Pearl at Home

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

WATERCOLOR AND TEXTURE

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MATERIALS

• **Paper:** Heavier paper that will hold up to water, like watercolor paper, mixed media paper, or cardstock
• **Watercolors:** A pan set or tubes
• **Ultrafine Sharpies or markers:** The finer the tip the better!
• **Palette:** For mixing colors if you wish. Ceramic or foam plates work well.
• **Brushes:** Watercolor brushes made from hair or fur are best. Bristle-looking brushes are okay to use.
• **Water container**
• **Optional:** salt, rubbing alcohol, plastic wrap, or tissue paper

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In this project, we’ll experiment with the use of color, texture, and pattern to create a watercolor composition.

**Texture** is the way an object’s surface feels – like smooth, rough, bumpy, etc. In artwork, texture can be real or implied – meaning it just *looks* like something has texture. Artists use different methods to create the appearance of texture on a 2-D surface. **Pattern** is a visual element that repeats in a composition; it can be used to give the illusion of texture.

We’ve included a “Watercolor Vocabulary and Techniques” section at the end of this packet that you can reference to help you with your watercolor practice!

DIRECTIONS

1. **Create a background**

   Create a free-form unstructured watercolor, similar to this example. Try using some of the wash techniques illustrated at the end of this packet.

   Use your favorite color combinations, and experiment to see what works well together! Try some vibrant or saturated colors, as well as some that are softer or more pastel.
2 Add texture

*This is an optional step. You can skip to Step 3 if you don’t want to experiment with methods of adding texture.*

Below are a few ideas for how to add some texture to your watercolor painting:

- **Salt**
  Salt changes the drying rate of water, carrying some water and thus the pigment away, creating a spot.

  Sprinkle salt on top of your wet paint and let it sit. Once it is dry, gently brush away the crystals to see the effect. Different salts will have different effects on your paper, so experiment with a few types!

- **Rubbing alcohol**
  Alcohol will repel watercolor, pushing it away to reveal a lighter color on your paper. This produces a similar effect to salt, but the spots will be larger, and sometimes concentric, with smoother edges.

  You can use a clean brush or pipette to drip alcohol onto your paint; start slow so you can see how it affects the watercolor. You can also use a spray bottle to apply a mist over certain areas of your painting. Q-tips can be used to directly apply alcohol to the paint surface.

- **Plastic wrap or tissue paper:**
  Lay crumpled pieces of plastic wrap or tissue paper on a wet area of paint. This will lift up pigment in unpredictable patterns.

  If using plastic wrap, allow the paint to dry completely before lifting the plastic.

  If using tissue paper, DO NOT allow the paint to dry completely, or the paper will stick and be hard to remove. Try lifting it after 10 minutes to see how it looks (and make sure it’s not sticking).
3 Add patterns

*Make sure your paper is DRY before doing this step.*

In the examples on this page, you can see shapes and lines that are repeated in order to create different patterns.

**Use your Sharpie or marker** to create patterns over your DRY watercolor background. First decide which way your painting will be oriented. Turn it around to see if any of the forms or colors created by the watercolor suggest something to you.

Once you decide which way your painting will face, start by working on a small section of pattern at a time. Look at patterns around you – both natural and man-made – for ideas!

Change patterns frequently, allowing your inspiration to flow. Put the piece down when you get tired and come back later with “fresh eyes.” Note that you do NOT have to fill the whole painting with patterns.

**TIP:** Once you have your patterns down, you can add in more watercolor in areas where you want a more saturated color.
About Color

Hue: The pure state of any color

Primary colors: Red, yellow, and blue

Secondary colors: Violet, orange, and green (produced by mixing two of the primary colors)

Tertiary colors: Colors produced by mixing two secondary colors or by mixing an equal mixture of a primary color with a secondary color next to it on the color wheel

Complementary colors: Two hues directly opposite one another on a color wheel (for example, red and green, or yellow and purple)

Monochromatic: A single color (hue) and its tints and shades

Shade: A color changed by adding darker or lighter paint to it, or by adding more or less of another color to it

Tone: A color changed by adding its direct complement to it, or by adding a neutral grey, for differing saturations

Tint: The slight addition of a color, such as in a watercolor, for a more transparent look when a small amount of paint is added to a lot of water, or for a less transparent look, when a small amount of one paint color is added to a lot of white paint or other paint color

Value: The inherent lightness or darkness of tones or colors. White is the lightest value; black is the darkest. Each color on the color wheel has a built-in value (yellow has a very light value, and blue has a dark value).

