

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.



The Bradyll Family by Reynolds - Introduction by Kate Noble



Portraits are a really good way of exploring relationships between people.

We looked at family portrait, looking at [The Bradyll Family by Reynolds](#) and we started by thinking about who the most important person in the picture is.

We considered body language, facial expression, background and accessories and discussed how the artist communicated the different roles and personalities of the family.

We noticed how the father occupies a large part of the picture and is standing up straight, wearing bright red clothes and is staring straight at you. The boy is also standing upright and his pose and body language are an echo of his father; a clever device which reveals who will go on to inherit the family's wealth and title.

The mother takes a more passive role and is seated, gazing out of the picture whilst she strokes the ear of the family pet.



Find out more about this painting in our [Fact Sheet for Teachers](#)

Exercise One - Using Contour Drawing to Explore a Painting



Here teachers tune into looking at the painting by using an index finger to draw contour lines around the shapes and figures in the painting front of them - 'The Bradyll Family' by Reynolds

Teachers were then encouraged to translate the process of looking and pointing into confidently drawing lines on the paper. They were encouraged to explore looking at the painting from the top to the bottom and see how that translated into lines. They were encouraged to look more at the painting than the paper.



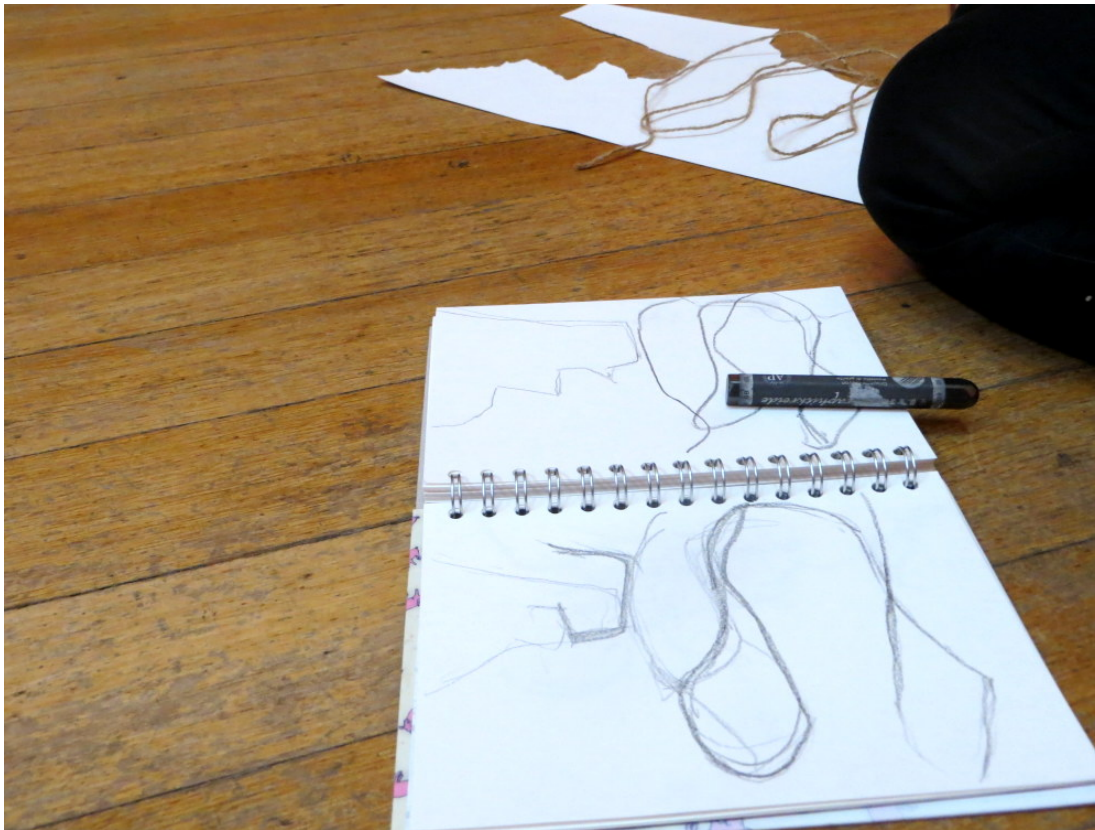
Teachers drawing 19th Century paintings at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

They then repeated the exercise looking at the painting from left to right and right to left.

