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STAGES OF ART DEVELOPMENT

We feel it is important to know where a child may be developmentally when you are doing art with them. Since I work with two- and three-year-olds in my preschool program, I spend a good deal of time at the beginning of the school year introducing them to art materials. Many have never held a paintbrush (sad but true), worked with glue, paint or the many other materials, textures and tools that we use in everyday art.

Kim on the other hand, has three-, four- and five-year-olds who have been in preschool and have had more art experiences and are developmentally in the “preschematic” art stage. It’s interesting to be aware of the different stages of art development. There are always exceptions.

A. Disordered scribbling – 18 months

- Children make random marks with no visual control.
- Crayons are held in various ways with little control.
- Children enjoy the activity for the sake of novelty.



B. Controlled scribbling – around 2 years

- Child discovers a connection between the crayon in his hand and the mark on the paper.
- Motions vary and scribbles become more elaborate.
- Children have no idea “what” they are drawing; they just enjoy the feel.



C. Naming of scribbling – around 3 to 3½ years

- Children draw with more intent, but their scribbles may not look any different.
- Children are influenced by what they want to draw and believe their drawings look like it!



Adult's Role:

- Offer a variety of tools – wide and skinny crayons, markers, pens and pencils
- Value their work. Post it where they can see it!

D. Preschematic – around 4 to 7 years

- Circular and line forms turn into recognizable “things” and shapes: person, sun, house.
- Usually, around age 5, the first symbol is a person without a torso.
- Children will experiment freely with color. People can be green, trees purple.
- The “base line,” or sky and ground, appears in drawings.
- The child's immature-looking figures do not represent how they actually perceive figures.



Adult's Role:

- Never criticize the child's odd choice of color or try to guess what the drawing is. Rather ask open-ended questions like “Tell me about your drawing . . .” or “That's interesting.”
- Provide a variety of materials – different papers, pens and markers, scissors, items to glue, tape, etc.
- Allow the child to create freely without adult help or suggestions like “Stay inside the lines.”

The Process Is More Important Than the Product!

A special thank-you to Carol Lindsay, head instructor of child development at North Idaho College and Educational Program Director, who helped us with her insight, notes and knowledge on “The Stages of Art Development.”

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In the book, *A Young Painter* by Zheng Zhensun and Alice Low (Scholastic Inc., 1991. New York, A Byron Press/New China Picture Book) there is a quote from Wang Yani's father. (Wang Yani is China's extraordinary young artist. She began painting at two and now in her teens, still paints incredible pictures!) Yani's father states, “We should encourage children to think and paint by themselves. Adults should never interfere and do things for them because we do not have the innocent minds children have.”

A Young Painter. By Zheng Zhensun and Alice Low. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1991. A Byron Press/New China Pictures Book. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

PLUNGER ART

MATERIALS:

Plungers in varying sizes
Tempera paint
Large sheets of butcher paper or construction paper
Flat containers to hold paint (pie tins work well)

PROCESS:

Pour desired tempera paints into containers. Place plungers in paint and then press onto paper. The suction buildup causes the paint to fan out, creating interesting patterns and causing the plunger to stick to the paper. By placing a finger or a flat object under the plunger, the vacuum can then be released.

You can use black paint on white paper for an interesting negative/positive design.

Use a large piece of butcher paper and make wrapping paper. Try seasonal colors of paint or bright primary colors.

Experiment with metallic paint.

Use colored glue instead of the tempera paint. Glitter may be added if desired.



WEATHER STRIPPING PRINTS

MATERIALS:

Cardboard

Adhesive vinyl foam tape (weather stripping)

Tempera paint

Brayers

Flat containers for paint that brayers will easily fit into for rolling

PROCESS:

