

How to Make Beautiful, Liquid Drawings Inspired by Degas

This resource explores drawings by French artist, Edgar Degas (1834-1917) and how they might inspire drawing in the classroom.

This resource was created in collaboration with AccessArt and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and is one of three AccessArt resources: [Inspired by Edgar Degas: Printmaking, Drawing & Sculpture at the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge with AccessArt](#).

• Who is this resource for?

This resource is for any teacher, or educator, who would like to take a closer look at 19th century art, in particular Degas, and bring it to life in their classrooms.

This resource can be used to support looking at art work in a museum, or how you might use printable resources in the classroom to inspire drawing.

• Accessing Degas's drawings...

- You will see a selection of Degas's drawings, as seen in the exhibition [Degas: A Passion for Perfection](#) at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge in 2017/18, with close up examples of his work including links to:
- The Fitzwilliam Museum's [Collections Explorer/Degas](#) with access to downloadable images of the work. A must go-to for teachers!

▪ **Activities covered in this resource...**

- A Drawing challenge with [AccessArt Drawing Prompt Cards](#), to help teachers explore Degas\'s work - (NB these cards are useful on any gallery floor, in any museum, anywhere in the world!),
- Introduction to how to create loose drawings, inspired by Degas\'s work, using drawn studies from the gallery floor,
- How to use Brusho crystals and wax-resist.

