

# Advanced Paper Making Techniques

By Karen Elzinga



## TWO METHODS FOR PULPING PAPER



The first method for pulping paper is to use a food blender, adding a bit of paper in stages to a blender, this is a quick method and very effective for smaller quantities. You can use any sort of recycled paper, but make sure to take out sticky tape or staples prior to pulping.

### HOW TO TURN PAPER INTO PULP



The second method is to use a tub, this is very effective if larger quantities are required. Add hot water to the tub and immerse paper, you can use cold water the process of paper breakdown just takes longer. Leave the tub and paper alone for at least 30 mins, an hour is preferable at minimum. If using as a school project and you wish students to be involved in the process you can decant paper and water into smaller tubs and have students work the paper into pulp. Simply get your hands dirty in the tubs, breaking up the paper as you go, you'll know when it's ready because it will feel like silk, soft and with no hard bits, generally this can be achieved in 10 minutes or less depending on quantity.

**You'll know when it's ready because it will feel like silk**

# How to Make a Paper Making Frame



Start by resourcing some simple timber, a standard pine length is fine, often larger hardware shops will offer a cutting service. Cut your timber into a rectangular shape such as A4 paper sheet size around 20cm x 30cm. Glue timber ends together then use a staple gun or nails to firmly affix your frame together.



Purchase some fly wire, (hardware shops have it on rolls, just buy the minimum you require) something standard with small holes and staple gun (preferred) or nails (Flat Head nails) and affix your fly screen to your timber frame



You will also require a piece of sheet timber such as plywood measured to fit the inside measurements of your frame, this is called a deckle, this is to flatten and reduce the water content of your paper pulp when in the frame, turning it into paper. It also helps to get your paper out in one piece when made

# Let start with some -Basic paper sheets



## Ingredients:

Cut up an old felt blanket in rectangles to fit inside your frame (opp shops have them for a few dollars)

Use the blanket remainder to place on a table to place your finished paper on (it will soak up the extra water)

Wooden Frame

Paper pulp

Wooden insert

Dyes (food colouring, ink dyes etc)

Get familiar with your pulp and frame and play around with it before attempting your first sheet.

Chances are if your not familiar with making paper this way your first few attempts will be put straight back into the tub and you'll start again.

This is a normal part of learning and practice definitely makes perfect. You don't have to save everything you make, if it's not great, dump it back into the tub and try a new one.





## Which side of the frame do I put the pulp

There are obviously two sides the inside and the outside, you can use both, there is no hard or fast rule about it.



However it does depend on whether you like nice clean edges or more rough edges, the top or outside is harder to work with then the inside as a rule.

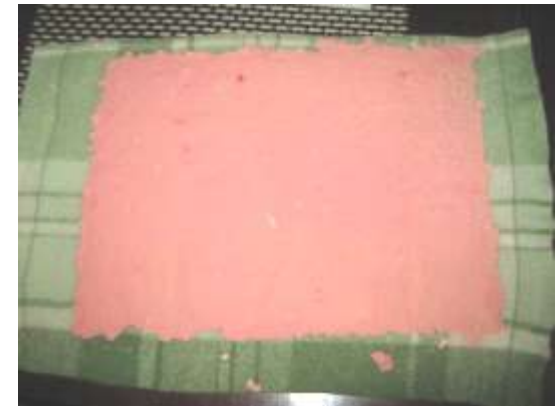
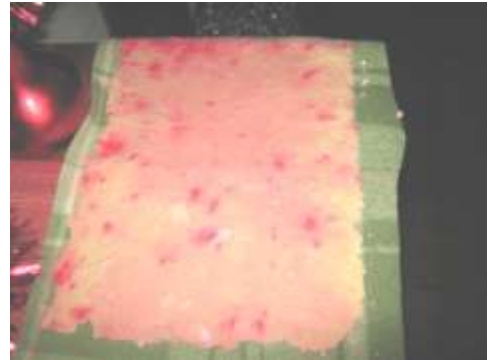


The other way is to place the paper pulp inside the frame (Preferred), it's just easier to get nice clean edges. Make sure your blanket rectangle fits inside perfectly.

# How to make Paper in 3 easy steps

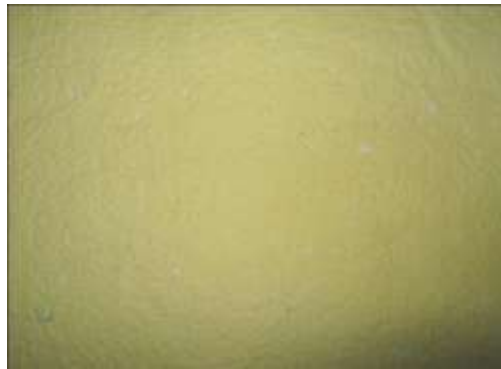
1. Place paper pulp so it just covers completely your fly wire inside your frame (try thick and thin for different paper thickness and weights. Remember any gaps will mean holes in your paper and more fragile spots, you want an even consistency all over.
2. Place your blanket rectangle on top of your paper pulp and then your deckle (wooden flat rectangle measured to fit inside your frame). Gently push down, make sure your frame is over your tub because water will be pushed out of your fly wire as the paper pulp flattens to become paper.
3. Once you have confirmed that enough water has been released, it's reveal time, keeping your deckle in place with your hand, turn over your frame and slowly move your hand whilst remaining on the deckle and allow the deckle to very slowly release the paper from the fly wire onto your deckle. Flip the deckle onto your drying blanket and take away the deckle and the underlying rectangle blanket leaving your paper sheet onto a dry blanket uncovered ready for drying out naturally. This technique may take a few attempts at practice but you'll get there.

