

Using Fine Art Display Cards

Before you begin: Review the artwork images and the information on the back of each card before you introduce them to the children. Ideally, you should begin with artwork from around the world. Then, move to the child's continent. After that, follow the child's interest and explore what every art calls to them. For each activity, choose a lovely basket or cloth pouch to hold about six cards.

Activity 1—Conversations at a Picture: You can complete this activity with our art cards or with art you have hanging on the wall. Invite one or a few children to work with you. Go to the shelf together, touch and name the work. Say, "These are the Fine Art Cards. Let's bring them to our work area." Show the child how to carry them and let them carry the materials to a large worktable or work rug. Sit next to them at the work area so you and the children are viewing the art from the same perspective. Demonstrate how to carefully remove the first card from the pouch or basket. Place it before the children and say, "This is a famous painting called the Mona Lisa. It was painted by an Italian painter named Leonardo Da Vinci." Look at the painting and ask questions to prompt the children to discuss what they see. Spark a conversation about it on whatever level the child is interested in. Model your own responses/ideas as part of a dialogue. Questions to prompt might include: What do you think is happening in this painting? What is it showing us? What do you see in this part? Have you seen anything like that before? Which part do you like the most? Do you like this? Why? Do you see anything beautiful?



Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. They are discussing art! Whatever it makes them feel is valid. Your job is not to correct their perceptions but to encourage a conversation where their ideas can come out. When finished discussing, place this one picture face-up on the top left corner of the work area. Then, encourage them to repeat for another picture and discuss it amongst themselves while you fade and observe. When they are finished, show them how to put the cards away carefully by saying, "Let's put the Mona Lisa by Da Vinci away first. Now let's put Van Gogh's Starry Night away." Continue in this fashion to reinforce (not quiz) the names and artists. Once it is perfectly back on the shelf, free them to repeat the work. Say, "I love looking at and talking about art. You can do it anytime you like."

Activity 2—Displaying: Prepare a basket or tray to hold six mini-art easels. Place these next to a separate container of Fine Art Cards (ideally, you will have two sets of Fine Art Cards out in your room: one for conversations at a picture and one for displaying). The mini easels should be sized to easily hold a single art card. Place the mini easels next to the art cards. Invite one child to work with you. Go together to the shelf, name the work, and bring the materials to your work area. Take the art cards and place them in a stack on your table. Say, "I'm going to find one that I really like." Look at the first one, appreciate it, then place it face down in a pile to the right of the face-up pile. Repeat for another card. Repeat for another card but this time say, "I like this one" and leave it face up on the stack. Search the easel supply, find one that you like and place it on the table in front of the child. Pick up the card you like. Use your left hand to secure the easel and your right hand to carefully secure the art card onto the easel. Say, "Let's find a special place to display this." Stand up and tuck in your chair. Lift up the prepared easel with one hand on the easel and one hand securing the card. Walk around the room until you find a good spot and place the easel there. Admire it. Say, "Now you can have a turn." Go back to the table together and give the child a turn. Fade and observe. When they have done as many as they like, guide them to return any remaining art cards to their container (it may be empty, that's fine) and carry the basket back to the shelf. At the shelf, tell the child, "You can display the art cards any time they are available." At the end of the day, gather all the cards and easels and return them to the shelf, ready for the children to choose on the next day. (Note: This activity is often done only once each day by one child; that's fine!)



Activity 3—Writing Descriptions: Guide the child to bring the art cards basket/pouch to a table. Have the child choose one picture from the folder. Encourage them to write about what they see in the picture (using the movable alphabet, chalkboards, or paper and pencil as appropriate for the child). If you have other children who are reading, you might encourage the children to play detective. Say, "Let's play detective. You can write about what is happening in this picture. Then, when you're done, we'll put the picture away and invite Bobby to read your note and figure out which picture it describes!"