



## Drawing from nature

In this pack you will find three drawing activities especially created by artist Christine Mills that start with a series of quick sketches and can be developed into large scale collaged drawings. The activities will encourage you to explore the natural world around you; take a deeper look at work in the gallery; and create your own imaginary landscapes.

Commissioned by Oriel Davies and in conjunction with the gallery's current exhibition [Our Isles](#). Part of [Where The Severn Smiles](#), a project connecting people to green places in and around Newtown.



Hello, I'm an artist based in rural Mid Wales. My practice involves drawing and working in mixed media. The work I make about the landscape, place and people draws on my own Welsh heritage and is inspired the richness of Welsh culture.

### **Let's slow down**

I've created some activities that I hope will give you time and space to observe and enjoy the beauty and variety of the landscape.

Begin by going for a walk. Notice the sights, sounds and smells you encounter. Try to slow down, notice things on a deeper level and give yourself permission to become immersed in the natural surroundings.

When I am drawing, I feel a sense of celebration for the beauty of the natural world. I would like to think that a celebration of nature comes over in your drawings too, so don't be judgmental about your work and have a go at new things - you have nothing to lose. Be free and enjoy!

### **Materials**

This pack contains three drawing activities for which you'll need some basic materials.

- sketch book any size from A6-A3
- brown paper
- pencils, pen, rubber, sharpener. Use earth tones if you have them, such as Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber or Yellow Ochre (we've included a dark brown and natural sienna pencil in our drawing packs - available from the gallery (free of charge or give what you can).

Optional materials for working at home on a larger scale:

- 2 Large sheets of good cartridge paper, try not to be smaller than A3
- Sepia ink and pen, oil pastels, paints of your choice.

### **Suggested Walks**

Here are a few walks local to Newtown: a canal walk from the centre of town to [Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's nature reserve at Pwll Penarth](#). [Walking Newtown](#) have several walks on their website including a walk around [Trehaeren Hill](#) and a riverside stroll through [Dolerw Park](#).

*Caution: Always ask for an adult's permission and let them know where you are. We recommend that this is a Family Activity.*



## **activity one - the walk**

Take a walk outside, it can be around your garden or through the green spaces near your home.

On your walk make a mental note of the colours of Autumn - collect a few leaves, scan your eyes around to notice the colours of stones, soil, the bark. This will be your palette for the project. Look hard to identify the range of these rich earthy colours - you can capture them on your phone or camera (look for the different colour palette of each season).

Choose one tree, look at its overall shape, the texture in the bark, the twists and turns of the branches.

Make five drawings of the tree. Take 5 minutes to do each drawing. Fill a whole page in your sketch book with each drawing.

**Get to know the tree through drawing, understand its beauty.**

Here are five suggestions for your drawings - they can be repeated with several trees.

- draw the tree with your dominant hand
- draw the tree with your non dominant hand
- draw the tree with an emphasis on mark making
- draw a section of the tree
- draw the tree from a different angle again with your non dominant hand

Now draw the landscape, noticing the textures within the environment, this may include trees, hedges, the river, etc. Try and use both right and left hand! Do several drawings, including more detailed information.

**You are building a visual bank of information for later**

## activity two - the gallery

Spend time looking around the exhibition: **Our Isles**

Look at [Lilly Hedley's](#) lino prints of people working with their tools and materials.

Look closely at the work, how the workers hold themselves, their hands and how they hold onto tools at work. Notice the mark making and textures within the print.

Chose 2 - 4 of Lilly's prints to study.

Using your sketch book and brown paper, use the brown marker pen to make a series of drawings from the prints without looking down at the paper. Take 5 minutes for each drawing.

Place your pen on the paper, and look directly at your subject, remember don't look at your paper, but draw as your eyes read around the drawing - follow your eyes around.

Now, drawing with your non dominant hand, and looking at your paper choose a different 4-6 prints to draw. Take about 5 -10 mins on each drawing and using a different pen or pencils.

Include an image of a person, an animal, fish or bird in the drawings.

Having finished with your non dominant hand, draw two of the images with your dominant hand, take as long as you like and enjoy.

**You have now broken into drawing and have loosened up.**





## **activity three - at home**

**Make drawings of whoever is around you working. Draw someone each day.**

For example: someone sweeping leaves, putting the washing out, cutting morning sticks, knitting, cooking, a farmer, a butcher etc.

Now you are at home try some wet drawing materials - a pen and sepia ink, or even paint.

**Take a look at Van Gogh's drawings of hands for inspiration.**

If you have access to the internet look at Vincent Van Gogh's pencil drawings [‘Digger in a Potato Field’](#), [‘February’](#) and [‘The Sower’](#).

Notice the posture of the figures, how they hold themselves during their activity. Take photos of hands and tools in action and use this information in your sketchbook.

**Try working on a larger sheet of paper**

Using your earthy colour palette in the media of your choice and using your dominant and non dominant hand, create a ‘suggestion’ of a background scene based on the information outside. This may simply be two trees, a wood, a herd of cows or a flowing river - information from your visual bank. Do not work to scale, be inventive and imaginative, like Pieter Bruegel and Stanley Spencer.

**Insert life into this rural backdrop, the landscape is now YOUR stage.**

Referring to your sketchbook, bring the people and their activities onto the stage. Use your sketches of people at home and from the exhibition. Include indoor and outdoor activities. Use your information inventively, and get more information if needs be.

An unexpected element is needed. This will add a new dynamic to your large-scale drawing. Insert an oversized bat, salmon or even a sheep, and not necessary in the location you would expect. Remember we are all together on this stage! Your rural scene also needs to sing so add a bird or birds.



## Now it's time to review your work, so ask yourself some questions

What takes your eye from one rural character to another within your picture plane? Areas may need working into, or even rubbing out, to create a natural movement that brings your rural scene to life. Have you created an element of the unexpected? Be brave even at this stage!

**I hope these drawing activities have inspired you to keep looking, experiment with new ideas, and let your imagination flow without limits when creating larger drawings.**

Artists I would particularly like you to look at for inspiration:

- Van Goghs' '[Potato Eaters](#)' for your colour palette and characterful faces.
- [Bruegel](#) for activity within a landscape.
- [Leon Kossoff](#) for drawings full of life and expressive mark making
- [Stanley Spencer](#) for activity within a scene and playing with scale.

For reference images of plants, animals and birds, [Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust](#) have a great webpage full of species local to the area.

Once you've finished your sketches would you like to lend the gallery one or two? Gallery staff are creating a wall of drawings made by the public and will look after your work well and return it at the end of the exhibition. Email [kate@oriel Davies](mailto:kate@oriel Davies) for more information. You can also share your drawings on Instagram and Facebook using the hashtag **#wherethesevernsmiles**

**Enjoy!**



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