Exploring Art & Artists at the Children’s School

Over the past four weeks, the three-year-old classes explored art & artists and focused on the visual art of drawing, painting, collage and sculpture! Within the unit, we explored the following questions-- Who is an artist? What is art? What do we use to create art? Do you have to think all art is good?

In the beginning of our unit, Moonet the Cow and Andy War Owl (puppets) came to visit the Blue and Red Room friends. With them, we discussed art and artists. We defined artists as people who create something (in our case, paintings, drawings and sculptures). Friends started the unit by reading books about artists and art and by exploring different components of design. Children began calling themselves artists and saying that everyone is or can be an artist.
We explored the styles of different artists including Jackson Pollock, Picasso, Van Gogh, Andy Warhol and Diego Rivera. Children took turns examining their work, telling peers what they noticed in a painting, how they felt when they looked at it, and whether it was an artwork that they liked or didn’t like. Sometimes friends tried creating art in the style of the painter. The children also explored painting and drawing using their own observations. They created self-portraits by looking in mirrors to notice details on their faces and drew apples after looking closely at them.
The friends also explored basic design elements including lines, shapes, and colors. Children read *Harold and the Purple Crayon* and saw that Harold created a whole story, just with lines. Some friends then used lines to create their own artwork and story. We also experimented with color mixing using both paint and water. Children mixed two primary colors to create a secondary color, and mixed all the primary colors to make brown. They also mixed white into a color to create a tint and black into a color to create a shade.
Sculpture was another form of art we took some time to explore. Children used found objects and wood to create sculptures to take home, and they built temporary sculptures with different kinds of blocks. At the end of the unit, the preschool created a junk train, using other people’s junk to create art. We also took a walk around the CMU campus to see the sculpture, “Walking to the Sky” and examine the fence that college students paint repeatedly.
Sensory and exploratory art activities in the Red and Blue Rooms, and Discovery Area have been plentiful. Ice cubes in the water table, a mixture of flour and baby oil in a tub, and finger painting were a few favorite sensory activities this month. Collage, black light drawing, and stamping Korean treasure bags were some of the available art activities.
More activities...
On Martin Luther King Day, we read and discussed special stories about things that make us different from one another as well as things we have in common. Our books relating to MLK Day included: Whoever You Are by Mem Fox and Shades of People by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly. Afternoon friends walked to the University Center to hear these stories and create artwork relating to the books.

Visitors
It was another month full of great visitors. Mae’s sister Jane played the piano. Alexander’s brother and Felix’s sister read stories. Brady’s mom read an art book called, When Pigasso Met Mootisse by Nina Laden and Steven’s mom read Push Here by Hervé Tullet. Felix’s mom continued to teach the children songs in French and practiced colors in French with them. Maggie’s mom came to read and celebrate Maggie’s birthday. Additionally, two Korean practicum students, Ms. Choi and Ms. Kwen joined the Red and Blue Rooms for the last two weeks in January. They shared about Korean culture, teaching the children the traditional Korean colors, a Korean story about a turtle who has lost its mother, and songs using a Korean drum.