

Stark Raving Paper Art

Layered contour shapes create visual depth, then the colors draw you in!

How can a flat piece of paper become a 3-dimensional relief sculpture with only one fold? The answer lies in multiple layers.

Probably one of the most pinned, forwarded, shared, and retweeted artists to this day is contemporary Los Angeles artist Jen Stark. Her 3-dimensional cut-paper sculptures and design style have been shared around the world via social media.

Stark uses vibrant colors that radiate and repeat through intricate shapes and patterns reminiscent of the psychedelic art movement of the 1960s and '70s and op art. She began working with colored paper because that was the only art material she could afford at the time. Her precisely cut paper sculptures use mathematics and geometry to create dramatic visual movement, depth, and dimension.

Jen Stark translated her cut-paper style to painting, and specializes in murals that drip from interior ceilings and off the front of buildings like “melting rainbows,” plus digital designs that have been featured in music videos and on commercial products such as clothing and phone cases.

This lesson plan shows how to create a Stark-like piece that uses contour shapes that recede in space and then expand again. Students can select their favorite colors in random order or be challenged to arrange them in spectrum order, which will result in the greatest indication of depth.

GRADES 3-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. View the colors of a spectrum through a prism or image of a rainbow. The reason colors always appear in the same order is because of the wavelength of light and how quickly it reaches our eyes (red, with the longest wavelength and blue, being the shortest, are at opposite sides of the spectrum).
2. Cut construction paper sheets in half (9" x 6" pieces). Each student will need a minimum of six colors. Stack sheets in spectral order with the lightest color sheets at the bottom and the darkest colors on top.
3. Cut posterboard or cardstock into 9" x 12" pieces for a background.



Materials (required)

[Pacon Tru-Ray Construction Paper](#), assorted colors, 9" x 12" sheets (11406-); plan for six sheets per student

[Blick Deluxe White Posterboard](#), 14-ply, White on One Side, 22" x 28" (13104-1102); share one sheet among six students

[Creativity Street Craft Sticks](#), 3/8" x 4-1/2", box of 1000, (60401-1001); plan for 30 per student

[Aleene's Quick Dry Tacky Glue](#), 4 oz (23884-1104); share one bottle among three students

[Maped Ultimate Scissors](#), 5" (58470-1005)

Optional materials:

[Blick Premium Cardstock](#), 18" x 24" sheet, Black, (11408-2009) or White (11408-1029)

[Crescent 14-Ply Black Posterboard](#), 22" x 28" (13113-2002)





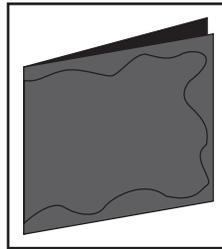
Step 1: Fold sheet. Cut a shape from one side of the fold to the other.



Step 2: Insert next sheet and cut just inside the first shape. Repeat until shapes can no longer be cut.

Process

1. Beginning with the black piece of construction paper, fold it in half so it measures 9" x 6". Using a pencil, begin on the fold line close to one edge and draw the outline of a shape, ending it on the fold line near the opposite edge, see (A) for an example. It can be a flowing and organic shape, or geometric. It should be as large as possible (close to the paper's edges) and just one piece that is cut away.
2. Fold the next piece of paper in half in the same manner. Select the next color, and insert it in the black piece so that the folds line up. Use paper clips, binder clips, or bulldog clips to hold the papers together perfectly aligned.
3. From the fold, cut a contour line that follows the outline of the first shape, just slightly inside the first shape. This will produce a second shape that is a bit smaller than the first.
4. Remove the black outline and set aside. Fold a third sheet and repeat steps 2 and 3. For best results, always use clips to hold paper in place and only work with two sheets at a time.
5. Repeat until it is no longer possible to cut more shapes.
6. Place all the outside cut-outs together, arranging them so that the edges line up together and the folds in the middle match. Glue the one with the smallest cut opening to one side of a piece of heavy posterboard or matboard.
7. To create added dimension, glue a wooden craft stick onto the edges of the piece that was just attached to the board, then glue the next cut-out over the sticks. Repeat, stacking the craft sticks, until all shapes are in place.
8. Next, stack the inner cut-out shapes on the other side of the board. Glue craft sticks between these shapes as well. It may be necessary to cut or break the craft sticks.



(A)



Step 3: Layer the outer cut shapes, creating depth by gluing wooden craft sticks between layers. Arrange on one side of a board.



Step 4: Layer inner shapes on the opposite side of the board.

Options

- Create a frame by gluing strips of black cardstock to the sides so that craft stick layers are not visible.
- Use full sheets of paper for extreme depth.
- Create random lines, rather than contour lines.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

