

## Exploring Paint Resists and Application

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Difficulty level:** Easy

**Messy level:** Medium



Inspired by John Twachtman's painting of Niagara Falls, on view in the exhibition *Three Centuries of American Art – Antiquities, European and American Masterpieces from The Fayez S. Sarofim Collection* (June 27–September 6, 2021), this activity will lead you in an exploration of applying and layering paint using a resist-and-water technique.

John Twachtman, *Niagara Falls*, 1894, oil on canvas, Fayez S. Sarofim Collection.

This exhibition is organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

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To view a hi-res image of the work, visit the [MFAH website](#).

### Investigate the Work of Art

American Impressionist painter John Twachtman (1853–1902) is known for his pastel color palette. He often mixed white paint into other colors to blend and unify the colors of his paintings. Look closely at this painting and list as many colors as you can see.

Niagara Falls is one of the largest waterfalls in North America. It is on the border between the province of Ontario in Canada and the state of New York in the United States. To see a picture of Niagara Falls, [click here](#). How does Twachtman's painting *Niagara Falls* capture the magnificence and size of this waterfall?

In this painting, water cascades down the canvas with a powerful force from the waterfall. How did the artist convey the power of water in this artwork?

### Gather These Materials

- Watercolor paper at least 12 x 16 inches in size
- White oil pastel stick
- Disposable baking pan or shallow plastic container large enough to hold paper
- Paint brushes
- Three small plastic medicine cups
- Three different acrylic paints
- Paper towels



To purchase some of the recommended art materials, visit [dickblick.com](#).

### Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Find a clear place to work.
2. Using the white oil pastel stick, draw a pattern or design on the watercolor paper.
3. Place the paper in the baking pan or plastic container, making sure it lies flat.
4. In one of the plastic cups, mix the first color, pouring equal parts paint with water to create a runny consistency.
5. Pour the paint over the paper like a waterfall. Use the whole cup or just part.
6. Mix and pour a second color.
7. Add a third color.
8. With the paints still wet, use a paintbrush to mix some areas of the colors and leave other areas untouched. This technique will create a sense of depth in the artwork.
9. Notice that wherever the oil pastel was used in the first step, that space on the paper shines through and remains white since it created a resist to the paint.