

Poured Polar Aurora

Glow in the dark poured paintings rival the wonder of the Northern Lights

(art + science)

In extreme northern and southern latitudes, the phenomenal natural light display known as an aurora has been viewed with wonder and awe since early man. Known as Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights in the northern hemisphere and Aurora Australis in the southern, they are often described as ribbons, curtains, or arcs of colorful light.

An aurora occurs when energy emitted from the sun (known as solar wind) reaches earth and is drawn toward the magnetic poles. Colors are formed when particles in the solar wind collide with gaseous particles in the Earth's atmosphere and send them into higher-energy states. For example, oxygen atoms give off the most common green color, while nitrogen causes blue or red colors.

To mimic these colorful ribbons of light in the night sky and the energy of the solar wind, tempera paint can be poured out onto a surface and manipulated by the force of gravity into unique marbled patterns. The addition of a landscape silhouette gives the viewer the information needed to perceive the paint pour as patterns in the sky. Include glow-in-the-dark glitter glue and the auroras will actually illuminate when the lights are out!

GRADES 2-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Prepare a pouring station by covering a table and providing cardboard boxes or trays to catch drips. Designate a place where paint-covered panels will be set to dry, and cover that area with paper.
2. To distribute paint across class, divide it into smaller flip-top bottles.
3. Cut black paper to size of canvas panel.

Process

1. Start by squeezing out enough of one paint color to cover the bottom of the paper cup. Tap the cup gently on the table to level the paint. Using a second color, make a pool in the center. Repeat to make rings of color inside of one another, creating a bullseye effect.



Materials (required)

Blick Economy Canvas Panel Classroom Pack, 5" x 7", package of 24 (07015-1000); need one per student

Blick Essentials Tempera Paint, pints, assorted colors including metallic and fluorescent (00057-); plan for 0.5 oz per student.

Creativity Street Craft Sticks, bag of 150 (60401-1500); need one stick per student

Cachet 101 Mix Media Paper, black, 9" x 12", 30-sheet pads (13834-1023); share one sheet between two students

Maped Sensoft 3D Scissors, 5" (58468-1105); need one pair per student

Paper cups, 3 oz size

Materials (optional)

Elmer's Glow in the Dark Glue, assorted colors (23945-); share one bottle among four students

Chipboard, double-thick 30-ply, 22" x 28" (13115-2232) or 28" x 44" (13115-2236); need a minimum of one sheet per class

Flip Top Bottles, 2 oz, package of 12 (04993-1002); share at least two packages across class

Krylon Low Odor Clear Finish, gloss, 11 oz spray can (23710-1001)



Process (continued)

Use as many colors as desired, or keep it simple by layering only 2-3 colors.

Aim for approximately 0.5 oz of paint in the bottom of the cup. Tap the cup on the table to level the colors.

NOTE: If Glow in the Dark Glue is being used, squeeze some between layers of paint.

2. Place a canvas panel on top of the cup. Hold it in place with one hand and hold onto the cup with the other. In one fluid motion, flip the cup and panel so the cup is upside-down. Wait at least 30 seconds for the paint to flow out of the cup. Students can also be allowed to tap the cup in order to track the time and speed of the paint flow.
3. Remove the cup. If excess paint remains inside, it can be dislodged with a craft stick. Discard cup.
If desired, add a little more Glow in the Dark Glue to the top of the paint.
4. Hold the panel upright by the edges over a box or tray to catch any drips. Allow the paint to flow close to an edge, then rotate the board to send the paint in another direction.
5. Allow the paint to run and cover the surface of the chipboard. Some paint may drip off, and some edges of the board may not be covered with paint. When the paint begins to dry, it will flow less freely. Gently tapping the back of the board with fingers or against the side of the drip-catching box will keep the paint moving.
6. As an option, gently blow through a straw on the surface of the paint to expose another color just beneath the surface.
7. Set the panel on a covered, flat, level surface and allow it to dry for 6-8 hours or overnight.
8. Using a pencil, draw the outline of a landscape or cityscape on black paper, keeping in mind how much of the paint pour will be covered by the silhouette, then cut it out. Glue silhouette to the paint poured surface.
9. If desired, protect the final artwork with a gloss fixative spray (keep away from children and follow safety instructions on the label).

Options:

- When dry, the poured paintings can be also be used as a base for printmaking, drawing, or collage.



Step 1: In a small paper cup, squeeze out just enough paint to cover the bottom. Create a pool in the center with a second color. Repeat, squeezing paint into the center of each color, forming a "bullseye."



Step 2: Turn cup upside-down on top of a canvas panel and allow paint to flow out into a puddle. If desired, add glitter glue to the top.



Step 3: Hold the panel upright and rotate it, allowing paint to run in all directions until the panel is covered.

Step 4: Cut a silhouette of a landscape or cityscape from black paper and glue to the front of the paint poured panel.



National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

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

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.