

# Shrink Art Mosaics

Creating mosaics is a compelling artform, in part because of the endless selection of material choices. Glass, pebbles, metals, wood, shells, recycled materials — over the centuries mosaics have been created from a huge variety of objects.

Add one more medium to the list of mosaic supplies available — Shrink Film. It's not just for kids anymore.

Create custom mosaic tiles exactly the way you want them to look by drawing, painting, stamping and cutting precise shapes. Personal artwork, photos, logos, lettering - whatever you can draw, print and cut out can be worked into a mosaic piece.

When they shrink down, they become rigid, durable and thick, with a glossy shine that looks like ceramic chips. Attach them to a rigid base with glue, then apply grout to hold them permanently in place. Create an entire mosaic from Shrink Art "tiles," or combine with other mosaic media.

## Grade Levels 5-12

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

## Preparation

1. Begin with carefully planning the size of the mosaic. It will need to be created at 200% of the final size. For this example, to make a finished mosaic on a 9" x 12" panel, the artwork will be prepared size 18" x 24".

NOTE: When baked, Grafix Shrink Film will be about 1/3 to 1/2 the original size. To be on the safe side, plan for 1/2 - if the film shrinks smaller, a border can be added around the edge.



## Materials

Graphix® Shrink Film, 8-1/2" x 11", 6-sheet package assorted color (61767-1010) or White (61412-1010) Each mosaic will need about two sheets of Shrink Film.

Sharpie® Fine Point Markers (21316-0129), assorted colors; share across classroom

Masonite Panel, 6" x 6" (14945-1066) OR 9" x 12" (14945-1023), need one per student

Blick® White Sulphite Drawing Paper, 60-lb (10209-1009), 100-sheet package; need one 18" x 24" sheet per student

Blick® Economy Graphite Pencils (20302-2009), box of 12; need one per student

Fiskars® School/Craft Scissors (57011-1005), need one per student

3M Scotch™ #811 Magic Plus™ Removable Transparent Tape (23002-1501), share three rolls across classroom

Delta® Sobo® White Glue (23820-1004), share eight 4-oz bottles across classroom

Blick Studio® Tile Grout, black (61132-2020) or white (61132-1000), share one tub between 8 students

Craftsticks (60433-1002), box of 1000, need one per student

Latex Disposable Gloves (35200-1020), need one glove per student

Oven

## Optional Materials:

Glass Globs, 3/8" (34924-1106)

Fancy Glass Bead Assortment (61520-1001)



*Layout for mosaic, created at 200% on 18" x 24" paper. Includes white, color and InkJet Shrink Film with marker embellishment.. After shrinking, the artwork was glued and grouted on a masonite panel*

## Process

1. Draw the mosaic design out on a piece of heavy drawing paper. Hints:
  - Leave 1/4" space between pieces on all sides. This will leave room for grout.
  - Design so that pieces are no less than 1-1/2". They can be narrower, but make sure that one dimension is at least 1-1/2". Larger pieces will have less tendency to curl in the oven and will be easier to work with.
  - Keep the design simple, using as few pieces as possible.
  - Draw the design first with a pencil, so that lines can be erased, then trace the final lines with a black marker.
  - Plan to use other materials in the final mosaic. For example, incorporate glass pebbles, as in the example above. Draw their placement into the design, remembering to leave an area 200% larger than you will actually need.
2. Cut and design the mosaic pieces. Hints:
  - Use Shrink Film Colors, Black or White. Add lines and patterns, shading and definition directly onto the cut mosaic pieces with permanent markers. You may also use light applications of acrylic paint or stamp with ink on the pieces.

- Incorporate images as mosaic tiles by printing on Inkjet Shrink Film, then cutting around the image.

- Most Shrink Film is translucent. Place it over the mosaic design so that you can see the marker lines through the film. Trace the shape onto the film with a marker of similar color and cut out with scissors.

3. As pieces are cut out, stick them onto the design with a looped piece of tape.

- Using a permanent marker, number each piece on the back side and mark the corresponding number on the paper with the mosaic design. This will assist in reassembling the design. It may also be helpful to take a digital photo to refer to.

4. Read all instructions on the Shrink Film package carefully before placing the mosaic pieces in an oven or toaster oven. Hints:

- Place the pieces on parchment paper, not directly on a baking sheet. Cover with a second sheet of parchment paper. Staple the edges of the sheets together, and in between pieces, if possible. On the top sheet between pieces (not touching them) place a metal table knife or spoon to weight the paper down.

- Expect imperfections with Shrink Film. For best results, follow the instructions on the package; however, expect distortions such as waviness or curling. Some of this distortion is actually desirable for this project — it will add texture and interest to the mosaic, once it is assembled and grouted.

- During the shrink process, some pieces may bend or curl. Do not remove from oven immediately after shrinking has occurred. In most cases, the piece will flatten itself back out if left in for a few more seconds.

- If a piece curls too much or sticks to another piece, place it back in the oven to soften the plastic again, then take it out and reshape it. CAUTION: always wear gloves when handling pieces, as they will be very hot.

5. Arrange the pieces on the panel surface, using the numbers on the back and referring to the original design. Pieces can be trimmed with scissors if they don't fit precisely. When cutting, safety goggles are recommended because the pieces may have formed sharp edges. Once the

## Process, continued

arrangement of the pieces is satisfactory, glue in place and allow the glue to dry.

6. Read all precautionary labeling on the grout container. Mix three tablespoons grout to one tablespoon water and stir well with a craft stick. Only mix this amount at a time — larger quantities will dry out before they are used. With craftstick, spread grout between mosaic pieces, press and smooth with gloved fingers.

NOTE: With Shrink Film Black, White and Colors, grout can go over the top of the tile and be removed later. Do NOT allow grout to overlap inkjet images — it will absorb and cause staining. Spread grout carefully against the piece using the craftstick and immediately remove any grout that gets on the image.

7. Dampen a cloth, tissue or paper towel and remove any grout that goes over tiles. Work from the center of a tile out to avoid dragging grout back over the tile piece. Once it has set for at least 20 minutes, excess grout can be brushed away with a nylon paintbrush.

NOTE: Avoid excess scrubbing of the tile pieces. The abrasiveness of the grout will remove any marker images on the tile if overworked.

8. Allow to dry completely. Shrink Art Mosaics are best used for indoor applications. If used outdoors, Graphix Shrink Film colors, inkjet color and permanent markers are vulnerable to eventual UV damage. Color life may be extended by sealing with Ronan Aquathane UV Absorber (01027-1007).

## Options

- Create the mosaic on a flower pot, frame, tabletop, coaster or any other rigid surface.

- Combine Shrink Art Mosaic pieces with traditional mosaic media:

[Blick Studio® Stained Glass Tiles](#) (60998-1000), assorted colors

[Ceramic Tiles](#) (61414-5014), assorted colors

[Mirror Tiles](#) (61480-5038), 3/8" squares

[River Rock](#) (61138-1001)

[Beach Glass](#) (61139-1004)

[Seashells](#) (61139-1005)

“Found” objects, such as broken pottery, metal pieces, etc.

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## National Standards

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

- 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

- 9-12** Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems