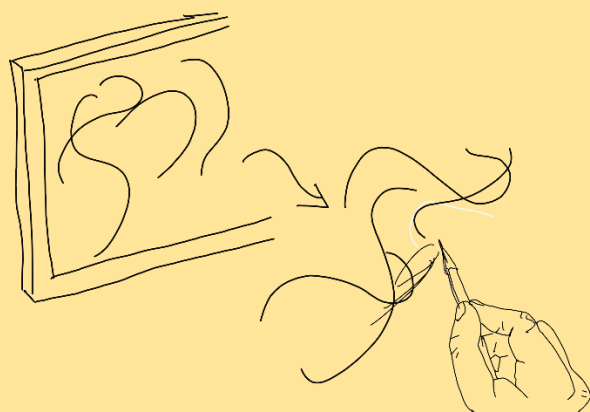




Drawing as Stimming provides some suggestions around creating non-verbal interpretation for exhibition artworks. The sensory interpretation should be considered to be an equivalent of written interpretation. It is designed for people whose first language might not be verbal and for people who enjoy sensory engagement.



Drawing as stimming looks to create a time where stimming can happen, through drawing and in response to artworks in the gallery setting, or online in response to art collections. Drawing as Stimming seeks to explore how drawing with different materials, not just on paper, can support non-verbal interpretation of artworks, whilst also enabling space to stim.

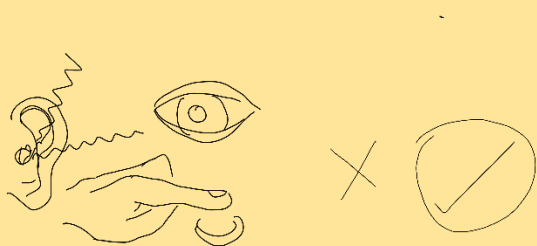


Drawing as Stimming aims to create a time where it is safe to stim or to respond with the body through to artworks drawing. Stimming is behaviour often seen in autistic or neurodivergent children and adults that can include repetitive actions, such as rocking or hand flapping or making noises.



Often stimming is viewed negatively because it is seen when an autistic child or adult is overwhelmed by sensory information. But, importantly, it can also be positive and part of a sensory-seeking journey, where the child or adult is responding to interesting sensory stimuli.

Masking or hiding stimming, something that children sometimes learn to do early can be painful. However, because stimming is so often misunderstood,



linked with bad behaviour and seen as disruptive, lots of adults and children who have the ability to mask will be pressured to do so.

We want to create interpretation in the art gallery that views a positive sensory-seeking journey as an equal and valid way of interpreting artwork.

Disability-led work - The suggestions were developed by neurodivergent adults and received feedback from a coproduction group of learning disabled and neurodivergent adults. This work has been supported by British Art Network, Pyramid of Arts and DASH. Pyramid is a Leeds-based arts collective and registered charity investing in people with a learning disability to discover the arts and develop their potential. DASH is a Disabled-led visual arts charity. It creates opportunities for Disabled artists to develop their creative practice. Thank you.

Writing/ exploration for this work was in collaboration with Jenny Robinson, who in her own words is:

