

We each view the world through our own lens. This view is personal to us, but is shaped, moulded, coloured—or even clouded—both by life experience and by the perspectives of other people, reflecting the many ways in which we come to understand the world around us and all it contains. *Drawing Connections* is a creative initiative that seeks to give people opportunities to take a variety of perspectives through different artistic practices. Even if some of those perspectives might last only a moment, they may leave a lasting impression. Over the last few years, *Drawing Connections* has worked in HMP Springhill a Low Risk Category D prison and it has been a rewarding journey. The project has created safe-spaces in collaboration with a range of award-winning artists (some with lived experience of the Criminal Justice System), bringing Foundation Art students in to the prison to work alongside residents to enable participants (some with no prior artistic engagement) the opportunity to experience the benefits of creative practice for themselves. We want you to have this opportunity too.

In the same way we started *Drawing Connections* sessions, let's start with a gentle exercise, to reset the mind and encourage calm. Cortisol levels, which increase with anxiety, reduce immunity. So be kind to yourself. Take a few minutes to zone-in. Consider spending 5-10mins doing the exercises described below.

Accomplished martial artists master their practice with a grounding in Qigong: 'qi' means energy, and 'gong' means work. Qigong therefore means the exercise of your internal energy. The opening stance for most martial arts is called Wuji Stance, perfecting that can make all the difference to back problems when you're stood around.

The practice of Qigong has helped me to address anxiety related to past and present traumas, maintain my mobility and improve my immunity. The deep breathing helps regulate your emotional responses.

1. Stand with your legs shoulder width apart. A soft, gentle bend in the knee, as if you were about to lower yourself in to a chair.
2. Imagine a golden thread suspending you from the heavens at the crown (the point at the top of your head between the tips of your ears).
3. Relax the whole body. So all your joints move freely. Breathe deeply and slowly through your nose.

4. Repeat this 3-4 times, concentrating on your breathing and little else, if your mind wanders, bring it back to your breath. Try holding your breath for a few seconds before breathing out.
5. Next time you inhale, as you breath in, raise your arms by rolling at the shoulder to start, forward (not up) then in to your elbow and then your wrist. Like a piece of reeling silk, or a wave travelling through your arm.
 - o Tip: to get the movement right in your shoulders, squeeze your blades together, imaging you are cracking a nut between them. You are looking for that lateral movement in back and forth (not up and down).
6. As your lungs fill, roll your hands over the top fingers last, then as you breath out, lower everything, starting with your shoulders, then elbows, wrist and fingers, folding down. Imagine a how a birds wings move.
7. Once your finger tips come down, repeat the process (action 5 & 7 as many times as you like, but at least six)

Once you have zoned-in, let's start by looking at simple **mark making and observational drawing**:

- As a general rule, a 2B pencil is the preferred drawing pencil as it is soft and good for shading, but an HB pencil (which has a sharper point for finer detail) or a pen (ink/ biro/felt-tip) is just as good.
- The quality of paper matters when it comes to watercolours, but for now, use whatever you can get your hands on (and are allowed to use!). Cardboard, old cereal packs, magazines, newspaper...
- Doodle over the top of images if you need a guide, or tear images up and stick them together (collage) if you can get your hands on some glue.

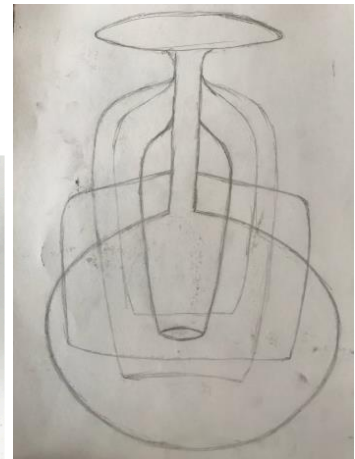
- In terms of subject - if you're not doodling or using your imagination - start simple. Hands are notoriously difficult, but other body parts could be a good choice, as well as inanimate objects that you have around your room.
- If you are doing observational drawing, draw what you see, not what you think you see. Look for the shapes and blank spaces in between - that's what people mean when they say draw the 'negative space', the space outside the outline.
- Breathe deeply, be patient and get absorbed in what you are drawing. Practice makes perfect!



Feather Study - Molly, DC 2018.



Beetle study - Leon, DC 2019



Vases - Donald, DC 2017

Drawing a portrait: Faces are something we see from the day we are born. Most faces include two eyes, brows, cheeks and ears, one nose, mouth, forehead, chin and philtrum (area between top lip and nose). Generally, this is all supported by a neck and beneath the skin are all manner of incredible and fascinating things that work together, similar in every one of us (muscle, tendon, flesh, teeth, cartilage and bone) but distinctive to each of us to make us individual. When it comes to drawing, having looked at many faces, we instinctively draw what we believe we see...

