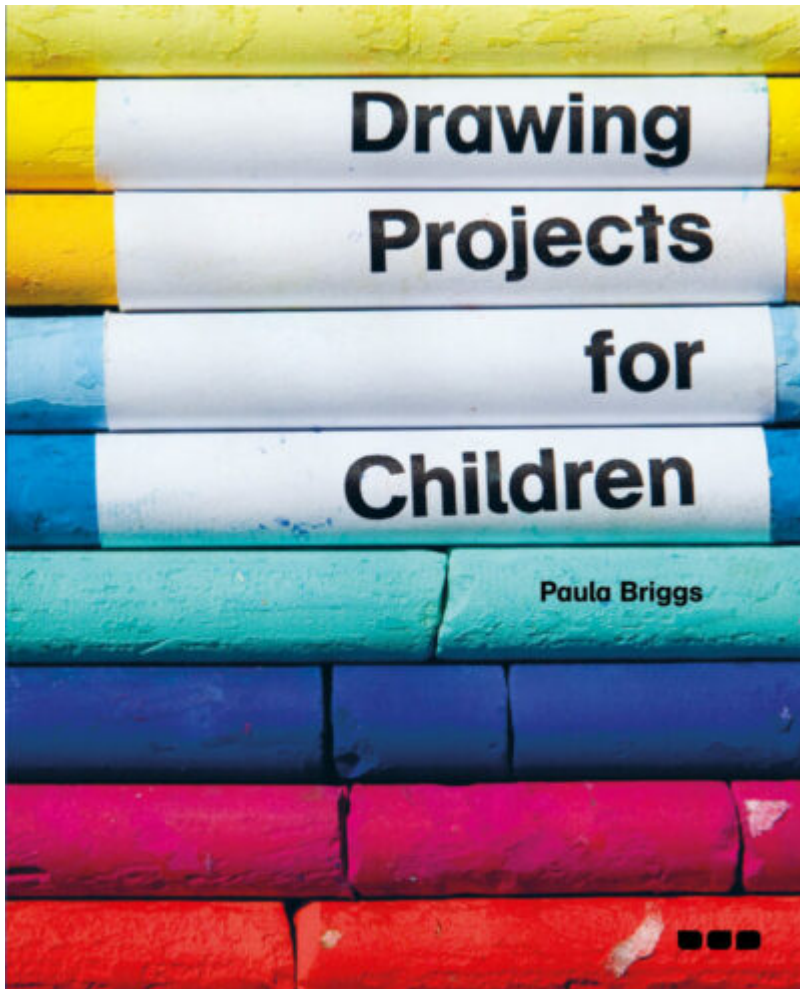


Drawing Projects for Children by Paula Briggs



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Published by Black Dog Press, *Drawing Projects for Children* is a beautifully illustrated collection of activities that will expand the mark making abilities and imagination of children of all ages, and help fuel their passion for drawing.

The book features a collection of drawing exercises and projects taken from the AccessArt website, presenting them in a beautiful and

inspirational format.

“A beautiful book, full of ideas and a vivid sense of materials – truly appetising and stimulating.”
– Sir Quentin Blake

“Drawing Projects for Children is fantastic and I know it will be an inspiration to many educators.”

“I am so thrilled with the book! Thank you for your inspiration and excellence.”

Philosophy

I have been teaching drawing for many years, and my approach is based upon:

- Providing children with simple exercises and inspiring projects which give them a focus for their drawing exploration.
- Providing non-specialist adults with the tools to enable them to facilitate drawing in others.
- Helping children understand and experience the potential of different drawing materials.
- Balancing experimental mark making with exercises which promote careful looking and thoughtful drawing.
- Helping children understand the importance of risk-taking in drawing.

Building confidence and experience to enable children to undertake their own drawing journeys.

The book provides a series of modular exercises and projects which can be used alone or in combination to build an exciting collection of work. Warm-up exercises are used extensively to help introduce the projects. The projects themselves are suitable for all ages of children, for use at home, in the school, in an art club, gallery or museum context. The book also shares ideas to enable parents, teachers or facilitators to devise their own warm-up exercises.

BACKWARDS FORWARDS SKETCHING

Backwards forwards sketching is a simple activity that will help you develop understanding and knowledge of your subject matter through slow, careful observation. It will help you match the speed of looking with the speed of drawing, helping your hand-eye coordination.



Materials

- Soft (B) and hard (H) pencils
- Drawing paper

Subject Matter

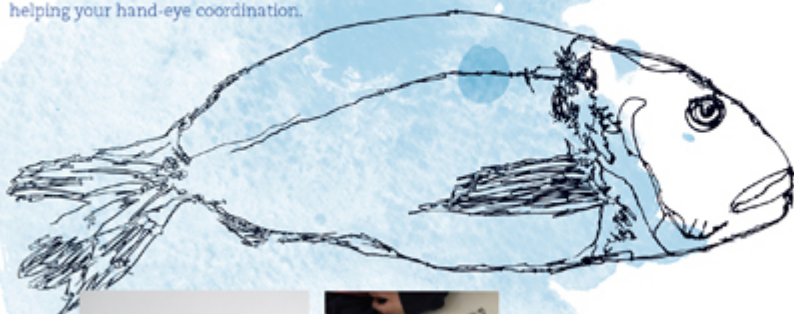
Any small still life object will work well for this warm up.

