

# Material Play Teacher Resource

**BALTIC  
STARS**





# About this resource

## What are we doing?

## Why are we doing it?

If someone else saw you doing the activities in this resource, they might think you were just making a lot of mess. And it's true, these activities are messy ones, but there's a lot more to it.

In this resource, we'll explore materials, colour, texture, volume and shape in a way that is free from the constraints of 'making a picture' or producing 'artwork'.

It's all about using our senses and playing.

**When we play with materials in this way, we learn lots of different things:**

- What we like to touch – and perhaps what we don't like.
- To use different vocabulary together, as we describe what we can see, feel, touch or hear.
- To think about the ways our bodies can move and the scale and speed of the marks we can make.
- To think about all of the different things that artists can use, and why they might use them.
- To think about gesture, motion and movement as part of a meditative, artistic process.

This resource is for SEND teachers but can also be used in an Early Years Foundation Stage setting.

# How to use this resource

The activities in this resource have been created by BALTIC Freelance Artist Zoë Allen. They focus on exploring, creating and playing with a wide range of different materials.

For this Material Play Teacher Resource, Zoë has created both written activities and a film designed to be used together. These resources can be used as part of a lesson, for a full lesson or as a longer project. Teachers can watch the film and read the resource as an individual and deliver the activities back in class, or watch alongside pupils as the film provides opportunities to pause, think, make and reflect.

**Watch the film [here](#)**



# Contents

05	About the artist	16	Print / Play with scale
06	What you will need for this resource	17	Time to... Think and reflect...
07	Before we start...	18	Time to... Look
09	More is definitely more!	19	Time to... Be inspired
10	Now play!	20	Further artists to explore
11	Using your fingers and hands!		Share your artworks with us!
13	Further ideas		
14	Get 'edity'		
15	Photo play		

# About the artist

Zoë Allen makes sculpture and installation using materials collected from places she has lived, or with which she has a personal connection. She is interested in the way in which people can feel strong emotions toward particular buildings, materials or spaces. She creates assemblages in which she considers shelter, habitat, family and shared histories. Her work explores ways in which objects or structures can be vessels to carry memories or allude to experiences.



# What you will need for this resource

## Base materials:

- Plastic sheet – to protect the surface you are working on
- Thick card – black or white is fine, but experiment with black card and see how the colours and materials become more vibrant
- Masking tape
- Old clothes and/or aprons

## Suggested messy materials:

- Brightly coloured paint – fluorescent is perfect but any bright colours will do
- White paint
- Glitter – as much as you can find
- Sequins or other shiny things
- Tin foil or other materials you can scrunch or re-shape like coloured paper, sweet wrappers or baking parchment
- PVA glue
- Little pots of jelly
- A big bag of cornflour
- A bag of oats
- A bag of demerara sugar
- A multipack of cereals
- Bubbles
- Coloured cellophane
- Shaving foam (check for allergies)
- Balloons (check for allergies)



# Before we start...

Make sure you have a clear surface, that you can reach and that you are comfortable to sit at, such as a large table, a floor space or a bench.

Completely cover your surface with the card or paper, making sure it is held in place with masking tape and that there are no gaps for materials to squeeze through. Make sure the card or paper is taped to the surface you are working on so it doesn't slide around.

## Let's start!







# More is definitely more!

One by one, introduce handfuls or large squeezes of your materials onto the card.

As you put each material onto the canvas, ask some questions about it.

**For example:**

- What have you got in your hands / on the paper?
- Can you make a shape with it?
- What colour is it?
- What does it feel like?
- Does it feel different on your fingers than it does on your cheek?  
Or your arm?
- Does it have a sound?
- Does it make you think of a memory or remind you of anything you have seen before?

- What words could you use to describe it? Do any of these words help to describe it? Prickly, Sharp, Soft, Sticky, Gloopy, Runny, Bumpy, Bouncy
- What other words can you use?
- How does the material move?  
Can you change the shape of it?
- What happens if you squeeze it? Press it? Slap it?  
Use your whole arm to smear it?
- What materials do artists use?
- Are you holding an 'art' material?
- Are you an artist?

## Let's find out...

# Now play!

What happens when you combine materials together? For example, when you pour glitter on the jelly, what does it do? What shapes can you make with the paint?





