

Mondays with MoMA



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Step 1 Look closely

1. What are some action words you can use to describe this artwork?
2. Use your finger to trace lines or shapes in the artwork that catch your eye. How would you describe the movements your finger makes?
3. How do you think the artist made these marks using paint?

Step 2 Learn more

This painting by Janet Sobel is titled *Milky Way*. Sobel had no formal artistic training and began experimenting with paint when she was forty-five years old. She used any materials she could find as surfaces for her painting, such as cardboard or mail—she even painted over her grandchild's childhood drawings. According to historians and family members, her son Sol had been frustrated with his own artistic development and gave his supplies to her.

According to her son, "She would prepare a ground, which would [suggest some 'idea' for her]. She would pour the paint, tip the canvas, and blow the wet [paint]." She used fast-drying enamel paints to achieve a jewel-like, marbled surface. Sobel used an [automatic](#) painting technique, allowing her subconscious to direct her process. She said, "I only paint what I feel."

Step 3 Activity: Blow painting

Materials: heavy paper, water, paint, straw, dropper or spoon, little cups

1. Mix a small amount of paint and water in individual containers. If using paints like tempera or acrylic, be sure the paint has a thin and pourable consistency.
2. Place your piece of heavy paper on a tray or a covered surface.
3. Using a dropper or spoon, transfer a small amount of paint from one of the containers onto your paper.
4. Place the straw near the drop of paint and blow to move the paint around. You can also tip the paper to let the paint travel along the surface. (Optional: You can replace a straw with a thinly rolled-up piece of paper.)
5. Repeat the process using different colors.

Step 4 Share!

Share your blow painting with a friend or classmate, or you can email a photo of it to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org.



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Image: Janet Sobel. *Milky Way*. 1945. Enamel on canvas. Gift of the artist's family