Activity

1 Make a drawing of your subject matter using only one motion—in backwards forwards sketching you are only allowed to draw from left to right and right to left, from your wrist. This means that the pencil travels forwards, then backwards, forwards, then backwards again. Each line you make in your drawing is repeated as your hand travels backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards.

Facilitator's Note

When children are challenged to only draw using a backwards forwards motion, their mark making is slowed down as the drawing line has to repeat (or reassert) itself. As the mark making is slowed down, the hand is less likely to run away with itself before the eye has really seen. In backwards forwards sketching the hand and eye has to check and check again each line as it is formed, helping to ensure the lines are intentional. This also gives children the opportunity to re-see their lines as they go. By nature, backwards forwards sketches should feel solid and intentional as the pencil 'feels' its way around the image.





LARGE AS LIFE SCROLL DRAWINGS

In this project you will make a long thin life-sized drawing, and then turn it into a scroll book. Working on a large scale means you will need to be physically involved in your drawing, moving your whole body up and down the long sheet of paper to make the drawing.

Materials

- Soft (B) pencils
- Graphite
- Compressed charcoal
- Erasers
- Long, thin sheets of drawing paper (approximately 10 cm x 3 m)
- Sheets of corrugated cardboard (approximately 10 cm x 20 cm)
- Glue or tape
- An elastic band

Subject Matter

The subject matter should be a mixture of long and thin items such as a 3 m length of rope, 3 m branches with side buds, tall shoots of asparagus or grasses, or a long line of cutlery displayed end to end.

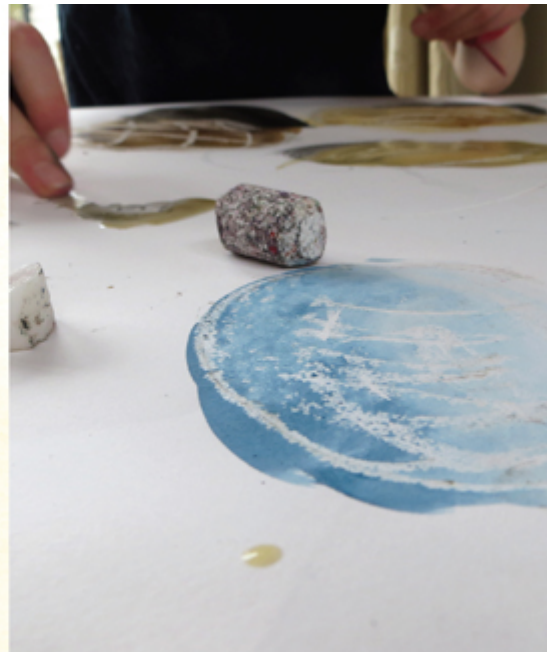
Lay each item on a long thin sheet of paper, the exact same dimensions as the paper on which you are going to make your drawing. You might need to cut and stick paper to create the right length.

Lay the sheets with the subject matter on the floor.



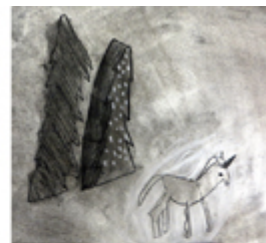
Activity

- 1 Using a permanent marker pen, draw contour lines over the surface of the potatoes and pebbles to help show their form. Then place the pebbles and potatoes on a white background.
- 2 Looking at your pebbles and potatoes, think about how chunky they are. Hold them in your hand. How heavy are they? What do their textures feel like? Try arranging them in different positions and groups of two and three. What new things can you learn about each object when you put them with another object?
- 3 Make some drawings that make the objects seem huge and weighty. Try using contour lines, wax resist, watercolour washes, graphite and an eraser to do this. Remember that these drawings are going to be chunky, solid and messy, so try working on a large scale, being careful not to make your drawing too delicate. You can use broad gestures, rather than thin lines to help with this. You may wish to start by drawing with a thick piece of candle wax, and then washing over this with a watercolour to reveal the drawing (a 'resist' effect).
- 4 Add some shadows to make the objects feel weighted to the ground.
- 5 Create several drawings in this way, each time exploring how your drawing materials can help create a sense of weight and volume in your drawings.



Activity

- 1 Using three or four toys, create a small scene that will become your subject matter. You can use cardboard and sticks to help prop up your scene, or as a background or foreground. Think carefully about how your chosen items work together or affect each other. Think of, and write down, a single sentence that is inspired by the scene.
- 2 Make a drawing of your scene using the charcoal and chalks. Remember that making a small, detailed drawing with large charcoal sticks can be very frustrating. Instead, try to work on a large scale and use the richness of the charcoal in your drawing. Allow both the words and the objects to inspire your sense of narrative.
- 3 Re-write your descriptive sentences on your drawing in a descriptive way so that the text and image work together on the page. How might the text sit in the white space of the drawing? How might the text relate to the image?
- 4 If you enjoyed this session, you may want to try illustrating the line of a poem or a line from a storybook. Then, with a collection of these, you can create your own illustrated storybook.



Facilitator's Note

If the child is focusing on a small scale, you may be able to help them make the leap from small drawing to larger charcoal mark making by having them watch your hand as it 'air draws' on the paper, alongside a commentary: "So the arm might be this big and be here, the head here, the ears here..." etc. As soon as children can start to visualise marks on an empty sheet of paper, they usually feel confident to make larger drawings on their own.



