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## Working With Collage with Danielle Krysa

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### Chapter 1 - Working with collage

#### Overview

- Hi, my name is Danielle Krysa. I'm a collage artist and I'm also the author and blogger known as the Jealous Curator. For years I have been looking at other artist's work and I've also been making my own. I love collage, because it allows me to work with pop culture images, found images, negative space, and I get to bring in all of the wit and humor that I love introducing into art. I'll show you how I find images and how I combine them. I'll share some of my cutting and gluing techniques. We'll also talk about composition and color. And we'll discuss how to create narrative through collage. Collage is a great medium to work in, whether you're an amateur or a professional. There's such a broad range of ways to work and when I began, I of course was a beginner. But, you can continue to push yourself and try new techniques and your work can become more complicated and more interesting. So, if you're a beginner, welcome. If you're more advanced, let's see where we can push our work. (playful music)

#### Materials

- The great thing about collage is that the materials are very accessible. Basically all you need is something to cut with, something to glue with, and something that you can actually glue down. Some of the things you are going to need are first of all a ruler and an X-ACTO blade those go hand in hand. My favorite thing to cut with are kitchen scissors. They work the best for me, you can try any scissors that you like. These little things, ring knives are amazing. They are life changers, you can get in to tight little corners with those. For glue, I like to use a white glue, and a neutral PVA, and a paint brush, and a small dish for the glue. You can use a glue stick if you like, but I find it too messy. Of course we're gonna need things to glue down. I like to work with found imagery and I like to keep them organized in clear envelopes so that when it comes time to work I can find things easily. So when they're cut out I pop them into these envelopes and I can go back to them when I need them. I also like to work with paint occasionally. I bring that into my collages so I've got a palette and a few of my favorite colors. Water to rinse the brushes. The brushes that will be rinsed. And then I've got three different bases that we're gonna play around with. I've got a wood panel, watercolor paper, and old book covers which coincidentally come from the old books where I get my images. When I go to a thrift shop I like to set myself a limit of three books maximum because otherwise you will leave there with everything that they have and then when you get home you're just too overwhelmed and you don't know where to start. This way you're sort of setting a playground for yourself to work within. You might also wanna gather up some bits and bobs from your studio to include that aren't paper, if you're wild and crazy and a rule breaker like me. So I like to have things on hand like washi tape, pompoms, glitter, sequins, some seashells whatever works and that you can add to your composition. The great thing about collage is that it's super flexible so grab what you've got and let's get started.

#### Cutting and organizing materials

- When I head into the studio, I always start with cutting, whether I'm in the mood to make something or not. So the first thing I do is grab my books, I actually love this. This is like meditation for me, and I just flip through and see what I can find. Sometimes there's colors that grab my

attention, sometimes there's actual little people that I think might be great to use in collage. Sometimes this might just be a really great area to use, so the first thing you have to get over with collage is just ripping things out. You don't have to worry that it's a beautiful book. It is a beautiful book, but watch this. (paper ripping) Oh, yes, I have now ripped a page from it, the scariness is over. So, you could use this area. I could cut it out, I could cut these flowers out in great detail, or I could just do this, and have a really cool triangle to work with at some point. 'Course, this guy's pretty fantastic, so I could go in with scissors and cut him out perfectly. As I said, these scissors are my favorite. I have tried fancy art scissors, and special tools, and these kitchen scissors work for me. So when I'm cutting, I always like to go a tiny bit inside the actual object that I'm cutting out. Otherwise, if you don't, you can get a little halo around the object, and you don't want that, so you can go right in, tiny bit, and just get close. Just gonna rip him out so I have less paper flinging around. Okay, there we go. So got a bit of a halo around his top, let's get closer. And this just takes practice. You're going to ruin a lot of things, and that is okay. You've done all this perfect cutting, and then something terrible happens, oh no, you accidentally ripped him. This is not a tragedy, I consider this a happy accident, because maybe now in your composition, you're gonna end up gluing him like that, or maybe you're gonna end up using it like this. Don't worry about a rip, or a tear, or if you haven't cut it perfectly, see it as a happy accident and move forward from there. Now that I have him cut out, I will put him in my People folder, so that when I am ready to do something with him, I know where he is. I just got these at a dollar store, you can use anything that you want that works for you, but it's just nice when you can see what you've got. All right, let's see what else we can find in this gem of a book. This is a great texture to use at some point, I could cut this boat of people out and put them in a new story. That's what I love about collages: creating new narratives. You can remove people from the situation that they're in, like this guy. Let's take this windsurfer and put him in an entirely new environment. Also, start by ripping this page out again, no fear. And this guy, I can use a combination of my scissors and the ring knife, so I'll show you an example of that. So let's just first get him cut out. So you can see that the top of his sail is actually cut off, that's not really a problem. Nobody knows what the original image looked like, so when you cut it, just cheat it a little bit. See, nobody will be the wiser. And when I have edges like this that aren't perfectly clean, like his foot is in the water, very often I'll rip that so that I'm emulating that water texture, and it kind of works better than trying to cut it perfectly. You can really get away with quite a bit in collage. Nobody expects it to be really real, and again, you're gonna make lots of mistakes, and you might wreck this one, and that's okay. You'll find another guy another day, and that one will work. Okay, there we go, we've got that. Now, if I wanted to go in and cut away these little windows, I could use my ring knife for that, because with the scissors, how will I get in there? The ring knife allows you to really get in there and do a clean edge all the way around, so I'll show you how I do that. I'll just grab my ring knife. The way this works is you slide it onto your finger, and you can hold it like a little pen. It just gives you so much more control, and you can get right in there, so I'm gonna just cut out this little window to show you. Sometimes I will hold it down like a pivot point and just move the paper instead of lifting the knife off, because then you'll never find that edge where you were. Rotate it, cut it, and then I always use this as a little stabby tool and poke it out. And there we go, we've got this perfectly clean window that there's no way you coulda done that with scissors. Now that he's cut out, I will put him into my Tiny People folder for later, and, of course, I always have a Royals folder underway, because I love to use the Royal Family in everything I do. So for one of our projects later, of course, Liz is gonna make an appearance, and there's a few I've been thinking about using, some of which are cut out beautifully, some of which are not, so I'm

just gonna use this chance to get one of them cut out a little bit better. I'll start with my scissors to cut out her outline, and then we'll go in with the knife tool to get those little elbow bits. Again, I use my scissors to pivot like I did with the knife instead of lifting the scissors off and on every single time. Her straps are tricky, I've broken many of them. Sometimes I stop and look just where I am so that I don't cut off an ear. Okay, let's come back to this crown 'cause that's gonna be a bit tricky. And because I already know it's going to be really hard to get in here and have this be clean, sometimes I will make the executive decision that Liz is going to be cut off from here down, and I'll actually go in and cut along her gloves and just use her as the little floating torso, so let's just do that, and these are decisions that get made along the way and change your composition as you go, and again, I just see them as blessings and happy accidents, because if you go in with a really precise plan, there's a good chance you'll be disappointed (laughs) that it didn't work out, so there we go. You can't really tell there's a purse strap there. There, and now we've got Liz as a little floating torso, and that's gonna work just as fine as anything else would've. So I'm just gonna go in and cut out her elbow area with my pen knife. Again, trying to go a little bit inside the line so we don't get a black halo there. I'll rotate it on the point, rotate it on the point, there we go, and then I can do the other side, and I'm gonna use my scissors to go and get all the detail inside the top of that crown. And I'll just do the other side now. Depending on the book that you use, the paper's more delicate, so you just, it's trial and error with every single new thing that you're working with, whether it's a magazine or a book. I'll get my scissors back, and head into the detail in this crown. You might wanna put on some music and relax, (laughs) because things like this take a little bit of time. I twist and turn my paper instead of moving the scissors, and it is so detailed that I'm just gonna go really slow and make sure I get all of those little diamonds, and all of the little corners. I can always go back and round off the end to make it not so pointed, and I'll continue until I get rid of all of that black. And there's Liz, ready for a collage. I want you to start by cutting for at least 15 to 20 minutes, just anything that you're attracted to, rip some things out, cut some things out. Have a stack of stuff that you may not know what it's going to be for, but you've got a bunch of materials that you're ready to work with.

