

Knowledge Organisers for Art in Primary Schools

By [Paula Briggs](#)

This article explores the current trend for using knowledge organisers in primary schools, and suggests alternative ways of thinking.

When I first heard people talking about a “knowledge-rich curriculum” I struggled to understand what they meant. I understood the words individually so could not understand why they made little sense to me, when taken collectively and applied to visual arts learning. I studied art at degree level and then later again at postgrad level and I have worked in arts education for over 25 years, and yet it never occurred to me to think of myself or my creativity as being “knowledge rich.” Of course I had picked up a fair bit of knowledge along the way, but that was not what was important to me - what was important was experience. I feel experience-rich. If I don't know, I google, but there is no google (yet) to find experience.

Increasingly, AccessArt finds ourselves being asked to give our opinion on the use of knowledge organisers in primary art. Schools send their knowledge organisers to us, asking us to help “build in more depth”, and we struggle with that.

The knowledge organiser tells us little or nothing about *how* art is facilitated – and that’s what adds depth. Here’s an example taken from an organiser:

Sketchbook
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artist research• Experiment with a range of materials.• Experiment with colour, line, shape, space.• Annotations to show reflections on their work and that of others.

You can see how it says nothing about “how” (or why or what if, or how do you feel). The words and ideas are so distilled, they become meaningless. Knowledge organisers require this type of distillation, but we worry the focus on knowledge organisers is masking a number of more important issues, which are getting more and more hidden behind those distilled words.

We’ve seen quite a few examples and it feels like it’s time for us to tackle the question:

Is it ever effective or even desirable to “organise someone’s knowledge” in art?

That question is loaded on so many levels and we need to pick it apart, and in doing so we need to

ask a whole load of other questions and check our assumptions before we move forward.

Let's Talk about Knowledge

Q. Do we worship at the altar of Knowledge or Experience? Can we do both?

A. Yes, but we need to start with Experience.

When we work with a class of eight-year-olds, they soon become familiar with the word “chiaroscuro”. They like rolling the word around in their mouths and they learn what it means. That is a piece of knowledge – a piece of declarative knowledge – and I can see it appearing on a knowledge organiser. It's a little golden nugget of knowledge offered on a platter of which everyone is proud.

But I would put that piece of knowledge on a paper aeroplane and fly it across an ocean compared to the experiential understanding of chiaroscuro that the children build through the drawing sessions. That I would hold very close.

Let's think about how *chiaroscuro* might appear on a knowledge organiser. Perhaps:

“The treatment of light and shade in drawing and painting”, or

“Chiaroscuro was one of the techniques used by painters of the Renaissance to make their paintings look truly three-dimensional”, or