AFTERWORD

Every Tuesday after school, a group of children aged between six and eight have been coming to the AccessArt Drawing Workshop, which takes place in a village hall in the beautiful village of Grantchester, Cambridge. Like lots of village halls up and down the country, it is an unassuming place, with the entrance at the back, and no clue as to what takes place inside from the front.

Those sessions have been a joy—for me and, I think, for the children too. Winter nights and summer evenings, it has been wonderful to close the door on the world, forget school and settle into our routines. Some children have stayed for years, others have come and gone, but it has been fantastic to watch them grow in confidence handling materials and understanding processes which many adults may have thought were beyond their years. I love the concentrated quiet that falls in the room as the children begin to draw, and then the energy and momentum that gathers as they make their own drawing discoveries. Most of all I love the enthusiasm and openness with which children greet each new project.

We have been learning together, the children and I, about how you can help children discover drawing. How far to push, how much space to give, when to plant seeds, when to be studious, and how to have fun!

The warm up exercises and projects in this book all originate from those Tuesday afternoon sessions. The projects are completely transferable and adaptable, and can be used with a wide age range. I hope they give a flavour of my approach, and I hope that they will inspire.

One thing I am certain of is that we need to raise our expectations of the level of artwork children are capable of making. We need to give children access to more materials, more time and space, provide focused support, and we need to feed them with projects to give them a reason to explore further.

In return, they will demonstrate how fundamentally important drawing is to us as human beings, and they will reward us with the most beautiful, eloquent and remarkable drawings.

[Buy Now](#)

■■■ black dog press £14.95

Author Paula Briggs Paperback 144 pages 120 b/w and colour
ills 26.0 x 20.0 cm 10.0 x 8.0 in ISBN13: 9781908966742

Bulk Buy

Network coordinators wishing to buy this resource in bulk should contact [us here](#) for direct purchase and discount rates.

[Read Most Recent Reviews – August 2020](#)

Eileen Adams, NSEAD



The chunky (8''x10') Drawing Projects for Children is a beautiful book: 144 pages, printed on thick paper, with colour illustrations on nearly every page. Well done designers Freddy Williams and Vanessa Wong! It is robust both in content and presentation, a book that will be of use for a long time. Black Dog, the publishers, claim to take a daring, innovative approach to our titles, to maintain high production values and authoritative content and to produce books that challenge, provoke and entertain. There is much here to inspire children to develop their love of drawing, to stimulate them and to engage them. This is not merely a 'how to do it' book: it is also 'how to think about it'.

The book is in three main parts:

- Materials, drawing surfaces and facilitators' notes

- Warm ups
- Projects

The section on warm ups provided a range of prompts for children to start drawing: exploring line, shape, tone, texture and rhythm to create different kinds of marks that could be manipulated in a variety of ways to create drawings.

The 26 projects vary in complexity and difficulty. Many are based on drawing from observation such as moving water and natural form. Some are prompted by experimenting with marks and materials. Some are concerned with drawing from imagination, such as animal cartoon characters. Some are about storytelling. Others bring new excitement to the activity, such as drawing by torchlight, making carbon paper prints or drawing on plaster. Some drawings come off the page and are developed in 3D. Some drawings turn into books.

Teachers, parents and other facilitators will welcome this book, chock full of ideas for drawing activities. They will also appreciate the explanations, instructions and advice that will help them support children's efforts. I particularly valued explanations as to the purpose of each drawing activity. What was the intention? What might children experience? What might they explore – a material, a technique or a concept? What might they learn as a result? This book is not just about learning to draw: it is about drawing to learn.

All the advice is sound, based on Paula Briggs's long experience of working with her colleague, Sheila Ceccarelli, in AccessArt, to support children and teachers. The projects have been trialed and tested at drawing workshops in Grantchester. They are transferable to other situations and other age groups – secondary students would benefit from exploring many of the activities. They have the potential to inspire young people and build their confidence and competence in drawing.

The whole tone of the book is about enabling children to experiment and take risks so that they are encouraged to push beyond what they consider 'safe' (safe drawings are those in which we know what the outcome is going to be before we have even started making them). This is such a relief when teachers and children in schools are being constrained and mis-directed by inappropriate assessment procedures and ways of valuing children's work.

Perhaps the author should have the last word. "One thing I am certain of is that we need to raise our expectations of the level of artwork children are capable of making. We need to give children access to more materials, more time and space, provide more focused support, and we need to feed them with projects to give them a reason to explore further. In return, they will demonstrate how fundamentally important drawing is to us as human beings, and they will reward us with the most beautiful, eloquent and remarkable drawings."

Artful Kids



There are no shortage of practical books about art out there for children, but speaking as someone whose first love in art is drawing, I was curious to review *Drawing Projects for Children* by Paula Briggs, (published by Black Dog) as there are not so many which focus on the act of drawing itself.

This is not a book about 'how to draw' in the traditional sense, and is, I personally thought, all the better for it.

Instead it is a truly creative book – the projects are aimed at encouraging children to explore different aspects of drawing for themselves – inviting them to think and create in different ways.

Well-structured, the introduction of the book includes notes about art materials, and is followed by some facilitator's notes for parents or teachers (there are further facilitator's notes added for some of the individual projects). There then follows a series of 10 simple warm up exercises devoted to different aims. So for example there are exercises in mark making, continuous line drawing, and activities aimed at encouraging children to work larger, or produce bolder or 'stronger' drawings.

