

# Celebrating Conservation

CLASSROOM MURAL AND ART CONTEST: HOW TO CREATE A MURAL WITH A MESSAGE

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## **National Art Challenge**



Share the art of our water planet. Each year, the Wyland Foundation invites students across the United States to use their creativity, talent, and passion to explore how water shapes our lives — and the lives of the plants and animals that depend upon this limited resource.

#### **ABOUT:**

#### **Wyland Foundation:**

Founded by renowned environmental artist Wyland, the Wyland Foundation has helped children and families around the nation to rediscover the importance of healthy ocean and waterways through public art programs, classroom science education, and live events. The foundation gives children the tools they need to become more creative, positive, and solution oriented. At a time in history when the arts and the environment are in peril, the Wyland Foundation fosters programs and partnerships to ensure a healthier planet and a brighter outlook for the next generation. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and has worked directly with more than one million children since its inception.

Join us in our efforts: www.wylandfoundation.org

#### Fredrix Artist Canvas:

Fredrix Artist Canvas has been the choice of fine artists since 1868, manufacturing the widest selection of artist canvas available today. With over 140 years of experience comes a wealth of canvas knowledge and expertise. A consistent fine quality product measured by exacting standards is what separates Fredrix ® from its competitors. Look for the Fredrix ® seal of quality to ensure that you experience the very best overall painting performance and long-term archival quality. Choose Fredrix ®, because it's not just a stroke of paint, it's your brush with history!

Visit www.FredrixArtistCanvas.com for more information.

## How to Create a Mural With a Message

## **Table of Contents:**

Natinal Art Challenge Introduction
About Wyland Foundation / Fredrix® Artist Canvas
Introduction: The Amazing World of Water
About this Activity Guide
Social Networking 5
Goals and Objectives
Education Standards
Topic Research
Develop the Theme / Make a Plan
Suggested Supplies List
Preparation for Painting9
Tips and Techniques10
Types of Media / Art Styles
Step 1: Sketch It Out
Step 2: Backdrop & Background Subjects12
Step 3: Middle Ground Subjects
Step 4: Foreground Subjects
Step 5: Light and Shadow
Step 6: Finish Up, Clean Up
Submit the Entry
Show, Ask, and Tell

Cover Art: Home Sweet Home 2014 National Mural Winners Grades 9-12
Bergen County Academies



#### Introduction:

#### The Amazing World of Water

Water is one of the most fascinating substances on Earth. Without water, our planet as we know it would not exist. Water is vital for all known forms of life, from our ocean, lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands, to everything in between. It has many unique chemical properties. It exists as a liquid, as a solid (ice), and as a gas. It supports our agriculture, nourishes the plants that help regulate our climate, affects our atmosphere, and alters the very geography of the planet itself. In fact, the quality and quantity of water available to humans have been vital factors in the success or failure of civilizations.

Famed marine life artist, Wyland, and his non-profit foundation encourage students to explore the many ways we interact with water and the way water shapes our world. It is our hope that the process of interpreting these explorations through art will lead students to a greater understanding of their role as future caretakers of this resource.

As students research their topic for their collaborative mural, they will discover a near limitless range of thematic possibilities to choose from. Once they narrow their focus, we encourage them to think how best to turn that idea or subject into art. They should be able to state their theme in a simple title or sentence. For example, "Forests, Ocean, Climate -- and Us," could depict how water flows from the mountains to the sea, nourishing our forests, which in turn keeps our atmosphere cool. "Dolphins at Play," could focus on the lives of an oceanic species. Or "Future of the Mighty Mississippi" could explore how a great river shapes the lives of over 40 million people. The art can be literal, abstract, or anything in between.

The journey starts now.

## **About this Activity Guide:**

This is a guide to one method of painting a collaborative mural with a group. When creating art there are as many methods as there are artists. If you'd like to take a different approach with your students on any of these steps, we encourage you to let their creativity free!

#### Social Media / Care to Share:

If your class would like to share their creative process and learning experience with other classrooms around your school district or the country, please post photos, videos, comments, and inspiration through the Wyland Foundation Facebook Page (TheWylandFoundation). We encourage all participants to use the "Water is Life" art challenge to engage and connect students across the country using this and other available interactive technology resources.