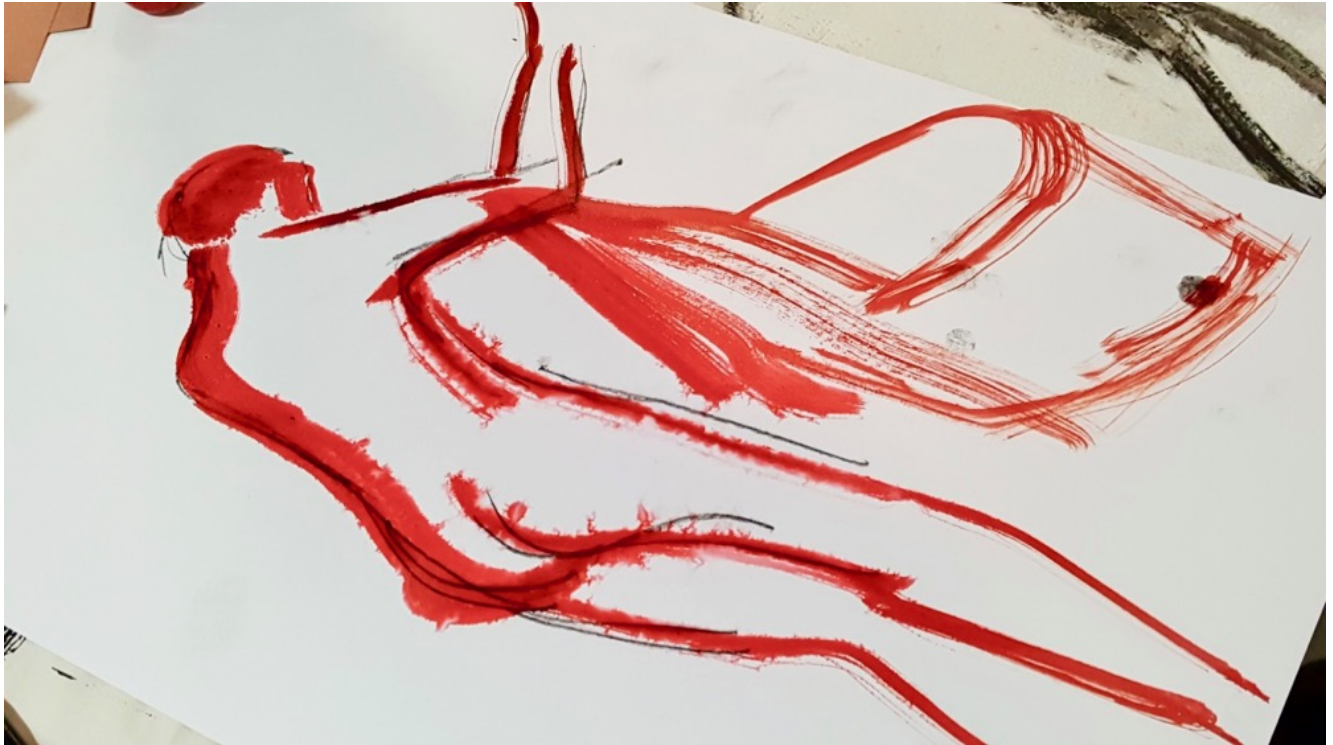
▪ **You will need...**

- Access to the internet and [Collection Explorer/Degas](#)
- [AccessArt Drawing Prompt Cards](#)
- A3 micron card or thick cartridge paper. Economy paper is fine including sugar paper, but ideally of a substantial thickness,
- Permanent markers,
- Chunky graphite stubs,
- Wax crayons, oil pastels or, Scolaquip Rainbow Crayons ,
- Brusho Ink Crystals,
- Water,
- Pipettes,
- Water spray bottles,
- Sponges,
- Paint brushes,
- Paint trays for mixing the Brusho ink in.

Setting the Scene

In this resource, we have adapted an actual workshop session for teachers, at the [Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge](#), with [Kate Noble](#), [Paula Briggs](#) and [Sheila Ceccarelli](#), exploring drawings by the French artist **Edgar Degas**.

We will show you, step by step, how you might create the session in a classroom setting giving pupils the opportunity to make beautiful, fluid drawings inspired by this important artist.



Liquid drawing inspired by Degas at a workshop for teachers at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

AccessArt is very keen never to be didactic in its approach to teaching art, and always encourages experimental approaches and open outcomes to any creative session. The basic lesson plan below, will create the frame work for you to take children, and young people, across key stages on a visual exploration of Degas's drawings and guarantees beautiful outcomes without being prescriptive.

Looking at Drawings by Degas

Degas was a 'draughtsman and French artist born in 1834 to 1917', who is most well known for his work, across all mediums, studying dancers, but he was a prolific artist and had a passion for landscape, travel, the classics and cafe scenes, all explored through the fine art mediums available to

him from mono-printing to sculpture, painting, drawing and printmaking. A life time of work and study of his world through these processes, was clearly visible at the Fitzwilliam Museum in the autumn of 2017 in the exhibition [Degas: A Passion for Perfection.](#)



Après le Bain, charcoal drawing by Edgar Degas, 1834-1917

The go-to resource for you is the Fitzwilliam Museum [Collection Explorer/Degas](#). Here, schools and individuals can freely use images of works in the museum collection for purposes of study. You can download, or print off individual images, or project them onto a whiteboard, to give children and young people a close up look the museum collection from a distance.

As a starting point, AccessArt suggests the images of Degas's drawing below - but please feel free to do your own research and make your own selection using the Collection Explorer.



Study of Two Standing Dancers, charcoal drawing by Edgar Degas made circa 1889.



Head of Thérèse Degas, profile to L. Study of draped figure and a detail of drapery, drawing by Edgar Degas

Warm-up Drawing Exercise

With a selection of Degas's work available through the Museum Explorer, or looking at images of dancers in real life - use [AccessArt Drawing Prompt Cards](#) to create a series of

drawings to warm up. These can be done on small sheets of A5 paper.



Using an AccessArt prompt card to get drawing

Have a selection of drawing materials to hand, so children can choose their own medium to explore. Permanent markers, wax crayons, soft pastels or chunky graphite would be ideal.

Try using as many different drawing prompts as possible to create a small series of drawings. The prompts are designed to free up the drawing process and make children and young people feel uninhibited by the white page and open to experimentation. They might challenge what they think a drawing is, or should look like, so try and encourage them to be open and that there is 'right' or 'wrong.'

[AccessArt Drawing Prompt Cards:](#)

Look and draw your subject in the time it takes to inhale and exhale one breath.

Draw your subject with your non-dominant hand.

