

A Fantastic Forest

ART TECHNIQUE

Painting & Sculpture

AGE GROUP

Appropriate for students 8 -14 years old

CONCEPT

In this art lesson, students will explore the installations of the art collective Meow Wolf and create paper-mache sculptures to create a group "fantastic forest" installation.

SESSIONS

4 x 45 minute sessions

MATERIALS

- 8.5" x 11" pieces of paper for sketches
- Colored pencils
- Bottles of Chromatemp Artists' Tempera in assorted colors such as: White, Black, Fluoro Blue, Fluoro Green, Fluoro Orange, Fluoro Pink, Fluoro Red, Fluoro Yellow, Fluoro Violet, Pearl Yellow, Pearl Red, Pearl Blue, Pearl Magenta, Pearl Turquoise, Pearl Violet, Pearl Green, Pearl Gold, Pearl Copper, Pearl Silver, Pearl White, and Pearl Black
- Chromacryl Students' Acrylic - White or Chroma Basic Gesso
- 1 round and 1 flat paint brush per student
- Lots of newspaper, cut to 2" x 6" strips
- Armature:
 - ~ Thin cardboard (cereal boxes, manila folders, etc.)
 - ~ Empty bottles, various sizes (plastic or glass)
 - ~ Cardboard tubes (toilet paper, paper towel, etc.)
 - ~ Wire
 - ~ Balloons

• 1 bucket to wash brushes in, per table

• Masking tape

• Plastic tablecloths or newspaper to protect surfaces

• White liquid glue or paper-mache paste

Other Chroma paints, such as Chromacryl Students Acrylic Primary, Secondary and Neon Colors, can be substituted in this lesson.



Meow Wolf is an art collective that started in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and has grown into a creative powerhouse, known for its immersive and interactive art experiences. They invite people of all ages to explore their imaginative worlds and believe that art can be fun, mysterious and mind-bending.

NATIONAL CORE ART STANDARDS

Creating: VA:Cr.2.2.6a: Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing.

Presenting: VA:Pr.5.1.6a: Analyze and interpret artworks for relationships among form, context, purposes, and critical models, showing understanding of the work of various art professionals.

Responding: VA:Cn.10.1.6a: Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.



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OBJECTIVE

1. Students will learn about the art and immersive experiences of Meow Wolf.
2. Students will learn the process of creating a paper-mache sculpture.
3. Students will learn the steps of artistic collaboration.

VISUAL REFERENCES

Visit www.meowwolf.com to curate works for inspiration.

FIRST SESSION

INTRODUCTION/DISCUSSION

Meow Wolf, an artists' collective, creates immersive experiences. Its name was chosen by randomly drawing two words from a hat at the first meeting of the collective. The artists all put the words on paper with a word on each one!

Started in Santa Fe, NM, Meow Wolf gained widespread recognition and success with the opening of "The House of Eternal Return" in 2016. This massive, interactive art installation was located in a former bowling alley. The installation tells the story of a fictional family and features a mysterious, multi-dimensional house that visitors can explore. It became a sensation and attracted visitors from all over the world. Following the success of "The House of Eternal Return," Meow Wolf expanded its operations and began collaborating with other artists and organizations, opening new immersive art experiences in different locations, such as Las Vegas and Denver.

Begin the lesson by showing examples of Meow Wolf's installations. Have the students point out what they notice, such as the glowing colors, the fantastic and imaginative sculptures, and how the artwork is not passively viewed, but experienced.

Introduce the learning objectives and explain that students will be creating their own paper-mache sculptures that will be collectively displayed, in order to create their own collaborative installation.

Discuss the idea of a "fantastic forest" and what it might include (magical creatures, unique plants, hidden treasures, etc.). Show the students the materials that will be used for their paper-mache sculpture - bottles, tubes, balloons, cardboard, etc. Using colored pencils, have the students create a concept sketch of their plant, insect, or other imaginary organism. Then, have the students form small groups to brainstorm and take notes on construction ideas, based on the available materials.

SECOND SESSION

CREATE THE ARMATURE

An armature is the structure that gives the paper-mache sculpture its basic shape.