# Practice makes perfect – Change paper colours by experimenting with dyes



12 plain sheets drying on felt beds.

# Basic paper sheets –Try to master at least 12 sheets





## Basic paper sheets



After mastering at least 12 paper sheets your ready to move on

## Step 2 – Mastering additives

Well done getting the hang of Basic Paper Sheets – Now it's time to move onto what can be added to paper for decorative purposes, this includes simple items such as glitter, cut up tinsel, paper bits, sequins, feathers, confetti, coloured sand, felt whatever you have lying around at home.

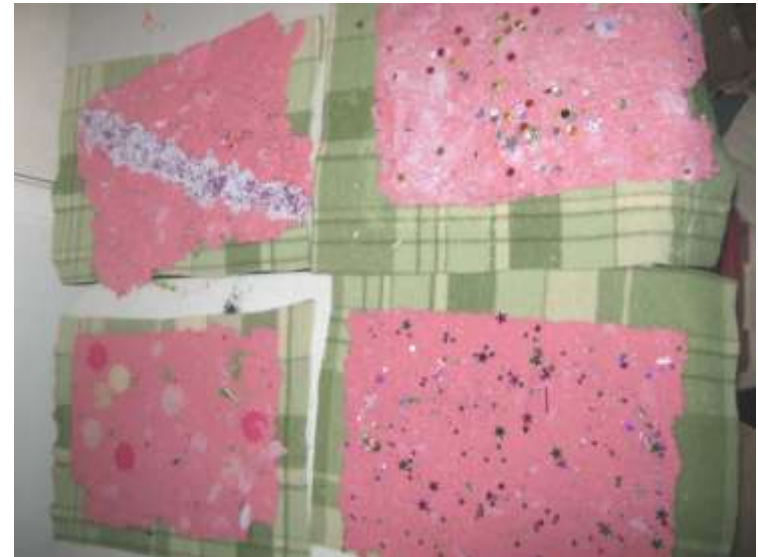
Simply add them to your pulp if you wish to have them embedded within your paper, or add them to your pulp when it's in the frame before you squeeze out the water with your deckle, this will mean the additives sit on the top of your paper very visibly like this example.



# Basic paper sheets with additives



Here are the twelve sheets with inclusions/additives drying on felt beds.