### Choosing a base

- The first thing you need to do is select a base for your collage. I like to work on one of three surfaces, and the first one is watercolor paper. The reason for this is it holds up to glue. Any thinner, and it'll start to buckle, so watercolor works the best for me. You can also buy it really cheaply in student packs so you don't have to spend a ton of money. You can use any size that you like. Little ones are fun to work on. The larger you get, you have to remember that that might buckle depending on how many elements you have on the page. I tend to work on 8x10s, 11x14s. I also like to take a perfect sheet and rip it in half so that one of the edges is raw and the rest are clean, and that way I can't get precious about the fact that I might ruin this perfectly perfect piece of paper. Another surface I like to work on are old book covers, because when you're a collage artist, you are going through a lot of books, and you'll end up having the covers left over. They are fantastic because they are so much harder, and they will not buckle ever. The other nice thing is that you don't feel precious because they're already kind of wrecked. Very often there'll be a little bit of writing that you can incorporate. There might be some crayon marks depending on who owned this book. And suddenly those are elements that you could include in your collage that you wouldn't have put there yourself. My last surface are wood panels. This is what I've been working on a lot lately because I've tried all sorts of things, trial and error, different paper, different thicknesses. And

I have wound up really liking panels. I tried canvas, but I didn't like the way that it handled glue. Panel handles glue really well. I often also add paint and other little objects like pom poms, and they would actually really adhere to this wood panel. Look for unfinished panels, that way you can add whatever you wanna add, whether it's varnish or paint or just plain paper. You can find these really easily at any local art and craft supply store.

### Composing your collage

- Before you even think about getting your glue out, we need to compose our collages. So we'll just take a little bit of time going through the piles of things that you've cut out, things you've ripped out, and just moving them around on the base that you've chosen. This way, we can get a really nice composition before we stick anything in a permanent place. Our first collage will be on a wood panel. Because this board is blank and scary, I like to give myself an assignment to help me get jump-started. So in this case, I'm going to use a metaphor. You can google whatever you like to find. There's lots of beautiful, beautiful visual metaphors. I'm gonna use she swam in a sea of diamonds. So as soon as you say that, you can instantly start picturing things. In my brain, when I hear the word she, I think of Queen Elizabeth, so Liz will be incorporated into this piece. I've got my envelope full of royals, so I'm gonna find a good Liz. Some of them are cutouts, some of them still need a bit of cutting out. There's some that are black and white, some in color, so I just like to play around with a few until I find a piece that might work. I love this one. And she swam in a sea of diamonds, so you gotta have some diamonds in there. But this dress looks a little mermaid-ish, so maybe I will go with that one instead. This is the one I cut out earlier. Now, we need diamonds since she's swimming in a sea of diamonds. This does not mean that you have to go through books and find pictures of diamonds. I've a cool textures folder that I always have handy. Actually, there are some diamonds right there. I'm just gonna pull up a bunch of the textures and I'm gonna cut my own diamonds that will then surround, surround her. I'll just use my scissors for these. I do a little easy diamond that basically I just go up, over, down, and I use that other edge. Voila. One of the diamonds that Liz can swim in. This is a fantastic piece of texture, and I think it actually is probably one of Liz's coats covered in diamonds, so why not use that? So it just makes a bunch of them all different sizes so that I have a nice grouping to use. I always like to make sure that I have small, medium, and large elements for my composition, otherwise, it will look a bit unbalanced. It's because this is blue and diamond day, which is perfect for the ocean, I'll make a bunch of different sizes. Any texture can become a diamond. I've got clothes in here. I've got a cable knit sweater. I've got roses from a garden book. It doesn't really matter. That's, again, one of my favorite things about collage, is so flexible. You can make whatever it is that you wanna make and have it work in the piece that you're creating. So now I have a whole bunch of diamonds and I'm going to start. Again, no glue is anywhere nearby and I'm just gonna play around with the balance and maybe, do they go under her arms, over, does it look weird to stick one in her elbow? Actually, that's kinda cool. So just take the time. Everyone wants to glue right away. Don't do it. Don't fall into the trap. Just start playing around. Make sure you've got a nice balance with the colors. And I would even suggest because I am such a rebel, maybe I don't want just paper. If she's swimming in a sea of diamonds, perhaps there are seashells involved. We'll throw a few in there. They might be terrible and I will take them out later. That is why I'm not gluing anything down just yet. I'm just gonna play around. And I say this all the time and I'm just gonna keep saying it again. Odd numbers are the way to go so I would never stop with four seashells. I would either do three or five. So let's just throw five in there for now. And I'm just gonna move them around for a few minutes until I feel like I can commit. And then

