

Painting with sticks and music

Sensory

45 minutes

(plus set-up time of about 30 minutes)

You will need:

Materials to draw with, such as paint brushes, felt-tips

Materials to make unusual marks, such as bits of sponge or herbs tied in a bow to make a rough brush

Water-based, non-toxic paints in a range of colours

Sticks, such as bamboo sticks (available from garden centres or hardware shops)

Masking tape and gaffer tape

Paint pots or bowls

Drawing surfaces, such as large roll of newsprint paper or lining paper

Live or recorded music

An audio device

Large groups



Gentle
Explorative
Tactile

Credit:

Entelechy Arts / Florence Peake, Shane Waltener, Sarah Jarman, Malcolm Buchanan-Dick, Rainer Knupp, Cai Tomos. Developed in partnership with Tower Bridge Care Home, and as part of Lewisham Creative Ageing Festival.

This versatile communal activity combines visual art with movement, through live or recorded music. You can adapt this activity in different ways depending on your context and resources.

To prepare:

Clear the space that you will be working in. A sense of space is important for this activity. Simply clearing enough uncluttered space in a dining or communal room can work well, or you could work in an outdoor space like a garden. Try to choose a space with as much natural light as possible.

Next, prepare the area that people are going to paint on. You should do this by spreading out your paper on the ground, or on a wall. Attach paintbrushes or felt-tips to your bamboo sticks using masking tape. The sticks allow for extended reach or if you want to paint big with less inhibition.

At this point, set up your live or recorded music so that it is playing as people come into the space. Music can influence how you draw and move your paintbrush. It can also create a relaxed space for those who prefer to watch or set the tone for people who want to paint. A live musician can improvise to the actions people make in their drawing. However, recorded music will work fine. Choose music to suggest the atmosphere and mood that you want to create.

To begin:

As people come into the space, explain that it is a free space where they can paint or make marks on the paper however they would like to. Some people may get stuck in straight away but others may need more support. You can ask questions to get people started:

What is the mood of the music and how could that be reflected on the paper?

Can you create shapes and colours that complement the space or that contradict the space?

Can you add to things that other people have drawn already? Or that people are drawing?

Can you draw something as big as possible? Or make tiny marks? How would you like to make a mark?

Next:

The work can develop further from the drawing stage into a movement piece where drawings can be hung or worn – if you want to do this, newsprint works best as it is a much lighter paper. How can you paint if paper is wrapped around a person or object? What does the image then look like when it is removed from that project?







You can also experiment with moving around in different ways to make different marks – for example how does it affect your marks if you move faster? Or slower? And what impact does it have if you add words or sentences inspired by the movements that you are making?

As drawings are finished, they can be immediately hung up in the space on washing lines or on walls to “take over” your environment, a bit like a spontaneous rough and ready stage design. And as one piece of paper is removed, another can be added for as long as the group wants to continue creating.

To finish:

Encourage participants to step back and appreciate the space they have created together. Talk about what you like in the space, what you enjoyed creating, what you would do differently next time...

You could also:

Develop the work further to create painted paper costumes.

Attach different materials to your bamboo sticks and see how that changes the effect, such as herbs, twigs and leaves can encourage a wilder nature-informed mark making. What else could you use? And what music could you try to encourage different qualities for the marks that are made?

Record, document and celebrate your work. You may not be able to keep it all, but it is nice to take photos of selected parts to share with others. Could you make postcards of some of the abstract marks, drawings and painted sentences to celebrate and share what you have created?

This activity works well with families – children seem to take to it naturally – so it’s a very easy way into intergenerational work.

