

DOT PAINTED GOURD TILE
By *LARRY MCCLELLAND*



The techniques outlined below are influenced by a combination of post-impressionist pointillism and Australian aboriginal dream time or dream dot painting. The pointillists created entire paintings with individual dots of color which, when viewed from a distance, blended into an overall image. The designs created by the Aborigines are reflective of their culture and traditions. I have simplified some of these elements into a few basic designs which create patterns as they are outlined and merge into each other. You can use some of these basic designs on your tile or create new designs of your own. The idea is to explore use of color in conjunction with the design elements.

THE MATERIALS

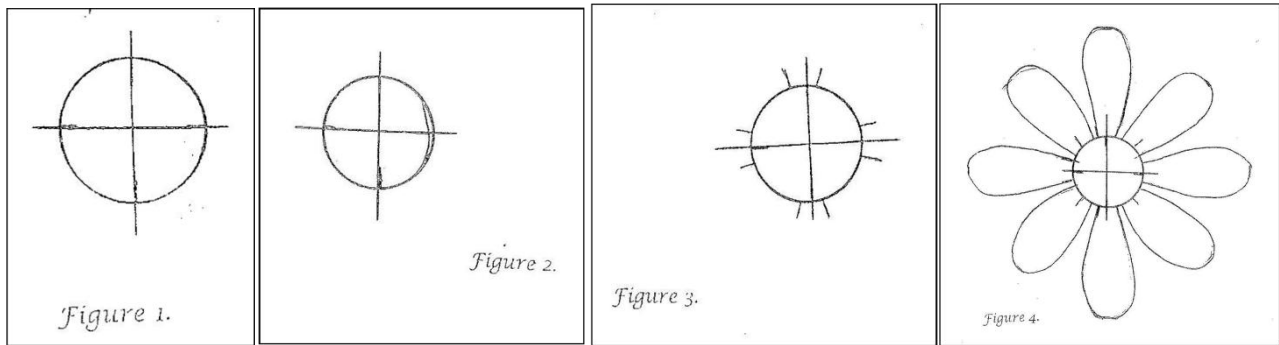
1. A gourd tile which has been prepped with gesso and base coated with a solid color. There are several colors to choose from.
2. Acrylic paints - these come in a wonderful range of colors, so the color combinations are limitless. There are three brands of paint which I prefer to use: 1 Delta Ceramcoat, 2 Americana, and 3 Folkart. Each brand has some unique colors. All are available at Michael's or any other good craft store.
3. Brushes - will be used minimally, since the patterns are created with dots. Brushes will be used to block in the background areas of the main design elements.
4. Stylus for dotting - the stylus will be dipped into the paint and onto the gourd to create the dots.

PAINTING THE TILE

1. CHOOSING THE DESIGN ELEMENTS

a. "Flowers"

Find the center of your tile and mark it. The flowers are created by starting with a circle (using the circle template), then adding the petals. Use a circle size proportionate to the overall size of the flower. Divide the circle into quarters; see fig. 1, extending the line outside the circle. Using a tape measure or small ruler, measure the distance from the circle to the tip of the petal, e.g. 1 ½" fig. 2 Mark the top of the petal with a pencil line. At the base of the petals, make a mark about 1/8" away from each side of the center line, fig 3.



Starting at this mark, begin widening the petals, rounding at the top to create a petal shape, fig. 4. You should have your four petals the same length and shape. Adjust the shape of the petals as needed. Mark a line half way between each of these petals. Measure up and mark the top of the secondary petals 1/8" less than the length of the primary petals. Repeat the process of sketching the petals as in fig. 4. You should now have a complete flower with one set of petals longer than the other. When planning the size of the flower, allow for room to outline it and create additional designs as the patterns of dots meet.

b. Circles

Using the circle template, draw circles in either a symmetrical or a random pattern. You could use either the same size circle or different sizes.

c. Free-form shapes

Create shapes of your own design.

2. BLOCKING IN THE DESIGN ELEMENTS

Using black paint, fill in your flowers, circles or free-form shapes. Black paint dries fairly quickly, so this process should not take long. When the paint has dried, you will need to redraw the circle in the middle of the flower, again using the circle template.

3. DOTTING

You are now ready to begin dotting. Choose your paint colors. Be creative with your color choices!

Avoid dark colors such as purple or dark blue, ect. which will get lost on the black. Shake your paint bottle and squeeze out some of the color you plan to use on your design. If doing flowers, choose two which work with each other. Starting with the center of the flower, dip the stylus into the paint, "scooping" up a little paint. You may want to practice dotting on a piece of paper.

Keeping the stylus perpendicular to the surface of the ground, apply light pressure on the stylus and start dotting on the line of the circle. Space the dots about 1/16" apart. To keep the dots about the same size, do no more than two dots on one dip.

Continue dotting around the circle until you have completed a row. Wipe off the stylus. Using your second color, do a row of dots inside the first row. Continue alternating colors of dots until you have filled the circle, ending with a single dot in the center. The petals have two sets of dots for each petal. On the long petal, dot along the outside edge of the petal, skipping the next shorter petal and doing the next long petal. Using your second color, outline the shorter petals. On the inside of each petals, do a row of dots using the opposite color. The flowers are now complete.

CIRCLES – Using white or light buttermilk, do a single row of dots around the outside edge of the circle. This will set off the circle designs from your outline colors. The circles can then be filled in with rows of dots of a single color or of alternating colors. Work from the outside of the circle to the center, ending with a single dot in the center.

FREE FORM DESIGNS – Outline and fill in the same as for circles.

OUTLINING YOUR DESIGNS

Make a single row of dots around the edge of your tile. Using a color not used in your flower or circle outlines, begin outlining your design elements with rows of dots. To add some uniformity to the piece, I suggest using the same sequence of colors around each element. As the outlining continues, the rows of dots will begin to meet and create additional patterns. Continue filling in the areas between the designs until all spaces are filled. You may wish to leave some areas of negative spaces or soli color as part of your design. As you work, be careful not to grab areas just painted or smear dots you have already put on. Cleaning up smears is possible, but time consuming.

FINISHING UP

Once the piece is completely dry, go back and erase any obvious pencil lines and tidy up any “oops”. When you’ve tidied up and the piece is dry, it is sprayed with an acrylic sealer. I prefer a matte spray to a gloss, but that will be your choice.

I HOPE YOU HAD FUN!
LARRY MCCLELLAND

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