

WITH **ROBERT GIL DE MONTES**
COLOR

Photograph by Alan Bariker



ROBERT GIL DE MONTES, *Untitled*, 1991. 40 x 60 inches.
Courtesy Jan Baum Gallery.

About the Program

Behind the Scenes with Robert Gil de Montes looks at the often surprising ways artists use color to express their ideas. Children will see that color appears to change according to its surroundings, that it can be used to create depth, and that it is an important element of composition. Robert Gil de Montes' unexpected use of color accentuates the dreamlike quality of his subject and shows how color can affect the mood of a painting.

About the Artist

Robert Gil de Montes was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1950. After moving to Los Angeles in 1965, he began to study art. His work reflects a keen awareness of the color and mythology of his Mexican roots combined with the fantasy and imagination of the Hollywood film industry.

Jumping Off Activity

Colors That Express Us: Personal Choices (10 minutes)

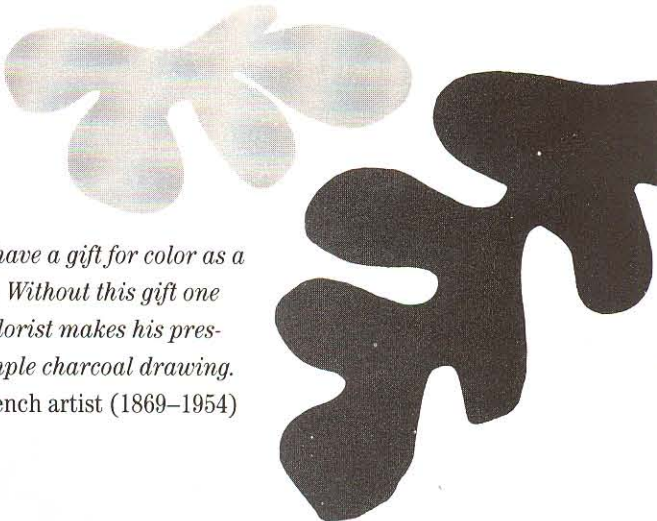
This activity prepares students to think about color.

The day before conducting this activity, ask students to wear clothing in their favorite color the next morning or to make a drawing of themselves in the color they like best. Have them write an explanation of their choice. In class, discuss how that color makes them feel when they wear it. Does it express their personality? How? Do they think about mixing and matching colors when they get dressed in the morning? Does their mood influence the colors they choose? Ask them to name other color choices they make every day. Describe how a "color style," like a writing style, is a unique signature and expresses something about each person. Remember to stress that there are no correct answers—everyone's choice is personal.

Viewing



Before you continue the activities, observe some of the ways artists use color by viewing *Behind the Scenes with Robert Gil de Montes*.



It is clear that one must have a gift for color as a singer must have a voice. Without this gift one can get nowhere. . . . A colorist makes his presence known even in a simple charcoal drawing.

—Henri Matisse, French artist (1869–1954)

Follow-up Activities

1. Changing Colors by Altering Their Environment (30 minutes)

This activity shows students how a color will appear to change if it is placed against a new background color.

Distribute a small piece of pink construction paper and three or four large sheets of different colors to each student. Ask students to think of a way to alter the color of the pink swatch using only the materials in front of them. If they place the pink swatch on top of the different papers, it will appear brighter, paler, darker, more red, more blue, or more purple, depending on the color of the background paper. Discuss which background colors create the most seemingly dramatic changes in the pink swatches. Note that although our eyes perceive the pink color differently, the color of the paper is actually always the same.

Now ask each student to create a packaging design for an unusual or imaginary product. Have them make their designs with a collage of colored construction paper. Then ask students to recreate the design in two more color combinations and decide which of their three examples best represents their product. Have them explain their decision. Finally, ask students what it was like to think about color. You might ask, for example, what color would describe the students' thinking process during this activity. Was that color bright or muted?

2. Grab Bag Mood Painting (40 minutes)

This activity encourages students to experiment with expressing mood and feeling through abstract color paintings.

Have each student write a mood on a piece of paper. Put the papers in a bag or hat, and ask each person to select one blindly. Have students create abstract color paintings to represent their chosen mood. Encourage them to experiment with different techniques and colors. After twenty minutes, have them trade paintings with their neighbors and discuss the feelings they experience when looking at each other's works. Remind them that it is not important to guess the correct mood but to explore how people can interpret the same work of art differently.

In the last five minutes, ask students to discuss what they have been doing. What new ways have they discovered for using color to express feelings? Was it difficult to make an abstract painting about a feeling? What colors might they use to express the mood of a historical event they have studied? How do advertisements use color to express moods and emotions?

Finish by listing all the phrases that students can think of that use colors to describe an emotion or mood, such as "feeling blue" or "in the pink."

Related Curriculum Activities

Language Arts

Colors Speak as Loud as Words—Read a short story or folktale aloud to the class. Ask students to choose a character and draw two identical illustrations, but to color each one in a dramatically different color. Discuss how colors can change our reaction to a character. For instance, would a dark green wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* make us feel differently than a hot red wolf?

Social Studies

Colors of Flags—Look at flags from around the world and analyze how their colors and shapes balance their composition. Have students discuss why they find a particular flag most interesting. Examine how a flag, as an inanimate object, can stimulate such emotions as pride, honor, duty, distrust. As a group project, have the class design and create a banner out of construction paper or fabric, having first discussed what they want the colors and shapes to represent about their class.

Science

Natural Colors—Make pigments and dyes from such natural sources as tea, pounded rocks, and boiled onion skins.