

Mayor's Book Club Activity for February with the Gibbes Museum of Art

Painting Without a Brush

Inspired by Jonathan Green's illustrations in *The Freedom Ship of Robert Smalls*, let's experiment with paint and materials we find around the house! Jonathan Green's illustrations use many different colors that he lays on top of one another, like fun dots. How can we get those dots in our artwork?

Materials needed:

Paper (heavier paper like cardstock is best, but a cereal box or other paper box would work)

Paint (tempera or acrylic, NOT watercolor, paint needs to be "gloopy")

Paper towels

Marshmallows (regular, mini, or both)

Cotton swabs



This is *Corene* by Jonathan Green, a painting in the permanent collection at the Gibbes. See how he uses lots of different colors in the grass and trees, and even in her dress and clouds. This reminds me a lot of the illustrations in *The Freedom Ship of Robert Smalls*. Here's a fun experiment to do with things you find around your house.

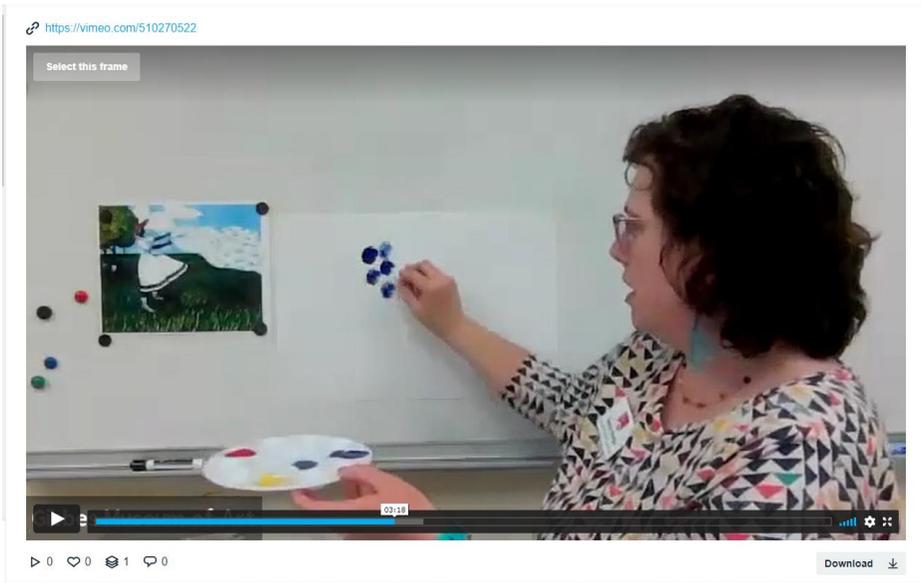
Directions:

Tip: Let the marshmallows dry out a bit before using. If using a brand new bag, leave a few out overnight.

1. Let's try painting with a marshmallow first. Dip one end of the marshmallow in the paint, but not too heavy. Then, let's make some dots on our paper. To get dots and not strokes, press the marshmallow up and down on the paper, not side to side like you would a paint brush.



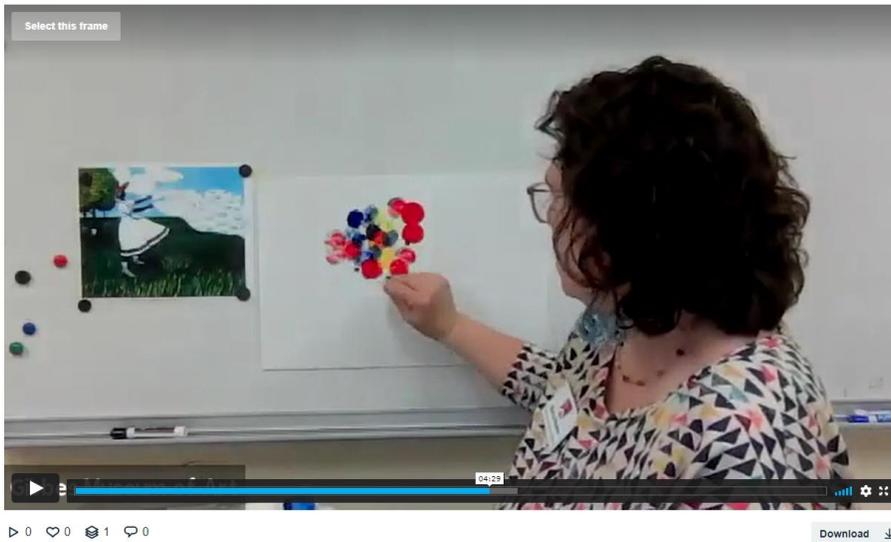
2. What happens as you make the dots? The first dots are darker and have more paint, and they get lighter as you use up the paint on the marshmallow.



3. Play with a few different colors, using a new marshmallow for each color so you don't get too much mixing. But what happens when you layer one color dot over another?

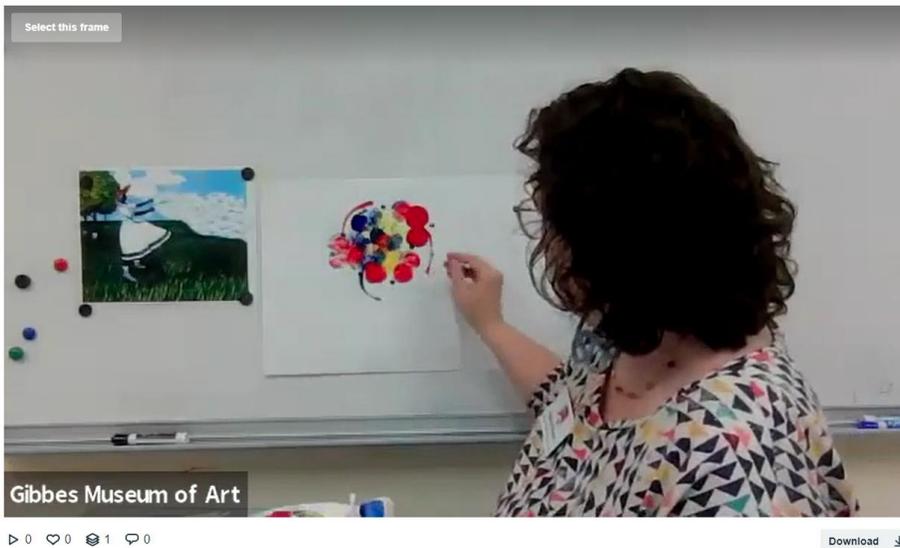
4. Let's play with a cotton swab now. How do these dots look different? Just as with the marshmallow, press the cotton swab up and down to get dots. Not side to side.

<https://vimeo.com/510270522>



5. What would happen if we treated a cotton swap like a paint brush and moved it side to side? How would those lines look different than the dots?

<https://vimeo.com/510270522>



6. What other materials could you use to experiment with? What shape would your finger make? What about a balled-up paper towel? Or some dry pasta? Or a leaf? Have fun experimenting, but make sure you have permission from an adult before you start painting.