


A Splash of **Blue**

A child-created classroom resource
to accompany the Mayo County Council
Schools Exhibition

Created by children from fourth class, St Angela's
National School, Castlebar, in collaboration with Kids'
Own and artist Kiera O'Toole.

An initiative of Mayo County Council Arts Service in
partnership with Kids' Own Publishing.

What
colours
do you
see?



Introduction

A Splash of Blue is a Schools Exhibition and classroom resource available on loan from Mayo Arts Service to primary schools in County Mayo. The artworks in the exhibition are part of the Mayo County Council Collection, which currently has up to two hundred artworks, including paintings, prints, photography, sculpture and mixed media. Mayo Arts Service developed this Schools Exhibition to make the collection accessible to schools and show children how to explore artworks through looking, thinking, talking and responding in creative ways such as art, writing, music and more.

Kids' Own Publishing Partnership and the visual artist Kiera O'Toole worked with 4th class in St. Angela's School, Castlebar, on this project in 2020. The pupils in 4th class became creative explorers, they viewed artworks in the collection and curated this exhibition for schools. They also discovered different ways in which children could respond to these artworks by exploring them with artist Kiera O'Toole. This resource is packed with the pupils' ideas of how to make the most of the exhibition while it is at your school. It was created by children for children. Make the most of the artworks and engage with them while the artworks are at your school. Become a creative explorer and use this booklet to support your journey of discovery of these artworks.

This project is strategically funded by Mayo County Council in partnership with the Arts Council and supported by Creative Ireland.

Aoife O'Toole,
Acting Public Art Co-ordinator,
Mayo Arts Service,
Mayo County Council.

What is a curator?

'A curator sorts out artworks and artefacts for displaying in a gallery or museum.'

'They guide us through the exhibition.'

'They see if the paintings look good in a group.'

'The person who puts the paintings on the wall.'

How we selected the artworks for this exhibition

We worked in small groups and on our own. We took notes on our favourite artworks and asked questions about them. We selected our favourite paintings and we voted on the ones we wanted in our exhibition.

A Curator is a person who sorts out, categorizes and guides people

Our final selection for the Schools Exhibition

'Our selection is cool!'

'We picked really moody colours.'

'Most of the paintings we picked out are landscapes.'

'All of the pictures have trees and nature.'



Artist: Tony Pilbro, Title: Moonlight,
Medium: Oil paint on board, Year: 2003.



Looks like

'Pretty trees.'

'Cool moon.'

**'It makes me
happy and
comfortable.'**

**'It is like it is night
time.'**

**'White to shade
the light.'**

**'Made out of oil
paint.'**

Can you think of your own titles for these artworks?

Here are some suggestions
to get you started...

'The Dark Sky.'

'Midnight Park.'

'Blue Trees.'

Artist: Michael O'Sullivan, Title: Lucky Shot,
Medium: Photograph, Year: 1980.



'Peek-a-boo Goat.'
'Goat Garden.'

Talking about art

We came up with some
questions that you
might ask when looking
at artworks.

What are you looking at?

What colours do you see?

What materials did the
artist use?

What's the title?

How do you feel when
you look at this artwork?

Who made it?

Is it a picture of a place?

How old is the artwork or
picture?

Where is it set?

Is it a sad picture?

What is the contrast
between the artworks?
(How do they work
together?)

Artist: Bernie Garvey O'Mara, Title: Surface,
Medium: Oil on Plaster, Year: 2003.



Artist: Janet Cruise Halpin, Title: Rainy Evening at Doogort,
Medium: Oil paint on board, Year: 2004.



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Looks like

- 'Bottom of the ocean.'
- 'It has bumps.'
- 'It kinda looks like water.'
- 'A crocodile's skin.'

Our alternative title

- 'A Splash of Blue.'

Looks like

- 'Calm.'
- 'Empty space.'

Our alternative titles

- 'The Dark Devil.'
- 'The Stormy Night.'
- 'The Rising Sun.'

Our response to the artworks

We responded to our favourite artwork in the collection through making our own artworks and we responded to the feeling in the artwork or a certain part of it, or whatever we liked.