To share your process, go to: www.facebook.com/thewylandfoundation

## **Goals and Objectives:**

- Students will learn that the health and availability of water resources on the earth impact plant and animal and human life globally, regionally, and locally.
- They will deepen their relationship with nature by discovering "hidden secrets" and amazing facts about water-based ecosystems.
- They will research and gain more knowledge about Ecology, Earth Art, Environmental Art, and talented eco-artists such as Wyland.
- The students will use research to study the murals of environmental artists of various ages, and local and national levels.
- Using this knowledge, the students will create their own collaborative art mural reflecting their ideas about environmental issues, either local, regional, or global, that concern them.
- Students will become familiar with basic art techniques, styles, and terms during the creation of the mural.
- Students will employ various documentation avenues, which may include photography, visual displays, journals, blogs, social media, and community networking to create impact and interest to encourage people to explore their connections to their watershed and each other; to discover how their actions are fundamental to the future of our water supplies, climate, and global health.

#### **Education Standards:**

National Education Standards Table: Example of Grades 5-8

## Science — Grades 5-8 example

A. Science as Inquiry	Calif.	Based on depth of study
B. Physical Science	Calif.	Based on topics chosen and researched
C. Life Science	U.S.	Based on topics chosen and researched
D. Earth & Space Science	Calif.	Based on topics chosen and researched
E. Science and Technology	Calif.	Based on topics chosen and researched
F. Science in Personal and Social Perspectives	U.S.	Based on topics chosen and researched
G. History and Nature of Science	Calif.	Based on topics chosen and researched

#### **Art - Grades 5-8 example**

A. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and process.	U.S
B. Using knowledge of structures and functions	U.S
C. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas	U.S
D. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture	Calif.
E. Reflecting on and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others	U.S
F. Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines	U.S

National Education Standards are referenced in this Activity Guide as the current resource. To date, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have not been completely adopted and integrated in every state.

#### Do Your Research:

1. Explore the Science and History of Water

Start by researching the many ways water shapes our lives. A good place to start is the American Museum of Natural History: http://www.amnh.org/explore/science-topics/water-and-life-on-earth or the U.S. Geological Survey: http://ga.water.usgs.gov/

2. Research Examples of Visual Art with Environmental Messages

There are many different ways to create art with a message that has an impact. Have students form teams and research different environmental artists and their work. "Environmental Art is a term that relates to similar art styles: earth art, eco-art, ecological art, 'ecoventions', art & nature, earthworks, land art, and some other common terms." Source: A Profusion of Terms by Sam Bower

## **Search Engine Words:**

earth art, eco-art, ecological art, ecoventions, art & nature, earthworks, land art, "list of local artists", sustainable art, ocean, water cycle, water pollution, sustainability, hydrology

Website examples to get you started:

http://www.artsandactivities.com

http://greenmuseum.org

http://www.ecoartspace.org

http://www.cityarts.org/gallery.php

http://www.sustainablepractice.org

http://www.naaee.net/

http://www.arteducators.org

Share other resources you find with us on TheWylandFoundation Facebook page or by email to artchallenge@wylandfoundation.org!

## **Develop the Theme / Make a Plan**

The research is done. The subject matter set. Now, it's time to develop the theme for the mural and how to communicate the chosen message.

Here are some questions to keep in mind:

- What message do the students want to communicate?
- What types of images should be used?
- How can the theme be stated in a simple title or sentence?
- What behavior are they trying to affect (change = start doing or stop doing)?
- What section(s) of the mural will be used to direct the viewers' eye?

Student teams should print out or record the artwork(s) that they found to be most unique and amazing, and explain their attraction to the artwork. Describe the medium used, the environmental message conveyed, or any fascinating information about the artist(s). Allow each team to share their findings with the class and hold discussions to have the class choose a style of art that clarifies their intended message.

On some of the "Steps" pages, you will find a section to help think through the different parts of the mural focal points.

