

Preschoolers at First Class

Children's Centre

By Katie Favell

On my first introduction to the children I had decided to explore natural materials including water. I set up two trays, one filled with moss, stones, pinecones, leaves, and even a couple plastic bugs. The other, I had sand, river rocks, a terracotta pot upside down, natural rope, and of course a few more plastic bugs hiding in the environment. I provided the children with magnifying glasses and small bowls filled with water.

I sat at the table with a small group of 8 children and asked them to touch the materials. I asked them to use the paint brushes to put water on the terracotta pot or the stones. I also asked the children if they could see the bugs I had hidden. The children immediately began to engage with the materials and the prompt. 2 children took their time removing the leaves, pine cones and stones, one by one and coating them with water. "Look it changes colour!" I pointed out. One boy smiled. He wasn't developed fully with language but I could recognize his smile as he continued his work gently and methodically.

Another, young boy who was 3 began to delight in finding the 7 bugs I had hidden in the trays. He took them from the trays and placed them in front of himself. He didn't want to put them back. "We want the bugs to go home and feel safe, and then our friends can have a turn finding them." I encouraged.

One boy who was 3 sat with me for 45 minutes. He sat in front of the terracotta pot and using the paint brush, "painted" it with water. He or I would turn the pot so the dry side was exposed. He would then wet that side. After he was done, he would again turn the pot so the side he had first painted was now already drying and changing colour. So he would wet it again, and then the cycle would continue.

We went through 2 bowls of water painting the terracotta pot. But it was my first meeting with him, and he was so engaged I didn't want to distract him.

Eventually, the time began to wear out and when clean up time came, we had to pull him away from the table.

It gave me a new perspective on what paint actually is. If water could change the colour of so many natural objects, does it qualify as a paint?



