

Mud Paintings

Family Friday Project

Inspired by
the field drawings of
Alexis Rockman.

Materials:

Paper

Brush

2 cups & a spoon

Water

Dirt

Glue



Artist Spotlight: Alexis Rockman

When Alexis Rockman was camping in the Amazon rainforest, he sketched so much that he wore his pencil down until it was too small. As a joke, a friend suggested that he make a drawing using mud. He did, of a mosquito that had just bit him.

Rockman continued this practice of drawing the plants and animals of an area using the materials he finds there. He calls them [field drawings](#).

Top left: Alexis Rockman with his field drawings. | Bottom left: *Common Loon*, 2017, coal dust from Grand Haven Power Plant and acrylic polymer on paper, 9 x 12 1/2 in. | Bottom right: *Lake Sturgeon*, 2017, sand from Pictured Rocks and acrylic polymer on paper, 12 1/2 x 9 in.



*Some of the best ideas
come when you're kind
of desperate.*

—Alexis Rockman



Let's get started!

Make the Mud Paint

Take one of your cups and a spoon outside to get some dirt or sand. You won't need much—a heaping spoonful will be plenty. Mix in a spoonful or two of water, breaking up any clumps by grinding them against the side of the cup with your spoon and mushing them with your paintbrush. When the mud is the consistency of paint, add a couple of drops of glue as a binder and stir it a final time.

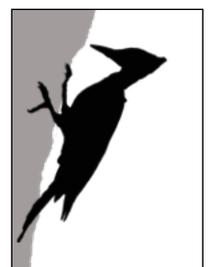
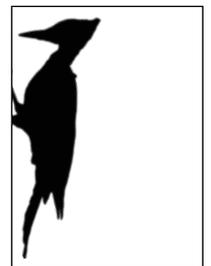


Pick a Subject

Think of all the plants and animals you usually see in the area where you collected your sand or dirt, and pick one you'd like to paint. It's okay to work from a picture; that's what Rockman did for his field drawings around the Great Lakes.

Composition

Before you start, think about the shape of the plant or animal you will paint and where you will place it on the paper. Remember that the blank space around your subject is equally important.



Painting Tips

Using just water, paint just the silhouette, or solid outline of your subject. If your subject is a fish, you will essentially be making a fish-shaped puddle.

They function like pictograms, icons, fossils, or shadows. Because I am using soil or sand as the pigment, the outcome is unpredictable. I never know how the drawing is going to come out.

—Alexis Rockman



Then, dab mud paint into the darkest parts of your subject. The paint should bleed a bit, spreading out lighter through the water and stopping at the edge of the puddle, but you can help it along with your brush if it doesn't. You won't be able to control the painting completely—that's part of the fun!



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3900 County Rd. F, Fish Creek, WI 54212 | 920.868.3455 | www.PeninsulaSchoolofArt.org