

Messy Mondays



In the lime green room, plastic covers the floor. It's the perfect setup for the birth of a Jackson Pollack masterpiece, but today's artists are much smaller. Toddlers waddle across the canvas in onesies and diapers armed with a variety of painting tools, their parents chatting and distributing red, orange, yellow, green, and blue paint to their little Picassos. Everyone is having so much fun that it's hard to believe it's Monday.

This is no ordinary Monday, it's Messy Monday at The Creative Cow, a family art center in Forest Hill, Maryland. Once a month, children aged 9-24 months are invited to explore their creative (and social) all while painting a keepsake work of art. The cost is \$10 per child for a one hour session, and the best part is that the mess stays there!

My friend Rachel and her 18-month-old son, Mason, invited us to Messy Monday in May. Our designated project was a canvas with a metallic letter ("M" for Mason; "L" for Leo) stuck to the middle. The boys (okay, mostly the moms) painted around their letter and removed it to find their special letter in a white space surrounded by bursts of color. They even used the tires on toy cars to paint!



The highlight of the night was when the hosts brought out shaving cream and the little guys smeared it all over the big paper, all over their bellies, and all in their hair. Some parents were the victims of shaving cream attacks as well.

The bright, energetic room bubbled over with laughter, but some very important learning was happening, too. In addition to practicing fine motor skills, the toddlers were tapping into the right sides of their brains, where outside-the-box thinking originates. This kind of thinking is essential to developing problem-solving skills that will help them make the world a little bit better when they grow up. But for now, let's just let them make messes.

Creative Cow will be hosting another Messy Monday on July 13th at 6 pm. Register by emailing thecreativecowinc@gmail.com and dress for the mess!

