

Early Years Coalition

# Making Marks:

EXHIBITIONS THAT CELEBRATE  
CHILDREN'S ART  
A "HOW-TO" KIT FOR COMMUNITIES

TASMANIAN  
GOVERNMENT  
INITIATIVE





Arlo Highton  
Age: 3  
Paint Stick and pencil  
on paper.  
*Squiggles: a car in the  
woods 2019*

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This resource has been developed by B4 Leaders Di Nailon OAM and Bronwyn Tamplin, and supported by Annette Fuller Senior Project Officer B4.

All resources within this document are open to be changed or adapted to suit your context and community. B4 asks when using and / or adapting information from this kit that you acknowledge B4 as either the original author of the material, or reference B4 in your resources.

For more information on B4 and other B4 resources, see [www.b4.education.tas.gov.au](http://www.b4.education.tas.gov.au)

Any companies or products used or mentioned in this resource are provided only as examples of what we used and in no way does their naming provide an endorsement or promotion of them or their product.

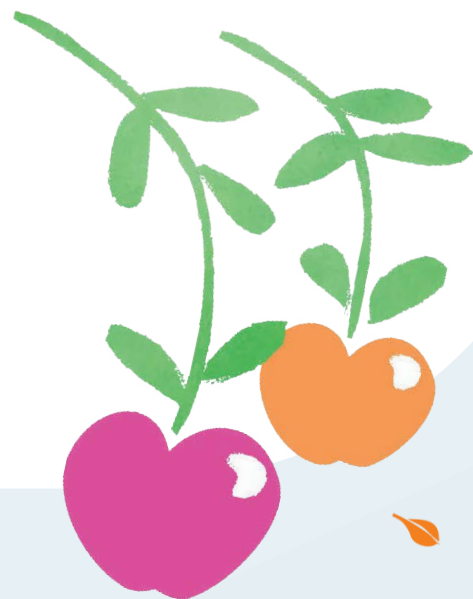
The B4 *Making Marks Exhibition* was only possible through the collaboration between the following partners:

B4 Early Years Coalition (B4), Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Tasmania, National ECA Conference Organising Committee, Lady Gowrie, Goodstart Early Learning, Northern Children's Network, All That We Are, Dr Barbara Piscitelli AM and the Tasmanian Museum and Gallery (TMAG).

**This is a companion resource to B4's *Making Marks: The Development of Children's Drawing***

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# B4 - Who are we?

The B4 Early Years Coalition (B4) was launched in August 2016 as a collective impact initiative of the Tasmanian Government. B4 is working to ensure everyone in Tasmania is:

- aware of and understands the importance of the early years,
- has a role to play, and
- is taking action together to support our youngest citizens.

The *B4 Making Marks Exhibition* supported this goal in a practical and celebratory way. Prior to curating and managing this 'first of its kind' Children's Art Exhibition, B4 developed a range of resources and tools for use in a series of statewide workshops for educators. These resources and the lessons learnt from the exhibition are shared in this kit.

All resources are open to be changed or adapted to suit your context and community. However, B4 asks that when you share information from this kit, you acknowledge B4 as either the author of the material, or that you have drawn from the kit.

