

OPEN STUDIO ANYWHERE



The Art of El Anatsui



Use this kit to learn about El Anatsui, his story, and his artwork. Inside you'll find prompts, projects, and more to help you create your own art!

To learn more about Artists Creating Together, visit our website at artistscreatingtogether.org

Who is El Anatsui?

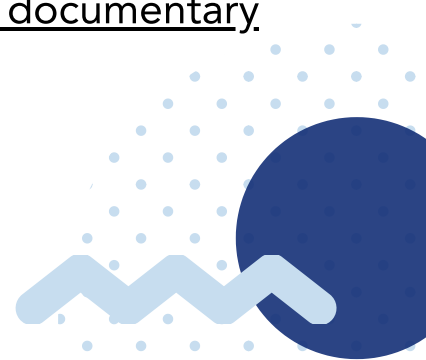
El Anatsui is a sculptor from Ghana who currently lives and works in Nigeria. He transforms simple, everyday materials into large-scale artwork.

What do you see behind Anatsui in this picture?
What does it look like it is made of?



Anatsui refers to himself as both a painter and a sculptor because of the way he "paints" by building color and pattern.

Learn more about Anatsui by watching this clip from a documentary about him called "Fold Crumple Crush"





Emphasis on Materials

Have you ever recycled? Maybe you have at home, putting cans and bottles in a separate container. Or maybe you have at ACT, recycling scraps of paper after a project!

Anatsui makes his art by using materials that a lot of other people would just recycle.



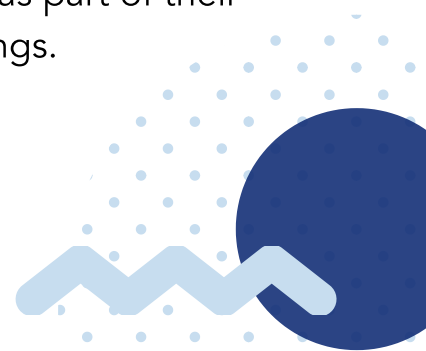
Do you recycle at home?
What kinds of things do
you recycle?



This huge project was made
from the metal seals and
caps that come around the
tops of bottles!

Anatsui is making a purposeful choice to use recycled materials. He makes giant artwork that might be a lot easier to make if he just bought the materials!

By using recycled materials, Anatsui is sending a message. He wants people to think about how sometimes people have to re-use materials as part of their everyday lives, rather than being able to buy new things.



Step One: Start Collecting!

Our first step is to start collecting materials to make a project! You can start by looking around your own house. You'll want to collect a lot of materials so you have choices for your work! Here are some things to look for:

soda bottle caps & lids - metal or plastic

bottle tabs

small cardboard boxes

juice boxes

plastic ties from bread

twist ties

lunch bags

grocery bags - paper or plastic

plastic bottles - large and small

Did you know that one of Anatsui's artworks was on display last year at Meijer Gardens? Did you get to see it?

Psst... if you didn't it's right over there! -->



It's okay if you can't find all of these things! And it's okay if you find things that are entirely different.

Don't worry if it takes a while to collect everything, we'll be right here waiting for you when you are ready!





Step Two: Make a Pattern

Anatsui is inspired by traditional African patterns and designs, like those found on West African Kente cloth.

Here is an example of a kente cloth.
What do you notice about it?



What shapes do you see in the pattern? Sketch them out right here!

Now look at all the materials you collected. Start to move those pieces around to make shapes and patterns like you saw in the kente cloth!





Pattern Sketch Page

Use this space to create a pattern inspired by kente cloth that you will use for your project. Think about repeating shapes and colors as you design!





Step Three: Assemble

Now you have:

1. A pattern inspired by kente cloth
2. All of the materials you found inside your house

Now you need:

1. Something to attach your materials: elmer's glue, mod-podge, tape or even string to stitch it into place!
2. A background to put your materials on: construction paper, fabric, parchment paper, or tin foil!

Let's Get Started!

Lay your paper (or whatever your background is) out flat in front of you.

Now look at all the materials you collected. Start to move those pieces around to make the pattern you sketched out on the last page!

Now start using your glue to attach each item to your background.



Make sure to let it dry!





Final Step: Display!

Anatsui does something unique when his work goes to a museum - he doesn't give them instructions on how to hang it up! He wants each museum to decide how it should be hung based on their own thoughts and feelings about the artwork!



Check out this [video](#) of a whole team at the Brooklyn Museum hanging up Anatsui's artwork. Notice how they take turns folding and draping it in different ways!

If you can, let someone else look at your finished artwork and decide how it should be hung up. Now they are a part of the creative process of making your art work!

Are they going to need three forklifts to hang your artwork up? Can you imagine making art that big?



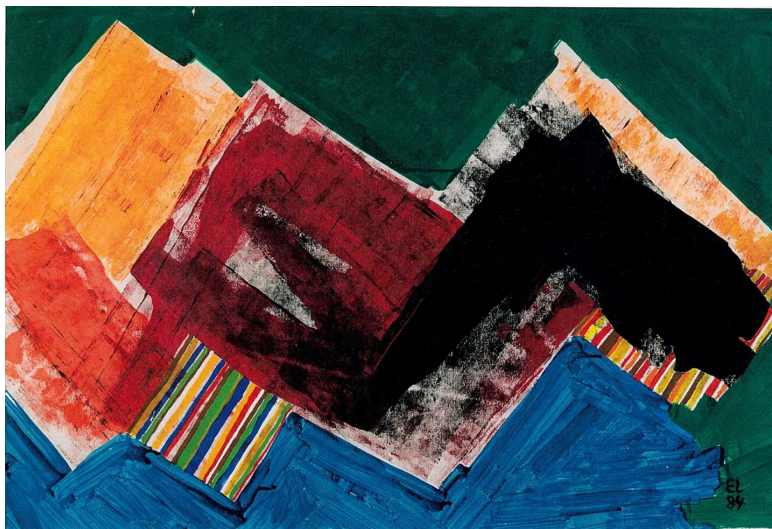
More Ideas & Inspiration

Today we looked at just one of the types of art that El Anatsui makes. Take a look at some of his other projects and see just how many of his artworks you can try to make at home! Make sure to share them with us at ACT so that we can see the awesome art you are making!



Gather sticks and color the ends, then stack them and take a picture! Can't find sticks? Try to roll up paper to make circles that look the same!

We're used to seeing lots of color in Anatsui's work. Grab a sharpie or black marker and try creating designs with just black - you'll be surprised at how much detail you can create!



We did learn that Anatsui says he is a painter as well as sculptor - and here is an example! Grab your paints, markers, pen or crayons and create a 2D work of art that focuses on pattern and color!





Learn more about El Anatsui

<https://elanatsui.art/>

<https://www.moma.org/artists/34619>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/el-anatsui-17306/who-is-el-anatsui>

<https://www.jackshainman.com/artists/el-anatsui/>

<https://art21.org/artist/el-anatsui/>

https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/el_anatsui/

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/global-contemporary-apah/21st-century-apah/v/el-anatsui>

http://blantonmuseum.org/files/elanatsui_ed_guide.pdf

<https://assets.ctfassets.net/f1fikihmjtrp/5p912o3wWWIUQCN0KjsxDm/dfe5f4e5b949eaea7ebde529fe202a60/gawu-african-inspired-tapestry-el-anatsui.pdf>

<https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/02/new-meijer-gardens-exhibit-celebrates-humble-founders-passion-for-sculpture.html>

<https://smarthistory.org/kente-cloth/>

