
Abstract Art Making: A Daily Practice with Abby Houston

Chapter 1 - Abstract Art Making: A Daily Practice

Overview

- Abstract Art Daily Practice with Abby Houston Day 21, take one. (slate claps) (upbeat music) - From a really young age, my mom used to take me to the park and the beach and the library to sketch the things in the world around us. I really find that that kind of creative practice grounded me to understand the world in a visual way. I'm Abby Houston. I'm a fine artist, art educator, art therapist and mother of three little artists. Something that I really believe in is that there's no wrong way to engage in the creative process. Let's work together making messy marks, fine details, looking at scale and repetition and thinking about how our mood affects different spreads that we work on. My process is one of spontaneity and color and I'm excited to take you along with me. (upbeat music)

Day 1 - Materials

- I have a really robust set of materials to share with you. And it's important to remember that you don't need every single material that I have out on the table. But, I will explain the reason why I like to layer a lot of these different pieces. So starting with paints, I love to work with a variety of heavy body, fluid, and high fluid acrylics. Those are really important for the sketchbook process that we're gonna do in this course, because they act different ways, and I wanted to start by explaining the high fluid acrylics, which are in these sort of squirt bottles, are pretty diluted. So you don't need a lot, they go a long ways. Next are the fluid acrylics, which are over here. They have a little bit more pigment to them, and are not quite as runny on the page. One of the things that I like to start off a piece with after I've gessoed it, are the heavy body acrylics, which come in a variety of different brands. You don't have to use the brands that I'm using. I just really like the color assortment in the Golden brand paints. I also really love these Amsterdam acrylics that come in these tubes, and I really like the abstract paint pouches as well. They're really fun to work with. All of these paints come in really small sizes and in sample packs if you want to buy them that way. That way you get a variety of colors at a smaller cost. I also really like these Sennelier abstract paints, which is a heavy body acrylic that comes out of a tube, kind of has a little fine line to it, which is really fun to work with in higher detail. I also wanna talk about Liquitex Gesso. It's a really great medium level gesso, that I feel like is a good price, and also has really great coverage. I use gesso on every single one of my sketchbook spreads, and we'll talk about that as we get started, because it's really important to prep your paper so that your materials sit on top of the gesso as opposed to absorbing into the paper. I have Mod Podge out here for when we get to our collage lessons later on during the course. I also have these Stabilo pencils. They're kind of a wooden crayon, and I really like the way that you can blend them with water and put them over the top of certain surfaces once you've already worked with your acrylic paints. Next I'd like to share about, just having a pencil and a ballpoint pen or a really kind of chunky pencil with you to do some of our more sort of free flowing marks, as well as a set of colored pencils. I really like Prisma colors, because I like how soft they are, and I like how vibrant the color is. And I also really like Posca colored pencils. Which leads me to talking about probably my favorite and most versatile material that we're gonna use in this course, and that's the Posca paint pens. I have a set here of different colors in some sort of narrower widths, and then I also brought with me my really wide tipped Posca markers. I also have a couple in another brand

that I like, called Molotow. The Molotow paint pens are refillable, which makes them really fun to use if you like certain colors and you want to invest in them. But I really love both of those brands. Any acrylic paint pen will work, so if you're just starting out and building your supply list, it's really important for you to know that you should work within your budget. I have built my collection of Posca and Molotow paint pens over several years, and I'm happy to say that it's a really fun thing for me to continue to work with. Next I have a jar of water and then I also really rely a lot on, as far as application tools, I love two different types of silicone tools that swipe the paint across the surface of the paper. This one here, you hold a little bit more in a grip, and this one's more like a flexible paintbrush. They're really easy to clean also. I have a variety of paintbrushes here, round, flat, fan style. You can see that they're not in tiptop shape, which I feel like is really important, because a lot of times my brushes work through a lot of different stages and I've had them for quite a while. I always like to have a set of washi tape, or masking tape with my work, both because I use them as circle templates and I also need to mask work from time to time. I have just a pack of Crayola crayons. Here's the Posca pens in a set, if you're looking to get the set of colors that I primarily use, these are sort of like a pastel set with a teal. I have a pair of scissors. I have some found materials, which I feel like are the sort of treasures of our sketchbook process, because I have plastic lids, I have circle templates that I've cut out some netting from a produce bag, and then this is an old stencil from a game board that my children received, and I use it from time to time to create visual detail by stenciling. A few more tools that I feel like are important for this process are a harder edge palette knife, some softer foam brushes to blend work together, and then I really really enjoy using these uni ball white ink gel pens, along with my fine liner acrylic paint pen, which has diluted acrylic paint in it. We'll talk about that as we get going in some of the lessons. I also have these cardboard pieces that I like to collect and use. They work great as an alternative if you don't have a wedge tool to use. Which leads us to our sketchbooks. The two types of sketchbooks that I like to work in are a 5.5 by 5.5 inch square sketchbook, or an 8.25 square sketchbook. I really like how the square provides symmetry on each side that you're going to be working on. These have heavy watercolor paper in them and that allows you to be able to layer a lot of different materials into the bound sketchbook. So that's our list of materials. If you're working at home on a flat surface, then great, you can access all of these. But if you're going out for the day, you'll just have to grab your sketchbook and some kind of pouch or bag to put some of your materials in. We're ready to get started.