The next section is the heart of the book where there are 26 drawing projects. These are unusual and imaginative, many of them with a fun element designed to appeal to children, while at the same time fulfilling a specific learning objective. There are projects which explore the properties of different art materials, and others which encourage children to 'think differently' founded on the author's extensive experience of conducting drawing workshops with children of all ages.

Not just for teachers of art, the book could just as easily be used by parents who are interested in genuinely teaching their children some of the fundamentals of art practice – to explore, observe and be creative, and also by older children who already have an interest in art. One of the strengths of the book however is the range of projects which encourage collaboration, sharing or simply exploring and learning together. The activity from the book which we tried together (Drawing by Torchlight, which you can read about [here](#)) turned out to be quite successful on a number of different levels.

The book is lavishly illustrated and produced in paperback format, using quality paper, and at £14.95 I thought it was pretty good value for the quantity of inspiring material it

contains.

Julianne Negri

How would you like a drawing book that encourages risk taking in art? A book that emphasises process over product? A book that encourages experimentation within guidance? A book that is full of messy-get-your-hands-dirty drawing projects? In short, a book with smudgy fingerprints all over it? Well if these things tick your boxes like they tick mine, Paula Briggs', Drawing Projects for Children published by Black Dog Publishing is the art book for you.

Paula Briggs has not only created a beautiful object with this book. She has created a welcome antidote to a world (wide web) full of outcome based children's activities that seem to be all about the photo opportunity to display on whatever platform – blog/insta/facebook/twitter – a parent chooses.

This is very much a gorgeous(smudgy) hands on book, divided into two sections – warm up drawing exercises and more in depth projects. So the only real way to review this book was to try it out. First – rustle up some children (fortunately not a challenge for me).

The book is firmly aimed at children but without any dumbing down of language or “fun speak” or the sort of cutesy Dr Suess sort of language you often find with this target audience. For example:

“All of the projects in this book also use a huge range of drawing materials from inks and watercolours to graphite and pastels. Remember, great drawing experiences are not always about the outcome, but often about the things you learn when you experiment. So get ready to try out some new techniques, and make some wonderful creations!”

This tone generates respect for the child artist, for the materials being used and for the activity being undertaken. I

read sections aloud to the kids first and we discussed some of the concepts – risk taking, process, not worrying about “mistakes”, no rubbing out etc. These are hugely neglected concepts in the world of a 7-almost-8-year old’s art practice. They are at an age where they lose the earlier wildness of creativity and have been firmly indoctrinated into school ideas of right and wrong and drawing like the person next to you, with a seemingly strong preoccupation on getting eyes and noses especially “right”!

While Paula Briggs suggests this book is aimed to be used independently by children, I found it does benefit from focused facilitating. And for kids this age? Fairly strong facilitation is required. Fortunately I had a background in art and understood the materials and requirements of the tasks, but it is written with point by point instructions, a colour coded idea of levels of intensity and a material list like a recipe and is therefore very accessible. For preparation we made a trip to the local art shop with a list in hand – lots of newsprint paper, various pencils, charcoals and pastels and some ink – and we were ready.

We began with some warm ups which were wonderfully fun and challenging. This “continuous line drawing” warm up was a terrific way to display process over outcome. Pens, paper, still life and go. The kids had to look at the object and draw it while not lifting their pen from the page. They were happy to keep trying this for ages! Our second warm up was “backwards-forwards sketching”. This was a good way to focus on looking and observing while slowing down the hand and creating texture.

My kids are very physical and these drawing ideas are also very physical – hand-eye coordination, large gestural mark making and sustained concentration. We interspersed the activities with kicking the footy in the back yard to freshen up.

We enjoyed perusing all the projects in the book and the kids have ear-marked many they want to try asap. But the obvious “project” to undertake right away was the “Autumn Floor Drawing”. We ran around the house and street collecting leaves, seed husks, plants and all things Autumnal.

I found myself joining in and rediscovering the joys of charcoal and of delicate lines and shading in a way I hadn’t indulged in years. It was so relaxing, for me and for the kids, to play with the materials without any pressure on the result.

Drawing Projects For Children, while not completely independently accessible to younger children, actually benefits from involving a facilitator as well as the child. I found that Paula Briggs language and ideas generate an inspirational and stimulating practical art experience. Through warm ups and projects she extends children’s idea of mark making and drawing into a new realm. It challenges children (and teachers and parents) to explore, take artistic risks and to discover the fun inherent in drawing when there is no pressure for the outcome. It is a book we will return to and from just one day of experimenting it has already inspired these two kids to observe things a little differently and to think more about how to represent their world through art.

Drawing Projects for Children is highly recommended for those who love messy art. For those who want to encourage careful observation, thoughtful mark making and inspire artistic processes. For those who understand that experimentation and sustained exploration of a medium is more important than a quick simple art activity that results in a picture perfect photo opportunity. Go get the book, some supplies, some kids and get your fingers dirty.

The BookBag

Drawing Projects For Children is a beautiful, full-colour

guide that encourages children to use a range of materials to create stunning and thought-provoking artwork. As the author points out, the end result is not always as important as the journey and this book helps children to move away from the more traditional, or 'safe' type of drawing styles and indulge in a little more experimentation and risk taking. The book is ideal for parents to use with their children, but each chapter is a self-contained lesson plan that facilitators and teachers can use with groups.