# Try At least 12 different additive inclusions



Coloured shredded paper inclusion



Fabric pieces, and cut wool inclusions



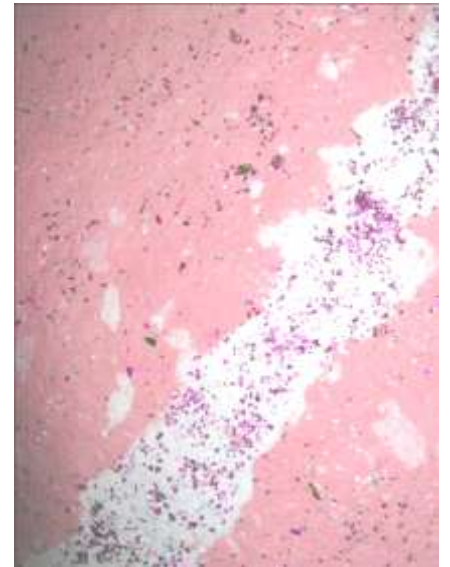
Feather inclusion



Coloured cotton and wool inclusions

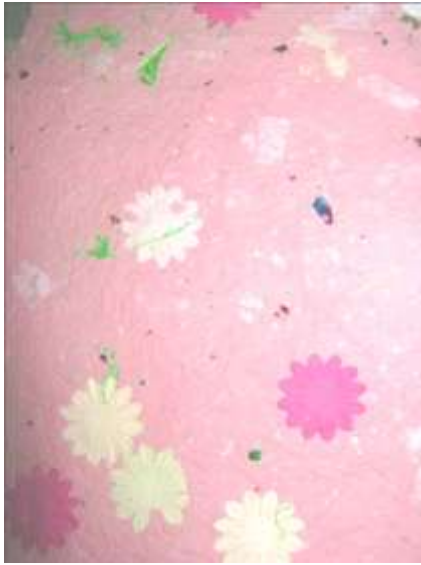


Sequin inclusions



White pulp and glitter inclusion

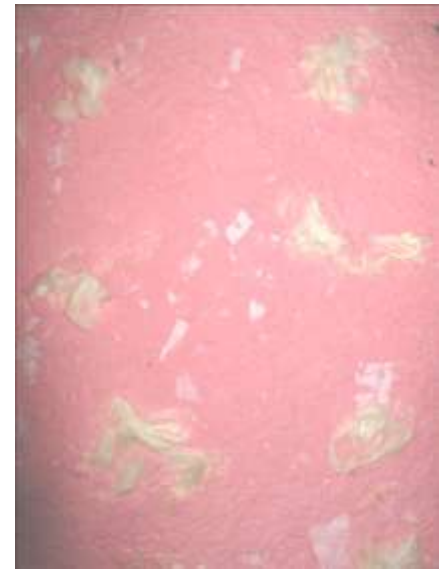
# Additives – Final 12 dried papers



Paper flower inclusions



Metallic star inclusions



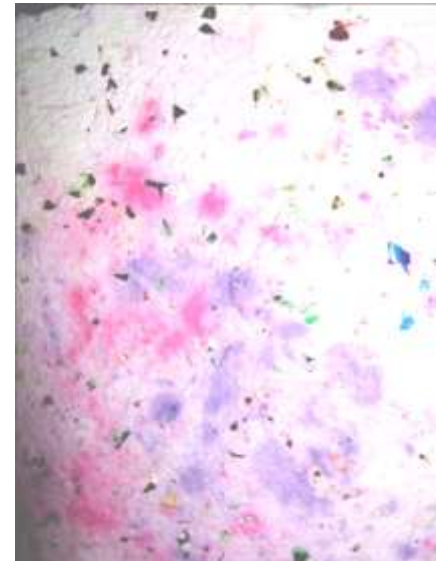
Dog hair inclusion



Felt person, feathers and metallic paper inclusion



Tea leaf and coloured paper inclusion



Paint and metallic paper inclusion



## Step 3

# Encasing objects in inside the paper

Well done, hang with me we have plenty more techniques to learn. Our next technique is the encasement of objects inside the paper to form a 3D paper shape.

Here you will need to source some every day objects, things like pegs, wire, match sticks, pop sticks, basically anything that can make a small 3D shape that you don't mind loosing to your paper.

Maybe pick a theme to work with, mine will be 'childhood memories' and let's see where that takes us.

# Inclusions



Idea – Connections - Childhood memories

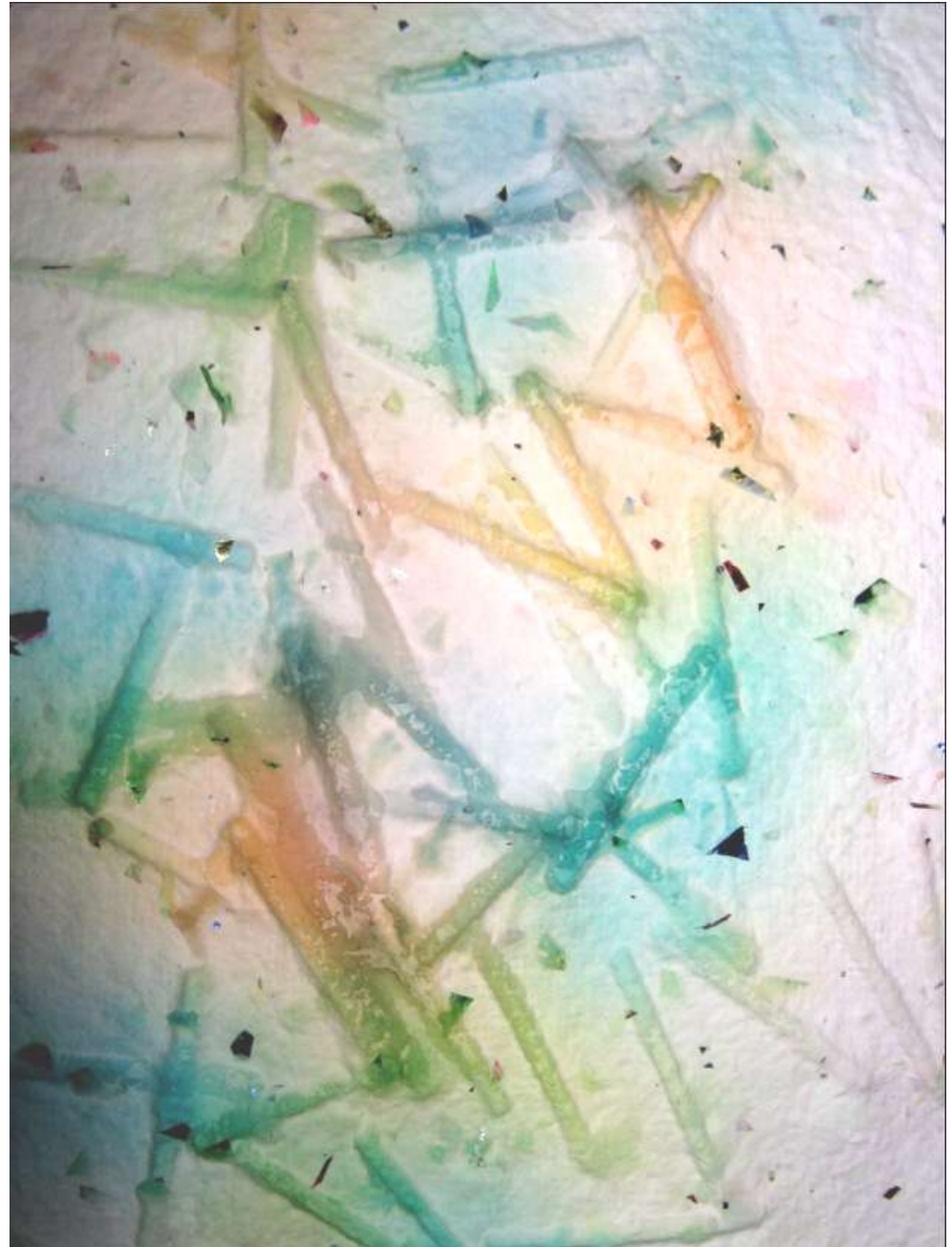
Concept – To devise a number of paper inclusions that have some meaning to your childhood memories.