“Italian term which literally means 'light-dark'”,

or

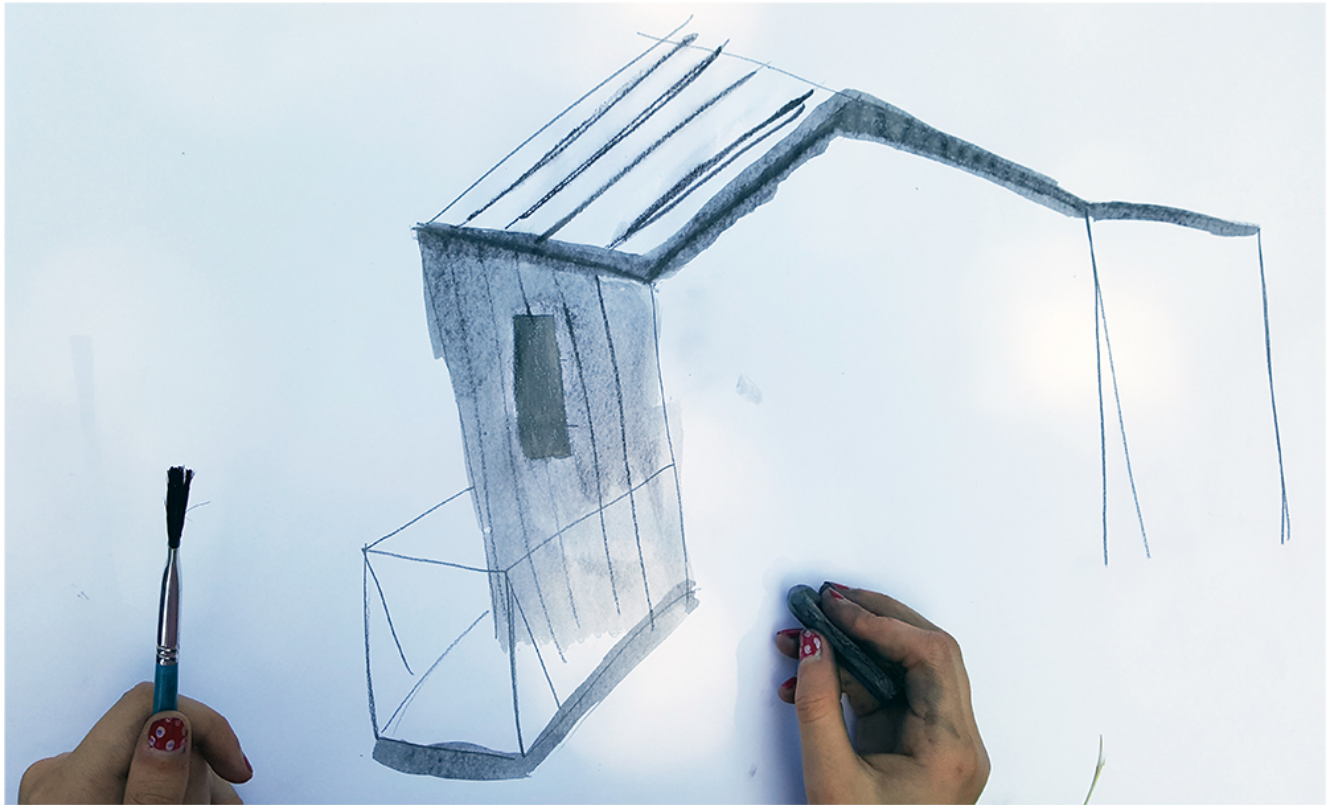
"Artists who are famed for the use of chiaroscuro include Leonardo da Vinci and Caravaggio.", or, if we're lucky:

An image which shows an example of chiaroscuro.

These are examples of knowledge passed down from teacher to pupil.

Let's think now about how the child might *experience* chiaroscuro through practical exploration.

Maybe the child will explore charcoal, experimenting with how much pressure needs to be applied to make a "dark dark" or a "light light". What happens when the hand is used to smudge the charcoal, or what happens when you introduce white pastel or draw on a dark ground? How does the energy of the mark making affect the mood created by the chiaroscuro? How can we use chiaroscuro to create a sense of drama, mystery or storytelling? How do we react to it as individuals - how does it make us feel? Can we use a torch to illuminate a scene in a cardboard box so we can work from a real life setting of dark and light? How about we dilute inks and use them with undiluted inks to create portraits? Can we use the white page as the light parts of the drawing?



Do you see the number of questions raised through the explorations above? Asking “what if”, exploring and sharing the revelation of what is discovered, IS the creative process. It is ongoing and never finished - the more you explore the more clues you find and the more journeys you are tempted to go on. Being given the “knowledge” without being enabled to experience it for yourself is a whole different process. Being given the knowledge is more finite, less deep, less rich, with an end point for you to “know”. In this sense knowledge can actually be limiting, not enriching.

The reality is, as artists we could spend a lifetime exploring chiaroscuro and we would never have finished learning. I don’t know many artists who would stand back and say “now I have a body of

knowledge", though they might say "now I have gained experience, insight inspiration, and understanding."