***"The start – where the  
magic begins!  
THE EARLY YEARS"***

**Quote from the B4 Making Marks  
Guest Book**



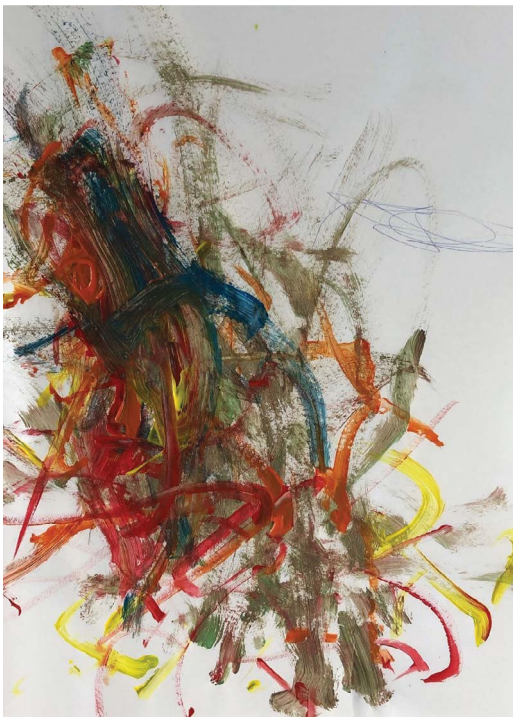
# Background

This *B4 Making Marks Community How-to Kit* has been developed as a guide. It was created following the highly successful *B4 Making Marks: A Celebration of Children's Art (Making Marks)* exhibition, which opened at the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery in September 2019. The exhibition then toured the State being displayed in galleries at Burnie, Devonport, Queenstown, Launceston and the Huon Valley, closing in April 2021.

The aim of *Making Marks* was:

*"Working together to celebrate and value Tasmania's children as competent, creative, curious capable citizens."*

## Artworks from the Making Marks Exhibition 2019



Kiana -Mae Clulow,  
23 months  
Acrylic Paint  
*"Kiana-Mae's Creation"*



Isabella Youd,  
3 years  
Paper and Pen  
*"Doctor Quack Quack"*

# The B4 Project - Story of the 2019 Making Marks Exhibition

The B4 *Making Marks* project had two major outcomes:

- an art exhibition by very young Tasmanian children from birth to 4 years, and
- provided an opportunity for skills development for parents, educators, and adults to confidently make marks with and alongside children.

Following the statewide adult workshops, the exhibition was created by B4 and partners in collaboration with children, artists, educators, and families from across Tasmania. The exhibition nurtured, supported, and celebrated children's voices through art. B4's brochure introducing the project stated:

*"Though mark making, children develop their relationships with materials, people and place and through doing this, they grow their voice and share their unique ways of seeing and telling stories."*

By creating an intentionally curated exhibition, B4 acknowledged and promoted both the value of art in children's learning and development; and children's contribution to their community as creative, competent citizens through their mark making.

The exhibition supported the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (\*UNCRC). It also assisted in challenging the often-held experience that children are 'neither seen nor heard' as participating or contributing members of their community.

A key intent was for works selected for the exhibition to represent children's journey of discovery, and their mark making development as they explored media, place, and relations during mark making. It was an attempt to reject a formulaic process of choosing and displaying works considered to be the "best" of what was submitted.

Of the 159 pieces sent to B4 from across Tasmania, 66 representative works were selected for the exhibition. The selection was made by a panel led by Dr Barbara Piscitelli AM and involved early years specialists and artists including a child artist.

The works were exhibited in groupings identified in B4's *Making Marks: Development of Children's Drawings Booklet*. All 159 submissions were included in a PowerPoint video and played on a screen alongside the selected works at each of the exhibiting locations.

\*For more information on the UNCRC watch this short video [UNCRC Department of Education](#).

