

# Art family

With Jackson Pollock



**Kick-start art appreciation and making with your little one from the comfort of your own home.**

Art Family brings you a user-friendly guide for engaging young children with a work of art from the national collection. Each instalment will equip you with tips for chatting, learning and making in response to one focus work.

In this Art Family, we take you on a creative journey with **Jackson Pollock** and focus on the theme of **exploring the body and movement through mark making**.

Jackson Pollock, *Blue poles* 1952, oil, enamel, aluminium paint, glass on canvas, 213 x 489.5 cm, Nation Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1973, © Pollock-Krasner Foundation. ARS/Copyright Agency





## Storytelling

Set the scene by introducing the work of art through storytelling. Storytelling is an active and engaging way of discussing art with young children. Use simple language to make connections. **Let's discuss Jackson Pollock's *Blue poles* 1952.**

Jackson Pollock was an American artist who worked in New York. He was a part of an art movement called 'Abstract Expressionism' in which painters used colour, shape, line and texture to express thoughts, feelings and emotions. Pollock's style was called 'action painting'. He dribbled paint across the surface of the canvas using sticks and syringes. *Blue poles* 1952 is one of his most famous paintings and was bought for Australia's national collection in 1973. The painting is so big that it couldn't leave the tenth-floor apartment of the previous owner through the door. It had to be lifted out a large window with a crane. Pollock's art was new and challenging for people, as it explored the idea of what art could be. His paintings were not only abstract but also busy. Our eyes look all over the painting instead of having one or two points to focus on. Painted on a black background, *Blue poles* is a web of colour and line, with eight dark blue lines dancing across the surface. When you view the painting from a distance, all the colours jumble together in a chaotic mess. But a closer look reveals the thought and care Pollock took in creating the layers of paint and in controlling the seemingly wild dribbles of colour.

