

Can Labour Show It Really Understands The Power Of The Arts To Transform Lives?

[Paula Briggs](#) asks is it brave to acknowledge what art can do for us, or foolish to ignore it?

When New Labour came into power in 1997 there was an energy of fandom; the arts in the UK were thriving, and Blair, Britpop and the Young British Artists celebrated together in Downing Street. As an artist and spectator, it felt reasonable enough - here was Blair doing just what we hoped; showing he valued the arts.

But actually, with hindsight, we can see more clearly the particular way Labour valued the arts. Yes the arts made us cool – but they also made us exportable, monetizable. Labour valued the arts from the perspective of capitalism. Investing in the arts made sense – they were good for the economy. Let's not forget that it was during Labours' government that the term "Cultural Economy" was quite literally coined. The newly established Department for Culture, Media and Sport worked with creative entrepreneurs to understand not just which "industries" might be considered creative, but also to measure the inter-relations and financial impact of these

industries on the economy. New Labour's establishment of the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) - the organisation, by the way, which helped establish AccessArt - was one of the ways Labour put meat on the bone. There was philanthropy yes (like the 25 museum and galleries who were subsidised to offer free entry to visitors), but there was always quid pro quo. For New Labour, investment in the arts, and protection of the arts, made economic sense because they saw the arts, and the people that worked in the arts, as commodities. You were a producer, or consumer, or both, but either way you brought in revenue - giving a tangible value to the interactions within the creative economies.

And the [figures for the Creative Economy](#) are still shared widely today. The Creative Industries website shares that in 2022 official government figures show that the creative economy grew by 6.8% (growing more than twice as fast as the rest of the UK economy that year), and added a whopping £124.6bn to the value of the UK.

And that's to be applauded, and I've shared those figures as often as the next person when trying to convince others of the value of the arts to society. But, whenever I do, I have a few niggles at the back of my head. I'd like to talk about them, and to think about how our current Labour government might show it has the capacity to

really understand the potential value of the arts to society, now, in 2024, and to use that understanding to inform vision, policy and approach.

Niggle Number 1 – No Equality of Value

When you look at the breakdown of money generated through the Creative Economies, there are of course clear winners, and therefore clear losers. Things like video game production churn the £'s. Being a fine artist does not churn the £'s. The creative economy figures are posted on the walls of schools to tempt parents and pupils into taking GCSE art, and it's true there is money to be made in some creative industries, but it is also very true to say that it is incredibly hard (always was but it has got worse) to make even a modest living in many areas of the visual arts. I'm surrounded by illustrators, animators, painters, sculptors whose incomes needs supplementing by other non-creative work. It's a hard slog. Job satisfaction maybe sometimes be high, but it is a reality that many creative areas do not bring in the pounds, and underpinning that reality *is that it is not always possible to assign a financial value to a creative life, but that creative life is no less valuable.* To fail to recognise, and to fail to have a conversation about "creative non-economies", is perhaps at worse elitist, and at best a missed opportunity.

Niggle Number 2 – No Mirrored Action/Intent

The statistics about the Creative Economy remain enticing and persuasive - even Rishi Sunak's government couldn't ignore their rosy glow. And yet... there has been little money, or even real intent, where the mouth is. I won't talk about the cuts to the arts at every level, and I won't talk about the way the arts have been razed in schools through decisions to promote STEM Subjects, and the belief in Progress 8, and the lack of understanding around "value". If you are reading this, you probably know all that. And where we do have funding, for example through the Arts Council, are we certain that the mechanisms which enable money to be passed from government to artist / arts organisation are fit for purpose to enable equality of access? Suffice to say, whilst governments are happy to hold the golden prize of the creative industries, they have failed to invest in the arts infrastructure and in the education needed to fuel that pipeline. And to hold up the Creative Economy figures as success, is to gaslight some of the Creative Industries themselves.

Niggle Number 3 – What About Creative Non-Economies?

There are many instances in which the arts bring non-economic value to society, or more accurately, bring economic value to society through a more organic, longer term route. An instance of this might be the fact that engagement with art can

help wellbeing; improved wellbeing helps productivity and helps protect against time away from work due to illness. Personal creativity and expression might not earn bucks for the economy, but it does help nurture a sense of connection and empowerment – which in itself helps counterbalance feelings of fragmentation and dissatisfaction, which if left unchecked, as we have seen, cost the economy money in countless ways. We need to talk more about the creative non-economies, and to acknowledge the very valuable role they play in our lives.

So, What Do We Need Labour To Understand?

Labour needs to begin with the question:

What are the values of the arts to society – in their totality?

How do we map, not only the purely financial interactions between arts and society as Blair did, but also the social and behavioural values and benefits. And once we have understood that, how do we shape language and policy which better represents that totality of value.

Let's start by calling out some issues in our society today.

The country is in a very different place now, to the one Labour inherited in 1997. Many people feel a lack of control and empowerment. Challenged by the climate crisis, the cost of living, world

peace, the unknown of AI - the list goes on - we do not feel safe. Instead, surrounded by pressures on all sides, people feel anxious, stressed and disenfranchised. There is a sense of the country being fragmented and disconnected; we become defensive, and we lash out, looking to lay the blame for our feelings (as individuals and as a society) wherever we can, and most definitely on anything we perceive as a threat to our very being.

Of course very little of this is caused by the fact that the arts have been systematically devalued – no one would argue that. But there *is* a very real argument that says by not making positive space and time for the arts in our lives (and that includes investment in art education) then we have taken away a key tool from our toolkit which would help individuals and society manage, understand and more positively respond to the challenges above. *By not appreciating the real value of the arts, governments have failed to recognise the power of the arts to enable people to live better lives.*

As humans, we rely on our visual, aural and spatial senses to navigate the world. We quite literally sense our way in and through the world, using our hands, hearts and brains to enable us to process, test and respond. At any point, in any day, our understanding of how we exist in the world, and how we feel about that, is governed by

these processes, and vitally, it is through our ability to think critically, creatively, imaginatively, that we show ourselves as humans. Art education, at every level, should help learners understand the importance of these skills, and in so doing help learners feel inspired to explore and understand, enabled to process and create and empowered to connect and affect. *If we value the output (the art), we must remember to acknowledge the importance of the input* – we must not fail to recognise that the artistic journey (of exploring, understanding, making, sharing) has an even greater value.

That journey is one of the things which makes us human, so if we take it away - if society doesn't acknowledge or create time and space for it – then we are left less than whole, and we feel less empowered, less connected and less positive. We suffer in countless ways as individuals and as individuals suffer, so too does society over time. We are all full of sensitivities (we sense the world after all), but these sensitivities are vital and useful. It is only when they are squashed, ignored, or not given proper means for processing and expressing, that those sensitivities can become anxieties. As we become more anxious, our negative or inexpressible thoughts over time exhibit themselves as actions, and negative behaviours form. Society has to deal with these in the form of poor mental health, dissatisfaction, fragmentation. And government

quite literally has to pay for those.

By not investing time and space, and by not using language which allows us to recognise the true value of the arts, government has been complicit in allowing us to lose an element of ourselves. AND they have squandered an opportunity to empower us to cope, heal and move forward, in turn creating greater burdens on other areas of the economy.

Making Space To Consciously Define The Purpose Of Art For Our Time

Every period of time sees a redefinition of the role and purpose art serves to that culture or society. Most often we only recognise these shifts after the event, understanding them from a historical perspective, BUT there is a real opportunity for society to actively define what role they wish art to play, what greater good they wish it to serve, and to proactively shape that purpose through actions. This is the opportunity we have now. Through collective conversation and vision, we can ask ourselves:

- *How can art and artists serve us now?*
- *What do we need to feel better?*
- *And what can artists offer?*

Without in anyway undermining or dismissing the

financial value of the creative economies (and long may they grow with investment and understanding), I'd like to suggest that perhaps for the UK, in 2024, the real value of the arts lies in the fact that *art can help us heal**.

We need Labour to recognise that:

Where people are feeling fear, art can help people process and express.

Where people are feeling fragmented, art can help people connect.

Where people are feeling despair, art can create optimism.

Where people are feeling disempowered and unheard, art can empower.

What Labour did in 1997 – parading and waving at us to a backdrop of brash, upbeat, extrovert and exportable creativity, isn't going to wash. We need something gentler, something more holistic, more caring, more inclusive and more diverse. We need the language around the understanding to change and soften. We need an approach which recognises that the value of the arts comes in a variety of different guises (and we will learn that ironically many of these guises will save us money in the long term). And we need to embrace the understanding that it is in the *process* of making art (whatever our level or means of expression) we perhaps find most value.

Recommendations from AccessArt

As [visual arts education charity](#) acting as voice for our 23,500 members and 44,000 subscribers, and as Subject Association for Art and member of the [CfSA](#), we would like Labour to:

1. Undertake a reform of the curriculum for all schools, working with Subject Experts such as AccessArt (Subject Association for Art), to create a more holistic curriculum which shows understanding of the vital role the arts play within a pupil's education.
(www.accessart.org.uk/primary-art-curriculum-more-info/ and www.accessart.org.uk/enquiry-based-learning-for-teenagers-menu/)
2. Understand, protect and advocate for the unique space which the arts provide for a pupil within the school day, and for the positive benefits of being in this type of space.
(www.accessart.org.uk/why-we-need-to-allow-art-to-be-the-unique-subject-it-is/)
3. Abolish any measure which creates a hierarchy of subjects, such as Progress 8 and subject buckets.
4. Change the language around education, making space in the lexicon to recognise education is holistic, and human-centred, not mechanistic or one size fits all. Recognise that the education system we need, in a world

of growing AI, is not the same as the system we have had, and that a focus on growth of us as humans, not competitors of AI, requires a brave and holistic approach. (www.accessart.org.uk/taking-control-of-the-narrative/)

5. Invest in subject-specific teacher training (whether Initial Teacher Training or Continuing Professional Development and Learning) equally across all subjects. Understand we need subject experts in ALL subjects (not just maths) (<https://cms.wellcome.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/final-cpd-challenge-evaluation-report.pdf>)
6. Recognise not only the importance of the Creative Economies, but also expand the language, and therefore the intent, to the “Creative Economies and Creative Communities” which recognises the totality of the value of the arts to individuals and to society. In so doing, we build a more diverse, democratic and inclusive understanding of the arts, rather than one based only upon a more capitalist understanding.
7. Connect the “Creative Economies and Creative Communities”, to other areas of life, including making space for them in conversations in other departments around health, wellbeing, productivity, citizenship, reformation, regeneration, industry, sustainability and others. Recognise the

complex but subtle interactions and benefits this will bring.

