

The Art & Science of the Traditional Finnish Christmas Decoration: the Himmeli

A 'Kids Inspiring Kids in STEAM' project by the students of
Huhtasuo School, Jyväskylä, Finland.

Realized in 2016 December.

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Geometry for Christmas? HIMMELI!



The **himmeli**, a traditional **Finnish Christmas decoration** made out of straw.

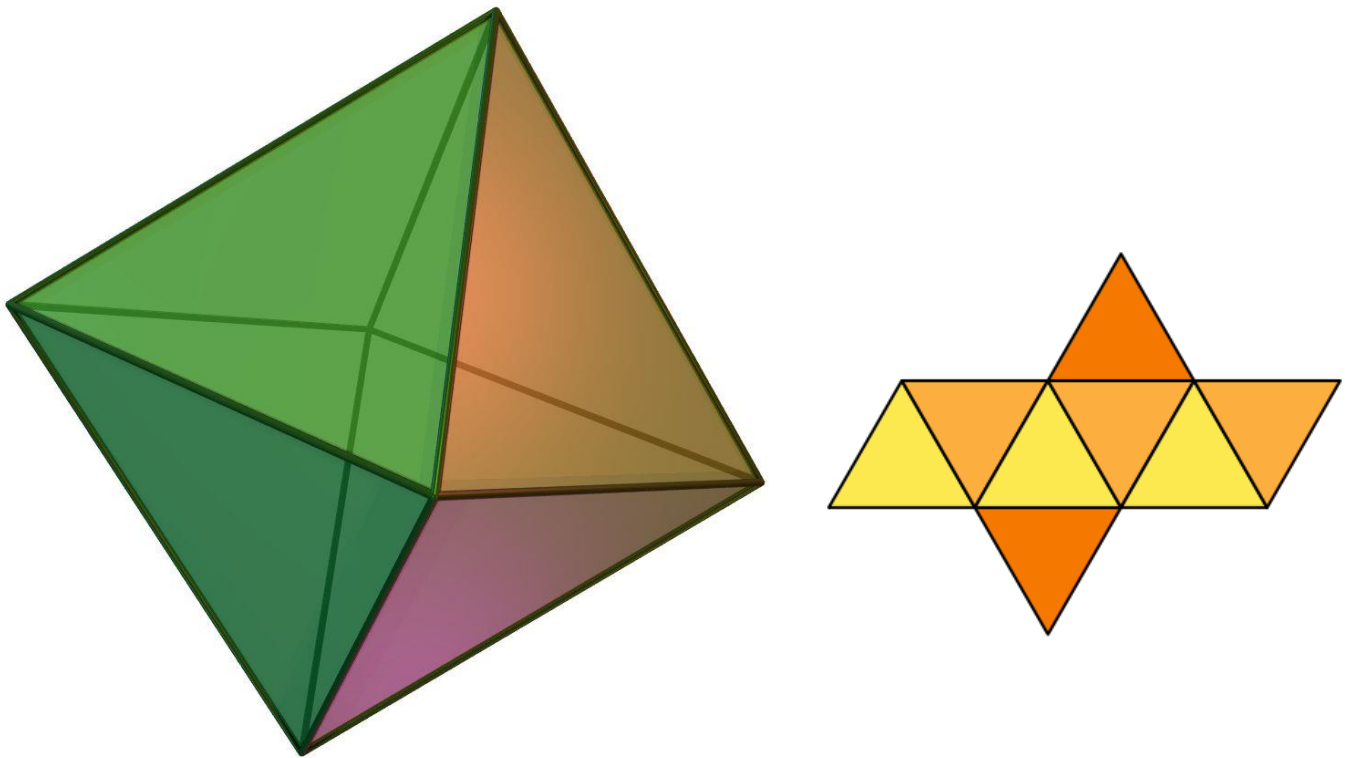
In Finland, himmeli have been made for centuries, and it is unclear when the tradition began. The word himmeli is believed to derive from the German word for heaven, 'himmel', which in turn derives from the Old Norse word himinn, variously translated as heaven or sky.