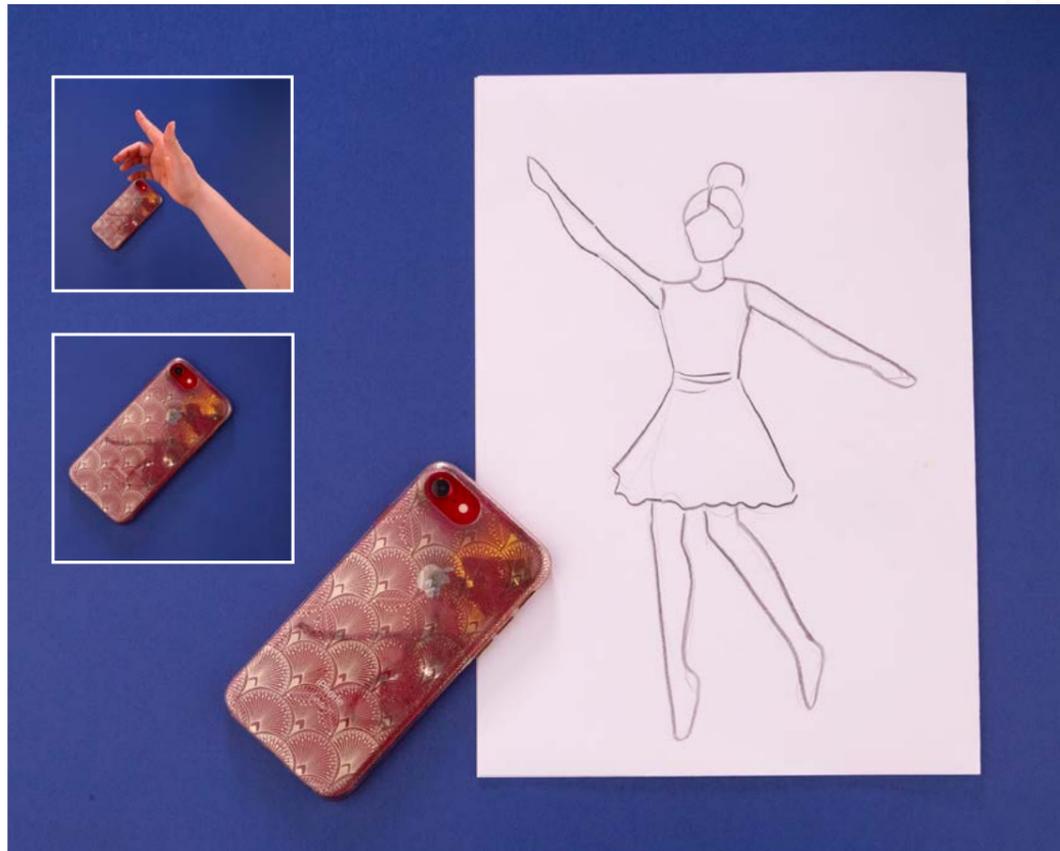
## Chat

Chatting about a work of art encourages creativity, learning and respect. Conversations may start naturally, but below are some tips to kick-start the process.

- Look at the marks on the painting. Are all the marks the same? What do you think the artist has used to create these marks? In what order do you think the colours were painted?
- The artist created the painting flat on the ground, making marks as he moved around it. How has the painting recorded the movements of the artist? Can you make the movement that the artist would have made to make the web-like marks? What would he have done with his body to reach the parts in the middle? How would the artist have moved to place the poles on the work?
- The 'blue poles' are so dark that they are almost black. How has the artist drawn our attention to them? Do they remind you of anything? How would the painting look without the poles?

Now let's make art

## Perform an 'everyday movement' dance



### You will need:

- Smart phone or tablet
- Your favourite music
- Your body

Be inspired by your everyday movements to create and perform a dance to your favourite song. Start by brainstorming some movements and actions you perform each day. Think of your daily routine. What movements do you make to brush your teeth? How do you put your shoes on? What about when you play? Try out each of these movements and select your top five. Listen to your favourite song and make up a dance that uses them. Film your dance and share it with friends and family or on social media with the tags #NationalGalleryAus and #NationalGalleryKids.

### Tips:

**With very young children (under 3):** Choreograph the dance to a small part of a song such as the chorus. Think about activities you do as a family.

**With older children (over 5):** Teach the dance to a friend or family member. You could use a video-conferencing app to connect with someone living away from you. Film everyone dancing together.

## Drip-drop action painting



### You will need:

- Ink, watercolour or diluted paint (you could make your own using food colouring and water)
- Eye droppers (or straws)
- Containers for each coloured paint (a jar lid or ice cube container works well)
- Card or watercolour paper