8. Recognise that artists of all disciplines, backgrounds and intentions bring a wealth of skills, behaviours and approaches which can be shared and benefit others, including curiosity, divergent thinking, exploration, testing, reflecting, communicating, creating and connecting. Recognise the potential in working with artists and arts organisations at all levels, appreciating their value, and sharing responsibility, reconnecting artists and arts organisations to the communities they serve or speak for.
9. Recognise the importance of opportunities for returning to creative exploration of the arts at all stages of life is an importance contributor to wellbeing, which in itself impacts positively on that persons health.
10. To ensure that there is a solid infrastructure to allow for incubation and development of arts organisations of all sizes, including individuals, and to ensure that this is representative of the diverse cultures of the UK.

Labour, remember, growth comes in many forms, and there are many interpretations of the word value. Let's embrace them all for the good of all.

Paula Briggs,

**The first principle in the preamble to the World Health Organisation's constitution, created in 1946 states:*

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

WHO goes on to say:

"With this in mind, WHO has always long used the arts in its work on health promotion and communication. Anthropology has shown that in early human history, art, religion and healing evolved in the same social space. In 2019, WHO began testing arts interventions to advance specific health goals, including universal health coverage (UHC), mental health and suicide prevention, maternal health, blindness prevention and quality of care, in addition to historic efforts in HIV/AIDS prevention... Over the past two decades, innovations incorporating the arts and health have been used to enhance physical and emotional support for resilience and wellbeing in communities, complementing and supporting therapeutic, rehabilitative and preventive efforts, increasing awareness of health and contributing to emergency preparedness. WHO's Regional Office for Europe is leading work into research on the effect of art in health through

its Behavioural and Cultural Insights program.”

and

“Artistic expression grew in lockstep with human cultural development and has long played an integral part in how we teach, learn, communicate and heal. Since our earliest ancestors began telling stories to make sense of the world, we have evolved to learn from narrative, be it through visual media, song or performance. The arts are uniquely suited to help us understand and communicate concepts and emotions by drawing on all our senses and capacity for empathy... Art can help us to emotionally navigate the journey of battling an illness or injury, to process difficult emotions in times of emergency and challenging events. The creation and enjoyment of the arts helps promote holistic wellness and can be a motivating factor in recovery... Benefits are seen across several markers, including health promotion, the management of health conditions and illness, and disease prevention.”

<https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>

<https://www.who.int/initiatives/arts-and-health>

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/feb/23/jennie-lee-policy-arts-white-paper-funding>

<https://creativeeconomy.britishcouncil.org/guide/what-creative-economy/>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c0b3de5274a7202e19327/Classifying_and_Measuring_the_Creative_Industries_Consultation_Paper_April_2013-final.pdf

<https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/facts-figures/creative-industries-add-ps124bn-of-value-to-uk>

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/07/05/uk-general-elections-2024-what-art-world-figures-want-from-the-new-labour-government>

https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

<https://www.accessart.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Art-Now-Report-V10-singles.pdf>

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.

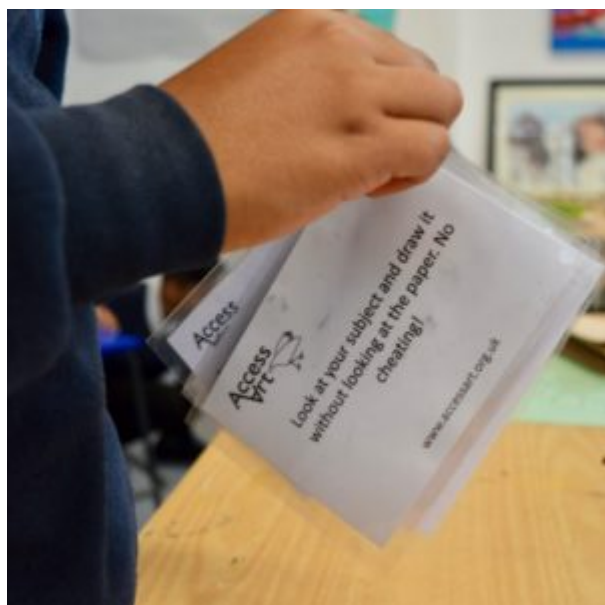
AccessArt welcomes artists, educators, teachers and parents both in the UK and overseas.

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.

What I Ate in a Day

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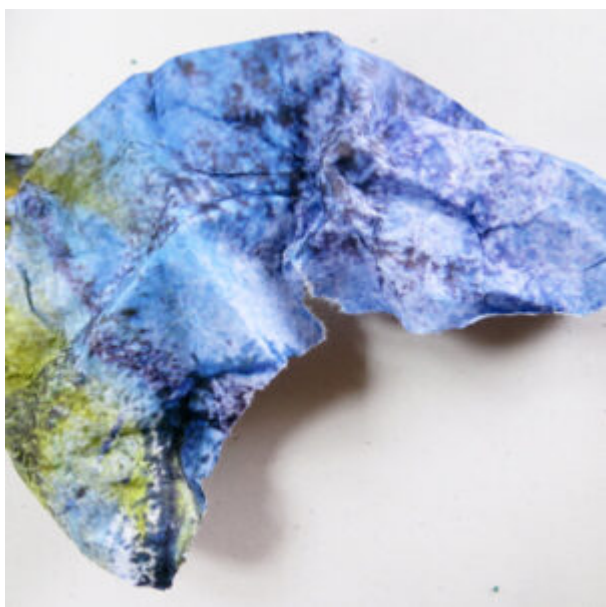
**AccessArt
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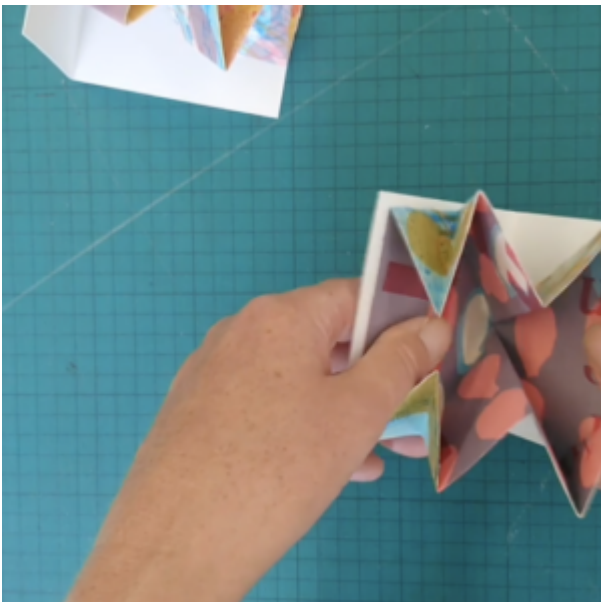
playful making pathway



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**Adapting AccessArt: Playful Making
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Adapting AccessArt: Pattern and Colour

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What We Like About This Resource...

"I really like how Yu-Ching's process combines hand-drawing and painting, before moving across to digital. Combining those processes ensures that the illustrations retain a very warm, tactile look to them, but the digital element refines the imagery. We really like what Yu-Ching says about the benefits of silent books being universally understood and feel that the benefits and challenges of not using words means that the imagery has to be really clear, which encourages lots of exciting creative problem-solving." – Tobi, AccessArt

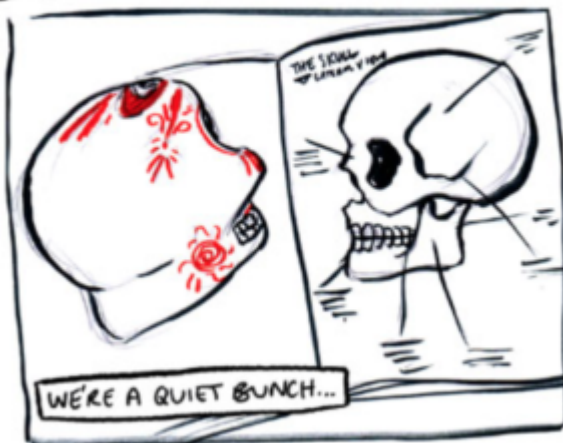
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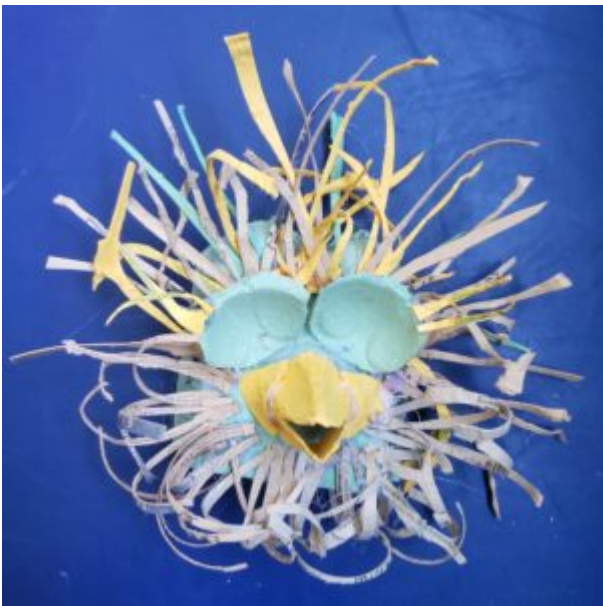


Making a Mask from Sticks and Tissue Paper



**See This Resource Used in
Schools...**





25 Year Celebration: The AccessArt Draw-Along



On Monday 1st July 2024 we celebrated AccessArt's 25th birthday by hosting the first ever AccessArt Draw-Along!

