

# Acrylic Mosaics

Create stunning transparent, glass-like mosaic pieces with acrylic paint and polymer gloss medium. The complexity of projects can be adapted to the age and skill level of the class. Simply pour out the medium on a non-stick surface, mix in the color and allow to dry. It looks milky when wet, but dries transparent.

If you've worked with polymer gloss medium you know that it has a tacky surface even when dry. Use this to your advantage. Cut a mosaic piece from the dried paint and press that tacky surface against glass, plexiglas, glazed tile, acetate — any non-porous surface. The piece remains in place until you move it again. You can create entire mosaics without having to glue each piece in place - just stick them down. Finished pieces can be made permanent by applying a clear acrylic coating over the surface.

**Grade Levels** K-12

## Preparation

1. The first step in the process is to create a sheet of translucent acrylic color. For very young children, you may wish to do this step in advance. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and pour the polymer gloss medium onto the paper. Spread the medium across the paper with a plastic painting knife to about 1/8" thickness. Place a drop of acrylic color about the size of a dime in six places around the cookie sheet, about 1 part color to 10 parts medium. Less color will increase the transparency, more color will increase the opacity. Blend with a brush or painting knife. Smooth the surface with a spatula or piece of cardboard.

## Hints

- Swirl multiple colors together, leaving them partially blended with the medium. This will produce swirls that resemble real stained glass.
  - Marbleize colors using a comb or craft stick.
2. Set aside to dry. Dry time depends on humidity levels, usually around 48 hours. Dry time may be decreased by placing the baking sheet in a sunny location or in front of a fan, but surface cracking will likely occur. Simply cut mosaic pieces between the cracks.
  3. As the paint dries, some wrinkling or cracking will occur. This is normal. Once the top surface of the paint is dry to the touch, you can turn it over (parchment side up) and help the underside dry faster. To avoid sticking, keep the acrylic on the parchment paper until ready to use.

## Process

1. Clean the surface on which the mosaic will be built with window cleaner to remove any dust or residue.
2. The translucent acrylic color may be cut down into smaller sheets and shared throughout the class. Cut mosaic pieces in either squares or random shapes. The side that dries away from the parchment paper will be glossy and tacky. Press that side firmly against surface to stick. Pieces may be peeled up and repositioned. They can also be stretched and curved around dimensional surfaces. Leave a small amount of space between each piece.

**NOTE:** If pieces don't stick well, try warming them by creating friction between your fingers or hands or placing in a sunny location. Metallic colors or inclusions will decrease the tackiness of the polymer medium. If you find that the pieces will not stick to the styrene at all, use a small dab of the polymer medium as a glue to adhere the piece to the styrene.

**Elementary:** Pre-cut the acrylic into mosaic pieces. Have students arrange and stick. The photo frame (see above) was done by this method. Proceed to step 3.

3. Once the surface is covered with mosaic pieces, seal in place by brushing a coat of the clear acrylic over the back and between the pieces to hold them permanently. Polymer gloss medium works well but allows some texture. Acrylic Varnish provides a smoother surface. Allow to dry and repeat. Display finished mosaics by placing on a window sill or in a well-lit place.



Frame made with Blickrylic Polymer Gloss Medium and Blickrylic Colors, applied to Dura-Lar Clear Polyester film.



Plate and bowl made with Blickrylic Polymer Gloss Medium and Blickrylic Colors, applied to clear glassware from a discount store.



## Materials

Blickrylic Economy Acrylics, assorted colors (00711-)

Blickrylic Polymer Gloss Medium, a Pint (00711-1026) will fill two baking sheets

Baker's parchment paper (available from grocery stores)

Baking sheet, 12" x 18" or larger

Richeson Plastic Painting Knife, Large (03105-0020)

Fiskars® Student Scissors (57016-1065)

Blick Economy Camel Hair brushes, size 14 (05153-1014)

Surface for mosaic to be applied to:

- Clear styrene (18908-)
- Dura-Lar (55506-), .007" weight or heavier
- Glass plates, bowls, votives or vases from a discount store
- Glazed tile from a hardware store

## National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

### K-4

Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner

### 5-8

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas

### 9-12

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

### K-4

Students know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas

### 5-8

Students generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work

### 9-12

Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems