

# My Friend Miro

## 2 Days

**Principle:** Abstract, surrealism, empty space

**Concept:** Create a surreal abstract painting using black lines, shapes of color and drawing on a colored background.

**Objective:** To introduce the students to the life and works of Joan Miro. Learn how to create a modern abstract painting in the style of Miro by using their own imagery. Understand the use of basic lines and combine them with basic geometric and natural shapes to create an original painting.

### Supplies Day 1:

- ✓ 11"x17" designated smooth heavyweight paper
- ✓ Acrylic paint in a variety of colors except...  
**red, white, and black**
- ✓ Acrylic large brushes "A"
- ✓ Paint palettes or paper plates to put paint on
- ✓ Water bowls for rinsing
- ✓ Paper towels

### Supplies Day 2:

- ✓ 11"x17" pre-painted heavyweight paper from Day 1
- ✓ Black acrylic paint or semi-gloss latex house paint
- ✓ Acrylic paint: red, yellow and white  
(A little blue and green acrylic if needed)
- ✓ Acrylic brushes "A", in a variety of sizes
- ✓ Water bowls for rinsing
- ✓ Paper towels

### Set-up Day 1:

- Set-up slide projector and screen or use the art room computer and projector to show the powerpoint slide show. Hang Miro print samples around room for students to look at. Pull samples of previous student work – see 2<sup>nd</sup> grade samples.
- Cover tables with old sheets.
- Set out paper, brushes and water at each table.
- Have paint colors ready with palettes at prep table
- Have pencils at the table for writing their names and classroom number on the back.

### **Set-up Day 2:**

- Set-up slide projector and screen or use the art room computer and projector to show the powerpoint slide show. Hang Miro print samples around room for students to look at. Pull samples of previous student work – see 2<sup>nd</sup> grade samples.
- Cover tables with old sheets.
- Place backgrounds painted previously by students at tables
- Have black, red, yellow and white acrylic paints distributed for each student
- Have a variety of brushes, water bowls and paper towels at each table.
- Have your background sample ready

**Prints:** Available in large files by Art Room door. 87, 88, 89, 89a, 89b

**Slides:** Available in cabinet by sink in the art room  
Also available on the art room computer and projector

---

## **Lesson Day 1**

### **Introduction and Background:**

1. Joan Miro was an artist from Spain. His name is pronounced: Ho AHN mee ROH. In Spain they speak Spanish. When he was growing up, he loved to observe things as he walked around his city. Everything interested him. He might be drawn to a bird or a broken telephone wire curled on the hot asphalt.  
He always wanted to be an artist when he grew up, but his father, a goldsmith, didn't want him to study art. He wanted him to become a Goldsmith too. This caused Joan to become depressed and quite ill, but after he recovered, his father said he would allow him to go to Art School in Spain, so he did.

In Joan's artwork, we can tell he enjoyed life very much. He liked to create funny and impossible animals and figures using vertical, horizontal, squiggly, or thick and thin lines.

**Show samples** from powerpoint slides, prints, or books you bring from the library. There is a book on Miro in the school's library you can check out and have on hand during class.

**Samples of Miro:**

The Gold of Azure

Painting on Ingres Paper

Figure in Front of the Sun

Bird Surrounding the Star of Hope

Woman and Birds

Woman at Night

**Points of discussion as you look through the samples:**

- See how you can't really tell it's a bird?
- What does it look like to you...  
bird/animal/human creature?
- These creatures don't really exist, and it doesn't look like a real bird/animal does it? That's what we call 'Abstract' art, or "Surreal" art. Those are words we use to describe art that doesn't look like anything real. It might give you the impression of something that exists. It feels sort of "dreamlike" or "crazy" or "whacky" or "weird". Use words kids can relate to.
- Can you tell Joan enjoyed using bright colors? Do you see the bright yellow background? The beautiful blue, the vibrant red?
- Look how sometimes he painted using a really thick line. Other times he used a teeny tiny line. That's what helps make a painting interesting to look at. Contrasting thick and thin lines, or blobs, or squiggles.

