

## Creating Icons in the Classroom

- ✓ Icons are usually painted on board or wood – use the thickest card available. Size approx. 30 cm x 20 cm.
- ✓ Draw a frame about 2 cm wide around the card – the frame represents earth, and the picture within represents heaven. The frame may be patterned or gold – it should make the finished result look like a window.
- ✓ Sketch the picture using the “rules” below as guidelines. Remember to include the symbol which tells you who the person is.
- ✓ Make up a mixture of egg yolks, vinegar and water. Use this mixture to make up your powder paints. This may require some experimenting to get the proportions right. (You should need no more than one teaspoon of vinegar)
- ✓ When painting your icon always paint the haloes and “gold” areas last. As you probably do not have enough real gold leaf to go round, you may have to improvise with either gold paper or glitter!

The meaning of the colours you use:

- **Red** is the colour of the presence of God. Of majesty and power
- **Blue** is the colour of humankind. Jesus should wear both blue and red, as he is both human and divine.
- **White** means a miracle
- **Green** is earth and growth
- **Gold** is heaven and the place of God.

| <b>Icons – What you do</b>  | <b>And why you do it</b>   |
|---|--|
| The main figure you are painting should be right at the very front of the picture, facing front, so that they are looking straight at you.  | When people look at an icon they are entering into a relationship with the saint, so you need to see their full face and know they are looking at you.   |
| The faces of the saints have large, almond-shaped eyes, enlarged ears, long thin noses, and small mouths.   | Icon painters are trying to show that the saints are holy, so they do not look like normal people. Their senses (speech, hearing, sight) have all been changed by their relationship with God.   |
| The painting must be flat, without any perspective or 3D effects. Important objects in the background can be larger than less important objects in the foreground, or they can be strange shapes. There should be no shadows.   | Icon painters are using a different kind of technique which experts call “reverse perspective”.<br>The figure should look as if they are shining with light because Christ is inside them, so the light comes from them, not from the sun or a lamp. |
| The most important figure in the painting should be the largest and in the centre.  | This is a way of showing what is the most important thing in the painting.   |
| If you are painting an event or story which took place indoors you should paint your figures outside with the walls of the house or city etc behind them.<br>You can show several moments of the same story in one icon. E.g. if you are painting the Christmas story you could show Jesus’ birth, the arrival of the Wise Men, and the shepherds spreading the good news all in the same picture. This is rather like a cartoon strip and is called “continuous style” | This is to allow you to concentrate on the people and the meaning of the event, rather than worrying about getting the details of the background right.  |

For some more Icon FAQs see: <http://www.iconenatelierversdonk.nl/over-iconen/vragen-engels.html>