes of both children and their teachers developed throughout the Inspire 2020 programme.

Modelled on the National Gallery, London's [Take One Picture](#), the Inspire programme took a deeper look at one painting from the [Fitzwilliam Museum Collection](#), and from there encouraged individual interpretations, discoveries and journeys to be made.

This post is based on CPD (Continued Professional Development) sessions that were hosted and delivered by the [Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge](#), in collaboration with AccessArt, for Cambridgeshire teachers participating in the project.

In this resource, you will find a breakdown of discussion-led and creative workshops that took place over the course of a day to help teachers understand how a painting or object in a local gallery or museum collection can inspire a cross-curricular and child-led project.



The Story of Cupid and Psyche. Sellaio, Jacopo del Sellaio (Italian, 1441/2-1493).

Introduction

The day began with an introduction to [The Story of Cupid and Psyche by Jacopo del Sellaio](#), followed by a warm-up exercise designed to help teachers develop their drawing skills for 'close seeing.' After this, there was a discussion where participants shared their ideas about the painting.

As the day went on, teachers engaged in a sketchbook and collage activity to further explore these ideas. Finally, they were introduced to the entire collection and asked to identify common themes among the paintings and objects. They then had the opportunity to develop these themes back in the studio space using collage, paint, and sculpture.

An Introduction To The Painting

The day started in the studio with Kate Noble introducing the project: the aims, objectives, and the focus object, [The Story of Cupid and Psyche](#) by Jacopo del Sellaio, an Italian painter who trained with [Sandro Botticelli](#) in Florence, Italy in the 1400s.

Kate set the scene by putting Sellaio's painting into a historical and cultural context, describing how it was made and why, and then beautifully telling the story it depicts.



Jacopo del Sellaio's Cupid and Psyche painting in situ at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge with a gilded 'Cassone' or wedding chest

Although the painting now hangs on a wall in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cupid and Psyche is a panel from a wedding chest, painted in egg tempera on a wooden panel. The colourful panel is from a *spalliera*, a decorated backboard that would either be mounted on the wall as a headboard or attached to a *cassone* marriage chest. The project team was excited to choose this object as a focus for the Inspire project because, as well as being a beautiful, lyrical painting, it also held a functional purpose as a built object, a piece of furniture from a Renaissance home. We hoped that this would allow for infinite possibilities, interpretations, and starting points back in the classroom.

Find out more about the Story of Cupid and Psyche by Jacopo

del Sellaio with "[Talking Points: the Story of Cupid and Psyche](#)".

Studio Workshop

Kate's introduction was followed by a drawing warm-up led by [Sheila Ceccarelli](#) from AccessArt.



Teachers are transported to the Mediterranean with the scents of Italian herbs on a guided drawing exercise

Participants used drawing prompts to take them on a sensory drawing journey, aiming to boost confidence in drawing and using drawing as a tool for looking and being in the here and now.





You can download [AccessArt Drawing Prompts here](#).

Looking And Discussing

Armed with sketchbooks and pencils and knowledge about the focus painting, teachers then made their way up to the gallery to see the panel in situ.

Kate guided teachers in their looking with an opening question: 'Does the panel look different in reality? Is it how you expected it to look?'



Participants were then invited to share ideas that came to mind about how the painting might link to different areas of the curriculum.

Many interesting themes emerged; from study of classical Greek myths and classical architecture to themes around nature and growing, trees, weather, landscape, colour, materials, design, geographical settings, proportion, shapes, symmetry, story telling, perspective, pattern, textiles, the human figure, the role of women in home and marriage, angels, wings, wind, to name but a few.



Using Sketchbooks and Collage

Looking at the painting, we then used collage as a way of further exploring the panel.

Teachers tore coloured sugar paper into shapes to reflect composition, elements of interest, perspective, and general shapes from the painting. They then played with placement and composition on their sketchbook pages. The colours of the paper were selected to echo the soft, pastel colours within

Sellaio's panel.