**Step 1: Painting background.**

Have students pick a paint color to paint their 11x17" heavyweight paper. Any color will do except black, red, or white. Have them paint their paper a solid color so that no white shows through. Brush strokes are fine as long as the color is solid. Explain since the paint needs to dry, they will finish their paintings on the following class by adding imagery and shapes.

**Prior to Next Lesson:** You will need to prepare a solid painted background for yourself to use as a demonstration in class. Be thinking of imagery you would like to paint as part of your demonstration for Day 2. Look at samples of Miro. You don't need to be able to draw – childlike imagery is encouraged. The simpler the drawing the more abstract it will look.

**Lesson Day 2:** **Demonstration: Show the powerpoint slides and poster to the students again.** Tell the students that now they will be creating an imaginative painting with black lines and shapes with accent colors in red and white and a little yellow. The red, white and yellow are to be used only to fill in or accent shapes, so use sparingly (in small amounts). Maybe they have an image in their mind of an animal or human they would like to paint. Demonstrate painting something in an "abstract" way. For example, paint a funky dog, or a cat in a very simple childlike way.

**Demonstration:** As you demonstrate, use a variety of line widths. Press hard on the brush to create a thick line and press very lightly to create a thin line. Oops, did you dribble a little paint? No problem, one or two little blobs here and there add interest. What about a nice star in the background made from crisscrossing lines?

Now, go in and add a couple accent colors (red, white and yellow). But remember to use the colors sparingly. Demonstrate and talk about balance with your accent colors. There is a reason Miro would put accent colors where he did. Does it look visually balanced to you? What are you thinking when you decide where to place the red or the white color?

Some of Miro's' paintings took him three months to paint!!! So he thought very carefully about where he was going to leave just the background showing.

**“The spectacle of the sky overwhelms me. I’m overwhelmed when I see, in an immense sky, the crescent moon, or the sun. There, in my pictures, tiny forms in huge empty spaces. Empty spaces, empty horizons, empty plains- everything which is bare has always impressed me.”** Joan Miro 1958

So, remember those “empty spaces”!

**Students:**

1. Have student’s first paint with black, drawing and creating shapes and lines. We want a lot of the background to show through. Their painting can be as simple as just a few shapes (or even a big blob!), or as complex as many shapes with lots of thin black line drawings. They can create fantastic little creatures or simple little lines. It’s up to them! As students work, remind them that variety of line width makes a painting more interesting to look at (thick lines, thin lines, squiggles, etc.).
2. After they have painted with the black let them use red, yellow and white as accent colors. Tell them to **think carefully** about where they want their red, yellow and white. Maybe they only want red, or only white, or a big shape in red and only a little white. Only one accent color is okay too! Add a little yellow, green, or blue if they need it. Tell them that they don’t have to fill in all their shapes with colors. They can leave some **EMPTY SPACE**, or just draw some accent lines with color. What ever they choose will be just what their painting needs. They may need to go back with a black brush to add detail to some of their images. Maybe a creature that needs eyes or a mouth. Just have fun!
3. Have them title their art and write this on a label and stick to the back of the paper.
4. Have children help clean up and wash brushes if time allows.

**Vocabulary:**

**Abstract** – creating art that is not a realistic image, but an imaginative, creative, expressive way to show the essence of something. Kids words: weird, twisted,

crazy, strange, etc.

**Surreal**-crazy, unusual, dreamlike, bizarre, strange images, are all great words to describe surreal. It is different from just abstract in that surrealist paintings have a definite image you can identify, where as an abstract painting can be just color with no image at all.

**Background**- part of the picture that looks farthest away or is behind images and shapes. In this lesson the background is the solid color behind the shapes.

Lesson plan created by Michelle Smit