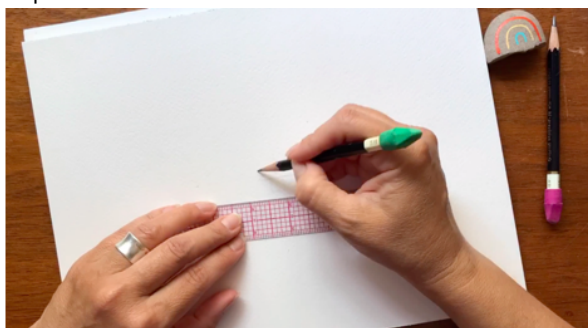Project: Negative Space Abstract Watercolor

The Demo is in watercolor, but you can use the medium of your choice: Watercolor, Watercolor Pencils, Colored Pencil, Crayon, or Marker.

Materials list:
- Heavy weight paper (watercolor paper for watercolors)
- Pencil (I use a 5H pencil; hard lead is lighter and easier to erase)
- Ruler
- Compass + Protractor to draw Peace sign
- Cookie cutter or heart-shaped cut out to trace heart shape
- Colored pencil for outlines
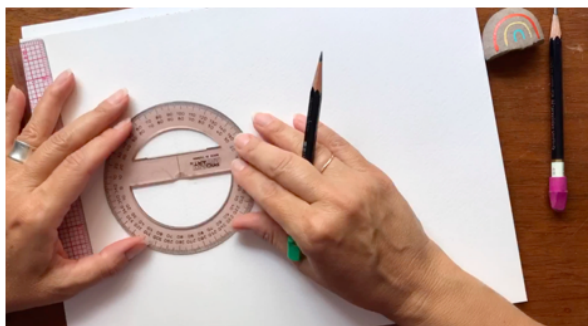- Color media of your choice, listed above

Step 1

Use your ruler to find the center of your page; use this to balance your design. This is where I drew the plus symbol +

Step 2

I used a compass to draw a circle, then drew another circle 1/4" smaller inside the first circle.

Step 3

A protractor will help you find 45 degree angles for the low crossbars for the peace symbol.

Step 4

I used a heart shaped cookie cutter for the heart shape.

Feel free to use your own design (your name; the words "PEACE" OR "LOVE" etc.), or draw any of this freehand. I like using these tools, but it's not everyone's thing! The important thing is that the shapes have an outline with white space in the middle - you'll see, keep reading.

Step 5

Next, outline the shapes with a colored pencil. You can also use a waterproof marker such as a fine point Sharpie, or Micron.

Step 6

Then use your pencil to lightly draw wavy lines across the paper. If you are new to watercolor, try not to make the lines too narrow or squiggly, as these will be more difficult to paint.

Step 7

Erase any pencil lines that are on the inside of your symbol or letter shapes, as this area (the negative space) will remain white.

Step 8

(Optional) Test out a few colors on a scrap piece of watercolor paper to get an idea of your color palette.

Step 9

Begin painting. Each wavy section will be a different color!

Step 10

Let each section dry completely before painting the section right next to it.* Skipping sections helps.

Step 11

As the sections dry, you can paint the areas in between.

Step 12

Continue until all of the wavy lines are filled in with color! Remember NOT to paint in the negative space (white) area of your letters/symbols.
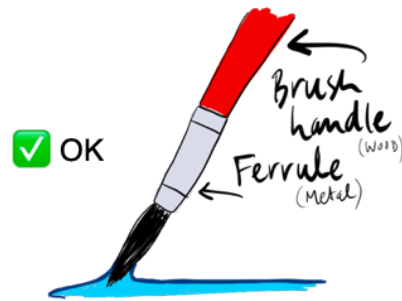
Watercolor tips:

Use the TIP of your brush to paint. You can press down, and allow the "belly" of the brush to spread paint, but the metal end of the brush handle should never touch the paper.

*Allow sections to dry completely before painting right next to them. If the first area is still damp and your wet paint of the next color touches it, the colors will bleed.

Colors bleeding is sometimes a good thing, but not if you want solid lines.

Use a scrap piece of the same paper you're using for your project. This is for testing your colors, but you can also use it for practicing brush strokes, and making sure you don't have too much or too little water.

Use two water cups: one for rinsing your brush after finishing with one color ("dirty" water), and one for dipping your brush into before mixing your next color ("clean" water).

✅ OK

Brush handle (WOOD)
Ferrule (Metal)

✅ OK

Belly of the brush

❌ NO

NO! NO NO! DO NOT SMASH THE BRUSH!!!

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Here is my finished result. If you make this project, make sure to share it and tag me on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or TikTok: @heidhorch !

And don't worry if you have a messy desk - you're not alone! 😅