Adult Take-and-Make: Popsicle Stick Gradient Painting

Inventory:

- 11 popsicle sticks
- 5 containers of acrylic paint (1 white, 1 black, 1 blue, 1 pink, & 1 yellow)
- 1 paintbrush
- Command strips
- 3 cardstock templates (1 dragon, 1 paw print, 1 flower/lotus, & 1 bird)

Please have the following on hand to complete this program:

- Container with water
- Additional colors of paint if desired
- Glue

Learning goal: To understand what a gradient is, how to make one, and to successfully make one.

Instructions:

1. Carefully, begin gluing nine of your popsicle sticks together using the remaining two as the backing of the "canvas." Your result will be, roughly, an 6x6 in canvas.
    a. Using the two back-sticks as your measurement, apply glue to the top tip of each of them.
    b. Take one popsicle stick and line it up as close to the top of those two tips as possible. You want the two back-sticks to be placed vertically, while the remaining nine popsicle sticks will be placed horizontally.

c. Continue to apply glue to the back sticks as you lay the remaining sticks to them. Place them as close together as possible to make a tight canvas.

2. Once you have assembled your canvas, let it dry. It may take 10-15 minutes.
3. Gather your paint and water to get to the painting!
4. To make your gradient:
   a. What is a gradient?
      i. This is the gradual blending of one or more color to another. It is also called color transition.

These are examples of color combinations you can make with the colors provided. While our instructions say horizontal, you can use any direction you want for a gradient! For the purposes of learning, starting with basic lines is how we wanted to teach this skill.

b. To begin, determine the colors you want to use.
   i. You can use any and/or all of the colors provided but be sure to leave enough of one of your colors (recommended: white or black) to make your silhouette painting later.
c. Apply a dollop of your first color. A little further up, apply your second color. A little further up, apply a third color, and so on, depending on how many colors you want.
   i. Note, the less colors you have, the more fun you can have in distancing the dollops. You can have them close or further apart, making for some very interesting gradients.

d. Painting along your horizontal stick, slowly working your way up, continuing to paint across your horizontal stick.
e. As one color meets another color, continue working with it. It should begin to blend on its own into a middle color.

f. Keep working until you reach the top of your canvas.
g. If you want to adjust the colors anywhere, apply a dab of paint to the area in need.
h. Once your gradient is complete, let dry before proceeding to step 5.

5. To make your silhouette painting:
    a. Free-Hand:
        i. Using white or black paint (or whatever color your left for this part), paint whatever you want over your gradient!
            1. We made a landscape, using black as the main color, and white to add depth. You can do the inverse too, with white as the main color, and black to add depth. See below for tips:

Lighting tip: you can use a lighter color to add depth or the illusion of shadow/light to any silhouette. With black silhouettes, white can help give that impression of light! With white silhouettes, black can give that impression of depth with shadows! If you are comfortable playing around with this, try it out.

Need inspiration? Google the ideas you might have for your beautiful painting! We did a search for mountain landscapes to get this idea.

Looking for other painting tips? You can search online with terms like "how to make a starry sky with paint" or "brush techniques."

b. Template:
    i. Templates are the item itself (example: dragon) and you can paint over the dragon with your color. Once dry, remove the template and the space below the template will be your gradient.

Hold the template over the center of your canvas. Tape may be helpful here to keep in place. Paint over the edges of the template. The result will be the space that is not painted reveals the gradient. (It will look like the template below.)

    ii. Templates include the cut-around paper/vinyl, so alternatively, you can paint the inside of the template, and have the outside be the gradient.

Hold the template around the edges of your canvas. Tape may be helpful here to keep in place. Paint the inside of the template. The result will be the space that is not painted reveals the gradient. (It will look like the template above.)

6. Let dry completely.
7. Attach the command strips to the back of your painting if you want to hang it up to enjoy!

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