

“Decalcomania” Glue Paint Symmetry Prints

A Surrealist technique
brought to new life with a new medium!

Surrealism took root in the mid-1920s in European art and literature. It was a movement characterized by fantastic images and conflicting associations that were intended to illustrate unconscious thoughts and dreams. Seeking to free their imaginations as much as possible, Surrealists would invent games and techniques for inspiration and to create a starting point for finished works. The collaborative game of “Exquisite Corpse” and techniques such as frottage (pencil rubbings) and automatic drawing played important parts in inspiring Surrealist artists.

“Decalcomania” was a technique that artists such as Óscar Domínguez and Max Ernst used to create impromptu paintings controlled largely by chance. They would apply paint to a smooth surface (such as glass) and either transfer it by pressing it onto a canvas or by placing a piece of paper or foil over it and lifting. Much like a Rorschach Ink-Blot test or looking for familiarity in cloud shapes, they would search for hidden imagery in the random, abstract patterns and develop it into a finished painting.

To experience Decalcomania in a colorful, tidy, and highly interactive process, students use a finger painting-style of application. Glue paint — basic white glue tinted with any shade of watercolor — dries with a beautiful transparency that is enhanced when applied to a clear sheet. When the sheet is folded, the colors can be blended and moved about the page without actually touching it. Open it, allow it to dry, and look for the hidden images and contour lines that will fuel the imagination of a young surrealist!

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

Preparation

1. Make glue paint by adding Liquid Watercolor to small glue bottles. Squeeze about a teaspoon of paint directly into an open glue bottle. Put the lid on it and shake. Depending upon the brand of glue used, it may blend readily or it may take hours for the color to saturate. Turning the bottle upside down occasionally or stirring the glue with a craft stick will help it blend.

Process

1. Fold a piece of Dura-Lar film in half and reopen it. Squeeze multiple colors of glue paint randomly on one side. Keep the glue close to the center of the page and the fold, away from the edges. The more glue that is used, the stronger the color will be.



Materials

Graphix® Dura-Lar™ Clear, 25-sheet pad, 9" x 12", .003" (55506-1303); share one across class

Elmer's® Glue-All, 4-oz bottles (23887-1004); share 10-12 across class

Blick® Liquid Watercolor, 4-oz assorted colors, recommend a minimum selection of:
Blue (00369-5004)
Yellow (00369-4004)
Magenta (00369-3044)

Sharpie® Ultra-Fine Point Markers, set of 24 colors (21315-0249); share two sets among class

Pacon® Storybook 2-Ply Tag Board, White, 9" x 12", package of 100 sheets (13111-1003); need one sheet per student

Optional Materials

Scotch® #924 Transfer Tape, 1/2" x 36-yd roll (23020-0050)



Step 1: Add Liquid Watercolor to white glue to create colors.



Step 2: Squeeze the colors on one side of a folded sheet of transparent film.



Step 3: Fold and move paint around with fingers. Open and view print. Allow to dry or press onto paper or board first.

Process, continued

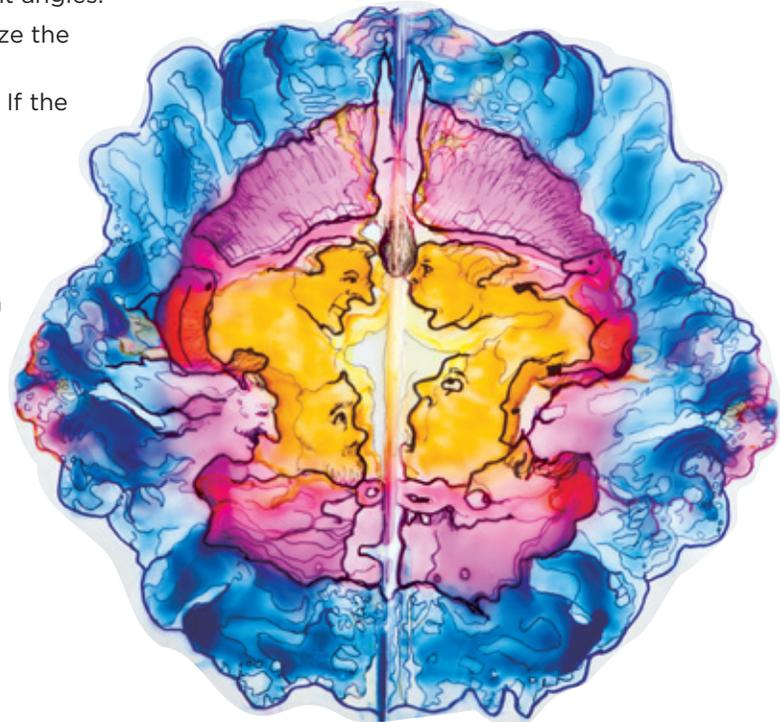
2. Fold Dura-Lar back over. With fingers or a rounded tool, press down on the glue to spread it and move it until the colors touch and blend. Extra pressure can move paint away completely and create open areas.
3. Open the fold and view the print. Allow to dry by either:
 - (A) Set the print aside to dry overnight. The glue patterns will have more definition this way. Or,
 - (B) While wet, press the print glue-side-down onto a heavy sheet of paper or board. Allow the glue to dry overnight. The paper will most likely curl. Once dry, it can be flattened again.
 Colors will become transparent as they dry and some bubbles may also form — leave them in for more interesting shapes and contrast.
4. Discuss the definition of a contour line — a line that defines the edges of a form — an outline.
5. Study the pattern that was formed. Use fine point permanent markers to define the contours. If an edge is found that seems to define a recognizable shape, develop it so that it becomes an obvious image. It may be helpful to turn the print and look at it from different angles. Use a variety of marker colors. Use darker colors to emphasize the most defined images.
6. When the contours are finished, trim the edges of the paper. If the print is unmounted, glue or tape it to a piece of white board



Step 4: Look for contour lines and images within the print. Develop these with a fine-line permanent marker.

Options

- If the print was pressed to paper or board while wet, the film may be pulled away and reused. The glue will remain on the paper.



National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #3 —Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.

K-4 Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art

5-8 Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks

9-12 Students reflect on how artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture

Content Standard #5 — Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

K-4 Students describe how people's experiences influence the development of specific artworks

5-8 Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry and reflect upon these effects in their own work

9-12 Students identify intentions of those creating artworks, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works

