

Suminagashi Monprints

(art + social studies)

The Japanese word “Suminagashi” translates literally as “spilled ink.” Centuries before the art of marbleizing papers was practiced in Western cultures, Japanese craftsmen created patterns by floating ink on the surface of water and transferring it to a sheet of paper. Suminagashi printing uses Sumi ink, an oily liquid that floats on the surface of plain water.

Because the nature of water is ever-changing and constantly moving, Suminagashi printers are viewed as great masters of control. Each monprint is like a fingerprint — unique and unreproducible.

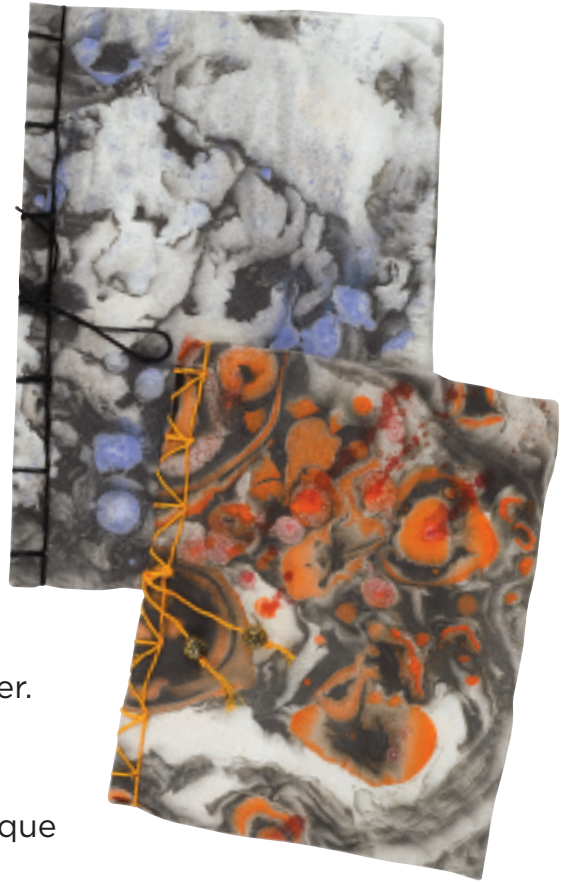
Suminagashi Monoprinting is fascinating, meditative and habit-forming — have plenty of paper on hand!

Grade Levels 5-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Fill pans with 1/2" of plain water.
2. Distribute small amounts of Sumi Ink into palettes using a dropper.
3. Cut or tear printmaking paper down. If you use a sheet of paper slightly larger than the pan it will be easier to lift from the water, but smaller pieces can be used as well. To make a natural deckle edge, hold a ruler firmly along the line you wish to tear, then pull the paper up and towards the ruler.



Materials

[Yasutomo® Liquid Sumi Ink](#), 2-oz bottle (20827-2004), share across classroom

[The Art Store® Oil Colors](#), 10-tube set (01557-1039), or single colors, need the equivalent of one 1.25-oz tube per class

[Shiva® Linseed Oil](#), pint (00437-1006), share across classroom

[Dropper](#) (04958-0000), one per student

[Blick Scholastic Red Sable](#), round brush, size 3/0 (05863-7030), one per student

[Rectangular 6-Well Tray](#) (03068-1006), share one between two students

Unsize Printmaking Paper, recommend:

- [Japanese Mulberry paper](#) (10410-1005), 24" x 33-1/2" sheet, cut to 8" x 11" pieces for 9 per sheet
- [Copperplate Paper](#) (10435-1022), 22" x 30" sheet, cut to 7-1/2" x 11" for 8 per sheet

- [Yasutomo® Japanese Rice Paper](#), 100-sheet pad (12744-1013), 9-1/2" x 13"

Aluminum foil lasagna pan, approximately 9" x 12" x 2-1/2" deep

Optional

Toothpicks, wide-tooth combs
[Weber Turpenoid®](#), 8-oz can (00442-1005)

Process

1. Using small brushes apply Sumi Ink to the surface of the water in drops or swirls. Sumi Ink is the perfect viscosity for floating on water, but some may sink to the bottom. As the ink spreads out and becomes diluted with water, it will create lighter colors of gray.
2. Manipulate the ink by swirling and moving the water around the ink drops, adding small amounts of mineral oil to the surface, etc. Experiment to find ways to move the water and ink for different reactions.

HINTS:

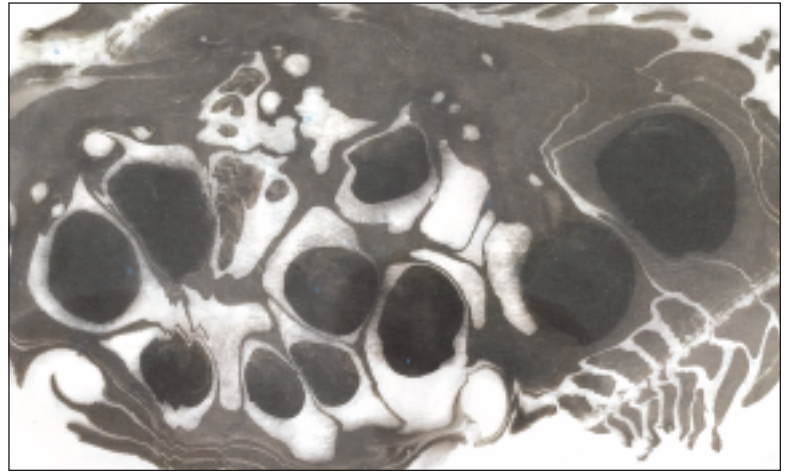
- The longer the ink sits, the more it will sink. It's not necessary to work quickly, but working too slowly may produce lighter prints.
 - Don't overwork. It may take a few tries to discover when the best time is to stop manipulating the ink and make a print (see step 4).
 - Sumi Ink is non-toxic, but permanent. Avoid contact with clothing and wash hands immediately.
3. Simple black Suminagashi Monoprints are lovely, but color can be added with oil paint, if desired.