1. Swinging on the clothes line
2. Playing pick up sticks
3. Drawing
4. Placing hand prints into concrete
5. Having my head put into hair ties and my little hand bag
6. Chasing butterflies around the yard

## Process

Create one sheet of paper, then layout your additives on top of it, create another sheet of paper and lay it on top of your additives and first sheet, gently with a blanket rectangle over the top squeeze the two together. Make sure you have done a thicker piece of paper so it doesn't rip so easily. Allow to fully dry.

# Inclusions work



The concept of this inclusion is the children's game pick up sticks, I tried to layer some of the sticks to gain added height and I used coloured sticks as they would bleed when wet, adding yet another colour as well as dimension. As a kid I loved playing this simple yet fun game. The finished result turned out very well, the paper really held the sticks well and as expected the colour from the match sticks bled through leaving a patterned effect. Try this one at home.

## Inclusions work 2



For this inclusion I used coloured pegs and plastic wiper sniper cord. Every child loves to swing on the clothes line, so hence the idea came to portray the clothes line in this manner. Both inclusions worked very well and gave good definition. Again I used coloured painted pegs so the colour would bleed through the paper adding definition to the pegs.





## Inclusions, work 3



Plastic hands



For this inclusion I used plastic hands, two sides worked from this experiment, the above one was the best of the two impressions as the paper sank into a hand like mould, on the other side of the hands there was no impression or sides just a flat surface and the marks were not as dominant or defined, but both sides worked well. The hands were from a clapper, I just pulled it apart, the idea was for the finished inclusions to look like children had put their hand impressions into freshly laid concrete and it had dried.



# Inclusions work 4



What child doesn't like to chase butterflies, back when I was growing up there seemed to be millions of butterflies flying about, now it is very special when you get to see one as there doesn't seem to be many about. But the memory of chasing butterflies was one of laughter and smiles. Foam butterflies were used, and were great, they achieved really good definition even when layered.



# Inclusions work 5



The inclusion for this paper was a little plastic bag and hair bobbles, every little girls loves her hand bag and are seen with hair bubbles in their hair, the memory is strong of every morning my mother doing my hair, it is where this idea came from.

