ARTS LEARNING LAB @ HOME

Flores de Papel
OVERVIEW

Learn the delicate and mindful craft of traditional paper flower-making with artisan Carmela Morales. This workshop will introduce participants to the eco-friendly practice of using recyclable materials and traditional art skills to create beautiful flowers that can be gifted to your favorite person or used to decorate your home. Discover how you can take care of your mental health through this meditative task and make new friendships along the way! Concerned by all the plastic waste found in the environment, Carmela wants to revive the traditional practice of using recyclable paper to create decor. As you take care of yourself, you’ll be taking care of your environment through this cultural practice.

OBJECTIVES

1. Participants cultivate an aptitude for self-care through meditative artmaking.
2. Participants learn to use recyclable materials in order to care for the environment.
3. Participants develop an understanding of traditional art practices from Oaxaca, MX.

RELEVANT CALIFORNIA ART STANDARDS SUGGESTED FOR GRADES 1-6, CAN BE MODIFIED FOR ANY GRADE LEVEL

2.1 Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and art-making approaches.

K.VA:Cr2.1 Through experimentation build skills in various media and approaches to artmaking.
1.VA:Cr2.1 Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design.
2.3 People create and interact with objects, places, and design, and this defines, shapes, and empowers their lives.

2.VA:Cr2.3 Repurpose found objects to make a new artwork or design.
5.VA:Cr2.3 Identify, describe, and visually document places and/ or objects of personal significance.

3 Artists and designers develop excellence through practice and constructive critique to reflect on, revise and refine work over time.

PK.VA:Cr3 Share and talk about personal artwork.
3.VA:Cr3 Discuss, reflect, and add details to enhance an artwork’s emerging meaning.

MATERIALS

- 1 sheet of dark green crepe paper (50cm X 200 cm)
- 2 sheets of colored crepe paper (50cm X 200 cm)
- 1 clear glue pen
- 1 piece of cardboard shaped as a circle (12 inches)
- 1 strip of ribbon (5 cm), scissors

VOCABULARY

- **Mental Health**: a state of well being in which individuals can realize their full potential, cope with stressful life situations, and maintain healthy relationships with themselves and their community.
- **Meditative activity**: practices that induce a calming effect through focus and repetitive acts. Examples include exercise, yoga, artmaking, crafts, gardening, and cooking.
- **Environmentalism**: a practice of questioning harmful acts against the environment and imagining ways to protect it.
- **Recycle**: the act of turning unwanted material or waste into reusable material.
- **Traditional practice**: a skill, craft, art, or aptitude originating from a particular region of the world.
INTRODUCTION

Artisan Carmela Morales describes the reasons for developing her workshop series Flores de Papel. First, the practice of artmaking and crafts acts in service of mental health. When we make things with our hands it helps to calm the mind and focus on what is right in front of us. Second, is to learn a skill that can help reduce plastic waste in the environment. Carmela expresses that rather than buying plastics such as balloons for celebrations people can instead use their paper flowers as a form of gift giving and celebration. Third, this workshop is a way for Carmela to share with participants traditional practices of her community in Oaxaca, MX.

STEP 1

To begin, participants gather and organize their materials from the list. Start by selecting a sheet of colored paper that will act as the first layer of leaves for your paper flower. It can be any color you may have. Follow along with Carmela by folding your selected paper into three even parts. Do not worry if the folds are not precise an approximate division is fine for this workshop. Unfold the paper and with your scissors cut alongside the individual creases. You should now have three equal sections of colored paper squares.
STEP 2

Carmela continues by selecting one of her cut sections of paper and folds it in half down the middle. For the next step follow along with Carmela by using your scissors to make a diagonal line across the folded section of paper. The orientation of the diagonal line should go from the top corner to about several inches above the opposite corner. Cut along your diagonal line making sure not to cut all the way to the bottom. After cutting you should have a folded section of paper in the shape of an arrow or triangle. Carmela repeats this process with her other two sections of square paper, folding down the middle, creating a diagonal line, and cutting across making sure not to cut all the way to the bottom. Carmela emphasizes that none of these steps need to be perfect. The intention of this class is to develop a sense of calm and relaxation that focuses our minds on the material in front of us.
STEP 3

Now participants will take their glue, open it, and lay a line of glue around the edge of the circular cardboard. Participants can now start unfolding their paper. At the base of each triangle piece, pinch together the bottom of the paper creating a fold that forms into the shape of a leaf. For this part follow Carmela’s examples as a reference. Holding the fold together with your hand, begin to glue the base of the folded triangle or leaf onto the edge of the cardboard circle. Continue to fold each triangle into a leaf or petal shape and glue all around the edge of the circle. The repetitive nature of this artistic practice is a part of what makes it a meditative activity. When finished make sure your first layer of paper goes all the way around the circle just like Carmela’s example.

STEP 4

Continue with the two remaining cut sections of paper. Start again by laying down a section of glue around the inner edge of the circle. Next grab your second section of cut paper, unfold, and pinch the base of the triangle piece creating another layer of leaves or petals for your flower. For this second layer make sure to lay down each piece of paper in the gaps or empty spaces created by the first layer of paper. This alternating placement will begin to create the natural look of a flower. Do not worry if you cut incorrectly or have left over scraps of paper, these will be used at the end of lesson. Part of the intention of this workshop is to learn how to recycle or reuse extra materials.
STEP 5

Participants can now go to their second piece of colored crepe paper and begin to fold it into three sections just like step 1. This color paper will act as the flower’s petals. Unfold the paper and cut along the creases. You will again have three square pieces of cut crepe paper. Fold the square piece of paper down the middle. For this section we are no longer cutting diagonally across. Follow along with Carmela and cut the paper in a round or curved shape instead. When you unfold the paper it will now resemble the curved end of a flower petal.
STEP 6

Grab your glue and lay down another section on the inner edge of the cardboard circle. Following the same process begin to fold or pinch the base of each piece creating the look of a flower petal. Glue each petal along the inner edge of the cardboard along the glue line. Make sure to place each petal between the gaps of the previous section of paper. The alternating placement will create the natural look of a flower. Continue this process until the cardboard in the center is no longer visible.

