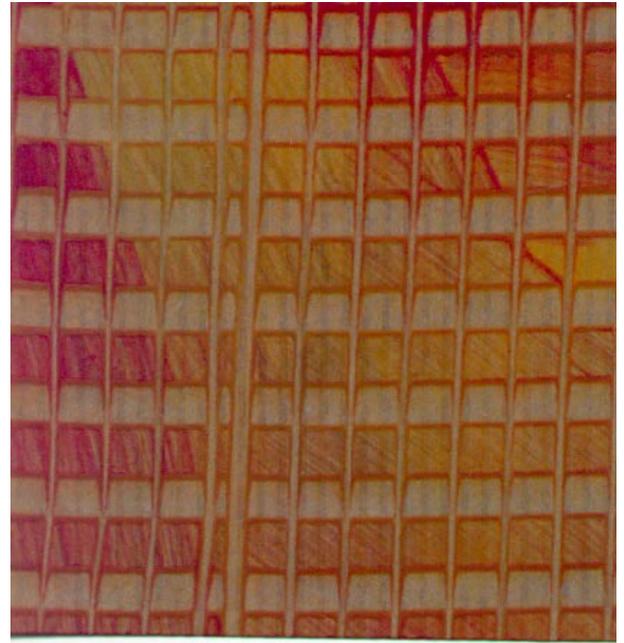


Paste Paper

by Al Rodriguez

General Description

The term “paste paper” refers to a method of decorating the surface of paper with acrylic or tempera paint mixed in a “paste” medium. Once the color is brushed onto the paper, a variety of common, around-the-house or around-the-classroom tools are used to make the designs. The idea is to make the designs with the tools, not with the paints. Resist the temptation to “paint” a design with the brushes used to spread the paint on the paper.



Materials

• Paste

There are several paste recipes that use corn starch, wheat and rice flour, dish soap, and glycerine that require cooking in a double boiler. They work fine, but there is an easier, more practical method for the classroom. Use wallpaper paste. Ace Hardware sells a Golden Harvest Teknabond brand of wallpaper paste. Mix it in a left over spaghetti sauce jar—the kind with the little numbers on the side. Pour in three cups of warm water and one and one-half tablespoons of the powdered wallpaper paste. Put the lid on and shake. In about 5 minutes it turns cloudy and thick. The viscosity should be of heavy cream. If you have chocolate pudding, add more water.

• Container

Cut off the bottom three inches of a half-gallon milk container and pour about a half-cup of mixed paste into it. The container can be reused if washed out after use.

• Colors

Add acrylic or tempera paint to the paste mixture. Try about two tablespoons. Experiment with the amount of color and adjust to your liking. Use a brush to mix.

• Brushes

Three inch wide foam brushes work best. Use them to brush the paint onto the paper. If washed out immediately after use, they can be used several times.

• Paper

Paper that is the equivalent of an 80 pound “text” paper works well. The paper must have good “wet strength,” not rip or fall apart when wet. Construction paper, cover paper, or “card stock” will work.

• Pattern Tools

Anything that will leave a mark when dragged through or touched to the wet paint qualifies as a tool. Look in your bathroom or kitchen or hardware store for gadgets that will leave marks. Try combs, adhesive spreaders, crumpled pieces of plastic wrap, plastic forks, corks, dowels, fingers, rulers, t-pins, rubber bands, etc. Cut designs into large erasers and press into the wet paint for a repeated pattern. Affix pieces of “mole skin” to a brayer to roll patterns. Part of the fun of paste papers is making your own tools.

Preparation

Cut all papers, combine paste with colors, assemble tools.

Procedure

Place a sheet of paper on a flat, impervious surface. Formica-topped tables work great. Brush on the color. Try blending two or more colors. Once you have the colors you like, use a tool or tools to make a pattern. Try using different tools on the same paper for a variety of effects. Just as there is no crying in baseball, there are no mistakes in paste papers. If you don't like the pattern you made, brush it out and start again. Caution: too thick a layer of paint may cause the paper to rip and will take longer to dry; and too thin a layer will cause the paint to dry too quickly, leaving little time to make a pattern. Experience will tell you how much paint to apply. If you can only eat one potato chip, then you're finished making paste papers. But, if you're like most of us, you'll want to make another one right away, then another . . .

Drying

Lift the completed paste paper off the table top with a pointed bamboo skewer. Carry it to a flat drying area covered with newspaper or hang on a clothes line. The paper should dry in 10 to 45 minutes, depending on how thick a layer of paint was applied. When dry, papers often curl. Remove the curl by pulling the sheet over the edge of a table, stack them, cover with a sheet of plywood and weight them overnight with some heavy books or bricks or kids. Or you can iron the back of the paper to make it flat.

Clean up

Clean table, brushes, containers and all tools with water immediately after use.

Now What?

What can you do with paste papers? Use them in book arts projects for covers and end sheets, make boxes, greeting cards, wrapping paper, kites, cool paper airplanes . . .