

Marbleized Paper

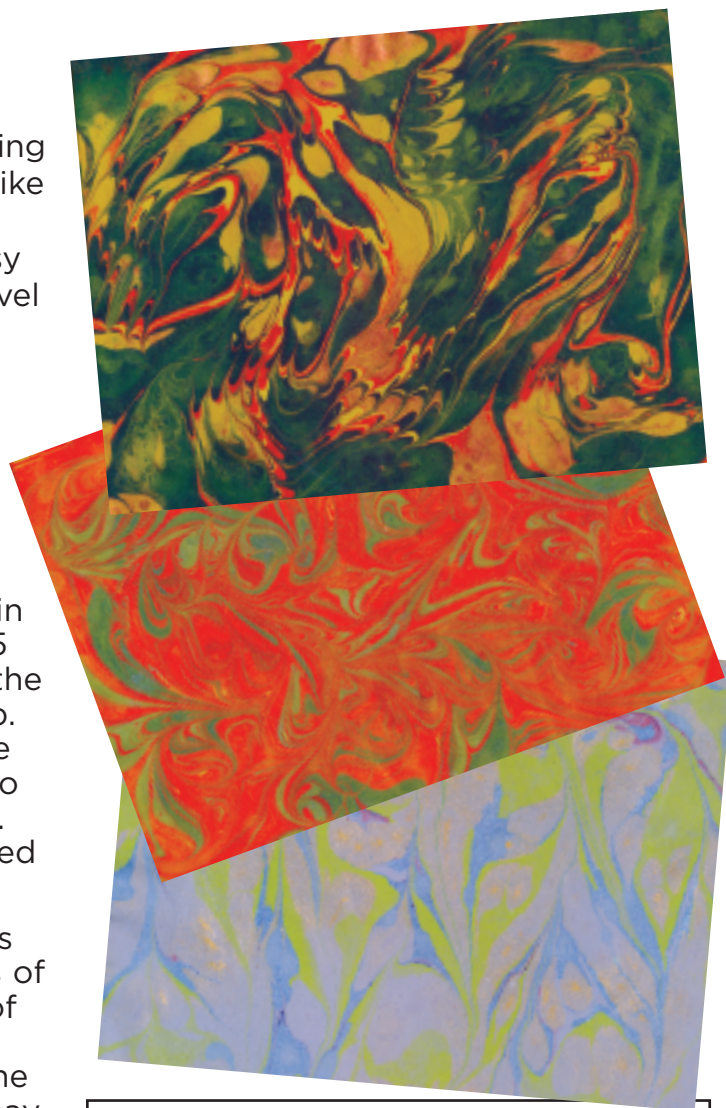
(art + history; art + literature)

Marbleizing (or marbling) is a method of decorating paper that dates back to eighth century Japan. Like all fine crafts, marbleizing requires skill, patience and imagination. However, by following these easy steps, even young students can achieve a high level of success, and teachers will be amazed at the beautiful results — without the use of chemicals or special materials!

Grade Levels K-12

Process

1. **Make the “Size”.** Mix the entire contents of Elmer’s Art Paste with 4 quarts of cold water in the water tray. Stir until dissolved. Let stand 15 minutes and stir again. The substance will be the consistency of gelatin that is starting to set up. Smooth out lumps as much as possible. A wire whisk may be used, but avoid whipping air into the paste because air bubbles are undesirable. From here on, the paste solution will be referred to as the “size”.
2. **Test the paint consistency.** Pour two spoonfuls of paint into a mixing cup. Add small amounts of water and stir until it drips easily off the end of the spoon but does not run too quickly. Traditionally, the paint would be dripped off the end of a soft hair brush, but a plastic spoon may be easier for young students to control.
3. **Test the paint’s reaction to the “size”.** Spoon some of the size into a bowl so that it’s about an inch deep. Drip some paint into the size. If it sinks straight to the bottom of the bowl, the paint is too thick and needs to be thinned with water. If the paint spreads out rapidly on the surface and looks weak and watery, it’s too thin and needs more paint added. It’s better to err on the side of too thin than too thick because if the paint is too thick, it will just sink and be wasted. The objective is to get the paint to float on top of the size. Some paint will always sink, but don’t worry about that. Only the paint on the surface of the size will be picked up by the paper.
4. **Choose a color of paper.** The paper color will show wherever there is no paint on the surface of the size, therefore it is an important part of the overall color scheme. Important: heavy groundwood construction paper works best for this method of marbleizing. Colored groundwood paper (not white, not sulfite paper) contains alum which is necessary to draw the color into the paper. Any other paper must be



Materials

Elmer’s® Art Paste (24003-1003), 2-oz package, need one package per four students

Riverside Groundwood Construction Paper (11400-0039), pkg of 50, 9" x 12" assorted colors, need at least one sheet per student

Blickrylic Student Acrylics (00711-) assorted colors, need at least three pints per class

Mixing spoon, mixing cups, plastic spoons or brushes, sticks, combs

Water Tray, at least 2" wider and longer than the size of paper used and large enough to contain more than 4 quarts of water

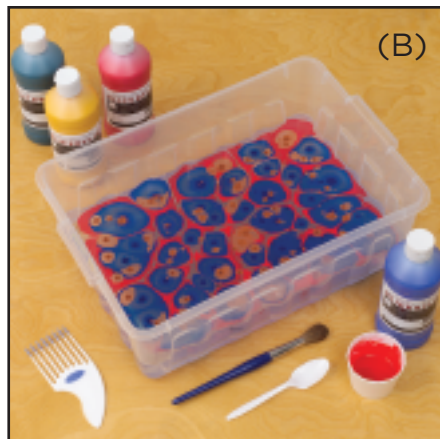
Newspapers and blotting papers

Paper towels and cardboard strips

Process, continued

treated with an alum solution first.

- 5. Prepare the paint.** Choose two or more colors of paint to coordinate with the paper color. Mix the colors in the mixing cups until the right consistency is obtained.
- 6. Drop the paint onto the size.** (B) Use spoons or brushes to drop pools of paint onto the size either randomly or in specific patterns. (For beginners, the results are unpredictable, so avoid too much planning at first.)
- 7. Swirl the paint.** (C) This is the fun part! Take the handle end of a brush (or an old pencil, stick, etc.) and swirl the colors together on the size to form a one-of-a-kind design! A wide-tooth comb makes an exciting pattern, too. You can custom make a comb by taping straight pins to a piece of cardboard at measured intervals.
- 8. Lay the paper on the paint.** Hold the paper by the ends, let the middle touch the surface first, and let the ends drop. Touch the edges of the paper lightly so that all parts of the paper make contact with the color. Let soak for a few seconds until you see the color start to bleed through. Pick up a corner of the paper and pull it out of the tray and quickly lay it, paint side up, on newspapers to contain the mess.
- 9. Remove the size.** Blot the paper with paper towels to remove the size. Put the paper in the sink and lightly rinse the size off the paper. The pattern will “magically” appear. Be careful not to handle the paper too much or rinse so vigorously that too much of the color comes off or the paper is damaged.
- 10. Clean the size for the next sheet.** Use paper towels or napkins and skim the surface of the size, pulling the color residue to one end of the tray; lift out and discard. Strips of cardboard may also be used. The size is usable for numerous prints and may be covered and stored in the refrigerator. A film may form on the surface which will need to be skimmed off.
- 11. Enjoy the finished papers.** Marbleized papers are used for book covers or liners, collages, photo backgrounds, or whatever you choose!



National Standards

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

- K-4** Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories
- 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