STEP 7

For the last section participants will use their last section of colored crepe paper. Crepe paper usually comes folded with premade creases or lines. Using just one section of paper cut along the first folded line. You should end up with one long rectangular section of paper. With this section of paper fold in half down the middle creating a shorter almost square shape. Gather any scraps of paper you may have saved from earlier steps. With the leftover scraps of paper crumble them up into a ball-like shape. With the folded piece of colored paper wrap it around the balled up scraps. Participants will now have a rounded piece of paper that will act as the center of their flower. Grab your glue and lay down a section of adhesive directly in the center of the flower and place your rounded piece of crepe paper directly in the middle.
STEP 8

As a final step participants will use their hands to fluff up individual petals creating a voluminous opened look in the paper flower. Using a hole punch or pencil create a hole in the top edge of the cardboard backing. Thread a piece of ribbon or string through the hole and tie a knot at the ends. This will create a loop that will allow participants to hang their paper flower on a wall or ceiling. Participants can now use this paper flower to decorate their home, bring to a celebration, or give it as a gift to someone they love.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are ways we can take care of our mental health and well being?
- How is recycling similar to taking care of our loved ones?
- Why is it important to care for the planet?
- What are traditional practices and why are they significant to the people that practice them?

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Now that you have completed your first flor de papel, continue to develop your meditative practice by learning about other forms of traditional practices and craft art from Mexico. Oaxaca in particular has a long history of traditional art practices dating back to pre colombian times. Originally people indigenous to Oaxaca used a material called Amatl, a type of paper made from the bark of trees such as fig and mulberry trees. During colonization new materials were brought on trade routes with the Manila Galleons, Spanish trading ships from South East Asia to the Americas. Today many folk arts remain, including the paper mache tradition of Alebrijes, fantastic creatures first envisioned in the 1930s by Oaxacan artist Pedro Linares. Learn more about the many different Oaxacan traditional practices that can help inform the ways you can practice mental health, meditative activities, and recycle material to care for the environment. Follow the links below.
Workshop Description

RELATED RESOURCES

- An installation of Market Exchange, a project by Cog•nate Collective - https://18thstreet.org/event/manos-a-la-obra/
- A non-profit organization working with the Oaxaca State Museum of Folk Art to promote the traditional practices of Oaxaca Artisans- https://www.fofa.us/meet-the-artists
- A video by the group Craft in America promoting Oaxacan Artists and traditional practices- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xE3RLp7uCA&t=10s
- A short documentary from 1975 by Judith Bronoski documenting the artists Pedro Linares and his Alebrijes- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1931UK_6XI
Teachers and parents can consider their role in modifying workshop instructions in the following ways:

- **Vocalize and provide visual examples for expected technical and physical outcomes for all tasks.** This can include providing examples of specific directives such as folding crepe paper, cutting specific shapes, gluing, or alternating the placement of leaves and petals. Although examples are provided, students may respond better to your own personalized interpretations.

- **Incorporate analogies and context about mental health, recycling, and traditional art practices from Oaxaca.** For example, Carmela Morales provides an analogy comparing recycling for the planet to a person taking care of their family. A parent or teacher can create different analogies to aid student comprehension around abstract concepts.

- **Provide students with alternatives to the length of time to display comprehension of key terms and concepts in order to meet all processing capabilities.** The length of time for many of the cutting and pasting directives can be extended to provide accommodations when needed.

- **Pause and ask students questions when new ideas are introduced.** This will help in checking for comprehension and determine if further instruction is needed before continuing. For example, how does a flower petal look? Should we cut with a curved shape or pointed shape? Where should we put the glue? Why does it need to go on the edge of the cardboard? Can we save these scraps of paper for recycling? How does this activity make you feel?
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Carmela Morales creates made-to-order paper flowers, dolls, centerpieces and other handmade paper decorations, employing techniques she learned and perfected while studying as a young girl in Mexico City. By building on the tradition of Mexican handmade paper crafts, her work creates alternatives to balloons and other plastic decorations, contributing to more sustainable celebrations and events.

ABOUT ARTS LEARNING LAB AND 18TH STREET ARTS CENTER

Arts Learning Lab @ Home is a series of live online arts classes for kids and families schooling from home. These hands-on artmaking workshops (which are posted as on-demand videos after each workshop) are led by professional artists in residence at 18th Street as well as members of our national and international artist community. The workshops are taught in both English and Spanish for those teachers that are bilingual, and are live translated in both English and Spanish. The workshops cover a range of fun, hands-on, and participatory ideas that connect with larger social issues.

You can visit more lessons at http://18thstreet.org/allathome

Founded in 1988, 18th Street Arts Center is one of the top 20 artist residency programs in the US, and the largest in Southern California. Conceived as a radical think tank in the shape of an artist community, 18th Street supports artists from around the globe to imagine, research, and develop significant, meaningful new artworks and share them with the public to foster radical imagination, empathy, and positive social change.