

## WORKSHOP: "BLOCK TREES"



**Summary:** Participants create trees out of different lengths of blocks, painting and embellishing them to look like trees, which can be for a festive holiday if they celebrate. Lights, beads, yarn and wire can be added. Participants can also make tiny birds to add to their branches. Blocks can be glued together or kept separate to allow rearranging the tree shape. A shaped object can be added to the top for a theme if desired.

### Materials and Equipment:

wood 1.3/8" x 1.5/8" with 37" of length  
small wood shapes  
acrylic paint  
paint brushes  
plastic lids for palettes  
t-shirt scraps  
water containers  
optional: acrylic paint markers  
coloured wire scraps  
pliers  
wire cutters  
decorative yarn scraps  
decorative braid  
beads – assorted colours & sizes  
optional: buttons  
optional: tiny pompoms  
optional: felt scraps  
Q-tips  
extension cord  
hand saw or bandsaw  
optional: stencils  
instructions/idea sheet

pencil, eraser, sharpener  
sketch paper  
wood glue  
glue gun  
hot glue – clear and assorted colours  
scrap cardboard  
work gloves, heat protective  
ruler  
tape measure  
sandpaper  
paper scissors  
safety glasses  
masking tape  
smock  
optional: ribbon  
table cover  
extension cord  
tooth pick or wood skewer  
carbon paper  
optional: varnish  
artwork sample

**Class Plan:**

1. Cut wood into descending size pieces to stack into a tree shape. Off-cuts of the same width can also be used for repurposing and salvaging.



- a. The wood thickness can be anything based on the size of tree you want to make. Ours was  $1\frac{3}{8}$ " x  $1\frac{5}{8}$ " and we needed  $37\frac{1}{2}$ " of length.
- b. We cut pieces 9",  $7\frac{1}{2}$ ", 6",  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ", 3" and  $1\frac{5}{8}$ " long for the green part of the tree, and another piece  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " for the brown trunk section at the bottom.



2. Sand all pieces of wood with about 60 grit sandpaper. Wearing work gloves helps reduce the chance of getting splinters.



3. Prime all pieces of wood with sludge primer. We use this primer by TriArt because it is made from leftovers of many other paint products, and makes it so the waste water from acrylic paint making can be reused.



- a. We primed one side and the edges, then turned it over when dry to prime the other side.
  - b. Sand all pieces lightly with about 120 or 240 grit sandpaper to smooth the surfaces. We recommend a dust mask for this.
4. Paint the six tree pieces in green and white:
    - a. Paint the top and the top part of all sides along a random wavy line of all the tree pieces in green.
    - b. Paint the bottom and bottom part of all sides along the same wavy line of all the tree pieces in white.



5. Paint the one tree truck piece in brown and white:
  - a. Paint the top and the top part of all sides along a random wavy line of the trunk piece in brown.
  - b. Paint the bottom and bottom part of all sides along the same wavy line of the trunk piece in white.
6. Optional: Trace the wavy lines between white and colour with a silver acrylic paint marker. Allow to dry.
7. Use an old frayed brush to dry brush speckles of the opposite colour on each section:
  - a. So, for the main tree, speckles of green paint was added to the white section and white speckles to the green section.



- b. For the trunk section, put speckles of brown on the white section, and white speckles on the brown.
- 8. Optional: varnish all sections of your wood pieces after painting and before embellishing.
- 9. Add embellishments to the tree, using fabri-tac glue for fabric and medium weight items, and high initial tack wood glue for wood items. Hot glue also works for quick attachment but it is less secure when dry.
  - a. Wear heat protective gloves when working with hot glue and use a popsicle stick to press and position things in place.
  - b. A wood skewer is useful for fine positioning of items.
- 10. Sequin braid makes nice garland, applies with lines of hot glue.



- 11. Scrap wire twisted into little curls with needle nose pliers makes shiny reflective embellishments. These were glued on with clear hot glue. We recommend wearing safety glasses when working with wire, cutting and shaping it.



- 12. Leftover beads from other projects make good bulbs for tree decorating.





13. Small wood shapes if available can be used for decorations.



14. Here are the beads and shapes added, spread out over the branches and attached with glue.



15. Try adding wood animal shapes at the bottom for a woodland appearance.



16. Try adding a shape at the top for a them. Here a painted wood star gold was used.



17. Wood lengths weren't glued together, so they could be positioned at different angles for a more three-dimensional tree look.



18. Happy creating, and please send us photos of your creations if you feel comfortable sharing.

**Useful Information/Adaptions/Variations:**

- Try applying dabs of coloured hot glue for easier decoration if attaching objects is tricky.
- Try making a different shape like a heart or a boat. Keep the centre of mass over the base so stack doesn't fall over.



- Make a tree without dimensional attachments. Paint one side of each wood piece for a season, so they can be rotated for a spring, summer, autumn and winter tree for year-round decoration.
- Try draping a short string of tiny LED solar powered lights. Don't attach the lights with hot glue (it melts the insulation on the wires and is a fire hazard).
- This project can be done without a particular holiday theme.

**Trouble Shooting:**

- If any of your items fall off try a different type of glue and sand smooth items at the attachment point to give the glue something to grip onto. Sometimes we use a dab of hot glue beside a dab of wood glue (not mixed!), which gives immediate hold from the hot glue and long-term hold from the wood glue when dry.
- If your tree is in a busy area, opt for gluing the wood pieces together so there is less chance of them falling over. A small triangle of wood can also be glued on at the base back to add extra stability if needed.