



Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts  
E.L. Wiegand Gallery

160 West Liberty Street, Reno, Nevada, 89501  
775.329.3333 | [nevadaart.org](http://nevadaart.org)

NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART

## NV STEAM CONFERENCE

### ACTION PAINTING | ART LAB

#### GRADE: 2

GRADE: 2 (written for Grade 2 but can easily be adapted for older or younger students)

#### STANDARDS:

**ART:** VA:Cr2.1.5a Experiment and develop skills in multiple art making techniques and approaches through practice.

**SCIENCE:** Disciplinary core ideas: PS2.A: Forces and Motion. Pushing or pulling on an object can change the speed or direction of its motion and can start or stop it.

#### OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to develop skills in multiple art making techniques through an exploration of forces and motion.

#### VOCABULARY:

**Abstract Expressionism:** A school of painting that flourished after World War II until the early 1960s, characterized by the view that art is nonrepresentational and chiefly improvisational.

**Composition:** The organization and bringing together of constituent visual elements (lines, shapes, colors, textures, forms, and space) to collectively create a painting or photograph.

**Visual Movement:** when forms, values, patterns, lines, shapes, or colors seem to create action.



**MATERIALS:**

- Large sheets of paper or newsprint
- Washable acrylic paint in at least two contrasting colors
- Liquid Watercolors in a variety of colors
- Craft pom poms
- Bowls (to hold water and watercolor paint)
- Large robot arena (3 x 5 feet)
- Sphero
- Sphero nubby cover
- Smart phone or tablet with Sphero App downloaded (<https://edu.sphero.com/d>)
- Marbles or Ball Bearings
- Large trays or baking sheets
- Pencils
- Wet Wipes
- Two drop cloths
- Three station wash set-up for cleaning supplies
- Poster or printouts of a Joan Mitchell and a Jackson Pollock painting
- Action Painters matching game

**TIME:** 2 Hours

**Set Up:**

In a classroom setting this project would be set up in three stations. Each station will have 20 minutes to experiment with the different techniques.

Each group of students will need:

## Station 1:

Large sheets of paper or newsprint  
Liquid Watercolors  
Bowls  
Craft pom poms  
Stool or chair (optional)  
Wet Wipes

## Station 2:

Marbles or ball bearings

4 large trays or baking sheets

Large sheets of paper or newsprint

Washable acrylic paint in at least two contrasting colors

Wet wipes

## Station 3:

Robot arena

Large sheets of paper

Washable acrylic paint in at least two contrasting colors

Sphero

Nubby Cover for Sphero

Smart phone or tablet with Sphero App downloaded

Wet wipes

**LESSON:****ENGAGEMENT:**

Have the students observe the condition of the room and the organized supplies. Tell them that it is their job to return the room to this condition at the end of the lesson.

Have the students do a close looking exercise and observe the Abstract Expressionist posters hanging in the front of the room. (Or refer each group to handouts of the prints.) Encourage the students to compare and contrast the works. Have the students share with a neighbor what they see in the posters. Give them a minute or two to discuss and then have them share with the larger group. What could the artist be trying to tell us? How are the shapes and lines in one piece different from the other? What is the mood of each piece? When the students have finished discussing, tell the students the names of the artists and the titles of the pieces. Does knowing the title change how you see the work? Why?

**EXPLORATION:**

Tell the students they will be designing their own Abstract Expressionist pieces. Art, especially Abstract Expressionist art tells a story about motion. By looking

at the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists you are able to see how the artist was moving and creating the composition.

Review the images in the PowerPoint or play the Action Painters matching game. Pass out one set of cards to each group. There are four pairs of painters and paintings. Have the students work together to match the movement of each work of art to the artists' motion. Give them a few moments to do this. Call the groups together for a discussion. Prompt the students to clean up the game and collect the deck.

Tell the students they will be experimenting with three different techniques to create compositions similar to those created by the Abstract Expressionists. Have the students look at the supplies at each station and hypothesize how they could be used to create the work.

How will forces and motion help create an artwork?  
What is powering the force or creating the motion?  
How does technology impact this artmaking practice?  
How does Abstract Expressionism compare to the physics of using robots?  
Why are we using robots?  
What if we took away the role of the artist?

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Station One: lay out a large piece of paper on the ground. Pass out 3-5 small bowls and add water and liquid watercolor to each bowl. Set the bowls around the paper on the ground. Dip the craft pom poms in the watercolor bowls and then drop them from varying heights around the paper. If a stool or chair is being provided carefully climb on top and experiment with dropping the pom poms from even greater heights. Continue until the composition feels complete. As a group work together to title the piece and sign the work where space allows.



Station Two will need to cut a sheet of paper to fit inside large trays or sheet pans. Put paint into paper plates. Roll the marbles in paint and place them on the paper in the tray. Carefully tilt the tray back and forth to create a composition. Continue until the composition feels complete. As a group work together to title the pieces and sign the works where space allows.



Station three will use the Sphero with the nubby cover to program and paint. First they will need to lay out a large piece of paper in an area with sufficient room and a smooth surface. Instruct the Sphero groups to put small squirts of paint in various spots around their paper. Connect the Sphero and instruct the Sphero to begin creating a composition of your paper by crossing over the piles of paint. Each member of the group can guide their Sphero, adding to the composition.



Can you recreate how the artist would be moving if they were using their bodies to create this artwork? Continue until the composition feels complete. As a group work together to title the piece and sign the work where space allows.

#### **ELABORATION:**

When they have completed the first project have the students clean the supplies and switch with another group. Each new group will then experiment with the new technique. Ask them how they think the techniques will differ?

#### **EVALUATION:**

Once their compositions are complete, have the students return all of the art supplies to the box and clean up the room. All students should assist in cleaning up their workspace including cleaning up any

splattered paint that may have escaped onto the work areas.

When the room has been cleaned up, have the students share their compositions. Each group may lay out the different compositions they have made for a group discussion. Have the student's share how each technique worked and which they felt was the most successful. Do any of them feel like the work of the Abstract Expressionists? Can you see how the artist was moving to make any of these artworks? Is anything lost by removing the artist from physically touching the artwork? Have them share their titles.

When the room is clean, the supplies are put away and stools are pushed in, students may be dismissed. Leave the works out to dry until they can be rolled up and sent home.



#### **EXTENSION:**

If time allows, have smaller groups merge into larger groups and experiment with using multiple techniques on the same composition.

#### **ART HISTORY CONNECTIONS:**

Joan Mitchell, *City Landscape*, 1955

Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950