The theme of the book is all about experimenting with materials, so it is a good idea to stock up on the basics in order to get the most out of the projects. The focus is on using different paper and drawing media to create effects, so items like graphite, charcoal and pastels, as well as papers of varying textures, are useful items to have on hand.

The book also has some engaging warm-up exercises to help the child become more aware and mindful of physical movements and rhythms involved in the drawing process. For example, drawing to a slow rhythm using a metronome, or trying to create a picture using a single, continuous line can improve hand-eye coordination and observation skills.

The projects are suitable for all ages and can be as simple or as detailed as the artist wishes them to be. Projects include turning paper into fur, drawing by torchlight and printing with carbon paper. Each project encourages a thoughtful approach and introduces a new aspect of drawing or mark-making.

There is something in the book for everyone and it is visually appealing. My daughter is a budding artist and loves perusing the pages for ideas and inspiration. It would also be a useful resource for home-educators and childminders.

Fran Richardson, Artist Educator

“Being both an artist specialising in drawing and a parent who wants to inspire my own children to draw, I was glad to have discovered this book. Although pitched at an older child to read and follow independently, it offers guidance for parents and teachers who want to lead activities at home or in the classroom.

The layout is simple and pleasing with contrasting fonts in different sizes. It is fully illustrated with colour photographs of children making the work alongside examples of materials and drawings at differing stages of completion, which makes it both engaging and easy to follow. No prior experience is required so anyone can start immediately with the items already available at home.

I particularly like the way the author moves away from the traditional model of seeking to make a finished product through a series of specific steps to a focus on different techniques and the enjoyment of using materials in an experimental way, gently pushing at the boundaries of what children can achieve.

Drawing in charcoal by torch light, the picnic drawing party, or being your own art installation are things that I would never have thought of doing. I haven't had any experience of teaching children so I feel much more confident that I will be working with them at the right level. Packed with ten warm ups and 26 projects with three levels of difficulty it offers value for money for any adult who wants to enjoy some creative time with children – a must for the holidays!”

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Shells: Observational and Imaginative Drawing

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Collaborative Public Mural Project

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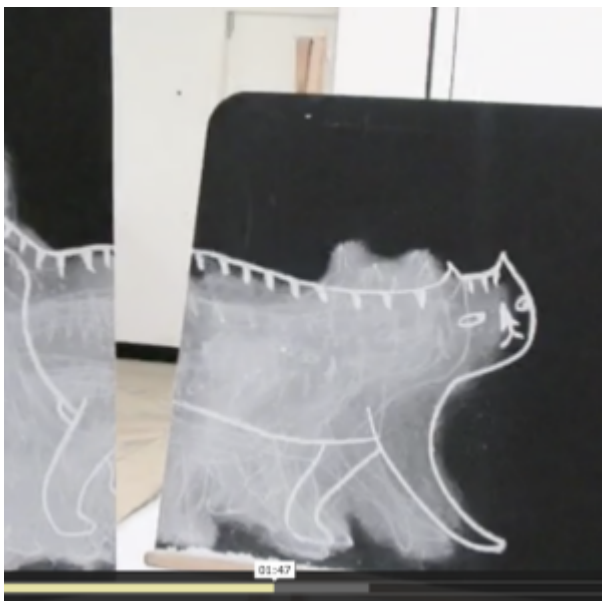
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Talking Points: Faith Bebbington

A collection of sources and imagery to explore the work of sculptor, Faith Bebbington.

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AGES 5-8

AGES 9-11

AGES 11-14

FREE TO ACCESS

Faith Bebbington

Faith Bebbington is a nationally renowned sculptor based in Liverpool. Faith has worked with a range of big name clients, from the Football Association

to campaigning for endangered species. Faith is best known for her sustainable practise; her large sculptures utilise lots of waste materials, with her biggest sculpture to date re-using over 2500 deconstructed plastic milk bottles!



itv Reindeer For itv Creates reimagined Brand Identity by Faith Bebbington (Illuminated Plastic Milk Bottles)



Polar Bear In The Studio (Created With 3000 Plastic Milk Bottles) by Faith Bebbington



Recycled Plastic Bengal Tiger for Veolia Environment by Faith Bebbington

Find out more about Faith Bebbington's process in this "[Which Artists?](#)" post.

Questions to Ask Children

What materials can you spot in the sculptures?

Why do you think that Faith has used recycled materials to make her sculptures?

How would you describe the sculptures?

Which sculpture is your favourite? Why?

This Talking Points Is Used In...

Pathway: Using Art To Explore Global Issue

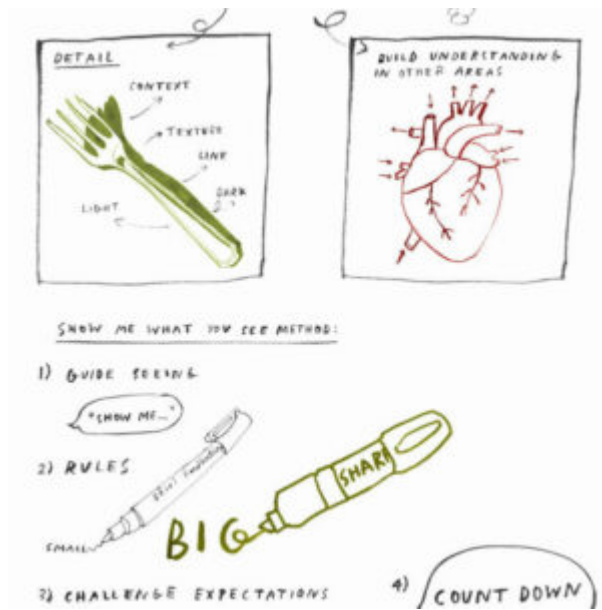


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using sketchbooks to make visual notes



Show me what you see



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The Nonna Maria Drawing Challenge by Luca Damiani

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

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Molly Hausland



Home: The Little House on West Street LockDown Project

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.

