



## Fine Arts Newsletter Grades K - 4



Dear SMA Families,

It has been my absolute pleasure to teach fine arts to your children for the past three months. Not only are the students eager to learn, they seem to have a natural proclivity towards art. Art comes in many forms, and it is my goal to help each child feel successful in art by learning some fundamental techniques, and letting their imagination run wild to see what they can create. I like to work with a variety of different media, and I think it is essential to use “found” and recycled objects to create art. I will encourage the students to see art in everything (a broken plate could be mosaic pieces, a palm frond could be painted to look like an animal, a piece of cardboard could be used as a canvass, etc. ) There are many ways to view art, and my philosophy is that art can be seen everywhere, as long as we use our curiosity and imagination.

So far we have learned to use watercolor paints, and learned several techniques to change the way watercolor looks on paper. In first and second grade, the students learned the Gradating-Watercolor technique or, as we called it, “fading to light.” This effect emulates the sky’s appearance from dark to light as it hits the horizon. You will see the Japanese Cherry Blossom trees they painted over the sky by using the watercolor-blowing technique for the trees. The third and fourth graders are learning the same technique on their watercolor charts, along with the effects of salt & lemon to wet paint, wet on wet, and wet on dry watercolor techniques. We have also been learning to work with oil pastels and chalk on dark construction paper. Kindergarten and First Grade learned to draw snails, and second through fourth grade students learned to draw owls. We celebrated *Dia de los Muertos*, or “Day of the Dead” by creating skulls out of paper plates. I will also be teaching the children how to draw portraits using a grid to get the proportions of the eyes, nose and ears correctly positioned. At the end of the year, we will compare their final portrait to the one they drew on the first day of art class.

Whenever we learn a new art concept, cultural art, or learn from the masters, we will discuss the history and the significance of those aspects in art. Each week we learn a vocabulary word in art. The children know this as our W.O.W. or “Word of the Week”. For the past weeks we’ve had some big WOWs. We learned One-Point Perspective, Vanishing Point, Horizon Line, and the difference between vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines.

Another one of our WOWs is Repoussé. We’ve been discussing this form of metalworking, which dates back to ancient civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean. It has become a popular style of Mexican folk art, creating a relief on a metal surface. Your children have been bringing in cardboard crosses, which we will use to create our Repoussé crosses. Don’t worry, we won’t be using hammers and metal, we will be using string and tin foil. Other upcoming projects will include delving into other cultures with a Japanese-style of art called Notan (light and dark negative space). I will use opportunities like this to incorporate discussions about Japanese and other cultures. Notan is an interesting way to teach the importance of contrasting dark and light images. Most professional painters learn to look past the direct objects they are painting, and follow the contrast of light and dark images.

There are many techniques and forms of art that we will learn throughout the year. I have designed art lessons to ensure that every child feels confident about their abilities to create great works of art. For example, if the child is struggling with a painting lesson, they may feel like a master when we study and create Cubist art, Abstract Expressionism, or sculpture. I intend to keep the lessons varied and stimulating for all of the children, no matter how well they think they can produce art. I don’t believe anyone when they say they are not “good” at art. I think everyone has a naturally artistic side to their personality, and it is my job to prove that to each and every one of your wonderful children!

I am always looking for volunteers in the art classes, so if you are interested in seeing the children in action, please contact me for the art schedule. I can also always use materials that may otherwise be thrown away, like magazines (*Vanity Fair*, *National Geographic* or *Vogue*). We can do a lot of interesting collage pieces by cutting out pictures in these magazines. Other objects I have been trying to collect are plastic bottle caps (for collaborative work), wine corks (for stamps and sculptures), square or rectangular pieces of cardboard (for canvasses), egg cartons, empty paper towel tubes, and large pine cones, among a few things.

Again, I want to thank you for the honor of working with your children. It has been a great semester so far, and I am so proud of the children. It seems like they are capable of doing some extraordinary and complex things in art, and I can’t wait to start creating masterpieces with them in the near future.

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## St. Martin of Tours Academy Fine Arts Newsletter - Grades 5-8 Fall/Winter 2015



*"An essential aspect of creativity is not being afraid to fail."* - Edwin Land

Hello! It's time again to share with you some activities and projects, and all that is being creatively and artistically accomplished, in fine arts classes at St. Martin of Tours Academy. As always, I am overjoyed to see the student's overall enthusiasm, the creative skills and techniques being developed and expressed on a regular basis. Students in kindergarten through eighth grade are receiving a minimum of 85 minutes of regularly scheduled fine arts time during the school week, in compliance with the State of California and the Catholic Diocese of San Diego. Assignments and lessons build on one another throughout the grades, providing students with the vocabulary, body of knowledge of art history, and "studio" skills and techniques that not only augment other academic subject areas, but prepare students to be creative, critical thinkers outside of the school setting. We are blessed this year to have a new primary grade art teacher, Mrs. Hilary Bilodeau, working with the students in grades K-4 (her letter, with curriculum notes, appears on the reverse of this page). We have a very creative staff, and artistic lessons, crafts, activities, illustrations, mobiles, models, ceramics projects, etc., are also incorporated throughout grade level curriculum lessons by the classroom teachers. I hope you've had a chance to see some of the artwork being displayed around campus, or sent home in your child's folder. It's great to see imagination at work! Thanks for your support of our arts program.

Students in grades fifth through eighth continue to use a sketchbook as a tool for developing ideas, taking notes, experimenting with techniques, media, and the elements of art- including color explorations and shading. The fifth grade class is currently working on creating a small scale reproduction of the animal art found in the caves of Lascaux, France, and Altamira, Spain. Sixth and seventh grade students are working on cartooning, drawing caricatures, and creating mini animation flip books. The eighth grade students continue their immersion in the works of the masters. This month's featured artist is Vincent van Gogh, and his use of complementary color and heavy application of paint ("impasto"). We have also begun a unit on photography - history and processes, composition, and rudimentary instruction in how photographs are developed. The students have been busy taking photos around campus and the local community. Some will be posted on the school's website in the coming months.

The Workshop Way® philosophy of education, which encourages students to manage their own lives and work, to take intellectual and creative risks, and work at their own pace and according to their own learning style, lends itself well to artistic endeavors and the creative process. Students are able to take their time when needed, and to challenge themselves to reach beyond the parameters of any given creative assignment if they so choose. There are lots of opportunities for improvement and mastery. Rubrics and project criteria include myriad choices for students to achieve success with any given project. Doodling, even, is encouraged, as ideas need to "percolate" and develop. Experimentation with a variety of media and materials is encouraged, both in and out of the classroom. (We've used charcoal and pastel, watercolors, acrylic and tempera, collage, colored pencil and graphite shading pencils to date.)

For home connection activities, there are many good museums and galleries in San Diego County, several of which have "virtual museum" websites, classes for children, etc. I encourage you to explore some of these with your child. Check out : <sdmart.org> <mcasd.org> and <mopa.org> for starters.

I look forward to checking in with you again in the Spring. You may always contact me through the school office or via my school e-mail (dpippin@stmartinacademy.org) anytime you have questions or comments about art. Thank you!

Peace to you. Have a Blessed Christmas!

Denise A. O'Malley-Pippin