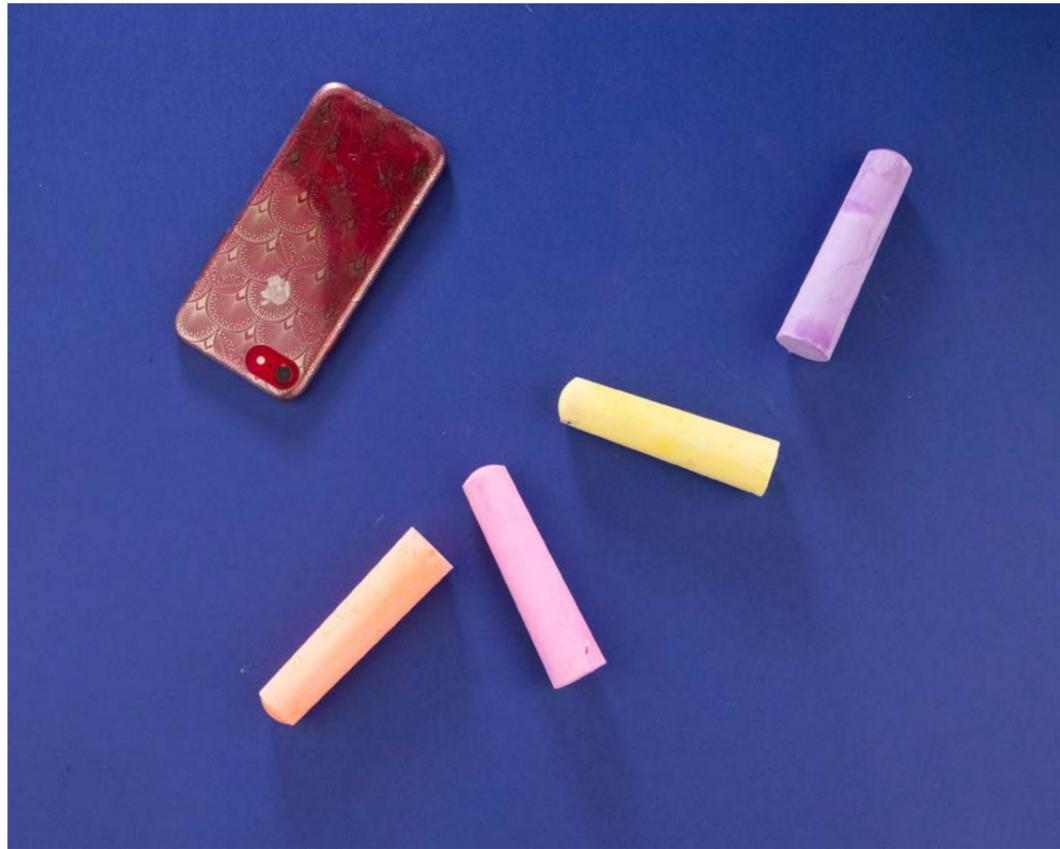
Select three to four colours and use an eye dropper for each colour. Insert the end of the dropper into the paint. Squeeze the rubber end to suck up the paint. Hover the eye dropper over the paper and squeeze the rubber slowly to allow for the paint to drip onto the surface. If using a straw, you will need more liquid in the container. Use your finger to seal the top of the straw to capture the paint in an air seal and release your finger to drip the paint onto the paper. Try experimenting with ways to change and control the marks on the paper. You can tilt the paper to let the colours run or use a clean straw to blow on the paint to create 'web-like' lines.

### Tips:

**With very young children (under 3):** Place the paper in a box to control mess, and work on a large piece of paper. Concentrate on having fun and learning through process rather than a controlled 'finished' painting.

**With older children (over 5):** Try working big like Pollock did. You could use an old bed sheet and work outside. Invite some friends to help paint and be prepared to get messy!

## Draw bodies in space You will need:



### You will need:

- Chalk
- Outdoor concrete space
- Recording device such as a camera, mobile or tablet

Map your body and movement through a public drawing performance. Start by sitting with your legs crossed on the concrete. Draw a circle around you without moving. Try it in a different colour. Now lie on your back and with a piece of chalk in each hand, draw a line either side of you, as far as your arm can stretch up and then down. How far can you reach behind your head? Sit up and lean forward. Draw a line to map your arms' reach. You could set up a recording device to capture your performance. Stand up and look at your work. You have created both a drawing and a performance about your body and its limits in space.

### Tips:

**With very young children (under 3):** Demonstrate the activity and then work together to 'map' each other's bodies. You could try drawing around the person or tracing their shadow.

**With older children (over 5):** Work on large pieces of paper. Add to the drawing with some paint (you may wish to hang the paper on a wall for this part). How could you use marks to record your body and movements?

