

## WORKSHOP: "NATURE DIORAMAS"



**Summary:** Participants create nature figures made of acorns, walnut shells and sticks. The figures are incorporated into miniature scenes with props like log slice bicycles, feather shelters and interacting with each other. The scenes are places outside and photographed by their creator. The images become the artwork and the figures and scenes can be left outside to return to nature gradually.

### Materials and Equipment:

4-5 acorns and acorn hats  
pine needles  
assorted pinecones  
milkweed pods dry  
4-5 walnuts  
6 log slices  
3-4 feathers  
odd pieces of wood and natural items  
birch bark  
burrs  
5-6 twigs straight and curved  
dried grass and/or reeds  
acrylic paint – earthy colours  
magazine pages for inspiration  
wood bead, beige  
wood chips

wood skewers  
wood craft sticks  
small pointed paint brush  
straight pins  
glue gun and glue  
cardboard for under glue gun  
coated gloves for working with hot glue  
pliers/cutters  
wood glue  
fine green wire  
scrap wire pieces assorted  
digital camera or cell phone (not provided)  
optional: drill (not provided)  
instructions/ideas sheet  
beads, circle of shells

### Class Plan:

1. These instructions will describe how to make a small figure made of nuts sitting at an easel painting, but you can make any kind of scene you like for your nature diorama. There is lots of inspiration online, or you could use a picture from a magazine.
2. To make an acorn figure:

- a. Pop the top off of an acorn. Using hot glue attach the acorn top to the beige wood bead, covering one of the bead holes. Glue the acorn bottom to the other side of the bead, covering the other bead hole.
- b. We recommend coated gloves while using hot glue to avoid getting glue on your skin. These gloves help but are not heat proof!
- c. Using hot glue, attach the largest multi coloured (or brown) bead underneath the acorn.
- d. Cut two small angled lengths of stick about 1.1/2 inches long and attach them to the sides of your acorn to make arms angled to be reaching forward.

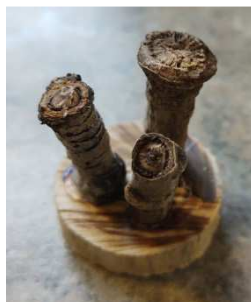


- e. Cut two small lengths of stick about 1.1/2 inches long and attach them to your figure for legs.
- f. Cut two tiny wider bits of stick and attach them with hot glue to make hands. Apply the hot glue to the arms and push the hands in place.
- g. Cut two tiny pieces of wood chips to make feet and attach them to the base of your figure's legs. Apply the hot glue to the legs for safety.



### 3. To make a stool:

- a. Cut three thicker pieces of stick about 1 inch long, angling your cuts. Attach your sticks to the base of a log slice with hot glue applied to the stick ends.



- b. Trim your sticks at the bottom as needed to make your stool rest flat on the ground.
  - c. Optional: Attach one or both of the legs of your acorn figure to the edge of the stool with hot glue to make your figure stand up leaning against the stool.
4. To make an easel:
- a. Cut three pieces of stick about 7 inches long and one smaller piece about 4 inches long.
  - b. Line up the ends of the three long pieces and tie them together about 2 inches from the end.



- c. Spread out the three tied sticks so two come forward and the centre one goes backward, to make the shape of an easel.
- d. Tie the smaller piece of stick horizontally to each of the two front long sticks to make a shelf for your painting to sit on.



5. To make a canvas:
- a. Tear a piece of birch bark into a piece about 4.1/2 inches by 4.1/2 inches. It will tear easily in one direction. Tearing instead of cutting leaves rough more organic looking edges, but either method works.
  - b. Tear a tiny slit in the top centre of your bark and fit this hole over the top centre easel stick that comes forward.
  - c. Rest the bottom of your bark on your easel shelf tucking a bit of it behind the shelf to hold it in place.



6. To make a hedgehog:

- a. Take half of a large nut like a walnut or a more textured one if available.
- b. Attach 4 small organic looking beads for feet to the underside with hot glue. Apply the hot glue to the large nut not to the tiny beads to protect your fingers.



7. Optional embellishments:

- a. Hot glue a small wood chip to one hand of your figure for a paint palette.
- b. For a paint brush, trim the fluff off of a feather almost up to the tip. Hot glue the feather to one hand of your figure, encapsulating the handle in hot glue so it doesn't fall off.



- c. Place a ring of shells over the tip of the easel support that goes through your bark canvas.



- d. Attach a clump of dried flowers to the top of your easel with hot glue, lining up the flower stem with the easel sticks.



- e. Place a few different sized pinecones in a clump near your figure for landscaping.
8. Position your figure nature diorama outside and let it gradually return to nature, or keep it inside to last.

#### **Useful Information/Adaptions/Variations:**

- Try out figure arrangements with toy action figures if available then create the scene with natural materials.
- Use your own photographs or magazine pictures of people for inspiration on what your figures could be doing and what props they might need (e.g. café table and acorn hat bowl of soup).
- Add your own found materials to add to your scenes.
- If you'd like to keep your creation, bring it inside instead of letting it return to nature.
- Add touches of paint to paint a face and embellish your scene.

#### **Trouble Shooting:**

- Use pliers or tweezers to hold tiny materials while gluing, particularly with hot glue.
- If a prop you are making isn't working, pile up the pieces and position your figures so it looks like they are trying to repair the item you were working on.
- If there is a mark, glue or paint spot that needs covering, glue another item over it like a seed.