

Welcome to our monthly roundup, where we celebrate achievements by the young people taking Arts Awards with AAI.

This month we take a look at one of the most exciting aspects of Arts Award — the extraordinary range of visual art media that young people can explore across the different levels of Award.

E explored water-soluble charcoal pencils to create a striking kingfisher study. This medium combines drawing and painting in one process. They began by building tone and texture with dry charcoal, then activated areas with water to create soft washes and blended shadows.



Through this project, E developed their understanding of tonal contrast and their control of water and pigment movement.

A focused on sketching skills at Bronze level, producing a character study inspired by Totoro from My Neighbour Totoro by Studio Ghibli.

Through this work, A explored shape construction, proportion and character expression.

Sketching remains a fundamental skill in visual art. It strengthens observation, builds accuracy, and develops the discipline needed for more complex compositions.



Also working at Bronze level, E experimented with wet-on-wet watercolour techniques, placing dots of colour close together and observing how they naturally merged.

Watercolour is an excellent medium for teaching both control and creative risk-taking. The WoW (wet paint on wet paper) effect is fun to learn; young people learn to work with the properties of the paint rather than against them.



At Silver Level, P explored printmaking through Gelli printing, creating a vibrant multi-layered monoprint.

This process involves layering colours, experimenting with stencils and textures, exploring negative space and requires an understanding of repetition and variation

Printmaking introduces students to process-based art, where experimentation and layering are central to the outcome. Each print is unique, encouraging creative decision-making at every stage.



Also working at Silver Level, E created a decorative glass painting featuring butterflies and mushrooms.

Working on glass offers a completely different surface and technical challenge.

This project developed an understanding of transparent versus opaque colour, an awareness of how light interacts with surface and decorative composition skills.



These five projects demonstrate just a fraction of what students can explore within their Arts Award and the strength of Arts Award lies in this breadth. No other qualification encourages artistic independence in this way. Students are not limited to one style or medium. Instead, they are encouraged to experiment widely, develop technical skill, and discover what genuinely excites them.

If you would like more information about Discover, Explore, Bronze, Silver or Gold level programmes, please get in touch.

See you next month,

The Arts Award Initiative team