

# “Acts of Kindness” Workshop

By [Paula Briggs](#)



Portrait of Jan Brueghel I (1568-1625) and his family, by Peter Paul Rubens (Detail)

The day after Trump and Zelenskyy stunned the world with their televised argument in the Oval Office, AccessArt ran a “Constructing Positive Social Stories: Acts of Kindness” workshop session at the [AccessArt Lab](#).

The event was one of a number of “[Artists & Teachers Exploring Together](#)” sessions, devised by AccessArt to give us an opportunity to think about some of the more philosophical issues behind art education. By working with artists and educators who are open to holding ideas lightly, we hope to collaboratively discover new arts educational approaches and activities, transferable to a variety of settings.

The idea behind this particular session was to explore how we can use making as a tool to help us focus more closely on the positives which surround us everyday, no matter how small. By creating a shared space for making and conversation, we hoped to lift spirits and create a sense of shared experience.

This post shares the session aims, some of the conversational highlights, and observations of the workshop attendees, and my own as facilitator. Thank you to all who attended, and for your generosity.

*“A timely workshop this Saturday morning led by AccessArt. Reflecting individually on our own experiences of small kindnesses, and then choosing*

*from a table of materials to abstractly or literally depict these, prompted conversation that magnified the acts beyond their original intent. The joy of creating by hand alongside others, of talking and making sense whilst sculpting and glueing, of sharing in stories of the smallest of acts that had made a difference to someone else... about people feeling seen, loved, heard. I left feeling lighter, more hopeful about the world, and with more generosity towards other drivers on my journey home."*

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*AccessArt is a UK Charity and we believe everyone has the right to be creative. AccessArt provides inspiration to help us all reach our creative potential.*

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**Collage: Deconstructing,  
Reconstructing and**

# Abstracting

## What We Like About This Resource...

*“I really like how this playful resource helps us to make a creative response inspired by a stimulus, ensuring that the stimulus is only an entry point into an outcome that will look totally different. Exploring the themes of colour, texture and composition through the lens of different artists also helps us see how we can interpret (and re-interpret) colours and materials in a meaningful way. Viewfinders and collage are also great tools for those who experience ‘fear of the white page’ and will allow learners to make conscious creative decisions as they go.” – Tobi, AccessArt*

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# Days

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## The AccessArt Lab Areas of Focus and Core Values

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The AccessArt Lab provides AccessArt with the opportunity to focus on practical and pedagogical exploration of key areas of interest which have emerged over the last few years. The work in the AccessArt Lab will be guided by the areas of focus and core values described below.

[Find out about the in-person sessions](#) we will be running at the Lab to help facilitate these areas of focus.

### Areas of Focus

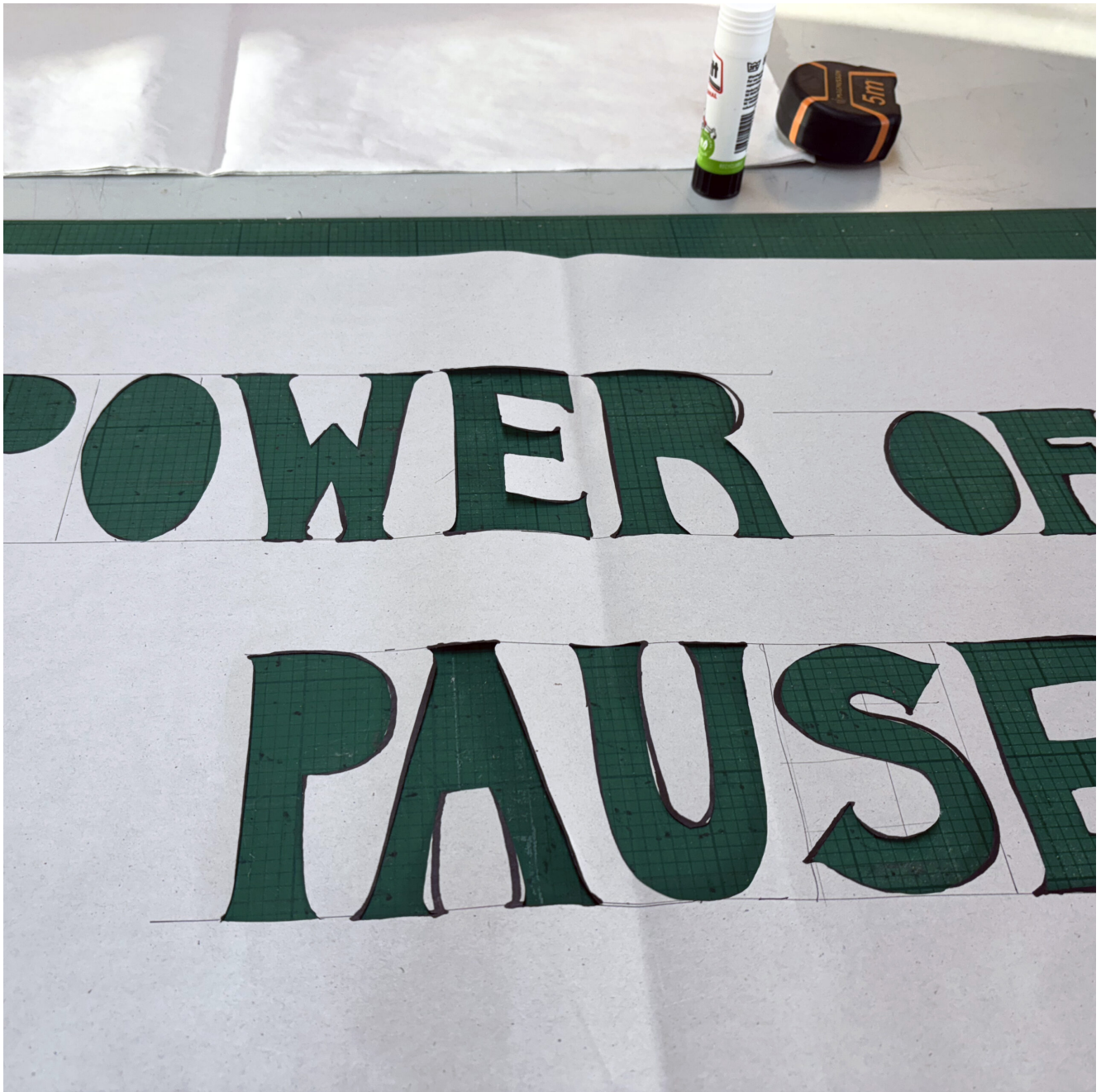


**The AccessArt Lab will be exploring the following areas of focus. New areas will be allowed to evolve over time.**

- Exploration of Inhabiting “Spaces of Not-Knowing” – What does it feel like to be in spaces of not-knowing? What are the risks and benefits? What might be the outcomes? How can we enable these spaces?**

- **Exploration of Social Models of Learning – How can we embrace shared experiences and outcomes to discover more open, inclusive and diverse ways of thinking and acting?**
- **Re-Connection to Physical Senses, Body-Based Activities and Exploration of Resistant Forces – Whilst not turning our backs on digital, how can we better protect and appreciate time spent in the physical world? How can we build tolerance of what resistance feels like (in interaction with materials and ideas, and in communication between people), and how can we more positively manage our relationship to resistance?**
- **Teenage Enquiry-Based Learning – How can we devise a rich, diverse and adaptable curriculum to engage all teenagers?**

## **Core Values**



The work undertaken in the Lab will be guided by the following principles:

- Awareness of the programming and messaging of our everyday lives and how this impacts upon our thought, action and wellbeing. Alongside this, an exploration of how we can explore a gentler, yet more physical way of thinking and acting, and the benefits this might

**bring.**

- **Permission for “Pause” – in all forms – space to think, space to act without outcome, space to play...**
- **Appreciation of “question” over “answer” – Where do we put the emphasis and how does it change our experience?**
- **An understanding that exploration of all areas of focus within the lab ultimate benefit others (people, communities and society) through accessible sharing of practice and ideas.**

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# Tiny Art Schools: Art School Ilkley Part One

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# Tiny Art Schools: Art School Ilkley Part Two

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# **Tiny Art Schools: Art School Ilkley Part Three**

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## **“When We Hold Art Education In Our Hands”**

Recording of a presentation delivered by Paula Briggs, CEO and Creative Director of AccessArt, at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft & Design Education on 17th December 2024.

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# The AccessArt Lab at Stapleford Granary

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AccessArt has always advocated for the role artists can play in creating dynamic, engaging and relevant art education experiences for the whole community. We have seen through the [AccessArt](#)

[Primary Art Curriculum](#) how activities that were devised, trialled and tested in community settings, led by artists working with small groups, have then been very successfully transferred into more formal education settings. Artists bring to education an opening of what is possible, together with a depth of understanding and clarity of purpose. Artists help educators ask important and often challenging questions: What is the purpose of art education, and how can we best inspire and enable?

AccessArt has been at the forefront of this approach for 25 years, and we have helped thousands of schools, organisations and individual artist educators transform their practice. Our recently launched [Tiny Art School Movement](#) is helping to encourage artists to reflect upon their potential as educators and to work with local communities.

We opened the first ever AccessArt Lab as part of our continuing commitment to push the boundaries of what is possible when artists and educators from all settings work together. Led by [Paula Briggs](#), Creative Director of AccessArt and the AccessArt Lab, the studio at Stapleford Granary, Cambridge, provided a space for an ongoing creative (and practical) conversation between AccessArt and our audience.

*“We are very excited about the potential of the*

*AccessArt Lab. We'll be using the space to devise and test new content, especially around the creation of resources for teenagers, and around how we nurture creative thinking for all. But over and above these key areas, we'll be exploring (and celebrating) what it is like for learners to enjoy being in a space of "not knowing." Too often, education focuses on the accumulation of precise and nameable knowledge, and then on measuring knowledge retention. Art provides a valuable alternative to this kind of thinking, providing opportunities to acknowledge there are other types of intelligence, and that there is real value in helping learners and teachers experience the benefits of operating in a space of play, feeling safe but inspired in the space of "not knowing... yet," and empowered by personal discovery.*

*As a predominantly [digital organisation with a national and international reach](#), the AccessArt Lab will provide an opportunity for us to engage with audiences in new ways, and of course everything we learn and create in the Lab will be shared with all our audiences via the AccessArt website. We are excited to see how this develops into what we hope will be a vibrant and meaningful creative conversation, helping our combined voice and expertise to be heard across all settings, and to help affect change."*

