

Make Colorful Art

The Washington Color School & “Color Field” painting



Alma Thomas’s 1966 painting *Resurrection* (pictured at left) was added to the White House Collection in 2015 and hung in First Lady Michelle Obama’s renovated Family Dining Room on the State Floor. *Resurrection* emphasizes primary and secondary colors in bright dabs of paint organized in circles. This style of art was part of a movement called the Washington Color School. This style of art features large areas of flat, solid color on the canvas – a “color field.” Thomas’s art featured patterns of solid colors as seen in *Resurrection*, often arranged in lines or circles. Her choice of colors reflected colors she saw in nature. Other artists in the Washington Color School used geometric shapes in

solid colors with clean, precise edges, often arranged in abstract patterns. You can make an [internet search for other Washington Color School art](#) for more inspiration.

You will need:

- Paper (preferably a heavier art paper) or canvas
- Paints – the sample art uses acrylic paint
- Paint brushes or sponges to apply your paint (a real brush works best!)
- Water and rags to clean and dry brushes between colors
- Sealant (matte or flat) for your finished art after it is dry(optional)
- A space to do art and clothes or a smock that can get dirty (this could be messy!)

This example art follows the style of Alma Thomas.

- 1) On a small canvas, a circular focal point was lightly traced in pencil and then carefully painted in one solid color.
- 2) Single short strokes of solid colors were made in rings around the circle.
- 3) The rings disappear off the edge of the canvas and reappear where expected.
- 4) It is very important that the brush is well cleaned between colors so your bright, vibrant colors don’t get mixed!



ALTERNATIVE:

You can replicate Alma Thomas’s style without messy paints! Simply use colored construction paper and glue, cutting the construction paper into strips of equal length & then tearing them by hand. You can glue the torn strips onto paper in a pattern!



Share your finished artwork with us at [@WhiteHouseHstry](#) or education@whha.org