The AccessArt team led a number of drawing exercises, and [Rowan Briggs Smith](#) was our live drawing demonstrator.

Thousands of participants watched the live event on their whiteboards or devices following along in classrooms, halls, community spaces or homes. You can find images of drawings from the session on this [Padlet](#).

Register Your Interest in the Next Draw-Along

Wherever you are, whoever you are, you are invited to our next Draw-Along event (date to be confirmed) to draw alongside us in a participatory event!

Keep an eye on the [CPD Zoom Events page](#) to get updates on when the next Draw-Along will be.

The event will be open and free of charge to AccessArt members only.

Please Remember:

- The exercises are suitable for everyone – ages 5 through to adult
- By showing the event on a whiteboard you can have as large a participatory audience as you like. You only need to book one place per device used to share from.
- You must not charge participants for the event.

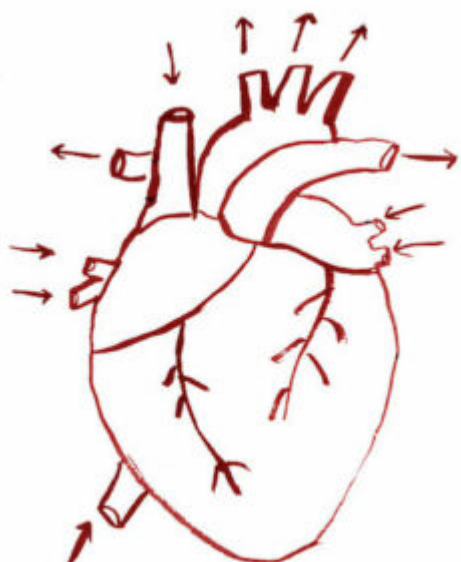
- The event is free of charge but only open to AccessArt members. The Zoom webinar link will be behind the AccessArt membership wall – so please make sure you are a [member of AccessArt](#) and can login!
 - These events will NOT be recorded.
-

CPD Recording: Celebrating AccessArt Pathways: Creating School Exhibitions & Displays

CPD Recording: Developing The Creativity of Teachers

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how do non-specialist teachers teach art?



InSET Day at Welland Academy: Exploring Printmaking Processes



**TEACHERS MAKE MARK MAKING TOOLS AND
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Arts Apocalypse: 14 organisations and artists unite to raise the alarm on the decimation of the arts in schools and colleges

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nsead

CLPE
CENTRE FOR LITERACY
IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

MUSIC
YOUTH

EQUITY

national
education
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AccessArt has joined forces with the National Education Union and a coalition of organisations in the arts and education sectors to spotlight the eroding of the arts across the curriculum.

The Arts Apocalypse statement offers policy solutions that the signatories believe would help save the arts from catastrophe.

We urge politicians of all parties to consider the statement, take notice of the critical situation and commit to implementing the solutions offered.

[Please download the full statement and share](#)

Arts Apocalypse: Time For Change in a Failing System

The crisis in our schools is deep, multi-faceted and worsening. The current state of arts education is one of the clearest signs of what has gone wrong with our whole system.

A commitment to arts education is essential to arrest the decline and to build an education system fit for the 21st century.

We call on politicians of all parties to recognise and respond to the problems on the scale that is necessary. We encourage educators and the wider arts community to push for radical change in their schools and communities.

The arts are essential to human fulfilment; they

are meaning-making activities which have a personal, social and economic value. But in education, what is recognised in principle is often denied in practice. In an underfunded system, we have seen arts education decimated as school leaders are forced to make impossible decisions on an ever-dwindling budget and a damaging focus on a narrow curriculum.

In primary schools, the demands of testing all too often push arts education into a corner of the curriculum. Primary teachers report that they do not feel enabled to be successful arts educators. Initial Teacher Training fails to prepare teachers to deliver arts subjects with confidence. Opportunities for professional development are rare.

In secondary schools, the move towards ever greater accountability rooted in the promotion of the EBacc system has a similar effect: students are actively discouraged from pursuing Arts-based routes. Subjects, like English, which the government sees as important have been stripped of their creative content. Assessment in other arts subjects is overloaded with written tasks. Increasingly, the government steers schools to deliver a prescriptive, often centrally planned curriculum, focused on examinations, in which Arts are sidelined. The impact on behaviour, mental health, school engagement and attendance has been catastrophic.

We demand systemic change

Learning to be a teacher of art or music – indeed of any subject – should mean learning about the skills and knowledge associated with that specialism. Reshaped by government, teacher education has come to mean something else – a training in generic skills, a lowering of quality.

The numbers are plunging. As a generation of students who have been through the declining system reach adulthood, recruitment of specialist teachers in the Arts subjects has fallen to dangerous levels. This negative spiral threatens the very existence of quality Arts education in schools. Where good practice does exist, it is in spite of the system, not because of it.

The consequences of not changing course are bleak. We have a system that does not help students reach their potential, that neglects their cultural experiences at home and in the community, that adds to problems of poor mental health, behaviour and attendance.

The relegation of the Arts subjects to third class citizens in our education system threatens the future of the creative industries in this country, but it also hinders our ability to nurture children to fully develop their talents and interests. It obstructs their access to the Arts, rights which are protected in Article 29 and 31 of the UN Convention on the Human Rights of the

Child.

We believe that the benefits of a rounded, broad curriculum with an equal focus on the Arts can bring huge societal, economic, and personal mental health benefits to future generations. We demand systemic change.

We want politicians to pledge the following:

- A significant increase in education spending, with specific funding for Arts education.**
- To increase the supply of teachers in the Arts, where ITT recruitment falls well short of targets.**
- To conduct a full review of curriculum and assessment from EYFS to Post-16 with the stated aim of broadening and improving Arts education. Practices such as Progress 8, EBacc and SATs that work to sideline Arts education should be ended.**
- To no longer use damaging low value language and 'Mickey Mouse' rhetoric to describe arts subjects.**
- To rebuild Arts education organisations which support schools.**
- To give education and arts trade unions, subject associations, arts educators, arts organisations a seat at the table when the**

curriculum is reviewed.

The Arts Apocalypse statement is supported by the following organisations:

[National Education Union](#), AccessArt, WGGB – The Writers’ Union, Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, Black Lives in Music, Equity, Musicians’ Union, One Dance UK, Susan M Coles - Arts Creativity Educational Consultant, Artist, UK Literacy Association, Music for Youth, National Drama, London Drama and National Society for Education in Art & Design.

CPD Recording: Working With Shape and Colour Pathway

**The Current Education System:
Too Much Beta, Not Enough Alpha**

Art Education: Moving Forwards with Confidence & Vision

At AccessArt, we are keen to share our insight, experience and vision as to how we might rethink the value and purpose of art education in particular, and education in general.

With a new Labour government and a Curriculum Review promised, we are at a pivotal moment in the UK.

The following articles have been curated to help share our thoughts and start a conversation. [Please get in touch](#) if you would like to discuss further, share your ideas, or lend your support.



Arts Education In Crisis: We Have The Evidence – Now We Need The Solution



Evidence and Solutions

A collection of current reports into the state of the arts / education, and solutions.

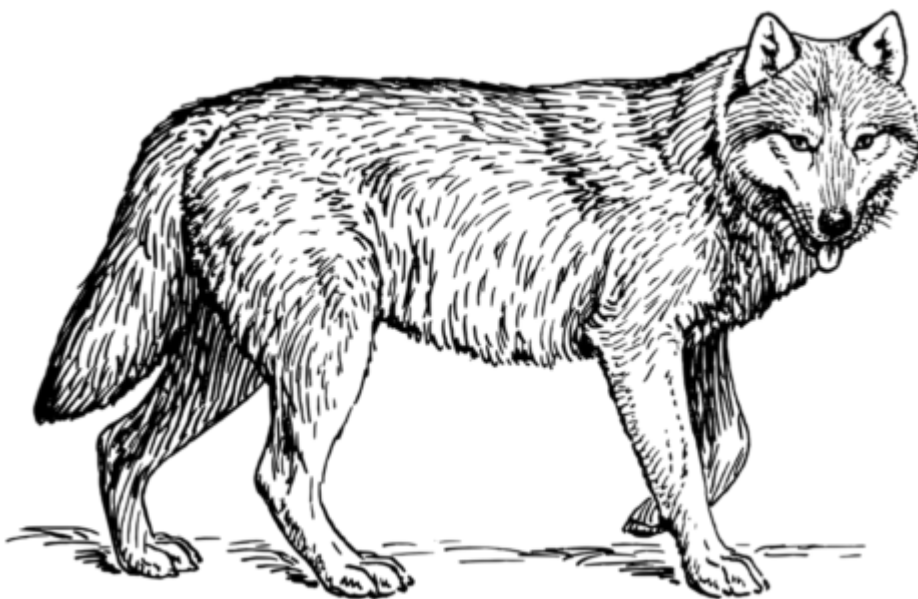
Can Labour Show It Really Understands The Power Of The Arts To Transform Lives?



