

## Construction Lesson with Infants to 6th Classes 'Scrunched Paper Constructions' Gemma Mc Girr

**Curriculum Strand:** Construction (Visual Arts Curriculum p.22, 38, 56, 74)

**Objective:** *Explore and experiment with the properties and characteristics of materials in making structures (p.22, 38, 56, 74)*

**Linkage:** *Print*> *Experiment with the effects that can be achieved with simple print-making (p.20, 34)*  
*Clay*> *Explore and discover the possibilities of clay as a medium for imaginative expression (p.36, 54, 72)*  
*Paint and Colour* > *Discover/ Explore the relationship between how things feel and how they look (p.19, 32)*

**Integration Possibilities:**

*Oral Language: Experiment with descriptive words to add elaborative detail (p.18)*

*Experiment with more elaborate vocabulary and sentence structure in order to extend and explore meaning (p.27)*

*Give and take turns in speaking, and experience a classroom environment in which tolerance for the views of others is fostered (p.38)*

*Explore the possibilities of language and sentence structure in expressing increasingly complex thoughts (p.50)*

### Developing this Activity in Class:

Before I start an art lesson I find it very helpful to do a little exercise with the children to unlock their imaginations and to create a safe environment in the classroom for them to show and discuss their work without fear of ridicule. Mankind's imagination got us out of the caves and onto the moon!! Anything can happen in our imagination if we only let it! "Close your eyes and imagine a big door. It can be any colour you like. Written across the door in big capital letters is the word IMAGINATION. Now reach out and slowly open the door, let your imagination out! Open your eyes and let me see the sparkle! Now we can do anything, our imaginations are at work and we are all different!"

**Materials Needed:** Paper  
Card  
Crayons  
Glue or PVA  
Shallow containers for the glue e.g. Pringle lids

**Stimulus:** The materials

**Activity:** This activity starts with the children filling an A4 sheet of paper with rubbings of various surfaces in the classroom, e.g., table tops, chairs, soles of shoes, floors, walls, Lego blocks, stickle bricks, bags, etc. Introduce the word 'texture' and encourage the children to feel surfaces for different textures and to describe them. Change the colour of the crayon for each surface and try rubbing different colours on each other. Ask the children to describe what happens when the two colours meet. When the page is full seat the children again and get them to look at their page. "When you look at all these textures what do you think about? Do they remind you of anything you have seen before? Can you see all the textures you rubbed? Feel them, can you describe the feel of the page? Now, we are going to work some magic! We are going to change this sheet of paper from a 2D to a 3D! Scrunch your page up into a ball and squeeze

it as hard as you can. Squeeze it harder! Open it out and feel it. Does it feel the same? How have we changed the paper? What have we done to the texture? Squeeze it up tightly again. Now, let us close our eyes and open the door to our imagination. When we open out the ball of paper, very slowly, something wonderful will happen. There is something in this ball of paper that only you can find, it could be anything! Watch it carefully and turn it in your hand. When it reminds you of something, stop opening it and look very carefully". When the children suggest a form (it could be an animal, a toy, a person, a place, the list is endless), glue it on the card and suggest to the child that he/she draws in the place or setting for their discovery. *I realise that this is an abstract idea and hard to visualise, so I am including some pictures of paper constructions that children have made. You can see how different the ideas are and how wonderfully creative the children are with just a ball of coloured paper! These images may be viewed in bigger format in the slideshow section of the website.*



Fairy Cave (Junior Infant)



Bird's Nest (Junior Infant)

Owl (5<sup>th</sup> Class)'Surfman' (5<sup>th</sup> Class)

### ***Evaluation/Looking and Responding:***

This will be happening as the children work. Encourage them to look carefully as they open the paper. Some children may need to ball the paper a few times before something emerges for them. When they have stuck the construction down and drawn in a background give them time to show their discoveries to each other and encourage them to ask questions of each other.

### **Extension Activities:**

Children love this activity and enjoy trying to find new things by changing textures and colours. They can also use scraps of fabrics to add to their constructions.

### **ICT Possibilities:**

The children might like to scan in photos of their constructions and write a little story about them on the computer.

### **Using the I Am An Artist DVD:**

The *Construction* programmes on the DVD offer opportunities to see children making constructions, using a variety of paper and card.

**Note:** I love doing this lesson with all classes in the school as it really frees up the children's imagination and they get great joy from seeing their ideas emerge in a tangible form. I find that using a finger to stick the paper with PVA rather than glue spreaders is much easier. Past experience of trails of glue from the spreaders has coloured my use of them. The children like peeling the dried glue from their fingers and the tidy up is much quicker and far less messy.

**Relevant Artists:** Alexander Calder (to introduce the children to imaginative mobiles)  
Niki de Saint Phalle  
Other artists you think relevant

**Relevant Websites:** This site explains what sculpture is about, suitable from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Classes  
<http://www.accessart.org.uk/whatisssculpture/whatisssculpture.htm>

This site contains images of Calder's work and gives a brief biography of the artist who became famous as the inventor of the mobile.  
<http://www.nga.gov/feature/artnation/calder/>

This is an interactive site which allows the children to create their own collages online.  
<http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/collagemachine.htm>

This site contains some of the amazing constructions/sculptures of Nike de Saint Phalle (her papier maché sculpture *Big Bird* is on page 101 of the Teacher Guidelines)  
<http://www.nikidesaintphalle.com/walk.html>

Scoilnet, which is a portal to lots of sites useful in the classroom  
<http://www.scoilnet.ie>