BLICK art materials

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3D Puff Pets

inspired by the Kawaii Aesthetic

These fuzz-tastic wire and fiber sculptures embody the "cute" culture of modern Japan

In the modern world, "cute" is part of our visual language. For decades, the popularity of charming cartoons, comics, and characters has expanded through media and consumer products, appealing to and expressing human emotions that are peaceful, positive, and humorous.

In Japan, "cuteness" is part of a distinct cultural trend known as "Kawaii." In a nation that has a history of embracing art and valuing positive concepts, this movement has developed over decades and has evolved into a worldwide phenomenon. The kawaii esthetic is evident in everything from emojis to fashion to food design.

Kawaii has also influenced the contemporary art world, including one of Japan's most celebrated artists Takashi Murakami. His pop-art smiling flowers and cartoonish Mr. DOB blur the lines between fine art and an interpretation of "cute" commercialism.

Although there are many genres, the traditional kawaii esthetic is often expressed in adorable, simplistic characters with childlike features. Realism is not a requirement. They are meant to look embraceable, so they are usually round and soft. In this lesson, students can imagine and create their own creatures with the inspiration of kawaii or—should they choose—something that is not necessarily cute.

Begin with a simple sphere created with craft stems and evolve it into an animal body using fuzzy yarn, fluff balls, and soft felt. Add legs, ears, a tail and facial features for definition, then enjoy the company of a new, one-of-a-kind pet!

Materials (required)

Creativity Street Stems, 12" x 4mm, pkg of 100, assorted colors (60923-); plan on 6 stems per student

Creativity Street Jumbo Craft Fluffs, pkg of 100, assorted colors (61431-); plan on 4-5 per student

Lion Brand Go For Faux Yarn, 3.5 oz skein, 64 yards, assorted colors (62818-); share one across class

Kunin Classic Felt Sheets, 9" x 12", assorted colors (65301-); share a minimum of 6 sheets across class

Blick Masking Tape, 1/2" x 60-yd, Black (24149-2005) or Natural (24149-1012); share one across class

Aleene's Felt and Foam Tacky Glue, 4 oz (83805-1004); share one between 3-4 students

Materials (optional)

Creativity Street Pom Pons, 1", pkg of 100, assorted colors (65364-)

Creativity Street Plumage Feathers, 1 oz, assorted bright hues (;)

Roylco Felt Shapes, pkg of 500 (65308-1500)

Morex Ribbon Assortments, 30 yds, Pastel Palette (83713-1001)

Sharpie Fine Line Markers, assorted colors (21316-)

Ready to order materials? Go to
www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plan/3D-puff-pets to access a product bundle for your convenience.

Preparation

1. Cut some of the stems in half to 6″ long pieces. Plan on 8 half-stems and 2 full stems per student (6 stems).

   If possible, plan stem color to coincide with yarn or cotton that will be used. White will be best to use with pastel colors.
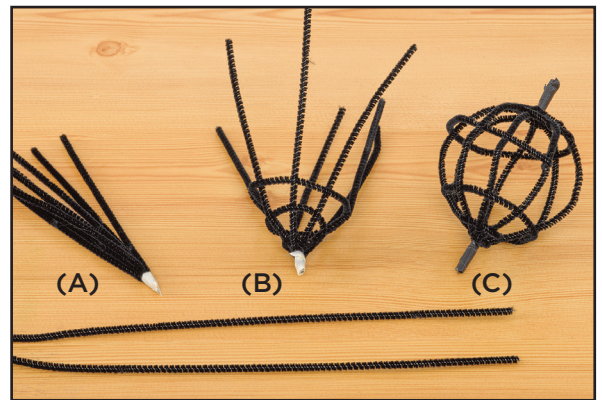
Process

1. Gather 7 half stems and wrap a 3-4″ piece of masking tape around one end to secure into a bundle, see (A), in Step 1 at right.. Use a narrow, 1/2″ wide tape.

   NOTE: weaving works best with an odd number of stems. Remaining half stem can be saved for another project.

2. Spread stems apart in a circular pattern.

3. Bend one end of a full wire around one of the half stems at the top near the masking tape. Weave the full stem in a circular pattern around the end until it is about half woven through, see (B), at right.

4. Join the other end of the half stems with tape in a similar manner, then weave with a full stem as in step 3, see (C), at right.

5. Weave remaining full stems loosely through the sphere shape to strengthen it, see Step 1, at right.

6. Unroll a craft fluff and gently pull the sides of the strip to make it wider and less condensed.

7. Start at one end of the wire sphere and tuck the end of the fiber in the woven area to secure it. Wrap the remainder of the fiber strip around the sphere. Press the fibers gently against the stems; the texture will hold the fiber in place.

   As an alternative, faux fur and fuzzy yarns can be used. Wrap, weave, or tie the yarn to cover the sphere. For best results, start at both ends and meet in the middle. Adjust and spread the fibers to cover all wires.

8. Repeat steps 6 and 7, above, until sphere is covered with fibers.

9. Transform the fluffy sphere into an animal using one or more of these ideas:

   - use more wires to create legs, wings, fins, etc. Secure by bending them over wires in the sphere, then cover them with matching fibers.

   - cut ears, eyes, and other details from felt and glue in place with Felt and Foam Tacky Glue.

   - add feathers, pom pons, ribbons, and other craft items to define the pet and make it just what you want it to be.

Step 1: *Form a sphere with craft stems according to instructions at left.*

Step 2: *Cover sphere with fluff fibers or weave with fluffy yarn.*

Step 3: *Transform the sphere into an animal by adding details with felt and other craft materials.*

Process, continued

10. Gluing items onto the sphere will most likely secure any loose fluff. As an option, create a small opening in the bottom of the pet, then stuff paper towels, tissue, or bubble wrap pieces inside to add strength. Move fluff back in place to concel openinig.

11. Use a small paper clip, inserted into the pet and secured to a wire in the sphere beneath the fluff to make a hanger.

Options

Name the creature that you have created then:

- Design a trading card for your Puff Pet. Include information about it, such as where it lives, what it eats, or any special powers you might imagine it to possess.

- Design a short comic strip featuring your Puff Pet in an action adventure.

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.