The intention of this exercise was to emphasise drawing as a means to looking and as a means to capturing representational interpretations of the paintings in front of them.



Teachers then worked in their sketchbooks using continuous line drawing to explore the paintings



Exercise Two: Drawing with String and Building a Drawing



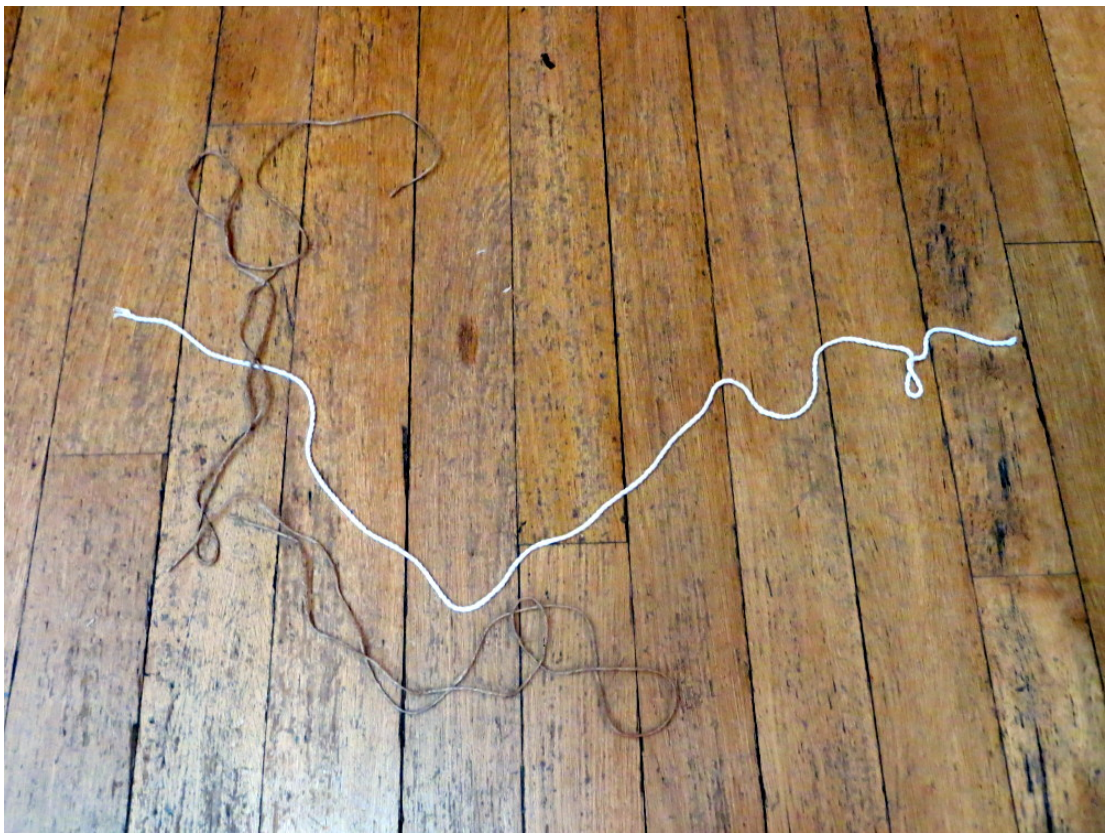
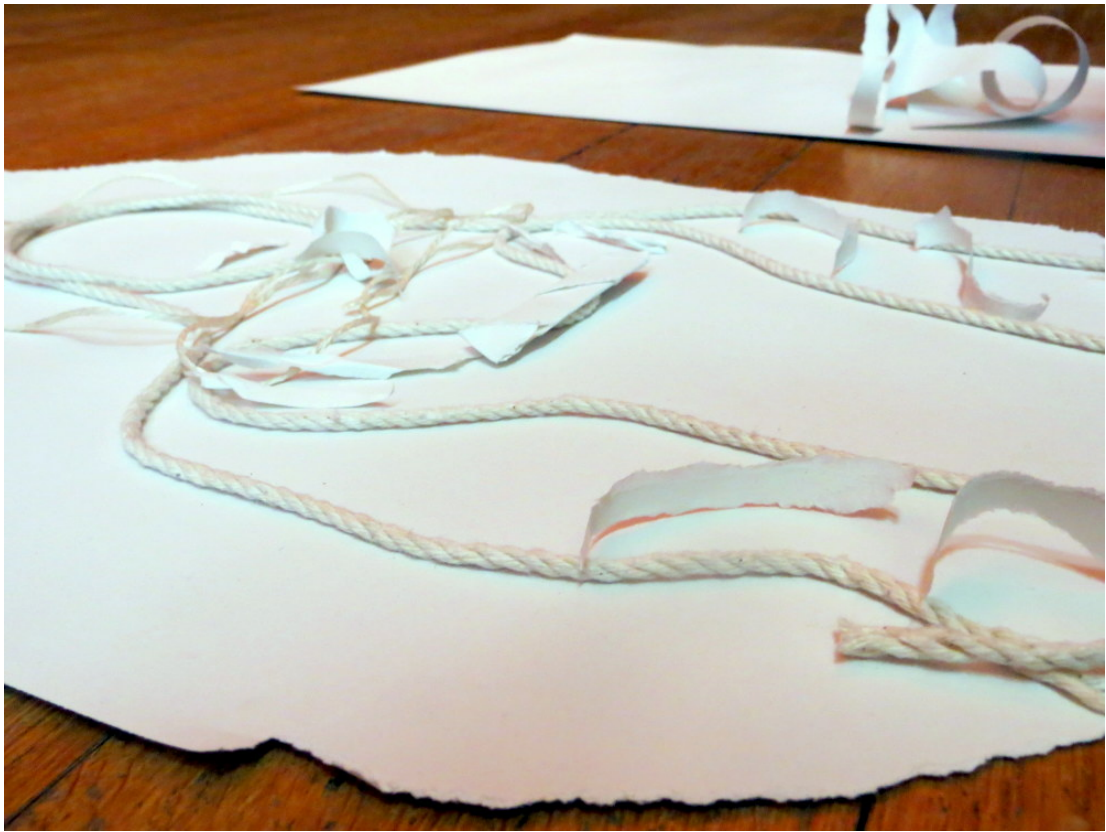
A pile of string! A drawing tool!





