

Egg-stra Easy Watercolor “Crunch” (art + social studies)

Incorporating crushed eggshells into artwork is a practice that has been passed down from generation to generation in cultures all around the world. Readily available and inexpensive, eggshells are naturally brittle and easily absorb color because of their high concentration of calcium carbonate. In China, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam, traditional lacquerware artists have spent centuries perfecting the craft of eggshell mosaics, with each culture adapting the craft to its own style and purpose. From Africa, decorative boxes, vases and jewelry covered with rare, shattered ostrich eggshells are highly prized by collectors.

Traditionally, eggshell mosaics are made by first dyeing then positioning each shard individually — a time-consuming and delicate process. This project introduces a new way to crush and color eggshells, creating intricate veining and texture all at once without pre-dyeing or arranging each fragment. The simple glue-and-paint process and satisfying “crunch!” of breaking eggshells will delight children of all ages and skill levels.

Grade Levels K-12

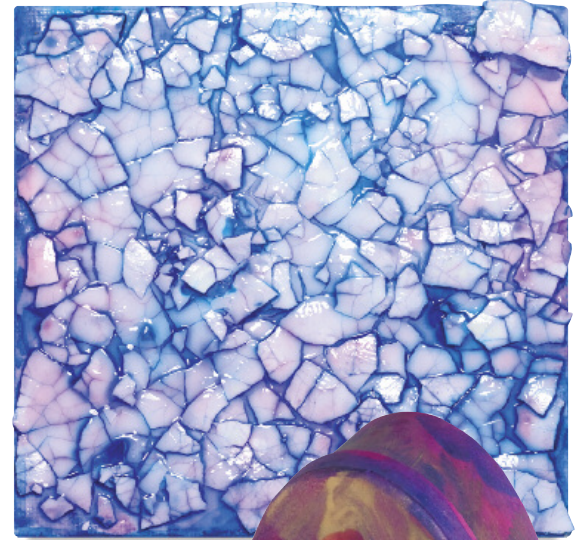
Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Collect the equivalent of one large chicken eggshell per project. Keep the pieces as large as possible for tidiness. Soak the eggshells in hot water mixed with anti-bacterial handsoap or dishwashing liquid for at least 15 minutes, then rinse them with cool water and set them on paper towels to dry for at least 24 hours. If the membrane is completely dry, it is not necessary to remove it.

Process

1. The canvas panels are pre-primed and ready to use. The maché boxes may be painted first with a background color. Read the “Options” section on page 2 for instructions on how to prepare other surfaces.
2. Apply white glue generously to the areas where the shells will be applied.
3. Take a section of eggshell and place it on the glue with either side facing up. The outer shell will not absorb color as readily; the inner shell will retain more color.



Materials

Eggshells, washed and dried thoroughly

[Blick® Economy Canvas Panel](#), class pack of 24, 4" x 4" (07015-1044); one per student

OR [Paper Maché Mini Boxes](#), assorted styles (60001-); one per student

[Blick® White Glue](#), 8-oz (23882-1005); share one bottle between two students

[Blick® Scholastic Golden Taklon Flat](#), 1/4" (05859-4014); one per student

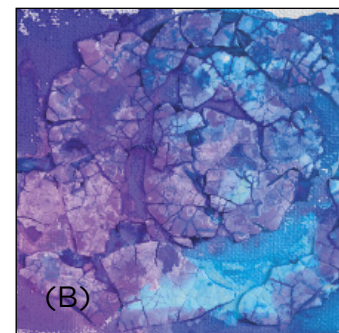
[Blick® Liquid Watercolor](#), 8-oz assorted colors (00369-); share 3-4 across class

[Liquitex® Pouring Medium](#), 8-oz (02001-1002); share two bottles across class

Process, continued

Press gently with fingers to flatten shell against the surface. Continue to apply pressure to increase the cracking effect. Allow the pieces to overlap each other and build up dimensional texture. Stray pieces may be repositioned or removed. Cover the entire surface or leave some areas uncovered for contrast, see (A). Allow time for the glue to dry.

4. Brush a freestyle coat of undiluted Liquid Watercolor over the eggshells and the surface. More than one color may be used, but it is important to realize that in the next step most of the paint will be moved. Do not paint details or patterns — they won't stay! The paint will probably make the mosaic look flat and uninteresting at this stage, see (B). Don't be discouraged — wait for the watercolor to dry and move on to the next step.
5. Apply Liquitex Pouring Medium directly over the painting, either with a brush or directly from the bottle. For a 4" x 4" canvas panel you will need about one teaspoon. The medium will rewet the watercolor so the white surface of the eggshell can be reclaimed. Use a brush to help push the watercolor away from the shells, see (C), or dab the paint away with a paper towel or tissue. When suspended in the medium, the watercolor will remain in the lower areas and in the cracks, surrounding and defining each shard. The medium will also act as a glue in the event some shards loosen.
6. Pouring Medium is milky in its liquid state but will dry perfectly clear. The medium is self-leveling, so the finish will be smooth and glossy, with the appearance of real lacquer. Allow the piece to dry. If desired, apply an additional coat.



National Standards for Visual Arts Education

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

K-4 Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner.

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 apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

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

K-4 Students demonstrate how history, culture and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

5-8 Students analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

9-12 Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art.

Options

1. This technique can be used on a variety of surfaces, including glass, ceramic, wood, stretched canvas and more. Prime these surfaces first with at least two coats of Blick Studio® Gesso (00682-1001). Do not dilute and do not sand between coats.
2. Blickrylic® Polymer Gloss Medium (00711-1027) may be used as a substitute for Pouring Medium. Gloss medium dries perfectly clear, but it retain brushstrokes, so the finish won't be as smooth.

