DAYTON **ART** INSTITUTE

ARTventures ... at home!

Playful Stage Diorama

Design a diorama for an artful play inspired by Pablo Picasso's *Scene design for Pulcinella* from special exhibition, *Picasso to Hockney: Modern Art on Stage*.

Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881-1973), *Maquette for Le Tricorne (The Three Cornered Hat)*, 1919, Watercolor ink, and graphite on board. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Gift of the Tobin Endowment. TL2001.105

Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881-1973), *Scene design for Pulcinella*, about 1920, Watercolor and gouache on paper. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Gift of the Tobin Endowment. TL2001.106

Materials Needed

- 9 x 12" construction paper or cardstock, approx. 10 sheets
- 9 x 12" cardboard sheets, 6 total
- toothpicks
- glue stick
- markers
- scissors
- pencil
- ruler
- tape

Optional Materials

- watercolors or acrylic paint
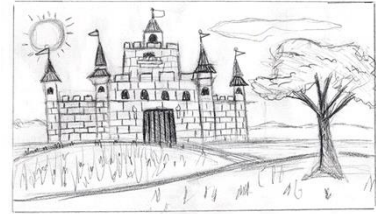- watercolor paper
- paint brush
- X-ACTO knife

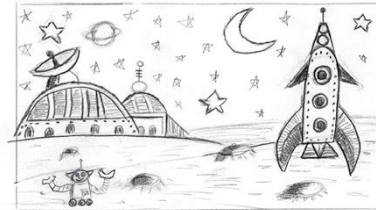Have time for a short survey? Let us know how you're enjoying our digital resources!

Step 1

Think of a theme for a scene in a theater play. Make several small sketches of how that scene would look on the stage. Think of what would be in the foreground, middle ground, and background (ex: sky background, castle in middle ground, tree in foreground).

Helpful hint: Keep the scene simple (approx. 3-4 main scene elements such as tree, castle, sun, etc.) to ensure all parts will easily fit into the stage. Color the concept drawings if desired.
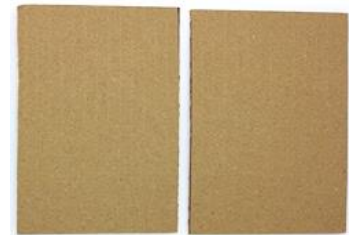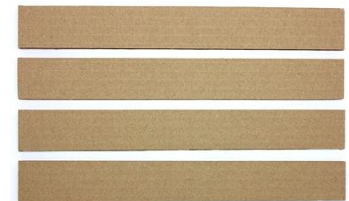

Step 2

Gather cardboard and cut it into 6 sheets, each 9 x 12". Save 2 full sheets for later use as the background and stage scenery elements.

Cut one of the 4 remaining sheets into 4 long strips—each approx. 1.5 x 12". These will now be the stage support beams.

Save 2, cut remaining 4 sheets

Cut a large rectangle into each of the last 3 full sheets, leaving a rectangular window with a 1.5" inch border all around. These windows will be for both the stage front and middle ground areas.
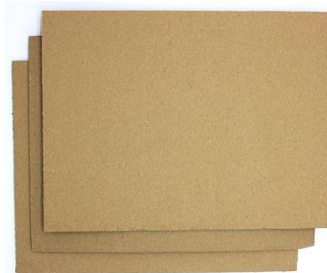

Note: save window cutouts and all extra cardboard for later use.

Note: use caution and proper supervision if cutting with X-ACTO knife.

Helpful hint: to cut windows without a knife, draw window frame onto cardboard, poke hole through cardboard with a pencil into and interior corner of frame. Use hole as entry point for scissors to cut out frame.

