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Abstract Pressed Landscape

Teach the concept of a horizon line while making a beautiful symmetrical pressed landscape

(art + history)

The tradition of landscape painting came about after centuries of evolving painting styles, starting with the tinted walls of the ancient Greeks. The Greeks adorned their walls with beautiful gardens and rolling hills. Eventually, these scenes became the background for religious stories. Many years later, during the Italian Renaissance of the 16th century, the landscape was revived by Leonardo da Vinci's portraits. Even though his subjects were often being painted in his studio, Da Vinci chose to paint them against a backdrop of an outdoor landscape. Because of these paintings, naturalistic themes like scenery and landscape gave rise to a renewed interest in studying the importance of nature.

Coming from the Dutch word, 'landschap,' idealized landscapes truly began in the Netherlands, brought about by a very religious population that desired a secular option to the religious subject matter dominating the time.

Aelbert Cuyp was one of the most prolific and well-known Dutch landscape artists. He drew from his surroundings to paint bright and imaginative scenes. By the 17th century, the landscape was perfected, combining a balanced and calm depiction of nature that evoked a classic simplicity. Landscapes were popular, but not recognized as "high art" until the 18th century, when they were viewed as an important way to document nature as an educational study.

An easy, but ephemeral expression of a landscape is made by pressing paper in half to transfer a "print" of paints and pigments from one half of the paper to the other, similar to Rorschach ink blot prints. After printing, additional detail is added using markers or other media.

GRADES K-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Materials (required) for older students

Blick Studio Watercolor Paper by Fabriano, pkg of 20 sheets, 9-1/2" x 13" (10080-1021); share two packages across class

Liquitex Acrylic Gesso, Clear, 16 oz (00618-2006); share one across class

Blick Scholastic Short Handle Golden Taklon Flat Wash, Size 1" (05859-1001); share five across class

Blick Scholastic Short Handle Golden Taklon Flat Wash, Size 1/2", (05859-4012); one per student

Liquitex Basics Acrylic Colors, 8.5 oz tubes (01637-); share at least six landscape colors across class

Jacquard Pearl-Ex Pigments, 0.50 oz, (27103-); share four across class

Optional materials:

Spectra Deluxe Bleeding Art Tissue, pkg of 24 sheets, assorted colors, 20" x 30" (11306-1009)

Step 1: *Fold paper in half, open and apply an even coat of clear gesso.*

Step 2: *Add paint and Pearl-Ex pigments to create an abstract landscape above the fold.*

Preparation

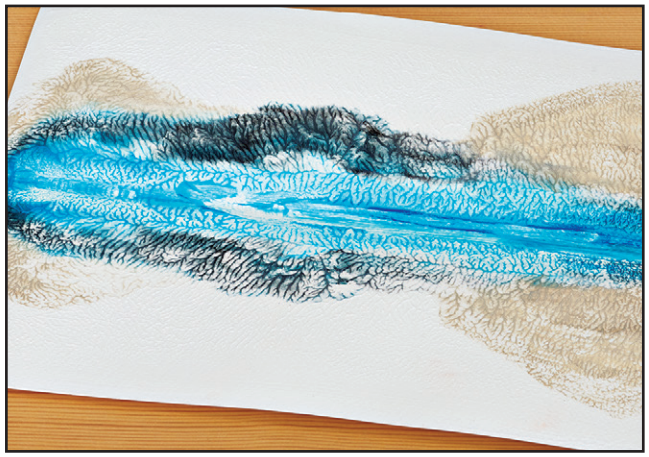
1. Study landscapes that show a clear horizon line.
2. Provide each student with a piece of paper.
3. For younger students, provide an atomizer filled with water.

