

206-2017 Art Curriculum Report

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The practice of Making Art at Miquon intends to encourage your child to become a flexible thinker; to take risks in a safe, supportive environment; to be resilient when plans don't go as expected, and to become an effective problem-solver. Miquon Art—as it is with the entirety of The Miquon School—aims to create and foster a culture of mutual respect, empathy, and support. These skills have excellent applicability outside of our immediate group: they serve both as a template by which community-positive social behavior may be grown in oneself, and as an example for others.

The practice of Making Art at Miquon is designed to give context and meaning to the content which we study. Art is naturally—and inextricably—linked to the human experience. Each and every piece of art we look at was created by a person. They may have lived in a different time, or a different place; they may have had experiences vastly different from those that any of us have had, and where these differences interact with our understanding, there is opportunity for learning; opportunity for connection; opportunity for growth—both as artists, and as people.

The practice of Making Art at Miquon aims to provide each student their best opportunity to access the curriculum. The means by which this is achieved changes and grows as your child progresses through their time at Miquon, but it is philosophically and practically consistent. Routines, and appropriate use of materials and social behavior, are modeled and supported—and the space in which we work is accessible. This serves to increase your child's self-reliance and confidence as they explore and create.

The practice of Making Art at Miquon hopes to allow each child the space and time necessary for them to develop a sense of the value for their own observations, to understand that this awareness extends to every aspect of an artist's life, and that we are all artists, so long as we keep our eyes open. Your child will grow to understand what it feels like to be inspired by other artists, and they will learn what it feels like to inspire those around them. Together with the rest of our community, they will develop a language with which we may discuss and appreciate art, and—by extension—to appreciate the artist in each and every one of us.

Nursery through Second Grade

Nursery has Art once weekly for thirty minutes, Kindergarten for forty, and First and Second grade for forty-five. Every Art class begins together on the rug: we read a book connected to what we will be exploring that day. This is a wonderful way to begin a rich group dialogue: we pay particular attention to illustrations and the choices that the artists have used to help tell the story.

After we finish reading, we talk about what we're going to be doing, and all materials and processes are modeled and discussed. Children are then invited to put on smocks, and we move as a group to where we will be doing our project (i.e., to the tables, the Artists' Loft, or outside.), and we begin.

When children are finished their work, they have the opportunity to draw, read books, build with blocks and rocks, or to go to the Peace Table (explained below).

For First and Second grades, both the room, and their options, begin to grow. These children have independent access to a broader range of materials, and they are empowered to choose and procure additional materials from the shelves that they personally feel they'd like to include in their work. Weaving (both personal, and community) and other fibers arts become available choices, and the Artists' Loft and Object Library are open for them to choose. They also have the option to draw and/or build outside.

At these stages of development, Art is mostly about process—not product. Children are introduced to a

variety of materials. They are encouraged to explore and discover; to learn and create. Children are introduced to artists, terminology, concepts, and techniques in age-appropriate fashion. Our young artists nurture one another as they each develop their own unique artistic voices.

The space in which our Miquon Artists learn about and create art was designed with several goals in mind: the *Art Room* was designed to feel calm, and to allow young artists to have a space wherein they can feel inspired and able to create. When possible, natural window light is the primary illumination in the space, and there is usually music playing. Our *Peace Table* is a beautiful spot in the room that holds a collection of lovely objects and images for children to thoughtfully enjoy. It is a place where they might reflect and meditate for a few moments before returning to their creative endeavors, or at the end of class.

From a functional perspective, Children need to be able to navigate their space; to access the materials with which they work, and to understand how to and why they should take care of the space—and each one of these things is explicitly explained and modeled. The aesthetics and functions of the space are constantly considered and reconsidered based upon children’s needs, wants, and ideas. The walls are hung with an ever-revolving combination of children’s work, and with that of the artists we study. The materials are placed in consistent locations, and kept tidy to encourage independence, both in retrieving the materials, and in knowing how those materials are to be kept—which is a relevant and applicable skillset in a broad range of other contexts. Likewise, themes of respect and stewardship—both for the space, and for our group members creating together within that space—form the basis of our classroom culture, and supporting our greater school community.

Third through Sixth Grade

Third through Sixth Grades have Art twice weekly for forty-five minutes. At the start of the year, every child is given their own sketchbook that they will use for note taking, sketching ideas for larger works, and for personal drawing and writing. We begin each class by introducing a new topic, or by reviewing our current topic for projects that take place over multiple class periods.

The Art Room continues to grow for children in these groups, as do their options for Open Studio and Choice Time activities. They have independent access to a broader range of materials, and they are empowered to choose and procure additional materials from the shelves that they personally feel they’d like to include in their work. Weaving (both personal, and community) and other fibers arts are available choices, as well as Sketchbooks, the Book & Postcard Library, (independent use of) Watercolors, Hot Glue Station, the Artists’ Loft (and Object Library), the Sewing Station, and Building and Drawing Outside.

Though the content of the lesson is constantly changing the way each lesson is conducted follows a specific format. This serves to allow children to become comfortable with structure and routine, and allows them to focus on the actual content of the lesson. There is plenty of room for growth and differentiation within this approach, both at a class level, and at an individual level—but setting in place this template alleviates most instances of anxiety of expectation, and fosters confidence in each child. This routine is echoed in the arrangement and decoration of the physical classroom space as well, which will be discussed below.

