

# Predella's as Story Telling Tools

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**Madison Christensen Grade 4**

**1<sup>st</sup> Place Showcase of the Arts - Saskatoon**

Curved Predella with images about the Centennial Celebrations in Saskatoon.

## Objectives

- understand that *line, colour, texture, shape, form,* and *space* comprise the basic language of visual art
- recognize complementary colours as being opposite each other on the colour wheel
- examine the types of balance (e.g., symmetrical, asymmetrical/informal, radial)
- demonstrate the ability to perceive visual details, and include details to enhance depictions of plants, animals, people, and objects
- understand that they can get ideas from such sources as memory, research, observation, feelings, or imagination
- become increasingly self-aware in decision making about methods and materials
- understand that they are communicating meaning through own art work
- explore the contributions of visual artists of various eras, locales, and cultures
- begin to articulate the variety of reasons for creating art works
- understand that art tells something about the society in which it was created
- examine own visual environment and determine how artists and art forms have affected it over time



**Keely Boechler Grade 4**

**Materials**

- Paper
- Block Paints
- Bendable rulers if possible
- Rulers
- Pencils
- Images of Predella's

## Background Information

A predella is the platform or step on which an altar stands. In painting, predella refers to the paintings or sculptures running along the frame at the bottom of an altarpiece. They often consist of narrative scenes, e.g. scenes in the life of a particular saint.



**Jacob Solie Grade 4**

## Lesson Summary

The grade 4 and 5 students at Georges Vanier Catholic School Saskatoon studied the Predella and the art of Fra Angelico. The students learned about some of the historical Predellas including the annunciation. The idea that the Predella tells more of the story that the larger panel cannot tell was explored. The children then selected an event from their lives (not necessarily religious in nature) that they wanted to tell in more than one panel. They selected the most significant image for the large panel and other images to support it for the smaller panels. The use of the gilded frame was also discussed and the children used some detail work on their own frames inspired by frames from the past.

A secondary learning objective was how paints for Predellas were made. Cochineal a small Mexican bug was used for red paint and was very expensive at the time. The expense due to the cost of harvesting small bugs and then shipping those bugs to Europe in a time when FedEx didn't get it there the next day. The children were shown some of these bugs. It was pointed out that the most important people in paintings at the time wore red and or blue because they were the most expensive colours.

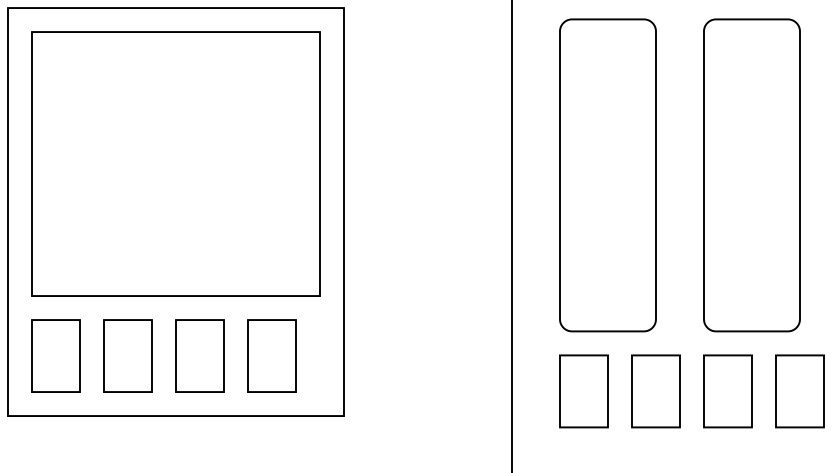
The children were shown slides of many predella paintings and the concept that most paintings were of a religious theme because the church commissioned most of the work. Artists were not often able to paint their own subject matter of choice because of the cost of materials and the fact that they were busy doing commissions for the church.

Phoebe Gilman is a children's author and uses the concept of a Predella in her storybook *Something from Nothing*. It was interesting after the unit that the children recognized this fact. Predella paintings come in various shapes. Sometimes a large rectangle will cover the entire area below the large panel or small rectangles. Often the shape was dictated by the space around the altar, therefore each Predella is as unique as the church and the artist that made it.

### Procedure

This lesson was simple.

1. Explain what a Predella is. See background information.
2. Have the children discuss which things in their life could make an interesting Predella where part of the story is large and the minor parts are smaller and at the bottom.
3. Do rough sketches of their plan, with main story in the top and smaller parts in the bottom areas. They also planned the space for their frames.
4. We used a great deal of math to divide our spaces.



5. Some students created curved edges on their spaces by using malleable rulers to duplicate spaces. These rulers are fantastic. They are a piece of wire inside a rubber casing and can be shaped to various curves. Using this ruler allowed the children to create even arches and curves on the predellas.
6. The students drew their images inside the spaces on the pieces

7. Painted the images
8. Added gold paint to the frames using small brushes to create details.



**Gabriella Fortugno Grade 4**