



ART CURRICULUM, 2009 - 2010

The art program at The Grammar School is multifaceted and seeks to help each child develop her or his artistic abilities and understanding of the language of art in the world past and present. Each year students in every grade work with diverse media. Having the chance to spiral back and work with clay or watercolor again allows continuity and promotes new insights and growth in the young artist. Students are given the chance to experiment and play with each material as well as gain knowledge from specific instruction about how these materials are used. Art and art movements are studied and explored in all grades to give insight into techniques and styles as they relate to culture, message, and time period. Most importantly, art is felt to be a language in which we express all aspects of the human experience. It is of utmost importance to create an atmosphere where each artist is appreciated for her or his own contributions and where there is safety to share, explore, and have fun.

In preschool art is primarily a part of the classroom experience. In addition, preschoolers visit the art room multiple times in the school year. It is important that they gain a comfort level in this space and also get to experience the specialness of a room full of exciting materials that is just for art. Cardboard and yarn weaving, collage, sculpture, and painting have all been areas of exploration in their times in the art room.

In kindergarten and grade one, art is integrated in the classroom as part of the everyday learning experience. In addition, these grades have art in the art room once per week. This time is about learning what can be done with colored pencil, tempura paint, and crayon. We learn by experimenting and students begin to have a sense of when and why the artist will choose one medium over another. Gaining early exposure to artists from many periods and places will help them have a sense of the diversity of art in the world.

In grades two and three, art continues to be integrated in the classroom as part of the everyday learning experience. In addition, these classes have art in the art room once per week for a longer time than previous years. Students continue to gain from exposure to new materials and begin to create more complex pieces that include more steps and combined media. They are interested in process and product and can begin to make art that ties directly to their own learning and place in the world. The Mexican muralists, Impressionism, and several great masters are studied in these grades.

The fourth grade art curriculum builds on earlier years and is a time when learning techniques and skills to create fine detail and more complex color relationships is possible. Students deal with showing space in their work and begin using the foreground, middle ground, and background as well as 2-D and 3-D as terms to describe art. Students also work with the concepts of value and complex symmetry. A few artists that have been studied in this year are Georgia O'Keefe, Keith Haring, and Andrew Goldsworthy. Detailed drawings of hands and feet and papier-mâché beavers are recurrent projects in fourth grade.

The fifth grade art curriculum introduces the students to an analytical approach to looking at and thinking about art. Students will study the principles and elements of design as well as experiment with a variety of media and techniques. Projects typically undertaken have been Vasarely-inspired optical art pieces, Deborah Butterfield-style horses, and vases painted after Giorgio Morandi. Students work on improving overall drawing ability and familiarizing themselves with the proportions of the human head. In the winter term they do an in-depth study of Japanese art and work on ink brush painting, printmaking, papier-mâché lacquer bowls, Anime drawing, and much more.

The sixth grade curriculum builds upon the student's knowledge of the elements and principles of design. Students will be encouraged to identify important elements of painting such as line and texture, and be able to articulate how they are used in a composition to express an artist's idea. Sketchbooks are introduced mid-year and become the homework component of the art curriculum. These give students a chance to practice drawing in their home environment and to make sketches of ideas for projects that they would like to explore further. Two-point perspective is practiced and students are encouraged to discuss work in terms of positive and negative space, scale, gesture, and proportion. Projects that have been undertaken have been Shepard Fairey-inspired stencils, animal optical illusion drawings, costume-design for Mardi Gras, and Sol Lewitt-inspired sculptures. In the spring, an integrated unit on Islamic art combines the study of art with math.

In the seventh grade the students begin a more focused look at the work of a variety of artists from throughout history with an eye towards self-expression and how our unique identities inform our work. The curriculum builds on skills acquired in the past and the focus is to create concise expression of ideas in the work. Students complete weekly homework, which allows them the chance to read about contemporary artists and issues in the art world. Often research done as homework informs projects worked on in class. Students have looked at masks from around the world and made plaster masks of themselves. They have done projects related to the work of Joseph Cornell, Jim Dine, and Roy Lichtenstein. A popular project has been creating CD covers for their own fictitious bands using Photoshop Elements. In seventh grade students need to be able to discuss artwork within a greater historical and social context.

The eighth grade art experience brings together all of the skills and knowledge gained in the past. Students are expected to create sophisticated and thoughtful works of art. The art history component focuses on modern and contemporary art. Students continue to use out-of-class time to research and plan art pieces executed in class. Conceptual artists from the 1970s to the present are studied and each student creates several conceptual works. Other projects undertaken in past years have been constructed paper shoes, acrylic layer paintings in the 15th-century style, shadow puppets, and Dream Windows that draw on Andrew Wyeth and Salvador Dali. The year culminates with a student-designed exhibition that is a retrospective of art from their time at The Grammar School.