

EXPLORING ROCK ART WITH KIDS: AN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY AT THE MIAMI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM - MIAMI, USA



Create your own cave



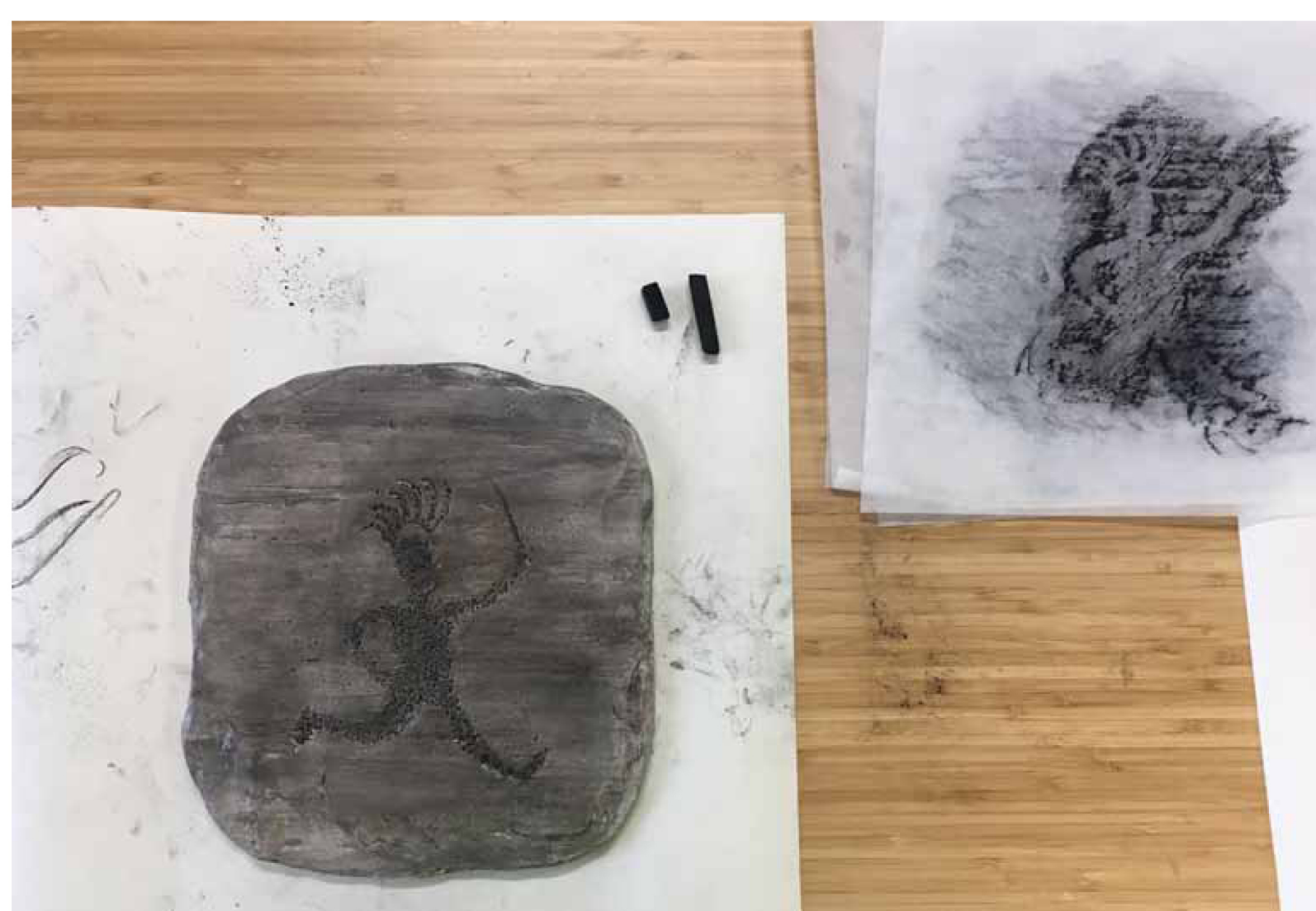
The project presented here has been developed with the children and their family visiting Miami Children's Museum in Miami, Florida-USA, under the educational supervision of the present author and the education department of the museum. It took place in the Art Studio of MiChiMu for 3 weeks in May 2018. The Art Studio plans, organizes and leads art activities for children ages 0-8 and their families who visit the Museum daily, as part of field trips and special events. Activities/projects introduce children to a variety of mediums, materials and themes.

This project has two main aims: first to get children closer to rock art and thus promote its value as one of the first human expressions of art. Second to stimulate creativity, increasing interpretative skills. In the context of MiChiMu it was possible to link the project with one representation of Lascaux Cave at the entrance of the renovated Art Gallery and the exhibition The Lion Guard by Disney, that takes place on the first floor of the museum, where there are representations of cave walls and some spaces where children may express themselves artistically.

For my activities I used images from some of the most famous rock art sites: Lascaux Cave and Rouffignac Cave - France, Altamira Cave - Spain, Valcamonica Sites - Italy, Tibesti - Africa, Oman - Asia and La Cueva de las Manos - Argentina. I presented both rock painting and rock engravings (pictographs and petroglyphs). I prepared the Art Studio for Rock Art Activity in a tour of 4/5 stations one per table.



Engravings



Frottage

SETTING THE STAGE: one table is dedicated to "setting the stage" inviting children to match a series of cave painted/chiseled animals and real animals in nature. This kind of activity is good for all ages of children and introduces them to the subjects and to the techniques in a fun way.

PAINT YOUR OWN CAVE: inspired by the previous images, children had the chance to create their own cave. Materials: stencils and shapes of animals (horse, elephant, giraffe, lion), brown paper, natural coloured pastels and faceted crayons. Children experimented the primitive method of using fingers to rub the colours into the paper.

The final result is impressive and it is good for all ages.



Hands - negative



Hands - positive

FROTTAGE, ENGRAVING AND TRACING LIKE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST: accompanied by images of original rock art and tracing from Valcamonica - Italy, children experimented the frottage technique, carving and tracing like an archaeologist on plaster castings. Materials: plaster castings from real rock art, tracing paper, carbon paper, charcoal, sticks, aluminium foil. By frottage and by tracing children could feel and understand the hammering technique on the rock. In addition they practiced manual and technical work.

Age: from 6 to 8 years or older.

MAKE YOUR MARK: inspired by La Cueva de las Manos, in Argentina, children made their own "signature" on a big paper to realize the effect of a cave painted by hands. I introduced the technique of negative handprint through spray colours: this activity involved kids in a sensory play and it is close to the real technique used by primitives to spread colour. The hand is a powerful symbol for the person and children liked it because they feel connected with themselves (identification). Materials: brown paper, watercolours sprays, markers.

It is definitely good for all ages.

Conclusions: rock art stimulates thoughts and imagination. It is an important theme and a medium at the same time for kids, this is why it is very important to introduce them to it. Based on the idea to offer an overview of the rock art world kids were given free choice of different activities. Some of these activities could be held on the ground and on walls to develop more interaction.

Finally we think that this project should also deal with the Native American Rock Art, especially with the petroglyph sites in Florida (as the Crystal River State Archaeological Park). This could be a valuable addition to the project as the participants would be directly connected with the ancient and local culture of the area.

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Mixed Media