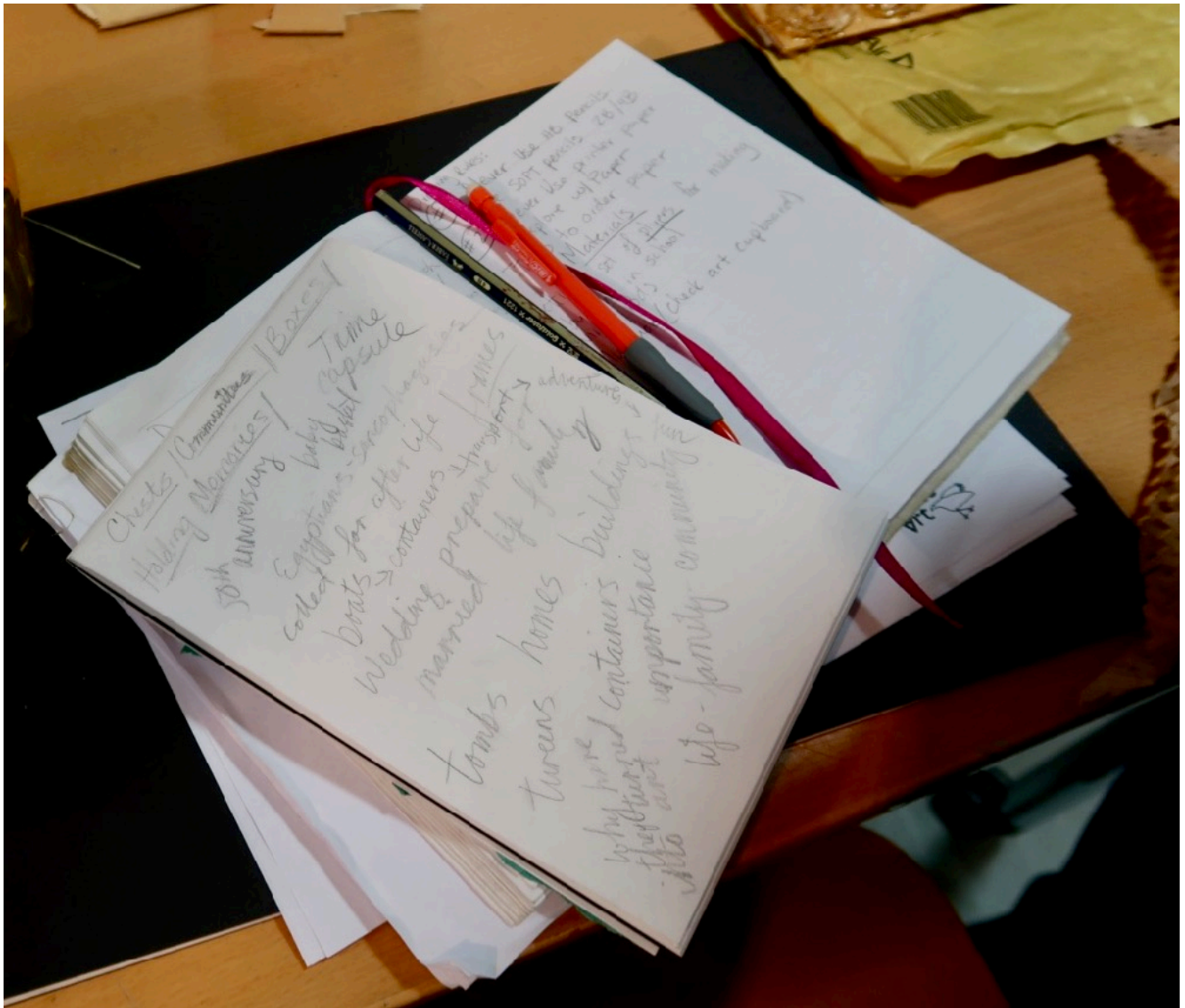






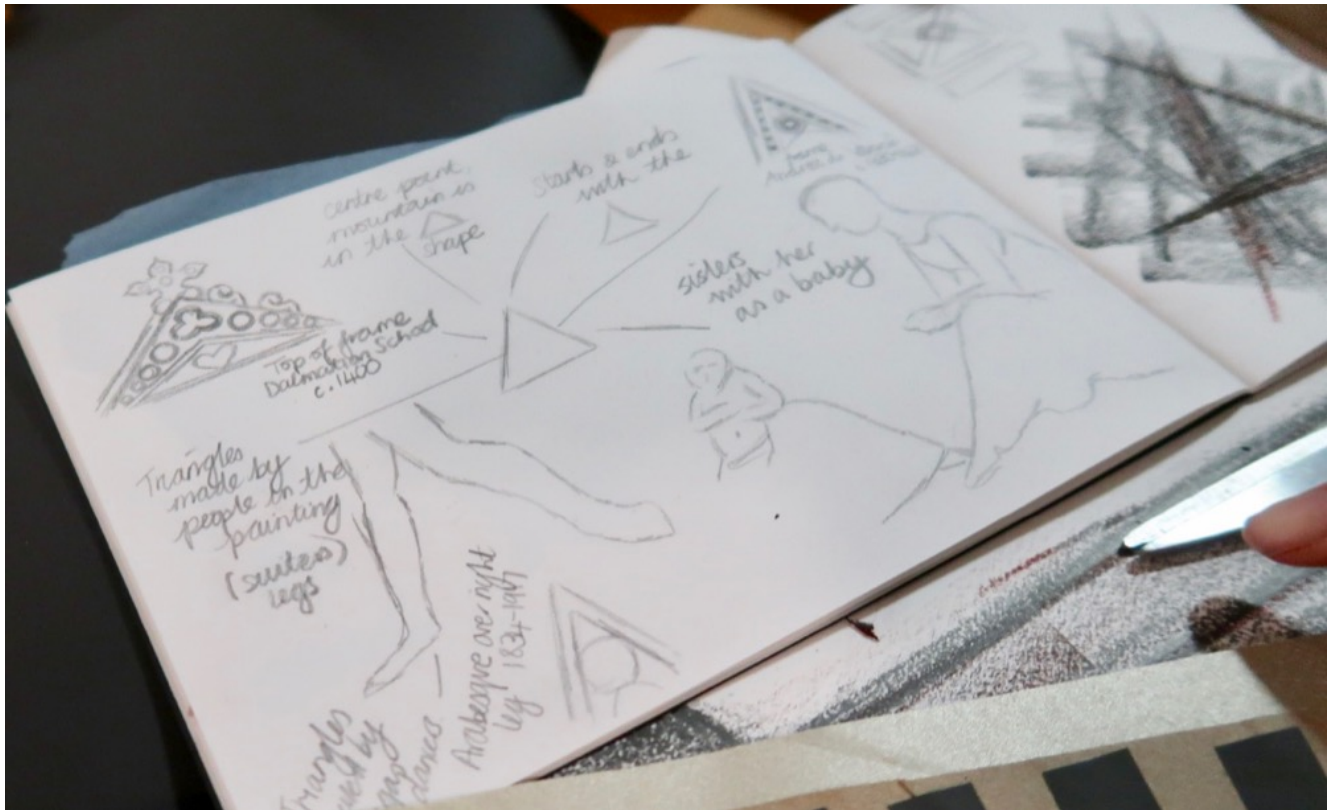
Making Notes and Annotating

Whilst the teachers were on the gallery floor, they were encouraged to note down the ideas and connections they were making. They were introduced to the idea of a sketchbook as a place to log, record, connect, imagine, write, draw, and dream.



Drawing

Teachers were also encouraged to make visual notes and sketches.



Using The Whole Collection To Find A Theme

Using the French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet's (1840–1926), [Springtime](#) (1886), Kate took teachers on a journey of 'Deep Looking' to demonstrate how a playful and meditative exploration of a painting can allow the mind to wander deeply into the canvas. This process brings the painting to life - allowing time and space for looking to happen and ideas to emerge.



Claude Monet's (1840–1926), Springtime (1886) © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Sheila reminded teachers to continue to take notes and sketches of ideas that might emerge from the exercise.

Teachers were then invited to explore the museum to find paintings, objects, architectural elements, or sculptures that might support themes, ideas, and subjects that had emerged in their own minds during the morning's session.

Back To The Studio...

Using all the information, recordings, and ideas gathered during the morning session as a starting point, teachers were invited to explore materials and processes in the studio. It was hoped that these explorations would both stimulate their own curiosity and creativity, but also support the development of art skills that they could take back into their classroom.

The studio was set up in three distinct areas...

Table One: Drawing and Collage

Here, teachers were encouraged to expand on the ideas and drawings that they'd collected in their sketchbooks during the gallery session.

The tables were set up with a variety of different papers and drawing materials, from chunky graphite sticks to Posca pens. Teachers were encouraged to be experimental and work in big A3 sketchbooks or bigger to move ideas forward.







