

## Christmas Activity - Christmas Countdown Star



Celebrate the Festive Season with this Art Activity and create a Christmas Countdown Star.

This activity is perfect for Primary Middle School and after school care. It can easily be simplified for younger grades, and a playtime activity for parents and children.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED



#### We used:

- Micador Vibrant Watercolours 200ml - White, Yellow, Blue & Red (Once you have this set it will last and last and you will find so many other uses for it – it will become one of the products you use the most)
- Roymac Rains™ Watercolour Paper- 300 gsm (1 sheet per student)
- Micador Lotus Palettes 2 per pk (use one tray per 2-4 students)
- Roymac Achiever Brush Size 6 (one per student)
- Roymac Achiever Brush Set Size 2 (one per student)
- Micador Essential HB pencils (one per student)
- Erasers to share
- Tracing paper (half sheet per student)
- 30cm ruler (one per student)
- Water pots & table Protection

# Preparation

Cover tables with protective covers or newspaper to guard against spills.  
Place water pots, pallets, brushes and pencils on each table.  
Have your students wear aprons or art smocks.

**Prepare your palette: This can be done by the student, teacher or parent.**

The first step is to create a festive colour palette, by mixing the watercolours with just a little water to achieve a nice flowing consistency. By adding white, where desired, the watercolour will become opaque. This is known as 'Gouache' painting. Add just a drop of two of water to each well to get the desired texture.

Start by placing a small amount of red in a well. Add a few drops of water and mix until it achieves a lovely, flowing consistency. Don't dilute it with white paint – as here, you want a nice 'Santa' red.

Squeeze a little yellow and a touch of blue paint – an amount the size of a 5-10 cent piece (together) - into three separate wells. Dilute one green well with a little water to make a 'Christmas Green' - add more yellow or blue as needed.

With the second and third green wells, add a little yellow to one, and a little yellow and white to the other. This will give you two, slightly lighter shades of green. Mix some other colours to be used with this artwork on the numbers and words. Here we've mixed a light blue and a light pink.

**Tip:** You can alter the colours by adding white, to make any colour lighter. When you mix paints, don't forget to add a little water to get the right texture. You want the paint to flow off the brush like light cream. Experiment a little until you create a colour scheme you're happy with - if you have 'ridges' or dry brush marks the paint needs some more water, if it is streaky or too transparent it has too much water.

**Note:** When finished, do not throw your paint away. Simple add more water to it to use for each class – this reactivates it and will not change the colour.

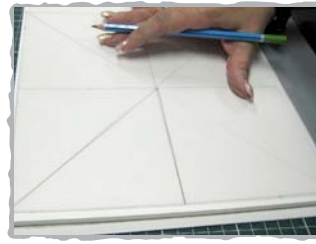
**Note:** If any of the paint looks a little streaky, go over it again in the same colour. Getting paint flat takes lots of practice!



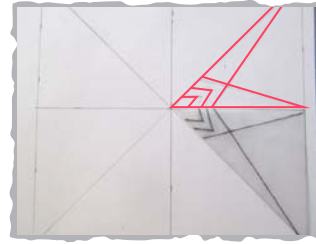
# Follow the Steps



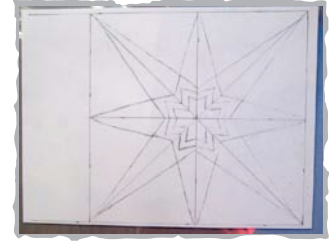
**1.** On the Rains paper measure in 1 cm from one edge of the shorter side and draw a line. Do the same a 1/2 cm from one long side edge. Now measure 22cm out from either line to make a square 22cm x 22cm with a small boarder on 3 sides and a large space at the bottom.



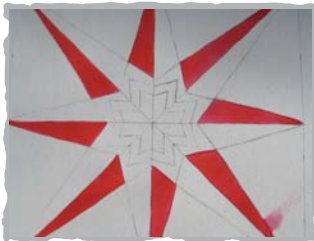
**2.** Inside your square start to divide it into equal triangles. Draw two diagonal lines from corner to corner to bisect the square in two directions. Measure 11 cm from the top and draw a line through the middle. Measure 11 cm from the side and draw a line through the middle. All lines should cross in the middle. You should now have 8 equal triangles.



**3.** Using the tracing paper, trace over the template provided and cut out the triangle. Trace the lines on the back so you have them on both sides of the tracing paper. The template will fit each triangle in your square. Make sure it is the right way up and trace off the paper with your pencil. You can begin in any of the triangles.



**4.** Flip and then continue tracing and flipping until all triangles are done and the star design is complete. Take care to make sure the pattern is the right way around and that the pattern meets up each time, until the star shaped pattern is ready to use.



**5.** Start by painting the large star red. Only paint alternate triangles, leaving half of the star white. Use big brushes for large areas and small brushes for delicate jobs.



**6.** Once the red is dry (use a hairdryer to speed up drying if in a hurry) use the darkest green shade you prepared earlier to paint the negative space outside the star.



**7.** Paint the inner star in red and dark green, alternating cell to cell with each colour. Leave the inner cells white. Encourage your students to think about the effect that repetition of colour has on this artwork's aesthetic.



**8.** Using the lighter green paint to colour the inside and outer cells of the hub at the centre of the star.



**9.** When the paint is dry enough, turn the page so the white space at the bottom of the design faces you. Use a ruler to draw 2cm section and then repeat to create a grid. This will become a calendar.