William Hogarth, Mrs John Kirkby c.1748







Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Rachel de Ruvigny 4th
Countess of Southampton c.1638







Sir Thomas Lawrence, Samuel Woodburn c.1823-1824

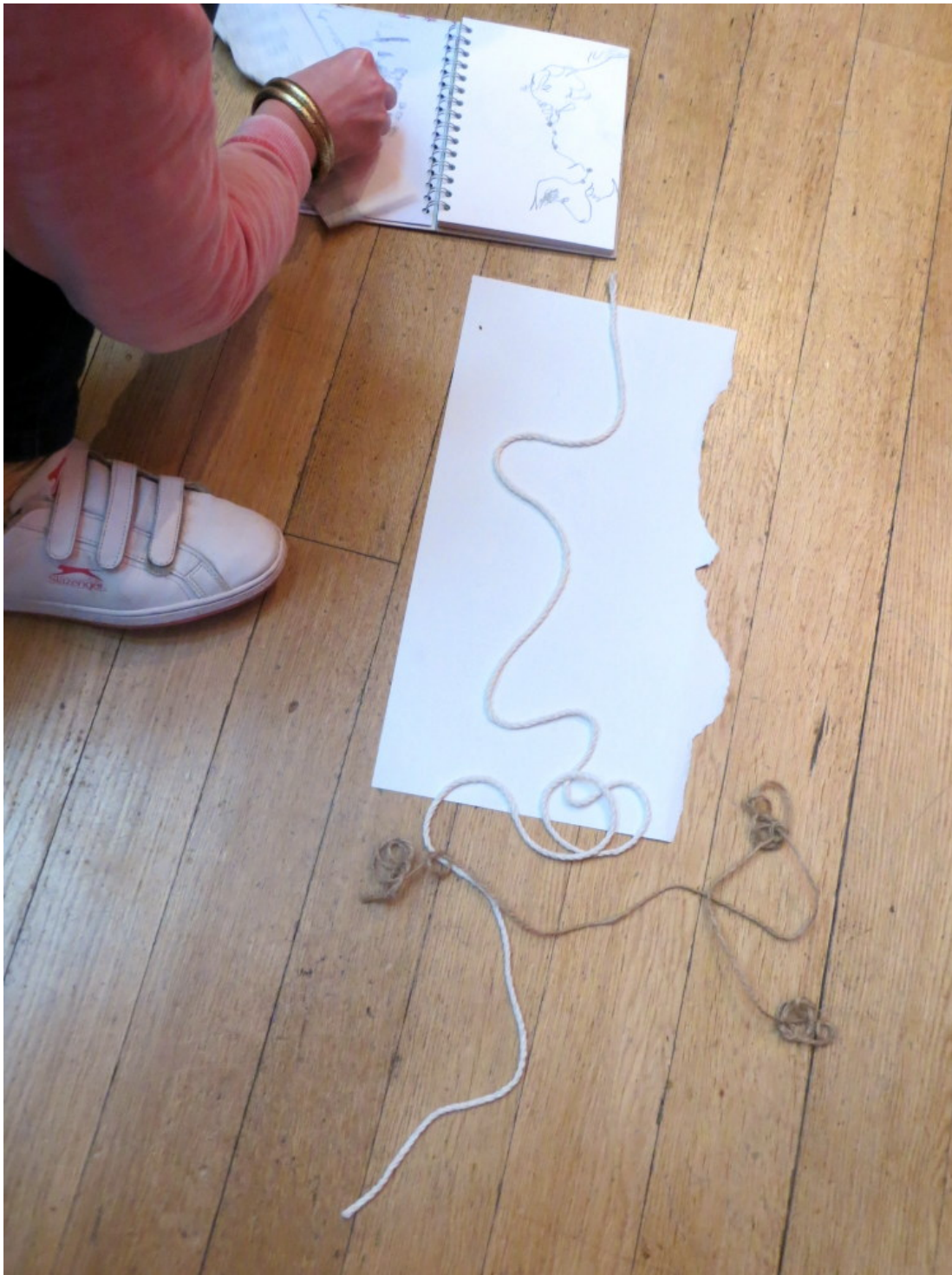


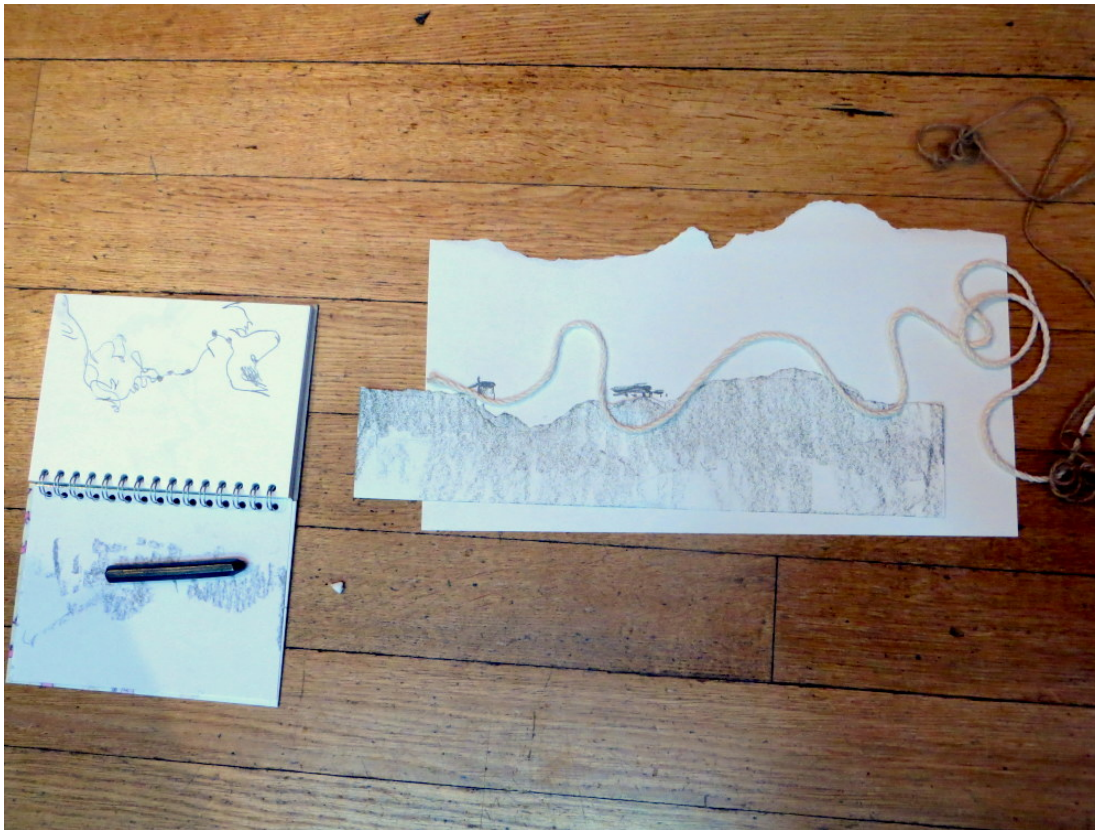




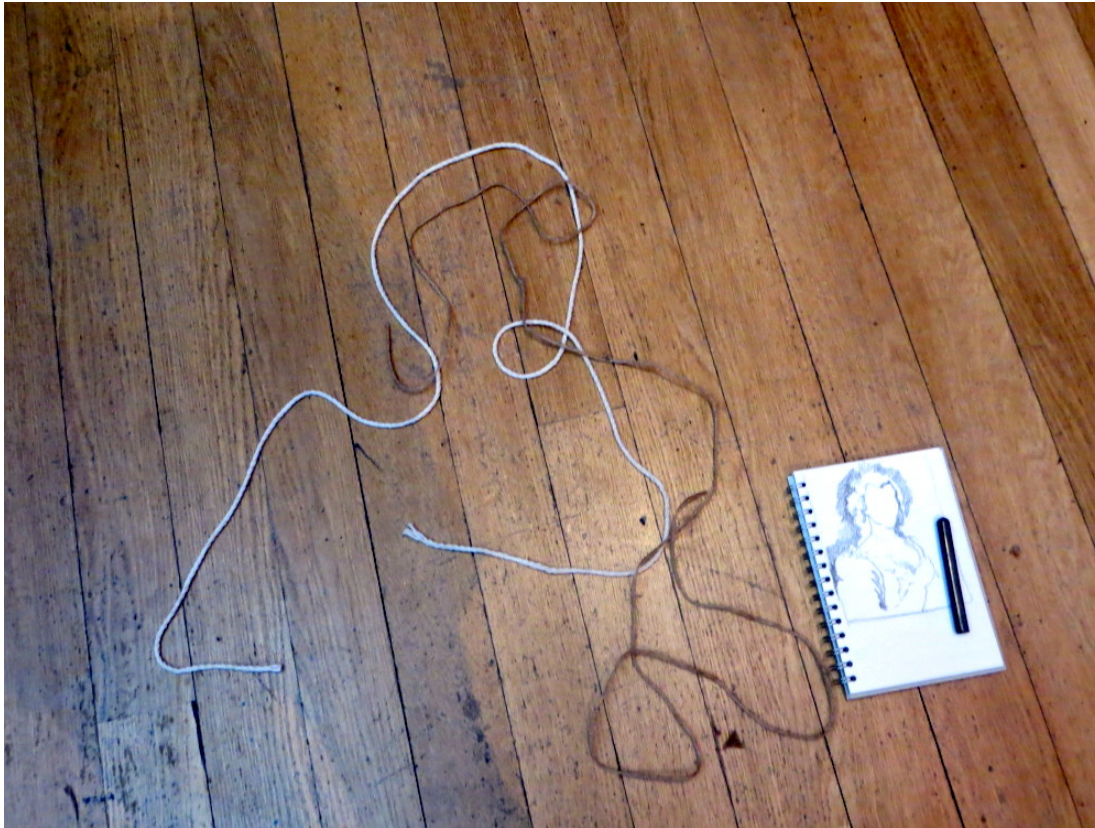
William Ashford, View at Mount Merrion, 1800-06







Joseph Wright of Derby, Mrs John Ashton
c.1769-1771



Many thanks to the teachers who participated in this InSET training session for sharing their process with AccessArt and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Many thanks to [Pink Pig Sketchbooks](#) for their generous donation of sketchbooks to AccessArt.

Photos by Paula Briggs.

The
Fitzwilliam
Museum
CAMBRIDGE



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
MUSEUMS
& BOTANIC GARDEN



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



UK Charity AccessArt created this

resource in collaboration with the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

AccessArt has over 850 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.

You May Also Like...

Teachers Explore 'Line and Shape' at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge with AccessArt



Drawing and Making Flowers



**Drawing and Making: Drawing to Feed
Making – Making to Feed Drawing**

