

Madhubani Painting

The origins of *Madhubani* painting are shrouded in the ancient history of India. The technique is still done by women from villages around the town of Madhubani. The style features spirals and curved lines, vines, tendrils, arches, crescent moons, and the globe of the sun. Madhubani paintings depict the diversity, color, and spontaneity of India and are representations of the all-encompassing nature of Indian culture.

Generally, no space in a Madhubani painting is left empty; gaps are filled by images of flowers, animals, birds, and even geometric designs. In this activity, your child will recreate the Madhubani style by using flowers, plants and animals that are familiar to her own surroundings. The main subject of the painting should represent an event in her life. Take a moment to look up Madhubani paintings online and notice how every inch of the picture surface is filled with color and line. It is a truly beautiful art form!



What You Need:

- Stretched canvas or canvas board, a piece of thick cardboard that has been painted with gesso, or paper (all of which can be found in crafts stores)
- Pencil
- Watercolors
- Colored pencils
- Fine brush
- Newspapers to protect your work surface

What You Do:

1. Have your child draw an event in the middle of her painting surface. The depiction of the event should be larger enough to fill up most of the canvas (or paper) while still leaving enough blank space for a large border around the edge of the picture.
2. Have your child design a pattern to fill a border around the outside of your image
3. Help her to choose a small design and have her practice drawing it before she begins on the canvas. This will be the filler motif that she will use between the figures in her image. She can choose from natural objects such as flowers, vines, leaves, birds or shells. Once she has decided on her motif, she can then draw it in all the "in-between" places. Make sure to space them evenly.
4. Have her draw all of the elements of her painting before she starts to paint. The pencil outlines will help when her paint backgrounds.
5. Plan your color choices. Will the background be white (which is best if your child is using colored pencils) or will it colored? It is important to know where your white will be ahead of time because you won't paint those parts in. Have your child fill any white areas in with a white colored pencil. The wax from the pencil will keep paint from soaking into the paper. Make sure to press hard!
6. If the backgrounds are going to be darker than the fill design, color the fill designs with colored pencil first. Press hard on the pencil. After the paint is dry you can erase the colored pencil and the design will be left as a reverse.
7. Use a wash (a little paint in a lot of water) to paint light backgrounds. You can paint or use colored pencil to outline or draw over your fill design outlines when the background is completely dry.
8. Let the paint dry in between each step. If you paint on dry paint you can achieve sharper edges - if the paint is wet it will blend and the edges will smudge.
9. Let dry and display with pride!

Madhubani painting is rich with color and many layers of design. The interweaving elements organize the painting and suggest a taste of an old and unfamiliar culture. Your child will gain a new understanding of pattern and composition and when she's done with this project, she'll have made a stunning work of art!

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