Create the forms for the sculpture. These could include leaves, petals, branches, and stems for flowers and trees, and heads, bodies, arms, legs, antennae, etc. for animals. Some armature examples:

- **Balloons:** Inflate balloons to the desired size and shape for your sculpture. They work well for creating round or organic shapes like animals heads or bodies.
- **Cardboard:** Cut and shape pieces of cardboard to create a basic form. This is useful for more geometric shapes, such as petals and leaves.
- **Bottles:** Plastic bottles can be weighted down with pebbles or sand to make the form sturdier.
- **Cardboard Tubes:** Tubes can be cut in many ways to help them bend and create organic forms. Some of the most useful cuts will



Portion of a room in "The House of the Eternal Sun" by Meow Wolf • www.meowwolf.com



Using cardboard shapes as armature



A cardboard tube and bottle for the stem and a cardboard petal



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be a flange and tabs.

- **Wire:** Wire is used to support flimsy structures, and depending on the gauge, can be an armature on its own.

SECURE THE ARMATURE

Use masking tape to attach and secure the forms. For large forms, an "X" method is helpful. Start by affixing a strip of tape that's tight, but not so tight that it alters the shape of either form. Next, place a second piece of tape in the opposite direction to form an "X." Ensure the center of the "X" aligns with the point where the two forms meet. Then do the same to the other side.

THIRD SESSION: PAPER-MACHE

Paper-mache is from the French "papier-mâché," meaning chewed paper. Create a paper-mache paste by mixing white glue with water. The ratio is typically 1:1, but adjust as needed to achieve the desired consistency. The paste should be smooth and not too thick or too runny.

Dip strips of torn newspaper or magazine pages into the paper-mache paste, making sure they are fully coated. Then, slowly pull the strip through your fingers removing any excess glue.

Apply the wet strips to the armature, smoothing them down to remove air bubbles and excess paste. Overlap the strips to create layers, which will add strength to the sculpture. Continue layering until you've covered the entire armature. You should apply at least 2-3 layers for strength.

Allow the paper-mache sculpture to dry completely. This may take up to 48 hours, depending on the thickness of the layers. Make sure it's completely dry before painting.

FOURTH SESSION: PAINTING THE SCULPTURE

Using white acrylic paint or gesso, paint the sculpture white to hide the newspaper base. When dry, paint the sculpture using Chromatemp Artists' Tempera. Paint details to create pattern and texture.

If students are using Chromatemp Fluorescent Colors, these colors glow under a black light. The students can have a "black light painting party" for a unique experience.

Have the students arrange their sculptures collectively on tables, so that all classes have the opportunity to view the complete installation. Name the installation like Meow Wolf, by having each student write two words on two scrap pieces of paper and drawing two words at random. These words can relate to the theme of a forest, nature, colors, sounds - whatever gets the students excited about their installation!

Tag Chroma with your creations - #createwithchroma



Using the "X" method to secure forms



Forms secured and gessoed



Painted forms



Under a black light



CHROMA PAINTS AT A GLANCE

The below chart can help you determine which paints will suit the classroom purposes best. While most of Chroma's Educational lines could be used at any grade level for a variety of projects, particular Chroma brands will meet students' growing skills and provide richer, more sophisticated painting experiences.

Product	Color Range	Acrylic	Tempera	Watercolor	Heavy Body Consistency	Medium Body Consistency	Lightfast	Washable	Indoor/Outdoor	Best for Elementary	Best for Middle School	Best for High School	Canvas	Paper	Canvas Board	Wood	Murals/Sets	General Crafts	Paper Maché	Printmaking
A2 Lightfast Heavy Body Acrylic	40	x			x		x					x	x	x	x	x				
Chromacryl Students' Acrylics	37	x				x					x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Chromacryl Acrylic Essentials	20	x				x				x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Chromacryl Fluid Acrylic	16	x									x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Chroma Drawing Ink	12	x					x				x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Chroma Mural Paint	37	x				x	x		x			x					x			
Chroma Mural Paint Markers	25	x				x	x		x			x					x			
Molten Metals Metallic Acrylics	10	x				x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Chroma 2 Intense & Opaque Heavy Bodied Washable Tempera	14		x		x			x		x	x	x		x				x	x	x
Chromatemp Artists' Tempera	32		x		x					x	x			x				x	x	x
Chroma Glitter Paint	12		x			x		x		x				x				x	x	x
Chroma Liquid Washable Watercolor	15			x				x		x	x			x						x

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