What can art do for us, and why we shouldn't ignore it...

Read why we need to see that Labour understands the true value of the arts to individuals and to society.

Taking Control of the narrative



“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.”

Read why we need to change the narrative and speak with more courage about the purpose of education...

The Current Education System: Too Much Beta, Not Enough Alpha



Is our current education system helping to break, not build?

Can awareness of brainstates help us move forward to a more balanced curriculum?

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...

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?””

Explore and understand all that AccessArt has achieved and the impact we are making

Please Get In Touch

Oak National Academy & The Art & Design Curriculum

During 2022 and 2023 AccessArt attended consultations organised by Oak National Academy to explore the potential for relaunching Oak after its initial creation during the pandemic. 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.

First, a little history about AccessArt. We are [25 years old](#) this year, and we are proud to say that for the last few years we have become a [self-supporting arts organisation](#), requiring no funding from outside sources. We are in this fortunate position because our (many thousands of) [members](#) pay a small subscription fee to access all our resources. In turn, this allows us to create new resources for our community, and most importantly, remain true to our vision and integrity. The insight, intelligence and pragmatic nature of our offering to schools means that we are privileged to help thousands of teachers inspire hundreds of thousands of pupils. This is no more in evidence

than in the creation of the [AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum](#). When we planned and created our curriculum, we were brave, followed our instinct and experience, and made certain that alongside the curriculum ethos and resources we created a support system and network to enable teachers to become enthusiastic, knowledgeable and confident art facilitators. The success of the curriculum has been recognised, with schools and Trusts recommending the flexible and empowering scheme to their colleagues. Our real pride though, is that artists, designers and craftspeople recognise the curriculum as being robust, exciting and rich – exactly the kind of experience they appreciate and value as artists.

So you can image we are justifiably proud of our achievement. We are now busy at work on our [Key Stage 3 pathways](#), and beyond into adult and community education. Our vision is true, our team and trustees incredible, and our business model as a membership charity is strong.

In 2023 AccessArt was approached by Oak National Academy to explore partnership working in the creation of new curriculum resources, and later the same year I was approached to join the Expert Group. We turned both opportunities down. Here's why.

There is currently a [Judicial Review](#) brought about by three claimants: The British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), the Publishers

Association, and the Society of Authors. This is also supported by the National Education Union who are participating as an “interested party”.

“The government’s plans for Oak will be an unprecedented and unevidenced intervention that will cause irreparable damage to the education sector as we know it. The government is in effect creating a one-size-fits-all state publisher that promotes a single curriculum, controlled by the Education Secretary of the day. This will undo years of work by publishers who have invested expertise over many decades in creating a rich range of world-leading resources for school children across the country.

“There is simply too much at stake to let these plans proceed unopposed. The potential impact on teacher autonomy, learner outcomes, and curriculum diversity and quality is too significant. That is why authors, publishers, educational suppliers, school groups, teachers’ unions, and others have all voiced strong concern over these plans.” [Dan Conway, CEO of the Publishers Association](#)

“If we don’t act now, educators will be left with one set of state approved online resources which will threaten diversity and choice, remove financial incentives, and damage the healthy competition which is at the heart of educational publishing. The result will likely be a weaker overall pool of resources, greater challenges for

teachers, and a negative impact on students' learning." [Nicola Solomon, Chief Executive of the Society of Authors](#)

"Converting Oak from an emergency response to Covid to a permanent part of government is a decision with ominous implications. Without consultation or parliamentary debate, the government has taken a long stride towards directing the detail of teachers' work. Unless its actions are challenged, what is now presented as an optional resource will soon become the norm in schools. The government should recognise its limits: it does not have the capacity, the imagination and the understanding to intervene in this way." [Kevin Courtney, Joint Gen Sec, NEU.](#)

The concerns echoed by the case brought to Judicial review, are echoed by the National Education Union. [Key NEU concerns:](#)

Claims that OAK is "by and for teachers" and "operationally independent" of Government misrepresent its true nature: OAK is under the ultimate control of ministers. Its resources are produced by a range of organisations by way of a commercial tendering process.

The Government's business case for Oak is clear that it will be "continuously strategically aligned with Government policy as it develops over time".

OAK's status means there is a risk its materials will be seen as Government approved and "safe".

This will increase pressure for schools to use their products, particularly given the pressures that Ofsted exerts, and its

current focus on curriculum

Examples of how OAK is aligned with Ofsted include:

Each of the “Subject Expert Panels” set up to advise on the production of Oak materials includes an Ofsted Inspector

The Government’s business case for the OAK ALB acknowledged that Ofsted’s overall emphasis, since 2019, on the curriculum within school inspections “may...be influential in shaping and accelerating the uptake of [Oak’s] service.”

[Read the Full NEU Statement here.](#)

We believe Oak is a flawed and dangerous idea, and we are not alone. We believe that whilst Oak attempts to involve experts in its creation, the mechanisms and ethos behind creation of resources will ultimately restrict and control. And let’s remember that whilst Oak touts itself as being “free”, it does in fact cost money which the government could choose to spend in wiser ways to value teachers, build knowledge and seek real vision. Those original consultations we attended? We see no evidence of listening to what we heard during those sessions, and in many other education roundtables, as a no thank you to Oak National Academy.

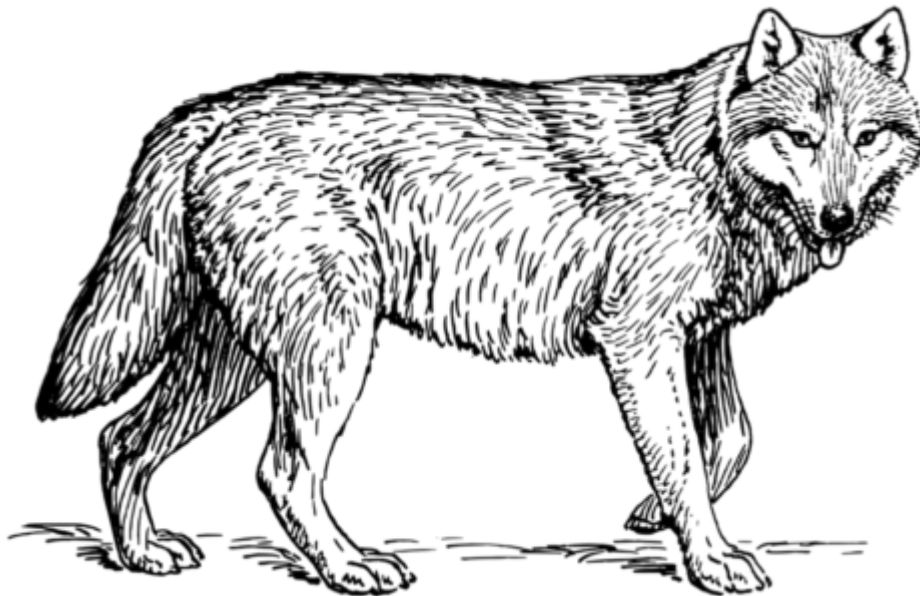
As a Subject Association and charitable organisation which has worked long and hard to develop expertise which develops and enables our community of users to feel supported, inspired and empowered, AccessArt will continue to work independently through our principles and practice

to support our members. We thank you for your continued support and understanding about what's really important in art education.

Paula Briggs, CEO & Creative Director AccessArt,
April 2024

Explore...

Taking Control of the narrative



“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.”

Read why we need to change the narrative and speak with more courage about the purpose of education...

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?""

Explore and understand all that AccessArt has achieved and the impact we are making

Supporting Schools New To AccessArt – Autumn Term 2025



If you are thinking about joining AccessArt during 2025, you can find lots of information here to help you understand more about how AccessArt can help develop excellent art teaching and learning in your school. Explore below:

- Our offer to schools – learn more about our approach and what makes AccessArt so special.
- Read teacher feedback about AccessArt.
- Find ideas about how you can trial our resources with your pupils and teachers, and how you might transition from existing planning.

Access a recording of a Zoom introductory session, including Q&A's, access to a Powerpoint to introduce teachers to AccessArt, & art material freebies!

- Ask for help ☐
- How to Join AccessArt.



"USING ACCESSART HAS
IMMEDIATELY RAISED THE
STATUS AND PROFILE OF
ART IN OUR SCHOOL."

[The AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum](#)

[AccessArt CPD](#)

[AccessArt CPD Recordings](#)

[AccessArt Offer to Primary Schools](#)

EYFS

Organisational Core Values

The AccessArt Offer To Primary Schools

AccessArt is a UK Visual Arts Education Charity and we are also a Subject Association for Art. We have over 22,000 members using our resources in schools and community settings.

What makes us special? We are passionate about what we do. We have just one charitable aim which is to further the advancement of visual arts education, and through our creative vision we are proud to help support the visual arts education of hundreds of thousands of individuals. Our approach is trusted also by many Universities who use our resources within arts teacher training contexts.

We offer schools access to the [AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum](#), a rich, diverse, engaging and highly flexible curriculum. We also offer [ongoing CPD](#) to build teacher understanding and enjoyment, and you can also use our [resources](#) and approach to expand upon your own planning or scheme.

We are a self-supporting charity and our independence gives us strength of vision and autonomy. We also work with experts in the field who help support the considerable in-house expertise. We do not create resources for anyone

else – instead we remain true to our vision, knowledge and experience. Explore our [Core Values.](#)

The AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum – Impact & Evidence Autumn 2023

Since the launch of the new AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum in 2022, we have seen a large number of new members sign up to use the resources in schools to help inspire and enable a rich, diverse and flexible visual arts curriculum for all pupils.

In the summer of 2023 we invited users to complete a survey to feedback their experience of using our Primary Arts Curriculum in their school. [See the report here.](#)

"ENTHUSIASM IS SO HIGH
WE ARE CONSIDERING
MOVING TO A SIX TERM
MODEL RATHER THAN
SPLIT."

[The AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum – Impact & Evidence Autumn 2023](#)



"IT HAS
TRANSFORMED
OUR ART
EDUCATION."

[Ten Minutes, Five Times a Week](#)

[Session Recording: Ten Minutes, Five Times a Week with AccessArt & DRYAD Education](#)

Trialling & Transitioning

If you would like a 15 day complimentary membership of AccessArt so that you can explore all our resources, please contact [Andrea](#), our Membership Manager.

If you would like advice about introducing AccessArt to your staff, or to ask questions about how you might transition from your existing

approach to our approach, please see our [“Preparing To Use the AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum”](#) session recording.

A great way to test drive our resources with staff and pupils is to try our [Ten Minutes Five Times a Week](#) exercises.

[Preparing To Use AccessArt in Your School and Introducing Staff to Us](#)

If you're thinking about using AccessArt as your Primary Art Curriculum provider in Autumn 2025 [watch this session recording](#) where we share the ethos and practice of the AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum.

In this recording we talk through how you might introduce AccessArt to staff, how you can transition from your existing scheme or plan, test driving activities with children and teachers, and how you can prepare the materials and resources you will need to deliver our curriculum.

Organise a staff meeting to introduce staff to the curriculum.

You can find a presentation [here](#), created with an introductory staff meeting in mind.

"UTTER JOY AND
ENTHUSIASM CAN BE FELT
IN ALL THE ART LESSONS I
HAVE ENJOYED OBSERVING
THIS YEAR."

[Preparing To Use the AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum](#)

Ask for Help ☐

We know it can be challenging deciding which scheme to use, or devising your own planning. We are a small team of experts and we love talking about pedagogy and practice. If you have something you would like help with, especially in regard to our Primary Art Curriculum, then please email us with your question.

You might also like to send us a quick video made on your phone, sharing pupil or teacher

experiences and outcomes, and let us know what it is you are struggling with. Send all enquiries to paula@accessart.org.uk and we'll answer as soon as we can.



"I LOVE ACCESSART! IT
REALLY ENGAGES OUR
CHILDREN AND SUPPORTS
SEND LEARNERS."

Send any questions or enquiries to paula@accessart.org.uk

"THE OUTCOMES AND
PROGRESSION OF SKILLS HAVE
BEEN AMAZING, RECOGNISED
BY STAFF, PARENTS AND
OFSTED."

[Join AccessArt](#)

Join AccessArt

Joining AccessArt offers incredible value for money and gives you access to the most innovative yet accessible visual arts teaching resources. Don't forget that when you join AccessArt, you are also joining a Subject Association, so we can help you every step of the way in your art teaching practice.

[See all membership benefits here.](#)

Pathway: Drawing and Making Inspired by Illustrators

Pathway for Years 4 & 5

Disciplines:

Sculpture, Painting, Drawing, Collage, Sketchbooks

Key Concepts:

- That Illustrators use line, colour and shape to create drawings which bring stories to life.
- That we can use other people's artwork as a creative stimulus, and use lots of different media (paper, pen, paint, modelling materials and fabric) to work towards our own artwork.
- That we can use our knowledge and curiosity of line, shape, colour and form to make playful and inventive art.
- That we can make an individual artwork which contributes to a larger shared piece, or we can work on a shared artwork.
- That making art can be fun and joyful, and that we can find subject matter which inspires us all and brings us together.

This pathway provides a framework for teachers to

enable pupils to create their own work in a variety of media, in response to the work of an author/illustrator (in this case Maurice Sendak).

The project explores: Mark making with pen, pencil and ink, making a shared drawing, colour mixing (soft pastels), making sculpture (plastic bags, paper, wire, modroc) and collage.

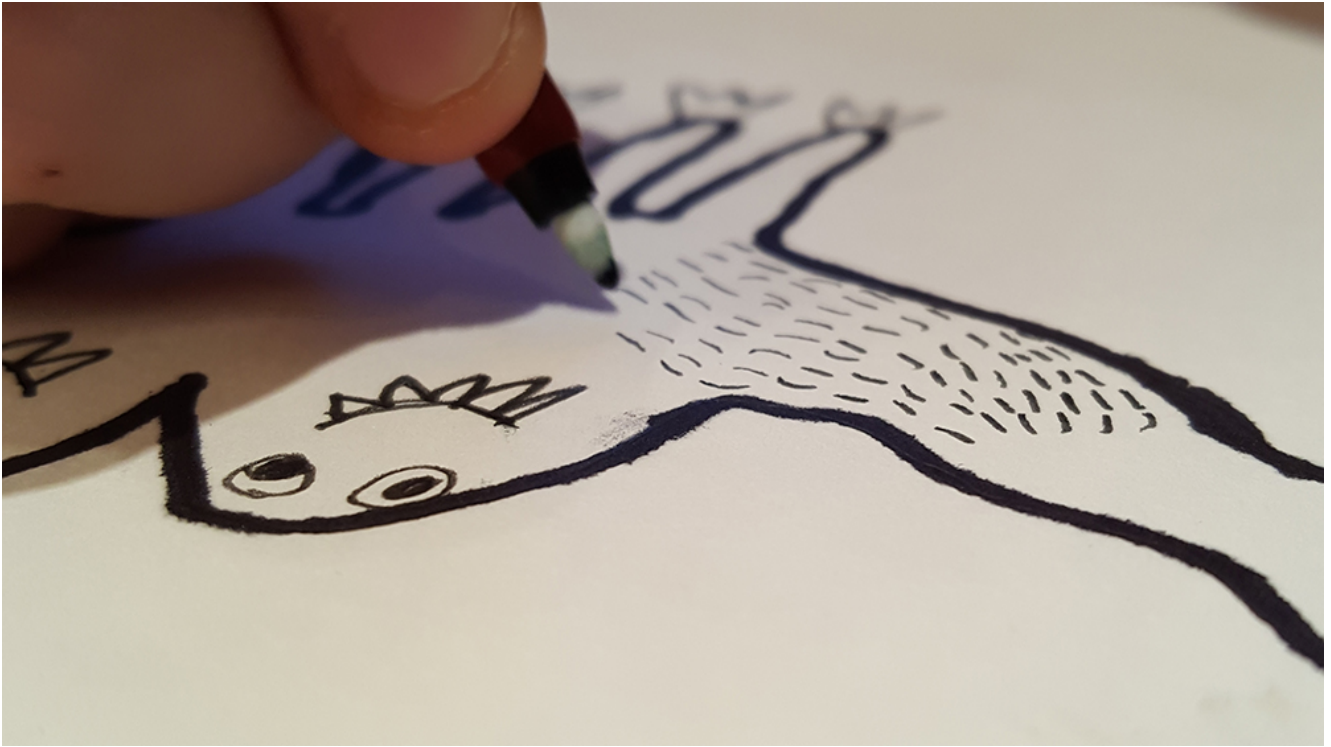
As with all AccessArt approaches, the emphasis is on a journey of building independent learning through lots of experimentation and creative risk taking, and balances sketchbook and exploratory work with high quality and varied final outcomes.

Themes: Narrative, Landscape, Character Development

Medium: Pens, Soft B Pencils, Ink, Collage Paper, Plastic bags, Paper, Wire, Modroc, Modelling Materials

Artists: Maurice Sendak, Shaun Tan

If you use this resource in your setting, please tag us on social media: #InspiredBy @accessart (facebook, twitter) @accessart.org.uk (instagram) and share the url. Thank you!



Additional Pathway

This pathway is an additional pathway to help you extend, develop or further personalise the [AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum](#).

We suggest this pathway is used to replace a “Working in 3 Dimensions” (Blue) Pathway – it works well in replacement of [Telling Stories Through Drawing & Making](#) (Years 3 & 4), or [Set Design](#) (Years 5 & 6).

Please note the activities in this pathway are best suited to more confident teachers who are happy with a higher level of interaction with the work, and more able or experienced pupils.

You may also like to use the activities in this pathway with a smaller group of children in an

after school club or community context.



AGES 5-8

AGES 9-11

Teaching Notes

Tips from Teachers

“Put a long piece of paper down on each table. Four children per piece of paper works the best so they don’t get too crowded.

Put examples of the book on their tables and three different sized black pen. Do the ink drawings in one lesson and then the black pen detail in the next and colour in the next with pastels.”

Find the MTP for this pathway [here](#).

[See the recording of the Zoom CPD session Exploring Modroc.](#)

[Journeyful Teaching: Teaching for The Journey, Not The Outcome](#)

[Pedagogy in 250 Words: Making is Hard](#)

Curriculum Links

English: Responding to Texts and Narrative

Geography: Landscapes and Habitats

Science: Animals, Plants and Trees

PSHE: Supports Responsibility to the planet,

Collaboration, Peer Discussion.

I Can...

- I have explored the work of an Illustrator and used my sketchbook to record my observations.
- I can draw directly from life, making quick sketches expressing emotion and personality.
- I can explore mark making, and use marks to create a (sometimes shared) background.
- I can mix colours using soft pastels.
- I can make a sculptural creature or person, understanding that by working in 3d my sculpture will be seen from different viewpoints, and be inspired by the drawn background.
- I can present my work as part of a larger artwork, and I can share my response to my own work and also to the work of my peers.

