

The Caves of ECDC

Journey into the past **May 2009**

Open Daily at 9 AM
Last tour leaves at 4:45 PM
The caves are closed on
weekends and holidays
953.5606

Project Origins

Teachers had decided to use the month of May, 2009 for a study of folk arts. They brainstormed ways to follow up on ideas offered by the children about three key questions

What is art?

Paint Drawing Markers Paper Origami
printing colors sculpture needlework
tracing pencil crayon

Why did people start making art?

For presents, to have a museum, to display, to sell for money, to make things look better

Why do you do art?

We have cool ideas, help tell a story, add details, for presents, for fun, we like it, make things look nice

A Starting Point

As they did preliminary research, the teachers discovered that the origins of American folk art can be traced back to the people of the Ice Age. Fifteen thousand years ago caves were decorated with natural pigments found in rocks and berries. Cave art was also used to express thoughts and ideas and to record events as the people of the time had no written language.

The Caves of Lascaux, France

- They agreed to begin the folk arts project work with an exploration of cave art.
- Wonderful examples of this art were discovered in the Caves of Lascaux in France.
- They took the children on a virtual tour of the caves.

<http://www.lascaux.culture.fr/#/en/00.xml>

Questions & Theories

The virtual tour was followed by introducing children to the idea that they were thinking like “anthropologists,” and then describing who they are and what they do. As the children re-visited their answers to the original questions, when asked why cave dwellers created the magnificent figures they had seen, they had new theories:

- To make things look nicer
- To share their ideas or tell a story
- Made as gifts for family or friends
- Drawings were created for money!

Initial work

The Butterflies (4-6 yr olds) and Seashells (2/3's) were inspired to create their own cave art representations.

This activity was a topic of such high interest and sustained engagement, that the teachers decided to let it emerge as a separate project parallel to the Folk Arts study.



Learning More

Teachers helped the children investigate and research dimensions of cave art:

- Animals such as bison, ibexes, cows, bulls, deer, horses
- Human life during the Ice Age depicted in cave art
- Caves and their features
- Symbols and their meanings

A Cave?

So much art was produced by the children that someone inevitably suggested making our own cave to display it!

The intensity and high quality of their work demonstrated to the teachers this would be a worthwhile turn for the project to take.



Details



As the children visited the virtual cave again and again, we observed attention to details in their drawings that were indications of a high level of focus and comprehension (as seen in these drawings by a 3 year old (top) and kindergartener (bottom)).

Art as communication

We noticed that children could clearly represent art as story.

Their understanding of how graphic symbols can be used to represent concrete events was developing.



Planning for the Caves

The children were very excited when learning the cave was a “go!” Obviously, there was now new work to do and key issues to be decided:

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Question	Considerations	Solution
Where could it go?	It needs to be dark and big and cold (& wet???)	Use one of the ‘grown-up’ bathrooms, because it has no windows. We can shut the door and we can make the air conditioning cold.
How can we make it look like a cave?	It doesn’t look like a cave right now; there are things that need to be covered up	We need to hide the toilet and sink and light bulb – we can cover it all up with the same paper we used for the drawings to make pretend walls. We can do SOUND EFFECTS!
How can we play in it or share it?	Our parents aren’t here all day; not a whole lot of people can go in at one time; they don’t know about caves like we do	Let people visit like the Caves in Lascaux; make a brochure for visiting hours; invite our parents to come when we have the Folk Arts Celebration; keep it open so we can play in it.

The Official Visitor Brochure



Opening Day

We had MANY visitors!

Flashlights were so much fun to take on the tour--

It was cold, dark, and scary (but not really). The water sounds were great!



Children loved having their pictures taken inside the cave next to their art.

Afterwards



The Caves stayed open long after the festival was over, until the end of summer session.
No one wanted to take it down!