


An abstract graphic at the top of the page featuring a dense, chaotic scribble of black lines. Behind and around these lines are vibrant splatters of yellow, magenta, and blue paint. The title text is overlaid on this graphic.

6 PLACES TO MAKE ART

Let their creativity run wild with these
fun classes, camps and drop-in options

By Laura Elliott

A photograph of a young child with long blonde hair, seen from the side, wearing a green and yellow patterned apron. The child is holding a paintbrush and painting on a large canvas mounted on an easel. The canvas is covered in colorful, abstract brushstrokes of orange, blue, green, and red. The easel itself is heavily splattered with various colors of paint.

The studios at Play
are ideal for toddlers
through age 5.

What's the most important thing you can teach your children? How to let their imaginations run wild! But don't take it from us. Get some creative tips from the most unique places to make art in L.A. From baking cactus cakes to embracing their inner steampunk rebels, creating fantastic dragons and painting by the sea, go on the greatest adventure with your children and get to know them better as they flex their creative muscles throughout SoCal.

Rebels With a Cause

"Letting kids' imaginations run wild is important because that's what's going to always keep them wondering," says Ponti Lambros, owner of **Art Rebel** (artrebel.net) in Sherman Oaks. "That's what's going to always keep them guessing. That's what's going to always keep them surprised. An art rebel never lets anyone take their creativity away because they protect the importance of being able to create while trusting and empowering their artistic instinct."

An artist collected by Hollywood's elite, Lambros' inspiration runs the gamut from James Dean (the studio is located across the street from the last place the icon had his picture taken in L.A.) to his grandma, who inspired his rebellion by putting a paintbrush in his hand when he was 4. An artist herself, she never told him what to do, and Lambros does the same for the L.A. kids he teaches.

Art Rebel hosts weekly camps, divided by age, for everyone from babies and toddlers (who use nontoxic, water-based paints) to teens. Campers can create steampunk-inspired fashions and art, bring cartoon characters to life and learn to sculpt. The studio also offers mobile art classes.

Branching Out

Samara Caughey, owner of **Purple Twig** (purpletwig.com) in Eagle Rock, says creativity is essential for children because it fosters the art of engagement and exploration. "Creativity isn't limited to what people do with paint on paper," she says. "It's important for life itself."

The studio takes a natural approach, encouraging students to make art using twigs, sticks, rocks and leaves – sometimes including field



Ponti Lambros, owner of Art Rebel, shares laughter and paint with his daughter, Leelu.



At Art Rebel in Sherman Oaks, kids are free to let their imaginations run wild – and make some wild art.

trips into the surrounding neighborhood to gather materials. The focus is on the transformation of natural materials into art with simple additions such as color. Caughey says she added “purple” to the name of her studio because it’s a fun word to say. And it’s all about fun at Purple Twig. Caughey enjoys combining disparate materials such as logs and plaster, incorporating hard and soft elements so children understand the nature of textures and contrast.

The studio offers classes for ages 2-10, as well as private drawing lessons for ages 10-14. In parent-child classes, parents and guardians can create with their 2- and 3-year-olds and introduce little artists to clay, fabric painting, beading, painting and even building with wood and cardboard. Open studio time from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays is an affordable \$15.

Unique among the studio’s classes is the potions class, where students learn about real-life potions that can be used as medicine and also experiment with make-believe potions. Herbs for these creations are harvested from the on-site herb garden.

Seeing - and Making - Art at LACMA

Two things set the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** (lacma.org) in mid-Wishire apart from other art-making experiences. First, the art on view at LACMA provides endless inspiration. Second, the art making is led by teaching artists who have their own studio practices. These artists design their classes with a deep interest in having students develop their own artistic processes.

“When we make art, we are exploring the idea of wonder,” says LACMA Director of Youth & Family Programs Karen Satzman. “We are experimenting with materials, problem solving, balance, expressing ideas and innovating with color and form. When we wonder, we are experiencing cause-and-effect firsthand, which is the most effective way to learn. When we wonder, we cultivate skills to better understand, comprehend and interpret the world. Besides, running wild with our creativity is really fun!”

LACMA’s Experimental Art Lab for ages 10-13 gives teens free rein to push the limits of various artistic materials, including spray paint, printmaking and mixed media. The museum’s family class series, called “5 to 105,” gives parents a chance to learn from their kids and about their kids. Another stand-out is Art School Ready, a class where teens spend a month at the museum learning technical skills in drawing to build a dynamic art portfolio that they can submit with their art school or college applications.