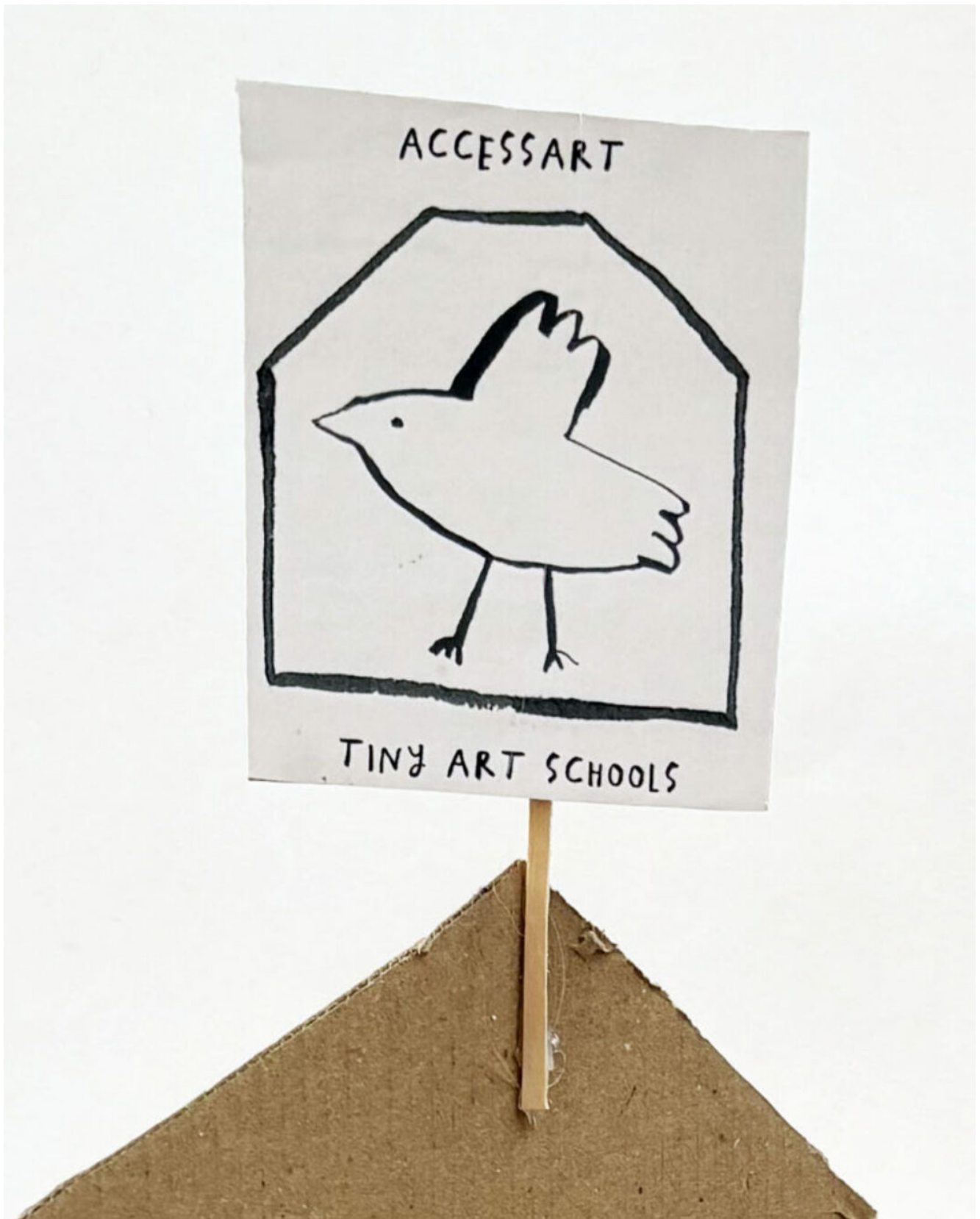
What Opens  
in the  
Body and  
the Mind?

Hands  
Making:



SPACE of UNKNOWING

*Staying in a space*



[Stapleford Granary](#) is an Arts Centre whose aim is to foster cultural understanding through education.

The venue offers music, art, education & conversation in a beautiful 19th century farm complex, situated at the foot of the Gog Magog Downs, just 5 miles from the centre of Cambridge.

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# Talking Points: An Introduction to Shape

A collection of sources and imagery to introduce shape.

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## An Introduction to Shape

Shape is used throughout art for lots of reasons; shapes can be vehicles for colour, convey emotion, and lead the eye on a journey around the page.

Different types of shapes can be categorised as 'geometric', 'organic' and 'intuitive'.

Geometric shapes, like squares and triangles, are mainly found in manmade objects, for example, houses. You would often find 'organic' shapes in nature, for example, in leaves or shells. In 2-dimensional artwork, artists also create shapes 'intuitively' to represent a 'thing'.

Artists use shapes to communicate a certain message or convey an emotion.

- What emotion do you associate with certain shapes, for example, a triangle, circle or square?

- Do you feel different when you look at organic shapes compared to geometric shapes?

Artworks consist of lines and shapes built together with colour in a certain composition, whether it's an abstract or figurative piece.

- Some people would define shape through line. What do you think?
- When does a line become a shape?

When you look at an artwork, consider the shape and also the space around the shape (negative and positive space). These are shapes in themselves.

- How do the shapes sit in the composition?
- What is your eye drawn to? Why do you think this is?

Discuss the artwork below, considering some of the statements and questions above.



**Abstract Landscape (1915- 1916) painting in high resolution by Henry Lyman Sayen. Original from the Smithsonian Institution.**



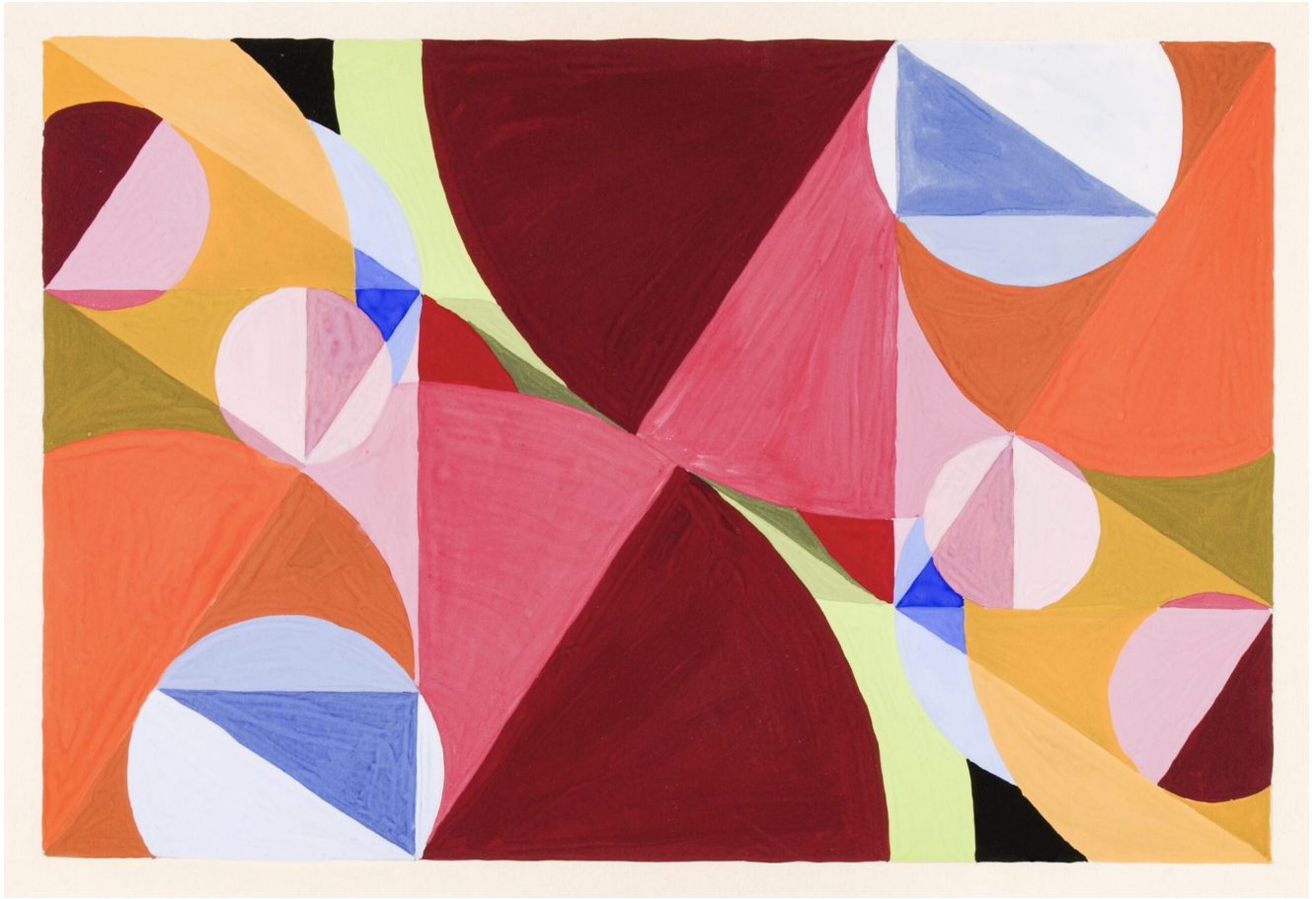
**Artist Unkown, Still Life with Guitar, Original public domain image from Saint Louis Art Museum**



