

Painted "Silk" Shapes

(art + social studies)

The production and commerce of decorated silk fabrics began thousands of years ago in China. Over the centuries, its popularity spread around the globe and a variety of cultures created their own distinct processes of weaving and dyeing this luxurious fabric. Synthetic fibers as substitutions for silk began to be developed out of necessity during World War II.

This project introduces fine-mesh polyester as a silk-like fabric painting ground. Although silk could certainly be used, this material is less expensive, more transparent and it stretches more firmly. Form a wire shape as a support and paint with transparent liquid acrylic color. Finished pieces are flexible and may be heat-set for outdoor display.

Grade Levels 3-12

Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Cut the polyester fabric to 9" x 12" pieces. One yard of the 42" wide fabric will make 12 pieces. Cut the wire into pieces measuring 5-ft to 6-ft.
2. Cut the freezer paper into pieces measuring approximately 9" x 12". Secure the pieces to scrap cardboard with tape or staples.

Process

1. Sketch a simple contour line drawing on a 9" x 12" paper. Keep the perimeter of the design at least 1/4" from the paper's edge to make sure the fabric will fit.
2. Bend the wire to follow the contours of the sketch and twist the ends together to close. The wire cuts easily with scissors and it can be bent into tight curves with pliers. Press the shape down on a tabletop to flatten it, then place it on a piece of cardboard. Note: if creating a piece that will hang, build a loop in the top of the shape.
3. Use the remaining wire to form details and inner contour lines inside the shape. Arrange these on the freezer paper. For best results, lightly sand the top of wire with a fine-grit sandpaper to allow better adhesion. Brush an even coat of permanent fabric glue over the wire, making sure the top is covered.



Materials

Multifilament Polyester Screen Printing Fabric, fine mesh 12XX, 42" wide (43404-1012); need one 9" x 12" piece per student

Blick® Sculpture Wire, 14-gauge, 350-ft coil (33400-1435); need one 4-ft piece per student

Pebeo® Setacolor Transparent Fabric Colors, assorted 45-ml (01237-); share 5-6 across class

Pebeo® Setacolor Fabric Glue, (01237-1004); share two 110-ml bottles across class

Blick® Scholastic Red Sable Round Brushes, set of 72 assorted sizes (06054-7209); need at least one brush per student

Fine grit sandpaper

Scrap cardboard, 12" x 16" or larger

Optional Materials: Push pins

Process, continued

- Place polyester over the wire. Lightly tap the fabric into the glue all along the wire lines to assure good contact. Start in the center and work outward to allow the fabric to stretch.
Hints:
 - If the wire won't lie flat or the twisted areas won't allow contact with the fabric, press push pins into the cardboard on the outside of the shape to hold the fabric down.
 - If the glue rubs off while the fabric is being placed, brush more glue on the wire from the top side. The glue will penetrate the fabric to the wire beneath.
- Allow the glue to dry for a couple of hours before attempting to pick up the piece. The glue will appear white when wet, but it will dry glossy and transparent.
- When the glue has dried, paint the fabric with transparent acrylic color. Setacolor may be thinned with water to make it flow like a watercolor wash. Opaque Setacolor can be used for resist techniques. The paint may be applied from either side. Allow it to dry and apply a second coat if desired.
- Trim the edges with sharp scissors either flush with the wire or with some fabric extending beyond. If unable to reach into curved areas with scissors, bend the wire to access or make small snips up to the wire, apply more glue and wrap the fabric.
- Heat-setting is not necessary for indoor use, but if displaying outdoors, set color permanently by placing in an oven preheated to 300°F for three minutes. Do not touch the wire until it has cooled fully.
DO NOT OVERHEAT.

Note: for best results, display the artwork in a location protected from wind. Do not allow to freeze.



Options

- Note: Pebeo® Fabric Glue provides the safest, fastest and best adhesion. If it is unavailable, Weldbond® Adhesive may be substituted. Make sure the wire is sanded before applying or Weldbond® will not fully adhere. Do not heat-set Weldbond®.
 - Shapes can be larger or smaller — adjust to fit your budget and the skill level of your students.
- To make a painted banner using this process:
 - Assemble Blick Stretcher Bars (07211-) and cut the polyester fabric 1/2" larger than the size of the stretcher bars on all sides.
 - Stretch the fabric over the frame and secure it with tacks or staples. Begin in the center of one side and tack it down, then move to the opposite side and tack down. Continue stretching until reaching the corners.
 - Paint with transparent Setacolor. When dry, remove the fabric from the stretcher bars, trim the unpainted fabric that went over the stretcher bars, and heat-set it with an iron set on the "nylon" or "polyester" setting.
 - Hang the banner on a dowel or a decorative rod.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

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

K-4 Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

9-12 Students apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

Content Standard #4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures.

5-8 Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures.

9-12 Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times and places