

Artist & Explorer

TEP Exhibition: *Everett Ruess*

Intentions

- Students will learn about Everett Ruess, a Utah historical figure and icon.
- Students will experiment with alternative printmaking techniques.
- Students will explore the built and/or natural environment in order to collect materials for their projects.

Materials

- Scratch paper or clip boards for notes (optional)
- Cardstock, or some type of heavy weight paper approximately 12x18
- Acrylic paint, stamp pads, or block printing ink in a variety of colors
- Glue
- Various recycled found objects for stamping and drawing, wood blocks or scraps
- Brayers (optional)

Backdrop

Everett Ruess, a young artist and writer who wandered the wilds of the Southwest, mysteriously disappeared in the Escalante canyons in 1934 at the age of twenty. He has since become both a legend and symbol of the wilderness he revered. The love and respect Everett felt for the places he roamed were expressed in his poems and essays, as well as in the images he carved for his precious block prints. His wanderlust and his art became inseparable.

The prints in this collection span the last five years of Ruess's short life, from the age of fifteen to twenty. They portray a variety of natural scenes and chronicle his travels along the California coast, high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and among the deserts and canyons of Utah and Arizona. Five decades later these images still speak to us with vigor and force. They show the evolution of a maturing talent, fully capable of capturing nature in bold and simple terms.

Printmaking: Historically, printmaking techniques were used as a means of easily replicating an image in order to distribute information and communicate political, social, religious or other messages. In the 17th and 18th centuries, printmaking became recognized as an art form, rather than only a means of communication. There are a multitude of printmaking techniques, but all create images by transferring ink from an object onto paper in some way.



Everett Ruess, *Granite and Cypress*, Wood block print

Activity

In this project, students will try their hand at alternative printmaking techniques from objects gathered during the course of exploration! Ruess was an avid explorer and revered the environment. Recycled and found objects make for a wide array of designs and prints.

In preparation for this lesson, ask students to gather objects at home that could be used for printing and stamping. Ask them to explore their homes and neighborhoods in search of objects that are interesting or tell a story. For example, maybe a grandmother's button jar, or a favorite climbing tree that has interesting leaves. You can also take students on an object hunt around your school or neighborhood. Objects should be small enough to stamp onto a sheet of paper.

The following is a list of suggestions for found or recycled materials that can be used to print, stamp and stencil.

Basic Stamps: For these objects, add a thin layer of paint, or use a stamping pad to coat the object and then transfer directly to the paper like a stamp. Try repeating patterns, overlapping and mixing and matching.

Corks
Bottle caps
Old flip flops (can be cut into interesting shapes)
Marshmallows
Leaves
Erasers
Fruits and vegetables
Puzzle pieces

Printing Blocks: These objects can be easily glued onto a wooden block to create a stamp. Make sure all objects are the same thickness for the best prints. Use either a brayer or foam brush to apply paint in a thin layer to the stamp, or try using a jumbo stamp pad.

String/cord with texture
Paper clips
Buttons
Soda tabs
Staples
Coins
Craft foam (pre-cut shapes or create your own)

Stencils: Lay the stencil on the paper and secure with a small piece of low-tac tape if necessary. Use a sponge with a small amount of paint to cover area of the object. Peel object off paper.

Paper doilies
Leaves
Die cuts
Screen
Lace or textured ribbon
Paper cut snowflakes

LINKS WE LIKE: [National Geographic: The Mystery of Everett Ruess](#)

[KUED video on Everett Ruess](#)

[Utah Society for Environmental Education](#)

[Stamp Making on Pinterest](#)

[Printmaking Blocks on Pinterest](#)

[Poems by Everett Ruess](#)

Links to the Core

Visual Arts:

- Explore a variety of art media, techniques, and processes.
- Connect various kinds of art with particular cultures, times, or places.
- Synthesize art with other educational subjects.

Social Studies:

- Students will understand how Utah's history has been shaped by many diverse people, events, and ideas.