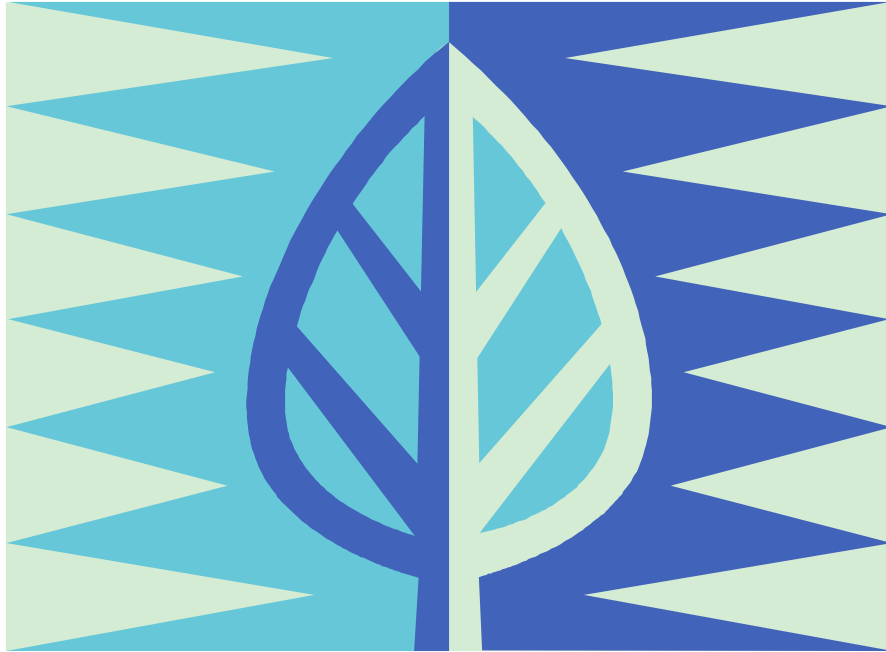


# *Unearthing Art:*



## *Nature-Based Art-making*

**Created for Use in the TDSB Outdoor Education Centres**

**Hilary Inwood**

Lecturer, Art Education, OISE/UT

[hinwood@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:hinwood@oise.utoronto.ca)

**Pam Miller**

Site Supervisor, EFSC, TDSB

[pam.miller@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:pam.miller@tdsb.on.ca)

# *Unearthing Art*

## Teaching Notes

### Overview

The following notes are a detailed teaching plan for *Unearthing Art*, a cross-curricular program which explores links between nature and art for primary and junior students and teachers. Using a natural place as an artist's studio, students investigate how the basic elements of art – line, shape, colour and texture – are also found in the world around them.

The main objectives of this program are twofold:

- to heighten awareness of the importance of specific places in the natural world;
- to use the visual arts to develop the skills of observation, communication and creativity.

In this *Unearthing Art* achieves a variety of expectations in the Ontario Curriculum in the areas of Arts, Language and Science. By combining these curricular areas students and teachers will learn about art and nature in an innovative, memorable way, potentially inspiring teachers to attempt similar cross-curricular lessons in the future.

Note that many of the activities included in the program are not original, but borrowed from a variety of sources and modified to fit the objectives of this specific program. Hopefully the familiarity of these activities will make the program easy for outdoor education leaders to teach. It has also been specifically designed to require only a few inexpensive materials to run, and to leave no refuse as a part of the art-making, intentionally focusing attention on *process* rather than *product*. The artworks created use only natural materials, and are left on site so as to minimize any impact on the natural environment. What the students take home is not only the memory of their experience, but also the realization that their artwork is 'on exhibit' for other site users to enjoy.

## **Preparation**

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Read through this entire kit to familiarize yourself with the program and supporting information. Recommended amounts of time for each segment are in round parentheses near the title of each section; modify these as is appropriate for your time allowances. Be aware that the level of vocabulary and knowledge will need to be altered dependant on grade. Expectations to be achieved for each grade level will also change; refer to the expectation checklists in the *Teaching Info* section of this binder for specifics.

