



Art Appreciation 101 for Young Children

The Gift of Art

Opening the world of art to your child is a way of giving him a gift for a lifetime. Art gives children multiple ways to express themselves. First they can learn to express their thoughts and feelings through art. This is especially valuable for young children who are just developing their language skills. Art can give them another way to express themselves. Second, encouraging children to discover their artistic inspiration builds the foundation for success in reading and writing, and builds self-confidence and social skills. Third, art helps children see that there are always fresh ways of looking at familiar things.

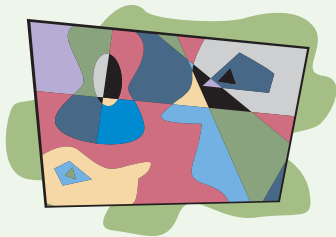
What's more, it's fun! There are two ways to enjoy art. First, there is looking at art that others have made. This is called "art appreciation." Most people think that this is only for college students but young children are at a great age to enjoy art.

Sharing ideas and feelings about art as a family has unique rewards. Your child gains language skills and confidence in expressing herself and you gain insights into your child's special way of seeing the world. When you share your ideas about the same piece of art you soon discover each person sees the same thing in their own unique way. This can surprise and delight you as you come to know your child in new ways.

Second, you can enjoy art by giving your child both the supplies and a supportive mindset that will help your child learn to express his creative side. This attitude means not putting the spotlight on perfect and recognizable art projects but instead on the importance of the process of making the art. When you take this approach, you help your young child connect with art – for a lifetime. After all, you may be raising the next Michelangelo!

Talking about Art

One single piece of art can be the starting point for an amazing conversation with your child if you ask your child these great questions. Remember to tell your child that there are no right answers.



Tell me what you see.

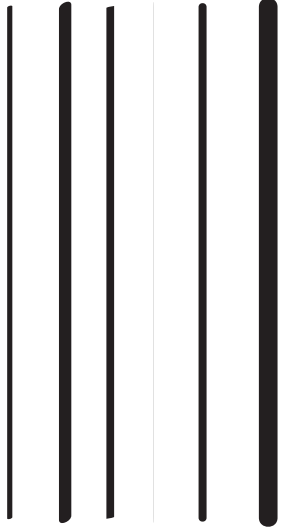
How does this work of art make you feel?

What do you think about this work of art?

What do you think is the story of this work of art?

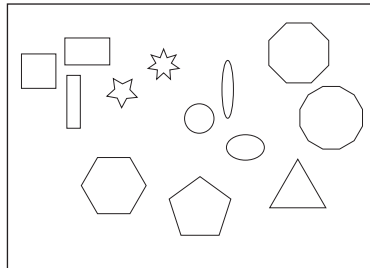
These questions can open new ways for you to talk with and listen to your child. You can even learn things about your child's way of seeing and understanding their world. Enjoying art together can bring you a little closer, too.

Art Appreciation Basics



Everyone can enjoy art. In fact, the basic elements of art— line, shape, color and texture—are not complicated. You can use these ideas to help you explore the art. Start by talking about the lines you see in a picture. You can ask your child to trace the lines she sees in a picture with her finger. Some art is full of straight lines, others have curvy lines and still others are a mix of both. The next element is shape. Take a moment to look for shapes in the picture. Some pictures have geometric shapes like triangles and

rectangles while others have many curvy shapes like circles and spirals. This is a great time to reinforce their learning about shapes. Then move on to talking about color. Look for the major colors in the picture, name them and notice how they look next to each other. “That red really pops out at you when you put it next to the white.” Finally, take a moment to search for texture. Paintings of animals often have interesting texture. Look carefully at the techniques that artists use to make fur look fluffy. They sometimes add on thick layers of paint creating a raised texture, or they carve grooves in wood to make a realistic effect.



It can be great fun to look at art together with kids. You can also talk about these elements of art when you are looking at the art that children make. As children come to learn these elements of art they will eventually learn how to use them to create the messages they wish to send with their own art. This may take many years, but you will be helping your child grow into the ability to read and speak the language of art.

Books can be a Window into the World of Art

You can find some wonderful children’s books about art. You may be able to find some of these books at your local library. Enjoy reading them to your child.

Claude Monet: Sunshine and Water Lilies by True Kelley

Come Look with Me Exploring Landscape Art with Children by Gladys S. Blizzard

Looking at Paintings An Introduction to Fine Art for Young People by Erika Langmuir

The Magical Garden of Claude Monet by Laurence Anholt

Vincent Van Gogh: Sunflowers and Swirly Stars by Joan Holub