Day 2 - First layers

- Let's get started by gessoing several different spreads in our sketchbooks. I like to use this Liquitex gesso and I like to go ahead and just drip the gesso directly onto my surface in a pretty loose way. I'm going to start by taking one of my wedge tools. You could also use a piece of cardboard if that's something that you have available. You can hear the gesso as it's coming across. And one thing I want to invite you to do in this preparatory lesson is to prep a lot of different surfaces. Open up several different pages if you want to and allow that gesso to dry completely before you start adding your first colors onto it. I'm going to be working in multiple sketchbooks during this lesson. You don't have to do it that way, but this way, it allows you to see how the materials work on a larger surface versus a more pocket-sized notebook. I'm working almost to the edge of my sketchbook, but it doesn't have to go completely to the edge. I'm prepping both sides of the spread and the reason I do that is because I really like to work on multiple surfaces at the same time. By working vertically, I also really like to reorient myself every time I open the

sketchbook. I've got a little bit of leftover gesso there that I can swipe onto another piece of paper if I'd like to. I'm going to just set it to the side for now. The initial sketchbook that I started gessoing is ready for a little bit of color. I'm going to start by picking two complementary colors. I'm going to use this Quinacridone magenta and this green gold. Again, I'm just going to loosely put the paint directly onto my surface. This time, I'm going to use just a straight piece of cardboard to pull the pigment around on the surface. You even get some kind of cool texture when working with different colors. (cardboard scraping) It doesn't take a lot of the pigment from the fluid acrylics to go a long way. Remember, we're working in a pretty small surface. This initial layer can be a little bit messy, but I guarantee you, it's a great way to get started with getting rid of the blank white page in front of you. I'm going to go back to the larger sketchbook. With this one, I'm going to work with a Diarylide yellow and a Phthalo blue. These are really, really pigmented colors, but they're going to have a nice interaction here in the way that we blend them together. I have another piece of cardboard here so that I don't blend together the red and green that I was using a moment ago. (cardboard scraping) A really important part of this stage of the process is to be playful and to allow yourself to move color around the page and interact with your notebook in a way that helps you to feel like it's a little bit less precious. I'm even going to dab the Phthalo blue, which is a much darker shade. I'm going to put it in a few different areas of the canvas here. (brush scraping) I like to rotate my sketchbook when I'm getting these initial layers on here, and what that allows me to do is to pull the paint all the way to the edge of the surface that I'm working on. This is true also if you're working on a canvas or a piece of cardboard, whatever your surface, it really allows you to pull the composition all the way to the edge to get the most of your surface area. These spreads are going to need to dry before we go on to the next step of adding color with other materials. So I'm going to set them aside.

