Bubble Wrap Prints

Project
Use a readily available material—bubble wrap—to create fun, unique prints.

Samples

Striped bubble print example

Zig-zag and stripes

Inspiration

Reynolda House is full of patterns. You can find them in the architectural details, in the textiles (in the curtains, carpets and furniture upholstery), and in furniture and other decorative arts objects. See what patterns you can find in the world around you! The Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein used dots, based on Ben-Day dots in graphic arts, in works like his *Peace Through Chemistry* (1970) print in Reynolda’s American Art collection. You can find a monotype print by artist Mary Frank in Reynolda’s collection. She used ink, paper, and stencils to make *Untitled (Running Figure)* in 1978.

Vocabulary

Monoprint or monotype print: a type of printing where the exact image can only be made once. A bubble wrap print like this is a monoprint.

Ben-Day dot: The Museum of Modern Art defines Ben-Day dots as “An inexpensive mechanical printing method developed in the late 19th century and named after its inventor, illustrator and printer Benjamin Henry Day, Jr. The method relies upon small colored dots (typically cyan, magenta, yellow, and black) that are variously spaced and combined to create shading and colors in images.”
Materials
- Sheets of bubble wrap, *unpopped* (you’ll have to wait until you finish printing to hear that satisfying POP!). Cut your bubble wrap to the same size as your paper (or smaller than your paper.)
- Liquid tempera or acrylic paint in various colors
  - Note: acrylic is harder to wash out
- Soft bristled brush (if you have enough brushes to use one per color, you can keep painting without having to clean your brush between colors!)
- A paper plate or small plastic cups to hold tempera paint
- Paper for printing onto with your painted bubble wrap
- Newsprint or old plastic table cloth to protect your work surface

Process
For video instructions, find this episode on [Reynolda's YouTube page](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIDEO_ID).

1. Squeeze out some tempera paint onto your plate or into (separate) cups.
2. Lay the bubble wrap on a covered work surface, bubbles facing up.
3. Think about what pattern you might want to make with your colors. Brush paint onto the surface of the bubble wrap.
4. Continue to paint the bubbles until the whole surface is covered.
5. When you have finished, pick up your paper. Lay the paper on top of the painted bubble wrap.
6. Press down carefully with your hands over the entire surface, applying a light pressure.
7. Carefully peel the paper away from the bubble wrap.

8. Lay the finished print flat to dry. You can continue to print with the same bubble wrap. You might be able to get one or two more prints without repainting, though they will be faint “ghost” prints.

Continue this activity: How can you use your prints?
- **Display:** Glue your print on top of a larger, solid piece of paper to make a frame
- **Book covers and endpapers:** Use your print as decorative paper when making handmade books
- **Bookmarks:** Cut bookmark-size rectangles from your print. If you want to make the bookmark stronger or better protect it from water, cut two lengths of clear packing tape and place one on each side of the book mark, trimming the ends as needed.
- **Note cards:** Cut a section of your print and place on the front of a blank notecard
- **Envelopes:** Use our envelope template and instructions to make an envelope from your paper. If you used tempera paint, you may want to cover the dots carefully with clear packing tape before putting in the mail.
- **What else can you think of creating?**

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