1-B Mission Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, 1755

Various Artists

1-B.1 Mission Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de Acuña, San Antonio, Texas, 1755. Ernst F. Schuchard (1893–1972). Mission Concepción, fresco details of façade, 1932. Watercolor on paper, 17 1/2 x 17 in. (45 x 44 cm.) in frame. Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library. Ernst F. Schuchard papers, Gift of Mrs. Ernst F. Schuchard and daughters in memory of Ernst F. Schuchard.

1-B.2 Convento and church at dusk. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. © George H. H. Huey.

1-B.3 "Eye of God" decoration on ceiling of the library. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. © George H. H. Huey.

The Art

Ernst Schuchard painted the watercolor of a 250-year-old mission located in what is now San Antonio, Texas. It was designed in the fancy and decorative style known as Spanish Baroque. The outside of the building was coated with plaster and painted with designs in red, blue, yellow, and black. The designs are geometric and flowery, outlining the windows and bell tower openings. Artisans created these patterns using the fresco technique of painting on wet plaster. The inside of the building is also decorated with frescoes. The mission includes a library that features an unusual painting of the sun on the ceiling.

The Artist

In 1755, the church was constructed by native artisans. The mission followed a traditional Catholic floor plan. This takes the form of a cross with a long central hall that is crossed by another hall. Schuchard painted this watercolor of the mission in the 1930s. Over the years, many artisans contributed to the construction of the original mission, decorating the inside and outside surfaces that are pictured in the watercolor.

The Historical Perspective

This mission is one of six that the Spanish built to block French expansion from the east. Although Spanish and French explorers were searching for gold and other treasures, the missionaries wanted to teach Indians about Christianity. In addition to religious instruction, the mission offered a steady food supply and safer living conditions than those on the plains of east Texas.

Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at this watercolor—the mission, the details included in the inserts, the background, and the colors used. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the painting.

Describing

✔ Use your "I Spy" telescope to look carefully at this artwork. Telescopes are easy to make—decorate an empty towel or tissue-paper roll. Have children use as many descriptive words as they can to explain what they see. Do you see any buildings that look like this in our neighborhood? Where? What do you think people do in these buildings?

✔ Ask the children to continue looking closely and carefully, and then ask them what kinds of shapes they see. Some are two-dimensional and others are three-dimensional. What's the difference? See if they can identify the shapes by name. Ask the children if there are shapes in the block center that look like those in the picture.

Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

architecture
dome
floral
fresco
history
horizontal
mission
patterns
plaster
shapes—rhombus, cube, polygon, dome
tower
treasure

Analyzing and Interpreting

Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- What kind of building is this? What do you think it is called?
- What makes this building different from our Head Start building?
- Why do you think the artist took photos of this building?
- What season do you think it is?
- Do you think we can try to make a building like this with our blocks?

Books

A Kid's Guide to Exploring San Antonio Missions National Historical Park by Mary Maruca (Western National Parks Association, 1999)
This book provides an overview of the San Antonio Mission, its buildings, and the people who inhabited it, including Franciscan friars, Coahuiltecan Indians, Apache Indians, and Spanish soldiers.

Architecture Counts by Michael J. Crosbie, Steve Rosenthal (John Wiley and Sons, 1993)
Illustrations of various architectural details introduce the numbers one through 10.

Architecture Shapes by Michael J. Crosbie, Steve Rosenthal (John Wiley and Sons, 1993)
Double-page spreads feature a geometric shape on one side and a related architectural element on the other.

Spanish Missions by Melinda Lilly (Rourke Publishing, 2003)
Spanish missions and their role in the American Southwest are explored.

Spanish Missions (National Places) by Risa Brown (Fitzgerald Books, 2007)
This book describes the Spanish missions of the Southwest and their role.

Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Educational Experiences

✔ Gather two matching sets of objects familiar to children. Make sure children can identify each object. Place one set of objects in front of you. Have children match objects in the other set to those you've laid out. Encourage children to verbalize how they matched them (same color, same size, same shape, etc.).

✔ Put one set of objects (from activity above) into a drawstring bag.

◆ Show an object. Have children reach into the bag and, by touching only, locate the same object.

◆ Name an object. Have children reach into the bag and, by touching only, locate the same object.

◆ Have children reach into the bag, touch an object, and guess what it is.

◆ Have children play these grab -bag games with partners.

All of the above activities can be played with three-dimensional geometric shapes.

✔ After completing the activities above, provide two-dimensional geometric shapes for children to manipulate. Introduce names for these shapes: circle, square, rectangle, and triangle. Cut out shape pieces of various colors, sizes, and textures. Use these to make geometric art projects or to play such activities as "I Spy" or "Hunt and Match."

✔ Provide attribute blocks, tangrams, and pattern blocks for free exploration and manipulation. Allow plenty of time for children to work with these materials before structuring activities for their use. Children can create challenge patterns for each other.

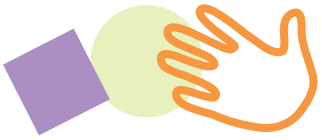
✔ Using black construction paper, trace around familiar objects. Have children match objects to these silhouettes.

✔ If possible, take a neighborhood walk. If you can see buildings from the Head Start windows, look from there. Draw children's attention to the different shapes, buildings, and structures in the neighborhood. If possible, take pictures with a digital camera. At a later time in the classroom, review the photos you've taken. Have children draw or build buildings from the photos.

✔ Have children assemble "shape books." Prepare book covers and pages in circular, triangular, square, and rectangular shapes. Children can draw items reflecting that book's shape or fill it with shape pictures from magazines.

✔ Provide ample time each day for children to explore block building. Encourage all children to build. Change the supply of blocks to create interest and challenges for building. Photograph children with their structures. Add other materials to the block center (signs, cars, dishes, etc.) that integrate with your theme.
To facilitate clean up, outline each block shape and tape it to a shelf. Children can match block shapes to that outline.

*The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger pla ys, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "**A Head Start on Picturing America**" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.*



Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

✔ look through circulars and magazines and cut out different buildings to make a collage.

✔ take a walk and talk about the different structures and buildings in their neighborhood.

✔ make different types of buildings with Legos, blocks, or recycled materials.