

Abstract Oil Collages

Essential Question	How does experimentation with our materials help enhance our experience and understanding of art?
Grade	4th
Time	50 minutes
Art Concepts	Abstract, collage, patterns, geometric shapes, organic shapes, composition, positive/negative space, arrangements
Materials	White paper, cardboard, scissors, glue, vegetable oil, small mixing bowls, food coloring, tray or tub for water, mixing spoon
Artworks in Focus	<u>Untitled, 2004 by Lecia Dole-Recio</u> <u>Walking I, 1998 by Ginny Bishton</u>
Talking about Art	<p>Compare and contrast <i>Walking I</i> (1998) by Ginny Bishton with <i>Untitled</i> (2004) by Lecia Dole-Recio. Can you find any similarities between the two works of art?</p> <p>How might you describe these works of art to someone who hasn't seen them? What do you notice about the shapes and colors and patterns?</p> <p>Geometric shapes include triangles, circles, and squares. Organic shapes are things you see in nature, such as leaves, flowers, and clouds. Do you see geometric shapes, organic shapes, or both in these two artworks?</p> <p>In works of art like this, you can talk about the areas of shapes and colors, the positive space. Or you can look closely at the areas around the shapes and colors, the negative space. Negative space is the empty space in a work of art that helps our eye travel through the picture. If the lines, shapes, and colors in these artworks were to continue beyond the picture's edge, where do you imagine they would travel?</p>

Lecia Dole-Recio and Ginny Bishton are Los Angeles–based artists who experiment with their mediums and materials to make **abstract** works of art. Abstract art is art that is not meant to represent anything from real life, yet it often captures the essence, or feeling, of a time, place, or memory. Both of these artworks are examples of **collage**, which is a technique that involves cutting and overlapping scraps of paper or other materials to form a two-dimensional work of art.

First, let’s look closely at Bishton’s *Walking I*. The artist carries a camera through her neighborhood and records her steps by taking photos pointed toward the ground as she walks. Then, she cuts them out into tiny circles and pieces them together into map-like **compositions**, or **arrangements**, that reflect her experience. Imagine taking a walk through your neighborhood. Picture the turns you would take and the colors you would see blurring by. Art often expresses movement by guiding our eye from one point to another, like a road on a map. If you were to make a collage of your neighborhood, what shapes, colors, or patterns would you use?

Now, let’s take a closer look at Dole-Recio’s *Untitled*. Here, the artist experiments with different materials in her collages, including paint, pastel, cardboard, and scraps of recycled paper that she saves from previous artworks. She cuts up her paper scraps into geometric shapes and layers them over the surface, providing a sense of depth and movement. Think about an old drawing you’ve made that maybe you threw away or tucked away on a shelf somewhere. What if you could give that drawing new life by cutting it into shapes, dripping paint on it, or doing another drawing on top of it? By adding more layers over time, art can evolve and transform with our experiences and surroundings.

Making Art

For this activity, we are going to make paintings using common household materials, transforming them into abstract collages.

First, gather together your materials. Ask an adult for permission to use these materials, as well as for their assistance with the art-making process.

You will need:

A plastic, metal, or glass container to fill with water—this can be a square or rectangular plastic tub, a deep baking pan, or a baking sheet.

A few small mixing bowls

A small spoon or other stirring device

White pieces of paper or index cards (if your container is smaller than your white pieces of paper, cut your paper into smaller sections so they can fit inside)

Food coloring

Vegetable oil

Glue

Scissors

A piece of paper or cardboard to be the surface of your collage

1. Pour water into the tray to reach about one-inch deep. Make sure there is some room between the water's surface and the top of the tray.
2. Pour a small amount (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each) of oil and food coloring into your mixing bowl. You will notice they do not want to mix together! With your mixing spoon, mix the oil and food coloring together by vigorously stirring. Once it looks as mixed as it can be, take spoonfuls of the mixture and pour it onto the surface of the water. Notice how it pools in circles on the water's surface. Use the edge of the spoon to quickly drag and twist the floating oil over the surface to make interesting twists and turns.
3. Gently place the white paper surface of your cardboard onto the top of the oiled water. Lift to reveal an abstract painting! Continue this process with more pieces of paper, using different colors for different results.

4. Let these oil paintings dry. Grab your paper or cardboard surface. Cut or rip your abstract paintings into unique shapes by following the lines and patterns made by the oil-and-color mixture. Arrange and overlap these into an imaginative composition. When you are satisfied with your arrangement, glue down all the pieces. To help keep the edges of your shapes from curling as they dry, take some scrap paper to place over your collage to protect it. Then, place a book over the top of that as a weight to help flatten your shapes into your paper or cardboard surface and seal it all together.
5. Once the glue is dry, admire your abstract collage!

Reflection

In what ways did being experimental with your materials help shape your experience and how you feel about your artwork?

Science Extension: What did you notice about how the oil, food coloring, and water reacted to one another? Now that you've seen that in action, see if you can answer the question: Does oil sink or float?

Curriculum Connections California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts
4.VA:Cr4.1: Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches. 4.VA:Re4.1: Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages

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