

**Tara Donovan**  
**Translucent: The Art of Tara Donovan**  
**Mixed Media Project Focusing on the Properties of Light**

Created by Karen Saunders, Lakota East High School Art Educator

**Post-Visit Lesson Plan**  
**3<sup>rd</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Visual Arts/ Science**



**About the Artist:**

Artist Tara Donovan's large scale organic sculptures have often been described using scientific terms. To create her installations she observes and studies mass-produced objects like Styrofoam cups or straws. The quality of each object's surface is emphasized through her work. Some surfaces may be translucent, others reflective, and still others opalescent. For each object she investigates the possibilities of the surface to form her hypothesis of what might work for the overall sculpture. Donovan experiments until she finds an outcome that will work.

Students will learn to make an installation with a garden theme to explore light properties and their relationship to the surface of an object.

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- create an installation
- recognize the different properties of light such as transparent, translucent, opaque, opalescent, reflective, and refraction
- learn about the work of Tara Donovan

**Materials:**

Hula hoops  
Bamboo poles  
Fishing line  
Old cds  
Mylar (insides of chip bags and helium balloons)  
Leftover laminating plastic  
Colored foil  
Colored wax paper/vellum  
Anything that is .... transparent, translucent, opaque, opalescent, or reflective

**Vocabulary:**

**Transparent**  
**Opaque**

**Opalescent**  
**Translucent**

**Reflective**  
**Reflection**

**Anticipatory Set:**

Look at the translucent installations of Tara Donovan at her CAC exhibition. Works like *Haze* (straws) and *Untitled* (plastic cups) are good examples of translucency. Back in the classroom show students sculptures by other artists which display transparent, translucent, opaque, and reflective materials. Hold up different objects and have students identify whether each is transparent, translucent, opaque, opalescent, and reflective etc.

**Procedure:**

Have different classes create different pieces of art for the installation.

**1. CD flowerers:**

Start with a cd then decorate the center using permanent markers. Then add petals around the edges and stems and leaves. Use a glue gun to stick another cd to the back side to enable the flower to be viewed from both sides. Use fishing line to hang them from a bamboo pole.

**2. Birds:**

Have students trace their drawings of birds onto scraps of laminating plastic using colored sharpie markers. Then cut the birds out and string them up with fishing line.

**3. Butterflies:**

To make the butterflies shape wings out of wire and wrap translucent packing tape around the wire and use scrunched plastic bags to form the body, then add sharpie marker and paper to decorate the butterfly wings.

**4. Flower vines:**

The flower vines made from reflective colored foil.

Then string all the art work with fishing line and hang from hula hoops and poles. Vary the length and heights of all the art work for visual interest.

**Assessment:**

Assess each piece of art on neatness and creativity.

Play I Spy and find something in the sculpture that is... transparent, translucent, opaque, and opalescent. Do this to assess that students have learned the properties of light.

**Ohio State Education Standards:****Visual arts:****Creative Expression and Communication**

Students create artworks that demonstrate understanding of materials, processes, tools, media, techniques and available technology. They understand how to use art elements, principles and images to communicate their ideas in a variety of visual forms.

**Valuing the Arts/Aesthetic Reflection**

Students understand why people value visual art. They present their beliefs about the nature and significance of selected artworks and the reasons for holding these beliefs. Students reflect on and respect diverse points of view about artworks and artifacts.

**Science-Physical science**

C. Explore and summarize observations of the transmission, bending (refraction) and reflection of light.

Created by Karen Saunders' students at Lakota East High School Art



