

## Suminagashi\_Making Marble Pattern

### Overview:

Suminagashi, literally meaning “floating ink,” is a traditional Japanese paper marbling technique. Participants create unique, swirling patterns on water using ink and a few simple tools, such as brushes, cotton swabs, and small containers. The patterns are



then transferred onto paper, resulting in a one-of-a-kind artwork. This hands-on activity allows participants to explore creativity while engaging with a centuries-old Japanese art form.

### Materials:

- Sumi Ink (Can get via Amazon)
- Dish soap
- 2 cotton swabs/person (Brush substitutes)
- 2 small containers/person
- A big container or a silver tray/person
- \*Please inquire with the museum about the possibility of borrowing these.
- Water
- Papers

### Instruction:

- In one container, add 1–2 drops of dish soap and a small amount of water. In another container, pour some Sumi-ink.
- Fill a large container with water.
- Using cotton swabs, gently touch the surface of the water and alternately drop ink and soapy water in the following order: Ink → Soapy water → Ink → Soapy water → Ink, and so on.



- To create unique designs, gently blow toward the surface of the water or lightly stir it.
- Gently place a paper on the surface of the water, then take it out.

### Cultural Background:

**Origin:** Suminagashi is considered one of the oldest forms of Japanese decorative art, dating back to the 12th century. It originated as a way to decorate paper for calligraphy and poetry.

**Artistic Significance:** Each marbled pattern is unique and cannot be exactly reproduced, reflecting the Japanese aesthetic of appreciating impermanence and natural flow.

**Philosophy:** The art of Suminagashi emphasizes patience, subtlety, and harmony with nature. The gentle interaction with water and ink mirrors the Japanese appreciation for simplicity and the beauty of natural processes.

**Modern Relevance:** Today, Suminagashi is practiced worldwide, both as a craft and a form of artistic meditation. It provides an accessible way for people of all ages to experience a traditional aspect of Japanese culture without prior knowledge or expertise.

### Note:

- Children welcome (parents/guardians recommended)
- Facilities with a nearby sink
- When the water in the large container becomes completely black, replace it with fresh water.
- Don't worry if ink clumps form at the bottom of the container. These clumps will not transfer onto the paper.
- If the marbling doesn't work well, it may be because of excess oil in the container. In that case, wash the container thoroughly with warm water before continuing.
- No prior experience or knowledge of Japanese is needed.
- The activity is visual and hands-on, allowing participants to engage and create their own artwork immediately.
- The process emphasizes experimentation, creativity, and observation of the interaction between ink and water.