Throughout this guide the following codes have been used:

- Q** Questions to ask
- A** Activity to conduct
- [ ] Square brackets with a number inside denote a curricular expectation that has been achieved. Refer to the list of expectations in the Appendix for code numbers.

The program requires the following materials:

- small plastic paint palettes (or empty egg cartons) (1 per 2 students) labeled with opposing descriptive words of texture on the bottom (eg bumpy and smooth, hairy and glossy, etc.)
- 1 round white cardboard circle (approx. 8” in diameter and cut into 6 slices)
- 15-20 coloured pencil crayons or markers or crayons
- glue sticks (1 per 2 students)
- ground sheets (1 per 3 students)
- slides or colour copies of artworks
- slide projector and screen (in classroom)
- scrap paper and pencils

For examples of some of these materials refer to the enclosed envelope.

Send the teacher the introduction kit (refer to Teacher Info section of this binder) a few weeks prior to the program. If possible, visit the class in their own school to briefly introduce the main concepts of the program and if appropriate, read them a story which links to these themes (such as Tomie de Paola’s *The Indian Paintbrush*.)

## **Program Introduction**

**(15 min.)**

Welcome the class. Explain the general objective, which is to introduce them to aspects of art and nature in a special environment – the outdoors. Outline the ground rules: try to get involved, listen carefully to others, listen for the leader’s signal, stay with your group. Also outline the general schedule for the day (timing of site visits, lunch, free time, etc.)

Start a warm-up discussion with the class with following questions:

**Q** Where is your favourite natural place? What do you see there? What sounds do you hear? How do you feel when you are there?

**Q** How many of you have made art before? What types of art have you made? What subjects do you like to depict? How many of you like making art?

Explain that *Unearthing Art* introduces art and nature to classes in a special way, by allowing students to use the world’s biggest art studio – nature. Ask the class to role-play as artists for the day. Discuss what an artist does (communicates ideas to others through their artworks) and what an art studio is (a place where an artist makes art, where they keep their tools and materials.) Note that what an artist needs can be found in their ‘new’ outdoor studio; invite them to come and explore their studio for the next hour.

**Q** Has anyone been in an art studio before? What happens in an art studio? What does an artist need to make art? What kinds of tools or materials might you find there?

If possible, divide the class into at least two smaller groups, with one adult leading each group. Ask the class to always keep their leader in view at the site. Provide the grade-specific Expectation Checklist to the classroom teacher.

## **Washroom Break, walk to Site**

**(5-15 min)**

Point out that all of the basic elements an artist needs to communicate can be found in nature — line, shape, colour, texture, and ideas – and that the following activities will introduce them to each one in a different part of the site/natural place. (Note: each of these activities should take from 10 – 20 minutes to conduct.)

**A: Station 1 – Touchy-Feely (Texture)**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1a34, 2s38, 2a36]

Take the class to the first location (where a variety of textures can be found.) Explain that texture is one of the elements that an artist uses to communicate.

**Q** What is texture? (the way something feels) What words can be used to describe texture? What types of textures can be found on your clothes? (eg smooth, bumpy, rough, glossy, hairy, soft, rocky, furry, prickly, etc.)

Ask the class to divide into pairs. Give each pair a small empty paint palette (which has been labeled on the bottom with two words which describe texture.) Ask the students to read the words quietly to themselves, and then search in the surrounding area for examples of natural materials which have these textures.

After five minutes, gather all of the students together, and ask them to trade palettes with another pair and then try to guess what their descriptive words are based on the materials selected. Have a few pairs report where they found their materials and identify what they are.

**A: Station 2 – Rainbow Treasure Hunt (Colour)**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1a25, 1a30, 1s20, 1s31, 2a32, 2a33, 4s15, 4a35, 4a38, 5s31, 5a30 ]

Before leaving the first location, give the class instructions for the next activity, which will be conducted as they walk to the second location. Note that colour is another of the elements that an artist uses to communicate.

**Q** What types of materials do artists use to add colour to artworks? (eg. paint, markers, ink, crayons, coloured pencils, dyes, etc.) Where does colour come from?

Explain that pure colour comes from pigment, which was originally found in sources in nature such as rocks, minerals, plants, fruits and vegetables. These sources were dried, then crushed or ground up, and added to a liquid such as water or oil.

