

## **2013-2014**

### **Art Curriculum Report**

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The art program is designed to support students in their exploration of the visual arts. My goal is for children to enjoy making art work, to see it as possible for them, to gather literacy specific to the world of art. In a time where play is finally understood to be the work of children, the art program seeks to allow children the opportunity to play with the techniques and concepts around art making, while exploring and defining what ART is for each individual.

This year the theme in the art room is Abstraction. From my point of view, this is the artistic quality which young children bring to their art readily, a reactive process driven approach which mirrors emotional response to what is seen, felt, and understood. For our older children the concept is that one can make art without the need to “get it right”. Throughout the year we looked at different abstract artists whose work balanced form, color, and shape to create movement and interest. Franz Marc and Marc Chagall, David Smith, Alexander Calder and Andy Goldsworthy were a few of the artists whose works were presented.

Students are encouraged to develop their observational skills. They learn to expand their vision, look carefully, and select from observations those aspects which they find most personally significant. In the youngest grades observation is taught through the use of stories while in the upper grades direct observation and drawing lessons focus observational skills. Learning to look carefully is a skill which they will find useful in many tasks from science to mathematics. Learning to interpret what is seen is another skill which takes various forms. In the youngest students it may be the simple act of mark making, responding with blocks of colors or with building blocks as they begin to understand the world around them. As they move through the grades these skills increase, as do the fine motor skills needed to interpret their observations. Starting in third grade, students start to draw directly from life, whether a flower or tree in the Miquon environment, a student model in the classroom, or individual objects brought together in a still life. Observations may be captured in black and white or color and in two dimensions or three. Remembering the theme of Abstraction, students are reminded that observing is about selection not copying.

The elements of art which all artists use in the development of their work include: line, color, shape, texture, pattern, space, and form. Like older artists, students favor certain elements in their work. Some children choose working in line, some prefer color and shape, while still others find building and three dimensional problem solving appealing. One element may anchor a child’s mind, while the others play supporting roles. Children are encouraged to develop their strengths and interests, while reaching forward to explore new elements.

The Nursery and Kindergarten often start with a theme from a story. Wonderfully illustrated books are always available many with art related themes, “Ish” and “Dot” by Peter Reynolds, “Mouse Paint” by Ellen Stoll Walsh, “ah!” by Josse Goffin, and many more including stories from Ezra Jack Keats and Leo Lionni. These stories and their illustrations help start the thought process, but a personal story usually arises. Children use paint sticks, craypas, paint, paper, scissors, glue, clay, and play dough to express their ideas. Throughout the year we return to familiar techniques and materials to build skills and confidence.

In both first and second grades children begin to be more narrative. Their classes often start with a story or focusing question. Art works are filled with references to family, friends, and imaginary and real adventures. Simple icons fill pages; monsters and spaceships, flowers, houses, and people, inhabit works of art. Clay work includes simple tiles and pinch pots, animals modeled, boxes fashioned as children learn basic hand building methods. This year a classroom study of animals inspired us to make paper mache animals, using recycled materials.

Third and fourth grade is when time in the art room increases from once a week to twice a week. Older students begin to consolidate learning begun in earlier years and make it their own. The routines of the studio are known to them. This year we focused on color theory through the lens of abstraction. Experimenting with warm and cool colors, tints and shapes, even landscapes referencing how colors work together. Student made simple weavings and helped make a larger weaving on the frame loom. Clay work included the pottery wheel where students coached each other as they began to learn the basics of pulling a pot. Coil pots were hand built and all clay was beautifully glazed. All children have art room sketchbooks which they use on their own, but also for more formal drawing lessons. Children also enjoyed working on the computers using TUX Paint, a simple graphic program.

In the fifth and sixth grade groups the abstraction study continued although the emphasis was similar, the class content changed according to the needs and interests each group. In Diane and Jeri's group children reviewed pottery wheel and hand building in clay. They experimented with glazing, using underglazes with glazes. In the winter they helped their nursery buddies make candles, made some for themselves, and sewed stuffies for their buddies. They made linoleum cut prints and learned to print editions. Outdoor landscapes emphasized the idea of render a point of view and abstracting paintings. Sculpture study included building environmental sculpture. Figure drawing with student models allowed each child to consider movement and to design a figurative sculpture in both groups. The sixth grade group photographed the campus and classmates in action, and painted wonderful abstract animal images, working with acrylic paint, deciding new colors and forms for their chosen animals. They also made linoleum prints, and printed editions. A personal study allowed choices and half the group designed a fashion line, while others concentrated on clay work. The 6th grade also did lots of drawing, from figure studies and portraits to cartoon characters.

### Mini Courses

There are three mini course sessions each year. The first included only children from the oldest two groups. Lisa, Jeri, and I worked to paint a mural on the ball court wall. Planning, priming, and painting took much of our work time, but a valiant group worked hard. We will need to return to the work in the fall. Drawing mini course involved eight students from grades 3-6. It was wonderful to have interested students across broad ages draw together, share, and inspire each other. Spring mini course brought together a small group of workers, from grades 1-4 to plant, rake, and generally beautify the area around the art room.

It has been a full and fulfilling year. It is a privilege to observe the growth in these children over this year and, for some, over many years.