The Harlequin’s Carnival, by Joan Miro & COMPOSITION

Pronounced: Hoe-ahn Mee-ROH

Key Words: shape, color, line

Grade: Kindergarten, 1st

Activity: abstract painting

Meet the Artist:
- He was born in Spain in 1893.
- His father was a goldsmith who wanted his son to be a bookkeeper.
- Joan hated having a job in a business office so his father finally sent him to art school in Barcelona.
- He finished art school in 1919. Afterwards, he met famous artists like Pablo Picasso. His works started out being surrealistic, but became more abstract over time.
- Abstract art focuses on color, line, shape, imagination, and form.
- Miro literally means, “He looked”.
- He lived a rather normal and long life. He died at the old age of 90 in 1983.

Possible Questions:
- What colors do you see? Are they mainly primary colors (red, yellow, blue) or secondary colors (purple, orange, green).
- What shapes do you see?
- Where is the contrast? (the light and dark areas)
- Describe what you see. Turn the painting upside down and sideways. See which way the kids like it best.
- Explain to the children that Miro used shapes, lines, and colors to create his paintings. Miro liked to create his own shapes and putting shapes together to make new things. Have the children locate shape combinations in the painting.
- Explain that Miro created imaginary places in his paintings. Ask them to look carefully: Is this place indoors or outdoors. How do they know?
- Ask the children to look and find what the shapes are doing: Where are two catlike shapes? What are they doing? Find the shapes that look like insects. Find some shapes that are flying. Can you find the shape that looks like a violin with legs?
Materials Needed: white construction paper, tempera paints, brushes, water, paper plates to use as palettes

Activity: Abstract Painting

Process:
1. Draw on the board a circle, square, triangle, diamond, oval, and rectangle. Tell the children that they are going to pick three shapes to paint on their paper.
2. Once they have their three shapes picked out, have them pick what colors they want their shapes to be, and paint them.
3. Ask the children if their shapes remind them of something. For example, maybe the circle looks like a balloon, and a triangle looks like a hat. You can also suggest that their shapes are playing together – what sort of game or activity might their shapes be playing? (Swimming, playing on the swings, soccer, etc.)
4. Encourage the children to add more abstract shapes to their painting – squiggles, lines, dots, blobs, etc. to show what sort of game, or what sort of thing, their shapes are. (i.e. wavy lines to show that they are swimming, or a pom-pom dot on the top of the triangle hat.)
5. Always be positive and remind them that abstract or expressive art doesn’t look “realistic.” Refer them back to the painting.
6. Have them title it on the back and of course, sign it on the front.