

Make Your Own Marbled Paper

Overview

Paper marbling is a very old art form, dating at least as far back as 14th-century China. Marbled paper can have many different decorative purposes, but modern people are most familiar with seeing it on book covers and the endpapers of books. This was also the case in the 1830s: it was a simple and inexpensive way to decorate books.



In the paper marbling process, inks or paints float on top of a water bath. The water bath has to be thickened with something called size. At Museum Education, we use carrageenan as a size, which is derived from a seaweed called Irish moss. You can find carrageenan in a lot of foods, too--it is often in ice cream, yogurts, cottage cheese, and other foods that need thickening. After adding the inks to the water bath, we use tools like quills and combs to manipulate the ink into different patterns. The ink sticks to the paper!

Supplies

- Foaming shaving cream
- Food coloring or acrylic paints
- Cookie sheet
- Thick paper (ie. cardstock)
- Spatula or spoon to smooth shaving cream
- Aluminum foil
- A tool to swirl the ink (fork, toothpick, comb, chopstick, etc.)
- Scraping tool (squeegee, ruler)

Directions

1. Lay out a piece of aluminum foil on your work surface. This will protect your table while you scrape off the excess shaving cream.
2. Shake shaving cream and then spray onto your cookie sheet. You will not need too much for this to work.
3. Spread the shaving cream into a thin layer.
4. Dab food coloring or paint onto the surface of the shaving cream.
5. Use your tool to gently swirl the coloring in whatever pattern you like.
6. Place your paper on the surface of the shaving cream. Make sure to press down all the corners and edges of the paper.
7. Holding one corner of the paper, peel it off of the shaving cream.
8. Place your paper shaving cream-side up on the aluminum foil.
9. Hold down the top edge of the paper and use your squeegee to scrape the excess shaving cream and ink off of the paper.
10. Let your paper dry.
11. Enjoy!