# Using your fingers and hands!

Push the materials towards  
and away from each other;  
keep adding more materials  
as you do so.

What happens?

What does it feel like?





# Be brave!

Can you use your feet to  
push, pull, splodge and swirl  
the materials?

What happens? What does it  
feel like?





# Further ideas



# Get 'edity'

Playing with materials is definitely 'enough'. But, if you also wanted to create images or document what you are doing, clean your hands and get your camera out...

Try to photograph from directly above as well as a survey or panorama across your materials field. Zoom in, zoom out – what kinds of detail can you pick up? How are you framing each image? Can you project or expand what you have made?





# Photo play

Once you have some digital images, you can play with these too: zoom in, crop, change the exposure, brightness, contrast and other controls you have available.

- What happens to your images?
- Which versions do you like best?
- Why?





# Print!

If you have access to a printer, make some copies of your favourites.

Use these to make new collages – each time you do this, you are regaining control over the image you create.

# Play with scale!

Imagine how your images would look if they were BIGGER! Or smaller...

Can you project or expand what you have made?





# Time to... Think and reflect...

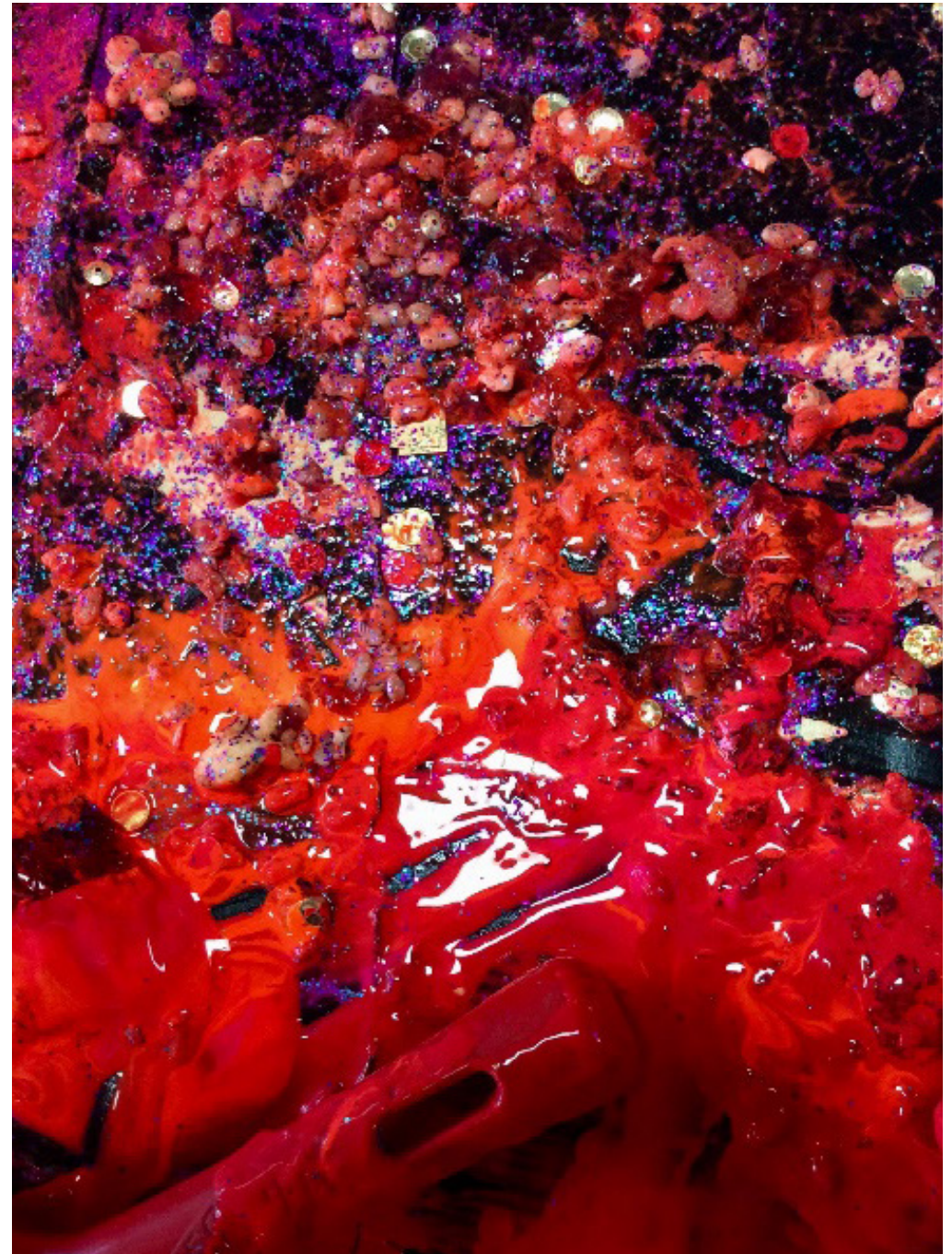
Which materials did you enjoy touching?  
Which ones felt funny?

