

# LESSON PLAN



Mystical Mark-Making

## DESCRIPTION

This process and experimentation based lesson will push students beyond the boundaries of traditional art-making through the use of non-traditional tools and materials in the creation of non-objective artworks.

## STUDENT AGE/GRADE LEVEL

Grades 5-8

## OBJECTIVE

Upon completion of the lesson, students will understand how the elements of experimentation, chance, and creativity can produce both surprising and satisfying results in their artwork.

## RELATED EXHIBITION/TOUR/ARTIST

Mod Squad: Exploring Modern Painting and Sculpture

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## RELATED WORKS



### Charles Clough, *Muniment*, 1988-1994.

Enamel on fiberboard

NOTES: In place of a paintbrush, Clough uses an instrument he calls the “Big Finger”—a large balloon-like contraption that he invented—to spread poured enamel paint into constellations of color. The artist claims that this device allows him to maintain an emotional distance from the physical act of painting. His quirky, made-up titles promote the sense of fantasy in his exuberant paintings. Clough’s approach to making art is highly philosophical: “I make the paintings because they don’t exist and soon enough neither will I.”

Discussion questions:

- How was this artwork created?
- Do you think these paint colors were mixed or used straight out of the tube?
- What is this artwork supposed to be? Is it supposed to be anything?
- Can the title tell us anything about the work? (*Muniment* – a document or record, esp. one kept in an archive)

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**Matthew Kolodziej, *Good Neighbors*, 2009.**

Acrylic and ink on canvas

NOTES: At a distance, 'Good Neighbors' appears abstract; closer inspection reveals representational elements. The painting originated with photographs Kolodziej took of construction sites. He digitally combined some of these photographs into a photo-collage (original collage displayed below the painting), which he then translated, or compressed, into a linear drawing using a computer program. Projecting the resulting "map" onto canvas, he traced its lines with markers, all the while adjusting and refining the composition. Kolodziej then squeezed lines and layers of acrylic paint onto the canvas using tubes designed for cake icing instead of brushes. To create pools of color, he placed the canvas flat on the floor and poured on liquid paint. Kolodziej's use of multiple canvases to comprise one painting echoes his layered process, resulting in a network of line, color and texture that is inherently dynamic.

Discussion questions:

- How did the artist create this artwork?
- What process(es) did the artist go through in order to get the final result?
- What type of mark-making tool did this artist use? Did he use one at all?

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Helen Frankenthaler, *Wisdom*, 1969.

Acrylic on canvas

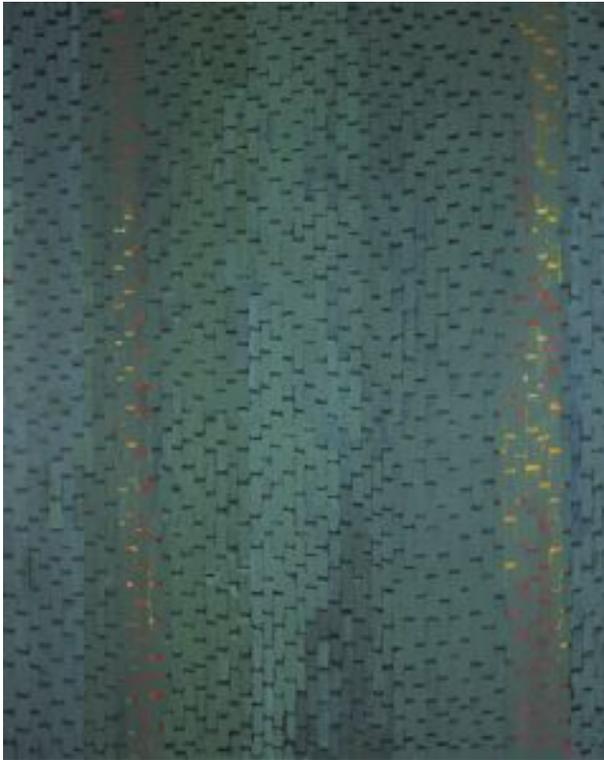
NOTES: Frankenthaler is considered the originator of "stain painting," the technique of applying diluted paint onto raw canvas so that the paint soaks into and becomes thoroughly integrated with the canvas. This imparts an unusual richness of color and reflection of light, bringing the look and effect of watercolor painting to canvas on a large scale. She places the canvas on the floor and manipulates the paint with squeegees and other tools and by lifting parts of the canvas. Each painting is an irrevocable recording of the moments when it is made. Frankenthaler titles her works after they are done through a process of association.

Discussion questions:

- How do you think the paint was applied in this artwork?
- Can you sense the movements the artist would have made with her body as she applied the paint to the canvas? Can you model them?
- What do you see within this painting? Does it look like anything?

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Alma W. Thomas, *Pond – Spring Awakening*, 1972.

Acrylic on canvas

NOTES: After retiring from her career as an art teacher in 1960, Thomas devoted herself fulltime to making art. Her abstractions, which focus on color and light, are frequently inspired by, and named after, experiences of viewing nature. In the early 1970s, Thomas began to limit the number of colors in her paintings, focusing on color harmonies and contrasts. Here, vivid patches of color peek out through a screen of gray brushstrokes. In 1972, the year she made this painting, Thomas was the first African American woman to have a solo exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art.

Discussion questions:

- What does this artwork remind you of? Anything?
- What real-life objects or places do these colors remind you of?
- Knowing the title of the work, what are your thoughts on how the artist chose to represent a pond?

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### MATERIALS

- Found objects (Anything that could be used to apply paint)
- Roll(s) of duct tape
- Glue
- Paint shirts
- Variety of colored paints
- Paint trays
- 18" x 24" watercolor paper

### PROCEDURE

#### DISCUSSION:

- Present students with the artworks that inspired the lesson plan. Ask students what they believe is represented in each of the artworks. Use the [Visual Thinking Strategies](#) technique if desired. Allow students enough time to look at each of the images before beginning discussion.
- Allow for varying ideas and opinions in discussion, noting that there is no correct answer and that you are only asking students what they see. Visit the Akron Art Museum's online gallery for additional artworks and information. [www.akronartmuseum.org/collection/](http://www.akronartmuseum.org/collection/)
- After discussion of students' observations, ask students how they believe each of the artworks were created. To conclude the discussion, explain to students the processes used to create each work.
- Point out a major difference between the two works *Good Neighbors* and *Muniment*: one is more representational of reality (Matthew Kolodziej's *Good Neighbors*) and one is much less (Charles Clough – *Muniment*).

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- Discuss sculptures seen at the museum and ask students what would happen if certain ones were used as paint brushes to create an artwork. “What types of marks would they make?” Transition this discussion into the beginning of the studio portion of the lesson.

### STUDIO:

- Instruct students to – using duct tape or glue and the found objects they/you have chosen to bring and use – invent their own tool/device to apply paint with.
- Advise students to pay attention to the various textures that the materials contain that could provide interesting mark-making to their composition. Encourage students to create more than one mark-making tool.
- When students have created their tools, instruct students to begin experimenting using various colored paints and various methods to create marks upon their paper.
- Sample studio questions: “How would you describe the marks your making?” “How do the variety of colors effect your piece?”

## STANDARDS

### OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

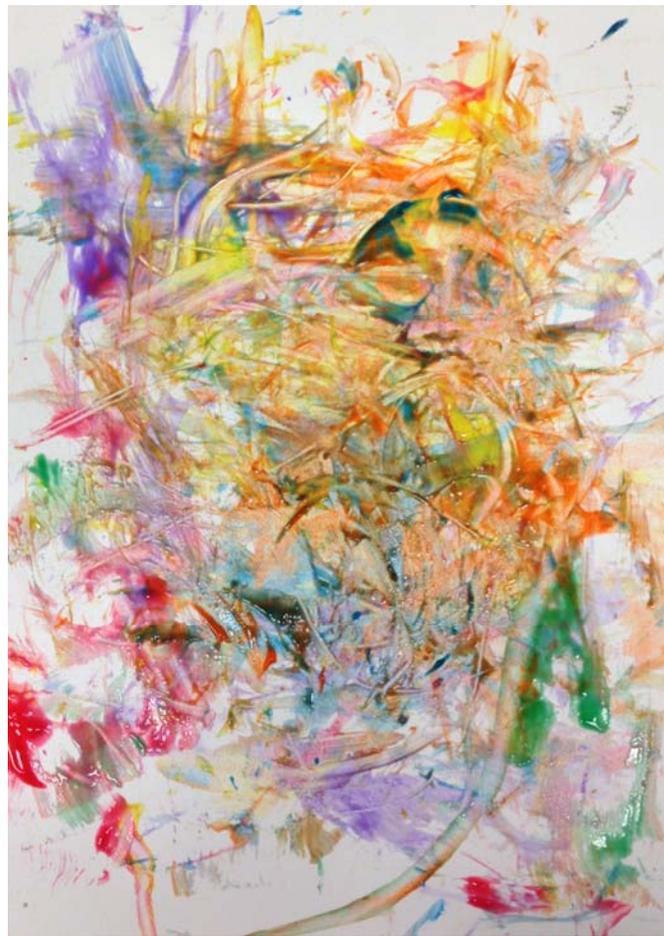
	Perceiving/Knowing	Producing/Performing	Responding/Reflecting
Grade 5	5PE	3PR	2RE
Grade 6	5PE	2PR	1RE
Grade 7	1PE	2PR	3RE
Grade 8	1PE	1PR	4RE

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Mystical Mark-Making

Finished Artwork



**Education Dept, *Untitled*. July 25, 2013.**

Tempera on water color paper

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### **Mark-making device: Before and after creation**

Wire, cup lids, paper bag, felt, feathers and duct tape

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### FOLLOW-UP LESSON SUGGESTIONS

Follow up this lesson with a discussion about chance and intention. Have students discuss the elements of their work that were intended in their work vs. what happened by accident. Using their paintings from this lesson as a background, prompt student discovery by asking them what they see within their piece. Then, have students attempt to create something representational out of what they find.

### Resources

Akron Art Museum Collection <http://akronartmuseum.org/collection/>

2012 ODE Visual Arts Standards [http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Academic-Content-Standards/Fine-Arts/2012-Revised-Fine-Arts-Standards/2012\\_Visual\\_Art\\_Standards\\_Final-1.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Academic-Content-Standards/Fine-Arts/2012-Revised-Fine-Arts-Standards/2012_Visual_Art_Standards_Final-1.pdf.aspx)

Greenberg, J., Jordan, S. (n.d.) *Action Jackson*. Roaring Book Press; Brookfield, CT.

Visual Thinking Strategies: <http://vtshome.org>

WCPerspective. (May, 2012). Big finger parking lot painting party. *Buffalo Rising*. Retrieved from <http://buffalorising.com/2012/05/big-finger-parking-lot-painting-party/>