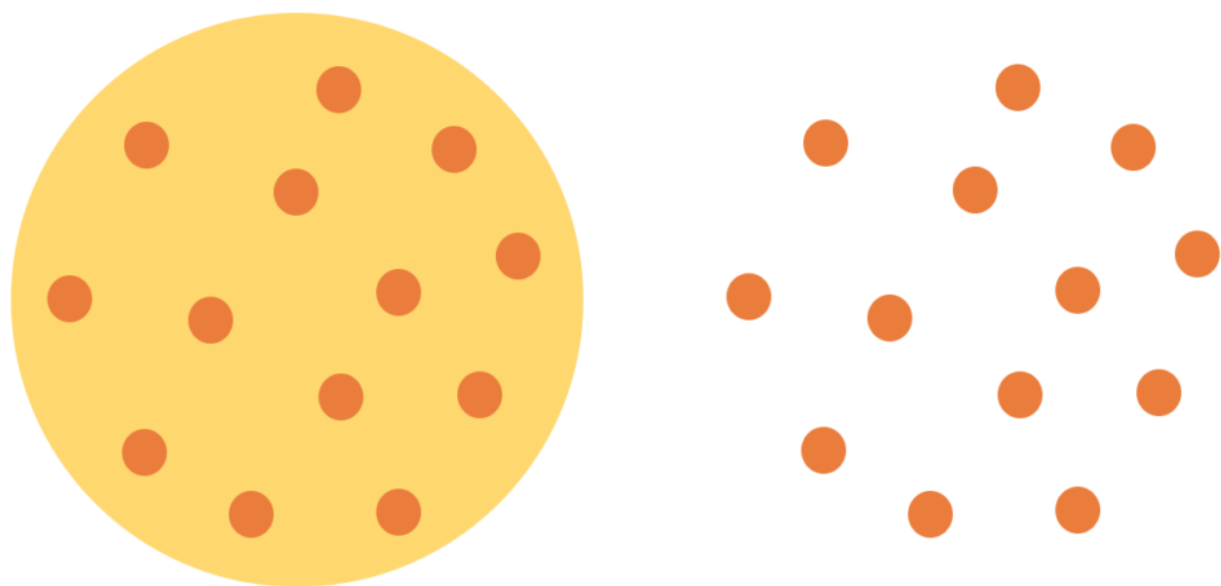
Of course if a knowledge organiser is a summary of excellent experience, then great, but our instinct tells us; that is not often the case. Too often the knowledge organiser is used instead to hide behind – it can make it look like some serious, heavy weight ground is being covered, but we need to ask the question: What do we uncover in terms of experience when we look behind the knowledge organiser? That is the important thing.

So What of "Knowledge-Rich?"

There are of course elements of knowledge which a child should and will build throughout their experiential creative journey. There are terms to be understood, vocabulary to be used, techniques to be described. There are materials and artists and concepts and movements and ideas. But, and this is a big but, because declarative "knowledge" can be more easily distilled onto an A4 sheet in clear and concise terms, it means that this type of knowledge is suddenly given huge priority over the experience of actually making art. By definition, the experience is nowhere to be seen on the knowledge organiser.

Yet ideally, the experience of making art is THE most important thing; exploring materials, using tools, thinking through ideas and seeing how they

change when made real, taking creative risks, understanding why things succeed or not, being exposed to new adventures, and the opportunity to practice, practice, practice, - let's call it the "studio practice", is the thing that we should be concentrating on at all stages of art education. It is through this kind of practical experience that children build (and own) their knowledge and without that practical experience that knowledge is just theoretical. It is a classic mistake made in many primary schools with many non-specialist teachers that art theory and art appreciation and art history become muddled with studio practice and the prevalence of knowledge organisers is making the situation more heightened and leads to studio practice becoming undervalued.



Orange dots of knowledge, on the left surround by the orange circle of experience. When knowledge is scaffolded by experience, it is made real, owned by the learner, who can then make connections and use the knowledge in meaningful

ways.

So, even if you are creating knowledge organisers in other subjects at Primary School, let's not assume it is in our pupil's best interests to "organise knowledge in art". Because whilst we are busy organising knowledge, we are not thinking about HOW we enable experience, which is far more important.

Let's Talk About Organisers

Q. Should we organise "Experience" then, instead of "Knowledge"? Shall we start a whole new trend (because let's face it that's what Knowledge Organisers are) around Experience Organisers?

A. The short answer: possibly not.

We've explained why we would like to encourage schools to think about replacing the word "knowledge" with "experience" when thinking about art in primary school. Now we would like to challenge the word "organise".

