

LESSON PLAN: Art Garden

By Heather Lamanno Lough, October 2010

Learn about unusual materials in art and create a 3-D garden with mixed media.

Key questions / ideas

Students will learn about different processes and non-traditional materials used in contemporary art. Any type of materials requires skill and planning to manipulate into artwork. Students will learn that the only limitation on what kinds of materials an artist may use is the extent of their imagination and creativity.

Who has a garden or yard at home? What other gardens or landscaping have you seen?

What kinds of imaginary plants can you envision?

What kinds of materials have you used before to make arts & crafts?

Have you ever played with something ordinary, and imagined that it was something else? (i.e. ice cream cone as a microphone, stick as a magic wand, towel as a superhero cape, etc.)

Why do you think an artist would choose to use non-traditional art materials?

How are the elements (color, shape, line, texture) still important, no matter what the art material?



Objectives

INTRODUCTION: Name some real **plants** we might find growing in our yards at home:

Trees, bushes, grass, flowers, vegetables, mushrooms...

Read My Garden picture book by Kevin Henkes to start discussion about imaginary plants, and natural vs. human made materials.

Introduce the term **mixed media**. Discuss and identify different kinds of **art materials** (usual vs. unusual):

2-D: Paint, pencils, crayons, markers, paper frosting, mustard, water, rock chalk

3-D: Clay, metal, wood, stone mud, bubbles, mashed potatoes, leaves

PRACTICE ACTIVITY: experiment making different lines and shapes with colorful wire: waves, zigzags, spirals, circles, etc. Demonstrate how to connect wire stems to misc. objects.

We will begin a studio project using mixed media in a plaster base to create a 3-D art garden.

1. Adults should **cut the carton top** off with scissors and **wash it** with soap to get all the juice out.
2. Adults should **mix the plaster** for the children; we'll have 2 adult assistants for each class.
 - Fill the carton with about an inch of water and then added about 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of plaster powder.
 - Stir it with a wood paint stirrer, if it looks a little soupy add a bit more plaster, and you will end up with a brick that is about 2 inches tall.
3. The students will have plenty of time to **stick materials into the plaster** while it is still wet.
4. Then we should **set it aside** during the tour until hard; if the students fidget with the wire or pipe cleaners while it is still setting, it will leave a gap in the surface that will not fill back in!

We will enjoy a museum tour exploring artwork made out of different kinds of fabric, thread, beads, sequins, paint, buttons, metal, etc.

TIPS FOR PLASTER PROJECT

We do have a plaster trap in the sink drain plumbing that both classroom sinks run through, but we should definitely try to get most of it off our hands with wet paper towels directly into the trash can so we don't have big chunks going down the sink.

For the cup or paper carton, teachers should first experiment and find the ideal ratio of water to plaster for the amount needed to fill the vessel and for the correct consistency. If time and supervision allows, you may allow the children to use measuring spoons to measure out the needed "ingredients" and then stir it themselves with a wooden craft stick.

The metallic pipe cleaners stay in the hardened plaster pretty well, but the soft ones only stay stuck when you lay them in with a bent part so more surface is touching; a soft one sticking straight in seems to pull out really easily of the hardened plaster, so if there is some sort of bend or hook shape at the end (that would act like a plant root) it would be more likely to stay put.

Water based markers look great on the exterior walls when you color them once it is set (after 45 minutes, it's a bit warm but not too warm to touch), but as the plaster dries overnight, the lines blur as the color absorbs into the plaster surface. Kind of a cool effect, but unexpected!

Vocabulary

Mixed media

Traditional

Non-traditional

Sculpture

Installation

3-dimensional

2-dimensional

Translucent

Landscaping

Materials needed

Plaster (to be mixed in paper juice cartons by adults, *prior to tour* to allow up to 45 min to set)

1 paper cup or juice carton per student (washed with soap and water, top half cut off prior to class)

Wooden paint stirrer or craft stick

Decorative elements: sequins, beads, buttons, aluminum can tabs, brass fasteners, pompoms

Pipe cleaners (metallic and fuzzy)

Markers

Twisteez wire

Scissors

Straws

Glue

Yarn

Tape

Hands-on Tour Elements: Magic Rope, dog tags, silver metal misc. photos of fish scales & dragons, red velvet ribbon, glitter socks, sequins, photos of Soundsuit performances

Assessment

Even though we all used the same white plaster base, our works all look different, don't they?

Which students used similar materials?

Where do you see different shapes, lines and textures?

What experiments worked well for you with the new materials?

What about the process surprised you?

What was your favorite part of the museum tour?

Which pieces have characteristics similar to works we saw on our tour?



Amir H. Fallah (Iranian American, b. 1979)

Mother of The West, 2015

Acrylic, collage, colored pencil and spray paint on paper mounted to canvas

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2015.165



Do-Ho Suh (Korean, b. 1962)

Some/One, 2004

Stainless steel military dog tags, steel structure, fiberglass resin, fabric

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003.02

Gift of Marti and Tony Oppenheimer and the Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation in honor of their children



Nick Cave (American, b. 1959)

Soundsuits, 2005 and 2011

Found sequined and beaded materials, hand sewn, mixed media, mannequin and armature; Buttons, wire, bugle beads, basket, upholstery and mannequin

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006.48 and 2001.01

Gift of Marti and Tony Oppenheimer and the Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation in honor of Sally Oppenheimer



Allison Schulnik (American, b. 1978)

Skipping Skeletons, 2008

Oil on canvas

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008.20

Gift of Marti and Tony Oppenheimer and the Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation