



Rikma - A Shabbos Weaving

Submitted by Julia Bry Schwab

Subject Area: Joining together of the "Simple" and the "Divine"

(or Diversity with Unity) (or Individual with Collective)

Target Age: Grades 1 -5, also excellent with parents participating

Brief description: Like a giant potholder, painted strips of butcher paper interwoven

Lesson Objectives:

1. Learning through experience, a visually-conceived metaphor deepens the lesson
2. Moving with the whole body....this is a BIG project with lots of energy released
3. Not much deliberation; more involved in the sheer action of painting. ANYBODY can do this!!!!
4. This MAJOR FUN!
5. The final product is unconditionally beautiful. To hang the art not only enhances the environment, but goes on to reinforce the concept that two opposing ideas can CO-EXIST.



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Discussion:

After creating the “Weaving” at Beit Sefer Chadash in the fall of 2003, at the Boulder JCC, the art was displayed for the children’s-led Shabbos service. There were two members of the group who described their experience to the congregants accompanying the paragraph in the evening’s program.

“In this weaving, elements join together to remind us of the marvelous synthesis between the ‘everyday’ and the ‘sacred.’ The same magic arises as individuals work in collaboration, and what creative results abound! The non-verbal realm here speaks volumes. We celebrate the cohesion, color, patterns, surprise, and shared intention of this Shabbos art. May it remind to carry forward the woven awareness if the Simple and the Divine.

Making the Art:

When my class created the weaving, we worked BIG. I believe the physicality of the project opened new thresholds of possibility in the children’s artistic minds. Isomorphically-speaking, they stretched! Of course, adaptations to this format will be made, but the non-deliberative brushwork sure generated exuberance.



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To start off, the room was cleared except for tables. Because we were using eight foot lengths of paper, each student had their OWN table. The materials' table was placed against the wall. Space around the working surface was necessary for walking and general group movement. Space on the floor grew in demand as freshly-painted strips were laid down to dry. Using a gymnasium floor was a preferable experience I discovered during the second phase of the project. Be warned: acrylic paints do dry permanently. Floors, carpets, clothing and tables need covering. simply speaking, the set requires some forethought.

Materials: Total expenses added up to \$90 approx

- Cut butcher paper strips*
- Newspapers
- Drop cloths
- Aprons (or dads' old shirts)
- 1 large bucket (for waste water)
- 1 water container (qt. yogurt jar) per child
- 2 oz tubes acrylic paint (I had ten different colors)
- masking tape
- large roll of duct tape
- paper towels



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- ❑ 1 qt polymer gloss varnish
- ❑ small dixie cups (for varnish)
- ❑ glue gun w/ glue sticks
- ❑ wooden dowels , 1/2" - (for hanging) same length as horizontal strips

*I cannot emphasize enough the value of a mini-model created in advance to figure proportions and to really comprehend what is entailed in the project. the visual model will stimulate and communicate WHAT this is about, particularly for children who have limited abstraction ability.

Phase 1

- ❑ **Introduce concept** of sacred/mundane, special/everyday, night/day, male/female, quiet/energetic, etc.
- ❑ Show model weaving project
- ❑ Demonstrate sequential steps
- ❑ **Action, Paint!:** Specify first task, covering entire strip with one color
- ❑ Each child chooses a different color & prepares palette, with large brush & water container
- ❑ Helpers assist carrying complete strip of wet paint to floor for drying & bringing new strip up to table, taping corners



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- ❑ New paint color, child paints entire length of paper
- ❑ Helpers assist carrying wet strip to floor

[That may be enough for day 1, or you could continue....]

Multi-color details now with small brushes - words, letters, designs, patterns, ANYTHING! Be sure to keep this lively and non-serious. there's a lot of space to embellish. After all, the woven nature of the strips will be covering major areas of each piece

When details are complete, helpers assist artist to carry length to floor & carry to table next dried and painted strip for its details, taping down corners gingerly

Busyness may seem extreme, but the paint is so vibrant & creamy & abundant, everyone is heartily engaged. so, the chronic issue of some finishing before others now translates into everybody helping each other complete the task. It is a collective projection.

Phase 2

Weaving: Using a very large floor space, like a gym with a drop cloth set random order of vertical strip in a line, taping down top edges evenly. Quickly, the children see how the over-under, then under-over process unfolds.



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Taping: Everyone together very carefully turns over the lattice of painted strips. Now we reinforce the backside with duct tape, first over verticals, then over horizontals - it may take the whole roll. this taping will help immeasurably for later stability in hanging.

Varnishing: Apply generous amount all over weaving with large brushes. Watering down varnish is possibility if quantity is uncertain. But, you do want a LAVISH coat of this shiny coating. Reassure students that the white film will disappear when dry.

Dry overnight on flat surface

Phase 3

Apply wooden dowels with glue gun onto very top horizontal level. I hammered nails onto each end first to allow hanging by simple “picture hangers”

HANG! PHOTOGRAPH! CELEBRATE!