Recycled Materials: *Takpekpe* (Grade K–2)

![Image of Takpekpe artwork]

*Takpekpe (Conference), 2006, El Anatsui*

Photo: Nathaniel Willson.

Find online at: [https://tinyurl.com/yb3hbces](https://tinyurl.com/yb3hbces)

**LOOKING QUESTIONS**

First, look at the artwork. Don’t do anything else but look until you’ve counted to 20 in your head or out loud!

Then, talk about it with a friend or family member.

- What do you see? What do you think about it? What does it make you wonder?
- How do you think the artist made this work of art? What materials did they use?
- Does this work of art remind you of anything you’ve seen before? What does it remind you of?

**INFORMATION**

From a distance, this artwork appears to be a gold, purple, and red tapestry, or a wall hanging. But up close, you will notice that this isn’t woven in fabric but instead was created from many different materials the artist has chosen for his artwork—metal tops from recycled bottles and cans. El Anatsui, who lives and works in Nigeria, creates his sculptures from metal, wood, and reused materials from bottles and packaging. The artist works collaboratively with a team to arrange the materials in different positions on the floor to create patterns, repeating designs made up of shapes, colors, or materials. Through a practice of experimenting and playing, El Anatsui creates sculptures of different patterns and colors.

- Check out El Anatsui’s process in action in this Art 21 video: [https://tinyurl.com/y97eesque](https://tinyurl.com/y97eesque)

**MOVEMENT ACTIVITY: SCAVENGER HUNT**

Look around your house and find the following patterns:

- Stripes
- Polka Dots
- Geometric Patterns (made up of a repeating shape)
- Floral Patterns (made up of repeating flowers and plants)

**KEEP LEARNING WITH A STORY**


This true story tells of how Isatou Ceesay found a way to recycle plastic bags and transform her community.
Michael Recycle, by Ellie Bethel (K–3)
This story tells the adventures of a young superhero whose power allows him to teach people about recycling.

ART ACTIVITY
El Anatsui gathers packaging, bottle tops, and other items to create his artwork. Through a process of playing and experimenting, the artist creates patterns and documents them with photographs. These images help guide El Anatsui to create new sculptures.

Play, experiment, and create your own recycled material artwork!

Materials
Recycled materials, glue or tape.

Steps
1. Gather recycled materials in your home over a week. Ask yourself if an item could become an interesting art material before you place it in the garbage or recycling bin. Rinse off the material and set aside until you are ready to begin creating.
   - Some items you could collect include: cardboard boxes, paper tubes, bottle caps, aluminum can tabs, foil yogurt lids, egg cartons, twist ties, and cereal boxes.

2. Once you have some recycling gathered, imagine how these items can be transformed. Can they be cut, twisted, folded, or combined to create a new material?
   - For example, you could cut paper tubes into rings, cut shapes out of cardboard boxes, or trim egg cartons into smaller objects.

3. Once you find a pattern you like, glue or tape your materials to a piece of cardboard to finish your artwork.