Declarative knowledge is suited to a knowledge organiser, experience is less suited to being organised. Organising experience into a shared A4 doc tends to stifle opportunity and growth for individuals.

Let's look at the key elements of a creative experience at any age or ability – the things we should be enabling and celebrating, and you'll see they might not sit comfortably within any kind of

organiser:

- A personal journey – creative journeys might have the same starting point, and sit within a shared structure, but we want to see children owning their experience and able to move forward in diverse ways. This might mean one child gaining drawing skills from a project, and another child gaining literacy skills from the same project. One child drawing with charcoal, another using charcoal and pastel. Brave children (and brave teachers).
- Open-ended learning – we do not want to see a class producing 30 identical end results (see above), so we need to take an open-ended approach. By nature this is messy, but exciting, liberating and not easy to define at outset. Try to control the journey too much and you will limit discovery and disrupt ownership. You might think you are doing one thing, but you end up doing another.
- All experience is valid. Facilitating art is not about top down teaching. Instead it is about enabling an opportunity so that the child can discover for his or her self. Old truths are learnt again and again by us all, but we learn them in art for ourselves through experience.

The problem we have with the “organising” part, is that we don’t accept the creative experience can

be “tidied” in a convenient format required by any kind of “organiser”, without losing integrity.

AccessArt would encourage schools to think again about using knowledge organisers in primary art, but if you still feel the need to use them, then let's ask:

So, IF We Still Want To Use Knowledge Organisers in Art How Can We Improve Them?

- Don't muddle knowledge organisers with teaching plans. If the purpose of the knowledge organiser is to help parents and staff identify what will be covered, then perhaps it is a plan not a knowledge organiser.
- If the purpose of the knowledge organiser is to help pupils recap and remember, then make sure it is written in language a child will understand. Remember not every one can “read” charts and grids. Think also about SEND requirements. For all children, make sure the content directly reflects what has been covered in class in such a way that the child can relate what is on the page to what they did in class (test this out: test the plan not the child;)).
- Better still, involve the child in its' creation (though see alternatives below).
- Teachers should ask themselves: “What's

around the knowledge organiser? What scaffolding do we create to ensure a good experience to make the knowledge meaningful? How do we teach what's on the plan? Once you start asking these questions the onus goes to how the teacher facilitates, rather than being placed on the child to accumulate knowledge. Take a look at [all the experiences shared on AccessArt](#) to see what scaffolding might look like.

- Remember – we are talking about the visual arts – if you must have a knowledge organiser make it visual.
- Your knowledge organisers should try to reference experience. They should be open-ended and outward looking. Make them less about finite points of knowledge learned and instead, make them question-based, encouraging the child to *apply* their knowledge by reflecting. See how you can use a [Class Crit](#) to encourage reflection and discussion.
- Lastly, think about making your knowledge organiser a promise from the school to the child which the child can complete: “I have been given the opportunity to explore xxx and I learnt this yyy”

If We Have Been Persuaded To Leave Knowledge Organisers Out In Art, What Can We Do Instead?

If knowledge organisers are used to plan, share,

recap and show then we are very lucky, because the visual arts offer lots of opportunities to do all those things (and far more) without resorting to a knowledge organiser. Here are the good old fashioned tools we have at our disposal:

- **Reference Material** (displayed in books, websites, walls): The theme or area of study can be displayed in lots of ways.
- **Sketchbooks**: Children (and staff) can use sketchbooks to plan, share, recap, reflect.
- **Conversation**: One to one, group, peer, teacher: lots of ways to have conversations about the work which can help teacher check understanding and build experience. Notes can be made in sketchbooks as a result, alongside project work.
- **Art Work**: The beauty of the visual arts: “It didn’t exist and now it does”

Key Takeaways:

Knowledge organisers tend to make art tidy, and the creative process is rarely so neat.

In art, we gain most knowledge through experience. Art is about exploration and discovery and art in primary schools should be about enabling that for the child, so that they can learn for themselves, with our help. Let’s think about how we can Enable their Experience rather than Organise their

Knowledge.

Don't assume any non-specialist or NQ teacher has the skills to understand the "how". Direct them to our resource [How Do Non-Specialist Teachers Teach Art?](#)

Protect time spent in "studio practice" in which pupils learn through doing, and embed building their knowledge (history/appreciation/contextual). Question if the opportunities you provide for pupils are a balance of practical/theoretical skills and think carefully how they feed into (and off of) each other.

Ask yourself if knowledge organisers create a state of stasis in teaching (same one used each year) and repeated learning? Is there space for innovation and reinvention each year? As soon as we have knowledge, we are at the end of that particular journey. Do they create stasis in exploration too? Do they allow (celebrate) a pupil to diverge from the original plan because they have made a discovery?

Let's try replacing a few key words and see how it changes our teaching:

Replace "teach" with "facilitate". Let's think about enabling a shared journey capable of enabling individual exploration. This is not top-down teaching where the teachers knows and the pupil's don't yet know. This is the teacher

creating space (within a structure) for children to discover. The teacher can model discovering too – that's very powerful.

Replace “knowledge” with “experience”.

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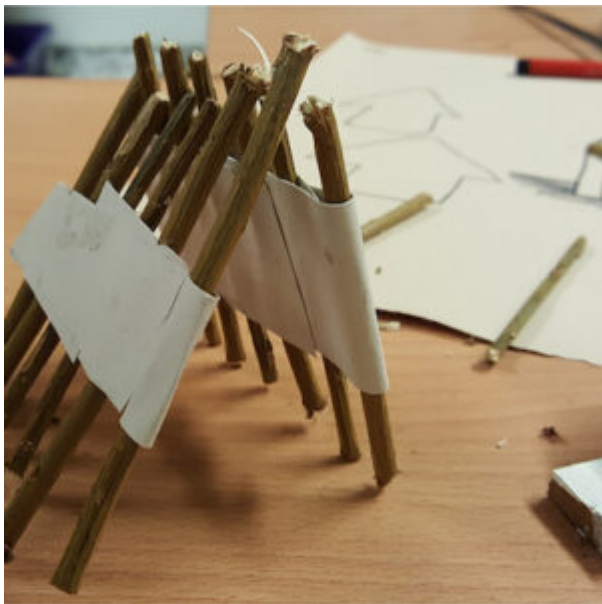
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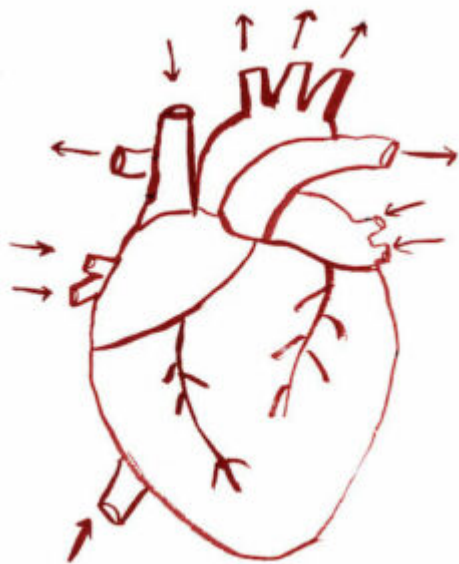
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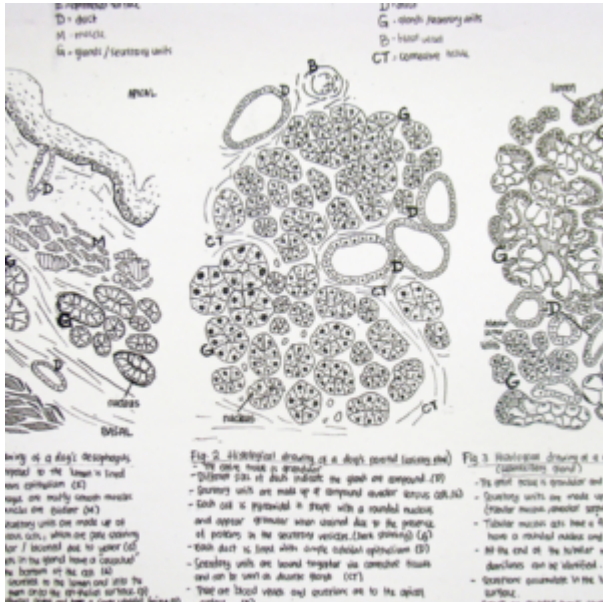
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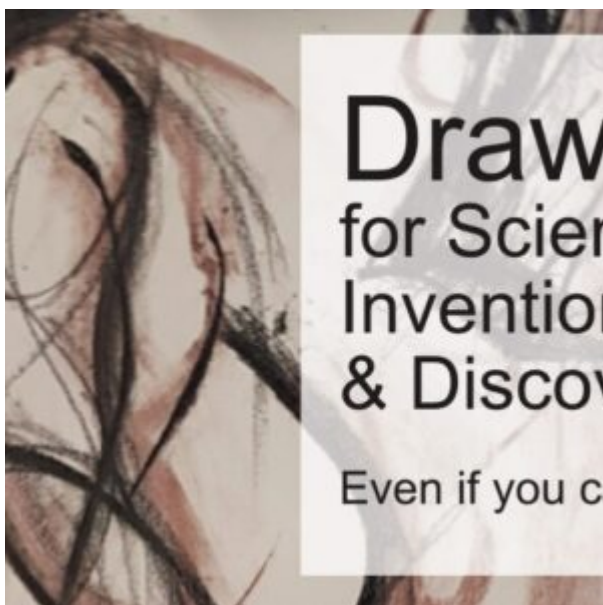
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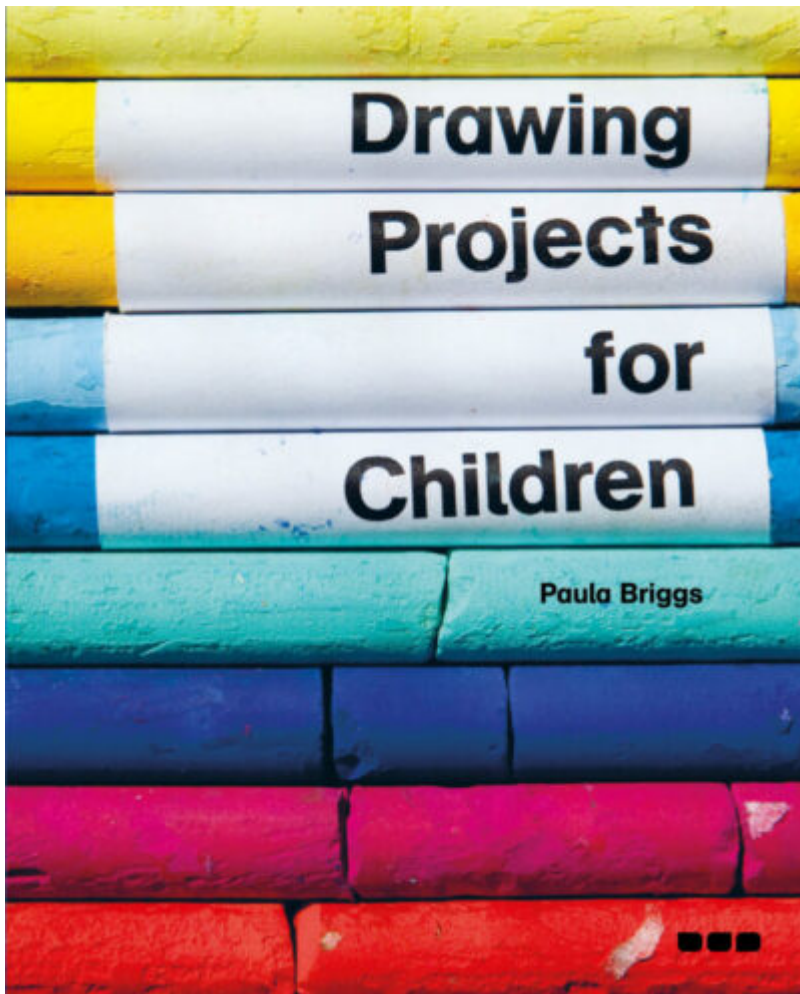
Assessment & Progression



Raising the Profile of the Art Department

Drawing Projects for Children

by Paula Briggs



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)
- Pieces 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.

