Greetings kids, parents, grandparents, guardians, friends and neighbors!

Welcome to the inaugural Minis at Home newsletter. During this time of closure, the Academy Art Museum is dedicated to keeping you all curious and enthused. Each newsletter will feature a special theme and offer pertinent information, a craft, and recommended reading. Grownups: please work on projects together with your children. Your pARTicipation is important! We will offer hints and tips for ways to create art as a twosome or a family. Topics closely parallel the Museum’s Mini Masters curriculum and are often based on the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC)’s program.

This week’s theme = SQUIRRELS & ACORNS

It’s fall, or just about! Let’s explore seasonal changes:

Do you have many squirrels in your back yard? Have you ever seen them eating acorns or digging in the dirt to hide the acorns? When fall arrives, squirrels will scurry around, looking for all types of nuts. They will hide the acorns in the ground or in a tree where they may make a nest and live for the winter months. Some trees even have a hole in their trunks that makes a perfect place for squirrels to live!

Activity: LOOKING FOR SQUIRRELS

Go for a walk outside and count how many squirrels you see. What are they doing? Notice how they move around. How would you describe the way they move? Are they alone or with other squirrels? Do they get along with their fellow squirrels? What color are they? Have your grownup take pictures of some.

Activity: COLLECTING ACORNS

When you are on your walk, look down at the ground and see if you can find some very small acorns. Collect a few for the craft projects that follow. If you find acorns, look up at the nearest tree. Are there more acorns on the tree? How far is the tree from the acorns that you find? Are there differences between your acorns? Are some longer than others? Rounder? Look at the stems on top. How are they different? How is the texture of the acorn different from the texture of the cap? At home, store your acorns in a special box or bowl so that you can take them out later and look at them again.
Craft One: **SQUIRREL HOME**

**Materials:**
- Paper towel tube
- Scissors
- **Markers** (or paint; you will need a brush and water cup if using paint)
- **Newspaper** (to cover work space)
- **Picture of squirrel** (downloaded from the Internet, or you can take one yourself and print it out)
- Paper towel
- **Small pieces of tissue paper** in fall colors
- White school glue
- Craft stick or ice cream stick
- (Optional: small acorns)

**Procedure:**

Have your grownup help where necessary. Cut a hole for your squirrel in the middle of your paper towel tube.

Color the entire tube with markers or water-based paint. Allow to dry.

Cut away small bits at the bottom and fold out to form the roots. Experiment with balancing the tree on the table as you cut and adjust roots if necessary.

Cut longer pieces at the top and fan out to form the branches.

Roll up bits of colored tissue paper and glue on with white glue.

Stuff the paper towel tube with a wadded up paper towel.

Google “squirrels” and click on images to see lots and lots of pictures. Hint: For the best image selection, always use the plural of a word (i.e. “apples” instead of “apple.” That way you will avoid any company names that contain your search word). Look together at the images and choose one that you like. Download it, re-size it so that it’s small enough to fit in the hole in the tree, print it out, and cut it to size. You can mount the picture onto an ice-cream stick or craft stick, so that you can pop it in the tree and take it out. [Optional: If you found some very small acorns outside, they might look nice glued onto the tree, perhaps on the roots.]
Craft Two: ACORN ART

Materials:
White card stock  
Pencil  
Acorn caps  
White school glue  
Newspaper (to cover work space)

Note that you can substitute pieces of brown magazine paper, ripped into small bits. If you do this, you will get better results if you use a glue stick to attach the paper.

Procedure:

Go outside and collect acorns (or nuts that you think a squirrel would like to eat!) You can make some very beautiful designs with acorns and nuts. Note that the acorns are easier to glue if you just glue the caps.

Have your grownup draw an acorn according to the following directions. Psst to grown-ups: Even if you think you can’t draw, please DON’T share that with your children. You don’t want to plant seeds of self-doubt in your children. Drawing is a skill that can be developed. The directions we give for drawing will always be easy enough for you to follow, even if you “don’t think you have a creative bone in your body.”

Make sure the acorn is super-large and takes up most of the space on the card stock:

1) Create a long “U” shape. 2) Attach a small triangle at the bottom. 3) Draw a flat frown-shaped line across the top of the acorn. 4) Starting just below this line, draw a curling line that curves all the way around and ends up on the other side. 5) add a stem shape on top.

Spread some white school glue or tacky glue onto the acorn template. Decorate your acorn with real acorns, making any design you want. If you don’t have acorns, rip up bits of brown paper from magazines or mail ads and attach with a glue stick.
Let’s get moving!

**Activity: MOVE LIKE A SQUIRREL**

Gray squirrel gray squirrel  
Shake your bushy tail  
Gray squirrel gray squirrel  
Shake your bushy tail  
Wrinkle up your little nose  
Hold the acorn in your toes  
Gray squirrel gray squirrel  
Shake your bushy tail

**Activity: FINGER PLAY**

(Use your arm as a tree and your fingers on the other hand as the squirrel who scampers about):

- Whisky frisky
- Hippity hop
- Up he goes to the tree top
- Whirly twirly
- Round and round
- Down he scampers
- To the ground

**Activity: COUNTING ACORNS**

(Use your hand as a tree and fingers as acorns):

5 little acorns sitting in a tree  
Along came a squirrel as hungry as can be  
The fall winds blew and rustled all the leaves  
Down fell the acorns out of the tree  
Onto the ground, and squirrel was pleased!

(repeat with 4,3,2,1)
Literacy: POEM TO SHARE

Celebrating Fall
by Constance Del Nero

Acorns, acorns everywhere! On the grass and in my hair (NOT!)
When I step on them, they crunch
When squirrels see them, they think lunch.
If you go on a walk today
Look around you on your way
Count the acorns that you see
Then draw one, or two, or three!

Literacy: RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Snuggle up in a big comfy chair and read together

Squirrel Leap, Squirrel Sleep by April Pulley Sayre
The Busy Tree by Jennifer Ward
Tree by Britta Teckentrup
Nuts to You by Lois Ehlert

Creatively yours,

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See you next week with issue 2 of Minis at Home!

Share your work on https://www.instagram.com/minimastersaam/
or email pictures to Ann Hansen ahansen@academyartmuseum.org
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