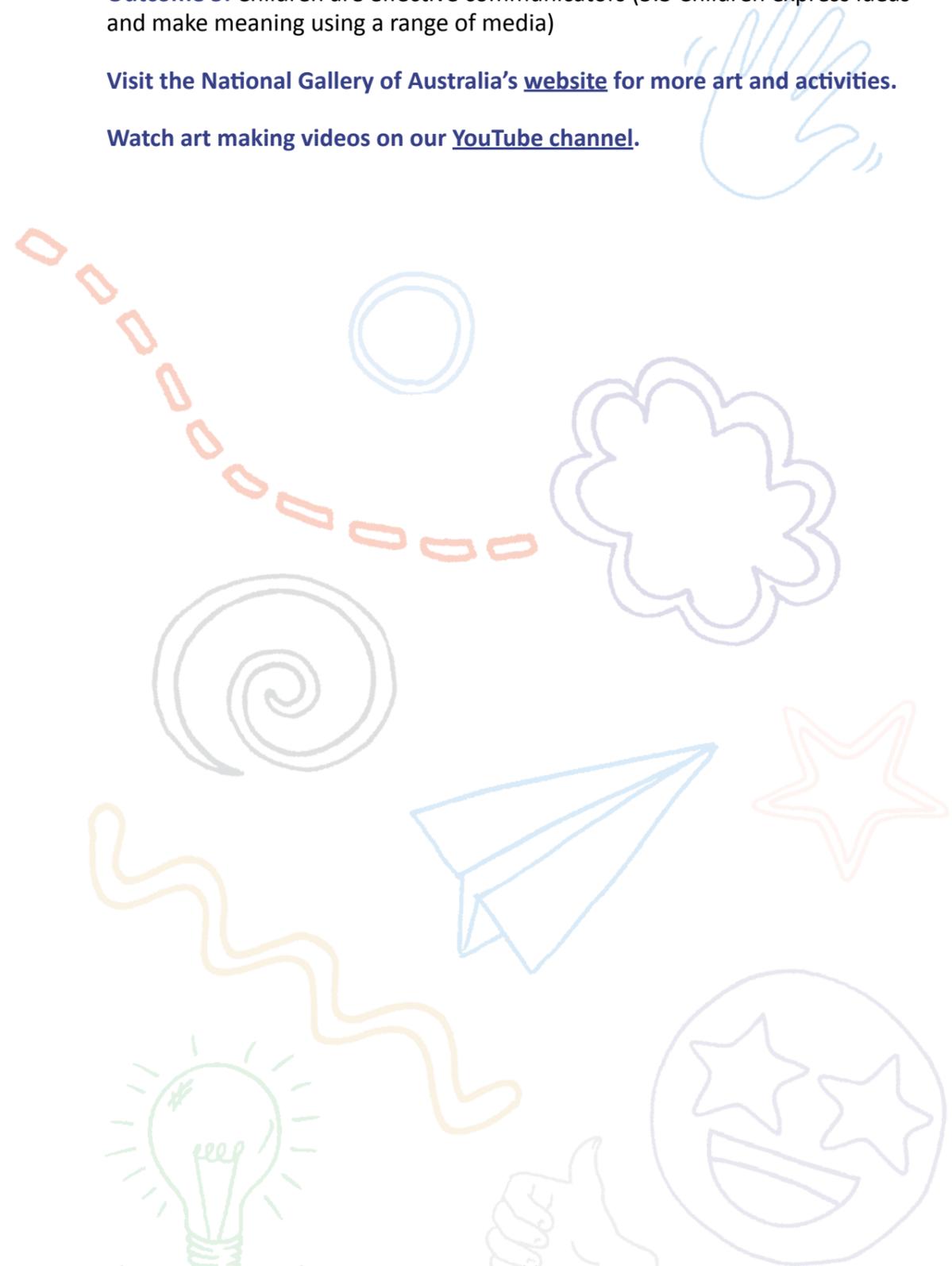
## Early Years Learning Framework

**Outcome 4:** Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity and creativity

**Outcome 5:** Children are effective communicators (5.3 Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media)

Visit the National Gallery of Australia's [website](#) for more art and activities.

Watch art making videos on our [YouTube channel](#).



Share your art with us  
#NationalGalleryKids  
#NationalGalleryAus

Supported by  
Education Patron  
Tim Fairfax AC

**NGA** National Gallery of Australia

