

Artist: Corwin Clairmont (Salish/Kootenai), from the exhibition [Love Letters to the Collection](#).

Materials: Cardboard, old magazines or other materials for collage, markers, glue stick, glue, or tape

Age range: The whole family!

Prompts:

- What natural resources are important to you? Have any of them ever been threatened?
- How might you choose to convey what is special about your favorite outdoor places?

About this Artwork:

In *Split War Shield*, artist Corwin Clairmont references the traditional form of an American Indian war shield. Unlike traditional shields, Clairmont's is constructed from paper fiber made to look like torn fragments of tire track and eagle feathers. A zigzag of white runs down the center of the shield, symbolizing the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes protest of the state of Montana's plan to widen Highway 93 through the Flathead Reservation. Clairmont was concerned that the highway expansion would affect the welfare of Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal people, as well as animals and the natural environment. *Split War Shield* reflects those [concerns](#) and draws attention to the connection between the well-being of the land and local culture.



Corwin Clairmont (Salish Kootenai), *Split War Shield*, cast, handmade paper, lithographs, and mixed media, 2001, 83¼ x 50¾ x 3¼ inches. MAM Contemporary American Indian Art Collection, purchase and partial gift of the artist, copyright the artist, 2007.0

Steps:

1. **Brainstorm ideas** using the prompts above.
2. Using paper, cardboard, or other found materials, **draw or paint** a real-life place in nature that you treasure. What animals live nearby? What kind of trees grow? Does water run through your place? Are there people or animals who live in the area who depend on the natural resources that your place provides?
3. **Collage** materials like old magazines, construction paper, or other drawings or rubbings to add depth and variety to your artwork. Clairmont uses mixed media to convey the layered complexity of the issue.
4. **Decide** if you would like to create some type of **framing symbol**, like the shield, to hold your image. Perhaps your symbol stands for the protection of your place.

5. **Share your art on social media using the hashtag #mamloveletters so we can repost it! If you want to write a love letter along with your image you are invited to send it directly to the artwork at the email address: shield@missoulaartmuseum.org**

Looking for more activities to do with *Split War Shield*?

Watch [this virtual gallery walk-through](#) of *Love Letters to the Collection*, made just for kids, which focuses on *Split War Shield*!

Discuss the piece with friends or family using the following questions to help you explore:

1. What do you notice or wonder about this artwork? What is the first thing about this piece that catches your eye?
2. How many materials can you count in this piece? What do the different materials look like?
3. What does the form of *Split War Shield* look like? Do you recognize the form of the war shield or any of the imagery that Clairmont used to make this piece? Why do you think he chose to incorporate these forms and images?

Want to learn more about Corwin Clairmont and his work?

[Download this informational packet](#), "Learning Through Art: Corwin Clairmont and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith," assembled by MAM, the Montana State Office of Public Instruction, and the Montana Historical Society.