



# ART IS PAINTING YOURSELF

A BOOK OF ACRYLIC SELF-PORTRAITS

2010-2011 K-1 CLASS

## ABOUT CONSERVATORY LAB

**Conservatory Lab** is a K1 - 6 music-infused charter school in the heart of Boston. We believe in the power of music to transform the lives of children and adolescents.

We use **Expeditionary Learning** as a framework for our unique, interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates music and other creative processes. Our learning expeditions are discovery expeditions. They start from scratch and travel light, relying on courage, compassion, and creativity as much as on intellectual acumen. We cherish action, hands-on situations where what we are doing matters to us, and has consequences.

To encourage deeper learning, our expeditions demand feedback and assistance from experts. Many of the photographs in this book feature feedback experiences and experts who guided our young artists as they created their self-portraits. As you can see from the student's faces, when you have a need to know, when you are eager to do something, a different level of energy kicks in.

Our interdisciplinary academic curriculum deepens students' appreciation of the role of music in the world and provides opportunities for the students to create and perform music and to achieve academic benchmarks.

**Conservatory Lab** is also the only school in the country to incorporate **El Sistema** Program and Methods into its core school day. **El Sistema** is a unique program designed to effect social change and nurture promising futures for underserved communities through intensive, ensemble-focused music education. Music at **Conservatory Lab** is like a heart that pumps and beats to infuse vitality into all aspects of the school community.

Our students will remember their experience at **Conservatory Lab** with stories about problems they solved, ways they helped the community, performances they participated in, and exciting projects they worked up hands. They will remember how and how not to be another and how they followed their ideas like the detectives until they understood them and made them their own. They will remember being challenged to push themselves to accomplish things they didn't think they were capable of accomplishing.

*Diana Levi, Head of School*

*Be brave  
when you are  
singing songs  
& making art.*  
SEOULÉ, K-1 STUDENT

## Introduction



The 24 vibrant self-portraits featured in this book were created by preschoolers at the end of a five-month learning expedition called “Portrait of an Artist.” Visitors to our classroom often ask, “How did 4- and 5-year-olds create such extraordinary works of art?” Here’s what we did.

We began by exploring the color spectrum. We mixed colors together to make different shades and new tints, read books about color, and created art with tempera paint, finger paint, crayons, watercolors, photographs, and more. We experimented, followed our imaginations, and made artistic choices.

As we painted, we listened to the sounds and rhythms of folk, jazz, and classical music, letting the lines and colors dance across the page. Children especially delighted in making connections between their art and the folk songs we listened to each day as part of our yearlong study of world folk music. We also made connections between color and emotion, responding to tempo and mood as we moved to music about different colors.

Reva Malove, Frida Kufis, Wendy Kambouk, Andy Warhol, Pablo Picasso—these are some of the master painters we studied and emulated. At the Museum of Fine Arts, we viewed famous portraits

by accomplished artists of the past and painted our own portraits with watercolors and oil pastels in the Museum studio. In the classroom, we assembled cut-up photographs of our faces to create Picasso-inspired self-portraits. We asked, “How far apart are my feet? Where does my nose fit?”

After drafting many self-portraits, we were ready to start the final acrylic paintings. We sketched our heads, faces, necks and shoulders on canvas, then took our first brush strokes with local artist Ellen McGill, who helped us mix paint colors to create each child’s unique skin tone. We added facial features and other details—a golden necklace, a striped shirt, hair beads in three shades of pink—that tell a story about who we are.

Children reflected on our process during interviews we conducted with each artist. Their words bring a unique and startling view with their refreshing perspectives on color, art, and music. Their words tell—step-by-step—how 4- and 5-year-olds created the beautiful self-portraits in this book.

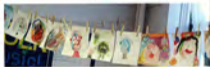
“Art is joy,” declares Sophie, one of our young artists. We hope you will read this book with a child and share the joy.

Jean Carlo Puccio and Mary Conway  
K-2 Section

## How did 4- and 5-year-olds create such extraordinary works of art?

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To learn more about the “Portrait of an Artist” expedition, curriculum, and student products, visit the Teaching and Learning Curriculum (K-2) section of our website.



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Art is...



## *Art is painting yourself.*

My favorite color is dark black because it's like a car.

I like to listen to "Sarah Sponda" when I paint because I like the rat, sat, sat.

***What is your favorite color?***





***Art is joy.  
Art  
is quality  
work.***

My favorite colors are pink and gold because they are such pretty colors together. I like to use pink and golden colors in my art.

I like to listen to "Amazing Grace" when I paint because it sounds really good.

***What colors do you  
like to use together?***





## *Art is a face and a head and legs and eyes and Matisse.*

My favorite color is dark blue. I like my portrait because I mixed colors to make my skin brown. I mixed brown and green paint to make my skin color.

I like to listen to "Hip Hop Here We Go" when I paint because it makes me want to dance.

***What colors would you mix to make your skin color?***







***I like art  
because it's  
beautiful.***

My favorite color is blue because it can be light or dark, but I really like the light shades. When I'm an artist, I like to choose reds and pinks and oranges and blacks.

I like to listen to "Ode to Joy" when I paint because it's my favorite song that doesn't sing.

***Can you find the color  
blue in my portrait?***





***You draw.  
You paint.***

My favorite color is yellow  
because it's the color of the sun.

I like to listen to folk music  
when I paint because it's calm.

***Can you find the  
color yellow in  
my portrait?  
Look closely!***





## ***You can draw whatever you want to draw.***

My favorite colors are blue and red because I saw art on TV at my house and there was blue and red.

I like to listen to "Bruno Mars," my favorite song that I hear on my home TV. I want to draw his face and his whole body.

***What do you want to draw?***





***I  
would  
say  
paint  
it!***

My favorite color is yellow because I notice a yellow hat that I like.

I like to listen to folk music when I paint. "Amazing Grace" makes me want to try to paint it, and paint Judy Collins—the singer.

***What music do you like to listen to when you paint?***



# *How to paint a self-portrait*





***You need to think  
about what to do.  
Make a plan.***

My favorite color is pink because it's like my shirt  
and my skirts.

I like to listen to gentle music when I paint because  
I like it when it's soft.

***What color clothes do you like  
to wear?***





***Choose  
a canvas.  
Choose  
a color.  
Put an  
easel on  
the table.***

*My favorite colors are black and green and grey because those are my choices to put on my canvas.*

*I like to listen to my favorite song, "Dynamite," when I paint. It makes me want to draw a T. rex!*

***What do you notice about my shirt?***



## *Look at a photograph of your face.*



My favorite colors are blue and yellow because blue and yellow make green—light green and dark green.

I like to listen to the song “Low Bridge” when I paint.

***What color do you get when you mix the colors blue and red?***







***You can look at your face in a mirror.***

*My favorite color is green.*

*I like to listen to Chris Brown sing "Superman" when I paint.*

***Can you find something gold in my portrait?***





## *Get pencils...*

My favorite color is light pink.

I like to listen to slow music when I paint.  
It makes me draw hearts.

***Can you find light pink in  
my portrait?***





## *...and a paintbrush.*

My favorite color is blue. I like all blues.

I like to listen to fast music when I paint.

***How many shades of blue  
can you find in my portrait?***





## *Get a small brush or a big brush.*

My favorite color is blue because it's shiny.

I like to listen to "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair" when I paint because I like the hair part.

***What color is your hair?***





## *You put the brush in water.*

*My favorite color is green because green is to "go" in the car.*

*I like to listen to slow music when I paint because I need to go slow to not cover my face.*

*Can you find the color  
green in my portrait?*





## *Put the brush in the color you want.*

I like red, green, orange, black, white, and blue. Blue is the sky. Red is "Stops." Green is trees and grass. Orange is like the Power Ranger Samurai. White is the color of some owls and snow.

When I paint, I like to listen to singing songs like "I'm a Barbie Girl" in the Wii dancing game, *Just Dance 2*.

***How many colors can you find in my portrait?***



***Then you  
can start  
to paint.***



My favorite color is pink because I love pink to draw.  
And I love purple to draw.

I like to listen to "Sleeping Beauty" when I paint  
because I love to watch it. My favorite song is  
"I Know You."

***What color are my cheeks in  
my portrait?***









***You have to paint hair carefully so you don't mix it up with the eyes.***

My favorite color is red because I love my cousin and my brother and *The Red Balloon*.

I like to listen to "The Jerk" when I paint because it's cool.

***Can you find the color red in my portrait?***



***I like to paint  
with black to  
make the hair.***



*My favorite colors are pink and purple.*

*I like to listen to Nina Simone when I paint because she sings about the boy she loves in "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair."*

***What do you notice about my hair?***



***Do your  
mouth,  
and your  
nose,  
and your  
eyes.***



My favorite color is a Popsicle color. I like the green Popsicle.

I like to listen to "This Pretty Planet" when I paint because it makes me joyful and cooperative.

***What color makes you feel joyful?***





*Eyes, mouth, hair,  
ears, shirt, cheeks,  
eyebrows, eyelashes.*

My favorite color is blue. I like blue and dark and light colors.

I like to listen to "What a Wonderful World" when I paint because it sounds beautiful.

*What color are my eyes in my portrait?*





***Put your portrait  
on the drying rack.  
You're done!***

I like to mix blue and pink. I like to paint grey on my hair.

I like to listen to "Yankee Doodle" when I paint because "Yankee Doodle went to town." I will draw a machine for him to wash his clothes.

***What do you notice about my nose  
in my portrait?***





***If you don't  
find any  
materials, you  
can't paint.  
You could  
play instead.***

My favorite color is purple because it's like grapes.

I like to listen to folk music when I paint because I like the singing.

***Can you find the color purple in  
my portrait?***





## *Thank you!*

**Steven Liby**, our Expeditionary Learning coach, for teaching his expertise with us. His showed us that creating quality portraits takes time, focus, and perseverance.

Thank you to **Rita Diaz**, for showing us your own artistic process, tools, and final products. You encouraged us to be experts, too.

**Kelley Manning** and the Artful Adventures program of the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), for giving us an afternoon to see the MFA's famous portraits. Thanks, too, for giving us the opportunity to paint self-portraits with watercolors and oil paints in the Museum studio.

And **Ellen McGill**, for teaching us how to mix our skin tones with acrylic paints. You gave us the courage to start painting our self-portraits.

**Rebecca Leek**, for teaching us songs about fine arts and music that make our world a better place.

**Tom Jackson**, for always being there with his camera.

**Rhonda Berkman**, for providing us with a rich library full of books about visual art and music.

Finally, thanks to the artists and instructors of the past and present who inspired us throughout the world—and will continue to inspire us in the future!



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The 24 vibrant self-portraits featured in this book were created by Conservatory Lab Charter School preschoolers during a five-month learning expedition in the winter and spring of 2011. "Art is joy," exclaims five-year-old Seouf. Read this book with a child and share the joy.