Time

This pathway takes 6-8 weeks, with an hour per week. Shorten or lengthen the suggested pathway

according to time and experience. Follow the stages in green for a shorter pathway or less complex journey.

Materials

Pens (3 different thicknesses), Soft B Pencils, Sketchbooks, A3 Cartridge Paper, Soft toys, Black Ink, Quills, Roll of Paper, Soft Pastels, Glue Stick

Modroc, Plastic Bags, Sellotape Construction Materials (see [list here](#))

Pathway: Drawing and Making Inspired by Illustrators

A PDF of this pathway can be found [here](#).

.Aim of the Pathway

The aim of the pathway is to give children the opportunity to be inspired by the mark making and visual story telling of illustrators, and to feel enabled to make their own creative response in both two and three dimensions.

▪ Week

1:

Introduce

Introduce an Artist

Begin by introducing story to inspire drawing and making.

You may want to explore *Where the Wild Things Are*, using our “[Talking Points: Maurice Sendak](#)”.

Or draw and make inspired by ‘The Arrival’ by Shaun Tan using “[Talking Points: Shaun Tan](#)”.

This pathway can be adapted to a book you are

currently studying in class.

▪ Drawing

&

Mark-Making

Observational Drawing



Be inspired by the mark making of Maurice Sendak and apply it to observational drawings of the children's own toys in the [Drawing Soft Toys Inspired by "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak](#) resource.

By the end of this session children will have practised observational skills, explore mark-making (both their own and that of the artist) and produced one or more drawings of their own toys.

| | | | |
|--------|----|---------------|---------|
| ▪ Week | 2: | Collaborative | Drawing |
|--------|----|---------------|---------|

Shared Ink Drawing

Explore making collaborative drawings in small groups, using new materials and new skills in the [Shared Ink Drawing Inspired by "Where the Wild Things Are"](#) resource.



By the end of this session, pupils will have explored how they can work together to create sections of landscape, exploring notions of “background” and “context”, using ink and quills.

▪ Week

3:

Colour

Mixing

Adding Colour



Explore colour mixing in an empirical way by mixing soft pastels directly onto the shared landscape drawing created above, as shown in the [Adding Colour to Shared Ink Drawing Inspired by “Where the Wild Things Are”](#) resource.

By the end of this session children will have created coloured backgrounds which are full of exciting marks and atmospheric colours, ready for the stage below.

▪ Week 4: (Optional) Life Drawing

**Life Drawing Inspired by 'Where
The Wild Things Are'**



Practise drawing from life in the [Life Drawing Inspired by “Where the Wild Things Are”](#) resource.

By the end of this session, children will have explored drawing directly from life, making quick sketches by looking for “big” shapes which express emotion and personality, to develop sketchbook work.

▪ Week 4: Drawing From Imagination

Drawing Imagined 'Wild Things'



Combine mark making and life drawing skills with inspiration from the shared communal background drawing, to create drawings of wild things from imagination, in the [Drawing our own "Wild Things" to Inhabit our Imagined Landscape](#) resource.

▪ Week 5 & 6 & 7: Making

Making Sculptural 'Wild Things'



Explore working in 3 dimensions using wire, paper and modroc to create sculptures of Wild things, in the [Making Sculptural “Wild Things” \(Session 1\)](#) resource.

You can find detailed information on [using Modroc in the classroom here.](#)



Continue working on the sculptures, and return to the starting point of the journey in week 1 by adding collaged drawings to the sculptures. Display the finished sculptures in front of the communal drawings. [Making Sculptural "Wild Things" \(Session 2 & 3\)](#)

▪ Week 8: Share and discuss

Share, Reflect, Celebrate



End the pathway by taking time to appreciate the developmental stages and the final outcomes in a clear space.

Depending upon the project option chosen, display the work appropriately including having open sketchbooks. Use the "[Crit in the Classroom](#)" resource to help you.

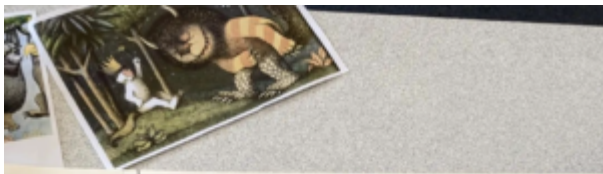
Encourage children to reflect upon all stages of the journey.

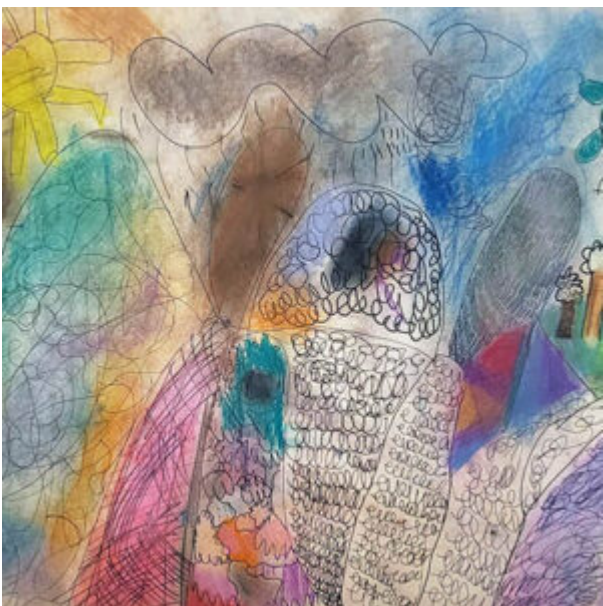
If available, children can use tablets or cameras to take photographs of the work.

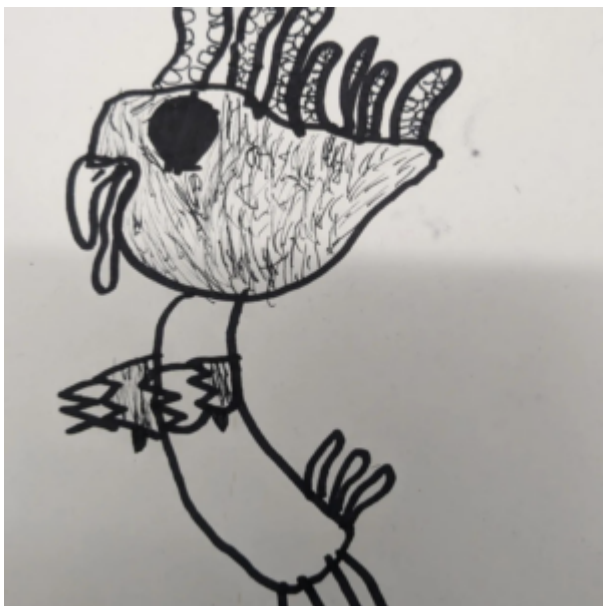
[Explore how children can take high quality photographs of 3d artwork with this resource.](#)

See This Pathway Used In

Schools















**If You Use AccessArt
Resources...**

You might like to...

Join our Facebook Group



[Join the AccessArt Network group on Facebook and ask questions of others using our resources](#)

Share and Tag



[Share photos of work made by tagging us on social media](#)

Pathway: Exploring Form Through Drawing

Pathway for Years 5 & 6

Disciplines:

Drawing, Sketchbooks

Key Concepts:

- That we use the word form to describe a three-dimensional shape.
- That when we draw on two-dimensional surfaces we can use line, mark making, value, shape, colour, pattern and composition to help us create an illusion of form, mass or volume.
- That contour marks can help to describe volume and form/mass.
- That we can mix colours and use a range of media to create atmosphere and meaning in drawings.
- That drawing and sculpture share a close relationship, and can inform each other.

This pathway enables pupils to consider how 2

dimensional drawing can convey a sense of form/mass and volume. By looking at the drawings of Sculptors' Henry Moore, and Christo and Jeanne-Claude we can explore the ways in which they portrayed an illusion of form and meaning in their drawings.

Pupils will explore a range of mark-making, taking inspiration from artists' work and will have the opportunity to experiment with a variety of materials.

Medium:

Drawing materials, Loose sheets of paper varying in size, shape and quality.

Artists: Henry Moore, Christo and Jeanne-Claude

If you use this resource in your setting, please tag us on social media: #InspiredBy @accessart (facebook, twitter) @accessart.org.uk (instagram) and share the url. Thank you!



Additional Pathway

This pathway is an additional pathway to help you extend, develop or further personalise the [AccessArt Primary Art Curriculum](#).

We suggest this pathway is used to replace a “Drawing and Sketchbooks” (Orange) Pathway “[Typography and Maps](#)” (Years 5 & 6) or “[2D Drawing to 3D Making](#)” (Years 5 & 6).

You may also like to use the activities in this pathway with a smaller group of children in an after school club or community context.



AGES 9-11

Teaching Notes

Find the MTP for this pathway [here](#).

Curriculum Links

Maths: 2D and 3D shapes, weight, symmetry, angles, mass, volume

Science: Properties of objects, shadows, rocks

PSHE: Collaboration, Peer Discussion

I Can...

I can describe the difference between shape (2d) and form (3d).

- I can explore how artists use their skills to make drawings which capture form.**
- I can use my sketchbook to record and reflect, collecting the ideas and approaches I like which I see other artists use.**
- I can use line, mark making, tonal values, colour, shape and/or composition to give my drawings a feeling of form.**
- I can share my work with others, and talk about my intention and the outcome. I can listen to their response and take their feedback on board.**
- I can appreciate the work of my classmates. I can listen to their intentions and share my response to their work.**

Time

This pathway takes 6 weeks, with an hour per week. Shorten or lengthen the suggested pathway according to time and experience. Follow the stages in green for a shorter pathway or less complex journey.

