

Katelynn Noel Knick | Session 2:

Sam Gilliam – Free Form Coffee Filter Paintings

List of Required Supplies:

round coffee filters, markers, water cup, paint brush, paper towel, a piece of white paper, glue, optional: other drawing materials (colored pencils, oil pastels, colored pencils, graphite pencils)

Additional Links :

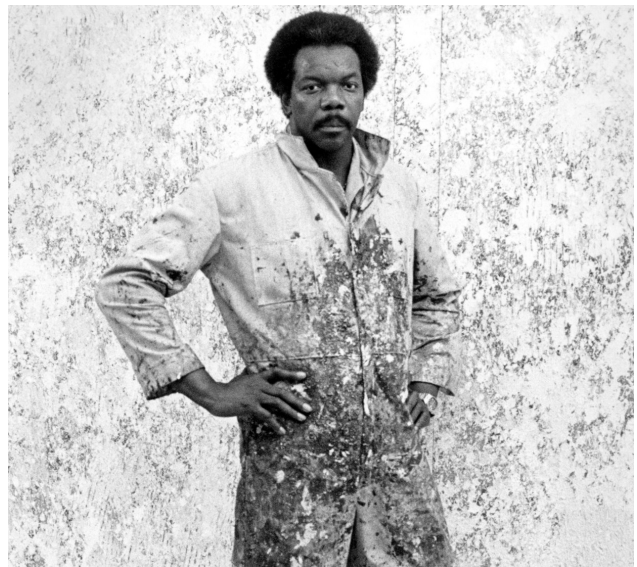
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKzyeXFZGyQ> (PBS video and interview with Sam)

Space/Facility Requirements: running water, table and chair, optional: plastic sheeting to cover table surface

Student Time Required: 60 minutes

Information on the Artist:

Sam Gilliam is a well-known African American artist born in 1933 in Missouri. He was a part of the Washington Color School where he was the first African American to join and became a game changer in abstract painting. He developed his own style of painting canvas flat, then installing it in unconventional ways on the wall.



Tips for the Instructor:

- Review the concept of color and discuss the visual impact of color in abstract art (example: what feeling does an all-red painting evoke? What do these colors remind you of?)
- Show examples of color field painting.
- Introduce 2D and 3D qualities of art, and how it creates FORM

Example Pre-Lesson Questions:

- How does Sam use both color and form in his work?
- Sam Gilliam's work is often unstretched, why do you think he chose this?
- What does Sam's work look like? Does it remind you of anything you've seen in real life? (example: clothes hanging on a clothesline, a messy bed, etc.)



Activity with Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Take your coffee filter and lay it flat on your table surface.
2. Using your markers, color in all areas of your coffee filter. Try using color fields—large areas of colors—and overlapping colors in your design and try not to draw anything representational for this project. Color and mark-making are best here.
3. Optional: Add another layer of mark-making or lines on top of the marker. Tip: The marker areas will blend together, and the drawing will not blend.
4. Using your paint brush and water cup, dip your brush into your water and cover the entire coffee filter with water until it is fully saturated.

5. Now you will have a beautifully blended coffee filter painting! Set it to the side and let it dry.
6. When the coffee filter is completely dry, fold and bend your coffee filter to create a new form similar to the work of Sam Gilliam.
7. Once you have the shape as you you like it, glue the edges down to a piece of white paper. Only glue a few edges down and allow the painting to pop out from the paper.
8. Optional: Repeat the process and add more coffee filters to create a more complex sculptural painting.



After Activity Instructor Tips:

Have the students get into pairs or small groups and share their work and answer the questions below. Encourage the students to share their similarities and differences in responses.

After Activity Review:

- What was your favorite part of this activity?
- What was challenging about this activity?
- What colors did you choose and why?
- Observe your finished project, what do you see?
- Do you see any shadows or shapes around your painting?
- Move your paper around the room and observe it in different lighting, how does it change?
- If you could do this activity again, what would you change?