

Some ways
to navigate
drawing



To start with a pencil

In this booklet you will be given some prompts to help you start drawing at Royal Museums Greenwich and to navigate the collections in a way that is meaningful to you. We will begin by working with a pencil and paper, materials that are allowed in the galleries. A pencil is the simplest tool for making a mark... and the most challenging. It is a tool that travels easily, that enables us to keep record of what we see and experience, and one whose expressive potential we encourage you to be fearless about exploring. Our drawn line is as intimate and unique as the sound of our voice, the rhythm of our breath and the gestures of our body. We can all draw.

The four sites of Royal Museums Greenwich have a lot to teach us about history, how we live today and how we might imagine a future. Here, we invite you to learn through drawing – primarily with your eyes and senses – and make images of what you notice.

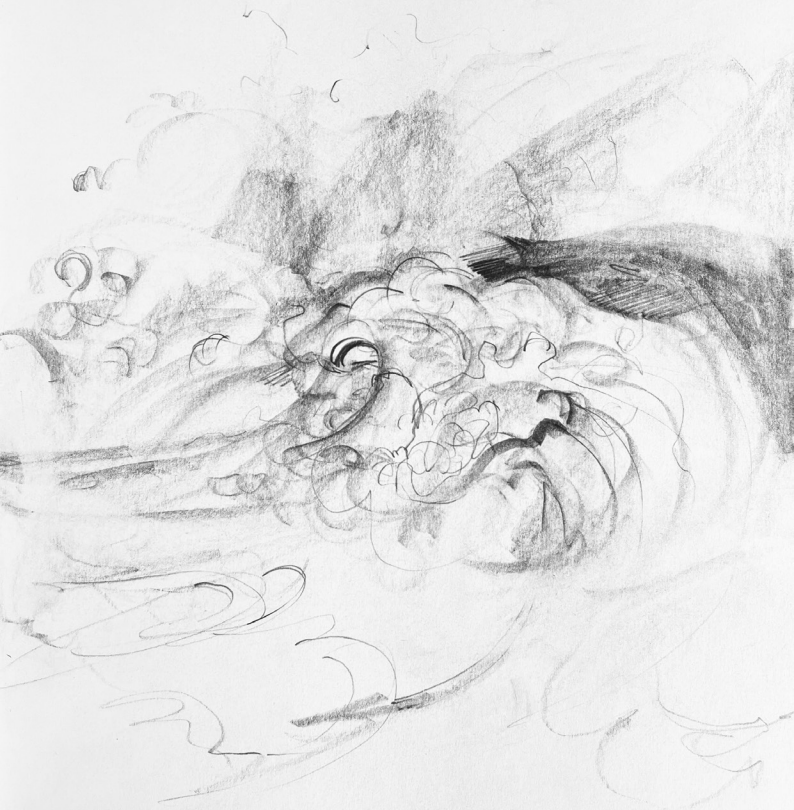
1. The Sea is History

Throughout the Museum you will find many paintings of the sea. Look carefully at the ways the artists have captured the ever-changing nature of water: the spray of waves, the shapes of storms and pull of currents. Think about what the sea has witnessed. What is locked 'in that grey vault', as the poet Derek Walcott asks in his poem *The Sea is History*?

Chose an image of the sea in the Museum and stand in front of it with your sketchbook and pencil. Focus on the shapes and movement of the water that you see. Draw as you listen to Walcott read his poem.

Let his words move through you and images appear. Listen, unlock your lines and allow them to flow like water. Respond to the rhythm of the poem and the rhythm of the sea inside of you.

The full text of the poem as well as recordings of Derek Walcott reading *The Sea is History* are available online.



2. Knots and Sails

Throughout the Museum you will find sails in different states of deployment: rolled and tied up on scale models of boats, open and billowing gently in some paintings, taut and driving ships forward in others. Make a series of drawings of fabric and ropes in different combinations. Look closely at where the material and strands of rope come together.

Mirror the appearance and character of the objects you focus on through the way that you draw them. From a tight, entangled, crunched, folded line to one that is as open and light as the air.

You could make your own sail by sewing together pieces of found fabric. First explore knotting and furling your material to make a sensuous still life to draw from. Then peg your homemade sail to a washing line and draw the material free and dancing in the wind.