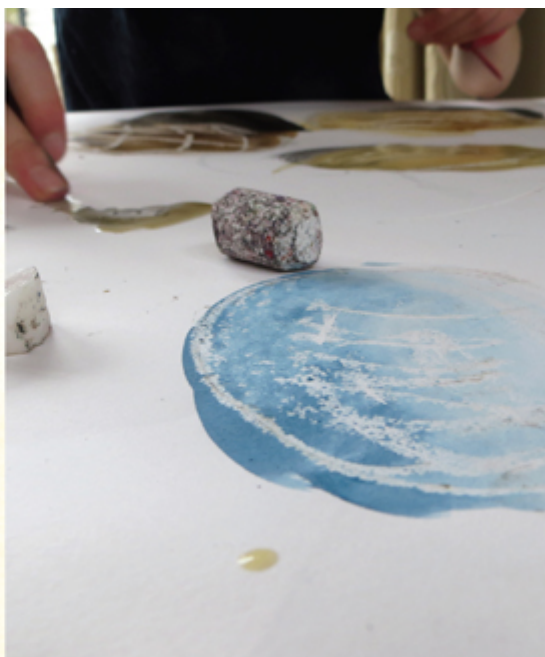
Lay each item on a long thin sheet of paper, the exact same dimensions as the paper on which you are going to make your drawing. You might need to cut and stick paper to create the right length.

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 'reveal' 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 of 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 worlds 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 'wax 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.

 **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

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

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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!"

You may also like...



[Make, Build, Create: Sculpture Projects for Children](#)

Research: Life Drawing & Adolescents

Inspire 2020: Teachers

This post is based on CPD (Continued Professional Development) sessions in February and March 2019, hosted and delivered by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge in collaboration with AccessArt, for Cambridgeshire teachers participating in Inspire 2020 Project.

Making A Creative Response – Physical to Aural

As part of the teenage #BeACreativeProducer Project, we have been exploring how we can trust and use “instinct” in relation to finding starting points to generate ideas and enable creativity. In this post, AccessArt Young Artist Alex Tunstall

shares what happened when he received a “box” of physical stimuli to inspire an aural response.

Messages From Creative Adults: Focussing on Art as a Career

A Year of Art Lessons with Year 3 – Introduction

Guided Sessions: Benefits and Practicalities

Style and Aesthetic

Balancing Observational & Experimental Drawing

Teaching for the Journey not the Outcome

Questioning the Canvas

Using Drawing to Get Closer to 18th Century Portraits at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

This post shares how Paula Briggs and Sheila Ceccarelli from AccessArt and Kate Noble from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, used drawing exercises to take a closer look at 18th Century portraits

Jan Miller: Our “Talented Art Teacher” Winner!

In 2016 AccessArt launched the [Children’s Art Competition](#), supported by Cass Art. Amongst the categories for children we had one for teachers, to acknowledge all the hard work and dedication we know you put in to inspiring and enabling children.

Thank you to all the teachers who entered – you filled us full of enthusiasm and passion!

We’re very pleased to announce the winner: Jan Miller from [Moreton Hall School](#) in Oswestry. Congratulations Jan!

Jan impressed us with the sheer energy and range of her work with the children – we’re sure the snapshot of images below will give you a flavour of the work she submitted. We hope Jan will be collaborating with AccessArt very soon to create some resources for us, so watch this space!

Jan Miller – Talented Teacher Award

“I completed my degree in Illustration at Kingston University followed by a PGCE at UCL. I have almost 20 years experience of teaching Art, across the full primary and secondary age spectrum. My interests particularly lie in the students’ development of observational drawing and mixed media. I

strongly believe in the use of personal sketchbooks at all levels. I expect the older students to have the same confidence and spontaneity as their younger counterparts. Similarly, I encourage the younger pupils to develop large work, over several sessions, alongside the older students. For several years I have been the Art Editor for SATIPS, a prep school magazine, to inspire Art teachers nationwide. I have recently developed Able, Gifted and Talented sessions for my own students and have extended this to a biannual event to other schools."

Now We Are Back

**Early Primary Sketchbook
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