

Mystical Window Resists

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY
DESIGNED BY MONA
EDUCATORS



Example by MoNA Educator

Description

Students will create a watercolor resist painting inspired by the work of Mark Tobey. This activity will teach them about the art of the "Mystics" in Skagit Valley and some basic color theory.

Relevant Vocabulary

- ✓ Mystic/mystical
- ✓ Watercolor resist
 - ✓ Color Wheel
 - ✓ Primary colors
 - ✓ Secondary colors

Materials

- White oil pastels
- Thick white paper
- Masking tape (scissors optional, or kids can rip)
- Liquid watercolor paints in the primary colors
- Brushes
- Planning paper
- Pencils
- Examples of Mark Tobey's "white writing" and color wheel (included at the end of this lesson)
- Optional: Paint smocks and coverings for the tables

Instructions

1) Start by taking a look at the **color wheel** and see what students notice and already know. This is a good time to introduce the concept of using the primary colors (yellow, red, blue) to mix the secondary colors (green, orange, purple).

3) Show learners examples of Mark Tobey's **white writing** and lead a discussion about what they notice. You may wish to use **VTS** (Visual Thinking Strategies) to explore the image included at the end of this lesson.

- VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS are included at the end of this lesson.

4) Share the big idea: **Mark Tobey** was one of the local artists sometimes called the "Mystics." These artists were interested in what was special, mysterious, magical or beyond understanding in this area. You can use the biography information on the next page to share more about Tobey's life and work.

5) Ask students: What is the most magical/mystical thing you might see out of your window? Give learners scratch paper and ask them to create a **rough sketch** using pencil of their magical/mystical idea.

6) On their final paper, have them create their window frame using tape.

7) Before painting they can draw any details using white oil pastel.

8) They will then mix colors using the three primary colors in their palettes and use them to paint on top of the tape and white oil pastel.

Students can use the scratch paper to test their colors.

9) Students can pull off the tape once the pieces have dried at home or in their classroom.

About the Artist: Mark Tobey

Mark Tobey (1890-1976) was an American artist who is known for his abstract paintings. He was inspired by Asian calligraphy and developed his own style which has been named "white writing," where light-colored strokes are brushed over a background. Tobey was the founder of the Northwest School, an art movement that developed in the Seattle area in the 1930s.



Mark Tobey *White Writing*, 1959, Gouache on buff paper, Image Source: artnet

Photo of Mark Tobey
Image Source: moellerfineart.com



Kurt Wyss, *Mark Tobey in seinem Atelier in Basel*, 1970, Gelatin Silver Print, 10.4 x 11.5 in. (26.3 x 29.1 cm)



Reflection

Ask Students:

- What worked? What didn't work?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What did you learn about color mixing?
- What does mystical mean to you?

Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards**

Pre-K: VA:Cr2.1.PK (Use a variety of art-making tools)

Kindergarten: VA:Cr1.1.K (Engage in exploration and imaginative play with materials)

1st Grade: VA:Cr1.2.1 (Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art)

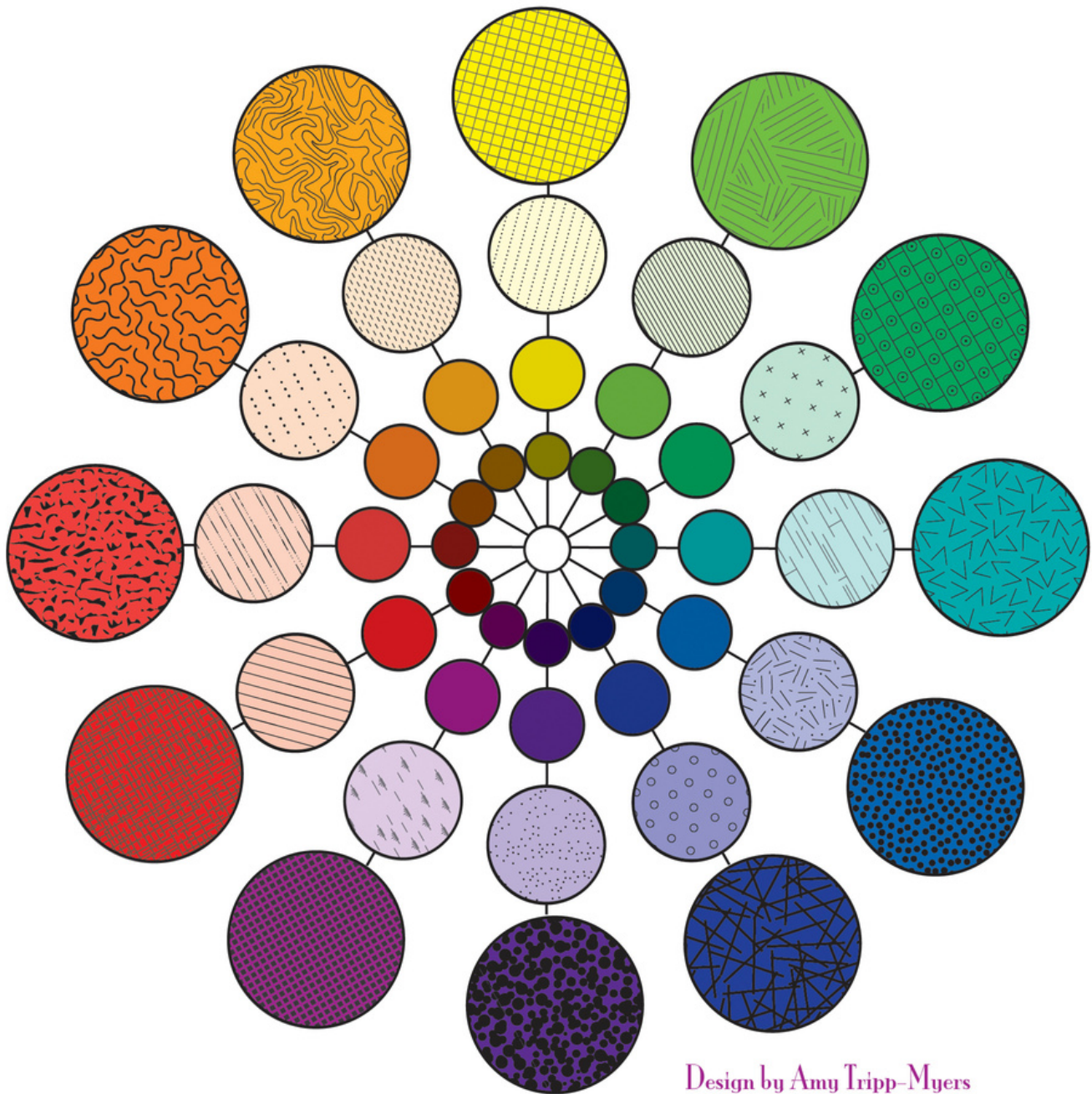
2nd Grade: VA:Cr2.1.2 (Experiment with various materials and tools to explore personal interests in a work of art or design)

3rd Grade: VA:Cr1.1.3 (Elaborate on an imaginative idea)

4th Grade: VA:Cr2.1.4 (Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches)

5th Grade: VA:Cr1.1.5 (Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making)

COLOR WHEEL



WHITE WRITING



Mark Tobey's Sharp Field, 1960

Photographer: Tom Barratt, courtesy Pace Gallery © 2018 Mark Tobey/Seattle Art Museum, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Image source: Bloomberg.com

Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a researched-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

What's going on in this picture?
What do you see that makes you say that...?
What more can you find?

Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to VTS in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: <https://www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators>