

Projects

All of us, young and old, seek to create our own world. Mind, heart, and eye envision a host of possibilities; hands seek to bring these to life. Whether we are using beeswax to model the ice wand brought by the Crystal Queen, knitting a rug for the tiny gnomes often spotted on walks, or weaving small baskets for nature treasures, our ability to create with our hands holds a unique kind of nourishment. The all important matter is the power of the mind and heart to envision and the hand to create.

For the young child, projects fall into three main categories. First are home and garden projects undertaken in the daily routines that keep our lives going; such things as baking and cooking, and nature walks fall into this category. Second are the visual arts, such as painting and drawing, in which it is the eye that is most dominant and most nourished; and third are handcrafts, in which it is the actual working of the hands that is central. Whether baking, painting, or making crafts, connecting with the natural world - climate, season, and so on - is always important. Therefore, many of the crafts begun in the Kindergarten are taken up again and again through the years, in keeping with the cycling seasons.

The core or focus of the home and garden projects is just that: taking an active and creative part in the workings of daily life. Although these may be the least glamorous kinds of projects, for the young child they are the most important - they are real. These are the stuff that life is made of and they empower the young child, who is finding his strength in his ability to be part of the world of normal life, in ways that more "artistic" projects cannot. Certainly one would not purchase a book to be told to cook, bake, and walk with your child - and very little of this book is devoted to these activities - but they are the most important ones for the young child.

The core of the visual arts lies in the wonder of the human eye. Whether in painting or drawing, it is the experience of color, light, and line that nourishes us. It is not the dry reproduction of form, but rather the living connection to the natural energies that produces great art and fills the artistic experience with joy. Our goals here center around connecting with the inherent properties of color, light, and line. The all important ground for this happens in early childhood as the children "mess around" with color and line. Later this open exploration will grow into art work that expresses a connection to the natural energies of and relationships between these elements - not the overlay of an idea on them.

The core of hand-crafts lies in the wonder of the human hand. No other creature creates the way humans do with their hands. People have long recognized this wonder - there are old Fairy Tales in which the release from imprisonment can only happen when the human trades with the evil creatures for the one thing they do not possess: things made by the hand. The hands give us a unique way to digest the many experiences of our lives as we create and recreate them in crafts.