

3-D Tagli Canvas

A three-dimensional cut canvas pops when adorned with paper shapes

(art + history)

In the 1940s, Lucio Fontana, an Italian painter and sculptor, began doing something strange. He started to puncture and cut the surface of his canvases. In fact, a hole, or “buchi” in his canvases eventually became his signature gesture. These canvases were known by the Italian word for cuts which was “tagli.” Fontana was striving to blur the line between two- and three-dimensionality. His canvas was obviously two-dimensional, but when he cut through it, or tore the canvas, those projections moved the canvas into the third dimension. During the decade of the 1940s, he explored many effects such as slashing, perforating, and puncturing in both paintings and sculptures.

With additions of 3-D paper forms on the surface of the cut canvas, the concepts of shape and form are easily visualized. The canvas moves into the realm of relief sculpture and can include several levels, from low or shallow relief to high relief.

Students will experiment with creating forms out of basic paper shapes by rolling, bending, or folding them. After choosing a favorite paper form, space and balance are considered before placing them onto the cut canvas, resulting in a unique sculptural and spatial arrangement.

GRADES 3-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Provide each student with a canvas. The canvas can be new, or an unsuccessful painting could be painted over and recycled.

Process

1. If using a new canvas, paint the surface in a solid color with a large brush. Include the sides of the canvas. If recycling a canvas, a coat of gesso may be needed before the final color is added to the surface.
2. Using simple, solid shapes or forms, draw a composition on the back side of the canvas using a pencil. Avoid very small areas or fine detail.
3. From the back, cut the negative space from the design using scissors. Older students may use a mat or utility knife for smaller areas if needed. Cut up to the stretcher bars of the canvas so that the edges may be folded to the back. Trim pieces of canvas where necessary and glue them to the back stretcher bar all around the edge. Allow to dry.



Materials (required)

[Blick Academic Cotton Canvas](#), 12-pack, 12" x 12" (07167-1212); share 12 packs across class.

[Blick Studio Drawing Pencils](#), Set of 12 (22220-2009); share two sets across class

[Blick Studio Acrylics](#), assorted colors (01637-); share across class

[Blick Mega Gesso Brushes](#), 1" (06209-1001); share 10 across class

[Snippy Scissors](#), Sharp Tip, package of 12 (57040-2009); share two packages across class

[Aleene's Quick Dry Tacky Glue](#), 4 oz (23884-1104); share five bottles across class

[Blick Studio Drawing Pads](#), 70 sheets, 9" x 12" (10314-1053); share across class

Optional Materials

[Blick Artist's Acrylic Gesso](#) (00691-)

[X-Acto #1 Knife](#) (57445-1101)

[Jacquard Lumiere 3D Metallic Paint and Adhesive](#) (00752-)

[American Crafts Textured Cardstock](#), 12" x 12", Pack of 25 sheets, 80 lb (11757-)



Process, continued

4. While the canvas is drying, begin experimenting with creating a few paper shapes by cutting circles, squares, or other shapes from white paper. Bend or fold the shapes to make them three-dimensional and glue them together as needed.
5. Choose a shape that complements the design of the cut canvas. Make many of the chosen shape, either all of the same size or in varying sizes. Begin applying the paper shapes to the surface of the canvas and glue them in place.

Options

- Add additional relief by adding trailed paints or glues to the surface of the canvas.
- Use a stiff paper as the "canvas," and after cutting, fold up and secure the four sides to create a raised surface, see example below.



National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating (Investigate, Plan, Make)

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

Connecting (Synthesize)

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.



Step 1: Use a large brush to completely cover a new or recycled canvas with a solid coating of paint.



Step 2: Draw a composition onto the canvas back in pencil. Cut out the negative space, and glue the edges back.



Step 3: Make 3-D shapes out of white paper by rolling or folding. Glue them to the surface of the canvas to add form.