

Everyday Papier-Mâché

Build scale models of common objects



Artists find inspiration in many different places; sometimes even things we see every day, like cans in the kitchen or a clock on your bedside table. People have created **still-life paintings** featuring food, flowers and furniture since the Middle Ages! However, you don't have to stick to painting or drawing. Featured in FAM's show *After Spiritualism: Loss and Transcendence in Contemporary Art*, Julie K. Gray remakes everyday items out of papier-mâché, acrylic paint, wire, and yarn. EVP Radios, featured in her work, are used to communicate with the spirits of the dead. In her work, she also recreates common household items like retro food packages and cookbooks. She likes to remake objects that make her feel nostalgic or might remind her of things that she has lost in her life. It's one way to honor parts of our lives that have ended or passed on. The funny surprise of realizing something is made out of papier-mâché makes us laugh, even if we might also see these items and think about things we have lost from our own past.



Above: "Untitled" (EVP Recording Altar), 2019.
Papier-mâché, acrylic, wire, yarn
(This work is featured in *After Spiritualism*, at FAM)



Right: "Assorted Groceries and Cookbooks", 2018.
Papier-mâché, acrylic and needlepoint.

You can make papier-mâché at home and create your own version of Julie Gray's work! Find instructions below on how to create your own 3D artwork from newspaper papier-mâché. Post your finished project on social media and remember to use the hashtags #FAM #MuseumFromHome !

Materials:

- Newspaper, rice paper or tissue paper, torn into strips about 1 inch wide
- Water
- Liquid glue (White glue, tacky glue, Mod Podge, or wood glue will work)
- Masking tape or painter's tape
- Paint and brushes
- Towels and work area that can get wet!
- Optional:
 - Old containers (boxes, bottles etc.)
 - Cardboard items (toilet paper rolls, etc.)
 - Tin Foil
 - Wire
 - Yarn

*Note: You can also make papier-mâché with flour and water boiled on the stove. This method can produce mold in only a few days, so please make sure you add salt.

You can find a recipe to make the flour paste here: <https://www.instructables.com/lesson/Paper-Mache-With-Flour/>

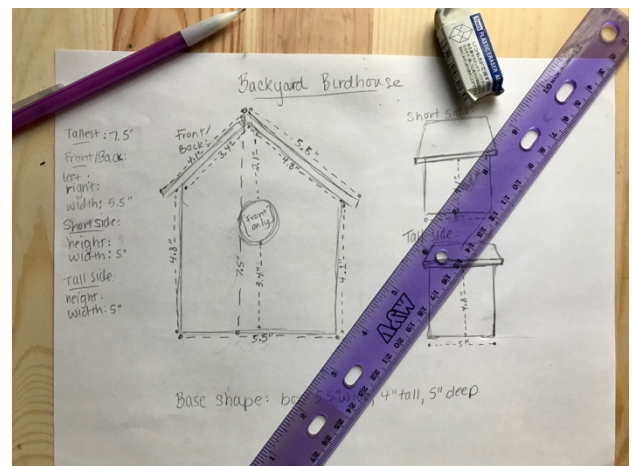
Directions:

- **Pick an item you want to recreate.** Think carefully about how you will build and decorate this object and make a project plan before you get started.

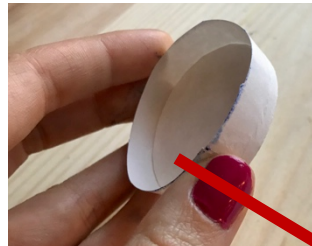


I chose to remake a birdhouse from my childhood home.

- **Measure your item.** If you want to remake something exactly, you will need to measure each side and write down all of the dimensions. Make a sketch and label each part with how long, wide, and tall it will need to be.



- **Build an armature or a frame.** If you are making a square, you can start with a small cardboard box. If you are making something more complicated, think about a simple underlying shape. You can make this shape out of cut cardboard or other sturdy materials.
 - Then you will take some of your newspaper and scrunch it up into small shapes. Tape these onto your base shape to create the specific form you need.
 - If you are not using a base box or tube, start by making your basic object shape out of scrunched up newspaper, wrapped carefully in tape. From there, you can build off of the base shape in the same way.



Be creative! I used the bottom of a paper cup to make the hole in the bird house by taping it into a cutout spot on my cardboard.



- Once you have the right shape, use tape to smooth out any uneven areas.
- **Make your papier-mâché mixture** and tear your strips.
 - Mix glue and water in equal parts (a 1:1 ratio)
 - Tearing your newspaper leave soft edges that will blend in. To make a sharp edge, cut the paper with scissors.



- **Dip your strips into the glue** and use your fingers to slide off any extra glue.
- **Lay the strip down** over your base and push it into place with your hands. Use your fingers to push lightly to erase seams between the strips as you continue to build up your project.
- You can also lay down a dry strip on top of some of the glue mixture and then rub more glue into the top- try out a few different methods, but **make sure everything is soaked through with glue!**

- Remember to have your strips go different directions as you add layers, this will make your project much stronger.
- Once you have built up a few layers on your project, you can **leave it to dry**. It can take more than 12 hours to dry fully. It should not feel cold or damp to the touch.



- Once dry, **paint and decorate** your object to look like your inspiration! You can trace out lines with pencil and then use brushes and sponges to paint your item. You can add texture by using sandpaper to scrape down edges or by adding wire, yarn, embroidery thread, or other craft supplies.

