

The Paper Dress - Circa 1968 (art + social studies)

Paper dresses were all the rage in the late sixties as the American “throw-away” society emerged. The Pop Art ideal of merging common culture with fine art was expressed in disposable clothing that was in high demand. Paisley and op-art designs (including Andy Warhol’s soup cans), giant eyes and political advertisement adorned these A-line dresses. They were sold in high-end boutiques as well as stationery shops (where you could pick up a tablecloth to match).

Although the mass-produced paper dress fad soon ended, the idea has inspired many artists since to create one-of-a-kind original apparel from contemporary fabric alternatives. Last year, a paper reproduction of Jacqueline Bouvier’s wedding gown was unveiled at the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum in Boston.

Whether or not a paper dress is actually worn is not necessarily important. The paper dress is simply an unusual substrate for this work of art. The type of paper used in construction will determine the wearability and the appropriate medium, but a paper dress can be designed with paint, markers, calligraphy, pen and ink, colored pencil, stamping and collage – any media that goes on paper!

Grade Levels 5-12

Materials

Paper — Although virtually any paper can be used to create a dress, durability is the main issue. When selecting a paper, keep in mind the medium that will be used to decorate the dress - for example, if you want to paint the dress, choose a paper designed for wet media. Some recommendations:

- **Artkraft® Art Paper Rolls**, assorted colors (11506-) 48" x 200' roll, cut into approximately 24" x 36" pieces (adjust for different body sizes) for 66 dresses per roll. Artkraft® has a smooth side for drawing media and a textured side for paint

- **Blick® Student Watercolor Paper** (10028-1022), used for Watercolor Dress, see next page. This paper is strong and somewhat rigid. It accepts both wet and dry media

- **Thai Unryu Paper** (11234-), assorted colors, shown on Watercolor Dress, below. A soft, delicate, fabric-like paper for dry media. Lighter colors are translucent

Scotch® Hook and Loop Fasteners (57316-1041)

Fiskars® Bent Scissors (57012-1008)

Design Media — Again, choose the media to match the paper. Some recommendations:

- **Blick Artist’s Acrylic**, assorted colors (00624-)
- **Blick Liquid Watercolors**, assorted colors (00369-)
- **Blick Broadline Water-Based Markers** (21224-)



“Psychedelic dress” painted with Blick Artist’s Acrylic. See next page for pattern..

Objectives

- Students will define a purpose for creating a functional work of art and identify its effectiveness and unique characteristics within a certain cultural and social setting.
- Students will select subject matter, symbols and images for significant content and be able to evaluate their sources, meanings and value.
- Students will make aesthetic and structural choices to create multiple solutions to a specific visual arts challenge.

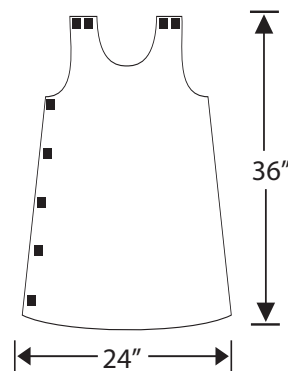
Historical/Cultural Relativity:

- Vintage and antique clothing shops and websites will turn up actual samples of 1960's-era paper dresses.
- Explore Pop Art examples from the 1960's incorporating images of mass media, advertising, comics and consumer products.
- Discuss the impact of a "throw-away" society to inspire ideas about creating art from recycled and recyclable materials.

Process for Creating an A-Line, 60'S Style Dress (shown on page 1):

1. Enlarge the patterns at right, cut 2 identical pieces. Black squares suggest placement of hook and loop fasteners. Trace with a pencil and cut an A-line dress from paper. On a model, dress form or manikin, determine placement of hook and loop fasteners to close seams, then trim away excess paper. The pattern may be adjusted to fit many sizes by adjusting the placement of the fasteners.

2. Release the fasteners and lay the dress on a flat surface. Paint 60's-style patterns, colors and images on the dress using Blick Artist's Acrylic colors. Wrinkles can be pressed from the paper by back (unpainted) side with an iron on a low setting. Place a piece of wax paper beneath the dress to protect the ironing board. Watercolor paper can also be pressed if misted lightly on the back side with water first. Do not iron Unryu.



Cut 2 pieces for each dress. Adjust sizes as needed for various ages and body sizes. Black squares show placement of hook and loop



"Watercolor Dress" made with watercolor paper, Unryu paper, hook and loop fasteners, staples, ribbon and watercolors



Paper dresses, circa 1968

Options:

- Create your own pattern and style, such as the Watercolor Dress, at left.
- Create a two-dimensional dress (paper doll style) as a wall poster.
- Create a dress sized to fit a doll or artist's manikin.
- Create a sports jersey, shirt or vest for a male.

National Standards:

Content Standard #3 — *Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.*

- **5-8** Students use subjects, themes and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.
- **9-12** Students apply subjects, symbols and ideas in their artworks and use the skills gained to solve problems in daily life.

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

- **5-8** Students analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.
- **9-12** Students describe the the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times and places.