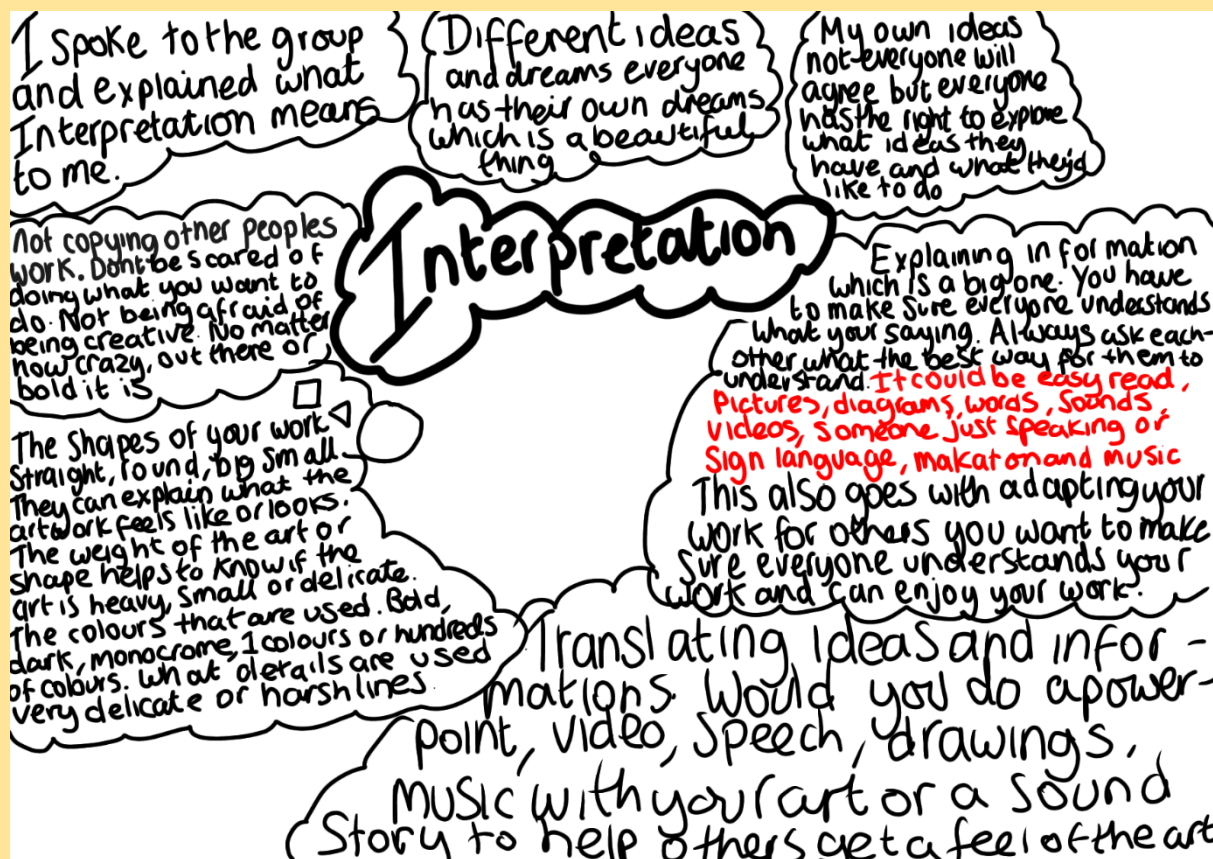
“a disabled artist who has learning disabilities, dyspraxia, adhd, dyslexia and I use a wheelchair.

I love doing art work and being creative. I don't let anything hold me back. I try lots of different styles of artwork, which can mean painting, drawing, oil pastels or chalk. But I also love doing needle felting, crotchet, knitting and anything crafty”.

Workshops were co-delivered by Sam Metz, Jenny Robinson and James Mabbett. Exploration for the tools was in collaboration with Ella Schofield and Jem Clancy, with support from Sarah Hill. Thank you to all involved.

What is interpreting?

An explanation by Jenny Robinson.



Our work together.

