



Next, Sam gets us on our feet and those paint-soaked tennis balls appear. “Now we’re going to loosen ourselves up,” he declares, turning up the iPod that plays throughout the day.

Balancing the balls on a piece of paper, we roll them around to create lines of paint. There’s much twisting of hips and laughter as balls hit the floor with a splat. “That’s great,” says Sam, encouragingly. He’s equally enthused by the results of our next exercise, in which, with eyes closed, we attempt to draw our faces through touch. The results are inevitably Picasso-esque. But again, it’s liberating to focus on drawing without worrying about whether the results are “good” or “bad”.

Despite a varying standard in the group – two members are professional artists while the other two are self-confessed hobbyists – the experimental nature of the day seems to put us all on a more equal footing.

That sense of equality is helped by the warm, friendly atmosphere. Sam is unfailingly encouraging and upbeat, while frequently asking us questions about what we are doing – and why. My answer is often simply “I don’t know”, but the experience helps me to start thinking about drawing in a different way and seems to have a similar effect on others in the group – even those who make art for a living.

The last exercise before lunch involves creating a large-scale, abstract work on the paper taped to the floor.

We begin with “automatic drawing”,

Henry Garfit opened the doors on this former Victorian school last September.

However, there’s little time to reflect on the area’s rich artistic heritage now though as my four course-mates have arrived and Sam, a practising artist and illustrator who also has a studio in the building, is itching to get started.

We begin with some line and tone drawing. I’m alarmed to find I’m expected to draw freely, rather than from a specific subject. “We’re not trying to ‘draw a shoe,’” is a refrain Sam comes back to several times during the day. Instead, he encourages us to be instinctive and spontaneous in our mark making.

Although it’s daunting to jump in without a starting point I find that, with no subject in front of me to worry about, I become absorbed in dragging ink through a swirl of charcoal and washing coffee over the top of pastel to explore different effects.

**ABOVE** Alice gets to grips with Newlyn’s experimental style  
**RIGHT** The quality of light in the harbour has drawn artists to Newlyn for years



using pieces of lead on the end of a yardstick, before getting down on our knees to work at the detail with any material we please. Sam also encourages us to think about cutting and folding our paper, or creating a collage:

“Making those lines is drawing too.” After a well-earned break, the afternoon begins with monoprinting. Sam shows us how to ink up a piece of card before using turps, cotton wool buds, card and scalpels to make designs inspired by the drawings we created before lunch. The whole day is full and fast-paced but as our work piles up, there’s a clear sense of developing ideas and themes.

Eager not to miss a rare day of sunshine, after we’ve each made a few

**“ALTHOUGH IT’S DAUNTING TO BEGIN WITH, I BECOME ABSORBED IN DRAGGING INK THROUGH A SWIRL OF CHARCOAL TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT EFFECTS”**

prints we move outside for some subtractive drawing. We cover the page with willow charcoal that we then remove with bread, creating a tonal image. This is the sole time when we work specifically from life but the primitive feel of the technique coupled with all that loosening up means I take a much freer approach to my subject than I would normally.

There’s no time to admire the results though, as Sam hands us each a

**BELOW** The rest of the class follow tutor Sam’s lead

painted board and a selection of pens, pencils and scalpels to draw and mark the surface. Having used the scenery outside as a starting point, we move back inside to continue in a more abstract way, adding elements from the work we created earlier.

For Sam, this approach is a “much more honest way of drawing” and looking around at everyone’s very different work at the end of the day, it’s apparent how people’s personalities have led the way. There’s a real buzz in the air as the course nears the end and I leave with not only a pile of artwork and ink-splattered hands, but also a newfound confidence and zeal to explore my drawing further.

[www.newlynartschool.co.uk](http://www.newlynartschool.co.uk)



### EXPERIMENT AT HOME

Newlyn tutor Sam Bassett offers four tips for loosening up your own drawing style

- **CLOSE YOUR EYES**  
Draw via touch. Be honest about what you feel, without trying to represent what you remember.
- **DRAW WITH PROPULSION**  
Work with gravity not against it and try to hit your surface at speed.
- **STAND UP AND DANCE**  
See what the movement from your hips or shoulders can do to your line.
- **DETACH YOURSELF**  
Increase the distance between you and the surface on which you are working by extending your arm fully.

[www.samuelbassett.co.uk](http://www.samuelbassett.co.uk)

# MAKING A MARK

Cold coffee, tennis balls and twisting hips... Alice Wright got more than she bargained for when she tried her hand at the Newlyn School of Art’s popular new experimental drawing class

Arrive at Newlyn School of Art to find experimental drawing tutor Sam Bassett bounding around the high-ceilinged studio, taping huge pieces of paper to the floor. Other materials already laid out range from the more conventional (charcoal and pastels) to the obscure (tennis balls floating in tubs of black paint and jars of cold coffee). It’s clear we’re in for an interesting day.

Newlyn has been a popular destination for artists since the early 19th century. In the 1880s, painters such as Walter Langley and Stanhope Forbes began to arrive in the town, drawn by the quality of light and spectacular scenery on Cornwall’s Penwith peninsula. But surprisingly, although the term “Newlyn School” was coined to identify the artists that settled here more than 100 years ago, there was no dedicated art school in the town until founder and director