Hold your pencil or pen lightly from the top (with all five

fingers).

Draw your chosen subject in a continuous line.

Draw your chosen subject in five lines.

Draw your chosen subject in three lines.

Look at your subject and draw it without looking at the paper.

Draw your subject in dots and specks.

Draw your subject in scrapes and slices.

Draw the outline of your subject in one, strong gesture.

Draw your subject without blinking.

Draw your subject's shadow.

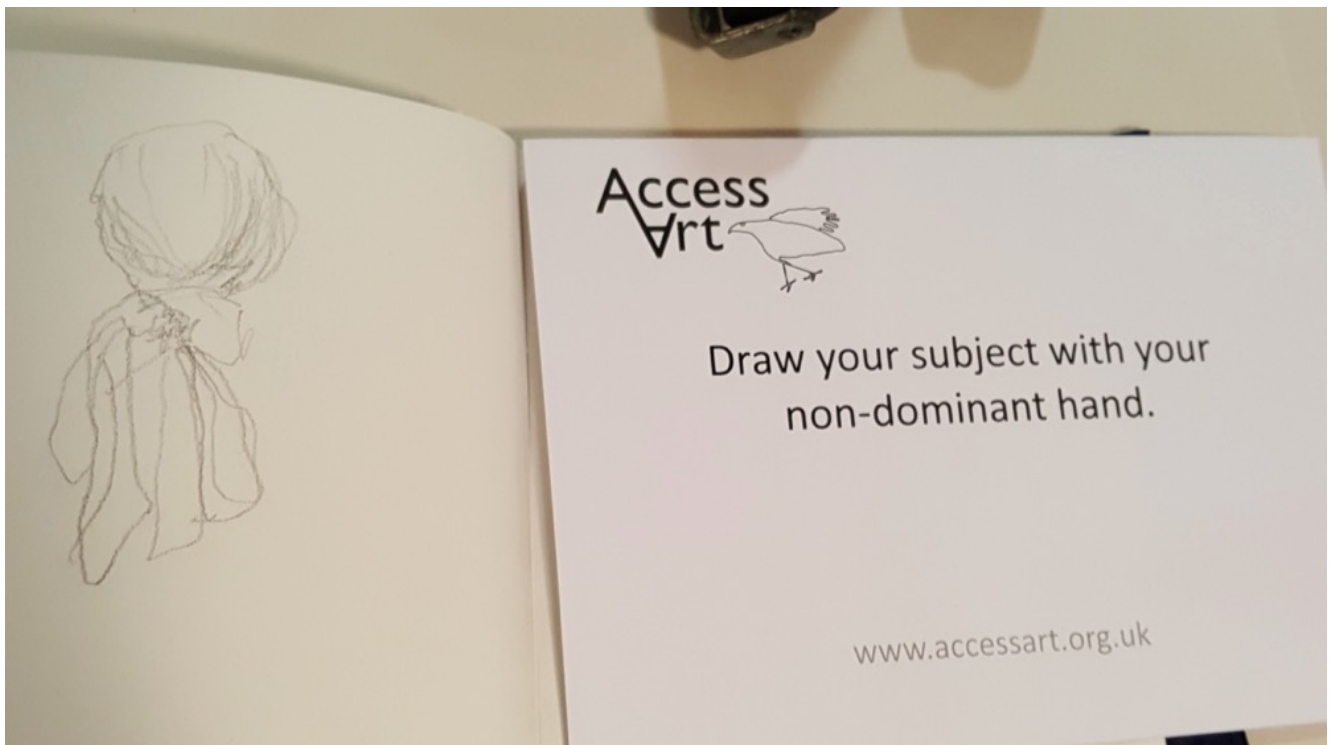
Draw your subject from inside out with no outline or contour at all.



Example A5 drawing by a teacher, inspired by Degas



Drawing from an AccessArt drawing prompt - A drawing in five lines and a drawing in the time it takes to 'exhale,' inspired by Degas



Drawing from an AccessArt prompt Card looking at Degas

Using Brusho Crystals and Creating a 'Liquid Drawing'

This is where the fun starts! The demo below will show you how you can work from your small drawings to create a larger A3 experimental drawing using Brusho Crystals.