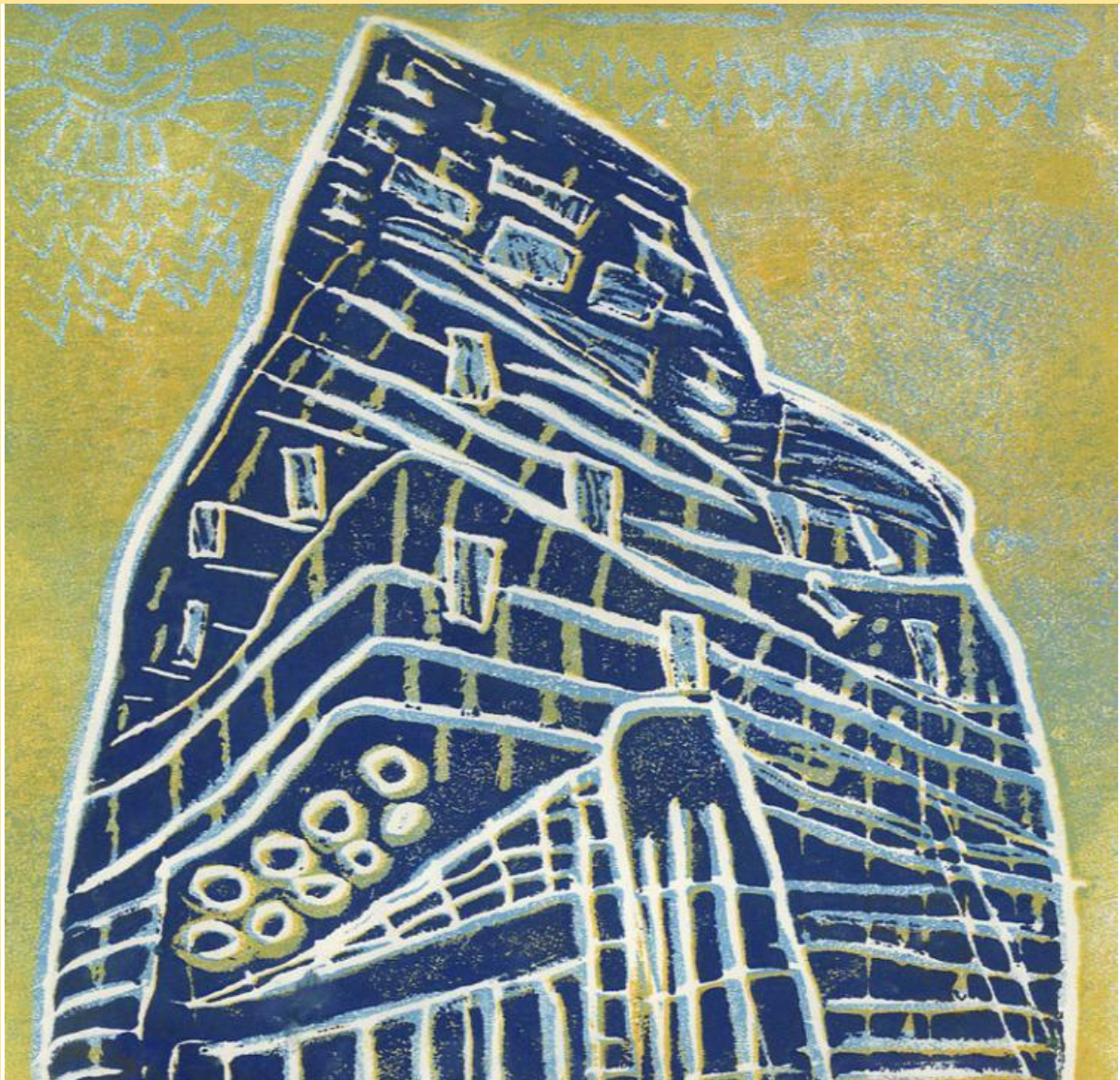
We explored the art collection online at The New Art Gallery, Walsall, and were supported by Julie Brown, Collections Curator. We worked online as some of our participants were vulnerable to COVID, but working online also allowed us to work in our own timeframes, which can be helpful for neurodivergent and disabled participants.

We selected works that we liked from the collection, which helped us to share with the group ways of interpreting the work.

The three artworks.

British Art Network

Drawing as Stimming



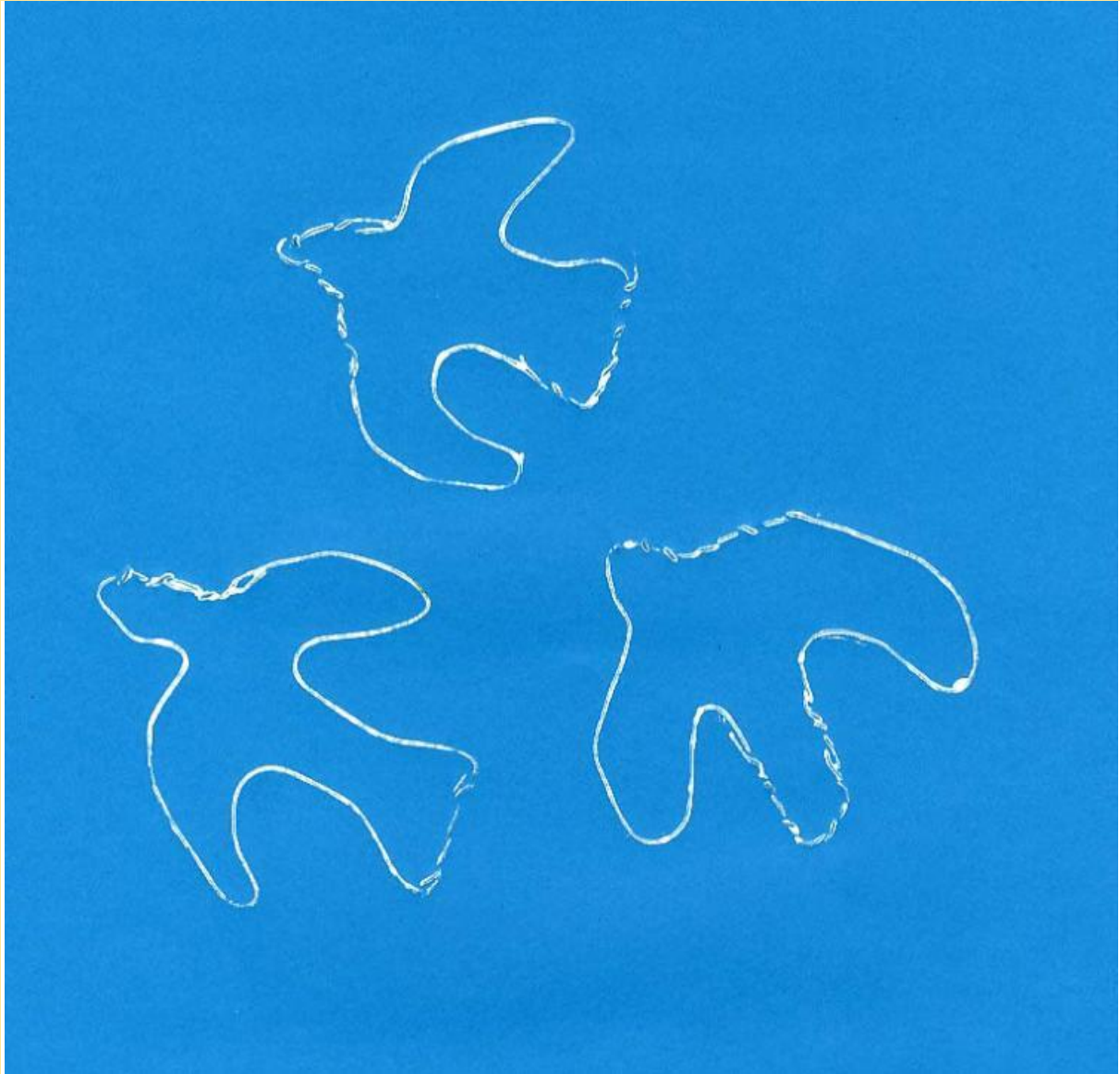
Print by MELISSA INSTONE; Title, The New Art Gallery Walsall; Theme, landscape, building, architecture, work, Walsall landscape, Castle School, children, pattern

British Art Network

Drawing as Stimming



Oil on canvas by PAUL BLOOMER; Title, Soliloquy; Theme, Walsall Artist, landscape, animals,



Print by MIRIAM HOPWOOD; Title, after, Birds in Flight, c1953-55, Braque (part of A View of The Garman Ryan Collection, prints by students from the Graphics BTEC course at Walsall College of Arts and Technology); Theme, Garman Ryan Collection, animals, birds,

- **Sound work with Paul Bloomer, 'The Soliloquy'.**
- **Soundscape Gallery Interpretation an approach by James Mabbett.**
- Discuss the sounds that might be heard within or around the artwork.
 - Environmental.
 - Human.

