

How to Set Up an **ART SHELF**

"The human hand, so delicate and so complicated, not only allows the mind to reveal itself but it enables the whole being to enter into special relationships with its environment... man 'takes possession of his environment with his hands.' His hands, under the guidance of his intellect transform this environment and thus enable him to fulfill his mission in the world."
-Maria Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*

Through art, children are able to express themselves. It is a way for them to communicate how they are feeling and to develop and master fine motor skills.

The Shelf

- Find a low open shelf or low table to hold the supplies, low enough so that the items are easily accessible to the child.

The Supplies

- Baskets or Boxes to hold supplies.
- Paper: White and Colored Paper
- Scrap Paper – You may want to have a basket for unused scrap paper.
- Media: Offer several choices for the child to explore: Pencils, Colored Pencils, Pastels, and Paint and Brushes. For the younger child, we should caution against increasing the number of drawing and painting instruments beyond what is essential.
- Scissors
- Strips of paper for cutting (with lightly drawn lines to aid the development of cutting skills for the young child)
- Glue (non-toxic), or Paste and paste brush – essential for creating projects!
- Punching Stylus and Felt Pad
- Pencil Sharpener
- Child-Sized Apron



The Work Space

- Table and chair, or Easel, which is placed to allow the child to move easily from the art shelf to his or her work space.

"If after finishing, the child shows the catechist a drawing, the child honors the catechist by sharing it, and we catechists should rise to the height of this honor. We should not be seeking to see something we recognize. If we do not succeed in understanding what the child has drawn, this is not the moment to ask the child directly and, most especially, not to interpret the drawing to the child. One can only attempt a short comment or otherwise risk distorting the child's expression by inviting a child to make drawings that do not correspond to the child. Sometimes a smile and few words such as, "It is beautiful," or "I like it," are enough to communicate to the child that we are content with the work."
-Tilde Cocchini, *Artistic Expression of the Children in the Atrium*
Journal of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: 1998-2002, p. 110-113