

Here come the holidays!

I hope you all had a great time during Halloween. I love getting dressed up and can tell you all do too. While all the costumes were great, I have to give kudos to the kids and parents who made their own. I know it was fun to wear it, but wasn't it fun to make it? And if you made it together, didn't you feel good when you were done? I saw some really creative stuff and I didn't just see costumes – I saw accomplishments.

After seeing that creative output, I knew I would have to get busy to create memorable, meaningful art encounters. So, here are my offerings for November and December...

The primary classes will begin to study the painter Edgar Degas. They will also begin to do guided drawings. These are drawings we do together, step-by-step of specific things. These strengthen eye-hand coordination, train the eye to see what is actually there to draw, create a sense of accomplishment, and begin the transition of your child's art from symbolic to representational. We will also make some cute "southwest holiday cards" to give and save.

Kindergarten will be glazing the pottery they have created over the last MONTH AND A HALF. I have never done this much pottery with a single class and I think they have really enjoyed it. I would like to display some of their pieces briefly in the main house on shelves and have them to you in time for the Thanksgiving holidays. I would like for the four and five-year-olds to see what awaits them in kindergarten. We will also create a tree that changes seasons, begin study of the painter Edgar Degas, and make some cute Holiday cards.

The Lower Elementary students will learn how artists in the past were only able to use materials from their everyday lives. We will make cornhusk dolls much like the ones pilgrims made for their children. We will also study Edgar Degas, contemplate what recycling during the holidays could mean to art, and make a holiday drawing for a card that I have been wanting to do for two years. (Well, I have to admit, I do some of this just because I enjoy it.)

Upper Elementary will do two projects with cornhusks (The staff and I have been eating a lot of corn on the cob!) – a wreath and a doll. We will delve briefly into art simulating motion (think pictographs), and make a project out of duct tape. I received this request from a student in the "Wanna Box." We did a project similar to this a few years ago and it was a hit, so it's back by popular demand. Thanks Aasiya!

The "Wanna Box" is a box near my desk that allows our students to contribute to their art education. If there is something they "wanna" know or "wanna" do, they can put their suggestion in the "Wanna Box." I have received some really good ideas and am doing my best to incorporate them into the curriculum.

Because we are studying Degas, who did a lot of paintings of dancers – go see a ballet! The Nutcracker is a "kid-friendly" one that will be performed here in San Antonio

beginning in three weeks. All children in our school are familiar with the music thanks to Ms. Cynthia. Then draw it!

Every year our family writes a list of things for which we are thankful, on strips of construction paper, and dates them. We have a long paper chain now that we string through the light fixture over the table. If you use removable tape (Office Depot) you can take it apart and store it flat during the year. Some of the links in our family chain are no longer with us and I really treasure what they wrote.

Many of our best holiday gifts were tote bags or aprons that we painted with fabric paints. Use masking tape to tape off a perfect square or rectangle and cover the rest of your item with newspaper so you don't get anything on it. Let your child paint inside the square, covering the entire area if possible. After it's dry, remove your tape and it looks like it was screen-printed professionally. Use a fine-pointed Sharpie to title or date it, just below the art in one corner.

The Winter Solstice is December 21st – the longest night of the year. Our ancestors would chase away the dark with lanterns inside and out. You can make luminarias with paper lunch bags – use a hole punch to make your pattern, open it up, and put sand in the bottom along with a tea light. If you worry about fire, try rice in the bottom and a glow stick.

We also like to make pomanders – the scent was thought to keep sickness away in medieval times. Use any citrus fruit, poke holes in the entire surface with a fork or toothpick, and have your child shove whole cloves into the holes. I like to put them in a bowl on my island. You can roll them in sugar for a frosted effect... or to attract ants. Since it is fruit, it will go bad; just as you start noticing that, put them in a pot with some water and simmer. They will make your house smell great!

Try a cute ornament / favor that looks like Santa. You will need a lollipop wrapped in clear plastic (not Dum-Dums), white and red paper, a hole punch, glue, a red pompom, googly eyes, cotton balls, thread, and tape.

1. Turn your lollipop upside down; decorate one side of it as Santa's face. Glue on a white paper upside-down triangle beard (with a punched hole for Santa's mouth), a red pompom nose and two googly eyes.
2. To make the hat, cut a red paper semicircle, roll it up, and tape it to form a cone. Glue cotton ball trim around the hat's bottom.
3. Tape thread to the lollipop stick, then pull the thread through the top of the hat so that it sits on Santa's head. Add more cotton for a pompom.

Hope you find some fun in these, and take time to draw the flowers,
Ms. Jennifer