British Art Network

Drawing as Stimming

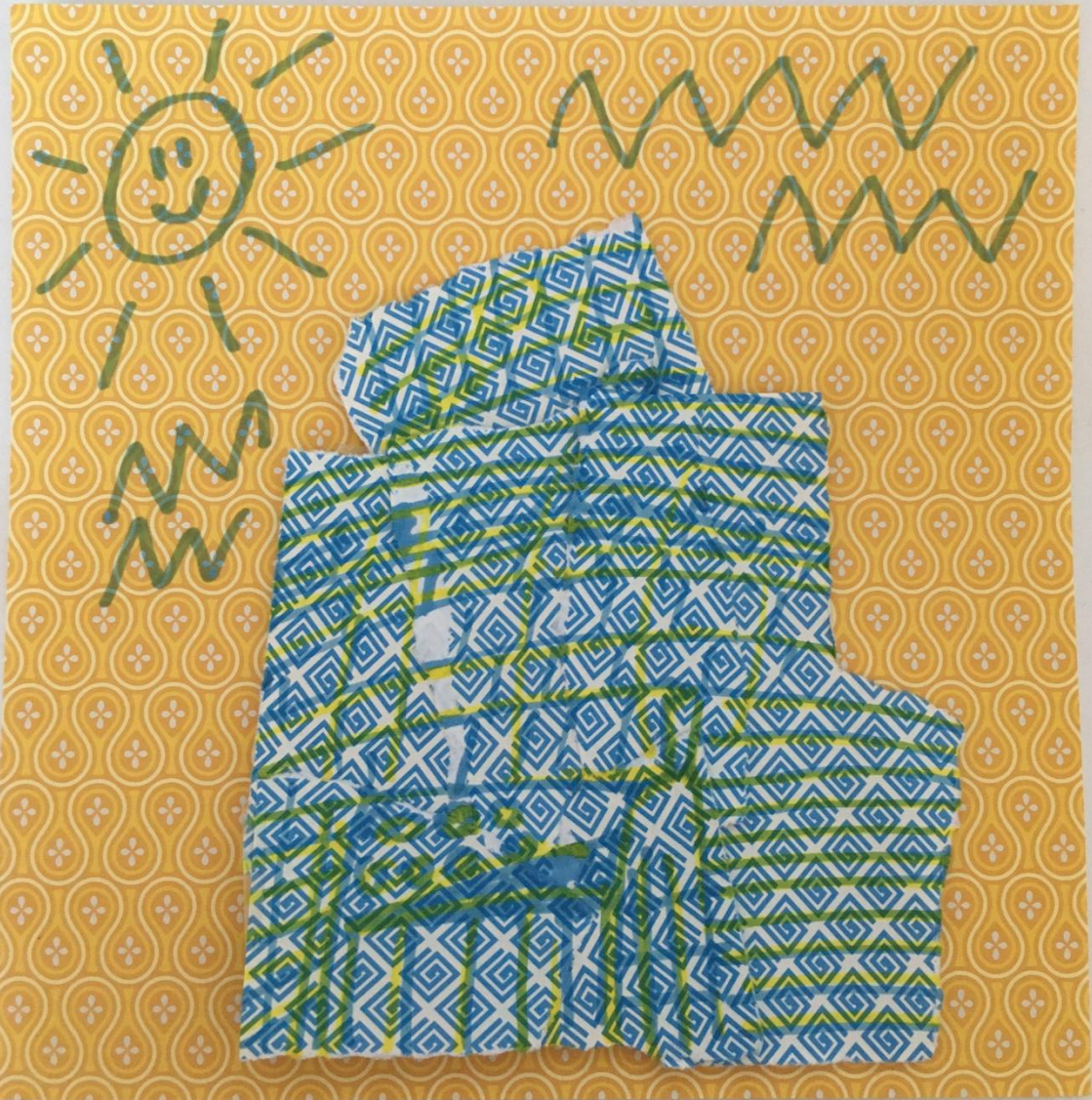
- External or out of frame/view.
- Working sound by sound, look for ways to create these sounds from around you.
 - Rhythmic sounds on different surfaces.
 - Rubbing items together.
 - Voice.
 - Pre-recorded sound effects online.
- Devise a live performance of the soundscape considering:
 - Sounds placement.
 - Timing.
 - Volume.
- Get different people to conduct the sounds.
- Record the performance.
 - Audio recording.
 - Video recording.
 - Both of these could be via a phone (it's important that the materials and ways of working are easy to engage with and low-cost).