#### What You'll Need:

The following is a partial list of suggested materials to enhance your classroom mural painting experience:

- Paint The type of paint will be determined by where you want to locate the mural. If it will be placed indoors, tempera or water-based acrylic works fine. If it will be displayed outdoors for an extended time period, then exterior acrylic latex paint should be used. In general, acrylic has better durability, but keep in mind that it will not wash out of clothes so have students dress accordingly. Many companies now offer environmentally friendly paint with low VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds). These are a good alternative when available.
- Paint colors needed: white, black, royal blue, deep green, yellow, red, brown, and deep purple. You can mix other colors from these basics.
- Assorted paint brushes (wide ones for large areas to small ones for details)
- Sponges or sponge brushes in assorted sizes
- Fredrix® "Paint-it-Yourself Classroom Mural Canvas" or other 5-foot x 10-foot flat surface
- Chalk for outlining / Image projector
- Cups for paint
- Trays or plates for mixing colors
- Paint stir sticks (ask the paint store when you buy the canned paint)
- Paint can opener (or use a flat head screwdriver)
- Paint rollers and covers- both 6-inch and smaller 2-inch sizes
- Paint roller trays
- Masking tape
- Drop cloths or butcher paper
- Two 6-foot tables (or whatever you have available)
- Rags, paper towels, and baby wet wipes
- Containers for water (clean and grey water)
- Completed concept sketch and pictures of habitat, animals, plants, etc. for reference

## **Preparation for Painting:**

- Cover the ground (and wall if securing canvas/paper on wall) with taped down drop cloths or butcher paper.
- Set up the two long tables. Cover top surface with paper or eco-plastic tarp. These will be your paint stations.
- Set out cups, brushes, rollers, roller trays, mixing plates and other supplies.
- Pour small amounts of different colored paint into cups. You can always pour more as needed. Add small amount of water if the paint gets too thick. Feel free to combine two or more colors in a clean, new cup to create a unique color for specific emphasis.
- Place a brush in each cup; keep it in the cup for repeated use and unnecessary brush washing. Have extra brushes handy.
- Use rags and paper towels for unwanted drips and spills; Wet wipes for hands.
- Have students bring in paint cover-ups or wear clothing that they can get paint on this includes shoes! (Don't forget to tie back long hair too.)
- Area prep: Wall Delineate the 5-foot x 10-foot area on the interior or exterior
  wall where the mural will be painted. Clean the surface and apply a primer coat so
  the paint will go on smoothly and last a long time.
- Area prep: Canvas The Fredrix® "Paint-it-Yourself Classroom Mural Canvas" comes pre-primed and grommeted for easy mounting on wall or frame. Use a 5-foot x 10-foot large piece of sturdy paper or primed cloth as an alternative. Tape a protective layer behind and beyond the outer edges of the canvas, paper, or cloth, to keep the wall clean.

## **Tips for Waste Water Disposal**

Visit http://earth911.com/recycling/ Click on "Paint Disposal" or call the group's free service line at 800-253-2687

## **Tips and Techniques:**

In this Activity Guide you will find a few general "rules of thumb" (tips) and some techniques that work well when painting nature scenes. Techniques may vary depending on the style of art and the subject chosen by the students. If the students have chosen a different style of art, make sure to study that style carefully and learn those techniques so they may be applied to the mural.

#### **Types of Media:**

- Acrylic
- Tempera
- Crayon resist
- Pen & Ink
- Fiber / Textile
- Mixed Media (Use of multiple types)

## **Art Styles:**

Impressionism

Abstract

Pop Art

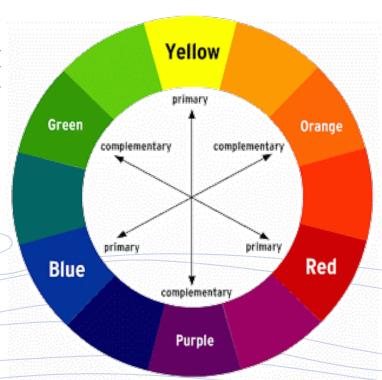
Pointalism

Cubism

Others? -check out: library.thinkquest.org/ J001159/artstyle.htm

## Try this

Use a color wheel to identify primary, secondary and tertiary colors. Consider how color affects the message or theme of the mural.

