This past week, the kindergarten team facilitated and documented experiences in an open studio during our morning inquiry time. This was an extension of the work we did in the first semester during our inquiry time; it allowed children to flow freely between different areas while other groups were meeting with teachers in inquiry groups. This studio focused on materials or languages, allowing children to have initial time to discover on their own what the materials can do. The experiences offered to the children were in wire, easel painting, watercolor, watercolor drawing materials, clay, and drawing materials with an assortment of papers.

So what’s the “Why” providing these initial experiences? We know that these first stages of “messing about” with the materials will allow the children time to discover ideas on their own thus making their learning more meaningful. This process of discovery is critical to inquiry work. We provide experiences where children can experiment with materials in small and large groups. This process transcends into math, reading, writing, etc. its the beginning stages of going deeper.

In this documentation, I will be highlighting easel painting some of the children’s discoveries and ideas. These ideas are important because they are what the children themselves discovered on their own or with each other, with teachers guidance.
The children had different ideas about combining the pencil and the paint. At left, J uses the pencil as a resist. Below left, L first draws her idea and then paints it in. Bottom right, C uses the pencil to draw the roots of the tree on top of the paint itself. Faded in the background, J uses a pencil first, then traces over it with paint.
When mixing color, we observed the children using different ways to mix on the paper. One at the top left was carefully blending one color on top of the other. Another at left bottom was mixing a few colors together. In the background, this child uses several colors together to blend.
While other children experimented with brush techniques, K at top right experiments with the thin brush and curvy strokes while L at bottom right uses fast upward strokes and blending. In the background, B uses a dabbing technique for the leaves of a tree; a different stroke is used for the trunk.
Some children experimented with carefully planned line work. At the top left, D uses the finer brush to create detail of his characters while at the bottom left, S creates an intricate design. At right, M chooses to recreate letters and pretend Japanese characters.
We observed children also getting ideas from each other.
N and A had both painted trees, not knowing the other was doing so. When N explained to the teacher that his tree was at sunset because of the color of the background, A listened intently. A went to do a second painting and used a piece of N’s idea in creating a background but instead of doing a sunset, she made it her own idea and chose to make it a sunny day. After she was done, both children were very pleased.
Another shared moment came when M shared her technique inspired by last semesters visiting artist Riki, with her friends.
At left, L tries M’s technique along with four of the other children. K, in seeing this, is inspired to find a way to do the technique but in a different way, so instead, she creates a similar look but uses her brush to toss the paint on as shown in the background photo.
These were just some of the children’s discoveries using this new media. In the weeks to come, the children will continue to have time to with these materials as we continue our inquiry work.