

# REVERSE PAINTED MESSAGES

*Isaiah Zagar utilizes reverse painted glass techniques in many of his shimmering mosaic murals. Zagar uses acrylic paint to make images, words and abstractions on large sheets of glass and then cuts the sheets into smaller pieces. He incorporates these elements into his mosaics with the painted side against the wall so it is protected from the abrasive grouting process and the outdoor elements.*

*Zagar has created over 125 public mosaicked sites throughout Philadelphia and has had a tremendous impact on his community. The reverse painted glass technique is an easy way for Zagar to incorporate bright colors, words, and imagery. In this lesson students will create their own reverse painted messages on the theme of what makes a strong community.*



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will observe the connections between contemporary and classical art.
- Students will identify particular words that exemplify a good community and recreate them in their reverse painted glass works.
- Students will collaborate to construct a large-scale series of reverse painted glass messages.
- Students will observe and analyze images and make calculations to transfer images to a larger scale.
- Students will analyze and manipulate shapes and evaluate which are most useful in making a mosaic.

## MATERIALS

- 3" x 5" pieces of cut plexi, available from plastic distributors such as everything plastic.com
- 3" x 5" paper
- Pencils
- Acrylic paint
- Paintbrushes
- Hairdryer (optional)
- Magnet strips with adhesive backing (optional)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What words describe a strong community?
2. How can artwork impact a community?
3. What other cultures incorporate the reverse painted glass technique?
4. How is painting in reverse different from regular painting techniques?

# KEY VOCABULARY

**Community** - A group of interacting people, living in some proximity, usually a social unit larger than a household that shares common values and has social cohesion.

**Reverse Painting** – an art form consisting of applying paint to a piece of glass or clear material and then viewing the image by turning it and looking through the material at the image

**Mosaic**- the art of creating images with an assemblage of small pieces of colored glass, stone, or other materials.

**Public Art**- works of art in any media that are in the physical public domain, usually outside and accessible to all.

# ACTIVITY

1. First students should come up with their word or phrase that describes “What makes a good community?”
2. Each student gets a piece of the 3 x 5 tracing paper and a pencil to write out and decorate their message. Encourage the students to keep the pieces simple and to make the words and designs as dark as possible.
3. Students will flip the tracing paper over so the statement is written in reverse.
4. Each student should then paint their words, images and details. The first color that is put down will be the closest to the viewer. Overlapping layers of color will be in the background of the piece, so larger areas of color should be added after the detailed layers are completed.
5. Since the plexiglass is not absorbent it can take some time for the layers to dry. Students can use the blow dryer to speed up the paint drying process.
6. Once the pieces are completed you can attached magnet strips or other backings in order to display them.
7. It may be a good idea to have students work on a smaller sample piece before moving onto a larger reverse painted piece of plexiglass.

# ADAPTATIONS

Younger students can make abstract patterns or images, rather than statements, on their pieces of plexiglass. Older students could work with glass rather than using the plexiglass. They could also collaborate on larger pieces of glass and then make the smaller pieces by using glasscutters and gloves.

# PA ACADEMIC STANDARDS

## Reading, Writing, Speaking, & Listening:

Types of Writing 1.4 A

Speaking and Listening 1.6 E

## Arts & Humanities:

Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance,

Music, Theatre and Visual Arts 9.1 C

Historical and Cultural Context 9.2.H

# RESOURCES

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse\\_glass\\_painting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse_glass_painting)

<http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Reverse-Painting-on-Glass>