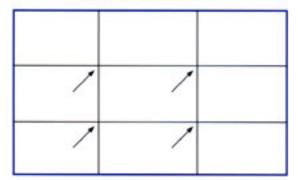


## Step One: Sketch It Out

Work in small teams or as a class to sketch the concept - or various parts of the concept - that the class had decided on. Many famous artists such as Picasso created many small sketches called "studies" or "thumbnails" before starting a large mural. A mural of a farm might be preceded by individuals "studies" of a barn, a cow, a pig, a cloudy sky, a well, a chicken, a farmhouse, a tractor, etc. (Students may even want to save or frame the individual studies as stand alone works of art.) The artist may look at all of the studies and decide to arrange these in a specific way to communicate a unique message in the final mural. Review and refine sketches as a class until a consensus has been reached on the final concept. Introduce the concept of the "Rule of Thirds" and the "Golden Mean" to help students compose their sketches.

The "Rule of Thirds" involves dividing an image evenly with three horizontal and three vertical lines. Many artists like to place main subjects along the lines or where the lines cross rather than in the center of the mural. This gives the artwork more interesting visual appeal, emphasizes the main subjects, and prevents the horizon line from appearing to divide the picture in half.

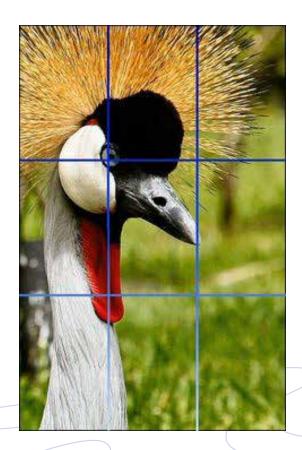
#### **RULE OF THIRDS**



Arrows show intersections for subject placement

## Try This!

To help students understand the rule of thirds, print out some examples of artwork and have students decide where their eye is drawn first and what the main subjects are. Next have them draw three horizontal and three vertical dividing lines over the artwork. Are the main subjects placed according to the "Rule of Thirds"? Which placements have the most impact? Students can also practice on their own by creating a "Rule of Thirds" grid sheet and sketching on it.





## **Step Two: Paint the Backdrop and Background Subjects**

Using the students' sketch plan for the mural, paint in the blocks of color and larger sections. Remember, color blending can be an important technique for depth, drama, or realism in your mural. Have students practice this technique on paper before trying it on the mural.

To blend colors in a backdrop, determine where the darkest color will begin. For example: When painting a sky, the darkest blue will be at the top as the sky appears lighter closer to the earth. If you are going to have a visible light source in your image (sun or moon), remember that areas close to the light source will be lighter too. In underwater scenes as the water gets deeper, less light can penetrate so the darkest blue color will be at the bottom.

Start with a wide brush lightly dipped in the darkest color and make wide sweeping horizontal strokes. Keep making the horizontal strokes, slowly painting more of the canvas. The color will lighten as the paint on your brush is used up. On your mixing tray, add some white to the color you started with, and lightly dip the brush – this is called creating a "Tint." Start the wide horizontal strokes again just above where the other color ends. Use your almost dry brush to do additional blending as needed, and repeat this process until the space has been filled and you are satisfied with the results. Color blending doesn't have to be limited to a single color or to backdrops. For example: sunrises and sunsets offer an opportunity to dip your brush in red and yellow and add white as you paint more of the canvas. In addition, a sea turtle shell might need an interesting blend of brown, green, and yellow.

Each student should have a portion of the mural to paint. Poll students based on their interest in painting the different components. If you don't have enough interest in things like the backdrop, give each student some backdrop responsibilities in addition to the bigger subjects of the mural.

## **Try This!**

To help students understand tints and shades, have them create some by starting with a chosen color and have black and white paint available. On a piece of paper, have them paint a spot of their chosen color. Next, to make tints have them make a new spot with their chosen color plus two dabs of white paint, then another with the original color plus four dabs of white paint, etc. To create shades, have them repeat this process but this time adding black to the chosen color.

## **Background Subject Matter:**

Once the backdrop is painted, the mural is ready for background subjects. These are subjects that are far away in the distance such as an island or a mountain, ships, clouds, trees, stars, or an object on or above the horizon line. To add a sense of depth to the mural, background subjects are usually much less detailed than subjects in the middle or foreground of the artwork, and aren't main focal points.

Use chalk as needed to outline the background subjects before painting them.

Background subjects are a great place to utilize texture tools such as sponges, stipple brushes, smudge rags, and even your fingertips, especially when trying to create the illusion of far away trees, rocks, mountains, clouds, or buildings/city scape. When painting far away birds, trees, or sea life, painting the shape of the animal in a small scale and a dark color is effective in creating a sense of distance.

