

## Earth colours – an ancient and brand new communication tool

According to the available knowledge, the use of earth colours has its origin at the beginning of the early Paleolithic Age (Upper Palaeolithic 40,000 to 8,000 years BC) in southern France and northern Spain. Hidden in the caves, the works of the Stone Age people have been preserved for thousands of years. With paints made of earth pigments, bound with bird eggs, tree gum, fat, blood or animal excrement, animals, people and characters were preferred.

Nowadays, engaging with earth colours seems to be more of a niche affair for artists and scientists. Wrongly! The occupation with the colours of the earth and their creative possibilities opens up in a unique way for each individual at the same time a view of the context of life and history and the soil as our livelihood.

In the context of the soil campaign of the government of Lower Austria "our soil - we stand upon", earth colours from Lower Austrian soil were extracted in 2008 and used with great enthusiasm in educational institutions. The campaign and the following EU projects with partners from Austria and neighboring countries were very successful.

Over 100,000 people, mainly children and young people from Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Austria have already worked with earth colours from their home country, painted in creative competitions and at information stands and thus found more reference to "their soil" and their artistic competences as well.



The basis of all projects is a painting box with up to 15 different types of regional "Colours of the Earth". These colours of course differ according to the soil types of regions and soils which are used for the production of these colours. On behalf of the Technical Department of Rural Development of the Lower Austrian Agricultural District Authorities, up to now more than 1,200 "soil colour painting boxes" have been produced for national and international projects. All work steps from extracting soil colours to sale and return / repair of painting boxes are performed by social enterprises, which renders this project sustainable as a whole.

## Many topics can be dealt with integrally through “Painting with the colours of the Earth”:

### 1. Topic of **soil conservation**

Rendering our soil visible: sensibly use – carefully protect soil!

I can only appreciate what I know.

Only what I appreciate, I will protect.



### 2. Topic of **sustainability**

In the production of the respective colours and painting boxes an integral sustainable concept is used. Production is only performed with persons with special needs in social enterprises. All materials used, such as, for instance, domestic wood, respects ecological criteria.

### 3. Topic of **arts, history and (European) unity**

For thousands of years, people have painted „with the colours of the Earth“, i.e. with colour pigments, which have been extracted directly from soil. Historical natural and cultural changes can be read from soil. It serves as a carrier of information and culture and shows us a reality of prosperous coexistence without artificial boundaries.

### **Mutual learning and sustainability**

Sustainable solutions cannot be found in the dialogue between politics and economy only.

A sustainable solution of environmental problems relevant to society necessarily requires an integration of science and the population (transdisciplinarity).

Mutual learning makes use of different types and sources of knowledge, in order to find appropriate and innovative solutions for environmental problems relevant to society:

- Academic knowledge in various disciplines (interdisciplinarity)
- practical knowledge of experts in politics, economy, NGOs and so on
- knowledge from experience of the population as experts in their own surrounding world they live in

-> **The total of this knowledge is greater and corrects the deviation of single perspectives!**



## **Cooperation offers: SOILART FOR YOU(R PLANET)**

The concept “soilart for you(r planet)” enables regions/local bodies to extract and use soil colours of their own - in production together with social enterprises

In cooperation with our partner organizations  
Lower Austrian Agricultural District Authority and  
wpa the BIENE association offers a wide range of  
cooperation.

### **SOILART FOR YOU(R PLANET) Painting with the Colours of the Earth -**

Concept of society education and  
global program for soil awareness  
and sustainability in your region

#### **1) Production of soil colours**

- \* Training on the extraction of soil colors from soils typical of the region
- \* Provision of mobile soil colour production facility (sieve stack, drying oven and others)

#### **2) Painting box “with the Colours of the Earth”**

- \* Production manual for sustainable painting boxes
- \* Procurement option to buy painting boxes from social enterprises
- \* Procurement option for colour jars and labels according to ecological criteria



#### **3) Artistic support**

- \* Professional training seminars for multipliers for use of soil colours
- \* Information material on painting techniques with and upon natural materials as well as natural binding agents

#### **4) A strong trademark**

- \* Use of trademark “SOILart – with the Colours of the Earth”
- \* Use of [www.soilart.eu](http://www.soilart.eu) web platform as a communication platform



#### **5) Painting competitions**

- \* Use of sustainable conditions for participation in competitions inclusive of assessment model and artistic criteria for soil colour painting competitions
- \* Use of web software in English for performance of online voting within the framework of soil colour painting competitions

#### **6) SOILart exposition:**

- \* International touring exposition of SOILart „with the Colours of the Earth“

#### **7) Earth Colours and Social Media**

- \* New methods for researching their own environment for individuals and groups
- \* Obtaining earth colors and knowledge
- \* Storytelling like Soil blog
- \* linking to local and international interest groups
- \* New kind of non-competitive competitions



The last 15 years we have learned some essentials in using earth colours for local and international communication and how to motivate people to look more diverse about soil and (their) lives!

With this background of enthusiastic, artistic and joyful experiences we feel able to offer tailor-made services for the production and application of earth colours implemented in a wide range of regional, national and international soil protection projects. If there is interest and need, we suggest offering our communication services as experts to all interested organizations in Europe instead of submitting just some own projects. In this way, we can use earth colours across Europe according to proven, sustainable criteria. Experiences and results from many individual projects could be used for all those interested in soil protection.

Looking forward to a committed dialogue and to see you again at the next conference of the Danube Region this September in Tulln!

<http://www.unserboden.at/1142-0-15+und+16+September+2021.htm?&qoback=174>

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