**10.** Using your lightest shade of green (you want a nice translucent light green) paint in the calendar. Make sure the green is transparent enough that you can still see the lines of the grid.



**11.** Now write in Dec 2012 in the 1st square (use a colour you think will work with the other colours). Fill the next 25 spaces with a numeral for each day leading up to Christmas. With the leftover spaces, write your name or a Christmas message. Decorate any spare squares with stars or other Christmas symbols. Make sure each character is evenly spaced.



**12.** Paint over the numerals and letters in a colour of your choice. Delicately trace around each letter to shadow it in your secondary colour. Finish it off with a ribbon if you like.

**Extended Learning** - could be discuss before, during, or after the activity

## **Learning Outcomes:**

This activity contains several Elements and Principles of Design including balance repetition and harmony. You can use these ideas as a springboard for further discussion with your students. Some ideas you might like to discuss are:

## **Paper:**

- Roymac Rains Watercolour Paper is a high quality artist paper, made in France from tightly pressed cotton fibres.
- This method of making paper is hundreds of years old. Two centuries ago, professional scavengers known as 'rag and bonemen' would collect scraps of cotton cloth to sell to papermakers who recycled the cotton into high quality paper.
- The paper has a smoother side or a more textured side you can paint on, depending on how you want your artwork to hold the paint. This texture is known as 'tooth'. A 'well-toothed' paper has a courser surface and soaks up paint more readily.
- This paper is acid free, which classifies it as archival paper. It will last a very long time and will not yellow with age.
- All paper is classified by weight, measured in grams per square metre (gsm). As a rule of thumb, the higher the gsm, the stronger, more flexible and resilient to moisture the paper is. Most printer paper is around 80 gsm and tends to buckle and warp when wet. Roymac Rains Watercolour Paper weighs 300 gsm, and resists buckling even when very wet.

## **Watercolours:**

- Watercolour paint is water soluble – it is far less viscous (more fluid) than other paints when it is made up. It is made up of a pigment and a binder – usually gum Arabic, which is harvested from acacia plants.
- Watercolour used with just a little water to loosen the texture and a little white paint to make it opaque is known as Gouache.
- Watercolour is transparent rather than opaque, and dries lighter than it's liquid form. For this reason, watercolours are best painted light to dark, so that dark colours can be painted over the lighter ones.
- Have your students look through the artworks in their books and identify any watercolour paintings they find there. Adapt this into a practical exercise during excursions to galleries, by encouraging students to identify watercolours and appreciate the techniques involved.
- Talk about some artists who work in watercolour, and discuss their technique – you might look at the work of Andrew Wyeth for example, and discuss his realist watercolours.

## **Brushes:**

- Give your students a round achiever brush. Have them feel the bristles and take note of how soft they are, and demonstrate the kind of strokes that a round brush head makes, distinct from a flat bristled brush. Have them experiment with the effect of stiffer brushes, such as the Roymac 1600 Hog Hair Brushes, and take note of differences in linework and mark making possibilities. Traditionally we only use soft brushes with watercolour and gouche and not usually stiffer bristled brushes such as hog.

## Discoveries and Learning Outcomes:

- Consider colour: the types of colours made through blending and they way they contrast with each other in the final artwork.

Discuss high key colours and monochromatic effects. Consider whether the colours were harmonious with each other, complementary or clashing. Did warm and cool colours work well together? Were they muted, natural, or bright?

- Explore Tone by having your students create a grey scale, mixing black and white paints to create a series of grays. One a scale of 1-10, with 1 being light, and 10 being black, what number would most colours used in this piece measure?

- Transparency VS opacity; did the paint let through light, and how did that work in terms of mixing and compiling colours. Consider the texture of the paint and how it lays on the page.

- Consider shape, and line. What type of lines have your students used? Are they thick or thin, broken, continuous. What descriptives apply: dark, light, soft, hard, straight, curved, etc? What kind of shapes are formed?

- Pattern in an integral part of this artwork; use class discussion to examine instances of pattern in art. What artists and cultures use patterns in their artwork. Consider traditional Islamic art. How does repetition work in relation to pattern?

- Explore instances of variation or gradation as they occur in the artwork.

- Consider harmony and rhythm in the artwork. Is balance achieved? If so, how?

Consider the impact of all other considerations, including line, pattern and repetition in the overall appearance of the artwork.

## Cross Curricular Learning - Maths

- Is this a Tessellation?
- Who else used Tessellations?
- Have your students ever heard of Escher?
- Did you know there is Maths in art?
- What is a Vertex?
- Is each vertex the same in our design?
- Did we use regular polygons?
- What is a Polygon?

## Some Learning Outcomes

- Measuring
- Counting
- Adding
- Shape recognition
- Tracing – transferring images
- Using a ruler
- Brush skills
- Understanding materials
- Colour mixing
- Paint application
- Opaque and transparent colours

- Paint control
- Decision making
- Colour relationships
- Special awareness
- Elements and Principles of Design
- Line, shape, colour, tone, texture, repetition, gradation, contrast, rhythm, harmony, balance, symmetry
- Concentration
- Process
- Build self esteem
- Learn from classmates

## Ideas for younger children:

- Younger children might like to use a simplified version of this idea if they have trouble with the complexity of the pattern.
- They might need some assistance with the tracing.
- They might like to use Micador oil pastels instead of the paint – we have some great metallic oil pastels.
- They may like to try our new Micador 3D paint for the dots and textures.
- They may like to try our colourush coloured pencils or colourfun markers instead or other media, or even a combination of any of these.

