

## SPATTERING

Spattering is similar to STIPPLING, in that colors and tones are built up from small dots of color. But in spattering the effect is more random and has a greater feeling of movement, because the paint is flicked onto the surface from a brush held above the paper.

Generally, spattering is used in small areas only of a painting, because too much of it can appear mechanical and overbearing. But it is an excellent technique for simulating rough, pitted textures such as stone, cement, and rock. When the spattered paint is dry, the shapes can be further worked: apply highlights and shadows with the tip of a small brush to create the illusion of three-dimensionality.

Artists often use a touch of spatter to enliven an empty foreground, because its randomness can suggest stones and weeds, while not distracting attention from the center of interest. Also, a spattered passage has an inherent sense of movement, which can be used to advantage when painting sea spray, or a snowstorm, for example.

There are two basic methods of spattering: one is to dip an old toothbrush into fairly thick paint and, holding it 3 to 6 inches above the paper, quickly draw a knife blade, or your thumbnail across it. This action releases a shower of fine droplets onto the paper below.

The second method is to load a stiff bristle brush with thick paint and tap it sharply against the palm of your free hand, or an outstretched finger, or the handle of another brush. This produces a slightly denser spatter, with larger droplets than a toothbrush does.

Spattering can be used successfully in all painting media. It may be an unorthodox painting method, but it has a valid place in

picture-making so long as it is used with care and discretion. It is worthwhile experimenting with the technique on pieces of scrap paper. For example, a variety of patterns can be achieved by simply varying the distance between the brush and the paper, so increasing or decreasing the density of the dots; or try spattering onto wet paper, so that the dots become softened and diffused; additionally, spattering with two or more colors produces a more interesting surface than a flat wash of color.

A final word of caution: spattered paint can travel a surprising distance, so make sure you are wearing old clothes and shoes, and that nearby walls, floor, and furniture are covered. Similarly, when applying spatter to a small area of a painting, mask off the areas not to be spattered with sheets of paper fixed with masking tape.



### Spattering • Egg tempera

1 Spattering is a popular technique in tempera painting because it produces a stronger, more vibrant surface than a flat wash does. Lay the panel flat on the floor; otherwise the spattered paint may run down the surface. Use newspaper to mask off those parts of the painting that are not to be spattered. This allows you to work with complete freedom within a specific area. The paint

should be wet, but not too runny — the consistency of heavy cream. Load your brush well, then draw your finger through the bristles to release a shower of small drops onto the surface. Here the artist is using a 1½-in decorating brush, held 6-in above the panel and at a slight angle to it. Leave the panel on the floor until the paint dries.



**2** When the paint is thoroughly dry, remove the mask. Here you can see the edge where the flat wash and the spattered area meet.



**4** Tempera paint dries very quickly, allowing a densely spattered texture to be built up quickly without the colors running together. The drops of spattered paint should not be so thick that they stand up from the surface; if they do, they may crack off. Correct this problem by reducing the amount of paint on your brush. Avoid spattering tones that are much lighter or darker than the color underneath: subtle shifts in tone help to create the glowing quality characteristic of tempera painting.

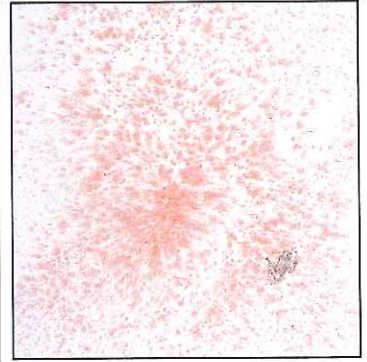


**3** Spattering from different directions will give a variety of effects. Here the artist holds the brush closer to the surface and slightly to one side. He then hits the handle of the brush sharply against the palm of his free hand. This method produces oblique marks instead of dots, because the paint hits the surface at an angle.



#### **Spattering on dry paper**

The delicate, fluid nature of watercolor lends itself well to the spattering technique. Use a stiff hog's hair brush or an old toothbrush and draw your thumbnail rapidly through the bristles to release a shower of fine dots onto the paper. The paint should be a stiff mix, like heavy cream. Always test the density of the spatter on a scrap of paper before applying it to a painting. Generally, the brush should be held about 6in above the paper, but you will discover by trial and error which is the best distance for the effect you want.



#### **Spattering on damp paper**

Spattering on damp paper creates a soft, impressionistic effect as the dots of paint blur together. This spontaneous way of painting often produces accidental effects which can be further worked to produce pleasing images. Try spattering with two or more colors and allowing them to blur into each other.