This process will help pupils make a transition between drawing and painting and give them a chance to explore experimental mark making and colour using Brusho Crystals.

Brusho colours are bright, luminous and very pleasing to the eye and perfect for creating vivid, fluid drawings. Brusho can be applied in various ways across paper to create different effects. They are very effective used over marks made with wax crayons or oil pastels to create a 'resist effect.'

Sprayed water can be used to disperse and blend the ink onto card or paper. Try sprinkling the crystals over damp paper or using a pipette to apply flowing lines across the paper.

You can also apply ink with sponges and paint brushes.



Brusho Crystals - Here there is a small hole pierced in the lid to aid sprinkling the crystals over damp paper



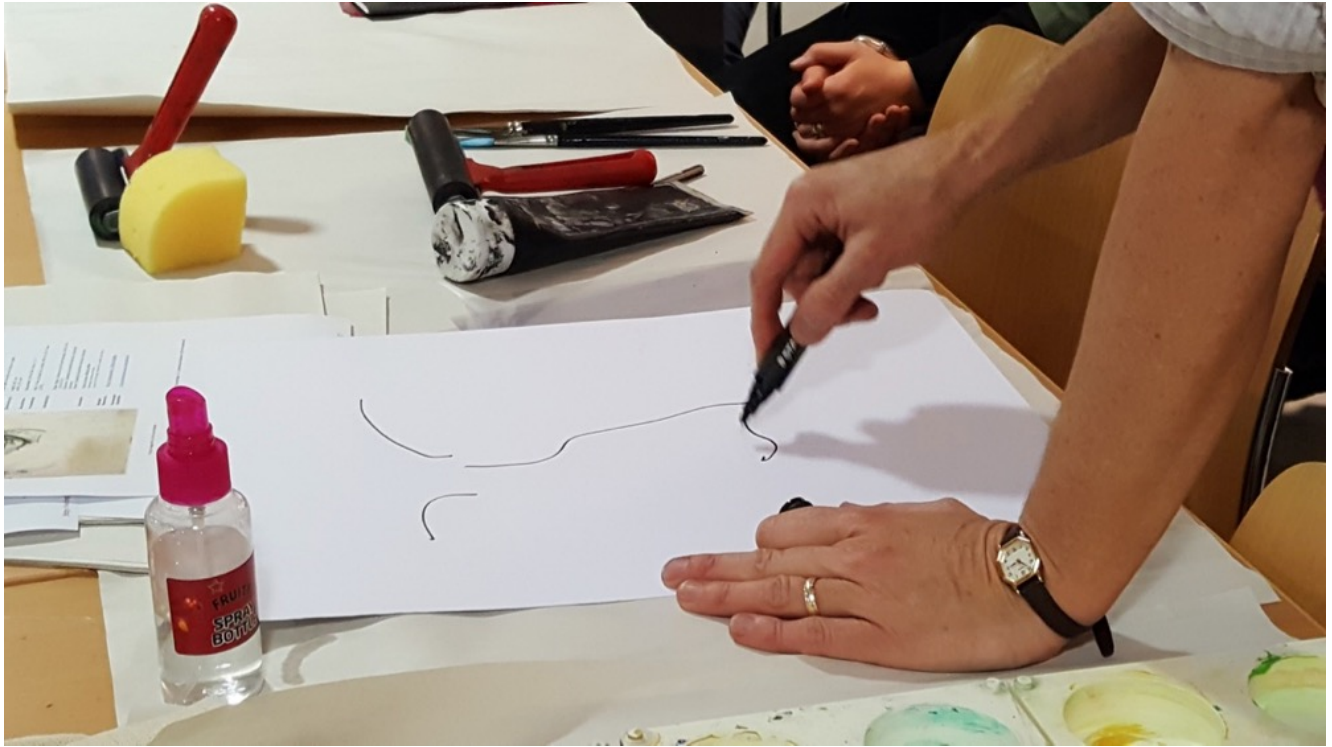
Brusho crystals close up



Water spray bottles used for dampening the paper and dispersing Brusho Crystals



Pipettes and ScolaQuip 'Rainbow crayons'



Inspired by Degas, Sheila from AccessArt draws with black, permanent marker onto Micron card



She then goes over the drawing with rainbow crayon to create areas of resistance which will repel the ink and water



Sprinkling Brusho crystals on the sheet



Sheila then lightly sprays the micron with water



Explosion of colour



Using the pipette to drag ink across the drawing



A5 drawing by a teacher, inspired by Degas



Teacher then works on A3 micron, inspired by her drawing to

create an experimental drawing with Brusho Crystals



And creates effects with a sponge



Finishing off with bold marks and an exploration of colour



Using a paint brush and sprinkling crystals on a damp sheet to create a fluid drawing inspired by Degas



Creating a drawing using wax resist: Initial drawing in white oil pastel and then flooded with water and Brusho Crystals



Using a brush to apply Brusho



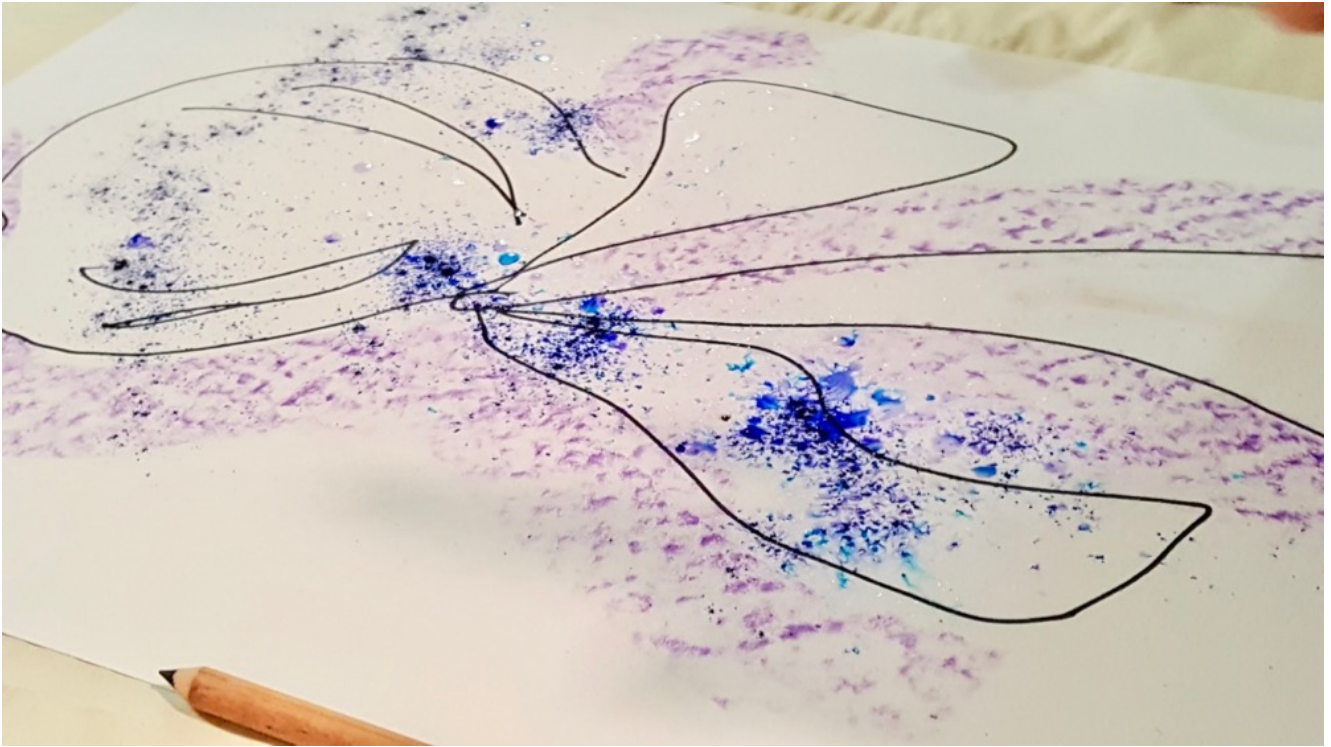
Finished drawing by a teacher at the Fitzwilliam Museum
workshop



