Abstract expressionist painter Stanley Whitney creates works of art by organizing blocks of colors into grids that fill the canvas. Viewing the paintings of Stanley Whitney provides a platform for understanding color and light, and how they can inform creating a composition. The art-making process engages students with an experience in color mixing, exploring lightness and darkness.
Objective
Students will begin to understand the difference between light and dark shades, engaging in a color mixing art-making experience that references the work of artist Stanley Whitney.

Essential Question
How might we use color to create a composition?

Vocabulary
Color
How someone sees an object based on how light is reflected or released

Shade
The amount of lightness or darkness a color has

Composition
How things are put together in space, the formation or construction of objects in space

Light
Stimulates sight and makes things visible, a natural or illuminating element such as the sun or a lamp

Materials
Primary Color and White Model Magic
Cardboard (cut into squares, one per student)
Elmer's Glue
Book: Mix it Up by Herve Tulle

Preparation
1. Display an image of Untitled (05–2010) to be used in visual inquiry discussion.

2. Separate out small portions of red, yellow, and blue Model Magic and place the three pieces onto a cardboard square, prepare one per student.

3. Separate out small portions of the white Model Magic and place them to the side to be used later, prepare one per student.

4. Set out cardboard squares (to be used as a base) and Elmer's glue.

Methods
1. Engage in Visual Inquiry around the work of Stanley Whitney, focusing on the key vocabulary.

2. Scaffold student’s understanding of color as you introduce mixing of the primary colors through a book read.

3. Distribute the cardboard squares with the primary colored Model Magic. Encourage students to explore mixing different color combinations, and to discover what new colors they can make.

4. Once they have created a variety of colors, introduce the white Model Magic into their palette, challenging them to create lighter shades of each color.

5. Have students count and sort the colors they’ve created into dark and light shades of color.

6. Have students use the shades they’ve created to form small “tile like” shapes, and glue them to their cardboard square.

Reflection
1. Ask students to describe the colors they made and how they made them.

2. Ask students to share what they enjoyed most about their art making.

3. Invite students to share what they enjoy about each other’s works of art, finding commonalities among the work.
Stanley Whitney
*Untitled (05–2010), 2010*
Oil on linen
The Studio Museum in Harlem;
Museum purchase with funds
provided by the Acquisition Committee 2012.16.1
Photo: Zalika Azim