

Studio Lesson/Papermaking

Overview:

This lesson introduces students and teachers to the technique of papermaking. A perfect way to combine visual arts and environment education, papermaking turns natural and recycled materials into beautiful handmade creations which can be used for 2D and 3D projects.

Supplies:

- **Equipment:** 1 medium Rubbermaid storage bin, 1 Mould and Deckle, J-Cloths (1-2 per student,) large stack of newspapers, 1 blender, 1 fine mesh sieve, rags, rubber gloves.
- **Materials:** Necessary: Discarded bond paper from the school recycling bin. Optional: cotton lint (from dryers,) tissue paper, colouring agents such as water-based paint, tissue paper pulp, powdered tempera paint, natural vegetable dyes, and decorative additives like rose petals, leaves, grass, thread, sparkles, etc.

Set-Up:

- Make the Mould and Deckle from painting stretchers available from most art supply stores. Buy enough stretchers pieces to make two equal-sized stretchers (eg. 8 pieces.) Ensure that the stretchers have at least one flat side (one sloped side is fine.) Assemble them. Cover the flat side of one stretcher with aluminum screen (like the kind used on windows, available at hardware stores) using a staple gun. Place the flat side of the empty stretcher (the Deckle) next to the flat side of the one with the screen (the Mould.)
- Turn the paper into wet pulp by shredding, cutting or tearing it into small (1 cm) pieces and soaking it in water in a pail or storage bin for at least 3 hours. Place a ½ cup of wet pulp in the blender with 1 cup of water and blend until the consistency of runny oatmeal (this is the pulp.)
- Place the pulp in the Rubbermaid storage bin and add more water to it to make a pea soup-like consistency. Add decorative additives and colouring as desired.
- Place the lid of the storage bin on a table next to the pulp and cover with 2-4 inches of newspapers. Top the pile of newspapers with a few newspapers folded in half to make a raised center. Cover with 2 or 3 J-cloths or old pieces of felt.

Instructions:

- Stir the pulp mixture. Place the Deckle on top of the Mould (screen side up) and dip both quickly into the pulp bin and lift evenly, keeping the Mould and Deckle level. Let the water drain through the Mould, and then gently lift the Deckle off of the Mould and place to one side.
- Carefully flip the Mould onto the newspaper/J-cloth mound, rolling smoothly from one side to the other once to transfer the thin layer of pulp from the Mould

- to the J-Cloth. Tap the Mould screen lightly if the pulp sticks to the screen. (If the pulps slides off the Mould before it can be flipped, the pulp mixture needs more water added to it. If it won't come off the Mould at all, it is too thin and needs more pulp added to it.)
- Turn each piece of paper onto a separate J-Cloth. Layer the J-cloths into a pile and drain excess water off the bin lid. Let sit overnight with a heavy flat object on top. Gently separate the J-Cloths from each other and let the paper dry completely still attached to them. Carefully peel the dried paper from each J-Cloth. Iron if desired to smooth paper.
 - **Note:** Dispose of excess pulp by running it through a sieve first (the thickened pulp can go into the blue box) or by flushing it down a toilet. Pulp will block drains if poured directly down a sink.

Variations:

- Add colour to the pulp using water-based paint, blended tissue paper or other pigments (such as powdered paints or fabric dyes.)
- Add texture to the pulp using things from nature (eg. grass, leaves, petals, seeds, etc.) or human-made objects (eg. thread, yarn, shredded tissue paper, glitter, etc.)
- Place cookie cutters on the top of the Mould screen and pour pulp through it to get shaped paper.
- Layer wet shaped paper one on top of the other to create patterns and designs.
- Emboss paper by placing a flat object (eg. a leaf) on the top of a pulled sheet of pulp just before it is rolled onto the J-cloths.
- Laminate other flat objects into wet paper (eg. photos, natural objects) to encase it like a frame.
- Apply thick wet pulp to a shaped object (eg. inside of a bowl) to capture the shape of that object. When dry, remove the molded pulp from the object.

Extensions

- Use handmade paper as the basis for another artwork, such as paper masks, paper sculptures, paintings, text-based work, handmade boxes, handmade books, etc.
- Use handmade paper with wildflower seed embedded in it to make cards or gifts that can be planted in the garden.

Resources:

- Elizabeth Couzins-Scott, *New Crafts: Papermaking*. Lorenz Books, 1999. ISBN 1859678920.
- Articles for Papermaking for Beginners
<http://www.handpapermaking.org/ArticlesforBeginnersIndex.html>
- Recycling and Hand Papermaking
<http://hometown.aol.com/Ppreble2/paper.html>
- The Japanese Paper Place. 887 Queen St. W. Toronto tel. 416-369-0089
<http://www.japanesepaperplace.com/>