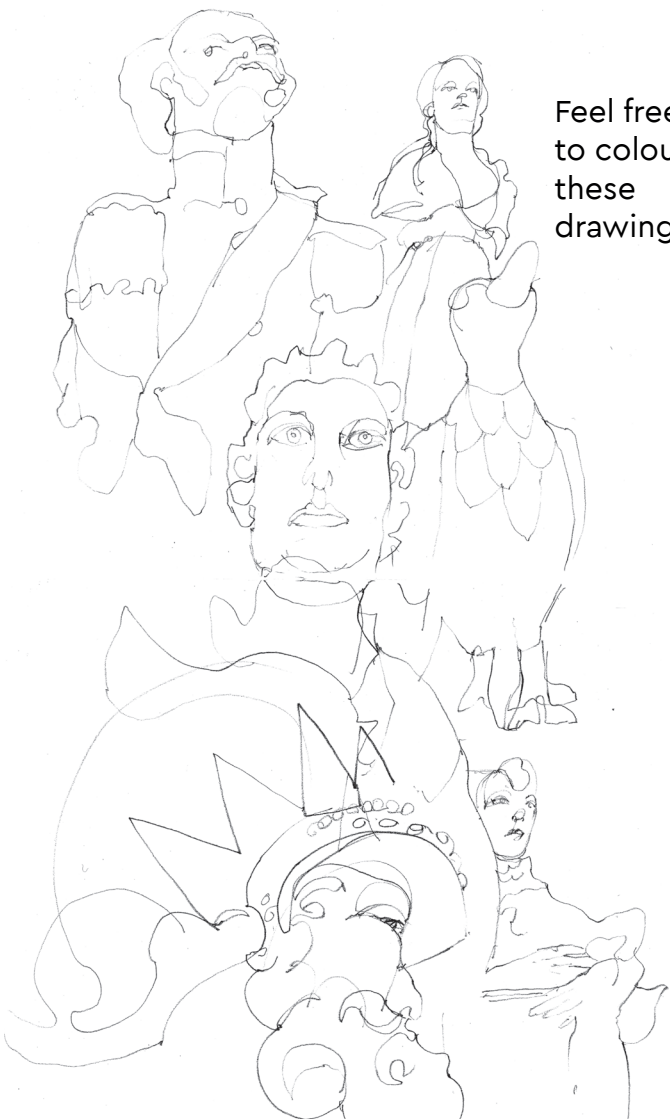
3. A Figurehead

If you could create a figurehead for the brow of a ship, who would you imagine there?

Start by studying the examples that are on display in the Museum. The characters are made from carved and painted wood so their features, hair and the details on their clothes are simplified. When you make a drawing, imagine your pencil etching into the page as if it were a wood-carving tool. This could bring some strength and a sculptural dimension to your marks.

With the same approach, draw a portrait from life, memory or a photograph of the person you would like to lead you on an adventure into the unknown. Who would you choose? Yourself? A parent? An icon? An invented creature? Dress your figure in garments that represent who they are.

Feel free
to colour
these
drawings.



4. A Lost Collection

The Museum houses more than 2 million objects and each one holds a story. As you walk around the galleries, pay attention to what catches your eye.

Drawing is a process of selection. What you end up choosing to spend time with and discover through drawing will say something about your own interests and what you want to learn. Once drawn, some of your chosen subjects will be part of you. When you are at home, spend time looking at and rediscovering personal objects that you have collected over time. A shell or stone? A garment? Hold each personal treasure in your hands, feel its weight. Touch the surface and rotate it with your fingers. Allow the memory that the object holds to come to mind. Draw with tenderness as a way of archiving your collection.



5. Natural Time

In the Museum you will find a collection of clocks that record the evolution of tracking time. Alongside the devices for keeping mechanical time there are ornate sundials small enough to be kept in a pocket. The practice of drawing can enable us to connect with natural time.

Create your own simple sun-dial with recycled card or wood. Cut the base into a shape, either a rectangle, circle or square. Create a slot or hole through which to fix a protruding triangle, which will cast a shadow onto the base in bright sunlight. Dedicate a sunny day to this activity. Spend the day outside with your sketchbook and sundial. Alternate between drawing subjects in your landscape and marking the shadow cast by your sundial over the course of the day. Watch the light change and sense the world turning.



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References

Derek Walcott, *The Sea is History*, in Derek Walcott (Edward Baugh ed.), *Selected Poems*, Faber and Faber, 2007

Horizontal sundial, unknown maker, 1853, AST0152

'How to make sundials', The British Sundial Society (sundialsoc.org.uk)

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Drawing is Free
drawingisfree.org

Drawing Correspondence
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