COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND ARTS
FINN CENTER

THE MERCURY NEWS IN EDUCATION

ART from the PAST
PROJECTS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

Nature All Around

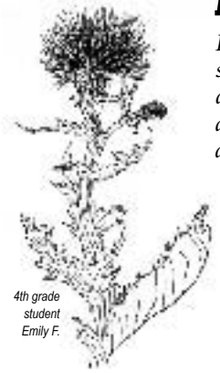
Nature surrounds us. Art from the past captures nature's beauty, magic & grandeur. Artists drew details of plants & birds, painted wide-open landscapes & designed lovely gardens that kept nature close at hand.

India, Rajasthan, Raghugarh, South Asia; ***Todi Ragini, Second Wife of Hindol Raga, Folio from a Ragmala (Garland of Melodies)***
circa 1775-1800; Opaque watercolor and gold on paper; Image: 9 7/8 x 6 ½ in. (25.08 x 16.51 cm);
Sheet: 12 1/8 x 9 ½ in. (30.79 x 24.13 cm); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of William Theo Brown
M.77.130.1; Photograph ©2006 Museum Associates/LACMA

Magical Garden

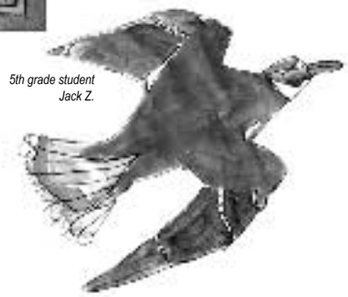
How would you design a magical garden? During the Mughal Empire (1526-1858) noblemen built walled gardens filled with lush plants, running fountains & pools. Paths wound through the greenery. Artists painted these beautiful gardens using pure rich colors.

- Plan a magical garden. Include fountains, flowers, trees, paths, animals & birds.
- Outline main shapes with yellow tempera paint.
- Mix 3-5 different greens using yellow & blue paint on a paper plate palette.
- Use greens to paint main garden shapes. Let dry. Mix other colors to add garden details.



4th grade student Emily F.

Page from an Herbal Manuscript; 13th century
Ink and opaque watercolor on paper; 9 ¾ x 6 in. (24.77 x 15.24 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, gift of Joan Palevsky; M.73.5.407a-b
Photograph ©2006 Museum Associates/LACMA

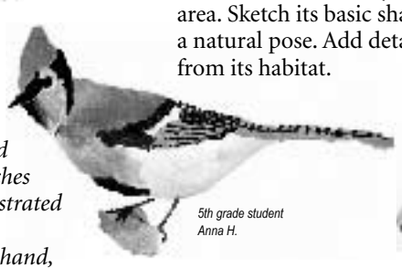


5th grade student Jack Z.

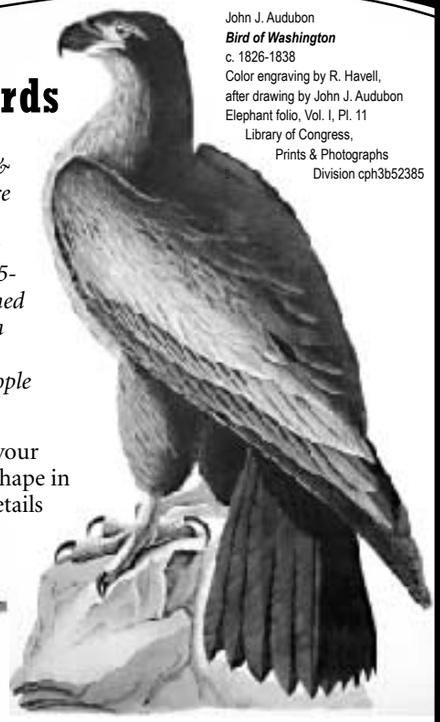
Audubon's Birds

Imagine hiking the forests, searching for birds to watch & draw. How would you capture a bird's feathers in flight or diving after prey? John James Audubon (American, 1785-1851) painted & published The Birds of America, *a collection of 435 realistic pictures fascinating to people worldwide.*

- Research a bird from your area. Sketch its basic shape in a natural pose. Add details from its habitat.



5th grade student Anna H.



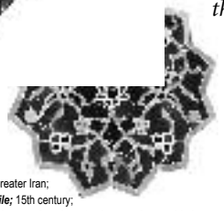
John J. Audubon
Bird of Washington
c. 1826-1838
Color engraving by R. Havell, after drawing by John J. Audubon
Elephant folio, Vol. I, Pl. 11
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division cph3b52385

- Paint large shapes first. Let dry. Add details. Try for iridescent feathers, soft down & beady eyes.
- Look at Audubon prints at: www.historical-museum.org/collect/audubon/audubon.htm

Medieval Plants

In the past, people throughout the world used plants from nature to cure their aches & pains. Scholars studied & illustrated these plants & characteristics. Manuscripts were copied by hand, bound into books & carried by travelers, spreading knowledge & art from culture to culture.

- Choose a plant to observe & draw. Look carefully. Use a black felt tipped pen to record its leaf shape, texture & stems.



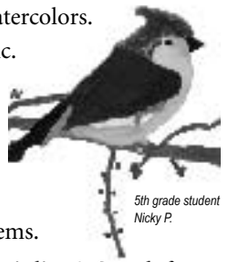
Greater Iran;
Tile; 15th century;
Fritware, glazed, cut to shape and assembled as mosaic
Framed: 24 ¼ x 23 ½ x 2 ¾ in. 61.595 x 59.69 x 6.985 cm); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Madina Collection of Islamic Art, gift of Camilla Chandler Frost; M.2002.1.19; Photograph ©2006 Museum Associates/LACMA

Islamic Tiles

How can nature be brought indoors? In ancient Persia, Islamic artists used geometric & floral motifs on tiles for floors, walls & ceilings. Ceramicists used a wax outline to keep glaze colors separate. This 'cuerda seca' technique let artists use many colors in their intricate tile designs.

Iran, Isfahan; ***Tile***; 17th century
Fritware, cuerda seca technique
9 3/16 x 9 5/16 in. (23.3 x 23.7 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, gift of Joan Palevsky; M.73.5.756
Photograph ©2006 Museum Associates/LACMA

- Cut several 4" paper 'tiles.' Draw part of a nature design on first tile. Continue design onto the next tiles.
- Outline shapes with black crayon. Paint interiors with brilliant watercolors.
- Combine tile groupings in a wall mosaic.
- Variation: Use glazes to paint designs on ceramic tiles & fire in a kiln.



5th grade student Nicky P.

Look in the Mercury News

Search the newspaper for designs from nature on clothing, fabric & household items.

How do people today bring nature into their lives? Search for articles about gardens, outdoors sports, conservation etc.

Great Western Landscape

Notice how the winding river, trees & clouds draw you into this landscape. Do you feel like you are there? Albert Bierstadt (American, 1830-1902) traveled throughout the American West painting huge panoramic landscapes for those back home.

- Look in books, magazines & calendars for landscape ideas with wide open spaces.
- Hang butcher paper for a large class landscape mural. Sketch a high horizon line & large shapes (mountains, hills & meadowlands).
- Take turns painting large shapes, then add details: plants, paths & distant mountains.

Albert Bierstadt, artist; American, 1830 - 1902; ***California Spring***, 1875; oil on canvas;
73 3/4 x 104 x 6 1/4 (187.3 x 264.2 x 15.9 cm); Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco,
Presented to the City and County of San Francisco by Gordon Blanding 1941.6

ARTS FOR ALL!

Information & activities created for teachers, parents & kids by :
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Written by Mary Bender; Designed by Ina Johnson

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