

Exploring Approaches to Painting on Canvas

Experiment with taking the canvas off the stretcher to create an artwork by draping fabric over a rod, as inspired by Sam Gilliam's *Carousel Change*, now on view at the Museum as part of the exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*.

Time: 45 minutes

Difficulty level: Moderate

Messy level: Moderate to high



Sam Gilliam, *Carousel Change*, 1970, acrylic paint on canvas and leather string. Tate. Presented by Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida (Tate Americas Foundation) 2018.



This exhibition is organized by Tate Modern, London, in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville; Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Broad, Los Angeles; and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

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Investigate the Work of Art!

1. Sam Gilliam had the innovative idea of freeing the canvas from its wooden stretcher and painting abstract images on the canvas before draping it around a gallery space. These “drape” paintings occupy space differently than traditional two-dimensional paintings. How are they different?
2. This work is non-representational, and some consider it part of the color field movement. This type of abstract painting was closely related to Abstract Expressionism.
3. Sam Gilliam was part of the Washington Color School. A common technique used by these artists was “soak staining” or just “staining,” in which the artist would pour a thinned painting medium onto canvas and let it sit over time. How do you think this technique is different than “traditional” painting? Why do you think Gilliam would want to use this technique?

To view an image of this work and to learn more about the exhibition, visit the [Museum's website](#).

Let's Make Some Art!

Gather These Art Materials

- Acrylic paint or food coloring
- Paint brushes
- Water container
- Piece of canvas that is 20 x 20 inches, or an old white pillowcase, an old white cloth napkin, an old bed sheet, etc.
- String
- Wooden dowel or skewer that is approximately 12 inches long

Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Find a clear spot at home where you can make art and get a little messy.
2. Lay canvas or cloth out flat.
3. Fill a small container with about a 1/4 cup of water.
4. Add five drops of food coloring or acrylic paint to the water.
5. Use a paint brush and paint, drip, smear or splash the diluted water onto the cloth. Think about the types of marks and color combinations you can make.
6. Repeat steps three through five with two or three more colors.
7. Let canvas or cloth dry.
8. To create a draped work like Sam Gilliam, fold the fabric in half and make a small bunch at five places along the folded side. At each of those bunches of fabric, use a piece of string and tie it onto the wooden dowel.
9. What are other ways you can display your art and explore the spirit of abstraction and the freedom to “take the canvas off the stretcher?”

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