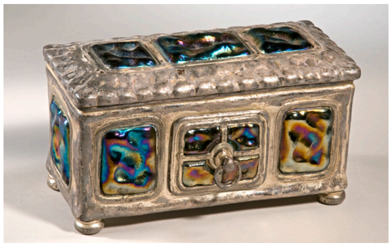
MORSE

IRIDESCENT INK STANDS



Pen and Ink Stand, c. 1910
Molded glass, blown glass, silver-plated bronze
Tiffany Studios, New York City, 1902–32 (53-006:A-C)

GRADES/LEVEL:

Kindergarten–5th grade/Elementary

TIME REQUIRED:

1 hour

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- learn about iridescence.
- create a finished piece of iridescent art inspired by Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933).

MATERIALS:

- Black paper (card stock, construction paper, magazine pages, sandpaper, etc.)
- Cardboard box (any size)
- Brown paper grocery bag (optional)
- Construction paper (optional)
- Water-based paint (optional)
- Paper towel
- Scissors
- Clear nail polish
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Aluminum baking pan
- White glue

VOCABULARY:

Favrile: trademark Tiffany used for his glass, pottery, and metalwork (including enamel); its root is from 'fabricate,' and Tiffany applied Favrile to his artwork to suggest its handmade quality.
Iridescence: a colorful, natural phenomenon that occurs when there is a disruption in the way light reflects off a surface.

3) Fill the aluminum baking tray halfway with room-temperature water. Drop one or two droplets of clear nail polish onto the surface of the water (avoid touching the brush to the water). As the droplet comes in contact with the water, it will create a thin, iridescent film. Submerge the black paper and "scoop up" the iridescent film. Lift slowly so the film doesn't "slide" off the paper and be mindful of any "strings" (Fig. 2–3).

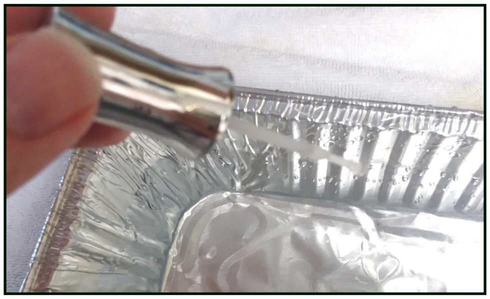


Fig. 2

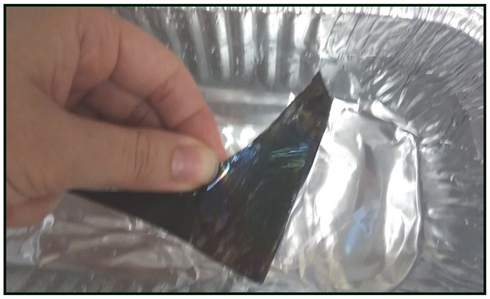


Fig. 3

4) Repeat this process with each piece of black paper. Set each piece on a paper towel to dry (Fig. 4).

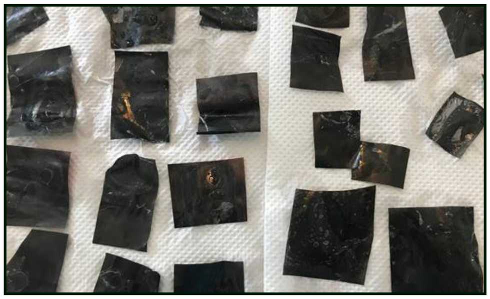


Fig. 4

5) While the black paper is drying, prepare the cardboard box. Create a clean, smooth surface by "wrapping" the box with a brown paper grocery bag (hint: cutting the bottom out of the bag permits a nice sheet for wrapping). Cut, tear, and glue the bag to accommodate the shape of the box as needed (Fig. 5–6). This step is optional if cardboard box has a smooth, clean surface. The box may also be covered with construction paper or painted.

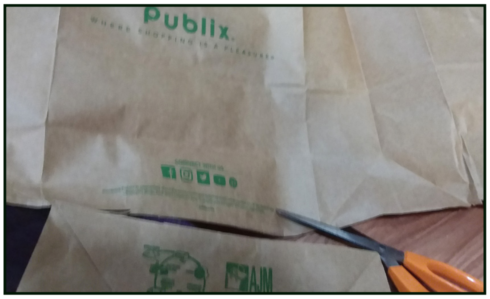


Fig. 5

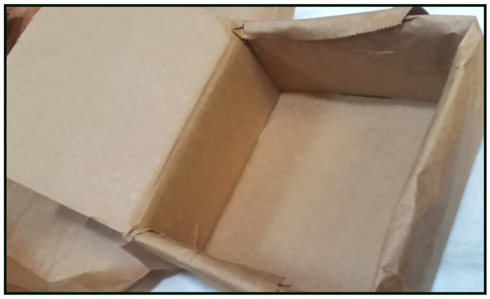


Fig. 6

6) When both the box and the black paper are dry, cut and/or tear the black paper into shapes. Glue each shape to the outside of the box. Add color between the iridescent shapes using crayons, markers, colored pencils, or other materials if desired (Fig. 7).

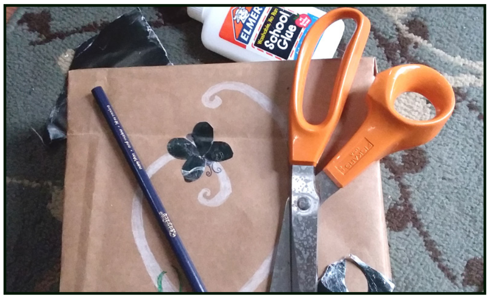


Fig. 7

7) Allow glue to dry overnight and display (Fig. 8).

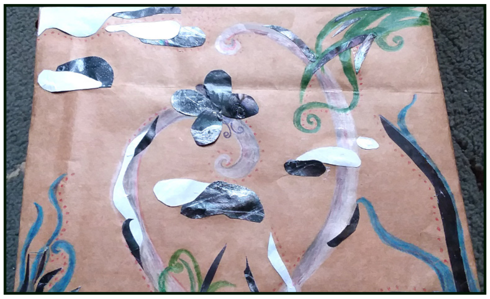


Fig. 8

ASSESSMENT:
Students should:

- have a basic understanding of the concept of iridescence.
- be able to explain the basic process of using water and nail polish to create iridescence.
- be able to identify different types of naturally-occurring iridescent surfaces (feathers, bubbles, insect wings, etc.).