



O- riginal Art Activity:

Super Soaker Painting Inspired by Sam Gilliam



Sam Gilliam, *Drape Work* (detail), 1970, Acrylic and dry pigment on canvas.

Sam Gilliam is an African American artist that works in color field painting and lyrical abstraction. Gilliam lives and works in Washington D.C. He was a pioneer of Black Abstraction during the 1960s, a time when Abstraction was considered “irrelevant to Black African Life.” Around 1965, he joined the Washington Color School movement which focused on creating paintings on a large scale with **color fields**. Paint was often applied through a pouring process that resulted in a stained effect without brushstrokes. Gilliam is recognized as the first artist to introduce the idea of the unsupported canvas, a painting without stretcher bars.

SEE SAM GILLIAM'S DRAPE WORK IN THE PERMANENT COLLECTION AT OGDEN MUSEUM.

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Note: Complete this activity with the permission of a parent or guardian.

Supplies: Acrylic paint, White pillowcase or cloth, and Water gun.

Instructions

Step 1: Gather your supplies. Find some clothes to wear that you won't mind getting dirty or wet.

Step 2: Find an area in your backyard where you can freely paint with the water gun and it's okay to get messy. Ask your parent or guardian. Hang the pillowcase up, this will be your canvas.

Step 3: Take a good look at Sam Gilliam's *Drape Work*. You can see a variety of colors as well as the **depth** created by the draped canvas. If you look at the overall shape of the draped canvas, it creates an **abstract form**. How will you use color to create an abstract painting?

Step 4: Use a few containers to mix different color paints with water. Have your parent or guardian fill up the super soaker with your first color.

Step 5: Now it's time to get creative! Where on the pillowcase will you start to spray the water gun? Remember Sam Gilliam focused on how he applied the paint to his canvas. How will you use the water gun to paint the pillowcase? Use the water gun to apply your first color.

Step 6: Remember to wash out your water gun when changing colors by taking clean water to fill it up and pushing the water back out. Make sure that you are focusing on creating something without a shape and that you are focusing on creating color combinations like Sam Gilliam.

Step 7: After you have finished adding all the colors you would like, let the pillowcase dry.

Step 8 (Optional): Once the painting has dried, create an abstract form by draping the pillowcase in different ways.

Vocabulary

Abstract - an artwork that is composed of shapes and colors.

Depth -- Objects appear closer or farther away and make a two-dimensional image seem three-dimensional

Form -- A three-dimensional volume or the illusion of three dimensions as it relates to shape.

Color field paintings -- use very large areas of flat, solid color on a canvas or on other surfaces.