once I have the composition that I want, I will probably take a photograph just so that I remember how exactly how it is. There, I think that looks like Liz is swimming in a sea of diamonds. I'm happy with that composition, so I'm just gonna put that aside and I'm gonna prepare another composition, but this time on watercolor paper. This one is going to be a landscape. And I actually keep little textured pieces that I think would work nicely in landscapes, so I'm gonna dig into that. I'm gonna put my scissors away and I'm gonna rip this one because torn edges are just as nice as perfectly cut edges. So I've got roses, but I could use the bottom part as a green field. You don't have to take it so literally. I've got some pineapples, palm trees. And the idea is I'll rip these into strips and turn them into some kind of custom landscape. This is just construction paper, so it doesn't need to be a found image. It could just be colored paper that you've got lying around in the studio. So let's start with that as our sky. I'll use the torn edge there. My land could be pineapples. I'll just rip the edge off so that it's about the same width as the blue. And, again, I'm not gonna get precious about this because there are many more images, and lines don't need to be perfect. These are curtains from a book about a hotel, I think. So that could be my grass. These pineapples are too distracting for me. Let's get rid of those. Here's a little rose garden. There we go. So am I gonna glue this down? No, not yet. Because this has a sharp edge, I'm gonna match up these sharp edges. You could butt them up against each other and overlap them and glue them like that, but I'm just gonna leave a tiny bit of white space in between each one. You could be done right there. There's a landscape. You've got grass, you've got a little garden and a nice blue sky. But I have an obsession with adding narrative to everything I do. So narrative usually comes in when a human is involved. So I'm going to try putting a person in here and I've got my tiny people folder. (laughs) So I've got an RCMP team. I've got some hula dancers. Here's a little girl, a little headless girl. Her foot is cut off so there's no extra foot to use. So in that case, I probably have her walking right off the edge just as a little cheat. I kind of lose her in this green on green. Sometimes what I do is I put a bloom of paint right there, but I already know it will not work on this texture. So let's go into my rose folder and see if we can find her a head that made up a rose. I've got so many. This is the nice thing about having these folders 'cause then you don't have to be flipping through books. You've got some go-to pieces to work with. It's quite cute. Here's another one that still needs to be cut out. I think I wanna try that. Organic things are very, very forgiving when you cut them out as opposed to cutting out a person where you know where an arm and a nose and whatnot is supposed to go. With a flower, you can cut right into it and not have to worry that you're following the petals exactly because they could be really anything. If there's one petal that's not really working, if this feels a little bit funny, you can cut it off. Nobody will ever even know that it was there to begin with. Haha. Overlap her collars so that it looks like a chin. There, now she's walking through her garden. Actually, you know what, I like the big one better. Again, it's the small, medium, large. I'm gonna tuck it right inside the cut of her collar. Are you picking up on the theme here? There's no glue yet. But this composition is complete. I will put it aside and we're gonna do one more. The third surface I like to work on are old book covers. I have so many of them from tearing up the insides of the books that you might as well repurpose the cover as well. I like to work on the inside of the cover because it's a nice, clean sheet. Sometimes there's writing and cool things there. The outside cover, you can use as well if you love it. It's usually a little rougher though and the glue doesn't always adhere the way that you might want it to. For this one, I wanna do an abstract collage. The first two were quite representational, and they don't need to be. Collage can be abstract as well. So I'm gonna go back into my cool textures folder, pull out a bunch of stuff, and just see what's in there. I'm also purposely not gonna use scissors very much. I think I'm gonna do a little bit more ripping. So I've already got few bits and pieces in here



