

Ancient Art Practical

Introduction

Cave paintings have been found throughout the world. Cavemen had very few tools available to them, and they had to use the minerals and rocks around them to obtain colours. They would dig these minerals and rocks from the ground and then grind them into a fine powder.



Modern cave art drawing.

The cavemen would use their spit, animal fat or ear wax to make their paints stick to the cave walls.

Cavemen would also use their fingers and the end of chewed twigs to paint their pictures with.

By the time of the Ancient Egyptian era there were more colours available. They found new brightly coloured minerals, and better tools to grind them with.

Egyptians found ways of extracting sap from plants, as well as using milk from cows to bind their pigments together to form paint.

By Medieval times people travelled and traded even more widely across Europe. A large variety of colours were now becoming available.

In this practical you will pretend that you are a caveman, and use natural materials in order to paint pictures, just like the cavemen did. You will also paint pictures using modern day paints and compare the colours.

Practical:

1. Look at both the natural pigments and the man made pigments. What are the differences between them? Which is your favourite pigment?
2. Add a teaspoon of your favourite pigment to a plastic cup. If you are using a natural material, make sure it has been ground to a fine powder first.
3. Add a few drops of water and mix with a brush until you have a smooth paste.
4. Separate the egg yolk from the egg white and dispose of the egg white. Add the egg yolk to your plastic cup. (If you are using PVA glue, add 2 teaspoons of it to the plastic cup instead).
5. Mix the egg yolk with your pigment paste using a paint brush.
6. You are ready to paint.

Questions:

What did the cavemen use to make their paints?

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How did cavemen make their paints stick to the cave walls?

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Which colours did the cavemen have to paint with?

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What are the differences between the ancient cavemen paints and the modern day paints?

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What are the properties required to make a good binder?

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What did the Egyptians use to bind their pigments together to form paint?

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