Drawing inspired by Degas on A3 paper in permanent marker



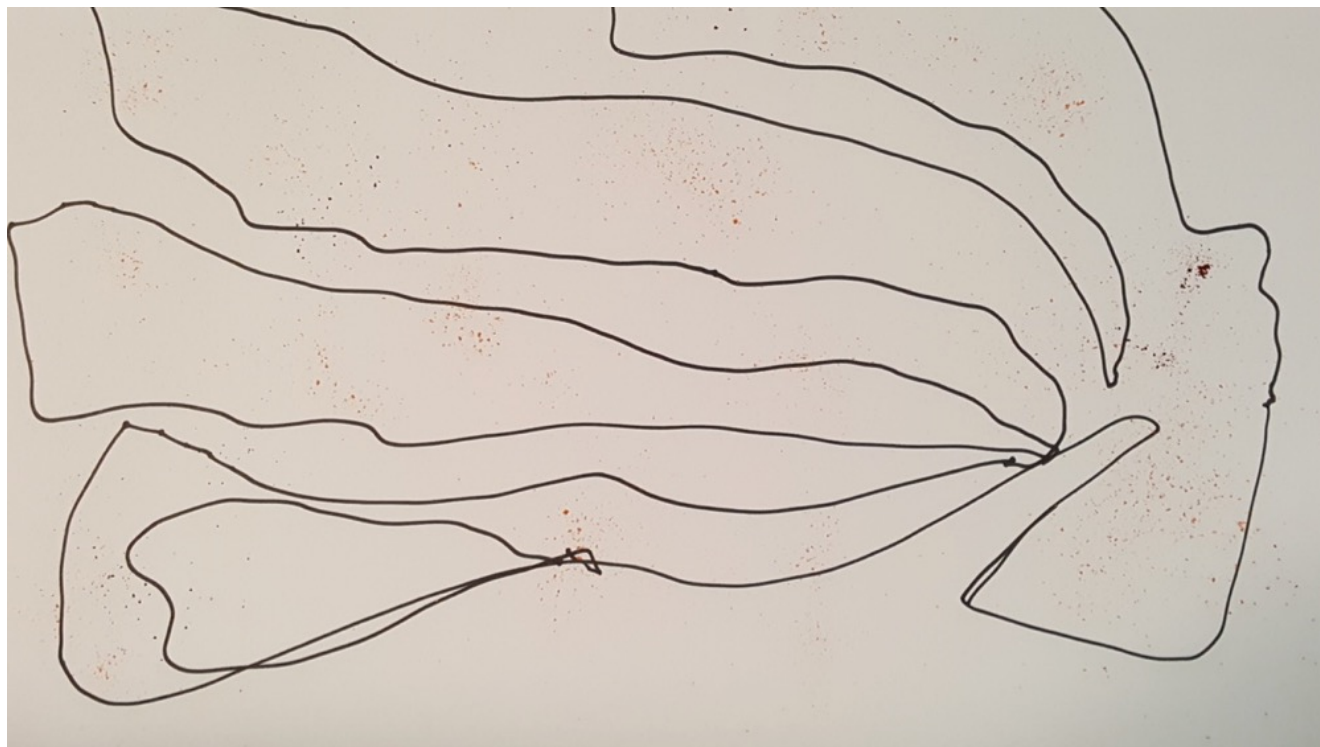
Spraying water over Brusho Crystals



Applying Brusho over the initial drawing



Exploding with colour! Brusho and water on micron



Drawing in permanent marker



With Brusho Crystals and water



Work by teachers at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge inspired by Degas

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

A special thanks to Jane Munro, the Keeper of Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and the curator of this exhibition, for her support and input into this resource.



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.