

Program Summary – Ebru (Turkish Marbling) at Henderson High Schools, March 2020

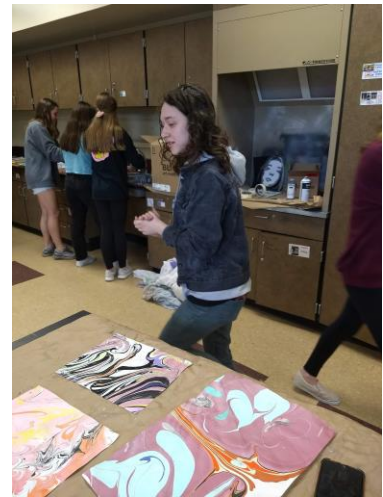
Christy Maurer - Art Teacher

Betsy Lamb is an experienced Ebru artist. Ebru, commonly called Turkish Marbling, is an old form of printmaking. Ebru translates roughly to *cloud painting*, referring to how the paint floats on the water, where it is manipulated before being printed. Patterns are formed in the paint with a series of rakes. To further develop the image, figures, such as hearts, flowers, and butterflies, may be formed in the paint.



Betsy worked with all the Studio Art 1 students, and with the other Henderson Studio 1 teacher, Nicole Snider. Studio 1 is the entry level course for 2 dimensional art in high school. Students are in every grade, 9-12, and every level of ability - freshmen who plan on taking 4 years of art, students who are trying their hand in art for the first time since middle school, Life Skills students, ELL students, and students who are very ambitious academically, but lack confidence or experience in art. We worked with Betsy for 3 periods at Henderson. Miraculously, we managed to fit our 3 work days in just before schools were closed in March. Unfortunately, due to the closure, we could not offer our program at Rustin. If the Foundation is able to hold the rest of the funds, Betsy and I would like to offer the program in the fall at Rustin,

in some format.



One of the wonderful aspects of our program this year was the role reversal in our Life Skills class. Since most of our Life Skills students were in my class last year when

we ran this program, they were able to teach our regular ed students what to do! Those who did not like the gooey water last year knew to grab gloves or a paper towel. They showed their classmates how to properly use the rakes and styluses, reminded them where to write their names... These things probably seem



very minor on the surface, but it's actually the goal in education - to have students be knowledgeable enough to teach another shows mastery of the process. That's usually the role our general education students take, in working with Life Skills kids. It's an invaluable experience for all to trade

places in such a way. By the end of day 1, my Life Skills students were asking me to promise we will do this again next year!

Betsy taught the students how to apply the paints to the water surface, move the paint blobs with rakes and styluses, and how to draw simple figures in the paint. We offered the students a range of paper sizes, so they could share small portions of a large design, or print their own large design. Students were quickly absorbed in making color choices and moving the paint, and were amazed when they printed their designs onto the paper.

Betsy led the students through several patterns and designs, ranging in complexity. She encouraged students to feel free to experiment, or to ask for help in creating a specific image. Our project encouraged students to collaborate, make consensus when working in groups, assist each other when working alone, and to embrace the unexpected. While we always encourage the



students to approach their work one decision at a time, to embrace their “mistakes”, and to make mindful choices about their work, they are not always comfortable doing so.

Many students who do not always feel motivated, successful, or focused on their art, seemed comfortable with this form. They were willing to give it a try, and were pleased to learn that forming patterns in

seemingly unrelated colors can unify them to create a stunning image. Students were excited about what to try next: new color schemes, different patterns, and even alternative printing surfaces! We also have students whose fine motor skills have not developed to the point of being able to draw a recognizable object on their own, or who require hand over hand assistance for simple art tasks. Almost all of them were able to freely manipulate the paint to make amazing patterns on their own!



We invited teachers to bring their students to the art room to see the process. Unfortunately, we did not have a chance to open it up to the student body at large at the Rustin Art, Music, and Poetry Coffee House. On the last day, there were rumors about a possible extended school closure. The stress and anxiety throughout the school was palpable. I took one look at my Graphic Design students and said, “let’s put all this aside and go across the hall.” We did a quick primer on marbling and gave them the rest of the period to play. I have no doubt we learned more in a half hour of “playing” than we would have trying to concentrate on Graphic Design lessons in the lab.



Our program concluded exactly 45 minutes before we had to vacate the building for the remainder of the year. Our beautiful papers are still on the drying racks (thoroughly dry by now!). Sadly, we did not have a chance to share, compare, and admire. Nor did we have the chance to transform our papers into a new work of art.



I have done this art form with all ages, and it never fails to amaze me how accessible it is for everyone: the confidence boost it can give to students who struggle with visual expression, and the challenge it gives to students who are used to being able to control their medium completely. We're so grateful for the experience, and hope we can do it again in the future.



