

SCULPTING GIANT PAPER MACHE HEADS

Cardboard & papier-mâché

Grade Level: Sculpture

Duration: 15 classes, 76 minutes

Materials:

- Cardboard
- Newspaper
- Paper Mache
- Gesso
- X-acto Knives
- Masking Tape
- Acrylic Paint

Media: Cardboard & Paper Mache



Lesson

Objectives: [See Curriculum Expectations Checklist](#)

By the end of this lesson students will have an understanding of the following concepts:



Vocabulary:

Figurative Sculpture, Paper Mache, Additive, Scoring, Assemblage, Trompe L'oeil, proportion

Introductory Activity

by the work of [C. Jagdish](#)

Lesson Process

Planning Paper Mâché Head Sculptures



We started this project by choosing a notable person that the students would like to sculpt. I had the students collect a range of photos of the person so that they could use those as references for the head shape and facial features. We also studied standard facial proportion to help us determine the size and placement of facial features on the head.



Paper Mâché Head Construction

Once planned, we started on the construction. You can see the detailed instructions for the construction of this project in the handout below and you can download a free .pdf file at the end of this post.

Basically, each student needed to make a cylinder of cardboard that fit around their head, without going over their shoulders. The cylinder should cover their entire head and extend around 4-5 inches above the top of their heads, when worn. We created the cylinders by using an X-acto knife to score lines in cardboard to make it curve. We then formed it into a cylinder and secured it with tape.

The remaining construction steps involve using cardboard and newspaper to secure the form and sculpt the face. The sculpting consists of crumpling the newspaper into different shapes and securing it

on the head with tape. We then cover the entire form in tape to give it a smoother surface on which to add the paper mâché.

The students are just now starting on their painting. We are discussing trompe l'oeil painting techniques to add the appearance of texture and details in areas like facial features and hair. This style of painting tricks the eye into perceiving painted details as three-dimensional objects, so it can be used to enhance the form of our sculptures. I'm excited to see how they turn out and I'll be creating another post for the finished products so check back soon for that.

Interested in trying this project in your classroom? Download [Paper Mâché Head Instructions](#)

Paper Mache paste Recipe

Dissolve 1/2 cup cornstarch into 1 cup warm water.
Heat one quart of water on the stove. Slowly stir



the dissolved cornstarch into one quart of boiling water. Once it thickens, turn off. Let cool before using. You will need 2 or 3 times this amount for a 3' x 3' mask. Make it fresh each time or store it in the fridge - it gets moldy fast. For a large amount at once use 2 cups cornstarch to 1 gallon of water.

- See instruction sheet & Slideshow
- Be sure to have plenty of [Masking Tape](#) on hand. [Heavy Duty Aluminum Foil Roll](#) can work wonders to help smooth shapes out, if desired.
- What other materials might you be able to use? Maybe some larger size vegetable/fruit cans can work for necks - roll of cardboard for neck ... Five gallon ice cream containers from Baskin and Robbins (or any local Ice cream parlor)... Corrugated cardboard scored and bent into a column for the body-- so many possibilities! If you decide to use [balloons](#) as a base to get heads going -- with cardboard or chip board faces taped to the front - then I would suggest a first layer of [Plaster Gauze](#) strips since balloons do shrink after a day or two (another layer of [Paper Mache](#) can be applied over the plaster). Whatever materials you decide to use - do not expect students to remember to bring them in (smile) -- you will send mom's scurrying to the grocery store at midnight only to find all boxes have been burned already.
- Working rather quickly -- smooth strips of newspaper dipped in [Wheat Paste](#) over the entire armature. If you have enough brown paper bags, you could use those, but soak over night. Your second layer can be end rolls of paper toweling (ask your custodian to save those for you too). Arms can be added keeping rather flat and abstract as Jagdish has. Notice the cardboard "Peace" hand in the example above. Note: Flour and water, [Elmer's Glue](#) (thinned with water) - or kid safe wheat paste gives you a harder finish needed for this project.
- Paint in [Acrylic Paint](#) . Melissa's goal was for students to get that subtle shading that [Jagdish uses](#). See how some of the near finished work has a slight cubist look to the faces (one side darker than the other). Glass globules have been inserted for the iris of the eyes



Assessment

- Students are assessed using a rubric.
- Formative assessments are given to ensure understanding of the lesson.
 - Sketchbook drawings are done first to informally see if students are grasping contour concepts.



Resources

[Sculpting Giant Paper Mache Heads | Artsy Dork](#)

[Lesson Plan: Life Size Paper Mache Figures](#)

[The Big Head Project | WVartist's Weblog](#) Big head project

PAPER MÂCHÉ HEADS

TERMS:

SCORING

FIGURATIVE
SCULPTURE

ADDITIVE

TROMP L'OEIL

PROPORTION

SUPPLIES:

CARDBOARD

GESSO

X-ACTO KNIVES

MASKING
TAPE

ACRYLIC
PAINT

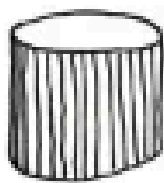
NEWSPAPER

PAPER MÂCHÉ

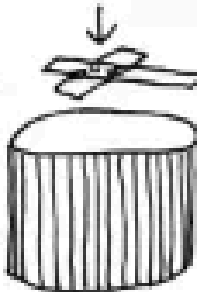


artsyfork.com

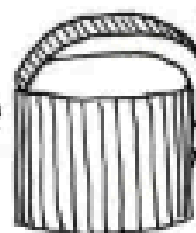
Instructions



1. SCORE CARDBOARD AND FORM IT INTO A CYLINDER THAT FITS OVER YOUR HEAD, BUT NOT YOUR SHOULDERS. SECURE WITH TAPE.



2. CREATE BRACES WITH INTERSECTING PIECES OF FLAT CARDBOARD. ATTACH TO THE TOP INSIDE LIP OF YOUR CYLINDER WITH TAPE.



3. SCORE A LONG STRIP OF CARDBOARD. SECURE ONE END TO THE TOP OF THE FACE AREA AND SECURE THE OTHER END TO THE LOWER MIDDLE BACK OF THE HEAD. YOU SHOULD TRY TO MIMIC THE CURVE FROM THE FOREHEAD TO THE BACK NAPE OF THE NECK.



4. CRUMPLE NEWSPAPER AND USE IT TO FORM THE OVERALL HEAD SHAPE. SECURE WITH TAPE.



5. USE MARKER TO DIAGRAM THE FACE, THEN CRUMPLE AND TAPE NEWSPAPER TO CREATE THE JAW, BROW LINE, CHEEKS, NOSE, LIPS, EYES, EARS, AND HAIR. ONCE COMPLETE, COVER THE WHOLE FORM IN TAPE.



6. DIP PIECES OF NEWSPAPER (NO BIGGER THAN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND) IN PAPER MÂCHÉ PASTE AND SMOOTH ONTO THE SURFACE OF THE HEAD. MAKE SURE TO OVERLAP AND COAT THE ENTIRE FORM. ALLOW IT TO DRY COMPLETELY.



7. PAINT GESSO OVER THE ENTIRE FORM. ALLOW IT TO DRY COMPLETELY.



8. PAINT APPROPRIATE DETAILS USING ACRYLIC PAINT. START BY PAINTING A BASE COAT OF SKIN AND HAIR, THEN ADD DETAILS USING A TROMP L'OEIL TECHNIQUE TO ACCENTUATE THE FORM.