The format for the presentation of a new area of study is as follows:

- content is presented, and we discuss what we might know about it, and what we will be learning more about
- class observes that all relevant key terminology is written on the whiteboard—accompanied by visual supplements: prints, photos, samples of material use, physical objects, et cetera

- materials and tools that will be used are presented, and their use is demonstrated and discussed
- when appropriate, excerpts from books may be read
- dialog is encouraged (this is true throughout the process, but is especially valuable once children have a better idea of what they're going to be doing)
- projects often start in sketchbooks: terms and concepts may be noted, preliminary sketches might be created
- project begins
- as the children work, we continue to review ideas, steps, and processes.

At this stage, children are developing an increasing understanding that Art is both process and product-oriented, and their technical skills are advancing and the process becomes more detail-oriented. It is no longer suggested that merely the experience of making art is the ultimate goal of learning about art, but that developing a sense of art appreciation can allow one to recognize that art can be a very powerful tool for communication and self-expression within our larger community. Children are becoming increasingly aware that art is everywhere, and that it matters. The creative process becomes more detail-oriented, and Art History becomes a more integral component of the curriculum.

All Miquon Artists

Throughout the years, all Miquon Artists develop an artistic vocabulary. They are introduced to a range of artists, from the masters to contemporary artists—with a thorough investigation of cultural art—which allows them to become familiar with art history, art movements and art criticism. Within each unit of study, the students look at art works that support the concepts and vocabulary taught in that unit. They have opportunities to describe, analyze, interpret and critique works of art. Through this process they learn to recognize and describe the art elements — form, line, shape, color, texture, space, value—and art principles—emphasis, balance, harmony, variety, movement, rhythm, proportion, unity—used in the individual pieces. Art and art history are integrated with classroom themes as much as possible; this relationship across content areas reinforces a deeper understanding of both the content and the universality of all learning.

Open Studio

Open Studio time is designed to allow children to self-select the activity (or activities) they would like to further explore—either independently, or with classmates. For Nursery through Second graders, stations are set up (three stations per Open Studio) with different media, e.g., painting, drawing, clay, and collage, plus block building, imaginative play with finger puppets, and books. First and second graders have the additional choices of weaving, working in the Artists' Loft, and working outside. Third through Sixth graders are empowered to broaden their options by individually designing a project and—with teacher support as needed—work through it independently. Open Studio time is also available to finish or to expand upon any project started during structured class.

Community Weaving

Our Community Weaving loom provides myriad opportunities for creating cooperatively. Each and every participant is given a voice at every stage of the design and creation of each weaving. Everyone that is interested in being part of the process works together to come up with ideas for the weaving. They then agree upon a theme—which is some combination of several ideas—and create a sketch (called a 'cartoon') for the weavers to use as their map. We then start weaving! Everyone from first through sixth grade is invited to add to the weaving (Kindergarteners who watch and become excited about the process may join in later in the school year), and this makes for some wonderful moments—it's a tangle of hands working together, with children sharing ideas and

helping new weavers learn what to do. The finished weavings are masterpieces, and they give everyone who worked on them a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Whole School Unit

The Whole-School Unit is a means by which every single child at Miquon has the opportunity to study in-depth a specific content area. This might be the work of single artist, an art movement, the work of several artists in a single medium, or nearly any other art-related subject through which we may investigate the elements of art, and develop a universal language with which each and every child may describe their individual experience with—and thoughts about—this unit of study. As all of the children create work based upon this, we observe one child inspiring another, and that one another still...

This year's *Whole-School Unit* was an extensive study of the work of artist Paul Klee. The entire school, from Nursery to 6th grade, was introduced to Klee, and each group examined different styles and works from his life as an artist. These served as wonderful examples upon which we based our discussions and explorations of the Elements of Art: Line, Shape, Form, Color, Value, Texture, and Space. Examples of Klee's works became springboards for children to make their own art.

With the Nursery through 2nd grade, we started our study of Paul Klee by reading *The Cat and the Bird* by Géraldine Elschner—a story inspired by Klee's whimsical painting "Cat and Bird." The brilliantly colored illustrations were based upon Klee's work: they were influenced by his love of color and use of shapes and line. From there, Nursery created shape collages inspired by Klee's "Castle and Sun" and Kindergarten's textured oil pastel resist paintings of underwater worlds reflected Klee's fish paintings and prints. First and Second grades took an even closer look at Klee's painting "Cat and Bird," and—with simple shapes and beautiful colors created from chalk pastel, water and a paintbrush—they created works of art to help tell our cats' stories.

Third through Sixth Grades had a more in-depth study of Klee as an artist. They were introduced to Paul Klee by reading *Getting to know Paul Klee* by Mike Venezia. With the 3rd/4th, we focused on two of Klee's works: "Senecio" and "Du Gris de la Nuit Surgit Soudain." The children created their own mixed media abstract portraits that referenced the elements and mood of these two Klee pieces. Fifth and Sixth Grades focused their study on the evolution of Klee's paintings of buildings, noting how over time they became more abstract. From there they began creating their own cityscapes in a multi-step process that involved printmaking, collage, drawing, and painting.

Throughout the *Whole School Unit*, children were excited to see everyone's artwork, and to learn which Klee works inspired them. The beautiful work created during this study became our first official art show in the renovated and newly named (by the children) Artists' Loft. This was our first of many opportunities to practice what is entailed in being in a gallery setting: how to view work and make thoughtful observations, and how to discuss the work appropriately, practicing our new vocabulary.