Materials

Loose sheets of cartridge paper, Handwriting pens, Soft B pencils, Water-soluble graphite, Wax crayon, Watercolours, Ink

Pathway: Exploring Form Through Drawing

A PDF of this pathway can be found [here](#).

• The Aim of the Pathway

This pathway gives pupils the opportunity to explore how we can convey 3-dimensional form through drawing, conveying a sense of mass and volume. Inspired by the work of Sculptors Henry Moore and Christo and Jean-Claude, pupils will make creative responses through a series of drawing exercises on loose paper, resulting in a collection of drawings for a backwards sketchbook.

• Week 1: Introduce an artist

**Introduce Henry Moore's Shelter
Drawings**



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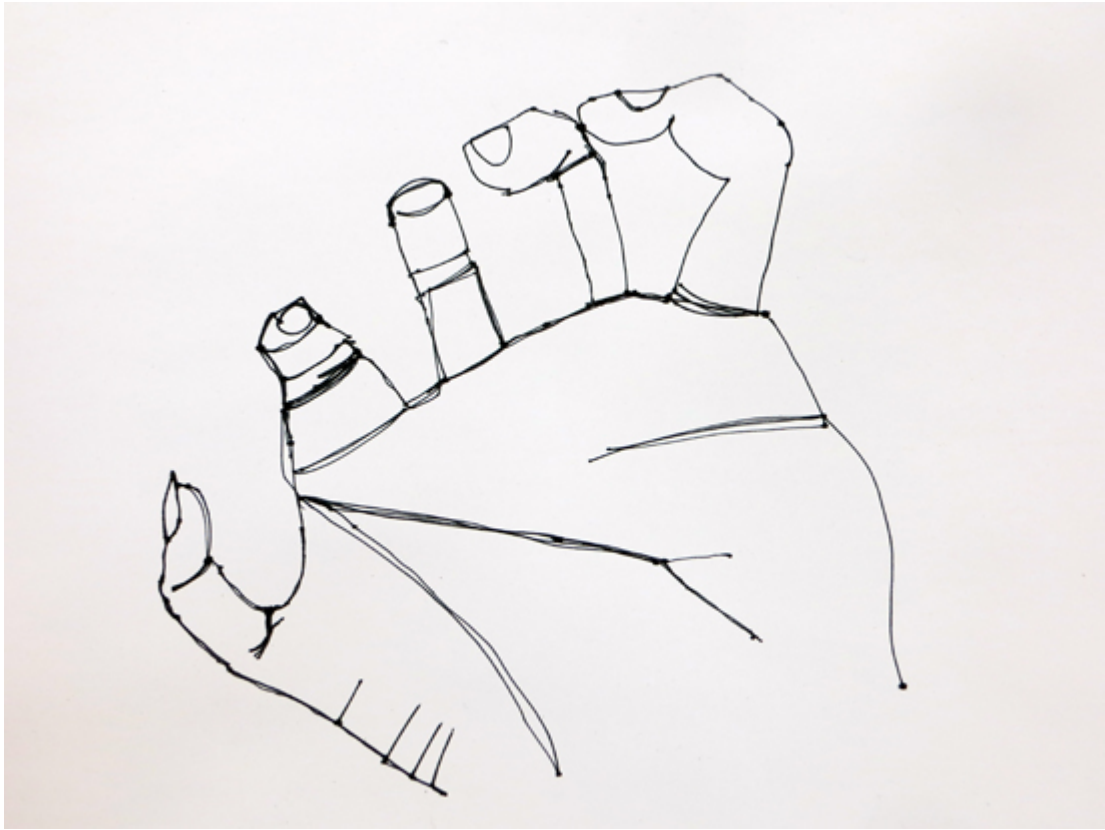
Introduce students to the work of Henry Moore. Find out how Moore's practise as a sculptor impacted his drawing style in this resource exploring "[Henry Moore's Shelter Drawings](#)".

Use the "[Making Visual Notes](#)" resource to help record on loose paper.

▪ Drawing

Exercise

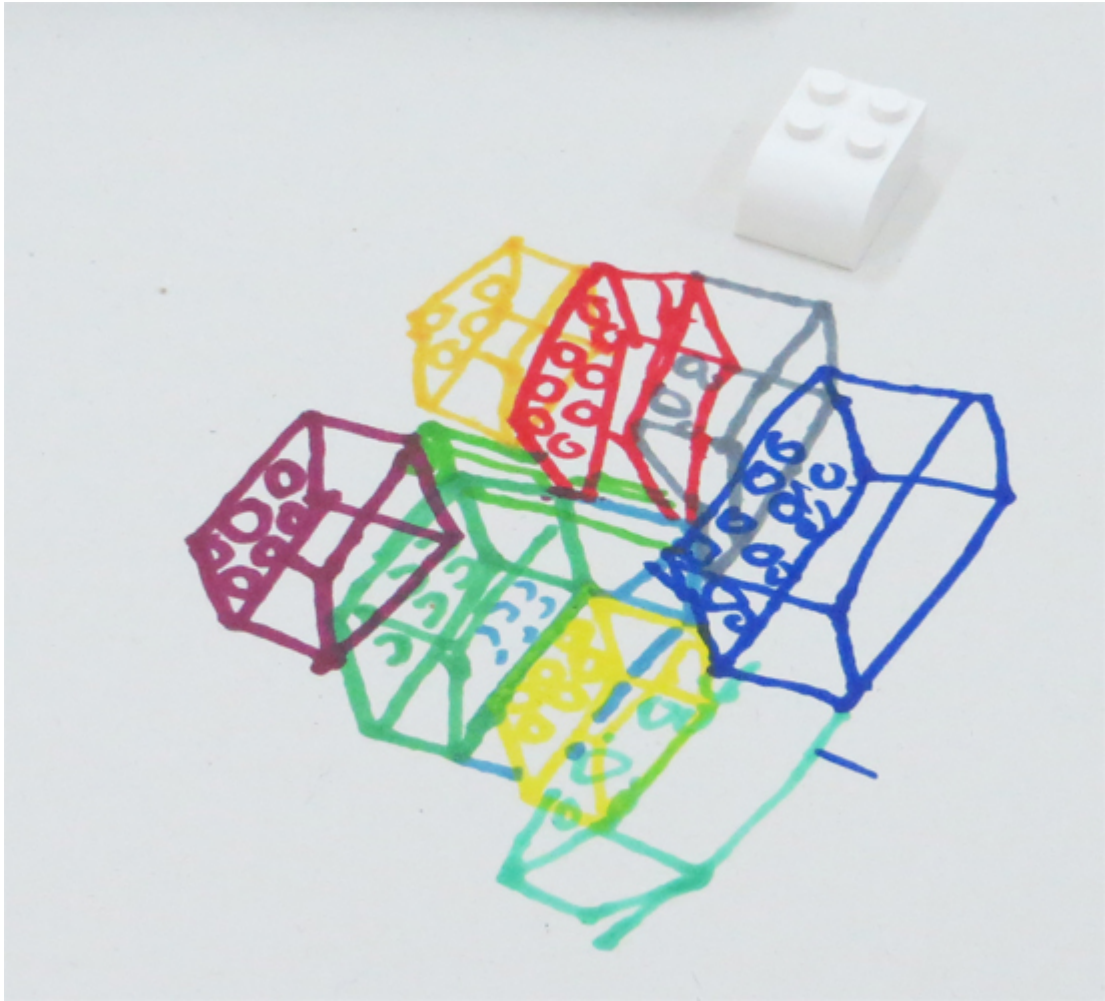
Drawing Hands



Create continuous line drawings of cupped hands to explore the word 'concave' and what this means in relation to form. Use the "[Drawing Hands](#)" resource to run this guided session. Create the drawings on loose sheets of paper.

▪ Week 2: Draw and Collage

Explore 3 Dimensions using Lego



Invite pupils to create simple drawings of lego blocks on sheets of paper, considering angle and perspective. Use the “[Explore 3 Dimensions using Lego](#)” resource to help you guide this session. Work on loose sheets.

