

Nature Shaper Paper™

A Lesson in Earth Art in the style of Christo and Jeanne-Claude (art + science)

In protest against the commercialism of art in the late 1960s, a group of artists began creating works that stepped outside the walls of galleries and museums and merged with the landscape. These artworks were often planned around a specific site, placed in remote locations, enormously proportioned and designed to change with time and elements.

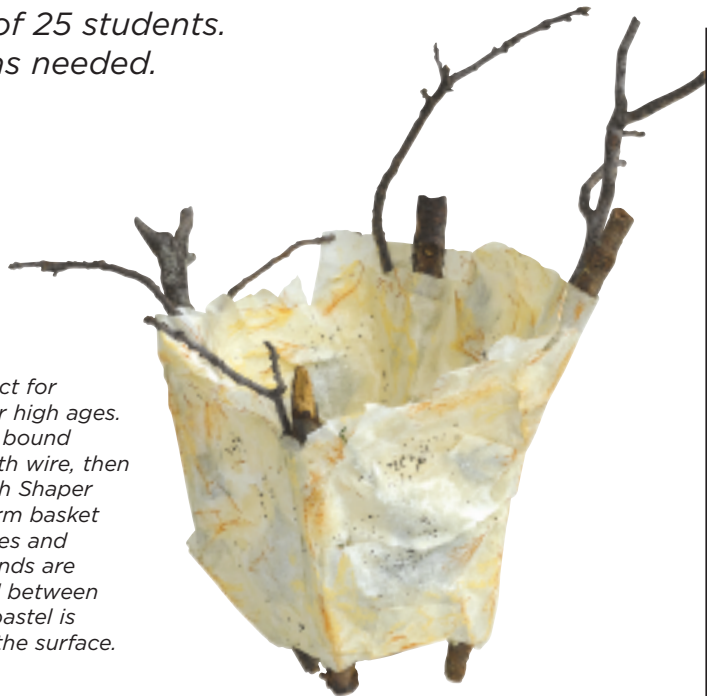
Some works of Earth Art introduce man-made elements into the natural environment, as with Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Wrapped Trees*, 1997-1998. Others create art from the earth itself, as in Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, 1970.

Students create a sculpture, window or wall art using leaves, twigs, rocks and other natural materials, wrapped together with Crayola® Shaper Paper™. This product works like instant paper mâché, but it dries faster and comes in tidy, easy-to-use sheets of paper. Activate the embedded adhesive with tap water. It dries crisp and translucent.

Grade Levels 3-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students.

Adjust as needed.



Right: Project for junior/senior high ages. Sticks were bound together with wire, then covered with Shaper Paper to form basket shape. Leaves and coffee grounds are sandwiched between layers and pastel is applied on the surface.

Preparation

1. Look at examples of Land Art, Earth Art, and Environmental Art. Recommended resource: [Land Art](#), (70033-1046) from the Taschen Basic Art Series on Art Movements



Above: Project for Elementary/Middle ages. Shaper Paper formed over sticks which were removed after drying. Leaves were sandwiched between layers and light watercolor washes applied to the top. Example is viewed with light from behind.

Materials

[Crayola® Shaper Paper™](#) (34962-1009), package of 100, 8-1/2" x 11" sheets, plan on six sheets per student

Materials gathered from nature

[Elmer's® Glue-All](#) 4-oz (23810-1004), share six bottles across classroom

[Natural Jute Twine](#), 2-ply (62984-8542), one roll per class

[Natural Copper Wire](#), 24 gauge, 100-ft coil, (33415-1024), share two across classroom

Optional Materials

[Crayola® Educational Watercolors](#), 16-color set (00309-0009)

[Blick® Pastels](#), set of 12 Earthtones (20016-0129), share one set between four students

[Sand](#), Beige (61006-8142) or Brown (61006-8002)

[Natural Feather Assortment](#) (61432-1005)

Preparation, continued

2. Collect materials from natural surroundings to be used in sculpture.

Examples:

- Sticks and twigs
- Leaves of all shapes and sizes
- Grasses and weeds
- Flowers and dried petals
- Small stones and pebbles
- Bark
- Seeds and seed pods
- Corn Husks
- Feathers

In most cases, drying materials is not necessary; it will occur naturally within the piece.

Process

1. To begin, students will need to build a basic armature for their piece:

Elementary/Middle - Students lay twigs down on a cookie sheet or plastic tray. They must use a non-stick surface — Shaper Paper will stick to cardboard or regular paper. Masking tape may be used to hold twigs together or to keep them in place on the tray.

Junior/Senior - Students build an armature by wire-tying, gluing, tacking or binding twigs together with jute. Shaper Paper will lack any structural strength while wet, so the underlying form will need to be created to support the piece.

2. Shaper Paper will be added one layer at a time. Cut or tear into strips and shapes, then wrap around twig structure, sticking the paper to itself. Adhesive is on both sides. To charge the adhesive, dip paper strip in a container of water, then use thumb and forefinger to gently slide down the strip and work off excess water. Be careful — too heavy of a “squeegee” action will also remove adhesive.

The first layer will be the most difficult to build, due to the softness of the wet paper. Concentrate on wrapping the parts of the twig structure. Subsequent layers will attach to the first layer and add more strength. It may be necessary to use a drop of glue in places to keep the Shaper Paper firmly in place.

3. Allow to dry between layers. Placing in a sunny location, under a lamp or in front of a fan will speed drying time.

4. Apply two or three more layers. The more layers, the more opaque the piece will be. Ideas:
 - Sandwich leaves, flowers, grass, bark chips, small pebbles and other materials between layers.
 - Sprinkle sand, dirt, coffee grounds and other materials onto the surface of the wet Shaper Paper to create texture.
 - If more support is needed, add more twigs or more layers of Shaper Paper.
5. Once dry, Shaper Paper can be adjusted if desired. Bend, fold, trim and tear until the desired effect is achieved.
6. Leave as is or apply watercolor or pastel. Use colors that are harmonious with the natural materials used in the piece.

Copyright © 2008 Dick Blick Art Materials. All rights reserved. JD

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

5-8 Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices

9-12 Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

K-4 Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas

5-8 Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas

9-12 Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

K-4 Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

5-8 Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts

9-12 Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or sciences