

Abstract Watercolor Collage

Create an abstract painting through combining several watercolor techniques!



Helen Frankenthaler (American, 1928 – 2011), *Sea Change*, 1982, acrylic on unprimed canvas. Museum purchase with funds provided by the 1987 and 1988 Associate Board Art Ball. 1987.53



Materials Needed:

- watercolor paper, 9x12, 5-7 sheets
- liquid watercolor, red, yellow, blue
- watercolor brushes
- sponge brush
- masking tape
- bowl for water
- paper towels
- toothbrush
- salt and pepper
- scissors
- glue stick
- paint palette

Optional:

- eye dropper
- paper shape punches



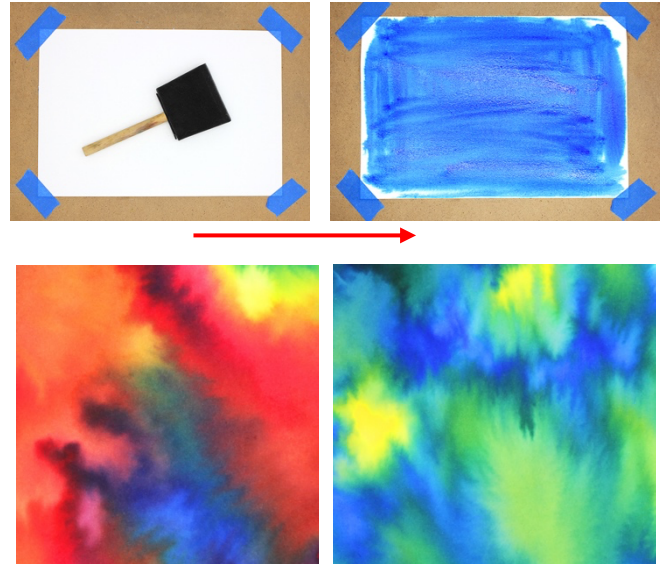
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Step 1

Experiment with **staining** the paper. Apply water to the entire sheet of paper with a sponge brush. Use a large paintbrush to apply any color of choice to the sheet of paper. Experiment with different brushstrokes, filling the entire sheet of paper with marks. Allow paper to dry and save sheet for later use. Create as many staining experiments as desired.

Helpful hint: tape the corners of the paper down to prevent paper from curling.



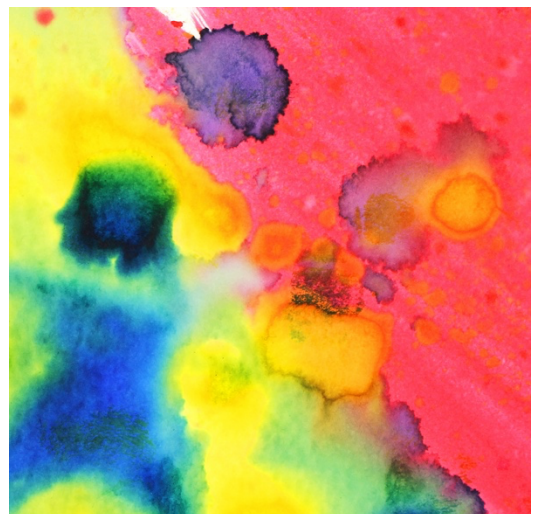
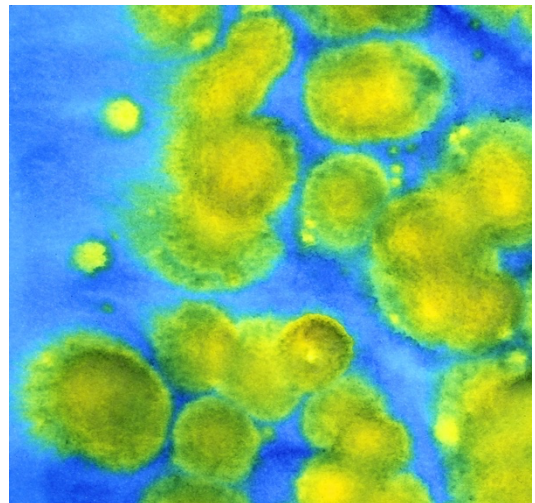
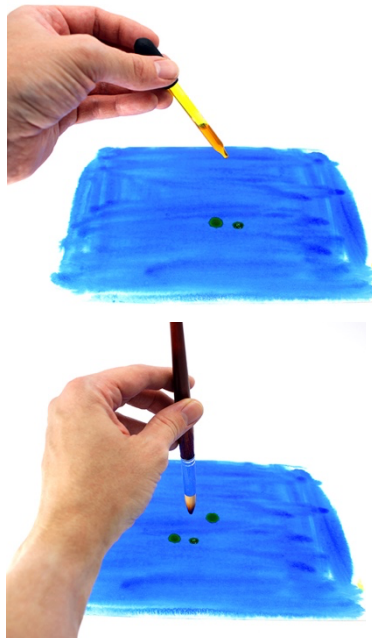
Helpful hint: try staining with more than one color for even more possibilities!

Step 2

Experiment with **dripping** colors. Wet a new sheet of paper with a sponge brush and apply any color of choice to the paper with a paintbrush. Wash out paintbrush and select a different color of choice. Add extra water to the brush to allow the color to freely drip onto paper. Add as many drips as desired and allow paper to fully dry. Create as many dripping experiments as desired. Save all experiments for later use.

Helpful hint: use eye droppers for extra control of drops.

Helpful hint: drip paint from various heights away from the paper to create a variety of sizes of dots. Add drops while paper is still wet for best color mixing effects.

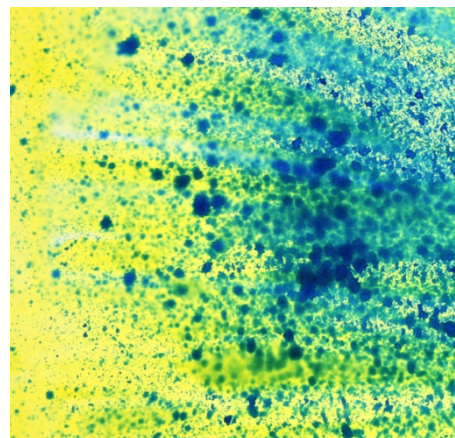


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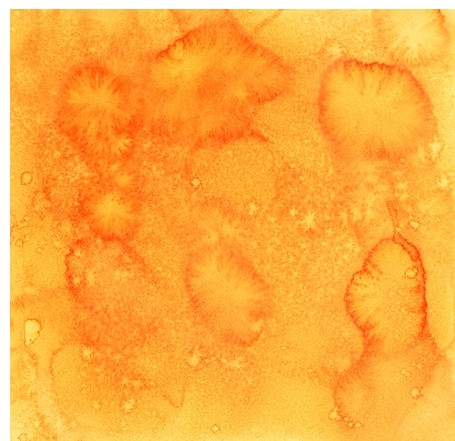
Step 3

Experiment with **spattering** colors. Wet a new sheet of paper with a sponge brush and apply any color of choice to the paper with a paintbrush. Lightly dip a toothbrush into a different color of choice. Hold toothbrush perpendicular to the paper and flick thumb across the bristles to spatter the color onto the wet paper. Add as many spatters as desired and allow paper to fully dry. Create as many spattering experiments as desired. Save all experiments for later use.



Helpful hint: add water to toothbrush to increase the volume and spread of the spatters.

Helpful hint: create a **reverse spatter** effect by spattering only with water to dilute and texture the color already present on the paper.



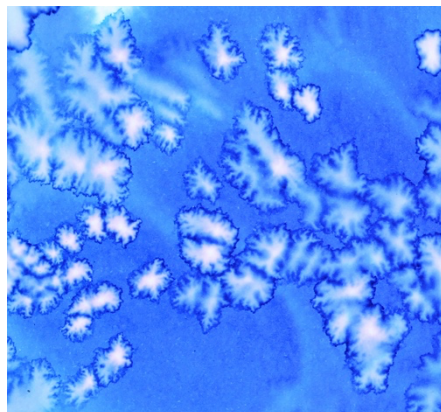
Reverse (spattered with water only)

Step 4

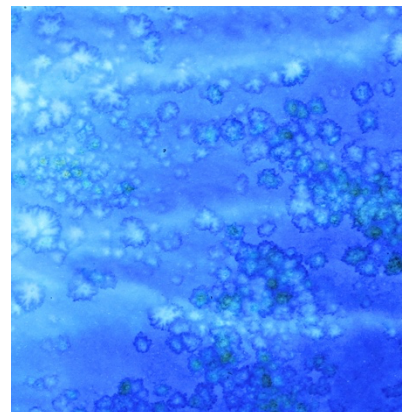
Experiment with **salt and pepper effects**. Wet a new sheet of paper with a sponge brush and apply any color of choice to the paper with a paintbrush. Sprinkle a small pinch of salt or pepper over the color while the paper is still wet. Allow paper to fully dry for effects to take place. Create as many salt and pepper experiments as desired. Save all experiments for later use.



Helpful hint: for best results, do not disrupt reaction by applying more color, water, or brushstrokes after the application of salt or pepper.



salt



pepper



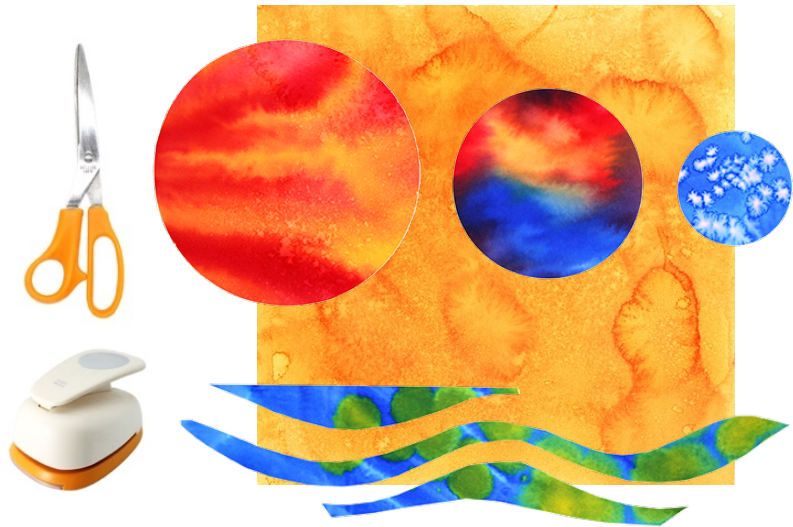
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Step 5

Gather all watercolor experiments. Cut or tear experiments into shapes to use for the collage. Save one experiment sheet to use as a background.

Helpful hint: create a variety of unique shapes to choose from. Use paper shape punches for precise shapes and sizes (ex: circles).



Step 6

Glue shapes together onto the background sheet to form a colorful abstract collage!

Helpful hint: layer shapes and try several arrangements before gluing into a final composition.

Helpful hint: for best results, use colors, shapes, and textures that best contrast with the background (ex: blue vs. orange, light vs. dark, spattered vs. smooth etc.).



Resources

[Extra watercolor techniques](#)

[Learn more about Helen Frankenthaler](#)

[Explore Helen Frankenthaler's *Sea Change*](#)

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