Birds of Peace: Paintings by Francisco da Costa Maya
Sample lesson plan by Prof. Alison Aune + Art in Elementary Education classes at UMD
Spring 2006

**Age:** Grade 4  
**Time:** 3 hours

**Focus:** Visualize Peace, Justice, and truth by creating colorful compositions inspired by  
the paintings of Francisco da Costa Maya

**Objectives:** The Student will:  
Continue to develop and demonstrate an awareness that lines express ideas and describe the outline of shapes  
Continue to search for solutions to design and media problems creatively and will show an understanding of the importance of curiosity when solving design problems  
Explore the creative possibilities of visualizing peace through artistic means  
Discover and appreciate Da Costa Maya’s peaceful world of dreams and kindness

**Motivational Resources:** powerpoint, or slide, presentation of Da Costa Maya’s work, laminated reproductions of his work and the works of Chagall, Miro, and Klee. Children’s Art books on Surrealism

**Art Materials:** White paper, thin posterboard (or old folders), making tape, rulers, puzzle- spiral-graph pieces, watercolor pencils, scissors, water containers, watercolor brushes, paper towels, thin, non-toxic permanent marker.

**Introduction** (Background Information for the teacher: The teacher simplifies the information to be age approach for the children)

Surrealism is a style of art that features fantastical dream images from the imagination. The Surrealist painters and poets in the 1920s in France were inspired to reveal a higher reality through their art. This reality, the reality of dreams and magical worlds, was more beautiful than the everyday world.

Francisco Da Costa Maya uses artistic elements derived from the Modernist-Surrealist aesthetic. These include floating figures, dreamlike landscapes, distorted perspectives, and symbolic shapes and colors. Da Costa Maya was inspired by the Modernist and Surrealist artists after seeing their works in the great museums of Paris France. It was in Paris, where he lived after fleeing Portugal to avoid military duty, that he integrated his philosophy of compassion with his aspirations to be an artist. He found artistic and spiritual inspiration in the colorful paintings of Marc Chagall. Like Chagall, Da Costa Maya would devote his work to creating peaceful and poetic dreamworlds of love, hope, and social justice.
Birds of Peace: Lesson Plan

Instructional Procedure:

**Class One:** Guided inquiry and introduction to the artist and figures in art history through a powerpoint, or slide, presentation. Discuss critical aspects of his works, and discuss the theme of peace, love, justice in Da Costa Maya's paintings. Demonstrate possible compositional techniques and have children begin to cut out bird shapes, mountains, dancing figures from poster board and arranging them on the paper to find a balanced arrangement. Have students tape the edges of their paper with making tape and then encourage free drawing around their selected shapes.

**Class Two:** Begin the class by guiding a discussion of Da Costa Maya’s work. Have student point out formal aspects such as his use of line and compositional harmony, and ask students to finish their sketches using rulers to create prismatic patterns. Color the compositions fully and add water with a brush to activate the watercolor.

**Class Three:** Complete the compositions by outlining forms using a permanent marker.

Un-tape the paper, and put work on display for an informal class critique. Encourage students to discuss their works in terms of the lesson objectives and their personal responses towards their creations.

**Content Checklist** (inclusive DBAE model)
Art Production: Drawing
Art History: Historic and contemporary Surrealism
Art Criticism: Class inquiry discussions and critique
Aesthetics: Discussion of the particular beauty of Da Costa Maya’s colorful dreamscape
Meaning/Content: Symbols of Peace, Love, and Justice

**Bibliography**