Clean the Sumi Ink from the brush. Fill one well on the palette halfway with low-viscosity linseed oil (not sun-thickened or stand oil) and mix well with a drop of oil color. The consistency should allow the paint to drop off the brush when it touches the surface of the water.

NOTE: Oil paint will pool on the water (in dots). To make it swirl with the Sumi Ink, either:

- Move the color quickly with a tooth pick and lay the paper over the color before it has a chance to reform into a pool.
- Using a dropper, add one drop of Turpenoid to thin the oil color. Test on the water and add more, one drop at a time, until the paint spreads slowly. Too much Turpenoid will cause a "spill" that pushes all ink and paint to the edges of the tray - try to avoid this.

Turpenoid is a petroleum-based distillant, not recommended for use with children. Read all labeling carefully and use with caution.



4. To make a print, take a piece of unsized printmaking paper and lay it over the ink pattern. It is important to use a paper that doesn't contain sizing, so that the ink absorbs immediately into the paper. Allow 10 seconds for it to set, then lift the paper without disturbing the surface. Gently blot any excess color from the surface with a paper towel.

HINTS:

- Fold the edges or two corners of the paper up as handles. Lift the paper straight up off the ink and the pattern will be crisp and clean.
4. Lay the print on a piece of absorbent paper or cardboard to dry. To make more prints, float more ink on the surface or refill the tray with fresh water and start again.

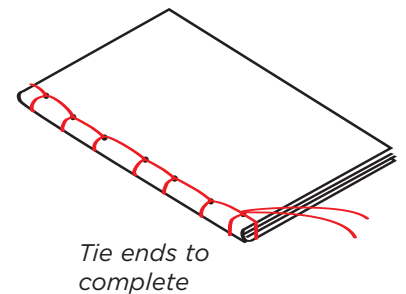
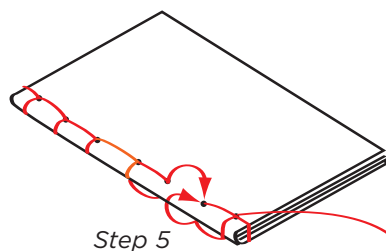
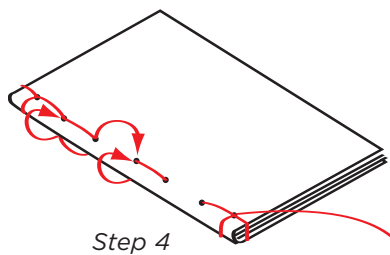
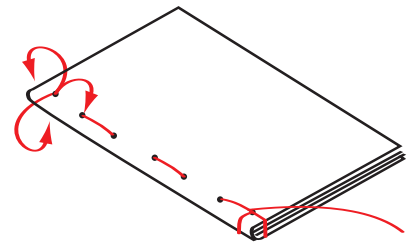
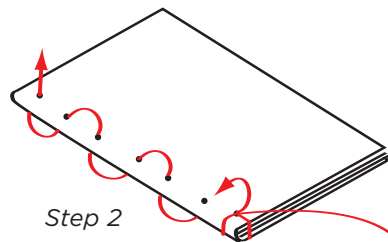
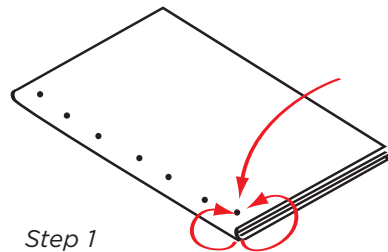
Options

Suminagashi prints are beautiful, abstract art on their own, but they can be used as a starting point for many more pieces of art, including:

- Book arts: create pages or book covers, (see page 3 for simple Stab Binding technique).
- Multimedia art: add paint or drawing materials to a print
- Calligraphy: add lettering to the light areas of the print with more ink
- Framing arts: as a decorative border for another piece of art
- Decorative arts: scrapbooking pages, picture frames, home decor, etc.

Make A Suminagashi Journal with Stab Binding:

1. Create a monoprint using the above process. Once dry, fold the print in half to make a cover.
2. Fold and cut drawing paper for inside pages. Recommend using four sheets or less.
3. Lightly, measure and mark a vertical pencil line approximately 1/2" from the fold on the back cover.
4. Measure and make a pencil dot 1/2" from the top and bottom, and a dot in the center of the line.
5. Measure and mark thirds between the center dot and the end dots (7 dots total).
6. Use a push-pin to pre-drill the dots, pushing through the cover and the pages.
7. Thread a needle with embroidery floss. Follow the diagram below for stitching process. Leave plenty of floss at both ends for tie off.



National Standards

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

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

Content Standard #4 – Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places

5-8 Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts