

In the Cosmic Flow

Drip, tilt, pour, and shift to make a poured paint planet that would make Jackson Pollock proud!

(art + science)

What do the planets in our solar system really look like up close? You'd either need a high-powered telescope or photographs from these telescopes to find out! Another wonderful resource for "seeing" our planets up close can be found at the gallery of planetary images at nasa.gov.

Humankind has been mesmerized by "other" planets for millennia. Most of that time was spent speculating about what the distant globes might look like. In recent years, however, actual images of our neighbors are available to us, although they're still not overly clear. Photographs by NASA show the blues of Jupiter with its swirling mix of colors on the southern hemisphere, as well as the varied red spots on the planet. Also noteworthy are the Jovian cloud tops, the winter view of a gullied crater, or the various hues in the slope of a crater wall.

This project is well-suited for the dramatic effects of drip painting, a form of abstract art called action painting. Artists in the 1940s and 1950s employed



various methods of dripped paint in their work. Jackson Pollock is the most famous of these artists and is known for his huge canvases, which he worked on while they were on the floor of his studio. Pollock

Materials (required)

- Blick Stoneware Clay, 50 lb (30517-1050); 1-2 lbs per student
- Blick Unprimed Cotton Canvas By the Yard (07377-); use to cover tables
- Rolling Pin, Wooden, 8" (30345-1008); share five across class
- Pro Needle Tool (34920-1063); share five across class
- Styrofoam Blocks and Shapes, Ball, 4" Dia, package of 2 (60928-1020); share 5 packages across class
- Hygloss Craft Trays, styrofoam, package of 25, 9' x 11" (61726-1010); one per student
- Loew Cornell Storage Cups, package of 8, 2" (04824-1002); share at least one set across class

- Liquitex Pouring Medium, 8 oz (02001-1002); share one across class
- Spoons for pouring
- Felted or fabric-covered ball
- Suggested Paints:

- Blick Liquid Watercolors (00369-)
- Sargent Art Acrylic Mediums, Pearlex Mixing Medium (00733-1006)
- Sargent Glitter Glaze (00704-)
- Sargent Art Liquid Metal Acrylics (00730-)
- Golden High Flow Acrylics (01650-)
- Blickrylic Student Acrylics (00711-)

Materials (optional)

- Walnut Hollow Birch Value Plaques, Circle, 6" Dia (60451-1050); one per student
- Blick Artists' Acrylic Modeling Paste (00623-)
- Golden Crackle Paste (00681-)
- Paint Pipettes (06972-)
- Richeson Plastic Painting Knives (03105-)
- Upcycled plate or bowl
- CD or 7-inch 45 rpm vinyl record



continued

dripped paint from large brushes and also buckets while he moved energetically above his canvas. Max Ernst used dripped paint by swinging a bucket that he had punctured holes through over his canvases.

Each student can choose to model the craters of the moon, the banding of Jupiter, the cold, desert-like surface of Mars, or the icy surface of Neptune. We still don't know the true colors of most of our planets, so an educated guess is often the best we can do based on other known factors such as temperature or atmosphere. The round "canvas" can be turned in various ways to influence the flow of the paint. Hills, valleys, and craters can be added with modeling paste to allow even more control as the paint drips over the bumpy surface. Create a poured paint galaxy for the classroom!

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



Preparation

1. Look at images of planets at Solarsystem.nasa.gov.
2. Mix up small containers of various pouring paints.

Process

1. Begin by deciding what planet to represent in a drip painting. After making a choice, choose a "canvas" to use. For this lesson plan, we'll make a clay base for our planet, but a round birch panel, an "up-cycled" plate or bowl, or a CD or old 7-inch 45 rpm vinyl record (apply tape to cover the center hole) all make good foundations for a poured planet painting. Younger students might also

use a pre-made canvas. If not working with clay, proceed to step 3.

2. To make the clay disc, evenly roll out about a pound of stoneware clay onto a canvas-covered work surface. Roll a slab about 1/2" thick. Cut a 5"Dia circle out of the clay using a needle tool. Slump the circle of clay onto a round surface such as a fabric or felted ball, tennis ball, or styrofoam ball. After coaxing the clay into a half sphere, carefully remove it from the ball and allow to dry completely on a board. Bisque fire to cone 04.
3. If an uneven surface and/or craters are desired, apply either light modeling paste, crackle paste, or a combination of the two onto the round surface using a palette knife. Allow to dry.
4. Mix various combinations of pouring paints in small containers. Mix 1 teaspoon pouring medium with a bit of water and add paints or other mediums to create a fluid, flowing consistency. Liquid watercolors will require less water in the mix than acrylics. Experiment by adding watercolors, acrylic paints, specialty paints such as metallics, mediums such as pearlescent mixing medium, or glitter glaze. Refill as needed.



Step 1: Make a disc shape out of a slab of clay for the base for the "planet." Bisque fire,



Step 2: Add craters and texture using modeling or crackle paste if desired.



Step 3: Using a spoon or pipette, pour various paints and mediums onto the disc to mimic a planet. Tilt, turn, and shake to manipulate the flow of paint.

5. Place the round “canvas” onto a foam tray. Pour small amounts of the paint mixtures onto the circular “canvas” using a spoon or a pipette. Now, tilt the tray or the canvas to create paint movement. Use the spoon or pipette to move the paint into desired areas. Add more paint in various colors when needed. Remove planet from the tray and allow to dry. Paint trays can be used many times. And if the poured painting doesn’t come out quite right, rinse or let dry and pour again!

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

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

Responding

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

