

CAST PAPER BOWLS

Caroline Long

Don't you just love it? Here we are as art teachers, practicing good "green" skills, and the nation has just caught on to what we have been doing for years. Yes, I am talking about recycling and being conscious of our environment. Needless to say, the expediency of an art teacher's efforts is sometimes not readily recognized. Being a pioneer is hard sometimes, isn't it?

Tearing Paper

When I first introduced this lesson, my students looked at me with bafflement. "What do you mean Mrs. Long—we are tearing up paper to make more paper?"

"O ye of little faith! Yes! Tear up any kind of paper that you want—into itty-bitty pieces, please."

A week was spent tearing, tearing, and tearing in preparation for use in their cast paper bowls, as well as handmade paper for their handmade books—the papermaking and the bookmaking units are intertwined.

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After looking at the history of papermaking, I brought out samples of various kinds of paper. Students were amazed to learn that the best quality paper is not made from wood, but from rags. Students learned the definition of "archival" and, through touch, experienced the many facets of the feel of expensive

types of paper. Students also viewed an amazing video that showed the whole process of papermaking by a professional fiber artist.

Preparing Paper Pulp

Working in pairs, students helped each other to create cast paper bowls. The first step was to choose colors. Mixing only two to three different values of the same colors produced a bowl with a greater sense of depth.

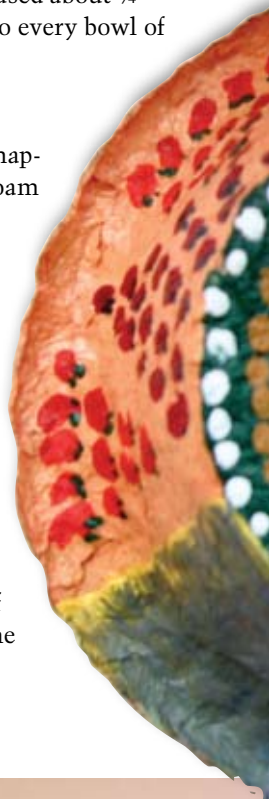
Torn paper was placed in the blender and filled with water, then ground to a smooth pulp. Recycled plastic containers were filled with brightly colored pulp. Using colanders and muslin squares (about 12" square), the

pulp was poured into the muslin and strained over the colander until all the water was squeezed out. I told students to pretend they were straining chopped spinach.

The pulp was placed in a shallow bowl and wallpaper paste was massaged through the pulp until it was evenly distributed. We used about ¼ cup of wallpaper paste to every bowl of pulp.

Forming the Bowls

Our cafeteria manager happily recycled his Styrofoam bowls to be used as our molds. A quick coat of cooking spray on the inside of the bowl was our release agent. To apply the paper pulp to the inside of the bowl molds, students learned that their fingertips were their best tools. They learned to gently but firmly press and rub the bits of pulp together to form the paper bowls.



Left page (left to right):
Hanna, Ben, Zail.
Right page: Kayla.



Using hairdryers exponentially decreased the drying time. The inside was dried first. When it was determined that it would stay together, the pulp shape was gently released and placed over the outside of the bowl so the bottom could be dried. Note that drying time is very long, even with the assistance of the hairdryer. A weekend was needed for the bowls to dry by themselves.



Fiber Artist Angie Wiggins

While the bowls were drying, I introduced the inspirational art of Angie Wiggins, a local fiber artist. She has a great website and I also had an example of her work.

We noted that her primary design principle was repetition, thus giving way to pattern. Texture and color were obviously present as well.

Visual Connections

As this was a three-dimensional craft project I stressed the importance of visually connecting the entire surface of the bowls. Students were also required to place their work on a pedestal, and for that we used a variety of materials including baked polymer clay. Here again, the concept of recycling “stuff” was what counted. A variety of textures and color added to our already burgeoning supplies.

I am always amazed at how my

students solve their visual problems. They literally dive into the materials and manipulate the media in a variety of ways. Each student puts his or her personal stamp on their work.

This was a great end of the year project in which students were fully involved. Knowing that a professional fiber artist was in our midst and that her work was accessible to all of us served as inspiration and as a teaching tool for creativity. 🌀

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NATIONAL STANDARD

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

WEB LINKS

www.angiewiggins.com
www.43rdstgallery.com