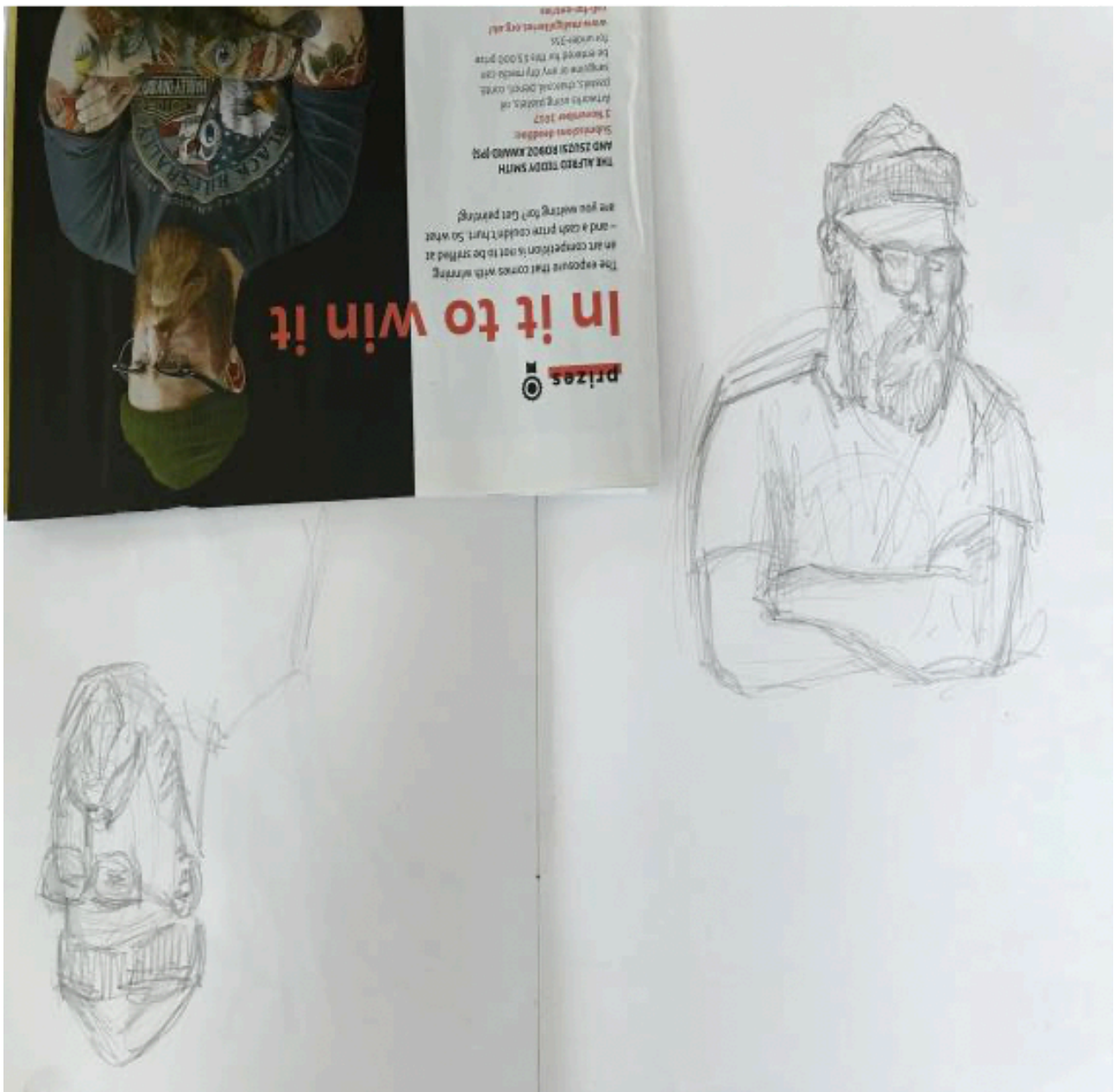
So, for this next exercise get a photo of a loved one, or someone else you wish to draw (from a newspaper/magazine). Now turn the image upside down. This (partially) tricks our mind in to seeing something 'new'. Now, rather than drawing a face, consider you are drawing a landscape.

Operation JackDraw:

Make your response today

Share it with the Museum

As before, look for the 'negative spaces' and shapes. Where is your outline? Is it solid or broken? Try not to get 'bogged down in detail' - keep it light, and try setting yourself time limits. This is a great way to 'loosen up'.



The image to the right shows how the person drew their portrait the right way up, then turned it upside down first... The left drawing (albeit upside down) captures more of the photo's character, do you think?

Perhaps you'd like to have a go & share your drawing with the Museum? Works submitted will Feature in the Operation JackDraw gallery.

Soap carvings: Lee Cutter is one of the brilliant artists *Drawing Connections* has worked with recently. Some of you may be familiar with his work, which includes observational studies of things located within his cell, which he made out of prison issue bars of soap. All you need to make soap carvings is a bar of soap, a plastic fork and any other tool that can make a mark, such as a pencil. There are two main ways of carving soap:

1. **A relief** – this is a shallow carving, where you treat the block of soap as a canvas and draw directly into the surface.
2. **A sculpture** – this is where you remove larger chunks to reveal a more three-dimensional object.

Using your fork, pencil, or other tool, make a rough outline or shape by chopping, scraping and drawing into your bar of soap with one of the two types of carvings in mind. My advice would be to start delicate and slow, and really try to understand the material. Once you have an idea of what it could look like, you can now go in with some details. Don't worry if bits unexpectedly break away - soap can be a little unpredictable. Often the most interesting carvings are the ones where pieces have been broken off.

If you are having a hard time thinking of an initial idea to work with, you can always make a couple of small drawings on scraps of paper. I tend to make drawings on the side as I'm carving too, as it breaks the process up into stages and helps me to move forward. If you want to smooth off a surface, you can always add a tiny bit of water and rub the soap with your finger. If the carving is wet, it'll be softer to carve, which will create a different type of mark to carving dry soap. If you have access to any inks or paints, you can always rework them and colour the surface of the carvings. A poignant thing I often think about: the great Renaissance artist, Michelangelo, made large carvings from blocks of marble and once said that his job was to free the human form trapped inside the block!