

Homemade Ink Drawing

Monochromatic and observational drawing activity inspired by Giacinto Gigante

Lesson plan prepared by Priya Jasmine Andrade for the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

Suggested grade / age levels

Grades 3–6 (Ages 8 – 11)

Introduction

Giacinto Gigante was an Italian teacher, painter, and engraver, and was best known for his observational landscape paintings. In his work, Gigante combined sketched line drawings with ink washes.

In this artwork, *Untitled (View of Bridge and the Villa Lucia, Naples)*, Gigante painted a light wash for the background before adding medium and dark washes to create depth. Gigante's drawings were monochromatic, which means that he used light and dark shades of one colour ink- in this work it is sepia. He would then do his observational sketch in pen on the dried background painting, capturing details such as leaves, architectural features, and human figures.



In this activity, we invite you to choose an object to observe and draw from your living space, we've chosen flowers. Be inspired by things in your home that have unique lines and engage in making monochromatic ink to create your own work of art.

Gigante, Giacinto, *Untitled [View of Bridge and the Villa Lucia, Naples]*, 1826.
Gift of Emanuel Laufer, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2016, with assistance from the
Dr. S.T. Laufer and Mrs. Irmgard Laufer Endowment.

Set Up

- Access to water and a kettle
- Desk/table covers, like newsprint or vinyl tablecloths
- Paper towel and containers for homemade paints, suitable for holding hot water
- Clothing suitable for painting, or aprons

Materials

- Observation set up - e.g.- Flower arrangement
- Black tea bags (1 or 2) and 1 tbsp of instant espresso powder
- Previously boiled and slightly cooled water
- Bowls or jars suitable for holding hot water
- Paint brushes - variety of sizes
- Painter's tape
- Cardboard
- Heavy weight paper (e.g. watercolour paper)

Process

- Make your homemade inks: Boil the water and steep the tea bag(s) for a rich colour. You need very little water. Repeat this in another container with your instant espresso.
- Arrange your still-life for observation. We've used flowers for this activity, but we invite you to find an object, landscape, or scene that inspires you.
- While your ink 'steeps', prepare your paper by securing it to the cardboard with painter's tape. Painter's tape helps prevent the paper from tearing when you remove the tape after your artwork is dry.
- Create the monochromatic background by painting your paper with the tea colour. Continue the wet-on-wet technique by adding some darker spots on the paper with the espresso ink. These darker spots will be the centre of the flower. If you are using other objects, note the darker shadows on the object and use the darker ink on your paper to represent it. Feel free to keep it loose and gestural, this is just to get basic shapes on paper. Let it dry completely before proceeding to the next step.
- Prepare to draw. Hold your pen up next to the flowers and physically "trace" the lines of petals in the air (see video demonstration). Practice this technique for as long as you need to really study the lines in the flowers. If you have young children, you can tell them that this is a way for your pen to remember how to draw when you get to the paper.
- Next, bring your pen to the paper and let your pen remember the shapes and lines it traced. Be creative and open to making a unique line drawing on your monochromatic painting. You can retrace certain sections of your drawing to make lines thicker.