

theMcNay

McNay Art Museum

Evening for Educators

Modern Art on Stage

Thursday, October 17, 2019

Cardboard Swords

Curriculum areas

Theatre, Art

Introduction

Picasso to Hockney: Modern Art on Stage features a wide variety of artworks intended for the stage. Much of the subject matter in these artworks is inspired by Medieval and Renaissance time periods. The most dramatic examples are the eight large scale paintings by Natalia Gontcharova that greet visitors as they enter the exhibition. Most of the subjects in these artworks are all sporting gear or accessories made of metal, including swords, shields, or crowns. Learn to create realistic, lightweight faux metal props using everyday materials.

Objectives

- Design a costume element or prop for theatre from cardboard or matte board.
- Build the prop with layers of material, glue, and tape.
- Simulate a metal finish using aluminum foil tape.
- Use faux paint finishes to create a more realistic metal finish.

Related Artwork

Top left: Natalia Gontcharova, [*General Polkan in Le Coq d'Or \(The Golden Cockerel\)*](#), 1922. Oil on canvas. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Gift of Robert L.B. Tobin.

Top right: Natalia Gontcharova, [*Prince Guidon in Le Coq d'Or \(The Golden Cockerel\)*](#), 1922. Oil on canvas. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Gift of Robert L.B. Tobin.

Natalia Gontcharova, [*Swan Princess in The Tale of Tsar Saltan*](#), 1922. Oil on canvas. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Gift of Robert L.B. Tobin.

Materials

- Cardboard/Matteboard
- Hot glue
- Box cutters/exactos
- Cutting mats
- Aluminum Foil Tape
- Black Paint
- Water cups
- Paintbrushes
- Sharpie
- Sponges

McNay Art Museum

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Discussion

1. Observe the illustrations of props and costumes for theatrical productions. How do the objects resemble and differ from their real life counterparts?
2. Think about the costumes and props in relation to the narrative of the play. How do the color, shape, and decoration help tell the story? How might the characters use these objects?

Studio Procedures

1. Use a pencil or marker to draw out the object that you want to create onto your cardboard or matte board. The object can be assembled in multiple pieces to make a more complex three dimensional prop.
2. Using scissors or an exacto knife, cut out all of your pieces from your flat materials. If you want an object with more thickness, multiple copies of the same shape can be cut and stacked to create an object with more weight. Hot glue is a great option for combining these layers into a thicker piece.
3. Assemble your cut pieces into the object that you are making using hot glue and tape. For an object like swords or shields that require a lot of movement on stage, it might be better to create a form that is reinforced with more layers of material, as well as subtle details on the surface to add more visual information. These can all be made from pieces of cardboard, or low relief designs drawn out in hot glue.
4. Once you are satisfied with the form and function of your prop, and confident that it is strong enough, you can cover the entire surface with strips of aluminum foil tape. This tape is commonly used in high temperature duct work areas, like in home heating applications. It is an easy way to achieve a faux metal look at a distance, and already has one adhesive side.
5. When covering your object with the aluminum foil tape, keep in mind that the texture of the tape will dictate how the final prop will look. If you want something that is flat and shiny, like a sword, make sure

For questions about this lesson or information about scheduling a tour, please email education@mcnayart.org or call 210.805.1768.

Lesson plan prepared by John Dalton Atkins, Artist.
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to keep your tape from wrinkling. However, creasing and wrinkling the tape while working with it is a good way to add texture to something more ornate, like a crown.

6. After the prop has been covered in aluminum foil tape in all the areas that need it, you can proceed to add light layers of faux finish painting to enhance the metal finish. Faux finishing a metal prop is as easy as painting on colors like black, brown, or rusty orange, and before the paint can dry, wiping away excess with a damp sponge or rag. It is important to let the paint stay in areas that have recesses and detail, and to not wipe it completely away from the entire surface. The paint can be applied and wiped in multiple applications to achieve a more detailed and layered appearance. Work the surface of your prop until you are happy with the finish, and use the paint as a way to highlight areas that are flat, as well as those with detail.
7. These steps and processes can be applied to almost any prop that needs to look like raw or shiny metal. If someone has the appropriate facilities, objects like swords and shields can be made from thin plywood, and then shaped and carved to create an even more realistic prop. Aluminum foil tape can then again be used as a surface on objects made of wood.

use of art media and tools in drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, fiber art, design, and digital art and media.

§117.315. Theatre, Level I. (3) Creative expression: production. The student applies design, directing, and theatre production concepts and skills. The student is expected to: (A) develop and practice technical theatre skills; (B) apply technical knowledge and skills safely to create or operate theatrical elements such as scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, makeup, current technology, or publicity; (C) perform a role such as actor, director, designer, technician, or editor in production decision making and collaborate with others in a production role to tell a story through live theatre or media performance; and (D) demonstrate responsibility, artistic discipline, and creative problem solving by concentrating in one or more areas of theatre production such as acting, technical theatre, or theatre management.

§117.302. Art, Level I. (2) Creative expression. The student communicates ideas through original artwork using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills. The student is expected to: (A) use visual solutions to create original artwork by problem solving through direct observation, original sources, experiences, narrations, and imagination; (B) communicate a variety of applications for design solutions; (C) use an understanding of copyright and public domain to appropriate imagery constituting the main focal point of original artwork when working from images rather than direct observation or imagination; (D) create original artwork to communicate thoughts, feelings, ideas, or impressions; (E) collaborate to create original works of art; and (F) demonstrate effective