**Quotes from the Making Marks Guestbooks...**

***"This exhibition is fascinating."***

***"Was awesome having it."***

***"I love these, more please."***

***"Beautiful, respectful display of children's thoughts and voices."***

***"A wonderful world through the eyes of children."***

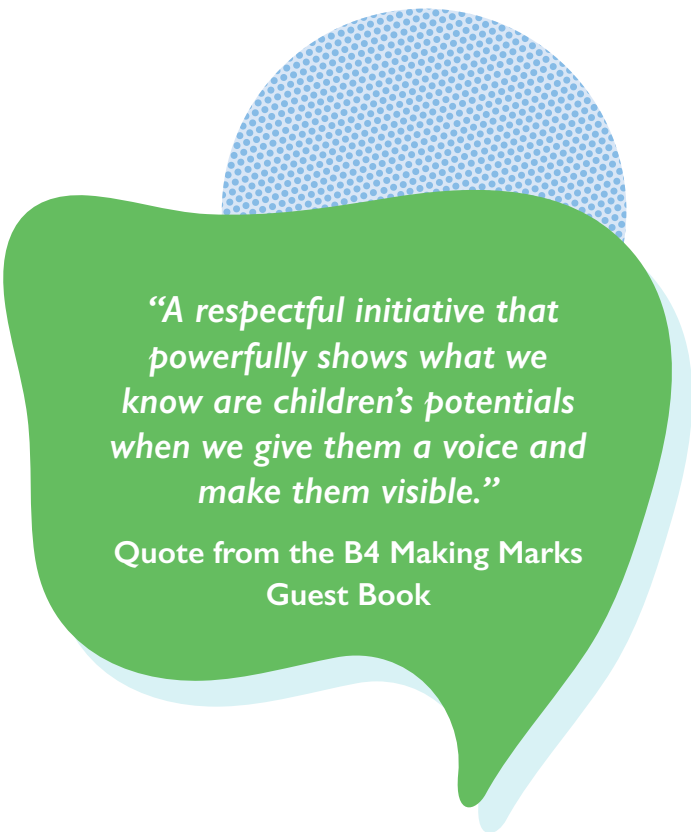
***"Inspiring - made me think about how children's voices can be heard/seen."***

# Why have a Making Marks Exhibition in your Community?

Look around your community.  
Are young children's voices  
visible? What are they telling us?

Young children's stories told  
through their art are not often  
seen beyond the 'fridge door'.  
Nor are their marks celebrated  
as worthy of putting on public  
display (unlike works made by  
school-age children and adults).

A *Making Marks* exhibition  
gives children, birth – 4 years,  
an artistic presence. Enacting  
the rights of our youngest  
children through art doesn't  
need to be a stand-alone  
exhibition but could form a  
part of a larger community  
event. A respectfully curated  
*Making Marks* exhibition builds  
a sense of belonging and  
connection for children, families,  
and community members.



*"A respectful initiative that  
powerfully shows what we  
know are children's potentials  
when we give them a voice and  
make them visible."*

Quote from the B4 Making Marks  
Guest Book





# How to create a successful Making Marks exhibition

What did we do to create the 2019/2020 *Making Marks* exhibition?

The B4 team adopted several organising steps. These steps may work for you too. Please re-arrange them to suit your circumstances. You might cluster some steps together, move ahead quickly on some and move more slowly on others. Revisit or re-order them as required. The steps are as follows:

1. Create a *Making Marks* exhibition partnership/working group
2. Develop a project purpose and project plan
3. Organise and deliver *Making Marks* workshops for adults
4. Decide and set up the logistics of creating the exhibition
5. Call for submissions of children's artworks
6. Identify a Curatorial Team and guidelines for selecting representative works
7. Establish an exhibition focus, based on the selected works
8. Undertake framing/printing and related exhibition preparation tasks
9. Create an exhibition plan and install works
10. Open the exhibition with flair and ceremony worthy of our youngest citizens
11. Evaluate the project and act on lessons learned for future events

An overview description of each of these steps is provided below for easy reference.

