Pearl at Home

Art projects designed for suggested ages of 5 and up, designed to be completed at home with easily-accessible art materials.

PAINTING WITHOUT A BRUSH

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MATERIALS

• Surface to paint on (paper, canvas, etc.)
• Paint
• Scissors
• Items to paint with (be creative and look at things with fresh eyes!)
  Suggestions: Rubber bands, string, clothespins, binder clips, thread, straw, twigs, wire, toothpicks, torn paper, cardboard, felt, foam, feathers from a feather duster or feather boa

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The purpose of a brush is to add a wet substance, like paint or ink, to another surface. Ancient artists made brushes from the things around them. Ancient Egyptians were producing palettes and tools, including brushes, over 5000 years ago. Archaeologists, anthropologists, and paleo-anthropologists have found paint-making materials they can date to about 100,000 years ago.

Considering how fragile ancient art materials were, and how rare it is to discover well-preserved examples, scientists think making and using paint is a far older human activity than previously thought. Some experts think that brushes were first used about 2,500,000 years ago! Those first artists had to make or find their own tools.

Although artists today can buy any type of paintbrush they might need, they often look for something unique to paint with. Art is often appreciated for the originality, quality, and style of line and texture presented in the work, and a store-bought brush may not be the best tool for their vision.

Artists also work hard to get expression or mood into their work, and one way to get this type of interest is to use things that give unexpected experimental results. They rig up tools from the things around them and evaluate the opportunities for making interesting “marks” in a similar way to ancient artists.

Many of us don’t always have art supplies handy, or we run out of materials and have to improvise. We can look back on the human history of invention and innovation to see that there is always a way to make art!
For this project, you’ll be making your own art tools to create a work of art! We’ll give you examples of interesting things you can use to make “brushes” to apply paint.

We encourage you to test out the different kind of strokes or marks made by your creations. The most important thing is to have fun exploring and experimenting!

• Make unique “brushes” using organic materials, like twigs, leaves, or seed pods
• Alter regular store-bought brushes to create new shapes or lines
• Repurpose man-made items

Tips & suggestions:
• Think of materials that can manipulate paint in other ways besides the traditional paintbrush. You can scrape paint that’s been applied (try an old playing card), or come up with a tool you can use to stamp or stencil.
• Try taping long extensions to your fingertips.
• Use thread or twine as a way to bind “bristles” to a “handle.”
• Try using wire or tape for bristles and bindings.
• As with any painting technique, you have to decide whether a layer of paint needs to dry before putting on more paint. Try painting onto a wet surface to get a different look.
• Test different combinations of ways to make your marks; see what your tool will and won’t do.
• Don’t forget to experiment with color!