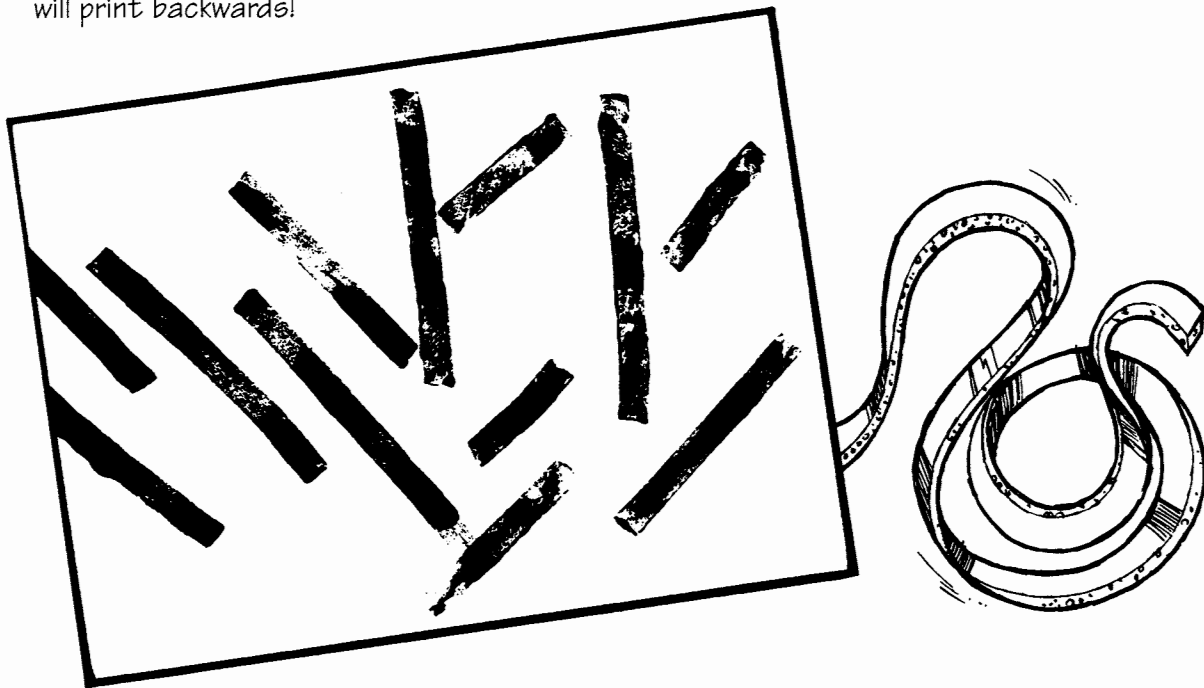
Cut cardboard into varying shapes. These will become your pattern boards. Fill containers with paint so that the brayers can easily be rolled.

Have children cut the weather stripping and peel off the backing. Press onto the cardboard to make their picture or pattern. For younger children it is easier to pre-cut the weather stripping, and let them peel it and place it on the cardboard.

Roll the brayers in paint and brayer over the pattern board. Place a sheet of paper on top of the pattern board and rub. Lift off the paper and your picture will have transferred its pattern. You can make additional prints with your pattern board or save it as a relief picture.

You can use this technique to make wonderful holiday cards.

Some children love to spell their names with the pieces of weather stripping. Please remember, it will print backwards!



SPINEY BALL ART

MATERIALS:

Rubber dog or cat ball* that can be purchased
in a pet store
Tempera paint
Paper
Circular plastic tub
Pie tins or bowl for paint

PROCESS:

With the paper already cut to fit the bottom of the circular tub and placed inside, dip the spiny ball in the container of paint and put on the paper. Grasp the sides of the tub and roll the ball around, adding other paint colors as needed.

This is a great hand-and-eye exercise. It takes coordination to get the ball rolling around in a circular motion. When adding other paint colors, they overlap and blend, making an interesting print.

To create a mural, cut out and fit butcher paper into a small, plastic swimming pool. Using many spiny balls, dipped into assorted colors of paint, have a group of children work together to roll and create patterns on the paper. This is a great icebreaker and fun to do on a parent night at your school or center.

We like to cut out black paper and use fluorescent paint. The results are spectacular!

You can also use pinecones, marbles or an assortment of various-sized balls with a variety of textures.

Spiny balls are wonderful for rolling about in play dough and can be used to create textural surfaces in drywall joint compound. (If you are unfamiliar with this art medium, see the Joint Compound section of this book.)

*See supply list on page 136.