Composition and Movement approach for 'The New Gallery Walsall' by Melissa Instone

We each had a craft box, which included different papers and scissors, which we cut up and arranged to form different shapes of the building in the print by Instone. We found that arranging the pieces allowed us to look more closely at the direction of lines in the work and the shapes. We learned about the work by trying to recreate its shapes.

British Art Network

Drawing as Stimming



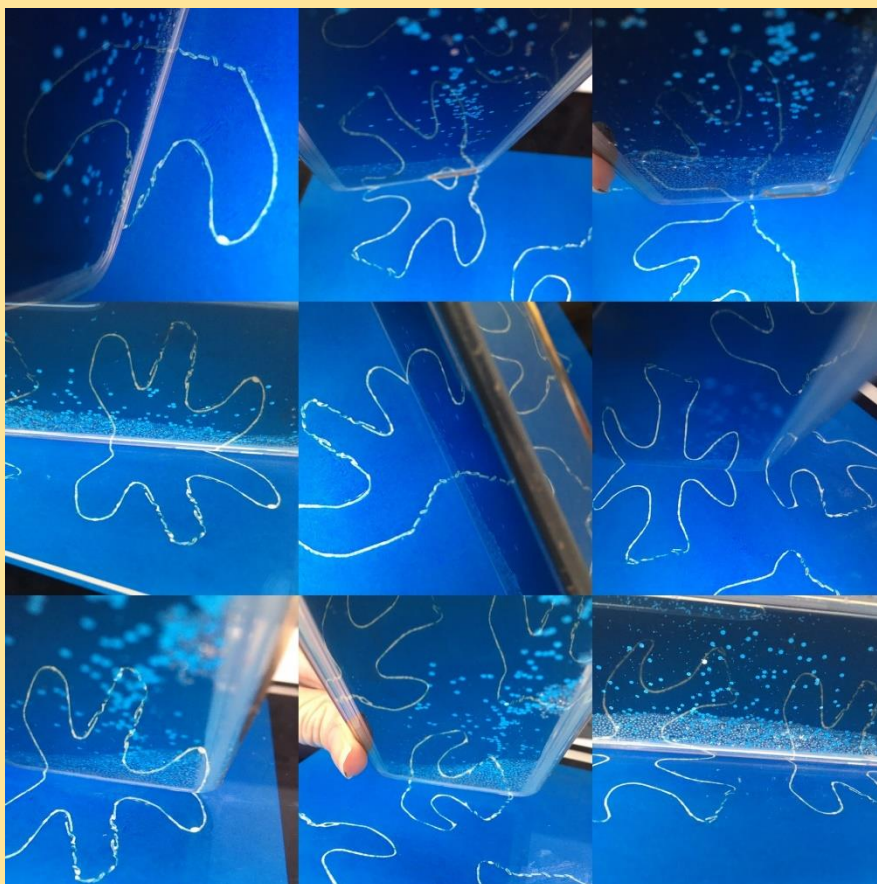
British Art Network

Drawing as Stimming

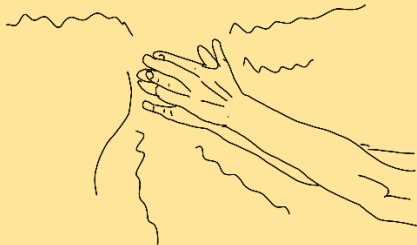


Reflection experimentation with Miriam Hopwood's 'after Birds in Flight'

In order to experiment with different ways of looking at Miriam Hopwood's 'after Birds in Flight', we used mirrors to explore a copy of the image on our screens. We changed the direction of the flight and the number of wings and explored new ways of looking at the artwork.



What materials are suitable to be used for interpreting?