Which material was the 'squashiest'?  
The 'wobbliest'? The 'stickiest'?

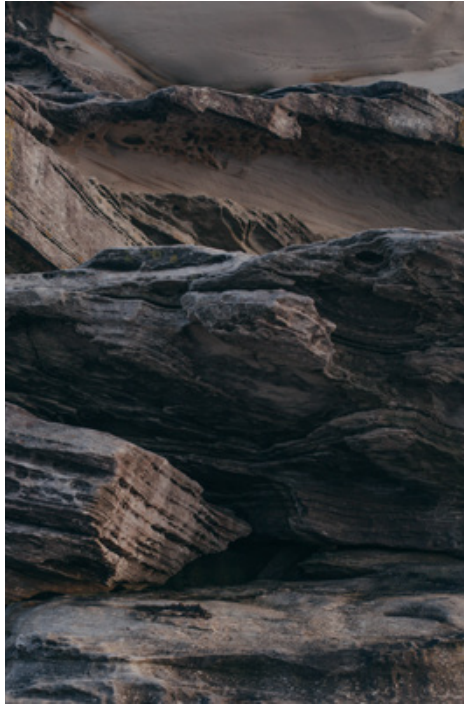
What have you learned by playing with these materials?

- The properties of different materials?
- To use our senses mindfully?
- To not be scared to make mistakes?
- To make decisions & edit your work?
- To meditate?

Why is it important to experiment with different materials?



# Time to... Look



What have you created?

What does your 'play' remind you of?

Look at your artworks, what can you see?

Things in the sky like clouds? In space, like galaxies? In the desert, like rocks? Or, something totally different?