Drawing Source Material: Nests

A collection of imagery and sources which you can use to prompt drawing in schools and community groups.

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Nests

Use the film below to enable children to explore

drawing nests. Try to create a sense of momentum – for example you might pause the video 4 times and ask the pupils to make a 1 minute, 2 minute, 3 minute and 4 minute drawing at each pause.

Encourage close and slow looking by talking as they draw – use your voice to attract their attention to qualities of the nest.

Try the same exercise using different materials, ie handwriting pen, ink and nib, pastel, watercolour...



Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Davis, United States. Original public domain image from Wikimedia Commons



Bird nest hanging on a tree. Free public domain CC0 photo.



Birds nest in tree, nature photography. Free public domain CC0 image.



Birds nest in tree, nature photography. Free public domain CC0 image.





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**Pathway: Sculpture, Structure,
Inventiveness & determination**



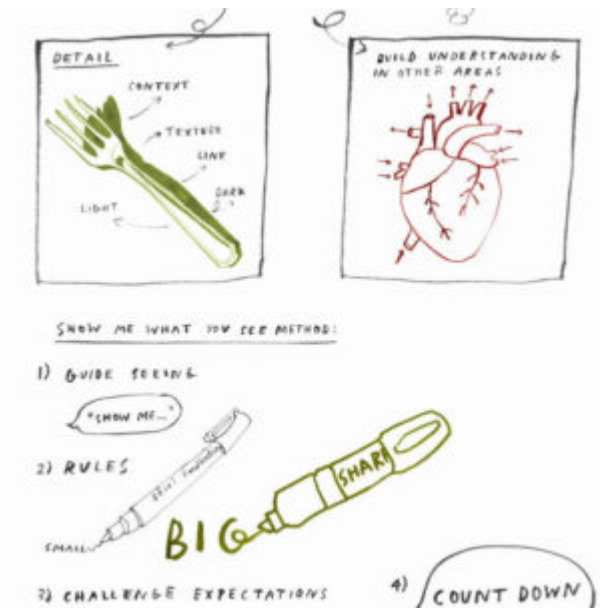
This is featured in the 'Sculpture, Structure, Inventiveness & Determination' pathway

using sketchbooks to make visual notes



Find out how pupils can respond to artists work in sketchbooks

Show me what you see



[Enable close looking and drawing with this exercise](#)

The Language We Use Defines The Society We Create: Taking Control of the Narrative

Since 1994, AccessArt has worked to shape high quality visual arts education. As a Subject Association, we have attended All Party Parliamentary Groups and Roundtable discussions with various art specialists, organisations and Unions, to come together to advocate for the

importance of art education. At these meetings arts organisations and experienced individuals agree:

- We need to better value the arts in education, placing arts subjects on an equal footing with STEM subjects, creating time and space for exploration and experience, as well as knowledge.
- We need to invest in Initial Teacher Training and CPDL.
- We need a reprieve from assessment which creates a climate of fear and drives us towards limited outcomes, in direct opposition to the kind of nurturing space art requires to flourish.
- The current Curriculum needs rewriting to ensure it is relevant, diverse and accessible to all.

Art education has been systematically attacked for many years. Art educators have had to defend, and therefore our dialogue has been defensive. We have defended the subject by using language we hoped would be understood by those in government – language which asserts itself but is spoken in their terms. We have taken the current model, shown its shortcomings, and the effects of those shortcomings, and suggested solutions. But all that has been done using the existing vocabulary

which defines education today. And that is a problem, because it limits ambition and vision. We are driven to talk about assessment, monitoring, progression and knowledge, when the subject we hold needs a very different set of words to describe its rich, organic nature and build understanding of the potential for the subject to change lives.

The accidental or deliberate (depending on your viewpoint) misunderstanding of the subject area shown by those in power has demerited the importance of art education. By pushing a knowledge-rich, assessment-heavy, STEM-prioritised curriculum, the government has created a system in which the very words we need to use, as creative practitioners, teachers and pupils have been taken away from us. There is no space in the current curriculum to use words like “intuition,” “growth,” “personal,” “organic,” and “experimental.” We could hold such a rich, exciting, enabling subject in our hands – a subject which should be oozing with joy and richness, discovery and vision, but instead the government wants us to grip it as if it were a beast we need to beat down and control; something to be scared of which offers no real benefit to anyone. Is this misunderstanding on the part of the government, or is this fear? Fear that if we enable personal creativity we create a beast which enables free expression, resulting in a population not so easily “controlled”?

The language used by any government creates the culture through, and in which, we act, and in that way we become conditioned. We forget there are always other options, other approaches, and other words which describe other philosophies open to us. All the while we have been trying to defend art education by using the words they want us to use, and in that way we are becoming complicit, despite our intention, because we are not using the words we really need to use.

This struck home, finally, when I realised through conversations with school leavers that they could no longer use words like intuition, entitlement, dreaming, invention, play. These words are unfamiliar to them, and they no longer resonate.