Send them on a treasure hunt to find examples of pigment, or colour, in nature. Divide the class into 6 teams, and then give each a slice of the white cardboard circle. Assign each team a colour, and then ask them to locate as many examples of one colour as possible, attaching a small sample of that colour onto their slice with a glue stick. Colours found in nature that cannot be attached or glued can be replicated by using colour pencils or crayons to apply colour to the circle pieces. Direct them to follow you towards the second location as they hunt.

Upon arrival at the second location, gather the class into a circle, and ask each group to show their ‘slice of colour’ to the others, identifying what they collected. Put the slices once again into a circle, finally constructing a colour wheel for the class and using it to define primary, secondary, and monochromatic colours (as grade appropriate.)

### **A: Station 3 – Looking for Lines**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1a31, 2s94, 2a34, 3a27, 4a36, 5a31]

At the second location (which should be under at least one good-sized tree) ask the class where one finds lines in nature. Note that one of the best places is to look up.

Ask the class to lie on the groundsheets in a circle with their heads next to the trunk of a tree (best done in smaller groups around different trees.) Ask them a variety of questions and use their answers as a basis for describing different types of lines.

**Q** Can you see any lines? What types of lines can you see? What is the longest/widest/straightest/wiggliest line you can find? Can you find a happy/sad/silly line?

In the course of the discussion point out that lines can vary in length, width, direction and type; have the class come up with a variety of words (and examples) to describe these features in their tree. Have them trace the longest line they can see, starting with the trunk and leading up to the

smallest branches. Once finished, have them look for lines in other areas of the site.

**A: Station 4 – Ears Open (Sound)**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 4s56, 4s57, 4s58]

Before leaving the second location, give the class instructions for the next activity, which will be conducted as they walk to the third location. Note that sound is an important element of nature, one that helps us to remember special places. Ask students to walk silently to the third location, listening carefully for sounds that are new or different from the ones they normally hear. When they arrive, take a few minutes for students to describe and identify what they heard.

**A: Station 5 – Shape Up (Shape)**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1s70, 1a33, 3a29, 5a33]

At the third location, ask the class to stand in a circle and look around the site for interesting and unusual shapes. Then ask one student to stand in the center of the circle, and take on one of the shapes he/she saw. Have the rest of the class try to guess what shape is being acted out, and when guessed, to describe the shape with a few words (eg. curved, twisted, squarish, etc.) In the course of the game try to distinguish between shape descriptors such as *organic/geometric*, *2D/3D*, and *positive/negative* (as grade appropriate.)

**A: Station 6: Snappy Ideas (Ideas)**

Before leaving the third location, give the class instructions for the next activity, which will be conducted as they walk back to the classroom. Note that one of the most important elements an artist needs to make art is ideas, so on their way back they need to identify a few memorable ideas from their ‘studio visit.’ Divide the class into pairs, and instruct the students to use each other as human cameras to take 2 or 3 ‘photos’ of the most important aspects of the site on the way home. Demonstrate how to use a partner as a camera (turning them in the direction of the important idea/image and clicking on their ear to ‘take’ the photo.) Once back in the classroom, test their memories by asking a few students to report what their partners took pictures of.

**Walk to Classroom**

**(5-10 min)**

## **Introduction to Artists Working with Nature** (15-20 min)

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1a41, 1a42, 1a43, 2a37, 3e63, 3a29, 3a31, 3a38, 3a39, 4s16, 4a47, 4a48, 5a34, 5a42, 5a43, 5a44 ]

Explain that the class has now had a good opportunity to explore their nature/art studio, and now it's time to see what other artists have done using similar studios. Briefly review what an artist needs to make art - materials, tools, the elements of design (line, colour, shape and texture) and ideas. Using the slides of artworks provided, conduct a discussion about the artworks, challenging the students to identify the materials, tools, elements of design (line, colour, shape and texture) and most importantly the ideas in the works.

**Q** What materials from nature did this artist use to make this artwork? Can you tell where he/she made it? What element of design is most important to the artwork? Why did the artist make the work? What other ideas/images/shapes inspired him/her?

After each slide be sure to mention the artist's name and where it was made (if known.) Refer to the articles enclosed in this binder for more information on each artist. Artists discussed include: Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Long, Serge Tousignant, James Pierce, petroglyphs (artists unknown), and Robert Smithson. (Any combination of these artists' works, or others that use natural materials, would fit here.)

Thank the class for their participation and give any pertinent instructions for lunch. Encourage them to consider a few ideas from the morning they might like to include in their own artwork after lunch.

## **Lunch Break** (45-60 min)



## **Introduction to Art-Making**

**(5-10 min)**

Spend a few minutes reviewing the main components and concepts of the morning session with the class.

**Q** What are the basic elements an artist needs to make an artwork? What new words/terms have you learned? Which artwork viewed in the slides was your favourite? What ideas or memories are most important or interesting about the site for you?

Outline the goal of the afternoon session: to make an artwork in the site using natural materials which highlights the ideas/memories your group believes to be most important. Divide the class into small groups, with one adult (parent or teacher) facilitating each group. Instruct them to plan their artwork co-operatively, first deciding on the ideas they want to communicate, and then deciding on the materials and elements of design the artwork will use. Encourage them to involve all members of the group in the planning stages. Provide scrap paper and pencils for each group for planning. Place a time limit on planning to ensure sufficient time is left to actually make the works on site.

## **Planning Time**

**(10-20 min)**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1e41, 1e45, 1a39, 2e23, 2e47, 2e51, 2a41, 3e63, 4e54, 4e56, 4e57, 4a44, 5a40, 5e47, 5e49, 5e50, 5e61]

Divide the class into their art-making groups and provide a place for them to do their planning together. An adult (teacher or parent) should facilitate discussion in the group to ensure that the members of the group work co-operatively to identify the ideas, materials, elements of design and location they need to make their artwork. before they head back to the site/'studio.'

## **Art-Making Time**

**(45-60 min)**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1s25, 1s72, 1s78, 1a38, 2a39, 2a40, 3e26, 3a33, 3a34, 4s123, 4a42, 4a43, 5a38, 5a39]

The adult supervisor can walk them back to the site when the group has finished their planning, and supervise the collection of materials and creation of the artwork. The adult should ensure that all members of the group are involved in some aspect of the artwork's creation, and help resolve any

conflicts that may arise. Once the group finishes, the supervisor should encourage them to view the artwork from a variety of angles, and to consider if it communicates the ideas the group had wanted. If time allows, improvements and/or alterations should be made. All groups should meet together at an appointed spot and time with the outdoor ed teacher.

**Walking Exhibition** **(10-30 min)**

[Curricular Expectations Achieved: 1s72, 1s75, 1s82, 1e56, 1a40, 2a42, 3a31, 3a35, 3a36, 4e65, 4a45, 5e60, 5s99, 5a41, 5a44]

Note that when artists finish their artworks they exhibit them so as to share their ideas and creations with others. Conduct a walking tour of the artworks, providing 5-10 minutes at each work to ask the group about their creation and allow time for the others in the class to experience it. Ask a few questions to encourage discussion about each work..

**Q** What type of materials did you use and where did you find them? Did you depict a specific image in your work? What ideas about the site did you want to highlight through your work? What was most successful about the work? What could have been improved on?

Encourage the rest of the class to offer constructive criticism about the work, noting which parts work well and which need improvement. Document each artwork with a photograph, both by itself and with its artists.

**Walk to Classroom** **(5-10 min)**

**Wrap-Up** **(10 min)**

Ask the class for feedback on the program – aspects they liked best and least. Thank the class for their participation in the program, and promise to send the photographs of their artworks on to their school when available. Encourage them to post the photos on their school’s website or on a bulletin board to share their experiences with their fellow students and local community. Give the teacher the follow-up information and ask for the evaluation to be sent back in.

Note: the following expectations may be achieved in the general course of the program:

[Curricular Expectations : 1e49, 1e50, 1s36, 1s39, 1a35, 2e56, 2e55, 2e59, 2e60, 3e50, 3e51, 3e54, 3e63, 4e52, 4e53, 4e55, 4e64, 4e66, 4e67, 5e46, 5e48m 5e49]