

# Studio Saturdays: Color-Tone Sculptures

Rollins  
Museum  
of Art

## *Alte Liebe* by Imi Knoebel



Imi Knoebel

*Alte Liebe*

2011

Acrylic on aluminum

## LIST OF MATERIALS

- 1 Half Sheet of Watercolor Paper
- Foam Tray
- 8 Popsicle Sticks
- A Pencil
- Flathead Paintbrush
- Bowl of Water
- Three different paints colors + white

Imi Knoebel is a German artist who uses painting, color, and geometrical objects to study how colors can create, define, and become shapes or 3-dimensional structures. Knoebel draws inspiration from Minimalism, an art movement from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s that focused on breaking art down to its basic elements and exploring how these elements can be put back together in new ways. The movement extended beyond art to literature, music, film, and architecture. Knoebel's work expands on this connection to architecture by investigating the effect different colors have on the viewer's understanding of his structures' space, weight, and volume, or the amount of space something takes up.

Knoebel uses color theory to help him choose which colors will create the most visual interest, or which colors will keep the viewer's eyes moving around the work. Color theory is the study of how people see and understand color, how different colors mix together, and what colors look best together. If you have ever used a color wheel, you've used color theory! Color theory also helps us to know which colors stand out to our eyes and which colors fade into the background. Using color theory, Knoebel is able to play with his placement of contrasting or similar colors in his structures to control how the viewer makes sense of what they see.

**For today's craft, we'll be making our own Imi Knoebel-inspired structures and practicing how to mix and place different colors to create visual interest. I'll be using my own structure to practice tonality using blue as my main color. Tonality describes all of the different shades that can be made from one base color. Feel free to paint and stack your popsicle sticks however you'd like but be sure to take time to think about how your structure will look before you start!**

## THINK LIKE AN ARTIST

- 1) What color did you use as your base and why?
- 2) Did mixing all of these colors change how you thought about painting?

# INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a base color and squeeze out large dabs of your paints on your foam tray. You will be building on your base color to explore all the tones and other hues that can be made from it. As you can see, I started with blue, so that will be my base.
2. Think about your base color. How many combinations can you make by mixing your base color together with other colors to create many different shades? This range of colors is called a color family. Create 8 different shades and don't be afraid to experiment!
3. If you are using acrylic paint, remember that it dries quickly, so mix large amounts—larger than what you see me mixing here—so that you don't have to remix your paints.
4. Take your sheet of watercolor paper and arrange 4 popsicle sticks on top of it in the shape of a square.
5. Trace the square, making sure to firmly press down on the sticks so they don't move and mess up your square.
6. Paint each popsicle stick a different color. Make sure to cover the entire front and each side but leave the back unpainted. Clean your brush between popsicle sticks to keep your colors bright!
7. If two of your colors look too similar, remix them with a different ratio of base colors to get a new shade.

8. Once you've painted all your popsicle sticks, set them aside to dry.

9. While you wait, grab your piece of watercolor paper with the square drawn on it. We'll be painting it in your original base color.

10. Dab extra paint in your base color on the tray, being careful not to let it mix with any others. Add some water to make a color wash—this will bring out some different tonal qualities in the color as you apply it, since the amount of water in each brushstroke will change the saturation in that spot. Saturation means how much color gets applied to the paper. The darker it is, the more saturated.

11. When your square is completely painted, cut it out and set it aside to dry.

12. Take 4 of your popsicle sticks and glue them inside your square, placing one on each side. Take a moment to think like Knoebel and consider how you'd like to arrange your colors in a visually interesting way.

13. Make sure to leave some room between the popsicle stick and the edge of the paper since we be adding a second, offset layer on top so we can see all the colors and the range they create.

14. Once you've glued the bottom layer, glue the remaining popsicle sticks on top, aligning them with the edge of the paper so they only half cover the layer below. Use lots of glue to make sure they hold!

15. Be sure to give your structure plenty of time to dry. You can help the process along by placing a heavy book on top of it to flatten and press together the popsicle sticks.