These words, and therefore the ways of being they describe, are not available to them right now. They find it hard to embody these words. (Embody is an important word by the way).

So, yes, let's keep defending the importance of art education, but let's take a much firmer stance. We need to unfurl our own language – the words we really need to use – the words which more accurately describe an exploration of the future role of education in general and value of art education in particular. I am no longer going to be embarrassed to use the word *love* in relation to *education*. I am no longer going to purposely *not* use the words intuition, passion, fun and play, for fear of making art education

seem less than; for fear of being dismissed.

Their words have been hurled at us for years – and now our whole educational and societal bedrock is built on silt. We need to start using words which build a solid place on which our children and young people can stand, and from which they can grow.

The language needs to be visceral. Honest. Brutal. We need to nail it and say it as it is. We have listened to and struggled with their vocabulary, and now they are going to hear ours. Please join us; let's use the words we really need to use, not the language we have been forced to use in a system which has been using the wrong language in the first place. We are artists after all, and we should not be apologetic that our vision, wisdom and insight comes from a very different place, is highly relevant, and to be listened to. Let's use our language, and in doing so say exactly what we need to say.

As artist, educator, CEO and parent – this is what I really want to say...

Where do we stand, at this point in time?

How are our children standing on the earth, at this point in time?

How are we serving them, in terms of education, health, wellbeing?

*Are we helping them build their sense of self?
Sense of safety? From which they can grow?*

*Are we helping them understand the relationship
between sense of self and connection with others?
The relationship between compassion and action?
Action and impact?*

*Are we helping them understand what makes them
human? What makes a community? A society? Are we
helping them think about purpose?*

*Are we showing them what healthy relationships
look like? With each other? With themselves? With
the planet?*

*Are we empowering them to dream, to envision, to
imagine? Are we enabling them to communicate so
that they can inspire and collaborate? Are we
skilling them to affect, enable and build?*

*Are we enabling them to think critically and
creatively, and to understand the difference
between the two?*

Where do we stand at this point in time?

*We stand at a point, caught between the way
society has been shaped by previous government
policy (or lack of policy), and the future. We are
ALL held at that point, no matter our privilege.*

*But it is not the only way to stand. And we should
not accept it, or think we can't affect it.*

So how do we enable every person to stand on the earth grounded, belonging, able to dream, empowered to act?

Can we even imagine such a thing, or have we been so stripped of our ability to dream, confidence to be optimistic, ability to think?

Think about it now. Can you even imagine everyone you know being able to feel like they are able to work towards their full potential? Feel appreciated, valued, have something to offer, and able to contribute?

If you can't imagine that, then please get angry and ask if we have perhaps been conditioned?

Don't say it is idealistic.

Why do we stand the way we do, on the earth today? And how can we make change?

When we look, what do we see with our own eyes?

We see teenagers, emerging from their knowledge-rich, assessed-heavy, education, uncertain. Uncertain as to how they feel about their place in the world and unsure what their entitlement is to dream, act and affect, because they have been stripped of their permission. Ask a school leaver about intuition, and see how they answer. Do they know what that word means? Ask a school leaver about their dreams and hopes, and see how they answer. Ask a school leaver if everyone has

equality of opportunity and see how they answer. Have they been enabled?

We see children and teenagers holding so much anxiety. Flight, fright or freeze – sense of self becomes fragmented and constricted and in that state we cannot go out into the world feeling safe and grounded ready to explore and contribute. Ask them if they feel safe and enabled. Ask them if they feel held. Ask them if they understand how what manifests as anxiety often starts as sensitivity – which can be a beautiful and vital thing which in turn can be explored, expressed and shared through art. Sensitivity need not develop into anxiety. It is not inevitable.

We see children and teenagers avoiding school, because their nervous systems know that school in its current state does not feel like the safest place for them. Do we understand what their bodies and minds need, now, to enable them to learn? Ask a child: What would keep you in school? In which lessons do you feel listened to and can flourish? What does flourish even mean? Has anyone asked you?

We see no time, no space. We send them hurtling, ticking off a list. Towards what? And the existential skills they have learnt are? Have we been brave enough to create generations who are curious? Brave enough to embrace the “other” – to explore differences and yet to be able to connect? Ask a child: Do you feel you have had the space to

follow your interests and really understand? Have you ever had the experience of exciting an other?

We see a climate of crippling fear. Everyone looking over their shoulder, or averting their eyes. Ask a teacher: Can you imagine overtly valuing things that can't be measured?

We see everything treated the same. Vanilla subjects. Tidy, neat, convenient. Don't risk, don't dare. Don't create mess. Don't give access to that tool. Don't let them fail. Ask a teacher and ask a child: In what ways is art unique? What does art need to be allowed to flourish in your school? What even is "art"?

We see teachers who cannot find joy and love in teaching, because they are not enabled to find joy and love in teaching. Does Ofsted ask: Do you find joy and love in teaching? Do your pupils find joy and love in learning? What do we feel this takes from us, to ask this question? What are we scared of? Why can't we use those words?

We see young parents and teachers whose own education has not shown them the promise of a more creative, holistic education, so they do not see the possibilities, do not know what their own children are therefore missing. Ask a young teacher: What is art for? How does it serve us? In what ways is it a catalyst? In what ways is it a sensor? In what ways is it a release? How can art make children feel safe?