▪ Week 3: Ink and Pen Drawings

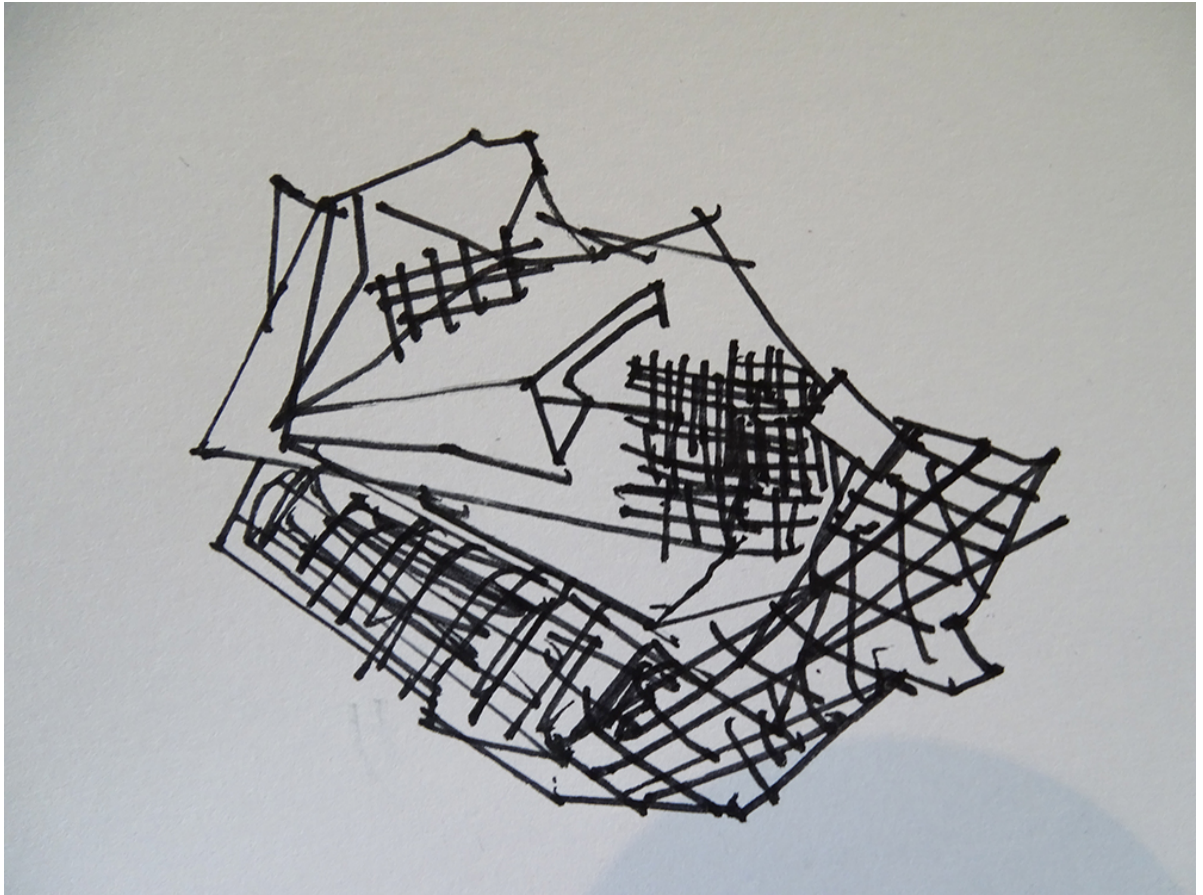
See Three Shapes



Explore outline, form and shadow using the simple “[See Three Shapes](#)” exercise. Create drawings on loose sheets of paper.

.

Drawing with a Ruler



Challenge children to create observational “[Drawings with a Ruler](#)”. Consider how mark making can be used to contour, giving mass and form to the drawing. See “[Ruler Drawings](#)” created using more spherical subject matter and see how the drawings change.

Ask pupils to consider their favourite exercise from the session, which did they prefer and why?

▪ Week 4 & 5: Introduce an Artist

Introduce Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Introduce pupils to the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude using “[Talking Points: Christo and Jeanne-Claude](#)”. Explore their drawings of wrapped monuments to see the first stages of their concepts.

▪ Drawing

and

Painting

Drawings With Mass



Bring in a physical subject matter, in this case potatoes and pebbles, and combine with the mark-making skills learnt previously, to explore how we can create a sense of form and 3d shape through line. Use the “[Drawings with Mass](#)” resource here. Work on loose sheets of paper.

What kinds of lines might they use to make a drawing of an object which feels heavy and solid? Where is the shadow? Where is the light? How can they make it feel rounded?

Backwards Sketchbook



Invite students to create a “[Backwards Sketchbook](#)” filled with loose works created throughout the pathway.

▪ Share & Celebrate

Share, Reflect, Discuss



Time to see the work which has been made, talk about intention and outcome.

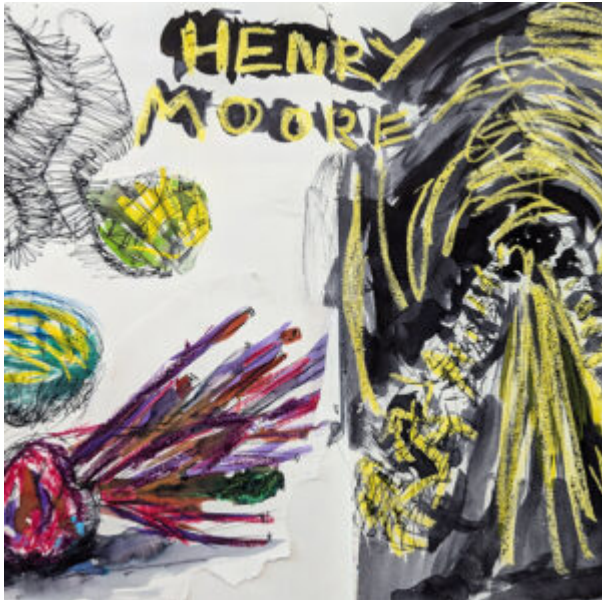
Invite children to display the work in a clear space and walk around the work as if they are in a gallery. Give the work the respect it deserves. Remind the children of their hard work.

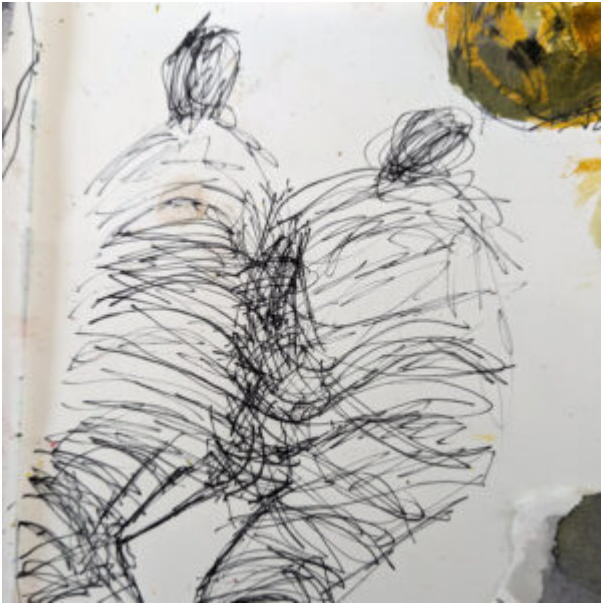
If you have class cameras or tablets, invite the children to document their work, working in pairs or teams.

[Use the resource here to help you run a class "crit" to finish the project.](#)

See the Pathway Used in

Schools...





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Share and Tag



[Share photos of work made by tagging us on social media](#)

Core Value No 4: Through Small Acts Of Understanding We Can Enable Big Thinking

[AccessArt Core Value](#) #4 "Through small acts of understanding we can enable big thinking."
illustrated by [Rachel Ng](#)



Rachel Ng is a young illustrator from Hong Kong, currently studying illustration at Arts University Bournemouth. Her vibrant digital illustrations with bold characters are deeply inspired by fauvism and minimalism. Creating expressive and heart-warming illustrations, with different textures and shapes is one of her main explorations.

We love the story that this illustration by Rachel Ng tells. Building from a simple seed, the days and nights pass providing the nourishment that the seed needed to grow. The little faces and characters put such a smile on our faces and the colours are so joyful, it's hard not to feel excited by what the small acts of understanding can bring us when you see this illustration.

We feel that this illustration really resonates with the AccessArt core value, highlighting that great ideas and growth can take time, and the importance of trusting in the bigger picture and the incremental steps to get there, remaining patient and open to the journey, no matter how long it takes.

AccessArt Value #4

Through small acts of understanding we can enable big thinking.

How can we create small stepping stones of experience which enable us to explore complex ideas and experiences?

Comforting as it is to know that "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step,"* knowing what that single step might be is not always easy. In reality, growing our understanding so that we can aim to be expansive, visionary thinkers, whilst able to act incrementally to make change, doesn't just happen; it requires planning,

effort and commitment.

At AccessArt we have always been inspired by big thinking, and we have never hesitated to have our heads in a cloud space where ideas swirl around. We have always been interested in the why as well as the how; at our heart we are a philosophical organisation.

But our feet are firmly planted on the ground, and understanding how we create and present a series of smaller experiences which help us move towards an often unknown, but always intriguing, bigger understanding, is one of our strengths.

Keeping clear sight of the bigger picture, whilst being able to distil down key ideas or skills, is vital in enabling individuals or communities to feel like they can trust the logic of the next step, or the next stage, whilst being inspired onwards by the bigger prize. Trusting too that understanding builds even when the process isn't linear, and that getting lost along the way might make for a richer journey and deeper understanding.

This way of thinking applies to all creative thought and action – from the teachers and children in Primary School, to decision making in larger organisations. We are proud that as an organisation we can help enable this way of thinking and acting.

*Lao Tzu

[See our other Core Values here.](#)

Paula, April 2024

Adapting AccessArt: Egypt in Ink

See This Resource Used In Schools...







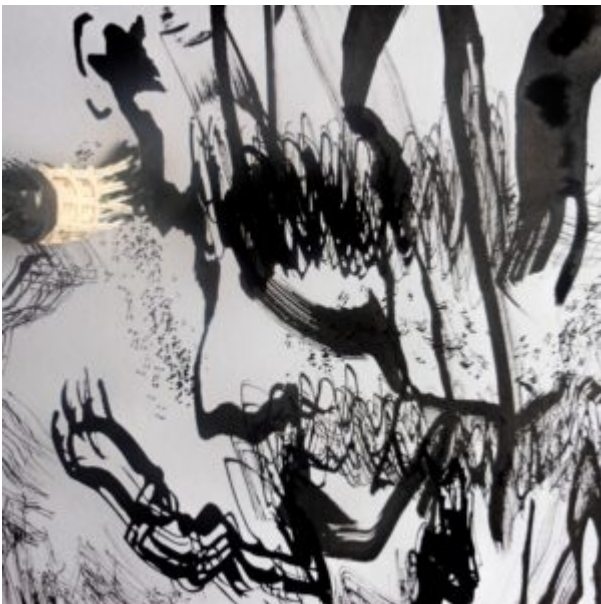


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Graphic inky still life