Himmeli were traditionally hung over the table during the harvest festival to ensure a good harvest the following year – the more elaborate the himmeli, the more abundant the next year's

crop. The most beautiful himmeli were stored hanging from the rafters in Finnish attics from one Christmas to the next.

HIMMELI's Structure

Traditionally, himmeli are made from specially selected and prepared **straw** in an **octahedron**, an **eight-sided polyhedron**.



The straws must be straight, clean and unblemished; this requires advance planning and preparation work well before the Christmas season to ensure beautiful and structurally sound mobiles.

The structure of a himmeli – especially a bigger and more complex one – is visually striking, with geometrical shapes made out of hundreds, or even thousands, of pieces of straw.

Finnish himmeli in its function and outlook is similar to the mobiles known as 'pajaki' in Poland.



What is himmeli made of?

According to experts the best himmelis are made out of rye, the grain with the longest and sturdiest stems. A well-kept himmeli can last up to a hundred years. In modern interpretations, the materials vary from plywood to paper and even plastic straws. Recent years have seen a himmeli boom in Finland.

Instead of using real straw, we started making himmeli using plastic straws.

Geometrical & Artistic Himmeli-party in the School!

Just before the winter holiday, we have organized a himmeli making workshop in our school



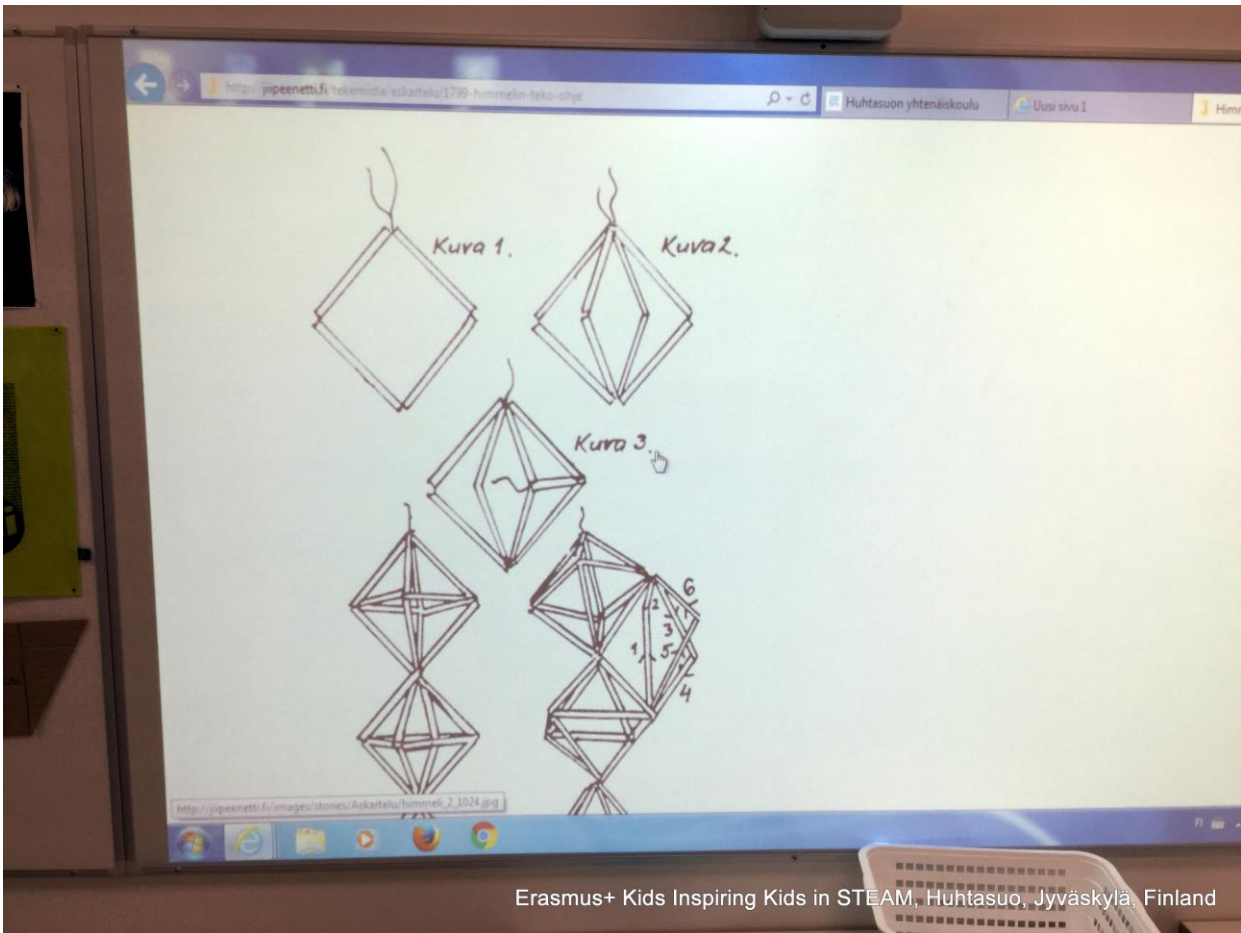
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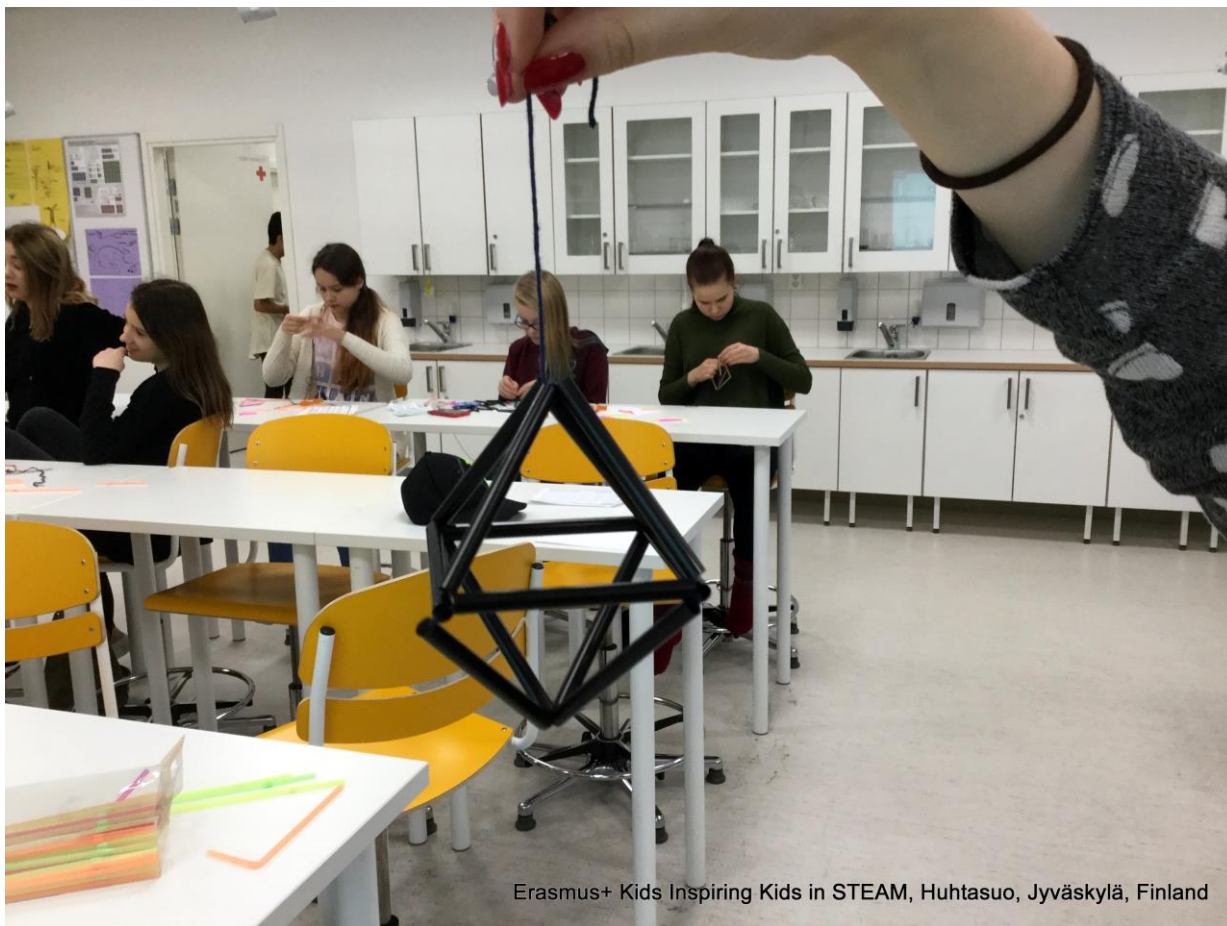
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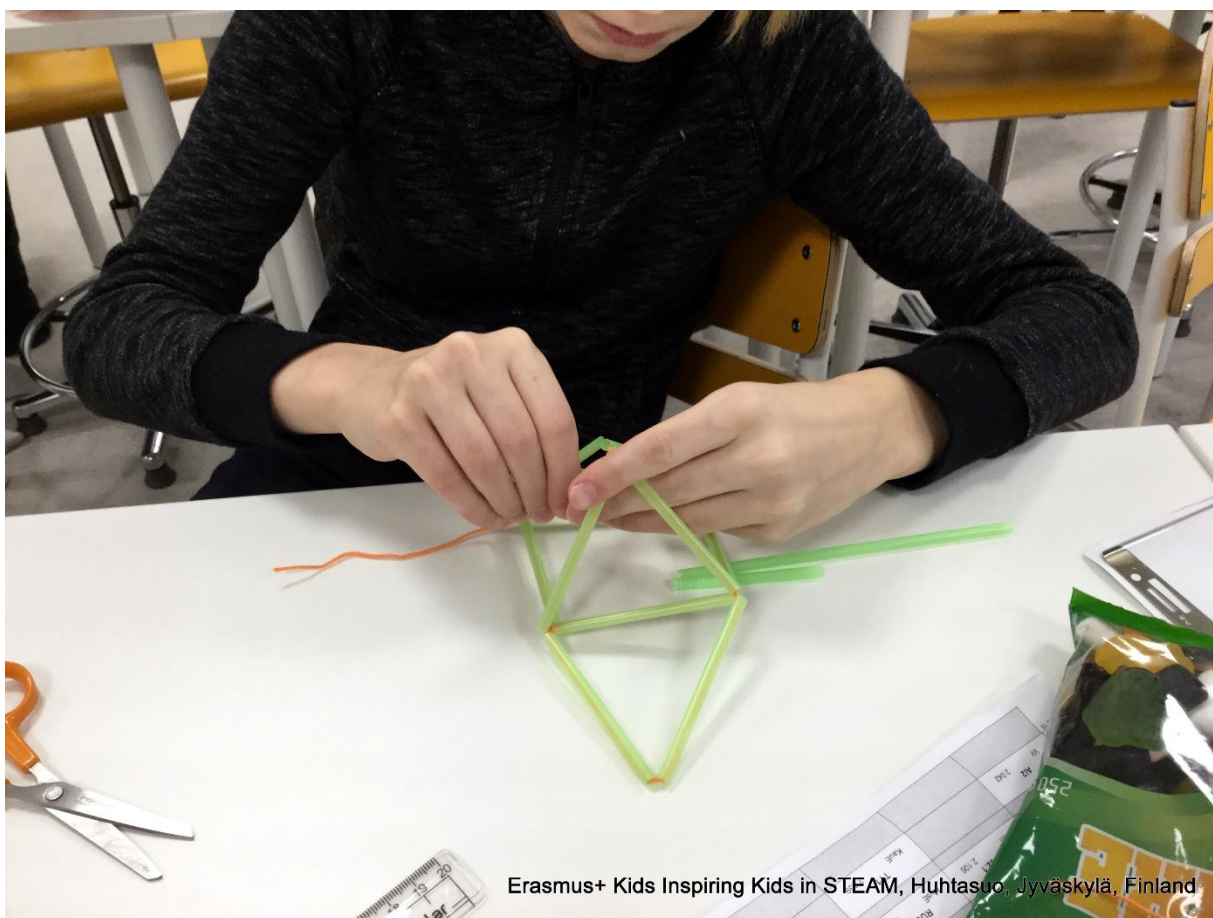
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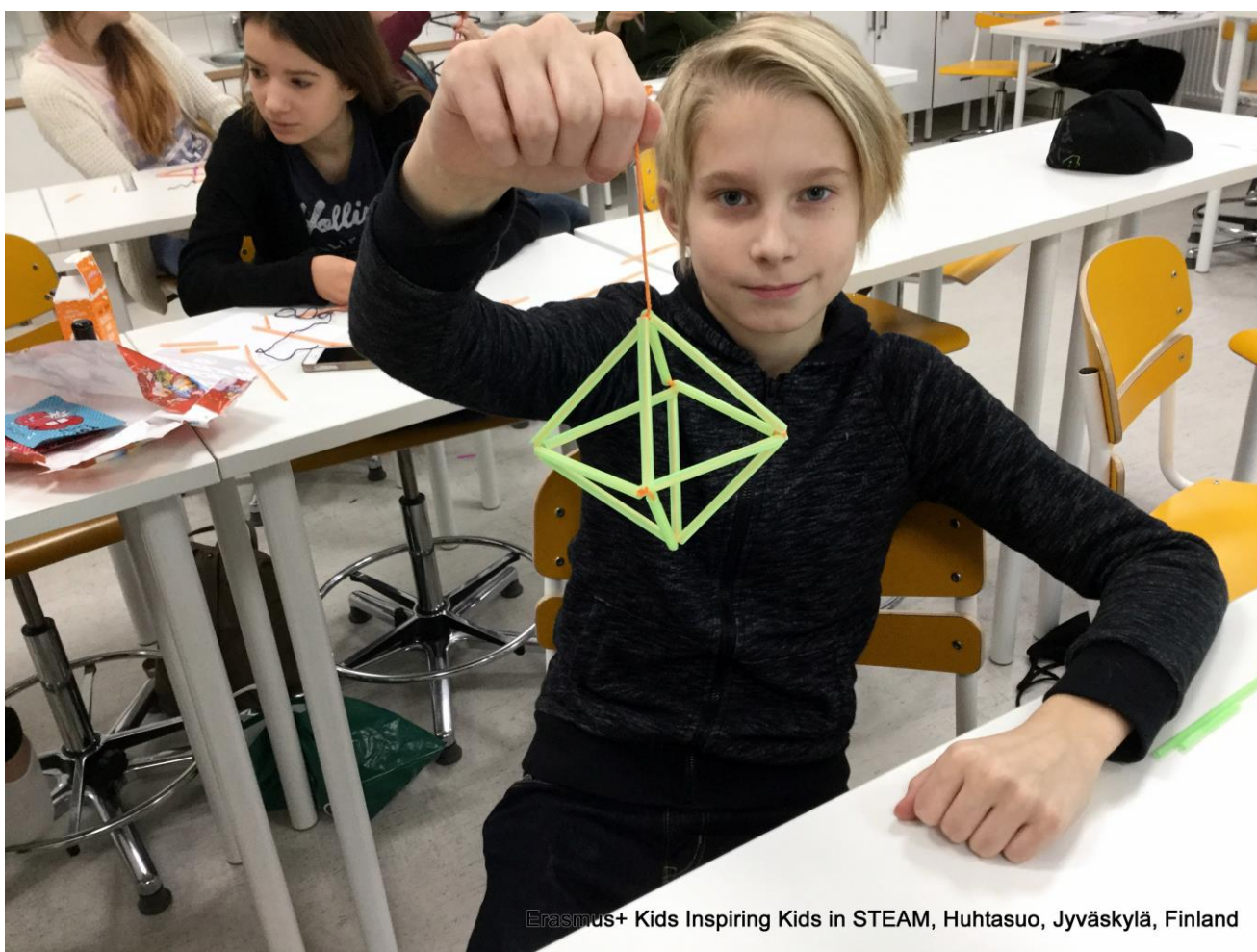