We see how a curriculum which places emphasis on measurable knowledge which can be pedantically defined and assessed has destroyed the space for exploration, discovery, self-learning. Ask a child: Are you able to explore uncertainty without fear of being judged? Do you feel like you are only valued when you can achieve? Do you feel like you are valued enough for the journey you are on to be the thing which is celebrated? Ask the teacher: How do you feel about the facilitation of an exploration of unknowledge? How do you feel about a child discovering something you didn't know could be taught (or measured)?

We see lack of vision. Our education system is a run-down version of a Victorian model. Does our education system embody aspiration? Just as the language we use reflects and shapes the culture we are in, our schools are a physical manifestation of our educational values. Ask a child: Does the environment in which you learn fill you full of excitement? Does it fill you full of confidence for the future? Ask a teacher: Does the pedagogy by which you teach stir your soul? Do you believe you are part of a system which is inclusive and aspirational?

We see whole communities who don't feel any sense of cultural entitlement. It starts with valuing finger painting which seems so throwaway. Anyone can finger paint. But if you don't let the exploration follow and grow, art remains just

finger painting and of course we can do away with that. We see a basic misunderstanding that art cannot be facilitated with as much rigour as any other subject. That if we assume art is just “nice” then it is a luxury we don’t need. Ask a child: When was the last time you (choose a word: made, drew, painted, sung, acted, were introduced to an artist who shared your values, celebrated your creativity...)?

We see a culture in which we are embarrassed to use words like love, play, curiosity, and nurture in schools beyond EYFS. We have been disempowered to use language which celebrates individuality, and which acknowledges what it is to be human in schools. Ask a child and a teacher: Do you feel better after your day of education than you did before the start? Does the environment make you feel cared for and supported? Do you feel emotionally and intellectually richer? Was it fun? Do you feel fulfilled? Do you even know what that means?

Does this sound idealistic? Too big a job? Shall we just continue as we are? Turn our cheek. If being brave, visionary, radical feels hard, even impossible, then please understand the way we currently stand on the earth has not encouraged that kind of approach. By taking away our right to nurture our creative and critical thinking skills, we are being disempowered. It’s happening already. The books are already burning – smouldering rather

than flames so we do not notice.

Being brave can be small and quiet. We don't have to shout. It doesn't have to take years (it can't).

More heart. Less arrogance, less bullishness, more listening. More seeing with our eyes wide open. Less measurement. More holistic approaches. Less binary choices. A big re-think about what purpose education serves. Radical rethink about what a curriculum is. Greater ability to understand education has a responsibility to go beyond knowledge, which can be googled or accessed in the blink of an AI. More recognition that we are humans and we have traits, needs, desires which can be developed and tapped into. More modelling of who we would like to be as a society. More emotional intelligence to counterbalance artificial intelligence. More problem solving through experience. And willingness and ability to see the far, far bigger perspective.

So that one day, we might look on this point in time, as we stand upon the earth, and see it for what it is: a very small contracted dot, tight and defensive, that we have been engineered into through lack of vision, insight, confidence and love. From here we have to feel able to relax and expand outwards. To use the word love in education without embarrassment, and in doing so ensure we give opportunities to teachers and pupils which enable them to feel grounded, appreciated,

empowered, connected and safe. And from there, we can all move forwards.

Which words would you like to use?

Paula Briggs, CEO & Creative Director, AccessArt,
April 2024

Explore...

Not just ideas: Action Too



“One cold, rainy morning in January 1999,
I received a phone call from the then

DfES. The woman started the call with the words: “What is the best news someone could call you with on such a rainy January day?”

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Why AccessArt Can't support oak national academy



“Like many educational publishers, we were concerned at the time about both the

nature and quality of the resources created, the ethics of the creation of a curriculum by government, and also the potential impact of a so called “free” curriculum on commercial and charitable educational suppliers...”

Read why we think Oak is a flawed idea...

Talking Points: Hormazd Narielwalla

A collection of sources and imagery to explore the work of Hormazd Narielwalla.

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AGES 9-11

AGES 11-14

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FREE TO ACCESS

Hormazd Narielwalla

Hormazd Narielwalla works across a number of artistic disciplines including printmaking,

sculpture and artist's books but he is best known for his intricate paper collages and assemblages, which are made on the surfaces of antique, vintage and bespoke tailoring patterns. – [Hormazd Narielwalla](#)

Explore more of Hormazd's figure work on [his website](#) including his [Diamond Dolls](#).

Questions to Ask Children

What do you like/dislike about Hormazd's work?

Why do you think that Hormazd works on brown paper/used patterns?

Are there any collaged designs that stood out to you? Which ones and why?

This Talking Points Is Used In...

Pathway: Fashion Design

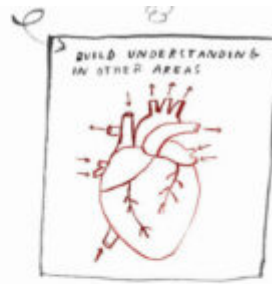
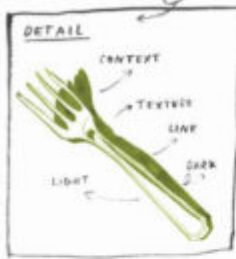


[This is featured in the 'Fashion Design' pathway](#)

using sketchbooks to make visual notes



Show me what you see



SHOW ME WHAT YOU SEE METHOD:

1) GUIDE SEEING

"SHOW ME..."

2) RULES



3) CHALLENGE EXPECTATIONS

4) COUNT DOWN