

Haley Prestifilippo | Session 4:

Indirect Process of Creation: Decalcomania

List of Required Supplies:

- Waterproof ink, such as Higgins Black Magic. Colored inks can also be used.
- Film/plastic-based surface – frosted mylar or YUPO paper work well
 - You could also use plastic wrap as an inexpensive alternative. If you use mylar or YUPO, these can become pieces themselves. If you use plastic wrap, it will be disposed of in the end.
- A few sheets of mixed media or hot press watercolor paper per student. A pad or two of either would work for a class to share, depending on the size of the class.
- A tool to make marks with the ink – a stick or inexpensive brush can be used. A dropper could even be used.
- Small cup with water
- Other mediums that can be used for drawing:
 - Pencils, colored pencils, pens, markers, pastel, charcoal, etc.

Additional Links (optional):

Short history of Max Ernst with panning view of his pieces. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXwaYGIKFQI>

Max Ernst on Artsy: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/max-ernst-europe-after-the-rain>
Decalcomania, by the MoMA <https://www.moma.org/collection/terms/decalcomania>

Decalcomania, by the National Galleries of Scotland <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/glossary-terms/decalcomania>

Space/Facility Requirements: Tables, table coverings (inexpensive tablecloth or butcher paper), sink for cleaning up after.

Student Time Required: Flexible; 2-3 hours recommended but can be compressed or divided into multiple classes.

Step-by-step Instructions:

In this portion of the class, we move from materials and mediums into the methods of creation, focusing on the importance of process to a piece of art.

Introduce artist Max Ernst and his explorations of decalcomania

- Discuss how he pioneered many alternative ways to work outside of direct methods
- How could an indirect method lead to a more creative outcome?
- How can an artist exert some control over the outcome after beginning with such an indirect method?

Vocabulary

- **Direct process:** a way to make art where the creator has control over every step of the process
 - ▷ Example: using a photograph as a reference for a drawing
- **Indirect Process:** a way to make art that takes some of the control away from the creator, often resulting in a more spontaneous and less controlled final output
 - ▷ Example: See Max Ernst's decalcomania

Exercise:

1. Use decalcomania – a method popularized by Max Ernst – to create a work.
 - ▷ Using ink or acrylic, quickly create some marks on a sheet of YUPO, mylar or similar plastic-based surface
 - ▷ Press a sheet of paper over the inked surface.
 - ▷ Wait for the paper to dry (ink dries fairly quickly, acrylic is a bit slower, especially depending on the thickness). Students can begin a second piece while waiting.
 - ▷ Students will look at the marks made on the page and try to find images within the abstraction, similar to Max Ernst.
 - ▷ Use various drawing mediums – colored pencil, marker, pencil, etc. – to pull out the images from the abstraction.

2. Questions to consider:
- What other methods or materials could be used to indirectly begin a drawing?
 - Nontraditional mediums: dirt, tea bags, coffee grounds, etc.
 - Weather: rust, rain, wind
 - Controlled deconstruction (pouring water/ink, liquid, sanding, crumpling, molding etc.), other methods to put marks down.
 - Why is this a useful way of thinking about making art? How can the process be an important part of the final work produced?
 - Is it difficult to let go of expectations?
 - How does this change the way students view the art-making process?

Homework, if participating in next session: Bring two old, unsuccessful, or unfinished artworks, drawings, prints, photos, or some found image etc. for next class.

Max Ernst decalcomania painting Detail of “Europe After the Rain”
Oil on Canvas



Student examples. All images courtesy of the artists.



Izzy Bliss
"Sheepish Dreaming"
5"x 8"
Acrylic and ink

Student examples. All images courtesy of the artists.



Gentry Leach
"Disarray"
36"x 30"
Mixed media on canvas: acrylic,
spray paint, pastel, dirt, ink

Left: Image in process. **Right:** Completed work