Some of the class made artworks by painting. Some made abstract artworks and played with colour. Some painted with different types and sizes of brushes and some used their hands. Some of the class made artworks by painting and making sculptures and assemblages out of cardboard, recycled materials and plaster.

Why don't you try this yourself in your classroom



Other ways of responding

We thought about how we would describe these artworks and if we could come up with a story about the artworks. A class member suggested, *'You have to guess what painting we have chosen from the story we tell.'*

Something for you to try

Make a mini exhibition from the main collection. We chose three artworks for a mini exhibition and discussed their differences from each other.

Artist: Marja Van Kampen,
Title: The Spirit of the Tree,
Medium: Silk Screenprint, Year: 2000.



Our alternative titles

- 'The Rainbow Tree.'
- 'The Bright Tree.'
- 'The Every Tree.'

Artist: Irene Hegarty,
Title: Memory 111,
Medium: Paint on board, Year: 1999.



Looks like

- 'Something coming soon.'
- 'A starting fire.'
- 'End of world.'

Artist: Marianne Heemskerck,
Title: Cill Rialaig,
Medium: Etching-drypoint, Year: 2003.



- ### Looks like
- 'Live colours.'
 - 'Moody.'
 - 'Dark.'

Our alternative titles

- 'The Funny Rocks.'
- 'The Berry Mountains.'
- 'The Drifting Boat.'

Exploring media and colour

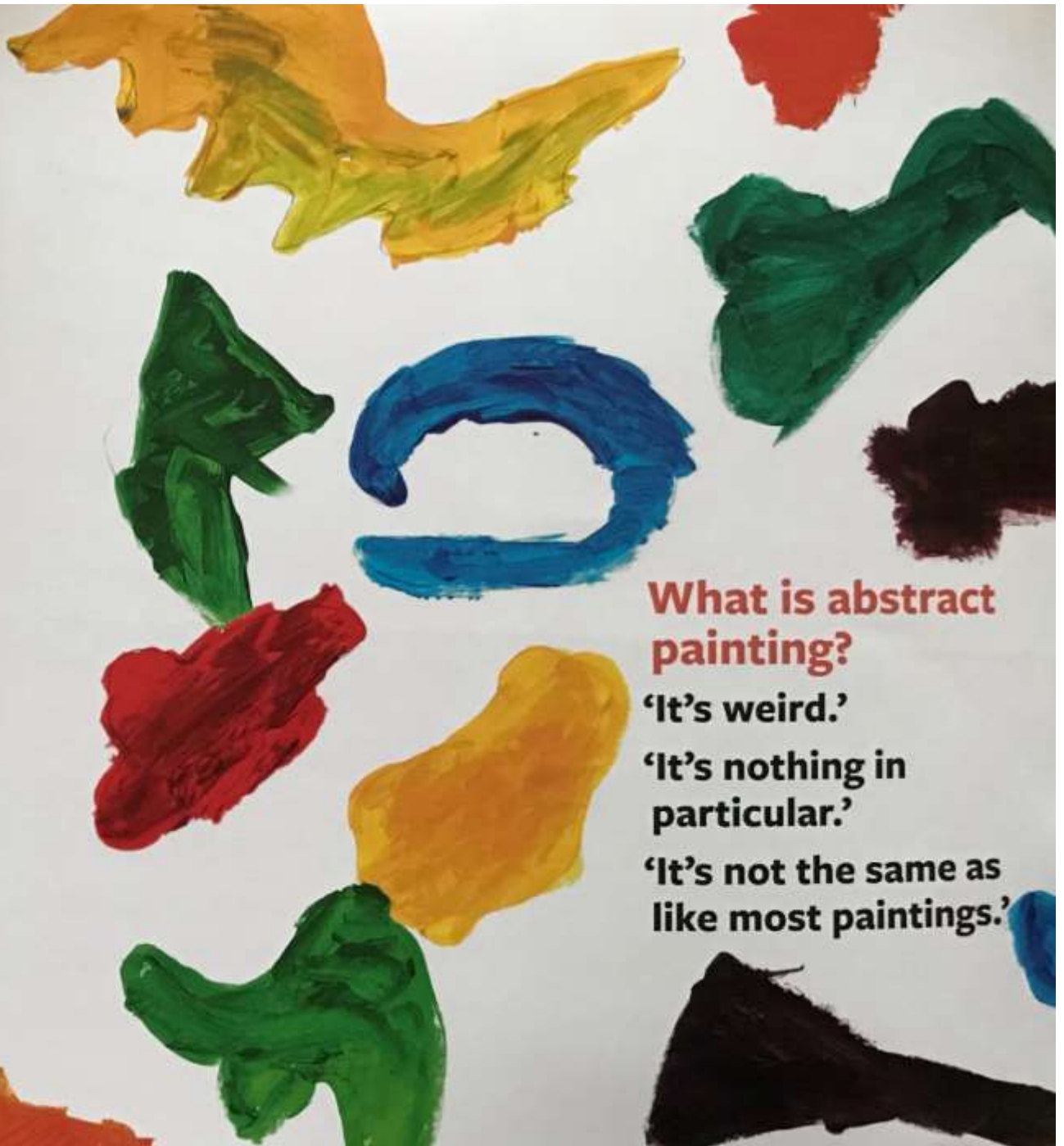
We are learning to mix colour and how to make abstract paintings. We explored colour tones (also called tonal scales) and abstract shapes. Everyone made some blobs or shapes but nothing that we could name as a shape. It had to be a closed shape and couldn't be left open. We thought about our shapes: Are they curvy or straight?

Then we made another shape or blob, but it had to be very different from our first shape.

We thought about colours and how we make colours. How do we make orange? pink? purple? green?

We explored a particular colour and made as many shades of the colour as possible.

One class member named all her blobs on her page when they were all filled with colour!



What is abstract painting?

'It's weird.'

'It's nothing in particular.'

'It's not the same as like most paintings.'

We explored oils, watercolour and acrylic and discussed the differences

Watercolour

'Spreads a lot and needs more than one layer.'

Acrylic

'It's kind of thick and it's see-through.'

Oil

'When it is dry it looks wet and shiny.'



Notes from the teachers:

Using this resource in the classroom

We were really surprised by how well the children – 4th class at St Angela's National School in Castlebar – responded in particular to the abstract works. They were really drawn to them. The artworks they selected for this exhibition were mostly abstract or semi-abstract. They thought about the mood and the colours. The children enjoyed playing and experimenting with art materials. It was all their own work. We would recommend this process to other teachers, i.e. creating a very open atmosphere where every answer is listened to and valued.

Our tips for other teachers:

Asking the children about their favourite one is a great way to start.

Slow it down. Give the time to it and let the class explore.

Develop a series of art lessons over a few weeks that all respond to the exhibition.

Try new directions with it. Get the mood, get the colours!

Let the children play with the materials and have fun.

Go mad with the paint!

Let the children come up with their own thoughts before you give them any information about the artwork, such as who the artist is, the title of the painting etc.

Try creating a glossary of terms with your class to explain the meaning of words, such as screenprint, etching, acrylic, assemblage, tonal scale etc.

There are lots of ways to link to the curriculum.

Looking at the artworks and asking questions links in to every strand of **Looking and Responding**.

Making up their own titles for the artworks links into their **Literacy**.

Making up stories about the artworks links into their **Oral Language**.

Cora Walker, Class Teacher.

Maria Mulligan, Support Teacher.

Lime leaf
+
Maple



Butter
cup
+
Maple



sweet
Briar
+
maple



Wild cherry
+
Butter
cup



All



Above image: Kiera, the artist, posted a guide to each child with instructions on how to make their own inks from natural materials, such as dandelion, nettles, onion, and beetroot. Saoirse, a 4th class student, posted back the carefully documented results of her experiments. Why not try this yourself. Visit this link for a guide on how to do it:

www.mayo.ie/arts/programme/youth-art/schools-exhibition



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