Basic Glossary of Watercolor Terms

Background: The area that appears furthest away from the viewer; objects appear smaller and with less detail. The color is not as strong, or is more blue in things VERY far away, like in a landscape.

Midground: The area in a painting that is between the foreground and background

Foreground: The part of an artwork that seems closest to you. Objects appear larger, brighter, and more detailed.

Pigment: Any agent in paint that gives it its color, made from natural or chemical substances

Transparent: Penetrable by light; materials or colors that you can easily see through

Translucent: A substance (paint) just clear enough to allow some light to pass through, but not clear enough to reveal all form, line, and color. A more translucent paint will show more paper through the paint layer

Opaque: Impenetrable by light; appears solid, not transparent or translucent

Wash: In painting, a thin, translucent layer of pigment, usually watercolor. Often used as the first layer of a sky or water.

Graded wash: A wash that smoothly changes in value from dark to light. Use it for a sky in your work

Highlight: A point of intense brightness, such as the reflection on an object

Motif: A term meaning “subject.” Flowers or roses can be a motif. Sometimes it means a part of a pattern

Dry brush: Technique when your brush is fairly dry (with thin or thick paint), so you rely on the hairs of your brush, the angle of your stroke, and the paper’s surface texture to create broken areas of paint. Also called scumbling

Wet-on-wet: The technique of painting wet color onto a wet surface (paper). Watercolor applied this way usually dries without a hard edge, diffusing and spreading the wash

Watercolor is a generally transparent or translucent type of paint. The “binder” allows the light to pass through and bounce back at the viewer, so we see the color because of reflected light.

See examples of techniques on the next page →
**Basic Wash:** Apply the paint as evenly as possible to the paper with a soft wide, flat brush.

**Graded Wash:** Apply the paint evenly while gradually running out of color.

**Dry brush:** Use undiluted paint, letting the brush skip over areas of the paper. The tooth of the paper aids in this effect.

**Wet-on-Wet:** Try one of these 5 easy methods!
1. Apply one color, then paint another on top of that while its wet.
2. Apply clear water to the paper first, then apply paint to the wet area.
3. Apply clear water to only certain parts of the paper, then drip paint onto the wet area. The paint will follow the water.
4. Apply one color, then paint a second color next to it so the edges meet. The water will carry the paint back and forth.
5. Apply paint to your paper, then water on top of it.

**Apply salt:** Different salts have different appearances. All work by changing the drying rate of the water, carrying some water and thus the pigment away, creating a spot. Sprinkle salt on top of your paint and let it sit. Once it is dry, gently brush away the crystals to see the effect.

**Rubbing alcohol:** Spray or drip rubbing alcohol onto your paint. This produces a similar effect to salt, but the spots can be larger, and sometimes concentric, with smoother edges. Use a Q-tip, pipette, or clean brush for this technique.

**Plastic wrap or tissue paper:** Lay crumpled pieces of plastic wrap or tissue paper on a wet area of paint. If using plastic wrap, allow it to dry completely before lifting. If using tissue paper, DO NOT allow it to dry completely, or it will stick. Try lifting it after 10 minutes to see how it looks (and make sure it’s not sticking).

**NOTES:**
Using salt, alcohol, plastic wrap, or tissue paper for special effects all require the paper to dry at least partially before continuing with your painting. You can use a hair dryer to speed things up.

Remember when you do rewet your painting, the dry paint will move since it is always water soluble.