

Watercolor Marbling Technique

Materials:

Frang Semi-Moist Watercolors
(Regular or Washable)
Inexpensive Shaving Cream (not gel)
Paper

Optional:

Pearl Ex Powders
Dixon Metallic Paint Markers

Equipment:

Brush – smaller watercolor style
Waterproof Surface (paper plate –
Plastic sheet – cookie sheet etc.)
Scraper (stiff cardboard with clean
Cut edge; squeegee etc.)
Paper Towels

Optional:

Combs or other devices to make
Make patterns besides handle
End of brush.

Grade Level: Pre-K through adult – degree of design control and application making the difference in skill usage. Basic technique can be successfully Accomplished at any age.

Project Time: Each print only Requires a minute or 2 – the set up and application are the true time requirement. Generally, one class period to manage color discussion and initial marbling of papers. Additional time for using the papers will depend on project selected.

Vocabulary: marbling; decorative; print; contact; primary; secondary; tertiary; Family of color; monochromatic; complimentary; surface design; accent; warm color; cool color; tint; transparent; translucent; opaque; viscosity;

Standard: Pre-K through 1st or 2nd grade: apply shaving cream to plate; smooth and add color; instigate further design – purposefully. Print and remove excess shaving cream and follow Directions for further use next session. Through 4th grade: use up to 4 colors per design with some control over patterning. More involved application of the printed papers. In combination with other media. Through middle grades – control size and area for maximum color effects - add metallic accents as appropriate with purposeful use in application afterwards. Upper grades – adults (as is dictated by any physical limitations) plan for applied Use before printing papers - selecting papers after experimentation – color and Design control with potential repetition for broader application in use.

Introduction: Decorative papers have been a high point of design across many cultures throughout history. The Marbled styles showing up in intricate form throughout the Italian Renaissance and forward. Currently – patterned papers are at a near all time high for use – collage having come of age with everyday use in scrap booking and other “memory” related crafts. Printmaking – the indirect application of color to a surface (as well as the possibility of multiples of an image) represents and entire section of the kinds of graphic marks man can make. This is a print a process – as the color is indirectly applied. The further uses of the decorative papers are as broad as the imagination – coupled with the ongoing color study it enforces along with the “instant” portion of the process makes this just plain fun – as well as a strong teaching tool/learning device.

Technique: Simply – you will be making a design with color that neither sticks to nor sinks into the substrate below. That initial design is acted upon to further complicate it – and is then transferred to the paper. Traditionally, this process involved cooking a seaweed mixture to make a thickened “gel” to support the thinned oil color. Preparations were laborious and not at all conducive to contemporary classroom use. Substitutions for the materials have evolved and some are more successful than others – all are still fairly involved and require much greater control and expansive materials to accomplish. This method is not meant to replace any of the more sophisticated options – it is merely a simple means to an artful end.

Process: Apply a thick layer of shaving cream to the waterproof surface (at least 1” preferably 2” thick – it is reusable and only exhausts as the bubbles in the dispensed shaving cream burst – too thin a layer shortens the life span. Less is NOT cheaper!) You want a brand such as Colgate – Barbasol or the Wal*Mart house brand Equate: nothing that touts extra softening or moisturizing...the added softeners etc will cause your print to blur and the color to travel. The Wal*Mart brand is the least scented...with many workstations operating this will make a difference faster than you may think.) Level the shaving cream with the cardboard or squeegee – (frosting a cake – generally smooth is adequate) Apply 3 or 4 brush loads of pre-wet and fairly loose Frang Semi Moist Watercolor in and random pattern. Draw back through the surface of the shaving cream to move the color into a more intricate pattern. Do not worry about the zealous artist who “stirs” the design beyond recognition...because of the properties of the Frang Watercolor – the design will not make “brown” – it will simply become infinitely more detailed. (Teach your students to stop before the design is too fine for most further application – allowing some areas to be more details than others.) Place paper to be printed directly onto the painted surface – face down if there is a preferred side to the sheet. Press gently to ensure complete contact – color can only transfer where it touches – do not encourage – yet do not worry about the student that pokes and mashes the paper onto the painted area – the design will remain intact. Pull back and across the surface to remove the paper – THE DESIGN WILL APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN OBLITERATED. (stand between the first student to pull a print and the garbage can – he will want to trash it – and then after seeing the effect be garbage can diving to retrieve it) Place the paper goopy side up on the table. Scrape back – preferably in the opposite direction that it was pulled off – removing the excess shaving cream – MAGICALLY the design is under it – and on the paper. Recycle the used shaving cream. Fold used and remaining shaving cream until color is even and repeat as desired. Paper will require no rinsing and be virtually dry when excess shaving cream is removed.

Hints: Different papers will give different effects. Construction Paper is NOT recommended as the colors bleed when wet. Use it if you like the effect. Coffee filters are a dynamic economical source for log fibered white paper. Be sure to shake the can of shaving cream a lot before dispensing – or top of can will be “dry” and last of it will be soupy. If adding metallic accents – Pearl Ex powders after the watercolor before the design combing is a great choice, Dixon Paint markers – once started – remove the nib and apply with the nib before combing. (nibs are reversible and the end into the marker is more saturated with the metallic paint). With the exception of the white – all the watercolors are transparent – so a colored paper will show the combination of the paint color and the color of the paper. White will lighten and show up on colored stock. Frang watercolors are the recommended because they contain nothing that will cause the paint to stick to the shaving cream and because of the pigments used, intensity and clarity of color. Liquid products will give similar results however do not have the light fastness that the Frang products do. Other pan style watercolors will not allow for the intensity of color nor will they necessarily not mix to brown if over used. For Fabrics – use Media Mixer instead of Shaving Cream and the fabric paint of choice. Back fabrics with contact paper to stiffen for better handling.