

Dressing Up as Fossils!

In this week's session we widened our horizons and made our drawings on metre squares of fabric. I wanted the children to concentrate mark making, exploring the texture of fossils and rocks and to fill the whole canvas. Then a fun treat was in store for the children right at the end, when we wrapped our bodies in the canvases to turn ourselves into fossils!



Layered, expressive mark making

Warm Up

I wanted the children to focus on creating a fossil or stone-like texture on their canvases. I explained that in this

session we were less interested in drawing a fossil in a traditional way, and instead to use the texture and marks of fossils or stones to inspire a drawing.



Drawing fossils on fabric squares

To ensure the children understood the notion of being inspired by texture, and to begin an expressive mark making exploration, we began with a simple warm-up. I tore some sugar paper into hand-sized pebble shapes and asked the children to explore the materials I had provided (wax crayons, oil pastel, chalk, graphite, charcoal, erasers, watercolours, pencils) and to work to create a fossil or stone like texture. I added a time pressure to the exercise and asked the children to create their pebbles in just 2 minutes, and then grab another sugar paper pebble to repeat the exercise. Children also explored how crumpling the paper, both before or after their drawing, could help add to the texture.



Warm Up: two minute fossil rocks



Two minute pebbles

"The Main Event"

We then had just 40 minutes to create our canvas fossils. As the children were working on a large scale, I wanted them to remember to step back from their work at intervals to enable them to make decisions about how their drawings were progressing. For this reason I set the room up with the children working at their own work station at one end of the room, and the materials on a table at the other end. I asked the children to choose materials, use them, return them and choose more, and every time they made this journey to remember to stop and have a look at their drawing before they sat down to work. I also reminded them of the importance sometimes of looking around them at other people's drawings, in addition to being inspired by the images of fossil textures which I had taken in.



Drawing, walking, looking



Fossil textures

We spent two minutes talking about how when we make a drawing we usually move from the wrist, but can also move from the elbow, the shoulder, the waist - how our whole bodies can be involved. Children began drawing, bringing their mark making experience from the warm-up with them. I encouraged them to try to "possess" the whole canvas. Throughout the process I asked them to think how the marks they made balanced out across the entire canvas, how colour and density of mark making helped create this balance . Again stepping back and looking was important to this process.



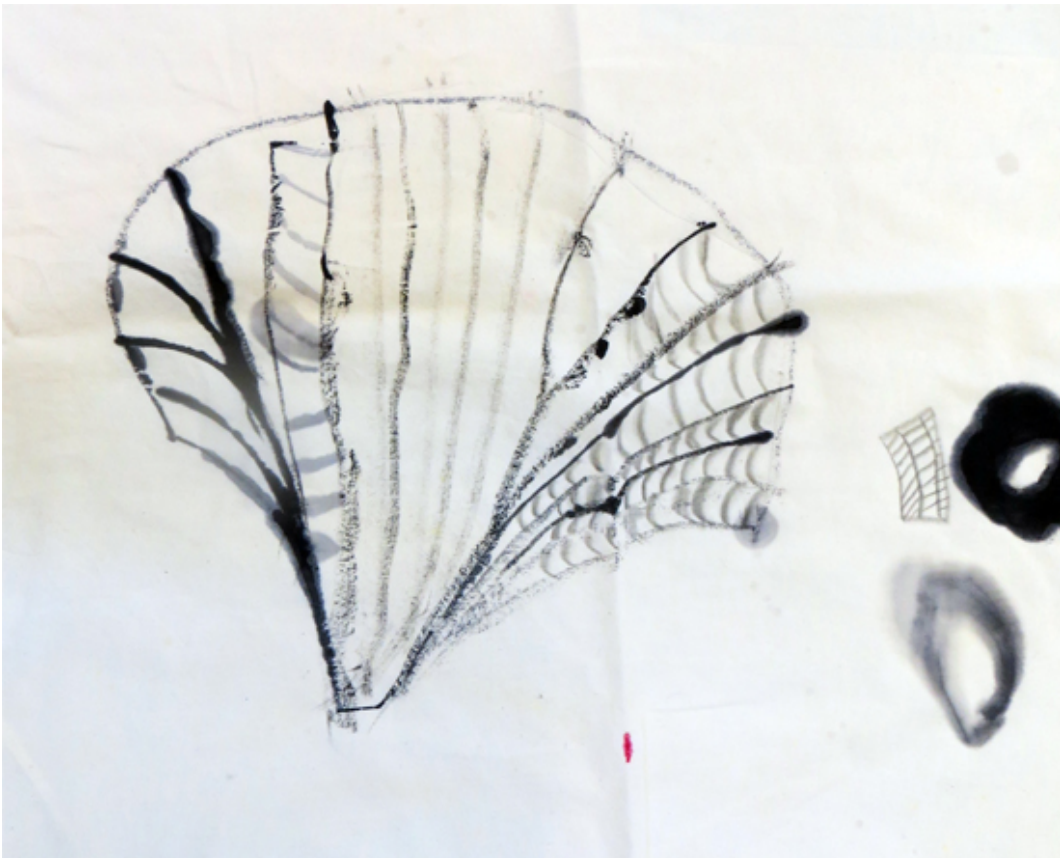
Mark making to create fossil textures



Covering the whole fabric square



Taking ownership of the whole canvas



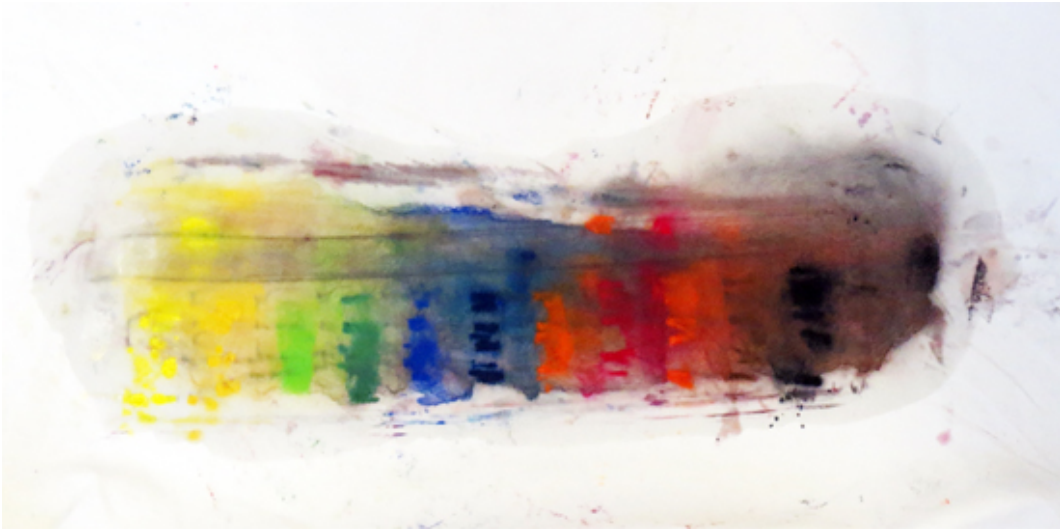
Careful mark making



Detail



Detail



Detail

The canvases the children made were full of curious accidents and detail. The metre square dimensions of the fabric pieces meant that they related to the size of the children's bodies very well - they clearly felt a sense of ownership towards them.

As a final surprise, I asked the children to curl into a ball on the floor and turn themselves into a fossil stone! They were thrilled with that last surprise and I loved the sudden quiet which descended as they all became rocks!



Turning ourselves into fossils



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Dressing up as fossils



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