

Papier-Mâché Abstract Airplane

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Sculpt an abstract airplane from papier-mâché inspired by *Ralston Crawford: Air + Space + War* Special Exhibition at the DAI.



Ralston Crawford (American, 1906–1978),
Weather Reconnaissance Plane, 1946, oil on canvas.
Collection of John Crawford

Materials Needed

- newspaper, newsprint, tissue paper or combination
- one: container for mixing
- measuring cup
- cardboard tubes
- mixing tool: fork or whisk
- flour
- water
- scissors
- masking tape
- balloons

Optional materials:

- beads, buttons, or other decorative supplies
- acrylic paint
- Elmer's glue
- marker



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Step 1

Choose a balloon to use as the main body of the airplane sculpture and inflate.

Note: papier-mâché is a wet medium. Use an object (such as balloon) that can hold its shape and not warp when it gets wet from the papier-mâché.

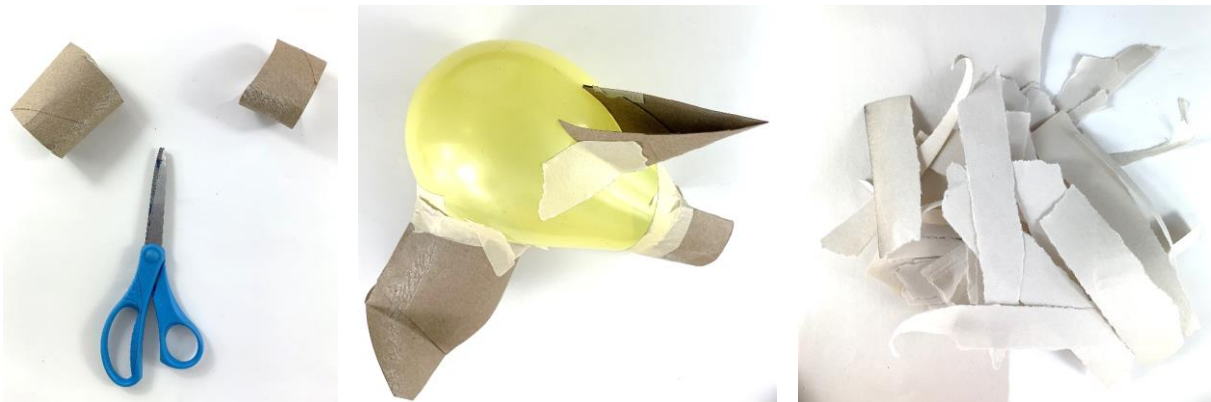


Step 2

Think about airplanes and what it means to fly. Consider this as you brainstorm what your airplane will look like, the specific parts that will make up the plane. Your sculpture does not have to be realistic. Instead, it can embody how taking off or landing in an airplane might make you feel or what flying means to you in terms of adventure or freedom!

Cut airplane wings and other plane parts from cardboard. Then, attach them to the balloon body using small pieces of masking tape.

Roughly tear strips of newspaper or newsprint that are about 1 inch wide and 4-5 inches long. Set aside.



Step 3

Using a whisk or a fork, mix one cup of flour with two cups of water. Mix until mâché paste is lump-free.



Step 4

Gather your paper strips and the bowl of mâché because now you're ready to sculpt! Start by dunking a paper strip into the mâché. Lightly run the wet paper in between two fingers to remove excess water, then apply to the balloon's surface. Apply wet paper strips one at a time, overlapping in opposite directions, until the entire form is covered. When fully covered, allow to dry.

Helpful hint: if sculpture starts to get soggy, stop applying papier-mâché and allow to dry. Then add layers until sculpture feels stable and allow to dry again.

Helpful hint: consider adding more than one layer of papier-mâché for stability.



Step 5

Time to add color. You can papier-mâché colorful tissue paper or apply paint! If adding papier-mâché tissue paper to your sculpture, repeat step 4, dunking tissue paper into the paste and overlapping pieces on the sculpture's surface. You can also lay dry tissue paper pieces over areas that are already wet to help soak up the paste. Set aside to dry.

Helpful hint: for a smoother surface, massage areas with your fingertips to work out any wrinkles.



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Step 6 (optional)

Embellish your sculpture with found objects like buttons, rivets or other small objects. Glue or attach decorative embellishments to areas of your choosing.



Step 7

Your papier-mâché abstract airplane is complete! Find a place to display our artwork or share with a friend or caregiver.



Extension

Experiment with different types of paper and mâché recipes. Which papers lie smoothest? Which paste recipe dries the fastest or has the shiniest surface? Create a journal to document your results.

Web Resources

[Read for more papier-mâché recipes](#)

[Read to learn papier-mâché tips & tricks](#)

[Understanding abstract art](#)

[See “Ralston Crawford: Art + Space + War” at the DAI](#)

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