

## Exploring Patterns and Color in Nature and Making Your Own Stamp

This lesson will guide you on how to use paint to create a composition with repeating patterns inspired by Julian Onderdonk's *Early Spring—Bluebonnets and Mesquite*.

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Difficulty level:** Moderate

**Messy level:** Moderate



### Investigate the Work of Art!

1. Your climate determines what plants will thrive in your area. A cactus grows in the desert. A cypress grows in the swamp. What plants and trees do you see in this painting? Where do you think this was painted?
2. Notice patterns and colors in the landscape, in the flowers, and in the tree branches.
3. If you go for a walk, what kinds of flowers and plants can you find near your home?

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

### Let's Make Some Art!

#### Gather These Art Materials

- Paint (acrylic, tempera, poster, or craft paint)
- Colored cardstock or construction paper (any size works)
- Paintbrush
- Cup for water
- Dull pencil, wooden skewer, or toothpick
- One potato, cut in half
- Cutting board
- Small knife (for adults to use to cut potato)
- Paper towels
- Scissors
- Tape



### Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Before starting the art making, gather inspiration by going on a walk and collecting leaves and flowers. Older kids can take this opportunity to sketch simple leaves and flowers.
2. Find a clear spot at home where you can make art and get a little messy.
3. Ask an adult to cut the potato in half.
4. Again, ask an adult to use the knife to create a flower shape on one of the potato halves and a leaf shape on the other.
5. Once the general stamp shapes are created, kids can use a pencil or skewer to carve out details such as the leaf veins.
6. Place stamps face down on a paper towel to dry for a few minutes.
7. Once the potato stamps are dry, brush the paint onto the flower or leaf stamp, and then press firmly onto paper. Cover the entire background of colored paper using this stamp.
8. Allow this paint to dry. Then repeat the process using the other potato stamp and a different color of paint.
9. Once dry, use the paintbrush and another color of paint to add special details, like painting a yellow center on your flowers.
10. To make the print 3-D, draw and cut out extra leaves from paper. Then, cut small slits into the printed artwork, slide the leaves through these slits, and tape in place on the back.

Family Programs at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, receive generous support from the Junior League of Houston, Inc.

Learning and Interpretation programs receive generous funding from the Jerold B. Katz Foundation; Institute of Museum and Library Services; H-E-B; MD Anderson Cancer Center; Sharon G. Dies; Sterling-Turner Foundation; Houston Junior Woman's Club; Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo; Samuel H. Kress Foundation; The Brown Foundation, Inc.; Susan Vaughan Foundation; and additional generous donors.

Julian Onderdonk, *Early Spring—Bluebonnets and Mesquite*, 1919, oil on panel, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Mrs. John Leckie, 33.129.