



Smithsonian Associates

Alternative Pens for Mark Making and Calligraphy

with Sharmila Karamchandani

In this class we will learn to make our own alternate pens that can be used for mark-making, painting, or using them as tools for writing, calligraphy or to create textures. The first class will introduce you to various possibilities in making your own tools and brushes. Then in subsequent classes you will make and play with your own alternate pens. The goal is to have a lot of fun making your own unique tools/pens.

SUPPLY LIST

- Bring a few found objects, natural or manmade (see options below)
- Any colors or ink (water soluble or waterproof)
- Any writing surfaces
- Pencil
- Pen
- Eraser
- Ruler
- Rag/paper towels
- Container for water
- Flat plastic lids or palette for mixing colors or inks
- A binder to keep all your experiments
- A phone with which you can document your process and take photos to share with the class

Materials to create writing tools

- To make brushes, use your creativity to make tools from any found objects that are either man-made or found in nature

Natural materials

- Leaves
- Dry leaves
- Seed pods
- Bark
- Dry grass
- Stones

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- Pebbles
- Pine needles
- Shells
- Feathers
- Animal hair
- Human hair
- Etc. the entire world is full of possibilities!

Found/discarded household objects

- Old pens to use them as holders
- Yarn
- Zip ties
- Soda cans
- Disposable razors
- Old hard cards that are hard plastic
- Marker caps
- Toothbrushes
- Plastic or metal scrubbers
- Cardboard
- Plastic spoon and forks
- Cotton swabs
- Faded markers
- Sky's the limit
- Look into your trash can, kitchen, pantry, toys, junk objects, jewelry box...you will be surprised how many things you will find that has a potential to become a mark-making tool

To adhere or tie the bristles

- Ribbons
- Rubber bands
- Yarn
- Masking tape or duct tape
- Wire
- Glue gun
- Fabric strips
- etc. Before spending any money...see what you can use that you have at home

Inks

- Any Inks (black or any color)
- Any of the following: gouache/watercolor or acrylic paints
- You may even create your own ink with tea, coffee, mud, berries, beet root etc.

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Writing surfaces

- Mixed media paper (notebook)
- Watercolor paper
- Construction paper
- Scrap paper
- Printer paper (back of recycled paper)
- Boxes
- Packaging material
- Cereal boxes
- Old newspapers, magazines, junk mail
- etc. use your wild imagination