

## 5-day Mural Workshop

See blog post for more information at [www.muralinglearningdoing.wordpress.com](http://www.muralinglearningdoing.wordpress.com)

### Goal:

Teach kids how to create composition, work together, consensus skills, problem-solving, art skills (paintbrush, etc), to involve them in the UXO Survivor Information Center. To create murals that do UXO education/tell stories.

Note: make sure you are taking enough lunch and snack breaks – we took one at 10:30 and an hour-long lunch break, and played at least three games per day.

### Day 1:

1. **Names/Introduction** Goal of today – explain the goal the week and the day. Today you will try to figure out the compositions for three murals to hang in the center that you will design and paint.
2. **Meditate** (5 min). Tell students to breathe, listen to their breaths, and let thoughts float through their heads.
3. Game: **Noi says** (Simon says). (see game appendix at end)
4. **Warmup**: compose a village. Divide into groups of 3 (or 2) and these will be the groups for the first mural as well. Students work together on big pieces of paper to draw a village. What's in the village? Who lives there? What symbols can you use to represent things? How can you work together? Think about looking at it from above.  
**Present** their drawings, and have students ask them questions (ie how many people live there? Do you have a school? Where is the road?). This activity is good because allows students to work on a big piece of paper, practice working together and discussing compositions, but works with familiar and relevant concepts.
5. **Mural introduction**: Tell them we are making 3 murals for the center.  
Discuss:
  - a. What is a mural?
  - b. Goals of mural – why painting it?
  - c. Who will be seeing it?
  - d. What do you want to say?
  - e. What do you want to teach?
  - f. How do you want to teach/say that?

If the group is very active, you can have a discussion, but when working with shy students, present the questions and have students talk in their groups about what they want the mural to have in it.

This is also a good time to show some images and drawings to inspire them – but put them away so students don't copy them!

6. **Composition building**. The groups then figure out compositions for their murals. Each group will go at composition building differently: they may

have a lot of discussion, or may each just draw in their individual sketchbooks.

We then went around and visited each group, asking them to **present their drawings**, and guiding them to think big (and also not all three draw the same mural). Some tips include asking them to remember what they learned in school, asking them to put a person in the picture, and put their own stories into it (what would they do?). For example, in my workshop, Groups #1 and #3 were mostly drawing landscapes with UXO in them, so we pushed them to add people. Group #2 did three different lessons (where UXO come from, as well as 2 things to do when you see them).

After visiting the group, they got a big piece of paper to start sketching their big ideas on. This is where they will discuss the most. Make sure to make clear that you are going to then transfer this drawing to the big mural, and that everyone is drawing (not one person dominating).

## **Day 2:**

Setup: Bag of paints, bowls with bags over them, paintbrushes, water cups, and you have to have prepped the paint surface (painted it white, etc). It can be good to have a whole paint mixing station as well – especially if it's many students working on one big mural – but for three small groups of these very responsible and careful kids (they only use as much paint as they need. It's amazing), I just let them have free reign – especially also because they are making their own work, not trying to faithfully copy or transfer a sketch that someone made.

1. **Meditation.**
2. **Painting practice.** They each got a small piece of primed mason board to paint on. We went over the color wheel, washing brushes, and thinning with water. The assignment was to paint what makes you safe (is it a person, place, thing, food, event, time of the day or year?).
3. **Presentations.** Ideally students could practice presenting and critique each other (ask questions, etc). If this is too traumatic, they can talk in their groups instead.
4. Game time! We played the **Noise Game** and did **blind contours**.
5. Lunch (1 hr)
6. **Mural painting.** Talk about background and the technique of trying to fill in the background before trying to draw in the details (so that you don't cover up what you just drew or waste a lot of trying to paint around a detailed sketch), and have students fill in the background of their drawings. Hang up their sketches and ask them which colors are the background. Have them mix paints and fill in the backgrounds.

When they finish painting the backgrounds, they will start sketching their designs with pencil. Make sure that they aren't worrying too much about detail as it's just a sketch, and are transferring their drawings to be bigger than their sketch and fill the whole space.

## **Day 3**

**1. Meditation** first, and then start painting – because groups will be moving at different paces, save the other assignments for the end.

When each group finished, have the whole group come and stand at least 5 feet away and look at the mural. First have the audience ask the artists any questions the students can finish up their murals.

2. We played a game called **Imaginary Toss**.

3. **Free time!** Let them draw for an hour, whatever they want.

4. **The next mural** - Make the assignment clear: talk, and then sketch, a drawing of what you think Xieng Khouang would look like without UXO, and put yourself in the picture (what are you doing? What is around you? Who is with you? Is it city, fields, streets, etc?).

To get over language barriers and make sure they understood (this was a very abstract concept), we sat in a group and I told them twice what the activity was. When I asked if anyone could repeat it back, no one could, so I told them that if they couldn't repeat it back, they would have to do a chicken dance. I explained twice more, and then asked a Hmong artist and then a Lao artist to explain back what they were going to do. They got it!

Have the students talk, plan, and then draw a sketch for the mural tomorrow, making clear that they will be transferring their sketch to a bigger drawing.

