

Blow up a Butterfly! (in the style of Georgia O'Keeffe)

Make a beautiful abstract pastel drawing using a butterfly's wing as inspiration

As one of the first women to break into the male-dominated art scene, Georgia O'Keeffe's contributions to 20th century art history are unquestionable. She mesmerized viewers with her gorgeously surreal New Mexico landscapes and stark New York cityscapes but, somehow, her name has become synonymous with flowers painted large and up close. Her goal was to magnify the intimate details of the flower so that viewers would appreciate the great beauty, form, and color in a way that might otherwise have been missed.

Akin to macro-photography, O'Keeffe's flower paintings looked closely at orchids, calla lilies, poppies, and roses, among many others. These detailed views sought out by O'Keeffe are a tribute to the beauty of nature itself. Georgia O'Keeffe prompted meditation into the wonders of every object in our world. She respected the beauty found in nature and her colors were magnificent.

"If you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for a moment." — Georgia O'Keeffe

GRADES 3-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. View the flower paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe, as well as up-close photography of butterfly wings, or actual butterfly wings viewed with a magnifying glass.
2. Cut black Plike paper into quarters, and provide 1/4 sheet to each student.

Process

1. Begin by loosely sketching or imagining the design of a "blown up" butterfly wing that will fill the paper. Next, brush a layer of Sargent Art Pearlescent Mixing Medium onto the black Plike paper with a large brush. Plike, a name derived from "plastic-like," is an innovative, unique paper with a smooth, pleasant touch evocative of both plastic and rubber. Try to cover the entire piece of paper evenly with the medium.



Materials (required)

Plike Paper, 28" x 20", Black (09604-2022); need one sheet for four students

Sargent Art Acrylic Mediums, Pearlescent Mixing Medium, 16 oz (00733-1006); use two bottles across class

Blick Mega Golden Taklon Brush, Mega Flat, Size 30 (06205-4112); share five across class

Kids Colour Shaper Set (04935-0601); share two sets across class

Blick Pastels, Set of 24 (20016-1109); share 3 sets across class

Optional Materials

Golden Interference and Iridescent Heavy Body Acrylics, Iridescent Pearl (Coarse) (00620-1123)

Golden Interference and Iridescent Heavy Body Acrylics, Iridescent Pearl (Fine) (00620-1133)

Golden Special Iridescent Acrylics, Pearl Mica Flake (Small) (00620-1125)

Golden Interference and Iridescent Heavy Body Acrylics, Gold Mica Flake (Small) (00620-9234)

Blick Matte Fixative (21707-1105)



Process, continued

2. While the medium is still damp, use a Colour Shaper to pull off areas of the medium to expose the smooth paper underneath. Expose the veining in the butterfly's wing, along with any areas that are to remain black. Use a paper towel to clean the colour shaper after each stroke. The Colour Shaper can also be used to add texture similar to the scales on the butterfly wing at this point. Let the medium dry completely.
3. Begin adding brilliant color to the Pearlescent Mixing Medium with pastels, avoiding the black areas. Accent the pastel drawing by adding various mediums such as iridescent pearl, pearl mica, or gold mica to mimic the qualities of a butterfly wing. Areas of Pearlescent Mixing Medium may also be left visible. Spray with fixative if desired.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Connecting

Anchor Standard 11:

Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

K-4 Students describe how different materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

9-12 Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

K-4 Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures.

5-8 Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts.

9-12 Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places.



Step 1: Brush Pearlescent Mixing Medium evenly across black Plika paper.



Step 2: Using a Colour Shaper, pull the medium off in areas that will remain black, such as veining.



Step 3: Add brilliant color using pastels and iridescent mediums.