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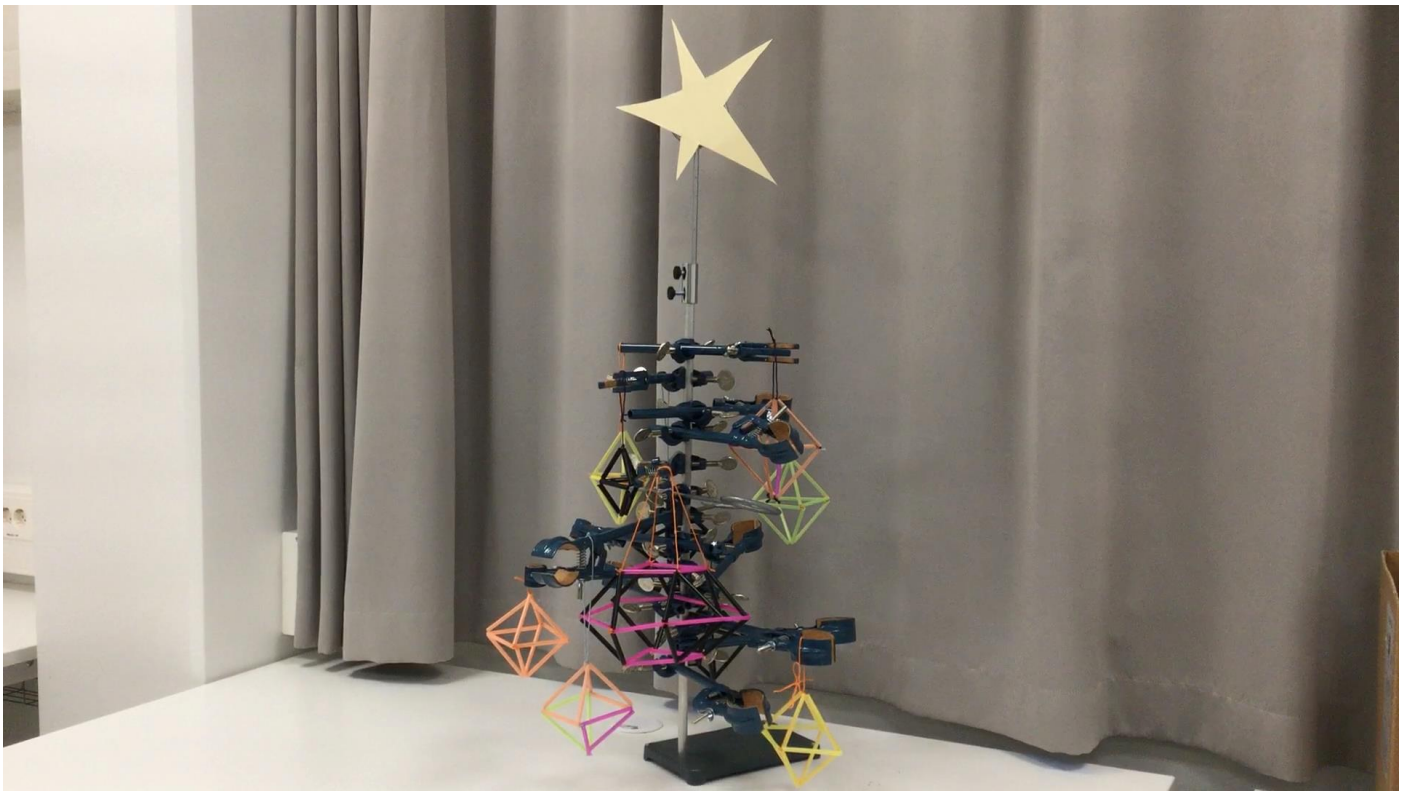
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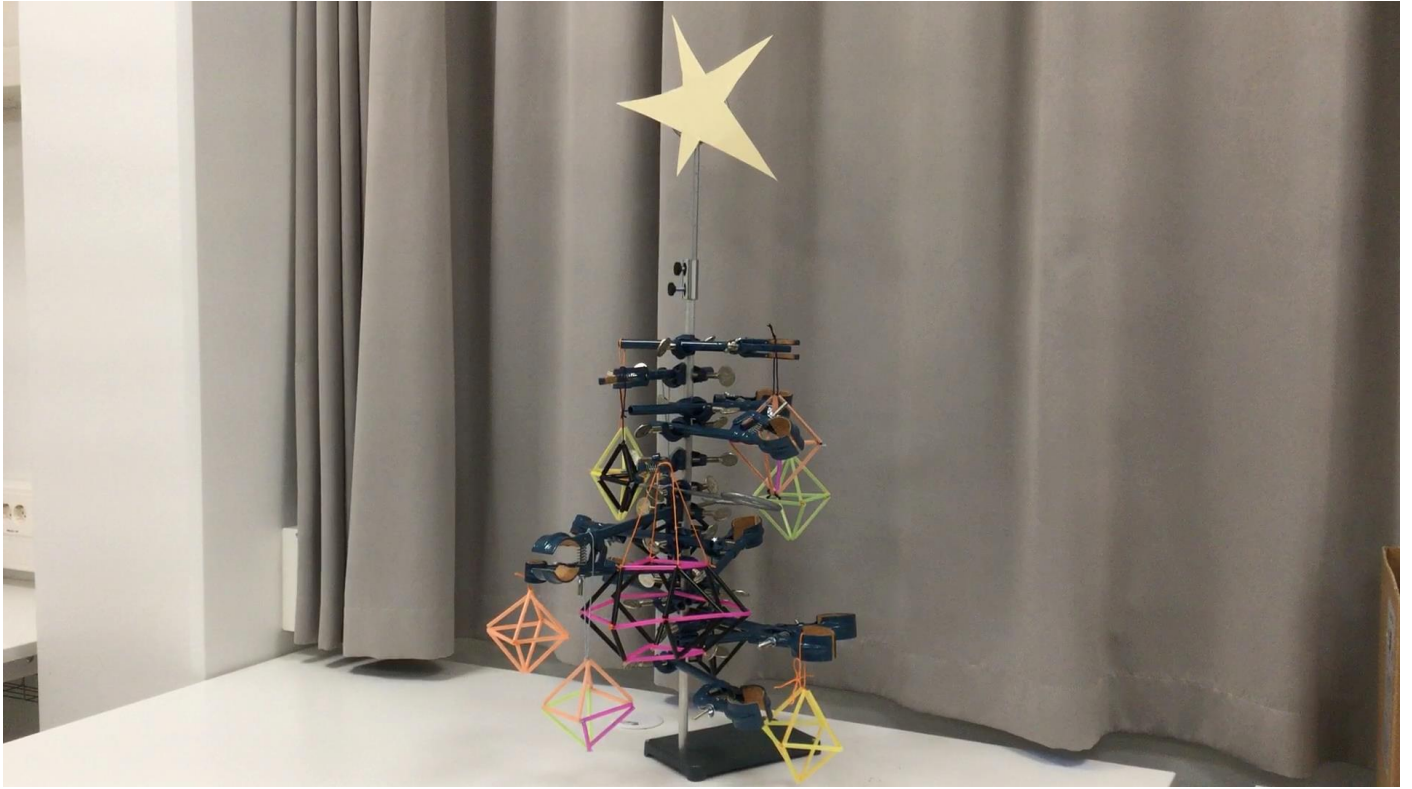
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Himmeli 3 ways - Tutorial for creating geometric hanging decorations using straws

A close-up video frame showing a hand with purple nail polish holding a purple straw against a ruler. The hand is using yellow-handled scissors to cut the straw. The ruler shows measurements in inches and centimeters. The video player interface at the bottom shows a progress bar at 1:20 / 2:26 and various control icons.

UNLEASH Creative



Watch a tutorial:

When we were ready with our himmeli modules, we have decorated our special scientific Christmas tree with our himmelis.



HIMMELI

HOW TO

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