# Overview of steps to create a Making Marks exhibition

Action	Details	Resources
Create a <i>Making Marks</i> exhibition partnership/working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build partnerships between willing stakeholders and expertise holders. You will need everyone's input and help.</li> <li>The video linked from the B4 website may help to encourage stakeholders to get involved.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Celebrating young children's creative explorations in mark-making</a> - Dr Barbara Piscitelli
Develop a project purpose and project plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Essential to support everyone stay on track and share the load.</li> <li>The what, where, when and by who.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">B4 Making Marks Project Plan Template</a>
Organise and deliver <i>Making Marks</i> workshops for adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a key component to support engagement and participation of adults to support children making marks.</li> </ul>	Workshop format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Janine Morris video</a></li> <li><a href="#">Workshop flyers</a></li> <li><a href="#">Making marks: The Development of Children's Drawing</a></li> <li><a href="#">Making Marks Visible: Respecting and Relating to the Stories Young Children Tell in their Mark Making</a></li> </ul>
Decide and set up the logistics of creating the exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Book gallery space/venue for the exhibition. This date will help you work backwards to set other key dates e.g. submissions.</li> <li>You will need a good 6 months lead time.</li> <li>It really helps if the space is designed for exhibitions with hanging rails and droppers. You also need to think about opening hours to ensure access by the community.</li> </ul>	Possible options for an Exhibition Space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal gallery space</li> <li>Community space</li> <li>Local businesses - create a walking gallery</li> </ul>
Call for submissions of children's artworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submissions to be via high resolution photo with accompanying submission form and consent forms.</li> <li><i>Note: Ensure artworks are kept by parents/ families somewhere safe. If selected the original will be required.</i></li> <li>B4 restricted <i>Making Marks</i> to 2-dimensional drawings you may like to open to 3-dimensional works.</li> <li>Set and advertise a clear closing date for submissions.</li> </ul>	B4 sample forms for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Submitting artworks</a></li> <li><a href="#">Consent</a></li> <li><a href="#">Spreadsheet for collation</a></li> </ul>
Identify a Curatorial Team and guidelines for selecting representative works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need a range of skills and expertise in the early years and arts. It is also great to have a parent and a child on the team.</li> <li>Can be done online, so representatives don't necessarily need to be local.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Showcasing Marks: Curating Young Children's Art Exhibitions</a>
Establish an exhibition focus, based on the selected works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Making Marks</i> as a central focus on children's exploration of materials, relationships and spaces, allowed for wide and open responses to these elements by children.</li> <li>You may like to set a particular focus for your exhibition to celebrate an event/date. Young children will respond to provocations in their own imaginative ways. The marks made may be similar to a child's other drawings but their intent will differ.</li> <li>The B4 curatorial team on reviewing and selecting representative works themed the works along developmental stages of mark making. There was also the additional theme making marks with the earth to celebrate the work of Uncle Murray and Tasmanian Aboriginal children.</li> </ul>	
Undertake framing/printing and related exhibition preparation tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having all works in consistent framing works well. B4 purchased frames through IKEA with Perspex versus glass.</li> <li>The development of an exhibition catalogue and curatorial labels is also important in capturing the stories and details of each of the works.</li> <li>Storage containers are useful for safely storing and transporting the artwork. B4 purchased storage boxes through Rebul Protective Crates – see <a href="http://rebul.com.au">rebul.com.au</a></li> </ul>	
Create exhibition plan and install works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The gallery or museum curatorial team should be able to assist with hanging instructions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">B4 Exhibition Project Plan Template</a></li> <li><a href="#">B4 Hanging instructions for travelling show</a></li> <li><a href="#">Opening event running sheet</a></li> </ul>
Open the exhibition with flair and ceremony worthy of our youngest citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for inviting guests well ahead of time. You can include child artists as special guests.</li> <li>If you decide to have food at the opening, make certain to organise catering. You will want to include an RSVP date on invites to ensure you know final attendance numbers, which will help determine the amount of catering required.</li> </ul>	
Evaluate the project and act on lessons learned for future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's a good idea to include a guest book at the exhibition to collect qualitative data.</li> <li>Collecting visitor numbers may not be possible.</li> </ul>	

Celebrate and enjoy!

# Are adult workshops really that important to the exhibition?

A huge YES!

*Making Marks* adult workshops are integral to the success of building and promoting *Making Marks* children's exhibitions. They provide an opportunity to build knowledge, capacity, and confidence in parents, educators, families, and service providers by helping them find their own "inner artist".

Young children need adults who are confident to watch, observe, and when invited engage with children as they are exploring the use of materials to create lines, shapes and stories that emerge in their drawings. Adults willing to develop their own sense of 'having a go' are better able to investigate, wonder, and share children's joy in exploring ideas through mark making.

*Making Marks* workshops support and encourage adults to be active co-learners with children.

A key addition to the workshops held by B4 was to use practising artists as collaborators with adults. The aim was to offer some visual arts techniques, but more importantly to have the opportunity to "get inside the head of an artist". There was a chance to see and hear what an artist is thinking as they chose and used materials and played with ideas. If you don't have an artist living in your community ArTELIER might be able to help you out -

<https://arteliertasmania.org/>



## Snapshots from regional workshops







To see artist Janine Morris working with a group of educators and parents, as well as sharing her thoughts about art and mark making, watch a short video [here](#).



