

# Using Sketchbooks, Drawing and Reflective Tools in the 20th Century Gallery at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

This post shares how [Paula Briggs](#) and [Sheila Ceccarelli](#) from AccessArt and [Kate Noble](#) from the [Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge](#), enabled teachers to explore 20th Century paintings and sculpture, through using sketchbooks & drawing as tools for looking and remembering.



Teachers draw in the 20th Century Gallery in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

---

### ***Overcoming the White Paper***

Drawing can be a powerful route into exploring artworks.

This session was about using drawing as a tool to 'look' and

gather information - not about creating finished pieces but building drawings, rich with visual clues and reminders for later.

It can be helpful to be able to have drawing techniques or warm up exercises to take away the feeling of being daunted by great works and overcoming one's own 'white page syndrome'.

First teachers are encouraged to hold the pencil gently in the tips of their fingers and let it dangle over the paper to explore, gentle, light movements.



Teachers explore mark making holding a pencil loosely with the tips of their fingers

Then, working their way down the pencil until held half way and grabbed or clutched and allowing the pressure of marks to push down onto the paper. The pencil is still vertical and marks are strong.



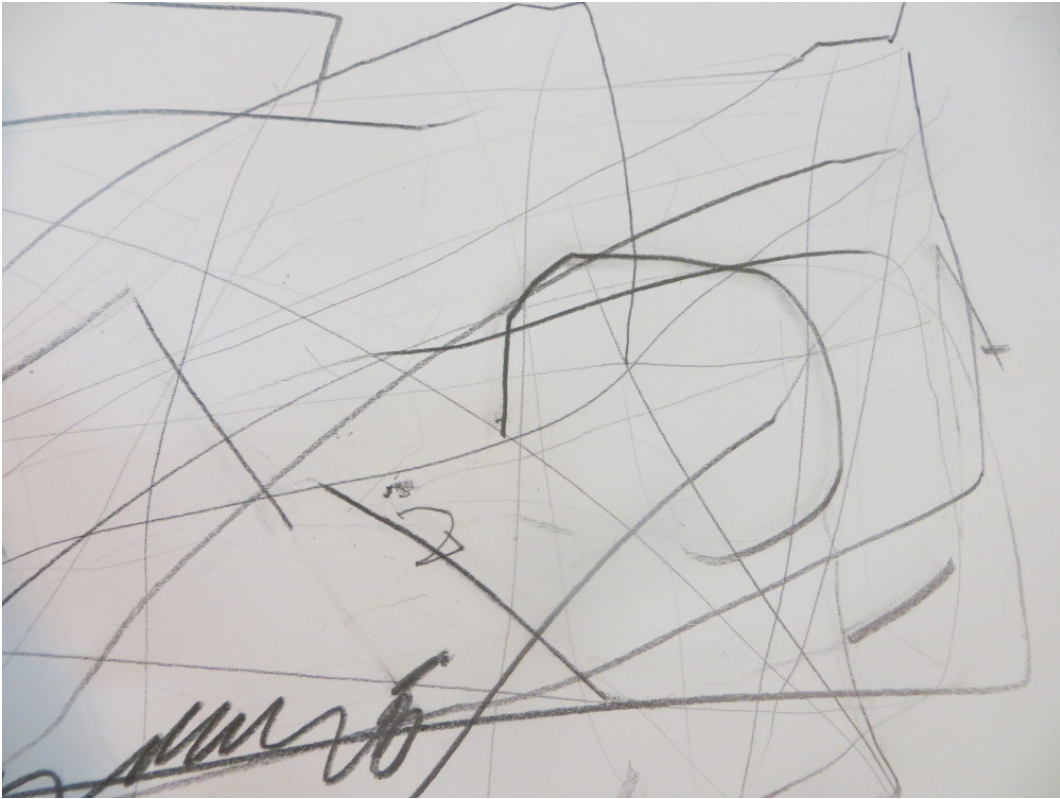
Grabbing the pencil to explore stronger lines

Continuing the exploration of the pencil, teachers then hold their tool horizontally, allowing the tip to make rich, small and thick scraping movements.



Holding the pencil horizontally and using the tip of the finger to draw





Exploring pencil

---

***Tools for looking at, and reflecting on, 20th Century Art by  
Kate Noble***



Kate looking at William Nicholson's Frostbound and guides teachers into the painting

Sometimes it is good to just take the time to look really closely at just one painting or object.

We started the session by spending a few minutes sitting in silence looking at the painting. We guided our looking by starting at the top of the painting and then letting our eyes travel slowly down the picture in a zig zag from left to right.

If there was an area which was interesting we were invited to stop and look at that detail for a bit longer. Once we had all had time to look we talked about what we had seen and then chose a part of the painting to explore in more detail.

This time we ventured 'inside the frame' to imagine ourselves in the painting. What could we smell, hear, see, touch during our adventure? We then shared our personal responses to the painting and discussed how this helped our own looking and increased our awareness of individual differences in interpretation.



Getting inside a painting with Kate

Click on this link to take a closer look at [William Nicholson's Frostbound](#)

---

### ***Drawing to collect ideas***

Teachers were then encouraged to move around the gallery looking for works from which they wanted to respond. This was an exercise to help 'collect' visual information and make visual 'notes' using drawing.

They worked with a 'continuous line', filling the paper with contour drawings of their observations.





To prevent teachers worrying about their own drawings and to aid keeping to the task of looking at the artworks in front of them, they were given a piece of cardboard to block their view of their own drawing.



Using a piece of card-board to block out the drawing to encourage the focus on looking and collecting observations



Exploring techniques for using drawing to collect ideas and overcome the white page



Exploration of Ben Nicolson in a continuous line



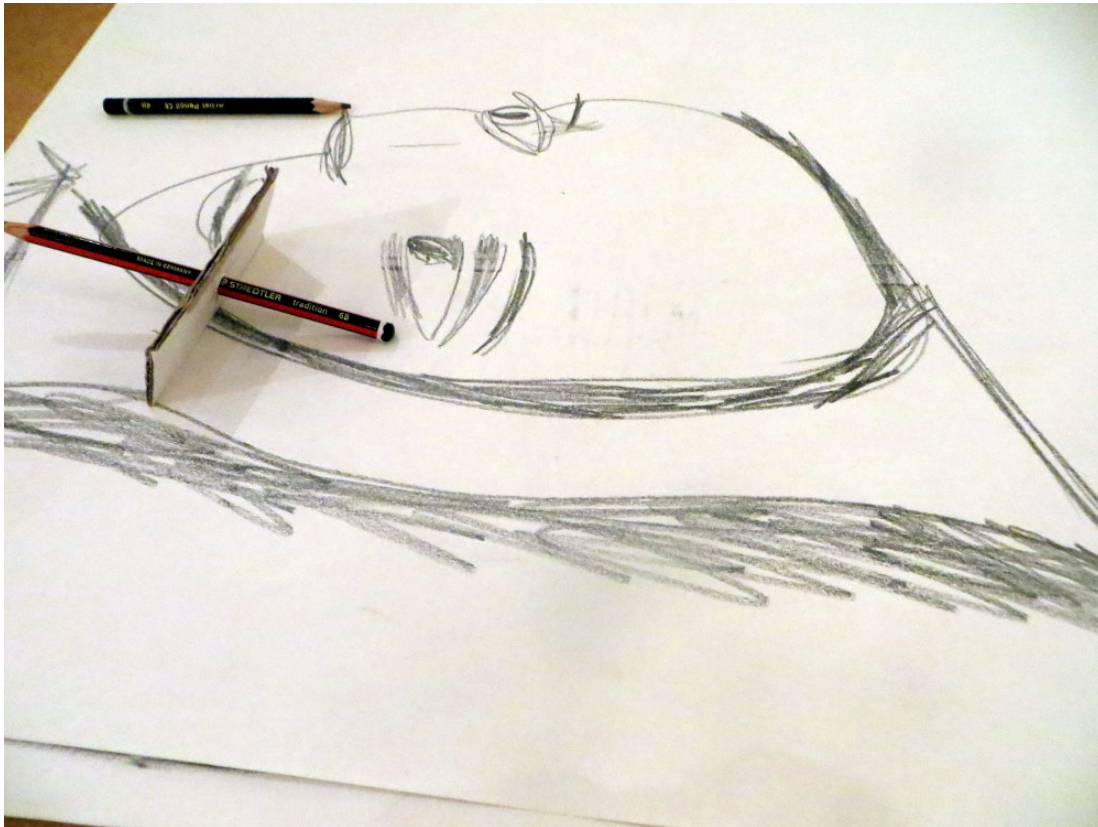


Drawing Henry Moore in 20th Century Gallery





Exploration of Henry Moore in a continuous line



---

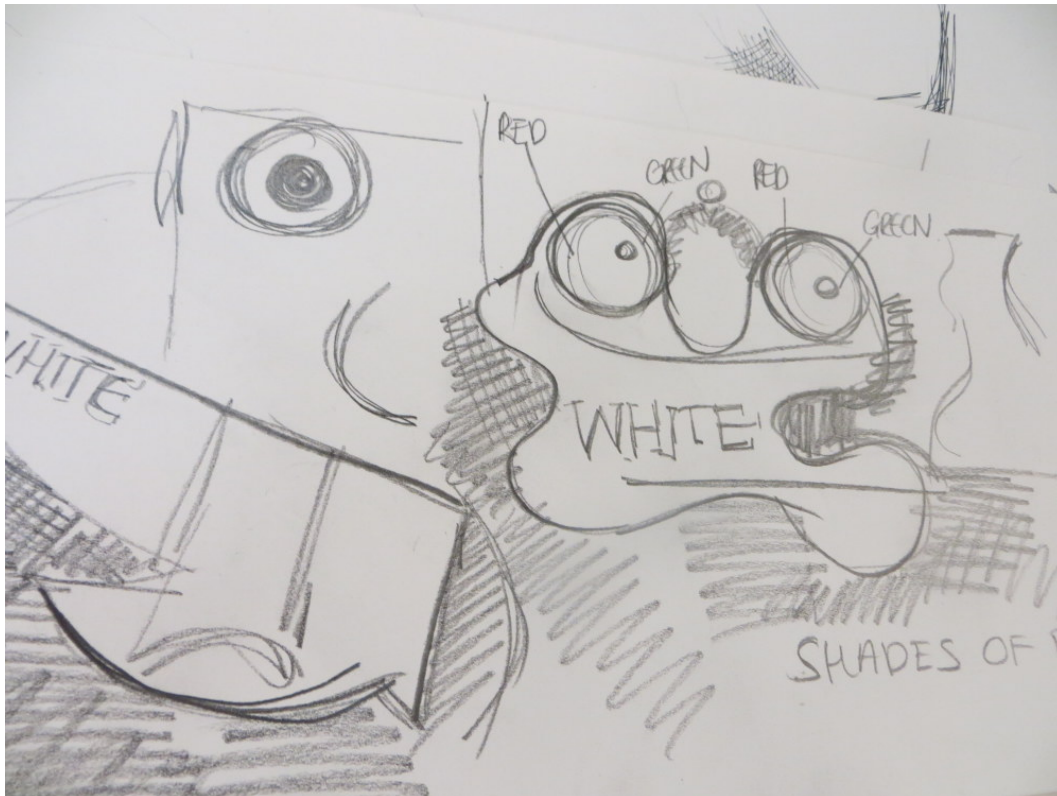
### ***Taking notes to trigger memories later***

As part of 'collecting' teachers were also encouraged to make notes on their drawings to help trigger memories later.

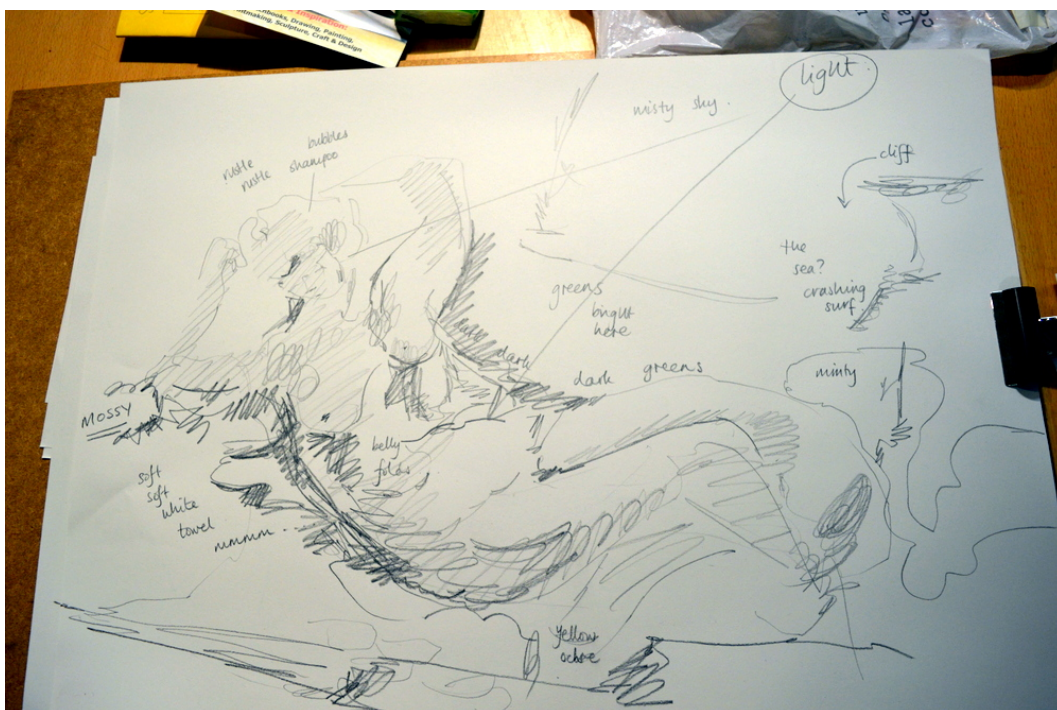


Barbara Hepworth - teacher uses drawing and annotation to take ideas back to the studio





Sketchbooks for collecting - teacher uses drawing and annotation to take ideas back to the studio



Annotating and drawing to remember

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

Thank you to Kate Noble for facilitating this session.

Photos by Paula Briggs, Kate Noble and Sheila Ceccarelli.

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.**



## Related Posts

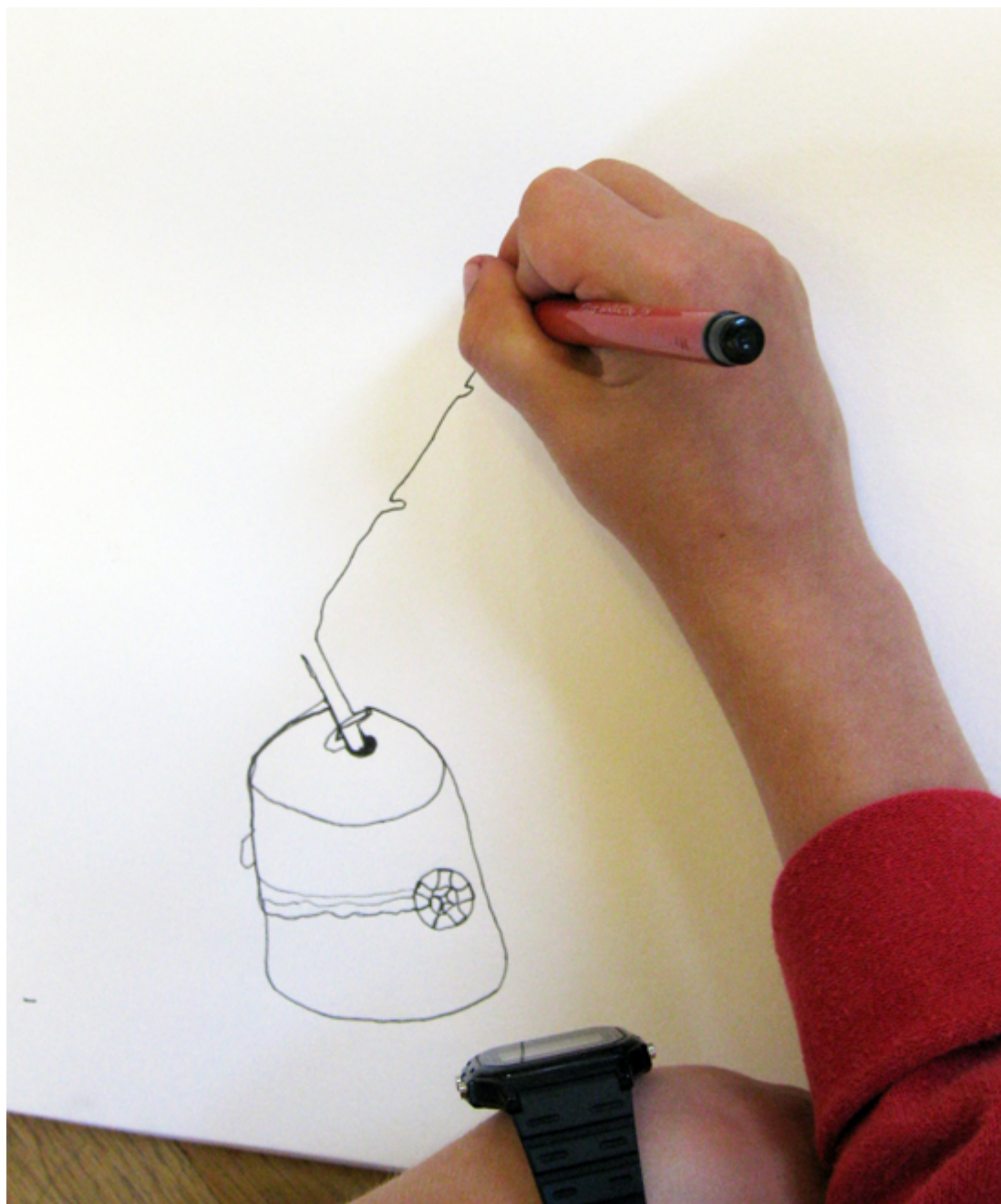
### Teachers Explore 'Line and Shape' at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge with AccessArt



[\\_See all](#) the blog posts from AccessArt's InSET in collaboration with the Fitzwilliam Museum. Find top Museum Education practice

with practical, hands on learning in Fine Art disciplines including: drawing, printmaking, sketchbooks, collage and sculpture.

## **Continuous Line Drawings (Squiggle Drawings) of Sticks**



[\\_](#)Look at this post to see how pupils aged 6 to 10 respond to a continuous line exercise exercise led by Paula Briggs.



## Teenagers Make Prompts to Overcome White Page Syndrome



[\\_See here](#)  
how teenagers overcome the white page with Sheila Ceccarelli.