that are smaller, and I'm just gonna do a grid of these little found oddballs, and I'm just gonna make a little grid of stuff. I'm gonna rip this in half and use this as two pieces. Actually, maybe three pieces. So I've got mounds. I've got little triangular bits. You can have them interact like this. Whatever. I'm just gonna make a grid and try to make it balanced in size, and we'll grab my scissors and make a few more mounds. I've got some people at a royal parade. Let's cut a little funny mound out of that, pop them in there. I've got this nice pink. Let's do another little skinny mound. I'll rip the bottom off so that I've got. Here's the bottom of Liz from that other piece that we did for the swimming in a sea of diamonds. So cut a little, rip a triangle out of this, looks like a tree. There we go. I don't like that, too dark. This is the nice thing about composing. If I glued that little dark piece down, I wouldn't have been able to second-guess and rip it out. I don't love this anymore either. Okay. I always like to look for a combination of colors that I think work nicely. I like to blend black and white images with color images. I also like taking things out of context like having this little group of parade people in a just a mound instead of actually cutting the people out perfectly. Here's a funny guy. I don't know what he's doing. (laughs) I'm gonna take him out of context too. Let's see now if he's gonna steal the show. So let's just rip him in half. Because I've got green here, I'm looking for a little bit of green, maybe in the other pieces. I've got pink. So I sort of look for colors that will work together so that overall, I've got a composition that I'm happy with. Sometimes I'll go in when I've got these torn edges and make some perfectly straight bits. So the idea is just to experiment and play, keep ripping and changing if it's not working for you. But I feel the need to try it with the person too, so I'm just gonna go into my tiny people folder. Again, I'm gonna look for people that have color that work. I like this green guy. I've never used this green guy because I've got green happening in here. Maybe there's this green guy. When I cut him out, again, he was at the bottom of the page, so his legs are cut off, so I'll put him at the bottom of my page, a little off-center. There, he's just coming to have a look at the abstract piece that has just recently been hung in the gallery. Experiment with as many surfaces and compositions as you like. And when you really are happy, move them to the side and then it will be time to get out your glue.

### Gluing it down

- I'm gonna be totally honest, gluing is my least favorite part of being a collage artist. So what I do is I have all of my compositions all ready and they often sit in my studio for a day or two until I am ready to roll up my sleeves and get out the glue. So that is what is happening right now. After years of experimenting, I have netted out on using white neutral PVA glue. I feel it just gives me more control. So I pour it into a little dish, and I work with paint brushes. So depending on the size of the piece I'm gluing down, I might use a bigger brush or a teeny tiny little brush if I'm working with small little hands or legs that I need to glue down. So I have my composition ready to go. I did not take a photograph of it first. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't, but I find that if I do take a photo of it, I get really really precious about it and I don't wanna be precious about it. So I'm going to trust my artist instincts and if these diamonds don't end up exactly where they are right now, I trust that they will end up somewhere good anyway. So, because this is layered, we have to step back a little bit and I need to glue the first thing down and then build on top of that. So in this case, the first thing is Liz. Instead of removing elements entirely, I just slide them a little bit out of the way so that I remember where they were, but they're not in my way while I'm trying to get that first layer down. So these two are gonna be the trickiest diamonds because they're tucked inside there. So I'll just have to remember not to put glue on her elbows until I get those diamonds in their place. So we've got Liz, she's in the middle. She's a decent size, so I'm gonna grab just a little mid range brush.