# Capturing the stories of the CHLD artist and their work

Another role that adults can take is to document what happens as children are mark making. Several of the B4 *Making Marks* 2019 submissions were enriched by generous and respectful written descriptions including:

- how the child explored and used particular materials in turn,
- where the child focused their marks on the paper,
- how the child's ideas and symbols changed during the mark making, and
- the language and sounds made by the child to share their ideas or name images.

The child's voice became even more visible to viewers when they read about the artistic process adopted by the child. A B4 companion booklet, *Making Marks Visible: Respecting and Relating to the Stories Young Children Tell in their Mark Making*, describes ways to document children's mark making as you sit alongside them as a co-artist or interested observer. With the child's permission you can locate their artist story (documentation) beside their work in the exhibition.



Flynn Dutson,  
3 Years  
Feather painting  
on paper  
"Spider Web"

Flynn dips the end of his feather into the black paint.

Circling with the feather, he watched as the paint starts thick and begins to fade towards the end of the lines.

He observes another child engaged in the same process and then dips again.

*"It's a spider web" he says.*

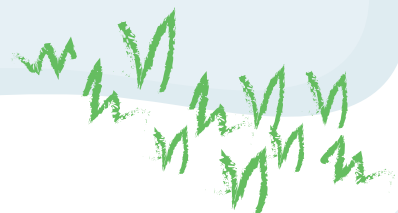
*"Spiders can live in spider webs."*

Pointing to the middle of the page, *"that's a spider, a BIG spider"* he explains.

*"A super dark spider. Me reckons it needs red eyes."*

I gather some red paint, present it to Flynn and he continues to dip.

*"Finished!" he smiles.*



# Curating and dressing the exhibition

Depending on the purpose and focus selected for your exhibition, you will need a title and a selected 'Champion' artwork to be associated with the title of the exhibition.

Arlo's work below was selected as the Champion piece for the 2019 exhibition.



Arlo Highton  
Age: 3  
Paint Stick and pencil  
on paper.  
*Squiggles: a car in the  
woods 2019*

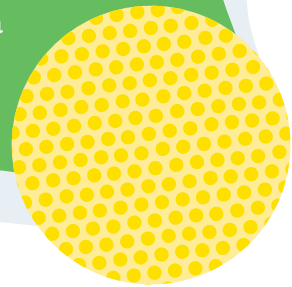
The other selected works for the exhibition, can then be grouped in different ways that suit the purpose of the exhibition and make sense to the viewer.

The 2019 *Making Marks* exhibition had five developmental groupings adapted from the *B4 Making Marks: Development of Children's Drawings Booklet*. Explanatory boards were located beside each grouping and provided a brief overview of the developmental phase or focus and what viewers could expect.

Here is an example of the *Taking Shape* Explanatory Board

### **Taking Shape**

At some magical moment, young children begin to pull their random marks into shapes that have meaning. The narratives that accompany their work tell personal stories about the way's children view the world and how they make sense of their life experiences. Sometimes adults consider these early works to be worthless, but these explorations are the beginning of the child's creative journey as an artist, a storyteller and a writer.



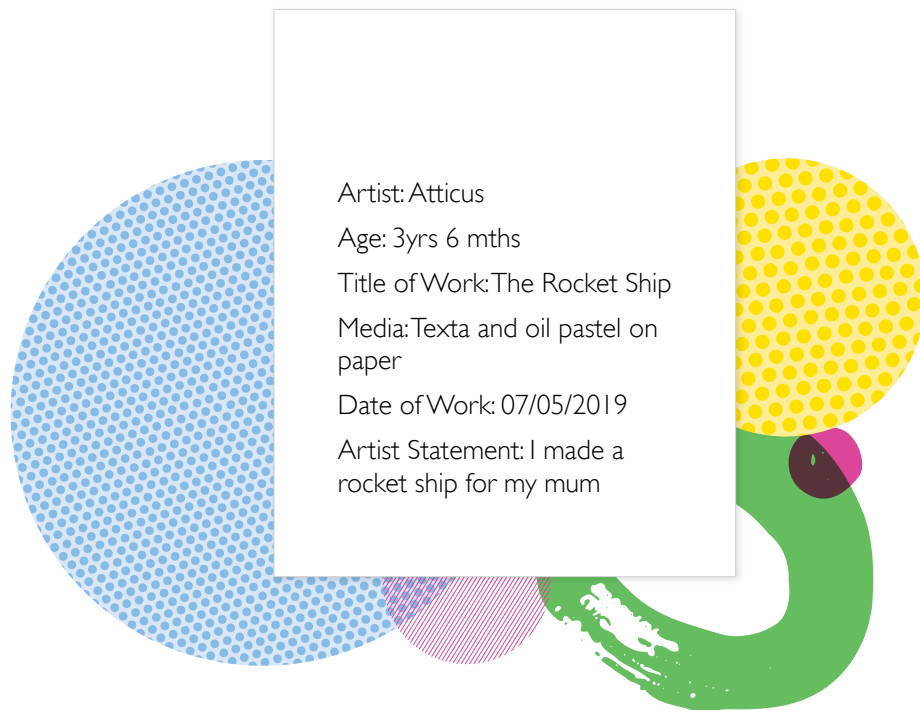
One grouping honoured young Tasmanian Aboriginal artists:

### **Making Marks with the Earth**

Tasmania is an island that has supported more than a thousand generations of families who have made their mark on the land and in the social world. Elder Great Uncle Murray worked at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association (TACCA) to explore ochre with children aged nineteen months to four years. The children listened as Uncle Murray talked about where to look for ochre, and about its use in Indigenous life. Uncle Murray showed the children how to load a brush and apply ochre paint. The children watched at first and then explored the quality of the earth paint, noting that it was a "little bit smooth and a little bit rough". Their works on paper connect these young children to the ways in which Indigenous people have long made their mark in Tasmania.



Individual works in the B4 exhibition were accompanied by a curatorial label - which are traditionally 150X120mm on a medium called Travelsol available through Signarama or Thinkbig:



Dressing the exhibition is your opportunity to invite the audience to look deeply at what they are viewing. Dressing also focuses on ensuring that the young artists and supporters of the exhibition are given the respect they so richly deserve.

Make sure you have these exhibition 'extras' beautifully crafted and visible upon entry to the gallery spaces:

- Exhibition Title Panel alongside the Champion piece used for marketing
- Acknowledgement Panel - Acknowledge Country, artists and supporters
- Information Panel - Shares the purpose and major features of the Exhibition
- Room Brochure - Overview of groupings of works and locations



Please see *Showcasing Marks: Curating Young Children's Art Exhibitions* companion resource available on the [B4 website](#) for more in-depth information.

Returning works to the artists is an important part of the *Making Marks* project. What we learned was that over time families move, and things change. Having parent/carers mobile or email is vital to ensure contact for returning artworks once the exhibition is finished.

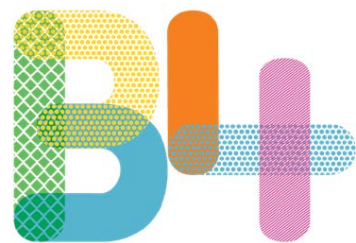
A number of the *Making Marks* works have been acquired by University of Tasmania (UTAS) to form part of their research and study library. To enable this transfer of works, artists and parent/carers were contacted and permission sought to provide UTAS with their contact details to progress appropriate consent.

## Travelling Exhibition

*Making Marks* was a statewide exhibition, as such B4 made a commitment to ensure all Tasmanians could access the exhibition. This saw a smaller subset of the original exhibition travel across the state to Queenstown, Devonport, Burnie, Launceston and the Huon Valley. While this added an additional level of logistics it was highly successful in raising awareness and celebrating young children's art.







Early Years Coalition

