Bas Relief Paintings

(art + history, art + social studies)

"Bas Relief" is a French term that translates to "low-raised work". It refers to a type of sculpture that creates a transition between flat and 3-dimensional artwork. It is meant to be viewed from one direction, as opposed to sculpture that can be viewed from all sides. Bas Relief is an important part of the history of art and can be found in almost every part of the world. The materials that have been used to create this type of sculpture are as widely varied as the civilizations they represent.

This lesson introduces a new medium for Bas Relief sculpture: block printing linoleum. Blick Wonder-Cut® is easy to carve, with expressive line quality, amazing detail and no crumble. It's thicker than traditional linoleum - capable of producing deep dimension. It's a high-quality yet economical medium for block printing and other applications such as this. Wonder-Cut® is a warm, sand brown color and once carved, the texture can be enhanced with Blick Matte Acrylic Paint.

Grade Levels 5-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Objectives

- Students will design and sculpt a dimensional piece of artwork, creating a variety of textures, lines and depths.
- Students will learn to use carving tools in a safe and responsible manner.
- Students will create a 3-dimensional artwork from a flat piece of material, understanding the planning and recesses used by artists for centuries in cultures around the globe.

Historical/Cultural Relativity

- This project may be linked to a variety of global historical and cultural studies. A few suggestions:

Materials

Blick Wonder-Cut® Linoleum, any size piece (40417-), need one per student

Speedball® Linoleum Cutters, (40203-) assorted sizes to share across classroom

Speedball® Linoleum Cutter Handle (40201-0000), need one per student

Sanford® Design® Ebony Pencil (20411-2009), box of 12, need one pencil per student

Blick Matte Acrylics, assorted colors (00727-), share at least 10 bottles across classroom

Blick Scholastic Golden Taklon Flat Wash Brush, 1/4" (05859-4014), need one per student

Alvin® Plastic Palette Tray (03046-1019), share one between two students

Optional Materials:

Sally's Graphite Transfer Paper (12918-1009)

Blick White Sulphite Drawing Paper, cut to the same size as the Linoleum (10209-1013)

Blick Artist's Acrylic Matte Matte Medium (00623-1046)

Blick Artist's Acrylic Matte Varnish (00623-1056)

Grifhold™ Pocket Sharpening Stone (34905-0000)

V-grooved Inking Plate, (42906-1003), for safer linoleum cutting

Historical/Cultural Relativity, continued

- Greek and Roman architecture featuring marble bas-relief sculptures
- Mesopotamian sandstone sculptures, especially those from the Palace at Nineveh
- Egyptian limestone temple carvings, particularly those incorporating painted images
- West African mahogany carvings and masks
- Native American totem carvings and paintings

Preparation

1. Have students prepare a preliminary sketch by either drawing directly onto the Wonder-Cut® or using the drawing paper, then transferring the sketch onto the linoleum using transfer paper.

Process

1. Students begin by selecting a steel cutter and firmly twisting it into the cutting handle. As they cut their designs, use the following list of suggestions to achieve the best results:

   - For the safest cutting, place the Wonder-Cut® on the V-groove inking plate to keep it from slipping.

   - Tools are sharp! Always have students cut away from themselves and keep their hands behind the cutter, out of the way of the blade. Use a sharpening stone to keep cutters at maximum performance.

   - Cut large areas in small sections; deep areas in small, gradual layers. Cutting away too much linoleum in one stroke increases the likelihood of the cutter skidding.

   - Encourage variety. Carve multiple layers to create the most interest. Leave some areas smooth, create lines and textures of varying depths and lengths, using different cutting heads. Students will learn the value of line and texture in their artwork.
2. When students have finished the cutting process, they should brush stray particles away with a stiff brush.
3. Blick Matte Acrylic is perfect for this project because it will cover the Wonder-Cut® in one coat and it has a matte finish when dry.

Watch the Lesson at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6eOV-73JXE&feature=youtu.be

Hints for Painting Linoleum

- Because Wonder-Cut® is an absorbent material, blending the paint on the surface is difficult to do. Have students mix colors in a palette before applying to the linoleum.

- Blick Craft Paint may be thinned with water to create soft washes.

- Small brushes may be used to force the paint down into the narrow crevices, then excess paint can be wiped away from the surface with a lint-free paper towel. This will emphasize the texture.

- Wide brushes may be used to paint the surface, allowing it to skip across carved areas. This is also a means of emphasizing texture.

- For a white, less absorbent surface, have students apply a coat of acrylic gesso to the Wonder-Cut® and allow it to dry prior to painting.

3. Finished paintings may be left as is or coated with an acrylic matte varnish.

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National Standards:

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

• **5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas.

• **9-12** Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use.

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

• **5-8** Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas.

• **9-12** Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

• **5-8** Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts.

• **9-12** Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times and places.