

Shape Language

Create a vibrant, geometry-focused painting in the style of Liquitex Brand

Partner Hannah Webb. **art + geometry**

Artist Hannah Webb creates vibrant paintings focusing on color and geometry. Her paintings are created by precisely stacking and layering independent shapes to imply light, texture, and form, a technique she has dubbed “shape language.” With a balance of both careful color shifts and loud punches of contrasting hues, the end result is a harmonious painting that vibrates life.

Geometry is the visual language of shapes and plays a huge role in all art. It is how perspective, form, and the three-dimensionality of a shape are conveyed on a two-dimensional surface.

It's not necessary to understand Euclidian geometry in order to draw something as simple as an apple, but it is important to observe objects and understand how to break down the overall form into smaller shapes contained within.

In this lesson, students will learn how to break down a shape to create a vibrant painting in the style of Hannah Webb. Richeson Hardboard Flat Panels provide the perfect surface for Liquitex Basics Acrylics, resulting in a flat, smooth finish.

GRADES 5-12

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

Preparation

1. Choose a reference image to work from. The image should be clear and have little visual distraction.
2. Prime the hardboard with a thin layer of Liquitex Basics Acrylic Matte Gel Medium, which provides a smoother finish than standard gesso. The medium can be thinned slightly with water, but ideally use no more than one-part water to ten-parts medium. The medium will act much like acrylic gesso, preventing the paint from soaking into the panel and providing better adhesion.



Materials (required)

Liquitex Basics Acrylic Paints, Asst. colors and sizes (00717-) share at least 7 colors across class

Richeson Hardboard Flat Panels, 6" x 6", 1/8" (14945-1006); need one per student

Liquitex Basics Acrylic Matte Gel Medium, 8.5 oz, (00775-2105); need four

Liquitex Basics Plastic Mixing Knives, Set of 72, (02819-1001)

Liquitex Basics Brushes, Round, Size 4, Long Handle (09124-1004); one per student

Liquitex Basics Brushes, Bright, Size 10, Long Handle (09128-1010); one per student

Liquitex Basics Brushes, Flat, Size 8, Long Handle (09125-1008); one per student

Winsor & Newton Tear-Off Palette Pad, 9" x 12", 50 sheets (03539-1023); share one across class

Container for water

Optional Materials

Paint Puck Brush Cleaner, Asst. colors (03362-)



Process

1. Using the reference image as a guide, sketch the overall shape of the object directly onto the unprimed panel using a round brush and Liquitex Basics Acrylic Paint thinned with water. Using a reference image does not mean making a copy of the image, but rather allows students to study it in order to accurately represent the object. Our minds are great at playing tricks on us. Even if you think you know what an object looks like, you probably don't really—that's where a reference image helps!
2. Loosely sketch in contour lines and delineations within the object. Keep in mind that this is only a guide for the painting. Focus on the big shapes. There shouldn't be more than six; the overall main shape, three medium-sized shapes, and two small shapes. One line can note the volume of the object, while the others show large areas of light or dark. It can be tempting to think of this as a kind of posterization, but that can actually hinder one from really looking at the reference image and faithfully breaking down areas of color and tone.
3. Use a flat brush to fill in the main color. The paint can be thinned with water, but do not exceed a ratio of one-part water to ten-parts paint. The thinned paint should be smooth and well mixed, with the consistency of melted butter. If the paint is too thin, it will appear translucent when applied.
4. Choose a contrasting or complementary color to show smaller shapes within.
5. Choose a color to apply as the background color. Again, this can be complementary, analogous, or contrasting.
6. Use all of the previously chosen colors, including the background color, to add final highlights that render and unify the whole image.

Created in collaboration with Liquitex Brand Partner, Hannah Webb
To see more of Hannah's work visit: <https://www.theobanoth.com/>

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.

Responding

Anchor Standard 8: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Step 1: Sketch the basic shape of the object directly onto the hardboard.



Step 2: Use a flat brush to fill in the main color.



Step 3: Choose an analogous color to paint to paint highlights.



Step 4: Choose a complementary color to apply to the background.