

Recycled Tissue Vases

Reimagine plastic bottles and cups as textural, painted containers perfect for plants and flowers.

This easy, economical project turns “trash” into 3-dimensional art! Using a mixture of water and polymer gloss medium, apply strips of tissue paper to the outside of discarded plastic drink containers — allow the tissue paper to layer, bunch, twist, and fold to create texture. As an option, glue small items such as buttons, strings, and wood shapes to the container first and form the tissue around them for even more texture. Add color immediately after the tissue is applied for soft, wet-in-wet effects, or after drying for more controllable color.

Finished containers can hold soil or water. Punch small holes in the bottom to provide drainage for plants and place pebbles inside if more weight is needed to keep the vase upright.

GRADES 1-8 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed

Preparation

1. Gather plastic cups, fast food containers or other cast-off, clean items. For best results, choose something that is clear or light in color and doesn't have logos or other prominent markings, which will require more tissue layers to cover. Also, choosing a container that has lots of fluting, ridges, or other texture will require that the design is planned to include that area or work around it.
2. Create a mixture of polymer gloss medium and water to use for adhesive. This can be made in advance and stored in containers with tight-fitting lids for up to a week. The ratio should be approximately 2/3 medium to 1/3 water, and the mixture will resemble the consistency of whole milk.

Process

1. Tear tissue paper into smaller pieces or strips about 3" wide. This will be easier to work with and cause less waste than trying to apply a full sheet. Tear as much as needed when fingers are dry and clean before using adhesive. Depending on the size of the container, plan to use one to two sheets of tissue paper per student.
2. Using a wide, flat brush, dab some of the adhesive mixture onto the surface of the container and place the tissue paper over it. Brush a little more adhesive over the top, and make sure the edges are covered.

The first few pieces may not stick well. As more pieces are applied and overlap each other, they will stick more easily. Create a flat layer of tissue paper around the entire container.
3. Start to build up texture and dimension by wrinkling, bunching, twisting, and rolling pieces of tissue paper. Apply in the same manner as the flat pieces, but use a little more of the adhesive to absorb into thick areas. Textures can be representational or simply abstract patterns and designs.



Materials (required)

[Blickcrylic Polymer Gloss Medium](#), 32 oz bottle, (00711-1027); share one across class

[Blick Pure White Tissue Paper](#), pkg of 24 sheets, 20"x 30" (11308-14973); share one to two packages across class

[Royal Langnickel Big Kids Choice Lil' Grippers Brush Set](#), Deluxe Assortment, Set of 6 (06082-1669); share four to five sets across class

[Blick Liquid Watercolors](#), assorted colors, 8 oz (00369-); share four to eight colors across class

Plastic bottles, tumblers, cups, etc.

Materials (optional)

[Blickcrylic Student Acrylics](#), assorted colors (00711-)

[Blick Colored Tissue Assortments](#) (11308-)



Process, continued

4. Apply items such as buttons, string, wood shapes, etc. to the container and then cover them with tissue to create more uniform texture. Extra glue may be required to hold them in place prior to covering them with tissue.
5. Paint the tissue container using liquid watercolors or acrylics. If the tissue is still wet, colors will be more wash-like and bleed together. Painting watercolor into the wet adhesive mixture will self-seal it — watercolor and tissue paper will be water-resistant due to the polymer gloss medium.

If a more detailed painting is desired, or if time constraints will not allow painting within the same session, allow the tissue-covered container to dry overnight, then paint with acrylic colors. The dried surface will not receive watercolors well.

NOTE: Do not use pan watercolors with adhesive as it may form a skin when dry, making it difficult to lift paint from the pan again.

6. Fill the container with water or soil. Add seeds or plants.

Options

- Use permanent markers add color to the dried tissue surface. Use alone them or on top of dried paint for a mixed-media effect.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

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

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Step 1: Apply pieces of tissue paper to a plastic cup with a mixture of water and polymer gloss medium and a flat brush.



Step 2: Create texture by bunching, twisting, and forming tissue paper and attaching it with the adhesive mixture.



Step 3: Paint tissue paper with acrylic or liquid watercolor, then fill the container with soil and add seeds or a plant.