“When we make art, we are exploring the idea of wonder.”
- Karen Satzman, LACMA



ABOVE AND AT RIGHT: Classes and workshops at The Huntington make use of the botanical gardens for inspiration.

“It’s really important to give kids creative freedom.”
- Anne Kelly-Saxenmeyer, Play

ABOVE: Purple Twig students transform natural materials into art with simple additions such as color.

Running Wild at the Huntington

All of the programs at **The Huntington** (huntington.org) in San Marino are grounded in a hands-on, collections-based experience. The museum espouses the open-studio model where kids have the freedom to make their own artistic choices and where kids and their grown-ups get to create art together.

"The Huntington Library is an excellent location for kids to let their creativity run wild because they can literally run wild in its amazing, enchanting green spaces – 120 acres of gardens include our multisensory and interactive Children's Garden," says Kate Zankowicz, manager of public programs and community engagement.

The museum's preschool series, *Playing with Art*, gives kids the chance to create sculpture out of recycled materials, make wearable art and role-play in the galleries. Celebrity cake designer Alana Jones-Mann recently conducted a cactus cupcake workshop where kids studied a specimen from the botanical garden's Desert Garden collection, then re-created it out of cake. A recent workshop called *My First Pizza Box* found kids planting all the ingredients for a pizza, then making their pizza boxes into works of art while feasting on pizza in the herb garden.

Drop-in programs include monthly garden parties with an hour of story time and art at different locations around the grounds. Family evenings are a wonderful opportunity to experience the grounds and collections after hours. Keep a lookout for *Night Owl Night* in June, with special guests (yes, owls) from Wildlife Learning Center.

Enjoying Messy Play

Getting messy at **Play** (playfamily.co), which has locations in mid-Wilshire and Silver Lake, is a unique experience that involves art, plus a music-and-movement curriculum that owner Anne Kelly-Saxenmeyer and her husband James developed with the help of local artists and educators.

"It's really important to give kids creative freedom, especially at this age," says Kelly-Saxenmeyer. "It's easy to get them to think about an end product, but we steer clear of that at all times. I think it's important to give kids basic tools and methods. Just teaching a kid to tear up a piece of paper helps them plug into something wild."

Play's Messy Mixed Media class for ages 2-5 is offered as a three-week short session and a seven-week summer session. The short session is based around a space-themed project called "Made of Stars," which Kelly-Saxenmeyer developed with her scientist father. As part of their quest to bring astronomy into Play and engage kids' imaginations, they figured out a hands-on way to illustrate how the Earth moves around the sun.

The studios, which are ideal for toddlers through age 5, offer drop-in classes on Saturdays so kids can get a feel for the program.

BELOW: Art making at LACMA is led by teaching artists who have their own studio practices.



PHOTO BY BRANT BROGAN



PHOTO BY JAMES SAXENMEYER



PHOTO BY JAMES SAXENMEYER

AT LEFT AND ABOVE: Art making at Play incorporates music, movement and messy fun.

Creating Together in the Lab

Oana Bogdon found that there were few places to create art communally, and didn't like creating in isolation, so she launched **Paint: Lab** (paintlab.net) in Santa Monica. She offers her students themes to follow, but allows the kids to explore the media they work with. The magic happens somewhere between the instruction and the expression, which is where creativity comes in.

"Creating analog, tactile art is a great way for kids to become well-rounded in a digital age," says Bogdon. "There's magic to experience from actually putting color on canvas and experimenting with paints and brushes to create a work of art."

Bogdon spent more than 16 years as an art director and production designer in the film industry before creating Paint: Lab. She emigrated to the U.S. from Romania as a child, and as a teen loved reading fantasy and science fiction. Her studio offers an interactive fantasy class on Fridays. Students explore a particular aspect of fantasy art – from fairies to dragons, cartoons and caricatures. She offers plein air classes near the ocean. Fairies or dragons? Bogdon picks dragons every time.

Reservations are required for all kids' classes, but kids and adults can drop in any time for an uninstructed painting day.

And that's a wrap! Enjoy all the beautiful projects and magical memories making art in L.A. will bring to you and your family this summer and know that you are helping to instill lifelong creativity in your kids. ♦

When Laura Elliott, a local writer, isn't writing to inspire readers with life-changing, planet-healing stories from around the world, she writes books for global thought leaders and blogs at laurasmagicday.com.



PHOTO BY SAMARA CAUGHNEY

Purple Twig students transform natural materials into art with simple additions such as color.

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