These are just my painting brushes, so there's nothing special about them. It's just the size that I like. And I will flip her over. Oh, there she is again! And I will start from one end and work my way down. If you're gluing a really, really big piece, I glue a little bit, put it down, fold it up, keep gluing. Otherwise, it dries. But this is a nice size. I'll be able to glue it all in one shot. Now I have to remember, I just said, don't glue her elbows so that I can slip those diamonds in. I have to remind myself instead of going into gluing autopilot. So I just get a bit on my brush, rub it around. This is why I like working with brushes. I have a lot more control than if I was using a bit circular glue stick. I can go right up to those little tips and coat the entire thing. I don't wanna go too close to the edges of my cut out because then when I push it down, a whole bunch of glue is gonna squidge out the sides. Now granted, this glue does dry clear, but you'll still be able to see a little lump and I don't want that. Skip over those elbows, leave a little bit. And we'll come back and get those from the underside once my diamonds are in place. Okay, when we're gonna put her down, I just get her down as flat as I can. And instead of pushing from one end to the other, all the glue would squidge out at the top, I just pat her down. I very often use the heel of my hand here, or my palm, and just press really gently. And then that way I seem to get less glue pushing out the sides. It seems to distribute it more evenly. There! You might see a few bubbles, that's okay. Just push those bubbles down. So these elbows are still not totally glued down. And then that way, I'm able to slip the diamonds in there so it looks like she's holding them. So let's get those diamonds into place. Same thing, not too close to the edge. And just slip it in there. Touch it down gently, use the palm of my hand. And there we go! And then we'll do one more little diamond on the other side. There we go. Now, I'll gently lift up her elbow with an X-Acto blade. And that just lets me hold onto it. I'll get a tiny brush and I can just go underneath and make sure I've got that glued. Touch it down. And I'll just make sure that I get her other elbow done. There. So that was the trickiest part is those layers and getting that big piece down. Now I can just work on getting the other diamonds into place with my glue. (calm, quirky music) Done. For chunkier items, like seashells for example, or sequins or gems, or anything like that, I just use a lot more glue. You can also use epoxy glue if you're nervous about it, but white glue usually does the trick. Now that said, I would never ever put seashells or anything heavy on paper. It just won't hold and it might buckle, so panels are the best thing if you ever wanna add some chunkier stuff. So I'm just gonna add a whole bunch of white glue and get these shells into their position on my board. This is gonna be a little bit trial by error. I'm gonna put as much glue as I can on the bottom of the shell. I tried to pick shells that have a flat side so that there was something to adhere. Sometimes it works to put a little bit on the board and a little bit on your object, and then that way they connect together better. This is just gonna take patience and some drying time. These guys, I had them positioned like this, but I don't think that's actually gonna work. There's nothing to grab onto so I'm gonna flip them around the other way. You see, collage, flexible. There we go. That will actually hold. And one more little guy right here. And as I'm thinking about this, I've now got paper, I've got shells, I've got Liz, all of these things that I love. Because I personally often work with paint in my collages, this isn't feeling quite done to me. So I'm going to mix up a little bit of blue paint and splatter it around, just so it feels like she's really in an ocean. I'm using acrylic gauche to make the blue that I want. And these are two colors right from the tube and I don't love either of them on their own, so I'm just gonna mix them a bit just so they're closer to the color of the diamonds that I've got going. I like the aqua, but it just needs to be a bit darker. There we go, that's a bit better. Now because I'm gonna splatter this around like ink, this is way too thick, so I'll just get some water in there. So I've got a small brush, but not a teeny tiny one, and that'll help me get dots a better size. I never splatter on my piece right away, I splatter on my palette so that I

can see how far that spray is gonna go. And that's perfect. Okay, here we go, moment of truth. Bah, this is always a little bit scary. But I'm not gonna be precious, I've made this decision, I'm simply going to splatter and be okay with it. Here we go. Brace yourself, Liz. There we go. There, voila. Much more oceany. And it feels a lot more like, oh she got a little, there we go, wipe it right off. Ah, there we go, now it looks like a piece of Danielle Krysa art. Liz was not traumatized, all is well. Whether you're working on board or paper or an old book cover, you're gonna glue it down exactly the same way. Think about those layers, what goes down first. If you are feeling really nervous, feel free to take a photograph that you can refer to. You just need to start building on top of each other. If you're tucking into any corners into each other, remember not to glue the entire thing down so you've got that bit of give, and just use an X-Acto knife to lift it up, add your glue, and then press the entire thing down.