#### **Day 4**

First we started with **meditation**.

Then they got right into **painting their boards**. When they finish, have them present. Guide them by asking what color different elements of their drawings are, or what goes in empty spaces (these kids have the confidence to say “nothing!”), etc.

After lunch, we had a short **naptime** (spontaneous, but important).

Then we play a game, such as **Exquisite Corpse** – read the energy of the group (do they need to run around? Get refocused on drawing? Etc).

The last assignment of the day was to **draw what made them happy (after their/their parents' accidents)**. I separated all the students so that they didn't copy each other – and lo and behold, they each made a different drawing! Samples included going to school, seeing beautiful nature, drawing, etc.

#### **Day 5**

**Field trip** – to the Plain of Jars. I asked students to draw what they see (as opposed to what they imagine/remember).

When you return, have students **present** a drawing and why they drew it (many said they wanted to draw to remember in my workshop).

Show students how they can make their own **sketchbooks** out of scratch paper so they continue to draw. Challenge them to use different materials (indigo, charcoal, etc).

Play a game, like **Exquisite Corpse**.

Close with a **party** where you invite their parents and folks from around town. Feed them snacks and have the students present their work. It can be good to give them a certificate of appreciation/completion (I also spoke about each student's work a bit).

Don't forget to mount and coat the murals if applicable (they are on masonboard, or another flimsy material, and need to be hung). See Supplies for more information.

Ideas for continuation workshops:

- Have them complete a big mural on a wall outside!
- Focus less on UXO education and more on their own stories (ie interviewing people, illustrating stories in different ways) in both their accidents (therapy) and their futures/presents.
- Try some other materials (natural dyes, sculpture, recycled materials etc).
- Focus on environment/land issues
- Media/art/consumer literacy

### **Supplies:**

- Mural panels - lightweight, durable, cheap, easy to transport – masonboard works well, but thin wood is OK. I cut three pieces of panel in half (to make 6 big pieces) and used 5 for big murals and cut one piece up into 8 pieces for them to practice on. Prime these with at least 2 coats of white paint. You can also just paint directly onto a wall.
- Small pieces of panel material for practice
- Big pieces of paper (a lot – for freetime, group work, etc we used about 25 pieces of A1)
- Acrylic paint and house paint (1.5 L white house paint, and I had 2000 ml of acrylic paint (20 - 100 ml tubes), but this was enough for two murals – especially as some of them were half used!
- Paintbrushes (9 small detail brushes, 5 medium brushes, and 4 big ones)
- Paint pots (we used plates with plastic bags over them)
- Sketchbooks (one for each student)
- Scratch paper
- Oil pastels (two sets of 48, and 60 colored pencils)

- Post-workshop: mount and protect the murals with a coating. We mounted the mason-board with wood pieces (along the edges), put nails into the top, and strung wire between the nails. We coated the paintings with ATM acrylic latex adhesive (which worked as an acrylic medium/varnish).

### **Stretching and break games:**

*Exquisite corpse* – students get A4 paper folded into 3 sections. They draw a head (any kind of head – animal, plant, alien, etc), extending the necklines a little bit past the first fold. Then they fold on the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> line so what they drew isn't visible and pass it to the next artist, who draws a middle body section (again, any kind), extending a little past the 2/3 line, and folding over what they drew, and passing to the next artist. Then they draw feet/legs in the last 1/3 and open it to see the creation they made!

*Zip Zap Zoom* – Students stand in a circle. They send the “ball” (the “it”) around by saying Zip (passes the ball the direction it was already going), Zap (changes direction) or Zoom and pointing across the circle. If you hesitate, you're out! This game is a little complicated to explain to a young group.

*Noise game* – Slips of paper, one for each kid, who has to make the noise of what is written on their paper.

*Scribble* – each artist draws a scribble on a piece of paper, and exchanges it with their partner, who has to turn the scribble into a drawing of something recognizable.

*Noi says* – A student is chosen as a leader, who stands in front of the other students. They tell the students to do things (ie touch your nose! Jump twice! Dance!). If they don't say “Noi says” before their command, and the students obey anyway, those students are out, until only one person is left, and then they become Noi.

*Kid systems:* They come up with (or you assign, to get them started), a system to represent. Could be "Pencil sharpening" or "Electricity plant" or "Opening the door". basically anything where there are a series of parts that work together to fulfill a function. The kids discuss what makes this system work. They each then come up with roles to act out the system.

example: Opening the door.

1. Kid A walks up to the "Door/Kid D". Puts hand on the "knob/kid B". Turns "knob/Kid B"
2. Kid B/Knob twists/ spins around/whatever representation to act out that they are being turned. their movement triggers the "latch inside the door/Kid C"
3. Kid C/latch turns to the side/twists/does action to represent releasing the "Door/kid D".
4. Kid D/door, swings open.
5. Kid A walks through

*Imaginary Toss* – Stand in a circle and pass a pretend ball around. Once that gets some rhythm, change the ball into something else (ie an elephant, a durian, a feather, etc) – everyone has to react to whatever the ball is (is it heavy, prickly, light?).

*Follow the leader* – Run around and be crazy.