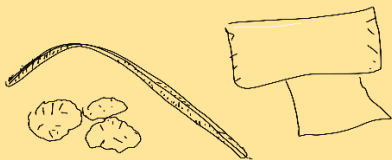


Responsive materials.

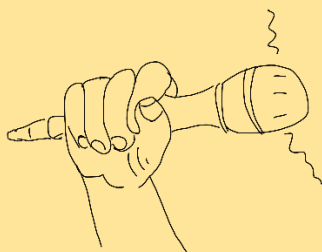
Materials that allow my body to act on them easily are good. They allow me to respond to the artwork quickly. Responsive materials are those that readily evidence the trace of the action of the body, materials that bend and stay bent, and materials that show a thumb mark. Highly responsive materials emphasise the shaping or the activation done by the participant.



These might be materials that are squashy, such as clay (which enables participants who have limited movement to leave traces), or materials that shift and change readily, like silver foil blankets (which can flutter, fall and be scrunched and change the way light reacts with them in the process).



In our group, we liked plasticine, pipe cleaners, squidgy balls and bean bags.



Materials that 'make bigger' presence.

We selected ways of working that make the participants input bigger. We worked with James Mabbett a sound designer to consider how making sounds together could help us interpret artwork.



Materials that are cheap and easy to find.

We decided to try and use cheap and easy to find materials in our workshops so that care centres can easily copy our approach and expand their ways of working.

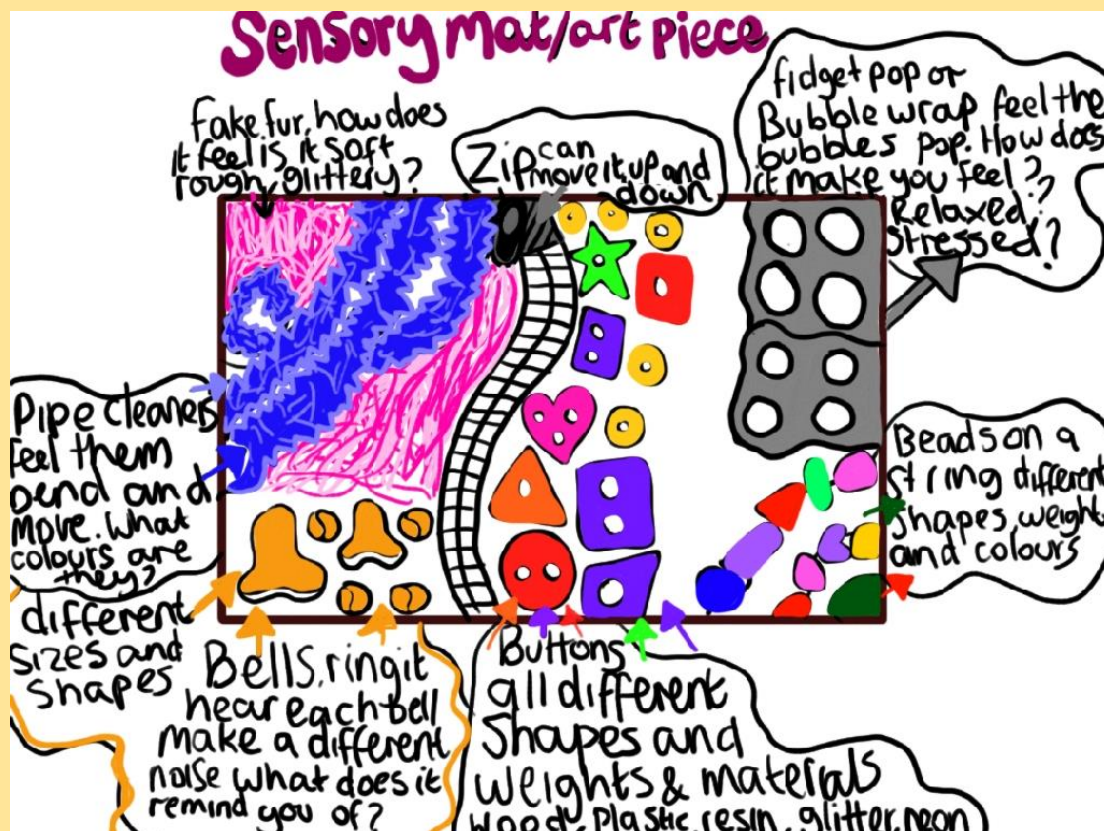
What might a Drawing as Stimming toolkit look like?