Day 3 - Color schemes

- I've flipped to a new page and I'm gonna start on a freshly gessoed spread. I've just had both of my sketchbooks here so you can gesso yours as you go along or when you're taking a break from your art making. I'm gonna play around with color combinations in a different way than the spreads that we prepped earlier. I'm gonna start with a pastel color scheme and the way that I like to incorporate pastels is by taking a few tones and just adding a little bit of white. So I'm gonna do that on the side over here instead of on my sketchbook. Swiping around color and then adding colors that you've uniquely made that are new to you can be a really fun thing to combine when working in a sketchbook. I have this squeezable heavy body turquoise color and I have my quinacridone magenta that I'm gonna work with. I'm also going to have handy something to trace that's circular in shape. I've got this can that I've recycled. I'm gonna start by flipping the can upside down and tracing it with a pencil in a variety of different ways. Because this gesso surface gives a little bit of room between the graphite, I can blend the graphite around to make some different textures as well. I'm creating a structure for myself and I'm not overthinking what I'm doing I'm just putting a variety of circles down on my page. This is gonna be the starting point for how I blend together the different pastel colors that I'm working with in the spread. Again, a lot of this is just getting started and getting rid of the blank white pages in front of you so that you feel welcome to continue your process in a way that allows you to feel a little bit of freedom in the creative process. I'm gonna dab my brush a little bit in water before I start to blend together some different colors. One thing that I think is really important when playing around with color, when you're working with a lighter or a darker tone is to be open to the variety that you can get. So I'm gonna begin by coming in here with

my brush and pretty loosely painting in sort of a tonal pink circle. I'm not paying attention too closely to the linework. I'm just trying to get the shape painted in. The other circles here, I'm going to press myself and make a little bit lighter and a little bit darker again so that I can play around with the variety of tones that you can get just by working with one color and white. I'm also doing a lot of the paint mixing while I'm putting my brush to the sketchbook page. The gessoed surface helps it to not buckle and it also holds the paint really well. There are my three circles, on this other side, I'm gonna work with the turquoise color. This time I'm gonna use a round brush, and I'm gonna start with the darkest shade of turquoise. This paints a little bit more gloppy, so it's gonna be a little more textural as I'm moving it around the page. Sometimes I like to stabilize my hand on the edge of my sketchbook here if I'm trying to get a cleaner line. Also, a little bit of water will help the paintbrush glide a little bit better. If you're trying to define a shape. I'm just gonna dab into the same white that I had over here, even though it has a little bit of the magenta in it. That's okay if they blend together a little bit. That's working out a little bit better now that it has the high fluid acrylic. I'm gonna add some high fluid acrylic white just directly to the next circle on the page, and I'm gonna use the turquoise that's already in my brush, and I'm gonna blend it right there on the sketchbook. Again, a lot of these initial layers are to get some structure to the spread and to help us think a little bit less preciously about the art making that we are engaging in. Circles as a form or as a shape, provide a really closed way of working with structure in your canvas. This one, I'm gonna try to get a mid-range tone between this darker one and the lightest version here but when I work with circles, what I find is that because it's a closed shape that's very balanced I can play around with color and not feel too constrained because it's a shape that continues to flow and move around. Now that I've got that spread done I'm gonna swipe some more color around. I'm gonna take a lighter pink that's sort of in the family of the magenta, and I'm gonna put it directly on my sketchbook, and I'm gonna take a little darker version of the turquoise and I'm gonna put it over here. The reason I like to play around with these different colors in this way is that by adding a lighter or darker tone in the same color family is that it allows you to let go a little bit of what you just created as the structure. I'm gonna first swipe around the pink, and it's okay to go over the top of what you've already created. You can tell that this pink tone, this light magenta has a little different tone to it than the quinacridone magenta but you can still tell that they're connected. I'm gonna actually use my other spread over here to wipe off my wedge tool. I'm gonna rotate this around. I always like to pull and push the paint vertically. It helps me to use the entire height of my notebook. It's kind of fun. As this spread starts to dry, I'm gonna grab my smaller sketchbook and show you really just the way that I can replicate this look over on the smaller sketchbook by adding a little bit more paint, and I'm gonna add the circle. After I have this initial layer of heavier body acrylic on it. I'm gonna grab my can again, and before this is even dry, I'm actually just gonna take it put it directly down onto the canvas, and I'm gonna use kind of a thicker colored pencil to get in here. And again, give it a little bit of structure. There's gonna be some residual paint on the edge of the can that I'm going to come over here onto the other spread and structure out a little bit more of my composition as well. So these feel balanced in a way but also I'm exploring two different types of color on the same spread. I'm gonna pull both spreads together so that we can talk about them a little bit. This foundational way of talking about and experiencing color are really important to get a grasp of. There are whole books written about color. Some of my favorite are by Josef Albers the *Interaction of Color* or actually also Lisa Solomon, another Creativebug artist has written an amazing guide to color, and what I wanna talk about is how when put together the blues and pinks here really reflect kind of a connection but also a distinctive contrast with each other. So as you're

