



Inspired by *Nowhere to Be But Here* and *Field Notes* by artist Christina Marian, displayed as part of *Nowhere To Be But Here*, exhibited spring 2025 at the Holter MOA.

### **Layered Environment Art Activity**

“This is the season of motherhood, imagination, belonging and growth. There is nowhere I need to be but here.

*Nowhere To Be But Here* is a collection of nine mixed media paintings on canvas about perception, absence, presence, and developing a new sense of orientation when challenges appear. I began work on this show after recently giving birth to a baby girl while also moving to a rural town in Montana. As I grappled with my new body, surroundings, and profound personal changes, I found that the key to re-defining myself was viewing my experiences from a different perspective. As wilderness is not easily accessible from our new home, the act of imagining walks in nature became an energizing inspiration for navigating my new life.

During the course of this journey, my paintings developed gradually into poetic landscapes built from memory, imagination, and layers of paint. Ambiguous versus sharp, defined elements; opposing forces where plant-like forms promise growth while tangled tree branches hinder my path; dense textural areas versus airy expansive surfaces all combining to symbolize an evolving connection to my environment.”

Inspired by the layering of color, texture, and sharp versus ambiguous shapes and forms, this activity invites participants to imagine a walk into their own poetic landscape of memory, imagination, and watercolor paints.

#### **Materials:**

Watercolor pastels  
Watercolor pencils  
Watercolor paper; instructor's preference  
Tape  
Graphite pencils; optional  
Paint brushes  
Water cups  
Blocking material (towels, kleenex, napkins or other absorbent material)

#### **Classroom prep:**

Cut watercolor paper to size if needed



# HOLTER MUSEUM of ART

## *Nowhere To Be But Here* Exhibition Connection

Prepare water cups

Remove and set aside black and white watercolor pencils/pastels for use later in the lesson.

### **Clean up and prep for the next lesson:**

Clean + dry brushes and water cups. Sort and return materials to the cart. Restock paper, pencils, and pastels as needed.

### **Preface:**

**Why do we tape down watercolor paper?** Ask students the following questions to direct learning: What happens when paper gets wet? What are ways to prevent or counter this? Artists tape paper down to prevent it from wrinkling as the fibers shift from the addition of water.

### **How to tear tape.**

1. Students may need instruction on “how to” tear tape.
  - a. Take tape roll in hand and use nails or fingers to begin to pull tape off roll. Once you have some tape peeled away from the roll, pinch the still secured tape with your non-dominant hand so that your thumb and index finger are holding it in place. With your dominant hand, pinch the already peeled tape as close to the secured point and pull sharply upwards towards yourself.
    - i. As you pull, do not twist tape, fingers, or hands so as to avoid twisting/tangling the tape.

### **How to tape down papers.**

1. Tear tape in lengths longer than the 4 sides of paper. This will make taking tape off easier at the end of the activity.
2. Place tape along edges of paper. Pull the edges of the tape taut as you lay it down. Make sure the tape overhangs off the paper so that there is adhesion to secure the paper to the table.

**How to take off tape.** For inclusion at the beginning or end of the lesson; teacher preference.

1. Start to peel tape off of the table. When you get to paper, pull the tape with your hand moving out/away from the center of the paper. If you pull tape straight up or with your hand moving into/over the paper, you are more likely to rip the paper.

### **Lesson Plan:**

1. Introduce watercolor pencils and watercolor pastels.

There are multiple methods you can use when working with watercolor pencils/pastels. You can draw directly onto wet or dry paper with watercolor pencils/pastels and then apply water over your lines. You can just draw with no addition of water and leave the lines as is. You can pre-wet the paper with a spray or a brush and then draw with the watercolor pencils/pastels. Or you can apply water to the tip of watercolor pencils/pastels and apply them to dry paper.

Suggested: First draw with watercolor pencils and watercolor pastels like you would with a regular color pencil or oil pastel. Then use a wet brush to “activate” the color, turning the applied pigment into a paint that can be manipulated just like watercolor palettes.

### **Techniques:**

Wet-on-wet: applying wet paint (watercolor) to wet paper

Wet-on-dry: applying wet paint (watercolor) to dry paper

Blotting: use towels (paper or cloth), kleenex/tissue, and/or dry brushes to remove excess water from painting.

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## *Nowhere To Be But Here* Exhibition Connection

Removing/controlling water on brushes: dip brush in water and pull against the lip of the water cup in order to “squeeze off” excess water. Use towels/kleenex/tissue to absorb excess water from brushes.

Watercolor rules of thumb:

Adding more water to a line will dilute colors, causing them to become lighter.

Just like with watercolor palettes or liquid colors, colors that are still wet will mix and mingle when connected by water or if another color is applied before the previous color dries.

3. Now that we know our supplies and how to work with them, encourage students to play with and explore the following using watercolor pencils and pastels:

Color

Texture

Defined edges - hard or solid lines

Soft edges - blurred/hazy lines

Layers

Optional: Whose environment have you created? What lives in your painting? Using the supplies provided and with the inclusion of graphite pencils, place animals and objects among your layers. Ideally, as you build up the layers of your painting, these animal/objects will become “hidden”, merging into the environment you are creating.

4. Once students have explored and created layers using materials, bring out black and white watercolor pencils/pastels. Introduce highlights and lowlights.

Highlights - a bright or shiny area, brighter areas that create depth and dimension

Lowlights - shadow, dark areas that create depth and dimension

5. Final step: tear off tape and sign your piece of art!

Examples:

