

**AMAZING
ABSTRACT ART
INSPIRED BY
ALMA
THOMAS**

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Alma Thomas

WHO WAS SHE?

Alma Thomas was an African-American Expressionist painter and art educator best known for her colorful abstract paintings. She spent most of her life living and working in Washington DC and was greatly inspired by nature. As a child, Alma showed interest in art, she made puppets and sculptures at home and took her first art classes in high school. She earned her Bachelors degree in Fine Arts in 1924 and went on to earn her Masters in Art Education from Columbia University in 1934. Alma was an important role model for women, African-American artists, and older artists. She was also the first African-American woman to have a solo exhibition of her work at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, a very important and world reknowned museum.



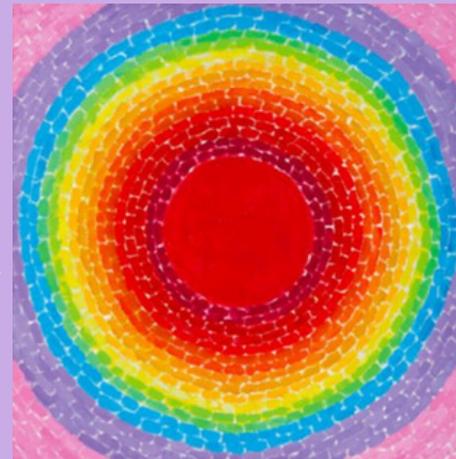
Ressurrection, 1966

WHAT KIND OF WORK DID SHE MAKE?

Alma was in her eighties when she produced her most important works. The first of her paintings to get lots and lots of attention, was her series of **Earth** paintings— bright colorful pieces made up of blocks of color organized into circles and lines. Made in the late 1960s, these works were inspired by visits to the countryside, where she would look at the effects of light on the rural environment. Brilliant shades of green, pale and deep blue, violet, deep red, light red, orange, and yellow are offset by white spaces where she chose not to use any paint at all.

WHAT IS ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM?

The kind of paintings Alma Thomas painted are about using shapes and colors in an interesting way, rather than painting something so it looks realistic. When something is Expressionist, the artist wants to express a certain feeling through the colors and shapes they use. What feeling do you think Alma was trying to express in her paintings? How do they make **you** feel?



A Fantastic Sunset, 1970



Snoopy Sees a Daybreak on Earth, 1970

YOU WILL NEED

- A piece of white paper- the bigger the better!
- A selection of objects you think would make interesting but simple print shapes. Make sure you have permission to use them :)
- Scrap paper
- A variety of different color paints
- Paint palette
- A paint brush
- Water
- A cloth or sponge
- Apron
- Protective cover for the surface you're working on

Now put on your apron, cover the table and...

LETS GET STARTED!



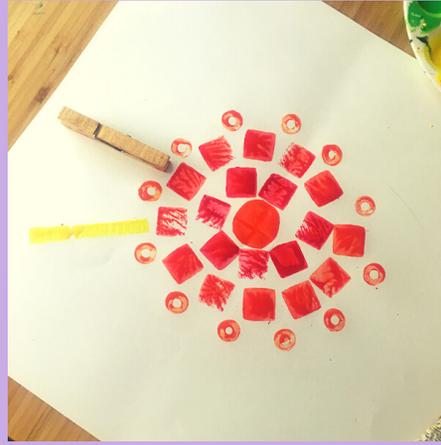
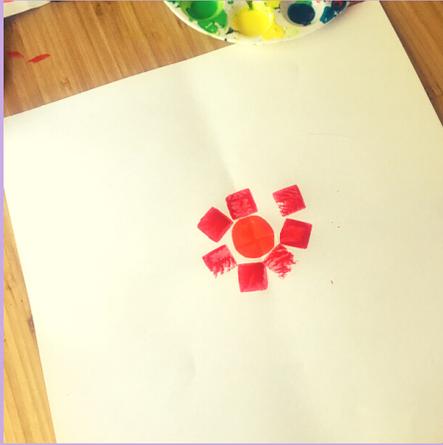


Shape experimentation!

1. We'll start by testing out some of the fun objects you found around the house to make prints from. Simple shapes like squares, circles and rectangles are a fantastic place to start. Lay out the scrap paper.
2. Using your brush, paint one side of one object and press it onto the paper to see how it looks. (Remember to keep reapplying more paint to the object before you make each print.) What do you think? Do you like it?
3. When you're ready to try a different shape out as well as a different color, wash and dry your brush as well as the object you've finished using.
4. With a clean, dry brush, paint one side of the next object and test it out, too!
5. Try out each object so you can see which ones you like best and want to use in your final piece!



Next: Make your abstract expressionist artwork!

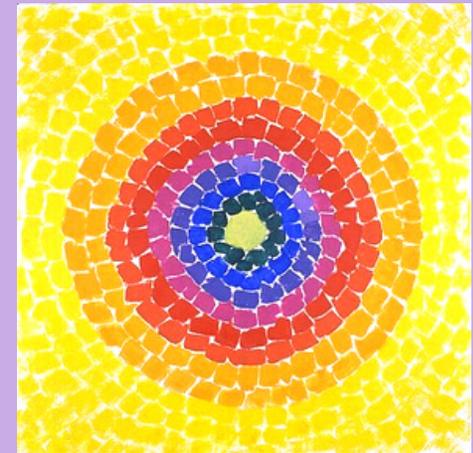


1. Start by thinking about which colors you want to use. I like how Alma's paintings make me feel happy, so I decided to use lots of bright colors in my piece to make others feel happy, too! What feeling do you want to share through your painting, and which shapes do you think will do the best job at helping you express it?

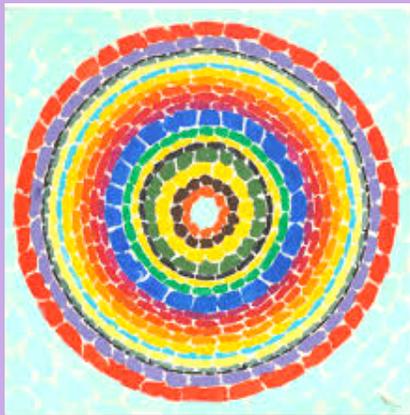
2. If you want to make a circular painting like I did, find the middle of your piece of paper. You can do this by folding it gently in half from bottom to top, to make a crease. Then fold it left to right. Unfold the paper and where the creases cross, is the middle. Paint a circle on top of the cross so you know where it is.

3. Now you can add shapes in a spiral around the circle, using shapes and colors of your choice! Keep going until the whole page is full (and don't forget to keep reapplying paint after each print, and washing and drying your brush between color changes :)

You did it! You're an Abstract Expressionist artist! Alma Thomas would be so proud.



Resurrection 1966



Untitled, ca. 1968



Apollo 12 Splash Down, 1970



Springtime in Washington, 1971



"Iris, Tulips, Jonquils, and Crocuses," 1969