

Art Activity

Printed Pillows and Paul Klee



Print and sew your own pillow

Artist Paul Klee talked about art as a language of signs. In the painting below, he creates simple shapes and stick figures signifying a childlike fascination with nature and the outdoors. Notice the small boat on the right and other organic shapes surrounding it. Klee re-purposed a handkerchief to make this painting, and he championed the artwork of young children throughout his life. In this activity, we can take inspiration from Klee's printed fabric and make our own fabric pillow with our own custom design using recycled materials. Activity suitable for ages 6 and up.



Paul Klee, *On the River*, 1939. Watercolor and crayon on handkerchief, mounted on board. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Bequest of Marion Koogler McNay

Suggested materials:

- fabric (old clothing or fabric scraps work well)
- leaves from outside or other organic materials to print with
- pillow stuffing: cotton, polyfill, fabric scraps or old clothes
- needle and thread & sewing machine (either one will work, both are great!)
- markers & paint
- paper plates or parchment/ wax paper (paint pallet)
- scissors
- sewing pins

Instructions:

1. **Cut your fabric.** Cut your pillow pieces in a desired shape and cut them an inch larger than you would like your final product to be. This will account for a sewing hem. Cut 2 identical pieces to make the front and back of your pillow.
2. **Decorate!** If using markers, draw all over your fabric. If printing with leaves and paint, spread a thin layer of paint onto a paper plate or piece of wax paper. Press the leaf into the



paint and then press that onto your fabric. Use as many colors and leaves as you like. Allow to dry before moving on to step 3.



3. **Pin.** Take your two identical fabric pieces and choose which is the front and back of the pillow. Take the front piece and flip it over so it's facing down. Now arrange the down-facing piece on top of the back piece. The two "right" sides of your fabric should be touching. Make sure the edges are lined up. Secure the fabric together using sewing pins.
4. **Sew.** Either by hand or with a sewing machine, sew your pillow edges together making sure to stop sewing about 3/4 of the way around (leave a gap about 5 inches wide). This will leave a large gap open in your pillow for stuffing. See **red dotted line** in the image below for the sewing path example.



5. **Flip it.** Reach inside the open gap you left in the pillow and flip your pillow inside out. Use your fingers to push out the corners of your pillow. You should be left with a nice seam all around and a 5 inch gap for stuffing. Your

pillow design should be facing right-side-out now.

6. **Stuff** your pillow with anything you have available. You can purchase Polyfill from a fabric store or use cut up fabric scraps from old clothes. Be sure to stuff the corners well. Once your pillow is stuffed to your liking, close up the gap in your pillow with sewing pins and hand stitch this closed.



Notice the yellow-tipped sewing pins holding the fabric together. This was a great dexterity exercise for a 6 year old (under auntie supervision, of course).



A little about Paul Klee

“A dot is a line that went for a walk.” - Paul Klee

Paul Klee was born in Switzerland in 1876 to two musically inclined parents. His mother, Ida Marie Klee, was a singer, and his father, Hans Wilhelm Klee, was a music teacher. Paul’s parents prepared him at a young age to be a musician, but Paul decided to concentrate his studies on art.

Klee studied the formal qualities of art such as color, line, and form. The image below depicts a page in one of his many notebooks that details his notes on color theory. Klee went on to teach art and applied crafts at the famous Bauhaus school in Germany. As a mature artist, Klee applied his understanding of music and color to create harmonious art pieces in an abstract style.