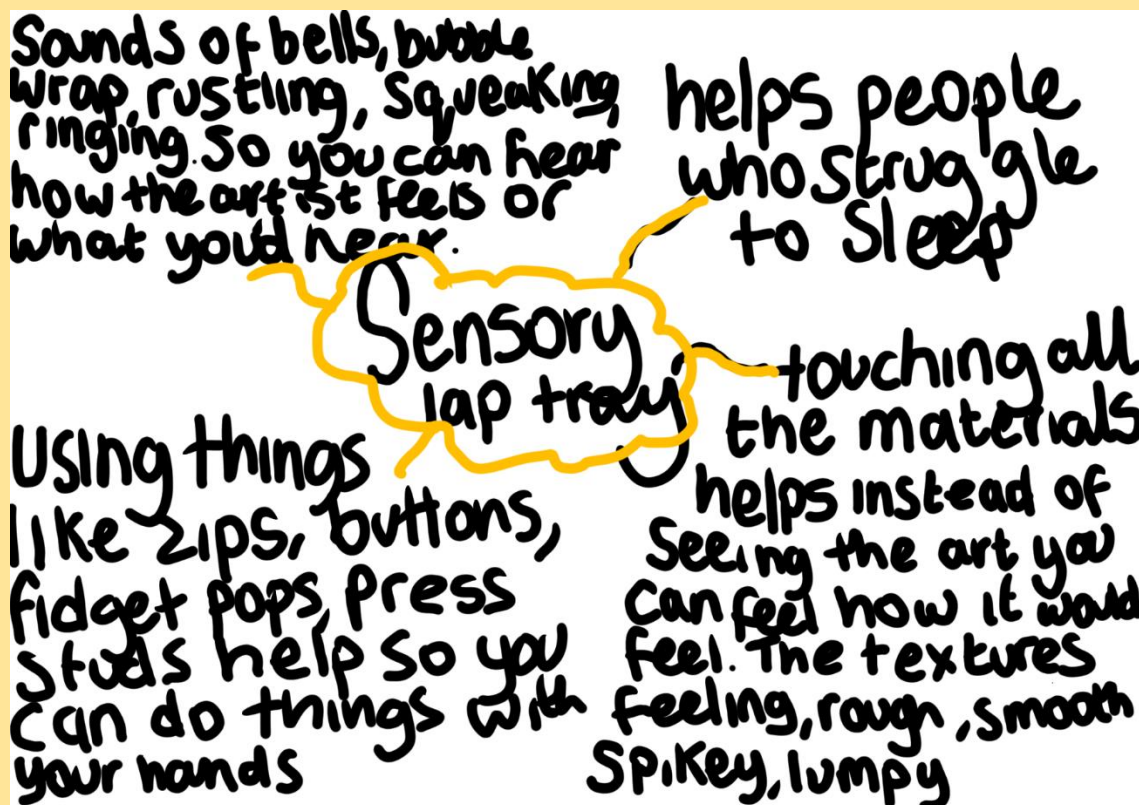
It would support people using it to think about drawing to include working with different materials.

It would be full of responsive materials that you can move, arrange and leave a mark on to help you think about the shapes and ideas in the artwork you are looking at.

It would be made of things that are easy to find and that are cheap.

It might look like this (drawing by Jenny Robinson):





Some tips for using a Drawing as Stimming Toolkit.

Let your body be your leader (as long as you are safe), explore the materials with your senses.

Allow repetitive actions.

Encourage 'long looking' at the artwork.

Make with the artwork in front of you.

Sam Metz is a neurodivergent artist-curator who responds to artwork with heightened body responses due to a sensory processing disorder. Sam likes to make things when looking at artwork and thinks that this form of making is as important as written or verbal interpretation. Their research into 'Drawing as Stimming' is ongoing.