

PAPER : KATHLEEN TRENCHARD



MEET Kathleen Trenchard and **WATCH** a video that features the artist at work. **MAKE** artwork inspired by the artist and **REFLECT** on your finished artwork as you consider what you might want to make next.

MEET

MEET Kathleen Trenchard and
“Papel Picado.”

“I am doing something that makes people happy, it’s an ephemeral art form...”

—Kathleen Trenchard



Top: Example of papel picado. Middle: Kathleen Trenchard, *papel picado*. Bottom: Trenchard working. Images courtesy of the artist and Craft in America.

ARTISTS OFTEN TRAVEL to learn about new art forms and techniques. Kathleen Trenchard moved to San Antonio and discovered *papel picado*. *Papel picado* means “punched paper” in Spanish. To learn more, the artist traveled to Mexico in the early 1990s and researched and worked in traditional Mexican *papel picado*. She was introduced to the technique in Huixcolotla, Mexico. Trenchard explains that *papel picado* probably started with the galleon ships bringing over *papel china*, thin colored paper from China, and the Mexican villagers figured out how to punch this paper using chisels to make paper lace. The traditional folk art is used in Mexico to decorate altars, tables, ceilings and plazas during festivals.

Trenchard engages in the process, using mallets and chisels as she explores contemporary designs, applications and materials suitable for cut work. She begins the process with white paper, makes drawings, and then challenges herself to see how closely she can duplicate the drawings as a paper cut. She uses thin and thick lines to create perspective. She says of her own work, “I cut the most difficult thing first. If I am going to make a mistake, I want to make a mistake on the most difficult stuff before I move on to the easy stuff... I usually try to figure out how to make the mistake better.”

Trenchard also creates *luminarias* using white pastry bags. *Luminarias* are a Mexican tradition, inexpensive to make, and are used as decorations for celebrations and altars. She explains that one can create *luminarias* at home using scissors to cut out designs. The artist begins with the easiest tool to use, a hole punch, as she goes around the periphery of her design, before working with various chisels and

a mallet. She works in two directions using different chisels for the pattern. Once the paper bag design is completed, it is ready for someone to place some sand and a tea candle into the bag to “illuminate” the pattern.

Trenchard has had many solo and group exhibitions and teaches design, painting, drawing and art appreciation in and around San Antonio, Texas.

WATCH



See and listen to Trenchard talking about *Papel Picado* and how she realized “this was an incredible craft.”

https://youtu.be/4yRVNxW59x8?si=NAc0JSY_EcvBT0jC

After viewing the segment, consider the following:

- Recall the artist’s history with *papel picado*. Under what circumstances did she begin making her own version of this art form?
- What kinds of tools does the artist use to punch paper?
- How does Trenchard challenge herself in the artmaking process?
- Describe how the artist uses her drawings as part of her process for making *papel picado*.
- What are *luminarias* and how are they used? What process does Trenchard use to create her luminarias?
- In what ways does the artist use her artworks to communicate?

MAKE



Make a paper bag *luminaria* using one or more symbols that celebrate an idea or event. Think about an idea or celebration and how your *papel picado* design/symbol might express something about it. Your paper bag will serve as the format for your design or symbol. If you have access to punching tools, use them to create your design. Otherwise, you may wish to use scissors.

- What kind of *papel picado* design will you make on your paper bag?
- Consider the kind of message it might convey. For example, think about a symbol that conveys an idea or is associated with a particular celebration. How will you represent your symbol on your paper bag? How large (or small) should the design be? What would you need to think about if you decide to create the symbol on all sides of the bag?
- Will you use scissors or punch tools to create your design?
- Think about how your piece will be used. Will you display it indoors or outside?
- How will you display or use it?



- Prepare the bag: Use brown or white paper bag, folding down the top edge for stability.
- Decorate: Trace or draw and cut designs into the front of the bag using scissors or a craft knife. Alternatively, use a hole punch to create a dotted pattern.
- Weight the bag. Fill the bottom of each bag with 1–2 inches of sand, pebbles, or kitty litter to keep them from blowing away.
- Illuminate: Place an LED tea light or string lights inside. Note: While traditionally lit with candles, battery-operated lights are safer and recommended to avoid fire hazards.

For added flair, use decorative edge scissors on the top rim, or insert tissue paper inside the bag to create colored glowing effects.

REFLECT

LOOK at your finished product.
THINK about the process.

- Were you able to “spark” a conversation with your *luminaria*’s design or symbol?
- What do you like most about your completed *luminaria*?
- What else would you like to make out of punched paper?