

# The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies

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## The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies

### Abstract

The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies is a workshop developed by the Pori Centre for Children's Culture and designed for families with babies. The central working principles of the workshop are the multisensorial experiential and experimental qualities of colours and materials, an interactive way of working, being in the moment, and actor-focusedness. The workshops progress from observing colours and touching different materials to self-producing traces. The traces left by the babies, as well as their visual gestures and activity, are considered significant and important. In the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies the main point is not about making a picture or picturing the world, but rather about existing in it. Existence appears as a pictorial, visual or picturesque trace. The work or trace is the baby's existence making itself visible.

Pori Centre for Children's Culture - Network of Children's Culture in Satakunta offers workshops and happenings for children, youth and their families and group activities for children in day-care and school classes. Centre arranges also further education, seminars and exhibitions. Pori

Centre for Children's Culture is part of the culture department of the city of Pori as well as the Union of the Centres for Children's Culture of Finland.

In October 2015 Pori Centre for Children's Culture released a book about the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies in English as well as in Swedish. The book introduces the basic principles of the activity, from material choices to creating a safe workspace. The original publication in Finnish (Vauvojen värikylpy) was released in 2011. The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies activity has spread throughout Finland and internationally through the Pori Centre. Centre has introduced the method with various children's culture festival, for example, in Italy, Ireland and France, and is interested in continuing the presentation of the different countries.

**Keywords:** Colour, Babies, Children's Culture, Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies

### The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies

The work done at the Pori Centre for Children's Culture aims at building and developing the identity of youth and children. The Centre's key areas of operation are to: create and develop cooperation networks; develop working methods based on culture and art as well as on art pedagogy; promote research into children's culture and facilitate the utilization of its results; and to promote children's culture in general. The method of the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies is the main development target. The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies is a form of visual art activity where babies, together



with their parents, produce a visual expression by using different kinds of materials and touching pigments and substances used for painting.

According to many parents the workshops have been a dream come true since they provide an activity related to the visual arts, and for having their own, very special atmosphere. In the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies, every single baby is seen as someone who knows and who can, as a person who is capable of developing many different kinds of talents and expressing unique ways of communication and expression. Actor-focused work means an activity that emphasizes the actor's – the baby's – own activity, and that respects the baby. The baby isn't the target of pedagogic activity, but is a co-actor.

The method of the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies can be adapted to people of different ages and operational environments. For example, the Pori Centre for Children's Culture has developed a new kind activity called Kultane in co-operation with the group child and maternity health clinic of Pori. In the Kultane activity the 6-month old babies get the chance to experience the world of art as well as to paint and explore different materials as a part of the group child health clinic meetings for families. Since 2006 Centre has organized mentor education in order to guarantee the professional circulation of the methods used in the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies. As a mentor of the workshop it is important to know which materials are safe to use, to be visually open-minded and competent and to know how to create a stress-free atmosphere.



Photo: Päivi Setälä





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## The Basic Principles of the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies

The main aim of the workshop is not achievement or efficiency, but sensing and experiencing (see Setälä, 2015). It is about visual enjoyment and delight. Not all things that stimulate the senses leave permanent traces, sometimes they create momentary sensations and memories. The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies offers possibilities of multifaceted interaction between a baby and an adult.

Workshops proceed from experiencing, touching and observing materials, colours and light to producing traces. The traces the babies produce, their visual gestures and their activity are seen as being something significant and important. Small babies are not yet aware of the connection between their own activity and the traces that result from it, but sensing the materials and the activity that is related to them gives the babies and the accompanying adults great pleasure. Little by little the babies also become aware of the connection between their own activity and the traces that are created from it. Being in the moment means that a workshop is supposed to create a moment when you do not think about anything else, just concentrate on visual pleasure. A baby's activity amidst materials and colours also demands of the parents that they surrender to the moment. It is also a question of change and variations of temperature, texture or the weight of materials, the





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intensities, the rhythm and the direction of light. Because it is a question of visual activity, there are often different kinds of prejudices concerning the final result.

It is about an event where something is being done together, with the focus being put on the baby. The Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies contains many elements that are developmentally appropriate, that stimulate mobility and support early interaction, and that are therapeutic (see [Värikylpy.fi](http://www.varikylpy.fi)). However, above all, it is about visual enjoyment and pleasure that is experienced by taking all the senses into consideration in the Experiential Colour Workshop for Babies.

## REFERENCES

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