Process for older students

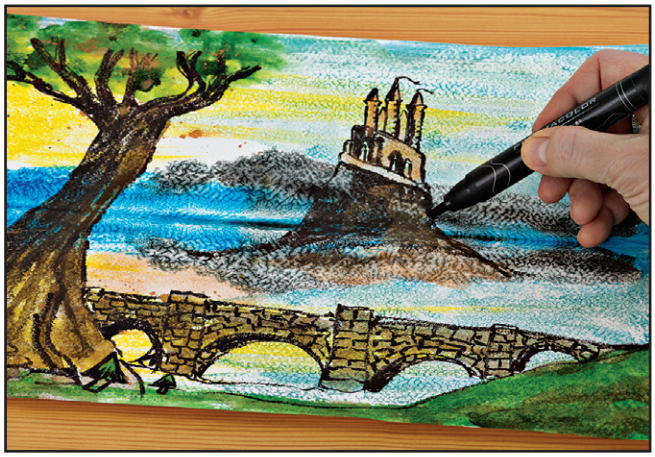
1. Fold a piece of watercolor paper in half vertically or horizontally.
2. Open the paper and apply an even coat of clear gesso with a large brush.
3. With a smaller brush, paint on landscape colors over the fold in the paper. An abstract mountain range, lake, or field are all good choices.
4. Sprinkle Pearlex pigments on certain areas right onto the clear gesso or paint to add texture where desired.
5. Fold the paper over and use pressure to transfer the “print” to the bottom half of the page. Open and allow to dry completely.
6. Once the composition is dry, any media can be used to add interesting details to the landscape painting. Add trees, buildings, etc. Note that this process works beautifully when seen as a body of water with reflections of natural elements or cities above the horizon line in the “water” below. Be sure to mimic the reflections of any details that are added after pressing.

Options

1. Experiment with adding pieces of bleeding tissue paper to the composition. The pigment will transfer to the opposite side. Remove the tissue or leave in place, as it will adhere to the clear gesso.



Step 3: *Fold the paper in half and apply pressure to transfer the “print” to the bottom half.*



Step 4: *When dry, add detail with markers or other media.*

Process for younger students

1. Fold the watercolor paper in half either way.
2. Tear pieces of bleeding tissue mimicking the shapes of mountains or hills. Tear more rounded shapes out of colors that are seen in the sky. Lay the pieces next to the paper to arrange them.
3. Place the tissue pieces above the fold on the paper. Explain that the fold will become the horizon line.
4. Have the students mist the tissue paper with the atomizer. It should be damp, but not runny.
5. Quickly fold the paper in half and press. Use pressure to transfer the pigment from the tissue paper to the other half of the paper. Open the paper and remove the tissue. There will be a symmetrical "print" of the tissue on the bottom half of the paper which will look like reflections in a body of water.
6. Remove the tissue and allow the paper to dry. At this point, students can use crayons or markers to create a "scene" on their landscape!

Options

1. Add Prang Tempera paint to the composition. Just brush it on over or under the horizon line and press to transfer the paint.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

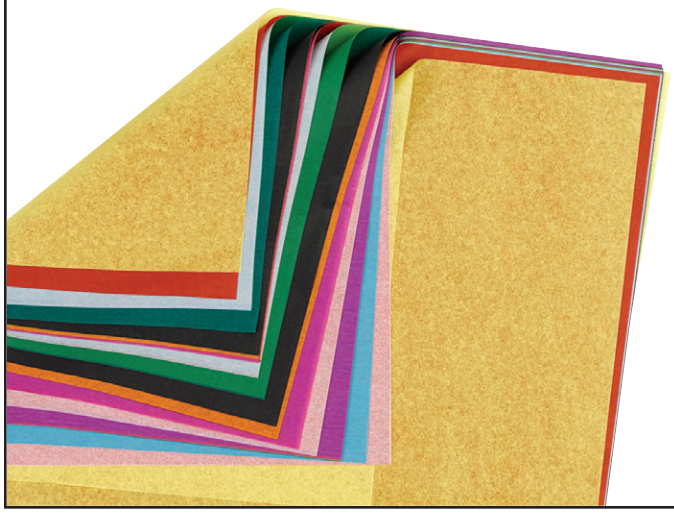
Materials (required) for younger students

Blick Essentials Watercolor Pads, 15 sheets, tapebound, 9" x 12" (10180-1023); share two pads across class

Spectra Deluxe Bleeding Art Tissue, pkg of 24 sheets, assorted colors, 20" x 30" (11306-1009); share one across class

Holbein Watercolor Atomizer Bottle (02912-1003); share five across class

Optional materials:

Blick Studio Markers (22148-)

Prang Ready-To-Use Tempera Paint (00021-)