

Community Curtain



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Single strands combine for an installation that grows and gives voice to individuals and communities

Artist Rebecca Louise Law of the UK is best known for creating large-scale, immersive installations in which hundreds of thousands of dried flowers and plants are strung together then suspended on wires. They appear to float in the air and form delicate, veil-like curtains. As viewers wander through - enveloped by the collective whole - they also experience the individual and diverse forms, fragrances, and colors of each specimen.

Law's most recent installations have invited community members to provide materials that represent their own gardens and local flora. Volunteers from diverse backgrounds work together to collect, dry, and string the flowers in preparation for hanging. Regardless of artistic background or interest, each person adds their own part to a project that the entire community can proudly enjoy.

As an interpretation of Rebecca Louise Law's installations, students and community members can create their own personal strand that becomes part of a large, collaborative piece: a community curtain.

Strands begin as a simple length of cord, but become so much more as words and objects are collected, designed, tied, and suspended in a vertical fashion along with other strings. They can express ideas, respond to a theme or prompt, represent a timeline of memories, or describe each contributor's personal vision.

An installation can be formed in the moment or allowed to evolve and grow slowly over time. It can be hung from a ceiling and fill a portion of a room, as Rebecca Louise Law's installations do, or it could also hang in a hallway, stairwell, a sheltered area outdoors, a clothesline, or from the branches of a tree.

Note: Instructions and materials are based on a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.



Materials (required)

Bonnie Craft Cord, assorted colors, 50 yd (61531-)

Blick White Glue, 16 oz (23882-1006); share 3 across class

Materials for Decoration, recommend:

Hygloss Rainbow Brights Bookmarks, pkg of 100, 2" x 6" (61724-1001); share 2 pkgs across class

Morex Ribbon Assortments, 6 rolls, assorted (83713-); share one across class

Classroom Yarn Assortments 5 lb assorted colors (65208-1005); share one across class

Creativity Street Wood Beads, assorted colors, 1 lb (80937-1001); share one across class

Roylco Really Big Buttons, pkg of 60 (60975-1002); share 1-2 across class

Pom Pom Beads, 1" dia, pkg of 50 (65090-1501); share 2-3 across class

Pacon Tru-Ray Construction Paper, 9" x 12", pkg of 50 sheets (11406-0039); share one across class

Crayola Construction Paper Shapes, 9" x 12", pkg of 48 sheets (11425-1048); share one across class

Wonderfoam Letters & Numbers, 0.5 lb tub (61732-1005) and **Large Shapes**, pkg of 42 (62192-1001) share 1-2 across class

Optional Materials

Frank Winne and Son Jute Twine 2-ply, 338 ft (62984-8542)

Twisteez Wires, pkg of 50, 125 ft (33407-1050)

Midwest Products Birch Dowels, 1" x 36", pkg of 3 (33303-8017)



Ready to order materials?

Go to www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plan/community-curtain to access a product bundle for your convenience.

Preparation

1. View and discuss examples of suspended installation art. These floating sculptures produce a dynamic impact for a number of reasons:

- Some move with air currents (mobiles, for example) or with mechanical assistance. Static pieces can also provide a sense of energy and implied movement.

- They can be viewed from more angles than most art, and usually provide an interesting view from any angle.

- They are often designed for a specific area, so they fill what would normally be blank space with color and form.

2. Determine a prompt or theme that will unite the strands together, provoke thought, and guide the direction of design. Prompts will be specific to the audience, location, creators, and message. Often, starting with a question is a great way to generate ideas as answers. Some examples:

- Who am I? What is my story? What have I learned? What do I want others to know?
- What can I do? What can I change? What do I want to happen? What have I succeeded at?
- What do I like about my community? What am I grateful for?



Step 1: Cut lengths of twine and tie a loop in one end for hanging. Glue the other end to prevent fraying.



Step 2: Design a personal strand with words and phrases on tags. Decorate with ribbons and a variety of craft materials and objects.

Process

1. Cut cord or heavy twine one yard in length or more, determined by how the strands will hang. Tie a loop in one end of the cord that will allow for hanging. Apply glue to the other end to prevent fraying.

2. Provide materials to attach to the strand. While the prompt should be part of the design, it is not necessary for the entire strand to be dedicated to the theme. Much of it can be simply decorated as the maker determines.

Words and phrases can be written on tags and tied to the strand. A simple construction paper tag can be cut, wrapped and glued in place.

More suggestions:

- Ribbons, strips of cloth and yarn.
- Beads and buttons, pom poms, tassles
- "Found" and recycled items such as faux flowers and plants, straws, discarded jewelry, plastics, etc.
- Paper: cut into shapes, chain links, or folded into origami shapes or paper flowers.



Step 3: Suspend strands from a ceiling, dowel or line. Group together to form a community curtain installation.

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*Installation of a Community
Curtain created at the Galesburg
Community Arts Center, 2023*

A narrower width of twine or plastic coated wires can be used to attach items to the strand.

3. Strands can be suspended by hooks or paper clips from ceiling framing or grouped together on suspended dowels. Two or three strands can hang from a coat hanger or macrame hoops can hold them in a circle, chandelier-style. Outdoors, strands can hang from a porch or park shelter. Secure nylon cord as a clothesline to hang strands across a room, in an overhead area, down a stair rail or between two trees. Strands can also hang from tree branches.
4. Strands can be created as classroom or community projects, or as part of an event, gathering, festival, or family project. The goal is to complete as many as possible to display in a group as an installation. These curtains can evolve and grow as time goes by, leaving memories, information and inspiration with them. Strands can be joined together or added onto.

If a community curtain is planned for an outdoor area, provide weather-safe materials for creating strands.

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.

Presenting

Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artwork.

Connecting

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