### Finishing touches

- We now have three finished collages. They are all glued down, and they are all dry. Here's our abstract piece. For me, I chose to add a little person just because it feels more like my work, and for me, it changes it from an abstract piece to a narrative. But it's totally up to you, and you can approach this any way that you like. For Liz, oh Liz, I love this piece. This was based on a metaphor, but to be perfectly honest, I kind of regret splashing the pain at the end. But I'm not sad about that, because I learned something from it. What I realized is once I splashed it on an unfinished panel, the paint bled into the wood. So I didn't get tiny little circle dots like I thought I might. So the next time I do something like this, I will either coat the panel in paint, or I will do this on a piece of paper, and then that way, I know I will get those little dots. So there's no trouble with getting something wrong. It's a learning experience, and I'll take it to the next piece. And our third piece was a landscape. I really embrace ripping. As a graphic designer, everything was always pixel perfect. So ripping just gives you the freedom to do whatever you want, and by ripping these three bands, you can create, again, any kind of landscape that you want. You will notice that, yes, there is a little person in here, because I like to add narrative. Don't feel that you have to do that. You're welcome to just go ahead and make an abstract landscape not with people. All of these pieces are finished. I wouldn't do anything else with them except probably frame them or hang them on a wall. If you're working with something like glitter, if you've adhered glitter to it, I would probably finish it with some sort of spray fixodent and just to make sure that glitter doesn't fall off once it is on your wall. So I brought a bunch of my pieces to show you. I'm gonna push these out of the way and show you things that I've been working on. This is the piece that started all of the swooshing for me. I was told, during my undergrad as a painting major, by my painting prof, that I should quote, "Never paint again." And unfortunately, I listened for about 15 years. I did transition into design, and I started doing collage, but the thought of using paint was just a huge no-no for me, and I sometimes even joke that you can't spell painting without paint. So I just avoided it for years and years, and then I had been running around the country, telling everyone else to get unblocked and push past their fears, and I decided to do a 30-day collage challenge for myself. So one morning I was lying in bed. It was gonna be my first day, and I wasn't quite awake yet, and I had a picture in my mind of a blob of paint with a little guy standing on it, and I caught my breath, and I said to my husband, "I have to buy paint." And I hadn't owned paint in almost 20 years at this point, so I ran out, bought new paint, and I came home, and because I was scared, instead of getting a canvas or some perfect paper, I started cutting out small squares, not even 5x7s in some cases, and just started making brush strokes, and balloons, and splatters and just covered them all. And then I got out my binders and



books filled with little people and started playing around with who would go on which blob. Not every little person belonged on every little blob. And when I found the one that did belong, a title would pop into my head, and I knew I had the right combination, and that was three years ago, and I haven't looked back since, and that is now how I work. So it is a combination of paper, paint, and whatever else I can find. This was one of the earliest pieces as well. I, again, had just put a pink stroke on one piece of paper and left it at that. I then started gathering up these little cutout wigs, well, they're now wigs, they used to be people in a catalog, and began placing them down. This instantly sets up a narrative. See these three girls are talking about this girl, and she's blushing 'cause she's sad and embarrassed that they're gossiping about her. For me, negative space is another one of the characters. I like to have as much room around the figures as I possibly can. It just gives air and creates a composition that works for me. This one is one of my favorites. Again, I was still working with this old catalog that I'd found, and found this great green skirt, and it just so happened that I had a brush that was exact width as this waistline. So I painted the stroke first, and when I got this skirt out, it matched perfectly. This piece is titled, "She Had a Real Flare for Fashion." I embraced my humor. I was told in university not only to never paint again, but that women couldn't be funny or they wouldn't be taken seriously as artists. So with this series, not only did I embrace paint, I also embraced being funny, because it's a huge part of who I am, and that needs to be in my art. This one is Liz. Liz started showing up in my work about a year and a half ago, and I had been painting Neapolitan stripes, as you do, and playing around with making my paint look like ice cream, and I found this (giggles) image of Liz. I think she's cutting a cake at some sort of ceremony, but to me it looked like maybe she was digging into some Neapolitan ice cream. So I just wait until I have the right person and the right paint, and then the story shows up somewhere along the way. The last piece I brought doesn't involve paint at all. It does involve Queen Elizabeth. Pom poms (giggles). This one, I had actually asked my gallery. I found these pom poms and loved them immediately, so I emailed my gallery in Toronto and said, "How do you feel about pom poms?" And they wrote me back and said, "Well, 'use them sparingly.'" But how do you use pom poms sparingly? This piece was already underway, and so it is now titled, "Use Them Sparingly, They Said, But Liz and Her Muse Were Already Knee Deep." (giggles) And my gallery ended up loving it, and they think it's hilarious, and now I'm allowed to use pom poms. So just grab whatever you find, whatever makes you happy. It's like when we were kids and we just found pom poms. We made art. We found a feather, we made art. We didn't worry so much about who would like them, who might buy them. We just made stuff. And I finally, finally, years after going through that trauma in art school, have realized that art is just about having fun, and so make what you wanna make and do it the way you wanna do it.