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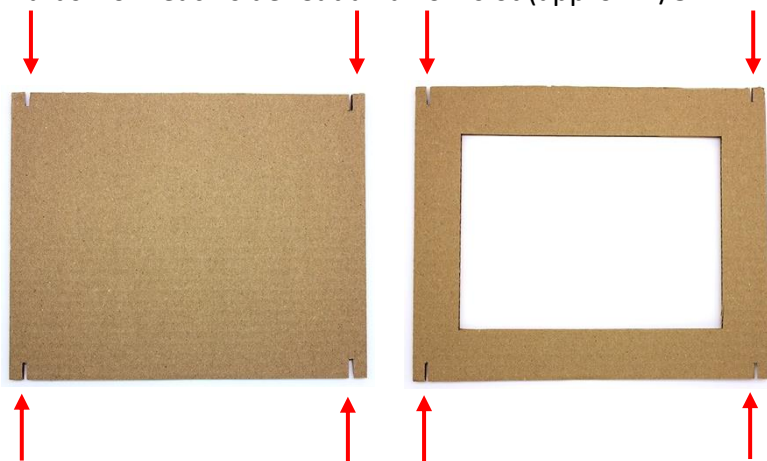
Step 3

Align a ruler with each 12"
cross beam, and make a mark
at the 0.5" inch, 4", 8", and
11.5" locations. Repeat this
process for all 4 cross beams.

Cut a narrow slot (approx. 1/8" wide—the same thickness as the cardboard) about 1" deep
into each mark on the cross
beam.

Make 2 marks at the top and 2
marks on the bottom of each of the 3 stage window panels and also the stage background
panel. Each mark should be 0.5" inwards from each side. Cut a narrow slot (approx. 1/8"
wide—the same thickness as
the cardboard) about 1" deep
into all the stage panels.

Step 4

Plan out stage drawing concept
into sections: background,
middle ground, and foreground
(ex: sky is background, castle in
middle ground, tree and grass in
foreground). Draw all middle
ground and foreground elements each
onto separate pieces of scrap cardboard.
Cut out all elements from cardboard.
Draw background onto a separate sheet
of 9 x 12" construction paper or
cardstock. If painting, use watercolor
paper for best durability.

> **Helpful hint:** for best results, scenery
> elements should be a minimum of 1.5"
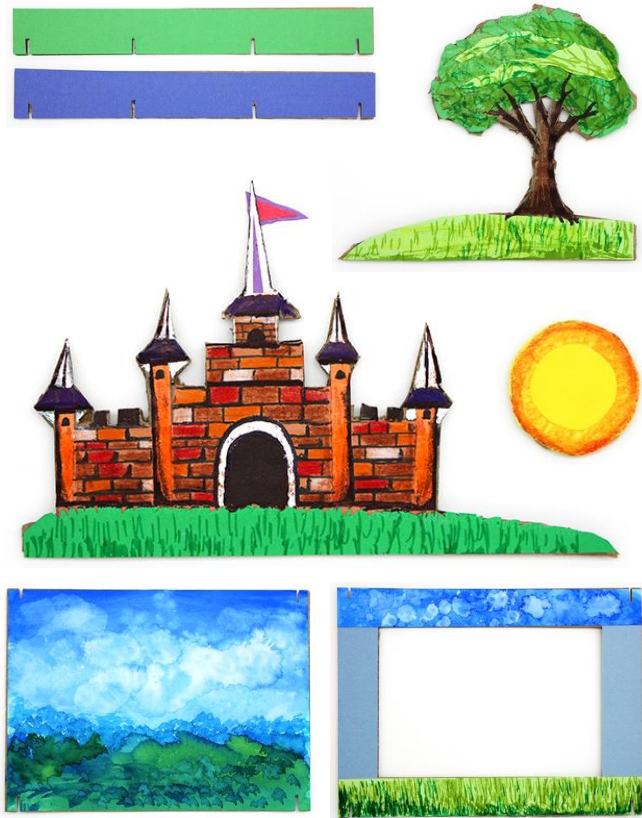> wide and a maximum of 6" tall.

Step 5

Use markers, construction paper, scrap cardboard, and glue to decorate and add detail to all stage window panels, stage scenery elements and the background.

Helpful hint: for best results, decorate construction paper first, then glue to cardboard. Add glue on both sides for best adhesion. Avoid painting directly onto cardboard to prevent warping. For added dimension, glue cardboard scraps onto scenic elements.

Helpful hint: for best full coverage of cardboard elements, trace cardboard onto construction paper first before cutting and gluing. Cut paper can also extend beyond cardboard edges.

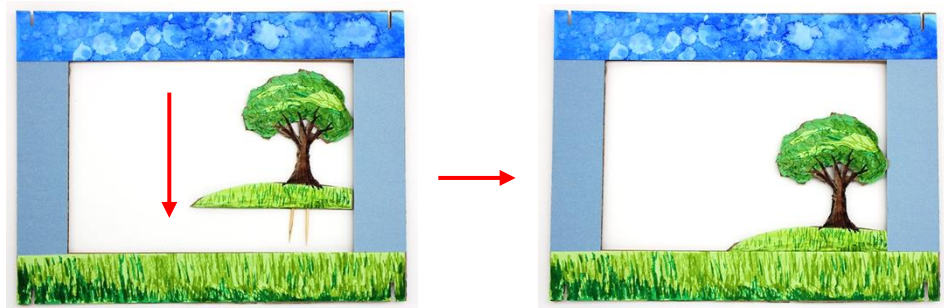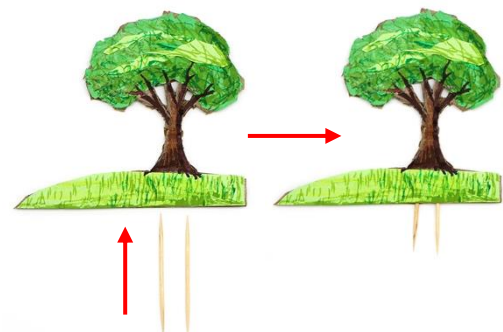**Note:** re-cut slots as needed if they are covered over by paper.

Step 6

Push 2 toothpicks into the bottoms of each stage scenery element (ex: tree, castle). Next, push the toothpicks of the scenery elements into the edges of each stage window panel where desired (ex: push tree into foreground panel).

Helpful hint: stage scenery can also be attached from the top or sides of each stage window panel. Toothpicks can be cut to size and also colored to better blend into the details of the stage.

Note: use rounded toothpicks or cut sharp tips off toothpicks for extra caution if needed.

Note: toothpicks allow for interchangeable stage elements that can be easily removed and replaced on the stage for scene changes. Add tape or hot glue to permanently affix elements to the stage. Use caution and proper supervision if using hot glue. Color any tape and window margins as needed to best blend all scenic elements into the stage design.

Step 7

Slide the slots of a cross beam into the bottom slots of each stage panel. Start with the background panel, attaching it at the 0.5" mark on the cross beam. Then add the 3 window panels at the 4", 8", and 11.5" slots. Repeat this process, adding another cross beam to the bottom slots of each stage panel on the opposite side.
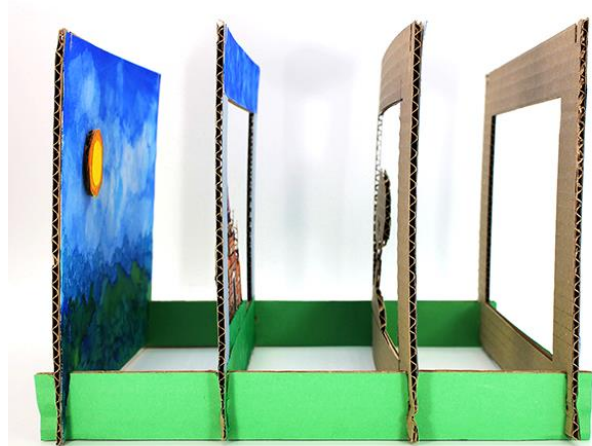
0.5"   4"   8"   11.5"

Slide a cross beam into the top slots of each stage panel. Repeat this process, adding another cross beam to the top slots of each stage panel on the opposite side.

Helpful hint: use masking tape or hot glue to better secure slot connections where necessary. Use hot glue with caution and proper supervision.

Note: some slots may need to be widened or lengthened to ensure best connection. If connections are too loose, new slots can be cut if desired. Use a ruler to make sure slots are in identical locations on both sides of the stage.
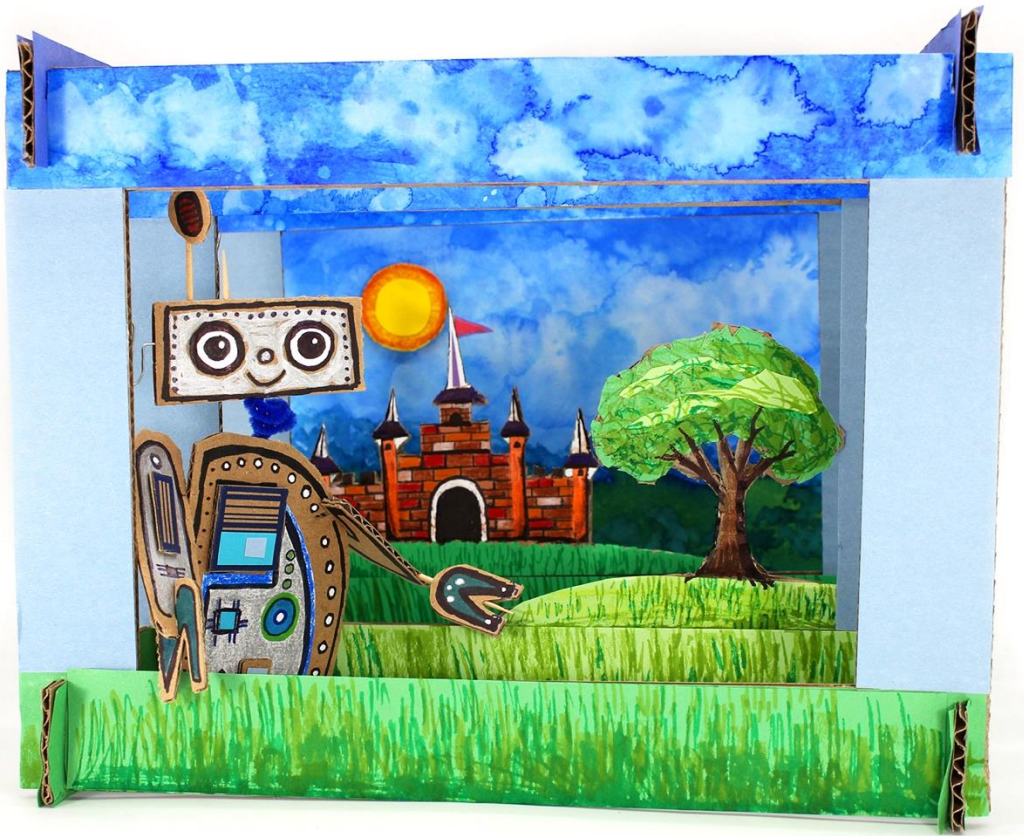
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Extra Challenges

1. Add fabric to stage window frame for curtains.
2. Use white or colored lights for extra dramatic effect and detail.
3. Design and create characters for the stage from cardboard scraps or other materials.
4. Write a play to be performed on the stage and act it out.

Resources

Create stage characters using cardboard sculpture techniques
Design creative costumes for a play
Read more about the art and artists in the exhibition
Buy a watercolor set and brush to paint details for your stage

Picasso to Hockney: Modern Art on Stage is organized by the McNay Art Museum.

ARTventures
... at home!

Questions about or ideas for ARTventures? Email edu@daytonart.org

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