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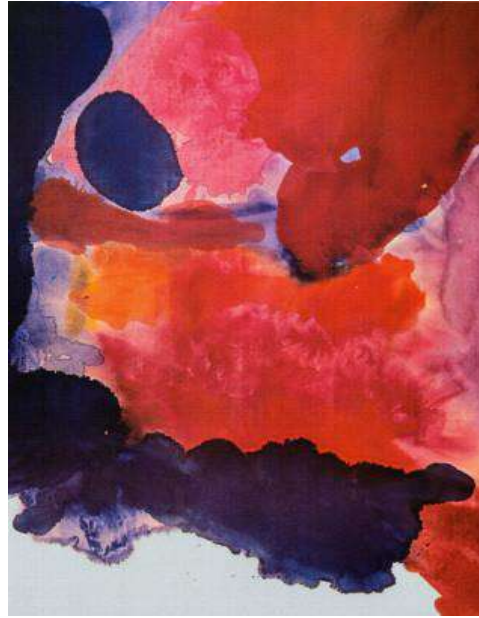
## Art Masterpiece: "Blue Atmosphere" by Helen Frankenthaler

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**Key words:** Abstract Expressionism, Color Study

**Grade:** 2nd

**Activity:** Abstract Painting with Straws



### Meet the Artist:

Born in New York, she was the youngest daughter of a judge on the New York Supreme Court. She had a formal education at Bennington College and continued art studies in the studios of various artists, such as Rufino Tamayo, Wallace Harrison, and Hans Hoffmann. Helen Frankenthaler is probably the most recognized and celebrated American women artists today. Her rise to artistic fame was almost immediate after her 1952 abstract landscape known as "Mountains and Sea". It measures 75ft x 10ft. It has the effect of watercolor painting, even though it is painted entirely with oils. It is this major innovation in her technique, which would reverberate throughout the art world over the next twenty years. "Stain painting" or "soak stain" became the hallmark of her style and enabled her to create color filled canvases that seemed to float on air. In this process she poured diluted paint (with kerosene or turpentine) directly onto the unprimed surface of the canvas, allowing the color to soak into its support, rather than painting on top of the already sealed canvas as was customary. Helen Frankenthaler was very interested in Jackson Pollock's art and his "drip" paintings liberated her way of creating art. She is viewed as the leader in the second generation of Abstract Expressionism

### Abstract Expressionism

- To apply paint rapidly with force on a large canvas
- Colors used by the artist showed feelings and/or emotion
- No familiar objects or shapes (i.e. circles, squares, triangle, etc.)
- The artwork appears to be accidental but is really planned out
- The expressive manner in which the artist painted the artwork was often considered just as important as the painting itself

### **Activity: Straw Painting**

- Prepare the Tempera Paint by diluting it a little; it should be fluid but not too watery
- Distribute the paper to the students
- Put "blobs" of different colors onto the paper, maybe three colors at the most.
- Let the students blow the paint all over the paper. Have them experiment and find out what happens if you blow harder or softer. Even a little amount of paint can be blown to a beautiful and fragile design. You can start to interpret the flows, see some flowers, trees, waves or just admire the beauty of paint flowing into each other.
- The students might want to think about mood by choosing the colors they use
- A picture in all red, pink or orange will look aggressive, a picture in blue and yellow will look bright or cheerful, a picture in all blue and purple will look moody or calm

### **Suggestions:**

This is a project that every student will be successful doing. You will discover that students respond well to Abstract Art.

### **Supplies:**

- Tempera paint in various colors diluted with water (keep in cups)
- White Cardstock (8 X 11)
- Straws
- Paper Towels or napkins