



Image: Do-It-Yourself Natural Brushes, Abstract Grounds and Botanical Prints  
Education Workshop, TarraWarra Museum of Art, 2020

# Do-It-Yourself Natural Brushes, Abstract Grounds and Botanical Prints

## Workshop Resource

*Making Her Mark: Selected Works from the Collection*

Curated by Victoria Lynn  
TarraWarra Museum of Art  
29 February–19 March, 2020

**Cross-curriculum Priority:** Learning about Sustainability

# Introduction

*Making Her Mark: Selected Works from the Collection* offers a new appraisal of the work of leading women artists held in the collection of TarraWarra Museum of Art. Curated by Victoria Lynn, the exhibition explores the themes arising from works by women artists in the collection—such as memory, landscape and abstraction—and also includes a modest selection of works by male artists that amplify these images, ideas and styles.

In the form of unexpected pairings, the exhibition shows the ways in which women artists have pioneered certain ways of seeing the world. *Making Her Mark* provides the opportunity to make new comparisons across decades. Rather than engage in a discussion about precedent and influence, this exhibition presents a nuanced conversation about image, composition and mark-making where women take centre-stage. In this way, art by women is not seen as a category, but rather as a catalyst for discussion. This education resource has been inspired by the *Making Her Mark: Selected Works from the Collection* Education Workshop activity designed and facilitated in the Museum by artist educator, Bronwyn Ward.

## How to use this Resource

The *Do-It-Yourself Natural Brushes, Abstract Grounds and Botanical Prints Workshop Resource* has been designed to support F-7 level students learning in the classroom with teachers, or at home with parents and guardians. Students will learn to be resourceful—using what they have at hand—while creating their own tools for making abstract artworks. The resource includes a **step-by-step** guide for teachers, parents, and guardians and an extension ‘**Try This!**’ challenge for students who are self-isolating or quarantined within the home.

# Do-It-Yourself Natural Brushes, Abstract Grounds and Botanical Prints

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**Find things in the world around you and be inspired to make unexpected art implements and unique artworks!**

Step outside into your garden, scour your nature strip, or scout out your local park and look for different materials to make your own brushes! Each one of the brushes you create will be unique and will make unusual and unexpected marks. Use these brushes, and a simple botanical printing process, to make your very own artwork inspired by two themes—abstraction and landscape—in the *Making Her Mark: Selected Works from the Collection* exhibition.

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## Did You Know?

A brush is made up of three parts: a handle, bristles and a ferrule (the bit that connects the handle to the bristles). A brush can be made out of just about anything you can find!



# Materials

- Natural materials (leaves, greenery, dried leaves, seed pods, flowers)
- Sticks
- String, elastic bands and masking or sticky tape
- Scissors or secateurs (ask an adult for help with these)
- Paper
- Coloured paints
- White paint
- Small foam roller
- Takeaway container lid (or any flat piece of plastic)

## Step-By-Step

1. To make your own natural brushes first go outside and collect some leaves, greenery and sticks. You can also collect leaves, seed pods and flowers to use for printing with, later. Once indoors, assemble these natural materials and the other materials listed above.





2.

Choose a stick to use as your brush handle. Select some leaves and greenery you feel would make interesting brush marks. Attach these to the end of your stick using string, tape or a rubber band. Make sure the leaves and greenery are bunched together and well secured to your stick so that your brush won't fall apart. You may want to make a few different brushes. Try making a huge brush. Make a set of tiny brushes. Make a brush with a really long handle ...

**How might the way you make marks change when you use a different brush?**



3.

Dip your brush in coloured paint and play with making different marks on your paper to create a colourful abstract ground. You can try sweeping strokes, little strokes, tapping, poking, etc. Notice how the different movements create different marks on your piece of paper.



4.

Once your paper is covered in brush marks, put your brush and coloured paint to one side. Select some leaves, seed pods or flowers to make botanical prints on your abstract ground. Set up some white paint on a flat, plastic surface (we used a takeaway container lid) and roll out the paint with a small foam roller.



- 5.** Use the roller to paint one side of your chosen leaf until it is evenly coated. Turn the leaf over and press firmly onto your abstract ground. Put pressure on your leaf to ensure the whole surface touches the paper and the white paint transfers onto the colourful ground beneath.



- 6.** Peel the leaf away from your abstract ground to reveal your botanical print! Repeat this process until you are happy that your artwork is complete!



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## Try This!

**Staying inside?** Find things inside your home to make brushes from. What kinds of marks might you make with a brush made with a chopstick for a handle, dental floss for a ferrule, and strips of plastic cut from a milk bottle for bristles? You could try making brushes using: wooden skewers, toothpicks, chopsticks, cutlery, wire, zip ties, ribbon, pipe cleaners, dental floss, old stockings, strips of fabric, cotton wool, fur you collect after you brush your pet—the list is endless! Hunt around the house for objects to print with such as Lego blocks, cookie cutters or sponges that you can cut into an assortment of shapes.

**Don't have a foam roller handy?** Use a kitchen sponge soaked in some slightly watered down white paint, wedged into the bottom of a plastic container. Press the object or leaf into the sponge to coat ready for printing.

**No paints at home?** Try making some 'chalk paint' by mixing equal parts plain flour with water and a little washing up liquid. Separate out this 'base' chalk paint into a few containers or jars and add food colouring to make different coloured paints. 'Chalk paint' washes off with water, but food colouring may stain so check with your parents or guardian before you use this substance on anything other than paper! You could try using the 'chalk paint' outside on the driveway or fence, so long as your parents or guardians say it's okay!

## Key Vocabulary

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Abstract</b>  | A type of art that is non-representational, and uses shapes, colours, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect. |
| <b>Botanical</b> | Derived from plants.  |
| <b>Ground</b>    | Short for 'background', a ground is the very first layer of paint (or other wet medium) applied to an artwork.        |
| <b>Landscape</b> | The appearance or depiction of the natural environment in artworks.   |

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