## **Try This!**

To help students understand foreground, middle ground, background, and scale, find a set of objects with the same size or scale such as blocks, beakers, or jars. Place the objects in three groups on a long stretch of floor with the first group at the viewing end, the second group in the middle, and the third group at the farthest point. Have students lie down near the viewing end and take a look. They should be able to see how the same size objects appear as different sizes according to their distance.

## **Background Subjects Plan:**

water Elements (Example: Atmospheric conditions):
Land Elements (Examples: Horizon line, Islands, Mountains):

Physical Elements (Examples: Ship, Building, City Scape):

Medium(s) Used:



## **Step Three: Middle Ground Subjects**

Middle ground subjects are found just where you'd expect them, in between the background and the foreground. The closer the subject appears to the viewer, the more detailed it should be. Middle ground subjects should be more detailed than the background subjects, but not as sharp or detailed as what will be in the foreground. Middle ground subjects should be painted in a larger scale than the background subjects, but not as large as subjects in the foreground. Use chalk or an image projector as needed to outline the middle ground subjects before painting them.

## Middle Ground and Subjects Plan:

Objects:	
Movement:	
Focal point(s)	
Message:	

## **Step Four: Foreground Subjects**

The foreground subjects should be painted with the most detail and will be the largest in scale to give a sense of dimension to the overall mural. This is an opportunity to use layered colors to create visual interest.

To help you draw and paint the foreground subjects, look at the subject and try to visualize it in terms of smaller shapes connected together to create a whole. For example, a fish could be viewed as an oval body with triangle fins. Sketch these shapes together, then trace an outline around them to form the fish. Erase the lines you don't need and add details by using other small shapes.

Use chalk or image projector as needed to outline the foreground subjects before painting them.

## **Try This!**

Give students a bunch of cutout shapes and an image of an animal. Have them find and put together different shapes to create the basic outline of the animal. Have them sketch the animal using shapes then trace the outline around them. They should erase any lines they don't need and then add details.



## **Step Five: Visual Interest with Light and Shadow**

Decide where the light source (sun or moon) will be on the mural. You may paint it on the mural, or show the effects of the light coming from the direction of the light source. For example: The sun's rays coming out from behind a cloud. Students may paint faint white rays and/or highlight some of the middle and foreground subjects in the painting.

To add light effects, have students consider the direction of the light source. To paint the rays, use a brush dipped in white paint and dabbed on a paper towel to remove most of the paint. Start the brush stroke where the light source is coming from and paint in the direction the light would be shining. When painting highlights on subjects, the parts of the subject closest to the light source will be the lightest. With a small brush and a very small amount of white or a very light **tint** of the color of the subject (the color mixed with a small amount of white), paint faint highlights in the appropriate places on the subjects.

To create shadow, the students will again look to the position of the light source. There are two different types of shadows that can be used. The first is a shadow on the part of the subject farthest away from the light source where the light can't reach – usually on the opposite side or underside from the highlights. To paint these shadows, students can use a **shade** of the color of the subject (the color mixed with a very small amount of black) or just a darker version of the subject color. Using a very small amount of the dark color, paint faint shadows on the subject. Students should practice this technique, as it is a little tricky to match the brush strokes to the imagined three-dimensional shape of the subject.

The second type of shadow is a "cast" shadow. Cast shadows are created when the object blocks the light source. For example: When a person stands in front of the sun and a shadow appears on the ground. Use a darker version of the color that will be under the shadow, not solid black.

The students may want to refer back to the artwork found during their research and discovery process to look for examples of these techniques.

## Try This!

To help students understand light and shadows place several objects or plastic animals on a table. Adjust the direction of a flexible desk lamp so that the light is at about a two o'clock position pointing at the objects. Have students study how the direction of the light source highlights different areas on the objects and how it looks. Also, have them look at where the shadows fall on and near the objects. For practice and for future reference they can do a pencil sketch leaving light places blank and using increasingly dark strokes to show the shadowing.

