Helen Frankenthaler | Teacher Guide

Women Artists Studio • Lesson 036 • Grades 9–12 • experimental painting • 3–5 sessions

Essential inquiry

How can we explore stain and color field through experimental painting and communicate an original idea?

Cultural or technical context

stain and color field. Research each named artist through credible collection or museum sources. Respect living artists, cultural ownership and attribution. Do not substitute copying a signature style for analysis.

Learning targets

Students will demonstrate experimental painting; research the relevant context; create an original artifact or composition; justify at least one change after critique.

Materials and preparation

Artist images shown with credits, pencils, paper and media appropriate to experimental painting; provide accessible, lower-cost substitutions.

Differentiation

Students define a specific inquiry, research competing interpretations, run technique trials, present an annotated process portfolio, and evaluate impact.

Extension beyond Grade 12

Advanced learners may deepen their research, technique and documentation while keeping the same core inquiry.

Ten-step teaching sequence

01. Notice two contrasting examples or observations associated with stain and color field; name one uncertainty.
02. Investigate who made or uses the source material and what context must be represented accurately.
03. Complete two low-stakes trials of experimental painting; label what changed between trials.
04. Sketch three independent approaches to the question: stain and color field.
05. Select one approach; plan materials, ethical citation, composition and success criteria.
06. Test fluid color on appropriate paper and build an atmospheric composition. Record one decision that differs from the first sketch.
07. Give peer feedback using one visible detail and one clarifying question.
08. Revise at least one element based on evidence; photograph or annotate the change.
09. Present artwork with an artist statement, source credit and medium information.
10. Explain how the technique and concept developed, plus one next studio goal.

Discussion prompts

01. What evidence tells you something important about stain and color field?
02. How does experimental painting change the meaning of the result?
03. Which source is being credited, and whose voice is missing?
04. What feedback prompted a visible or audible revision?

Formative assessment

At entry: one baseline observation. During: two skill trials and a peer critique. Exit: final result, revision evidence and source credit.

Safety and accessibility

Provide accessible participation roles, sensory accommodations and clear consent for any recordings or images.

Reference and standards note

https://nmwa.org/art/artists/
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection
Align locally with current grade-level arts standards; do not treat this resource as a verified Louisiana standards crosswalk.

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