

M is for Masterpiece: An Art Alphabet

David Domeniconi

Will Bullas, Illustrator

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In 1889 when American architect Frank O. Gehry created the Guggenheim Museum in Spain, he proved that art isn't always inside the museum, sometimes art is the museum!

Similar fun facts from A to Z are shared with readers through clever rhymes and visually engaging illustrations in this story about art history. The tale begins thirty thousand years ago with cave drawings in the Pyrenees Mountains of France. Readers are gradually introduced to artists and their tools—paintbrushes, watercolors, and sculpting utensils. Alternating pages offer brief biographies of some of the world's most influential artists, like Michelangelo, Monet, Cassatt, Kahlo, O'Keefe, Picasso, Rembrandt, and Ansel Adams. Artistic techniques, styles, and media are explored, including Impressionism, Japanese printmaking, weaving, quillwork, sculpture, and architecture (the Taj Mahal & the Eiffel Tower).

The illustrations are generous in their use of color. "B is for Brush" displays a deep red-and-turquoise backslash imprinted with bold, black Chinese letters. The foreground contains an array of paintbrushes and a demonstration of how they are used. "C is for Color" shows several color wheels with bright splashes of the primary colors that artists mix to create other colors. Amusing rhymes like "Who even knew? Green owed it all to yellow and blue" complement the art.

The author has written two other titles in this alphabet series. In addition to writing a travel column for the Santa Barbara *News Press*, Domeniconi is the co-owner of a California fine art gallery. The illustrator has won multiple awards and garnered national recognition for his watercolors, graphic design, and poster art. This is his eighth children's book illustration project.

The alphabet layout and simple rhythmic sentences will appeal to beginning readers. Intermediate readers will be captivated by the more advanced vocabulary in the sidebars along the edge of each page. One example is the brief but thorough biography of Leonardo da Vinci, which discusses his birth and death dates, multiple occupations, professional milestones, and most famous works—the *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper*.

Children and adults will enjoy this beautifully written and illustrated book on the history and observation of art.

ANGELA BLACK (October 5, 2006)

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