**Landscape by Joe Gamble**



**Polypodium vulgare, British by Anna Atkins and Anne Dixon, Original public domain image from Getty Museum**



**Area Broken by Perpendiculars (ca.1934) painting in high resolution by Joseph Schillinger. Original from The Smithsonian Institution.**



**Monoprint by Claire Harrup**

## Questions to Ask Children

Describe the shapes you can see? Consider the edges, angles, colours etc.

How do the shapes connect with each other?

Do any of these artworks use negative space? What shapes can you spot?

Shapes can give the illusion of something being there. In Claire Harrup's monoprint, what can you see?

Where is your eye drawn to? What journey does it take and do you think it's intentional?

What do you notice about the overall composition of the piece? How do the shapes and colours impact your opinion and overall feeling?

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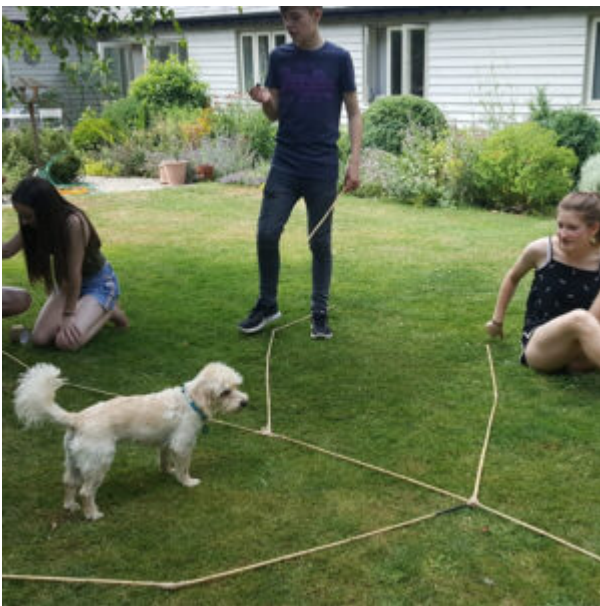
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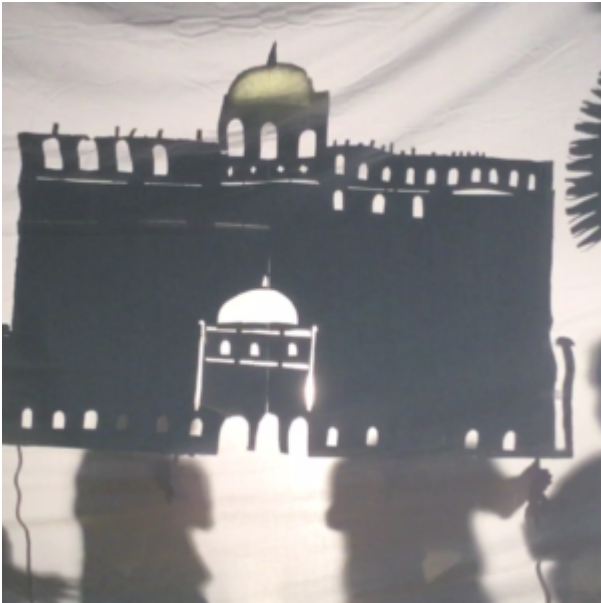
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