



# Bend it like Deacon

*This month's eco-art activities add a creative twist to recycling paper and card*

Welcome to the second part of our 'Eco art' series. The series offers a collection of activities inspired partly by the work of contemporary artists and partly by the contents of several boxes of recyclable items currently sitting outside your front door! This month's activities offer opportunities to put all those pieces of card and coloured paper that gather around the paper trimmer in every classroom to good use. How often have you swept those strips into the paper bin, half thinking that they must deserve a kinder fate? Well, their day has finally arrived, as your class can use them to get to work on creating some twisting, turning sculptures that in turn will be used to inspire some challenging observational drawings.

## Curriculum links

**NC:** Art and design 1b–c, 2a–b, 4a–b, 5a–c.

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*Restless* by Richard Deacon

## Activities

**1 Inspirational sculptures** The following activities are inspired by the work of Turner Prize-winning sculptor, Richard Deacon. Deacon's sculptures are usually built on a huge scale using solid materials such as wood and steel, yet they often have a wonderful flexible quality, almost as if they were made by someone playing around with a box of enormous elastic bands. If possible, show the children some real examples of Deacon's work – be sure that they take along their sketchbooks. (Search for 'richard deacon' at [www.artfacts.net](http://www.artfacts.net) then select 'public collections' and scroll down to discover where Deacon's work is exhibited in the UK). Making drawings of Deacon's sculptures is a fascinating task and one that inspired the following 'Extending into drawing' activity (see page 51).

**2 Bendy art** Begin by showing the children some images of Richard Deacon's sculptures (see [www.richarddeacon.net](http://www.richarddeacon.net) or [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk) – use the search function to locate examples from the Tate's collection).

Children will quickly get a feel for the kinds of unusual shapes and rhythms Deacon uses in his work, but they may also be a little mystified as to the materials they are made from. Explain that this is because Deacon often constructs his sculptures from hard materials, such as wood and metal, yet in such a way that the materials appear to be bendy and flexible. Thin layers of plywood, for example, are bent into shape and sealed together to preserve graceful curves and dynamic twisting shapes.



### 3 The 3D challenge

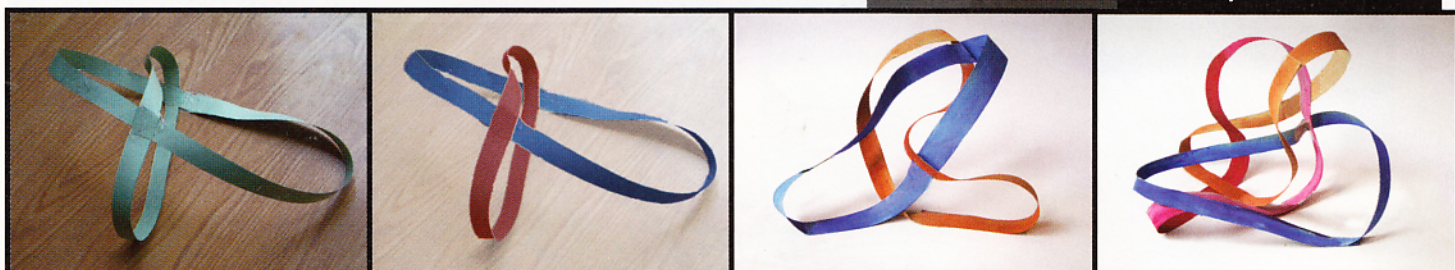
Explain to the children that they will be making their own sculptures from strips of card. First, they will need to experiment with twisting and fixing the strips into interesting compositions. Demonstrate how to loop a strip of card into a circle, adding a 180 degree twist before taping the two ends together. Then, tape this strip to the desk to secure it while you twist a second length in the same way, this time looping it through the first and securing it at the top and bottom.

Once the children have grown confident with the technique of

twisting and fixing the card strips, set them a specific challenge of creating a sculpture that will rest on a surface with a minimal amount of contact. Not only will this focus children's attention on balancing individual forms within their structure, it will also lead to the creation of a group of elegant, twisting 3D compositions. Children can be as ambitious or cautious as they wish. Some children will want to experiment with multiple strips, loops and colours, while others will opt for a more minimalist approach, integrating a few graceful curves. (See series of four images below.)



Laocoon by Richard Deacon



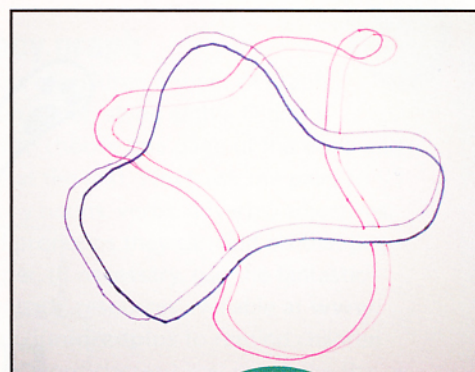
This step-by-step series of images shows how children can use scraps of coloured paper or card to replicate the curves and twists of Deacon's sculptures

### 4 Extending into drawing

Sculptors often use drawings to plan, experiment and solve problems before tackling the materials they will use to create the sculpture itself. The previous activity, however, lends itself to making drawings after the sculptures are completed. Arrange a selection of the finished pieces on a table and provide each child with two drawing pencils. Holding both pencils in the same hand, demonstrate how to make drawings of the sculptures so that each pencil line represents an edge of the

card strip – a bit hard to explain but great fun to do! (See image, right.)

Show the children how to represent the twists and turns of the card strips by changing the space between the two pencil points, before challenging them to draw their own sculptures with their 'double pencils'. When the children are confident with the technique, offer them the option of using felt-tipped pens to make the drawings. Felt-tipped pens are not always the most practical or sympathetic drawing tool, but they suit this activity really well.



Next month:  
Transforming  
plastic bottles  
into scary  
monsters!

### 5 Telling a story through art

The titles of many of Richard Deacon's sculptures could almost be titles for stories (*Tell Me No Lies*, *Keeping the Faith*, *Water Under The Bridge*, for example). Encourage the children to create their own personal titles for their sculptures and drawings before displaying their work alongside images of Deacon's own work. ■



Dead Leg by Richard Deacon