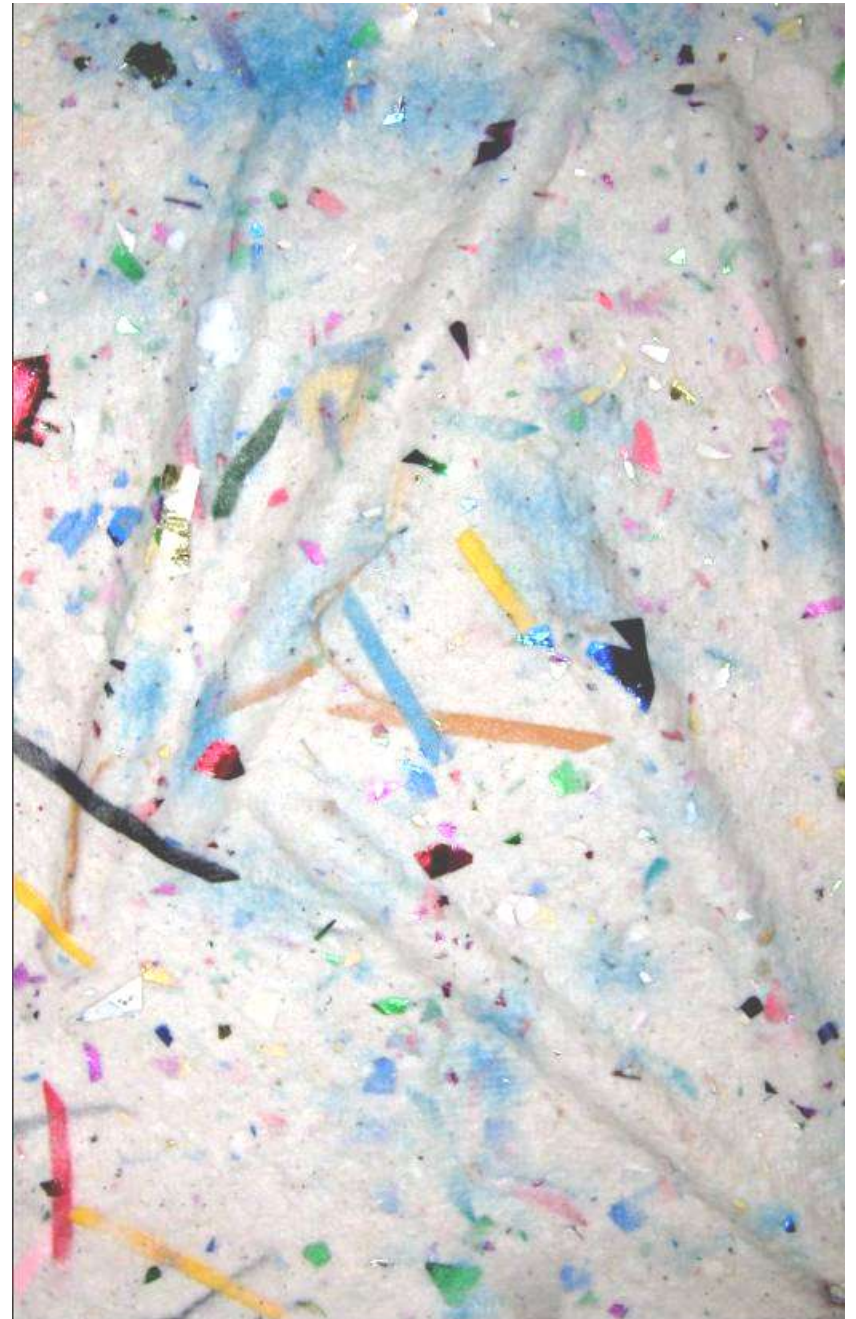




# Inclusions work 6



I think we all associate coloured pencils with children. My memories of drawing cards for my mum every week was strong enough that my own kids now do it for me. The pencils worked very well but it would be difficult to gage that they were actually pencils as the point of the pencil is not visible, so this could also be done with straws as a cost effective method of achieving the same result.



## Inclusions work 7



The inclusion here was wooden shaped pop sticks in a Christmas design. They are designed to be pop stick puppets, I remembered putting on many a puppet show as a kid, and what better way than a Christmas show. Even though the pop sticks were only a few millimetres thick they gave a fairly good impression.



# Step 4

## Creating A paper pulp sculpture`

So you must be getting super enthusiastic by now about what you have created thus far, so let's now go crazy. It's time for making *Dimensional* objects from paper pulp.

You'll need an old stuffed toy or two of any shape or description (opp shops), we are still going to carry on in our previous idea of 'childhood memories' for this step, but you can choose what ever topic that you like.



## Pouring over a constructed sponge

So this is what  
we are making  
now,  
Dimensional  
shapes created  
from  
surrounding  
plush toys with  
paper pulp



# Let's get working



Layout a piece of your blanket and put on some paper pulp, it can be slightly drained of water so it doesn't run off all over the floor, you could also do it over your frame.



Add on top your selected plush toys, experiment with some different shapes.



Add on some more paper pulp and surround your objects, use a knife to get right to the undersides if difficult and then leave as is to dry. Cut out when dry.

# Finishing off your dimensional objects



Cut shape out

Cut a hole in the back

Pulled out toy stuffing

Star is now a shell inside



Cut shape out

Cut a hole in the back

Pulled stuffing out

Empty inside

These make great Christmas tree decorations with the kid's

**Let's try one more.....**

## Pouring on a mould -Pulp over gravel rocks



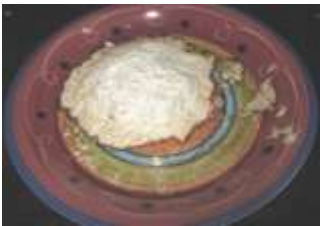
Gravel rocks



Rocks covered in paper pulp



Had to go into oven to dry out



Dried paper



Paper pulp poured over gravel rocks and cooked in the oven for a different look. The effect is really good, especially if your artwork needs to look old. Large crater like cavities were left within the paper when dried and rocks removed, it almost looks fossilised.



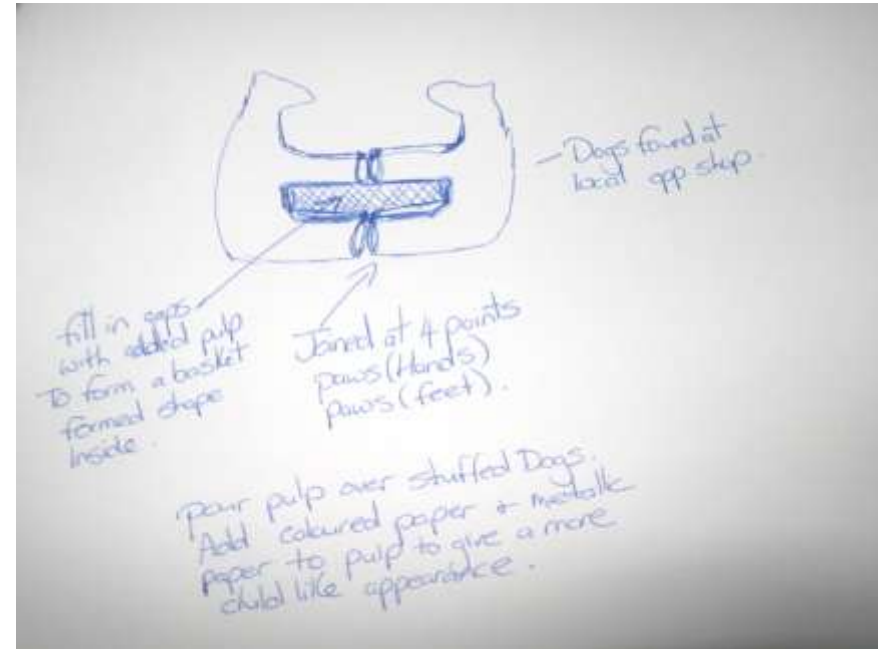
# Pouring over an object – Children’s game – Rock till you drop

Make sure your idea is a solid one  
(Tease out your idea)

By dotting down some notes about the idea you have in your head, it will allow you to better create the foundations of a good sculpture because your idea is clear as mud.

Idea – To use the idea of childhood memories to connect this project to. As a child I remember sitting on the ground on the school oval with friends where two kids would sit opposite each other with their hands and feet together and rock side to side to see who would roll over first. The idea is to use stuffed toys and build a sculpture depicting that childhood scenario.

Concept – To pour paper pulp over two similar stuffed toys then recreate the scenario of hands and feet joining, the dog represents mans best friend and a childhood pet, it is also symbolic of a child in terms of its design, it is meant to be used by children. So with that in mind I think the overall finished product should have the element of child like about it.



# Pouring Paper Pulp over a Dimensional object



I have added metallic paper and coloured paper strips to the pulp bath to give some colouring effects

Place the stuffed toy onto the frame so the excess water can easily flow through, then pour paper pulp over the stuffed toy. Use your hands to mould pulp around your toy.



Toy is removed from frame and placed on felt to dry



Second stuffed toy is started and finished as per the first one



# Finished dimensional object



Two individual stuffed toys are joined together whilst still wet to form one sculpture. You could do just one toy, maybe a child's favourite teddy when they have grown out of it, that way it will be forever immortalized .

# Step 5

## Using Paper Pulp as a stuffing

Using Paper Pulp as a stuffing can create wonderful sculptured art, even the simplest of things such as the bottom of a palm leaf can become a sculptural beauty. Taken further it could be turned into an ephemeral artwork.

### **What is an EPHEMERAL ARTWORK?**

Well it is simply classed as a fleeting artwork, something that lasts for as little as a few seconds such as water art, or perhaps a pile of tin cans placed together for a short time then blown up with dynamite then all that's left are the photographs.

It could be a desert flower that blooms once a year for a few hours before dying, it is transient, short lived thus is great captured in photographs.

In this next step we will look into stuffing with paper pulp and how you can go further in art to tease out and create a body of work in an ephemeral style.



# Pouring work - Using paper as stuffing



Palm leaf



Added paper pulp to the inside

I really liked the way the palm leaf curled, when I saw it on the ground, I thought it was really beautiful in its structure and shape, I could not help but try to make a work out of it, and using the paper pulp just seemed a perfect way to do it. So I literally stuffed it. It just has a natural beauty about it that appeals to me, its a simple work but its just beautiful and another way of using paper in art!



# Turn your sculpture into an ephemeral artwork



I collected a piece of palm frond just the end bit that was approximately 40 cm long



I soaked recycled paper for 24 hours before placing it in the blender and mixing it into a pulp



I spooned the pulp to the inside of the palm frond



I allowed for the pulp to dry completely for a few weeks



I wrapped a length of bamboo around the top



Then thickened the foliage with more



Dug a small hole and planted the work, and dug a small hole to place the camera at the tree base to get the correct angle



Started the lighting procedure using only matches, I wanted to get the sense of a real pyromaniac. It took a few boxes of matches (windy day) very frustrating!

# Ephemeral Photographic Art

You don't always have to go large to prove a point.

Working ephemerally you can get ideas such as environmental points across by using creative miniatures.

This is where our palm leaf stuffed with paper pulp and dried ended up. Show casing a burning forest through a lack of due care with matches showcased with a single flame.

Think about what else you could document using ephemeral art and paper pulp.



# Step 6

## Creating large scale paper pulp sculptures

Now that you are an expert in the workings of paper, we delve into the big guns of the paper world. Paper sculptures can be very creative and incredibly strong and durable.

Sometimes when we think of paper it's about it's fragility, but paper can in fact be amazingly strong. Houses can be made with paper bricks for example. When the paper pulp dries it's like concrete if done correctly.

Next it's a look into large scale artworks and how paper pulp can be included to make very dynamic sculptures.

Firstly a plan needs to be devised, remember an artwork based on a planned concept won't fail, if you understand the exact direction that is needed. So let's look at how to develop a planned concept.



# Making connections – Finding your artistic concept

## Gather ideas

- Children are everywhere
- Future of children
- Children's imaginations – ---Space travel, super hero's, villains, space ships, aliens and monsters in the closet
- Children all over the world unite
- Children united
- Children play with toys
- Toys are children, toys depict children

## -Idea

- Universe of toys (universe of children)
- Knit toys together, knit toys together with paper
- Toys are global – world globe – large ball – kids play with balls – toys mixed together in a ball, toys make up the ball made from paper pulp!

## -Refine idea

- Giant ball made up of toys and paper pulp, - have toys sticking out of pulp like countries on a world globe map Toys represent children all over the world, and universe – (have Styrofoam balls depicting the solar system around the world globe ( a real universe of children united)
- Quote from action figure - Buzz light year – “To infinity and beyond”!

## Concept

- **To infinity and beyond – Kids have no limitations on what they can do!**
- Have toys climbing up to a global ball of paper pulp and imbedded toys with the solar system of ball circling around under the banner that children all over the world can do anything they put their minds to even go to space, infinity and beyond.

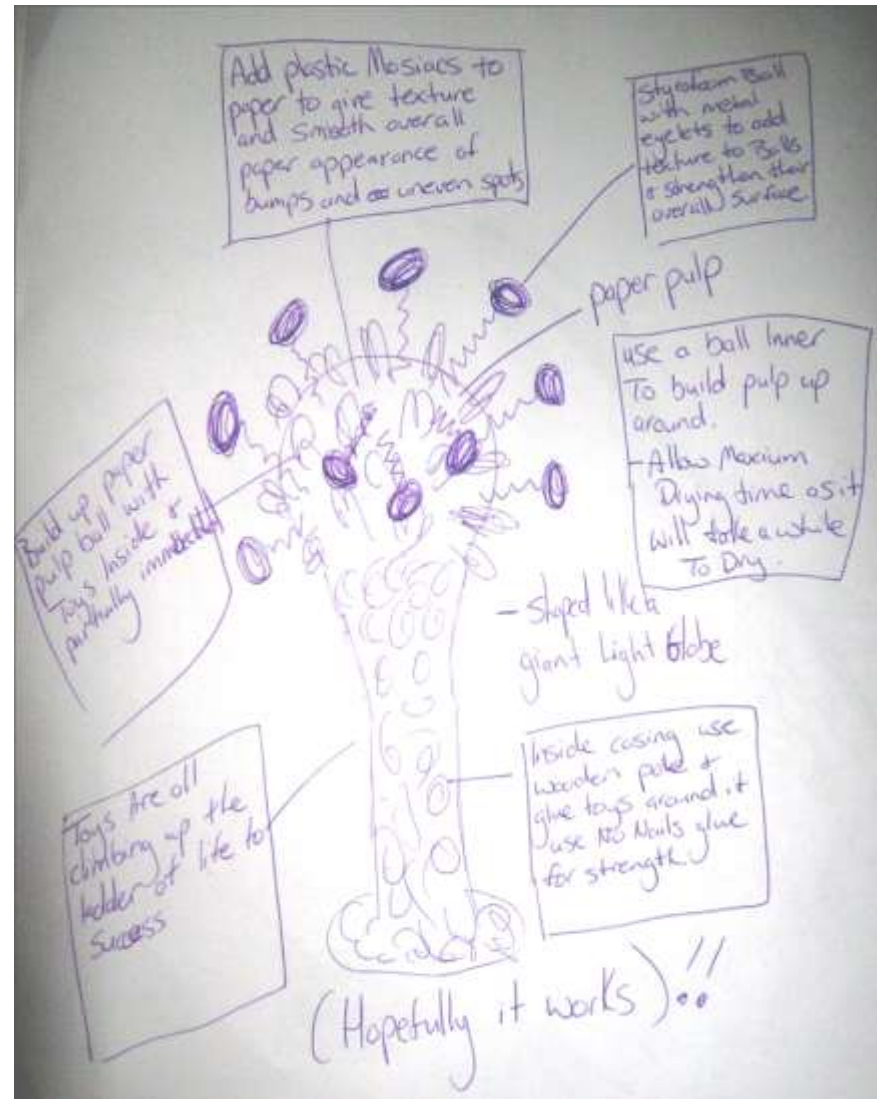
Materials – Styrofoam balls – Different sizes, Metal eyelets, silver spray paint, wire, no nails glue, plastic only toys, Wooden pole or lamp shade base, plate, paper pulp, plastic mosaic pieces,

# Making connections -Finding your vision

Draw....Draw....Draw....Draw

It's very important to understand not only what you sculpture is about before starting, but also what it looks like, do some quick sketching variations until you find one that you feel cuts the mustard.

Having a clear and concise plan means no wasted materials in mistakes, and means your finished artwork will be more to your liking when complete because your expectation will be met.



# Making connections -Sculpture work in progression



Felt and frame



Pulp



Toy fish wrapped in fabric  
to form a ball



Pulp poured over ball



Pulped ball



Plastic toys imbedded into ball



More toys imbedded to fill the entire ball



More pulp is placed around the toys to build up the ball and in case the toys

## Project 3 – Making connections



Toys are knitted together with no nail glue to a large wooden lamp shade base.



Base is sprayed silver to gage the look and a plate is added to the top to support the paper ball.



Toy and paper ball is added to plate on the toy post base.



Added Styrofoam balls with twisted wire.



Added metal eyelets to the foam balls to add a new and interesting dynamic



I added plastic pieces to the paper so that the end sprayed look was more interesting.  
Luckily I got two very hot and sunny days and the paper was able to dry out somewhat, it had been raining for weeks and it was impossible to get it to dry.



Making connections -Finished work 120cm H x 60cm W

“Children to infinity and beyond”

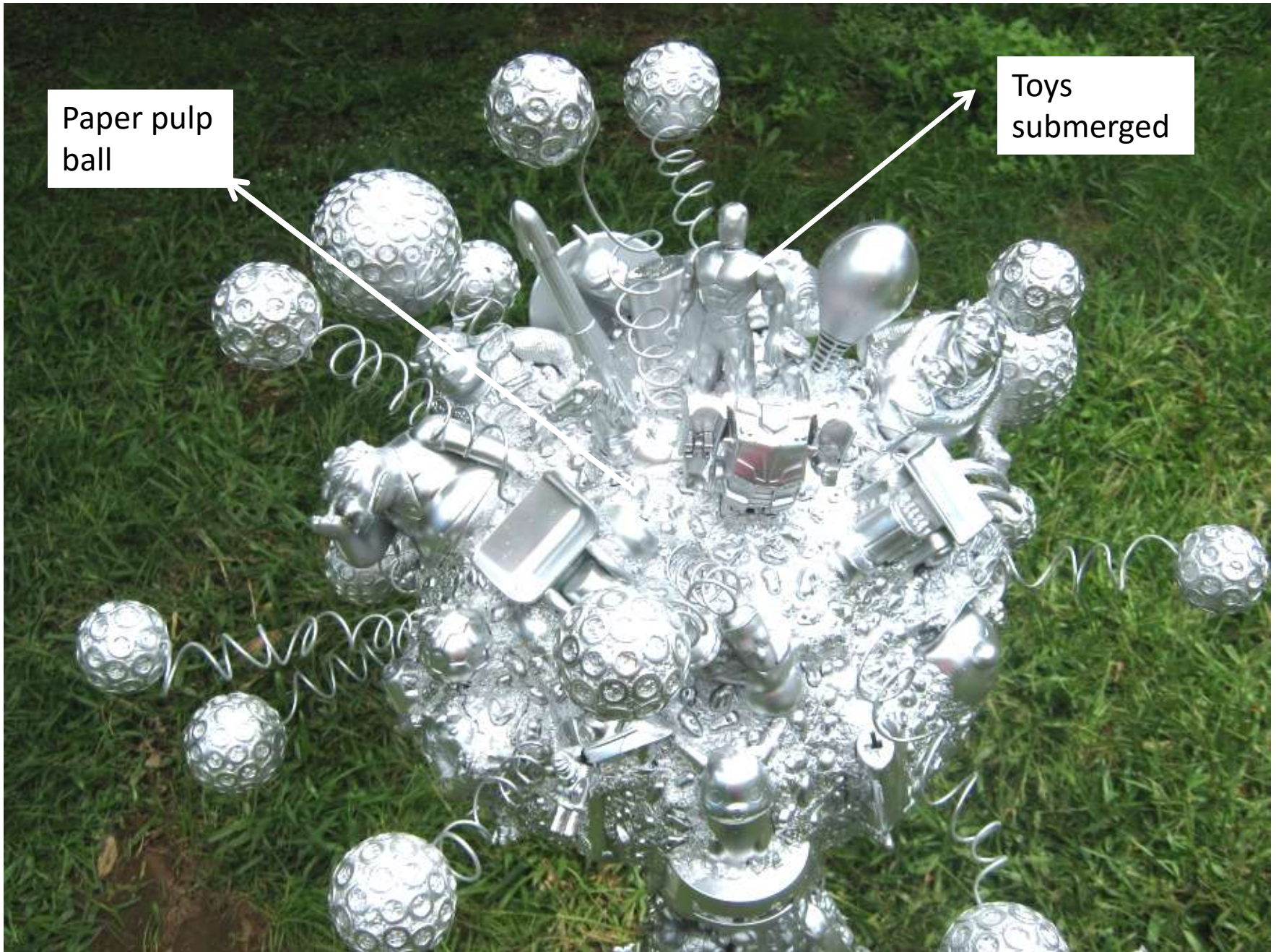


Get creative with your sculpture building, the weirder the better. This was spray painter metallic silver to finish.





# Making connections -Finished work – Close up of top



Paper pulp  
ball

Toys  
submerged



Making connections -Finished work Close up of base



Well that's it phew – did you make it- I hope so. Now you can go on and create some of the most interesting of artworks complete with a wealth of new knowledge, and based around paper pulp. Congratulations.

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Karen Elzinga (Bachelors Degree – Fine Art & Visual Culture)