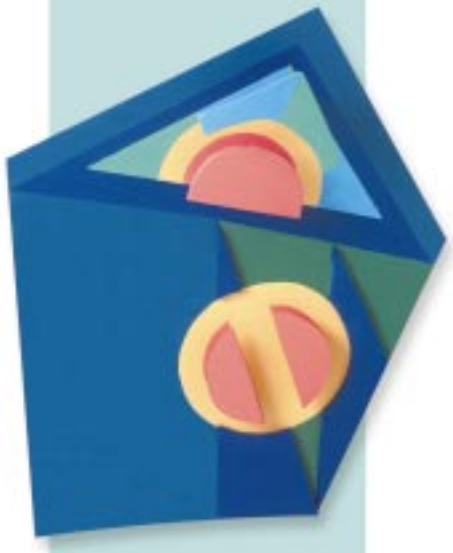
Volume 16

Nasco ARTWORKS

Foam Board 3-D Paintings — based on the shaped canvases of artist Frank Stella

Including an adaptive lesson plan for students with physical, emotional or cognititve disabilities.

In the mid-1960s Frank Stella began an influential series of brightly colored paintings marked by intersecting geometric and curvilinear shapes. Using a protractor, Stella constructed three semicircular designs — the "interlace", the "rainbow", and the "fan" — and used these designs as the backbone for the paintings in his Protractor series. Stella methodically developed images in series, first mapping the designs on paper before transferring them to canvas. Little was left to chance. Bright bands of vivid and harmonious color overlap, causing the paintings to appear child-like at first glance. The meaning of Stella's work, however, is purely formal. The artist insists: "My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there. It is really an object… You can see the whole idea without any confusing. What you see is what you see."



Directions

Prep students by showing examples of Frank Stella's work on the shaped canvases. Describe that this is going to be a group process of creating pieces. With a class of 25, you can probably expect to create about five 3-D sculptures. There is no magic number to the number of pieces that can be attached together, but usually 7-11 pieces looks pretty good.

Supplies

- Hot Glue Gun and Glue Sticks
- Wooden Spools or Film Canisters
- Telephone Wire
- Scissors (to cut wire)
- Foam Board, 30" x 40" x 3/16" (one board per 5 students)
- X-Acto® Blades and handle (for instructor use)
- Chromacryl® Acrylic Paint, white, magenta, warm yellow, and cobalt blue
- Paintbrushes
- Paint Mixing Trays

1. Precut foam board into random size pieces and shapes. One shape should be larger than the others, about ¼ of the board. All other shapes will be attached to this base. (Students may be given the opportunity to draw shapes with a pencil for the teacher to cut out.) There is no need for wasting any pieces; the shapes can flow from one to another. Cut large and small pieces — some angular, curved, and some mixed — the more interesting the shape, the more interesting the final piece. The foam pieces should range from about 2" x 8" to 10" x 15", with sizes and shapes varied.

2. Allow students to choose a shape they wish to paint. Students are given acrylic paint — white, yellow, blue, and magenta — for their paint containers or paint mixing trays. Students mix colors and paint abstract designs, patterns, and images on the foam board until all the shapes are painted. Let the foam board dry thoroughly.

3. Beginning with the base (the largest foam board piece), use film canisters or wooden spools to provide "lift" as you attach the smaller pieces. A hot glue gun works well to secure the pieces together. Students should pay attention to color harmonies and balance of design when attaching pieces to their bases. The foam board pieces can be layered only about three levels high, as the structure gets top heavy with more layers. Be creative in placing the pieces, allowing some to extend over the edges of pieces already glued and over the base.

4. To create more "movement" in the work, smaller pieces can be wired to the sculpture. Take an 18" piece of telephone wire about and wrap it coil-like around a paintbrush handle. Slide off and stretch it a little. Take the point of a pencil and push a small hole into the edge of a small piece of foam board to create a hole to glue the wire into. Put a dab of hot glue into the hole and insert the wire. Hold until dry. Take the other end of the wire and repeat the process on the edge of the piece that you want to hang the small piece from. The newly added shape will add a bit of movement and texture to the piece. Hot glue additional wire to the top of the piece to hang it.

Additional Notes:

A teacher may choose to cut many small pieces (from 1" to 5" or so) from the foam board and have the students make "mini-Stellas" of their own before or after the large group pieces. These can consist of about 3-7 small pieces. Use scraps of foam board to raise the pieces instead of using spools. Tacky glue will also work well to adhere the shapes.

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Adapted Supplies:

- NASCO "PRO-FORMANCE™" 2 Happy Hands Brushes (9705884)
- Squeeze & Flo™ Brush Set (9717866)
- NASCO Washable Tempera Paint Markers (9715178)
- Sponge Brush and Rollers (SB26640)
- Nonspill Paint Pots and Holder (9713263)
- Paper Plates, 9" (9703842A)
- Tap-N-Glue® Cap (SB18606) & Elmer's Craft Bond Tacky Glue (9712706)
- Adjustable Tabletop Easel (9711870)
- Masking Tape, ¾" (9717778)

Options for students with physical disabilities

- The NASCO "PRO-FORMANCE™" 2 Happy Hands Brushes are great for students that have difficulty grasping a traditional brush handle. A foam insulation piece could also be added to the brush if the student has difficulty holding onto the thicker brush handle.

- If the student is in a wheelchair and has trouble leaning to do his/her work or can't reach the tabletop due to contractures in his/her arms, an adjustable tabletop easel on the wheelchair tray or on the table can bring the work surface to the student. Use either masking tape or stick pin to secure the foam board shape at the correct height for the student and let him paint!

- The nonspill paint pots and holder can help keep the paint from falling off the table or onto its side where the student can't access it. A paper plate or flat microwave dish secured to the tabletop or wheelchair top with masking tape can provide a stable mixing tray for the paint.

- The tempera paint markers or Squeeze & Flo™ Brushes may work better for some students than a paintbrush. Fill empty paint marker bottles with acrylic or tempera paint. Add about 1 tsp. of liquid soap to the paint to keep the sponge applicator top from drying out.

- For the use of glue, attach a Tap-N-Glue® Cap to an Elmer's Tacky Glue bottle to eliminate glue puddles.

Options for students with cognitive disabilities and emotional disabilities

- I control the colors that I give the students for success. I have found that many students enjoy color mixing to the point of making "frustration brown". This means that the student enjoys the process of color mixing, but gets mad or frustrated with the "brown" color — not the lively colors he/she had mixed at one point. So, I give the students a palette of either white, magenta, and yellow; white, magenta, and blue; or white, blue, and yellow and let them mix with those colors. This provides a very pleasurable painting experience and we can always work on color mixing at a later time.

- I try to let the students have a much decision making in the process as possible. I do not over-adapt for the student; when possible, I allow them to choose to use a tool instead of employing traditional means. I also try to let the student make as many independent marks as possible without my hand over hand — that may mean adjusting the height of the work table, adding an adjustable easel, working sideways on the wall or on the floor, having the teacher or occupational therapist move the child out of the wheelchair and onto a wedge to free up their upper trunk. Each child is individual and needs individual adaptations. Let the student be your guide — don't be afraid to be creative!