## Step Six: Finish Up, Clean Up and Submit

#### Clean up the area:

Wipe up any unwanted spills or drips on the floor or wall. Latex paint may take a bit more "elbow grease" than tempera paint. Clean brushes in one of the buckets with warm, soapy water. Dispose of left-over paint using an environmentally friendly method (For tips, see http://earth911.com/recycling/). Or ask the school custodian how to best dispose of both the paint and gray water.

#### **Documentation:**

Have all artists sign the mural on the right side (top to bottom).

Record the final date.

Put the mural's title on or near it.

List all participating artists (name, age, grade)

School name / Teacher(s)

#### Take a Picture ... It Lasts Longer!

Take a group photo of everybody in front of the mural.\*

Take a photo of the mural all alone.\*

Individual artists next to something he/she painted, or student teams that worked on a specific section or area.

Mural with students, teachers, parent helpers.

Photos of foreground, middle ground, or background focal areas. These make nice photo cards for "thank you's" or package several different cards to use to fund-raise for local eco-charity or art and/or science department supplies.

\*Submit these two images (300dpi JPEG format) as Art Contest entries. Email images to: artchallenge@wylandfoundation.org

For complete Rules and Terms, go to: www.wylandfoundation.org/artchallenge/

A winning mural will be chosen from each of the following grade categories:

Grades K-4

Grades 5-8

Grades 9-12

## Show, Ask, and Tell

#### The Unveiling:

Find a place to display the mural and set a date for an art show to display the mural to your community. On easels around the room, you can feature some of the theme studies or thumbnail sketches that were made during the students planning and implementation stages. If the mural is painted on a wall (interior or exterior), show photos of the "before and after", the creation in process, and other fun candid shots of the mural activity process.

Invite other students, faculty, parents, and family to the event. This will give the muralists a time to inform and inspire those around them about the importance of water awareness and the arts.

## Try This!

**Impact Interviews:** During the "Art Show", students that created the mural should have a small notebook to write down their observations. Have the students observe the reactions to their artwork and make notes. Students can record the answers from questions asked of the viewers such as:

- What do you think the intended message of the mural is?
- Are you familiar with any national or local water issues?
- How can this mural be used to make a difference in this water issue?
- What part of the mural are you drawn to?
- Can you name the art style(s) or artist(s) represented in the mural?
- Will this artwork make you change your behavior in any way? What specific action will you start or stop doing after examining the mural?

Back in the classroom, have a discussion about the viewers' responses to the artwork; if the intended message was clearly communicated based on they learned; and if they would change the mural in any way based on their classroom discussion.

## Discover more about our water planet, visit these resources:

U.S. Forest Service - www.usfs.gov

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) - www.noaa.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Office of Water - www.water.epa.gov

For more information about the Wyland Foundation Visit us at www.wylandfoundation.org

**About Wyland** 

Marine-life artist Wyland has earned the distinction as one of America's most creative influence and a leading advocate for oceanic resource conservation. Since 1993, his nonprofit Wyland Foundation has supported numerous conservation programs, including Wyland's monumental Whaling Wall project—an epic series of life-size marine life murals that spans 17 countries on 4 continents and is viewed by an estimated one billion people every year. Hailed a "Marine Michelangelo" by USA Today, Wyland's workis sought by millions of collectors; and his equally successful Wyland Foundation, in partnership with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the Ocean Institute of Dana Point, California, is actively engaged in teaching millions of students around the world to become caring, informed stewards of our ocean, rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands.

#### About the Wyland Foundation

Wyland Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and preserving the world's ocean, waterways, and marine life through classroom education, public art, and community events. Wyland Foundation is proud to administer and participate in the FOCUS Program. FOCUS (Forests, Ocean, Climate – and Us) is a nationwide campaign in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, and NOAA that uses art and science to teach young people about our forests and ocean — and how these two irreplaceable resources hold the key to the future of our water supplies, climate, and global health. Never before have these organizations worked together in such a way for such an important cause. Our goal is to engage all students across the country, bringing together art and science activities and traveling exhibitions, to fundamentally change the way we see, understand, and care for our environment.

About Fredrix Artist Canvas

For more information about other Fredrix® canvas products go to www.fredrixartistcanvas.com

The "Paint it Yourself" Classroom Mural Canvas and frame can be found at www.dickblick.com. Type "Fredrix mural" in the search engine.

About Arts and Activities Magazine http://artsandactivities.com

