

Exploring Materials and Creating and Modifying Beads

Time: 1 hour

Difficulty level: Medium

Messy level: Low



Lucy Sarneel, "Meli-melo" Necklace, 2007, zinc, textile, rubber, wood, paint, glass beads, and gold, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of the Rotasa Collection Trust, 2015.86. © Lucy Sarneel



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To view a hi-res image of the work, visit mfah.org/art and enter the artwork's title in the search bar.

This activity will guide you in exploring different media while creating and modifying beads to achieve unity while taking inspiration from Lucy Sarneel's "Meli-melo" Necklace.

Investigate the Work of Art!

1. What are some materials traditionally used to make jewelry?
2. Why do you or people you know wear jewelry?
3. In "Meli-melo" Necklace, Lucy Sarneel uses a wide variety of materials, but still manages to make the materials look cohesive, like they belong together. How do you think the artist accomplished this? Think about color, texture, and size.

Let's Make Some Art!

Gather These Art Materials

- 1 pack white air-dry clay
- 1 black permanent marker
- Various wooden beads
- Stretchy jewelry thread
- Scissors
- Towel
- Tape
- Skewer, toothpick, or pencil

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Think about your design. How will you create unity? Will everything be the same color? Will everything be the same theme? Will everything be the same size?
2. Air-dry clay takes 24 hours to dry, so first create multiple beads using the clay. Do this by creating your desired shape and then pushing a hole through the center. Pencils work well as a tool for this step. *Tip: Keep your beads thin or small to avoid heavy necklaces.*
3. Set aside to dry.
4. Look around your home for small materials and objects that can be used as beads. This means they already have a hole for threading, or you can easily make a hole for threading.
5. Begin to alter your wooden beads by using the marker.
6. Allow the wooden beads to dry.
7. To thread your necklace/wall hanging, work on a small towel to prevent beads from rolling. Cut string to desired length and put tape on one end so beads do not slide off. You could also use a paper clip.
8. Begin putting on beads in desired order, making sure to leave a couple of inches on the ends for the finishing knot. To make the finishing knot, keep the necklace lying flat on the towel and remove the tape from the ends of your string. Then tie a small knot in the end.