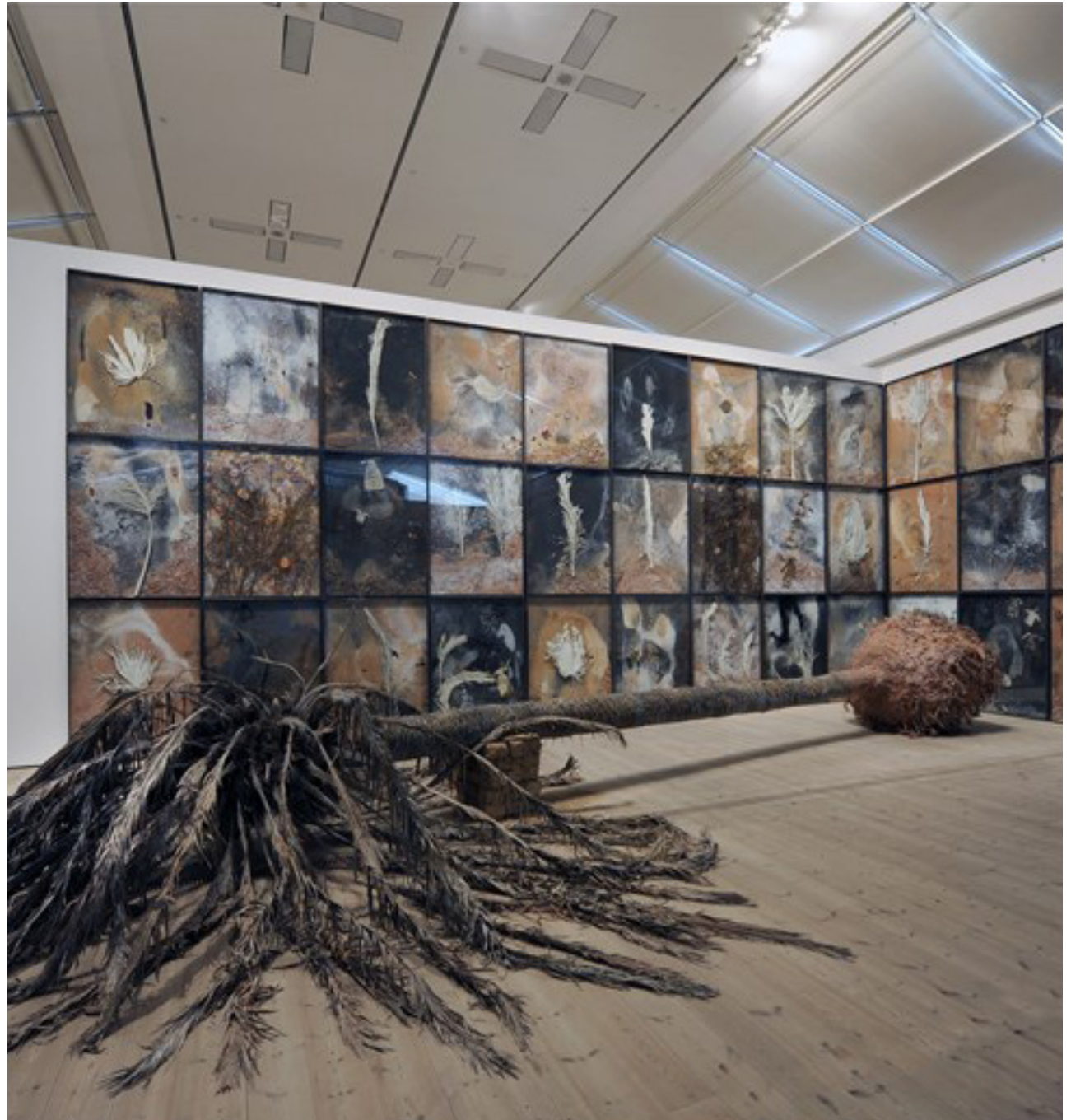


# Time to... Be inspired

Artist Anselm Kiefer famously uses lots of non-traditional materials to create his huge artworks. Some materials he has used are: lead, ash, rope, human hair, wood, metal, rust, trees, barbed wire, straw and clay.

- How many different materials can you see in the works in his exhibition at BALTIC?
- What has he done with these materials?
- Has he made: paintings? Sculptures? Something else? How would you describe the artwork he has made?
- How do you think these artworks would feel if you could touch them?
- What materials can we use to make artwork?

Photo: Colin Davison. Image courtesy of BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. Credit: ARTIST ROOMS, Tate and National Galleries of Scotland. Acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund 2008 © Tate, London 2010



# Further artists to explore

**Richard Long** describes his work as 'Simple creative acts of walking and marking about place, locality, time, distance and measurement. Works using raw materials and my human scale in the reality of landscapes.'

**Connections:** movement, materials, scale

**Olafur Eliasson** paints with rivers and ice, makes artwork out of different environments to raise awareness around climate change.

**Connections:** movement, materials, environment, scale, colour

**Yayoi Kusama:** *Infinity Rooms*

**Connections:** Collaboration, painting, pattern, design, reflection, meditation, experience, space

**Tomás Saraceno:** *Poetic Cosmos of the Breath*

**Connections:** light, air, elements, Space, environments, rhythm, galaxies

**BALTIC**  
[www.baltic.art](http://www.baltic.art)

# Share your artworks with us!

We would love to see your pupils' artworks! Teachers and Home Educators can share these with us by email:

Leanne Alldred, BALTIC's Assistant Producer (Schools and Colleges) [leannea@balticmill.com](mailto:leannea@balticmill.com) or [learning@balticmill.com](mailto:learning@balticmill.com)

Cover image & images on pages 8, 10 and 11 courtesy House of Hues. Images on pages 3, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17, courtesy Zoë Allen.



Supported by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



Registered Charity No: 1076251