Table Two: Colour

A 'colour table' was set up with a variety of different painting mediums and primed wooden pieces for teachers to experiment on.

We were very fortunate to be joined by Ali, a studio artist who works at the Fitzwilliam, who was able to share her knowledge of egg tempera and painting on a wooden panel.

Ali prepared powder paints and an egg yolk for teachers to play with mock-'egg tempera', as well as gouache colours, inks, Brusho and more. She also provided a variety of different surfaces on which to work, from paper to papyrus and wood.





Table Three: Making

A making table was set up with a variety of materials, mainly from the [Cambridge Community Scrap Store](#), and all ubiquitous

and easily sourced, including: fabric, wire, cardboard, mesh, film, clay, Modroc, hessian, foil, sticks, wooden rods, plasticine and more.

Teachers were encouraged to make playful explorations of the materials and explore how they might construct their own interpretations of ideas gathered from the morning's session on the gallery floor.









Looking at Talking

The session ended with a chance for all the teachers to see each other's work and share their experiences of being in the studio.



Threading conversations back into how ideas and processes might be taken back into the classroom and what scope there was for the bigger task at hand: facilitating meaningful creative experiences for the children.



Many thanks to the wonderful teachers who came to this CPD session for sharing their ideas and processes with AccessArt.

Many thanks to Alison Ayres, the Fitzwilliam Museum's studio artist, for her support in the studio and for sharing her knowledge, and to Holly Morrison for her consultation and for preparing materials for the Inspire Project.

This post was written by Sheila Ceccarelli and edited by Kate Noble. Photos were taken by Paula Briggs and Sheila Ceccarelli.

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