working on a sketchbook spread I would invite you to look for ways to create connection with the paint that you're working with and also providing contrast. These two spreads are a little bit different and one thing you'll also notice is that I've left some blank space in here on both of them. That sketchbook area that has gessoed but not added with color yet, is gonna give us a little bit more of an opportunity to play with as we build more layers in the different spreads to come. I think it's really important for you to do a little bit of work outside of my tutorial maybe play around with bright colored tones, jeweled tones or even secondary colors which happen to be orange, purple, and green. Those are the most challenging for me to work with so I often try to stretch myself and play around with them. Go ahead and work on a variety of different spreads so that we have a lot to work with as we're moving forward.

Day 4 - Centering yourself

- Before I get fully into my creative process, every day I find it really important to center myself. Finding grounding in your daily life is a really important thing to do, whether that's through meditation or walking in nature or just getting a little task around the house done. I find it really helpful to change my body temperature in some way, whether that's going on a walkout in the rain or taking a bath to get myself started for the day. I also find it really helpful to establish a motto or a theme for my day. And oftentimes I will hide those hidden statements within my sketchbook work. We're gonna do that in this lesson and I wanna show you a little bit about the importance of establishing a motto when you get started for the day. I'm gonna start by clipping down my spreads in my sketchbook with binder clips, because they're starting to get a little bit bulky with all the layers of paint that we're putting in our notebooks. I'm gonna grab a pencil. You can use a pen or a marker or a crayon even. And I'm gonna begin by establishing a motto for myself for this moment in this day. Your handwriting doesn't have to be super fancy. I'm also gonna write a few things that I wanna focus on for the day. Little reminders to myself. Before I move on to the next spread, I'm actually gonna cover up these mottos or statements for the day so that I know that they're within the sketchbook but then also I'm ready to start a new spread in our next session. I'm using some high fluid acrylics to get started because they provide a transparent layer. Oftentimes, I notice that later on when I'm coming back to a spread or working on it when I'm out and about, I can see the little reminders that the mottos that I wrote in there and they oftentimes are a good reminder maybe of how I'm experiencing that day. I've gone ahead and used sort of a teal and a light orange for these two spreads. Those complementary colors really connect with one another. Before I finish up, I really wanna conceal the statement that's there so I'm gonna use some black. This is a high fluid acrylic black so it should be really opaque but glide across the paper really nicely. And that's it. We're ready to put these spreads away and come back to them knowing that the motto and the intention is there.

Day 5 - Tonal arches

- As we start another spread today, I just wanna mention that the last few lessons have really given you a variety of ways to set a foundation for the backgrounds of your sketchbook spreads. So while this might feel like we're just jumping around and starting a new piece, I promise you we will start to work in the layers in the next few days. Today I'm gonna start by creating a little bit more structure. Similarly to how we did the circles the other day. I wanna create something called a tonal arch. I'm gonna find something around me to trace that has a circular form to it. In the previous lesson, we used a can to trace around. Now I'm gonna use a yogurt lid. As I'm creating the arches around my

surface, I really want to think about how the structure of these lines is going to help me create more of a background that I can then layer on later on. I'm gonna take two different approaches here on the two spreads, and I'm gonna start with tracing the lid and then going back around and just free handing the other layers of the arch. Again, when I'm using the graphite, I can smudge the pencil if I want to. If I'm feeling like it's looking like it needs to be too perfect, I can sort of blend it together or mess it up a little bit. It's not about this being perfect, it's about it creating a structure in one of my backgrounds. I've also decided to kind of go at an asymmetrical or diagonal here so that I'm working and rotating my sketchbook as I add the different layers. I'm gonna be working with a phthalo blue and white and I'm just gonna add them to the palette that we've been working with. I'm gonna use a round brush and I'm gonna start here in the inside section with the lightest form of blue that my brush can make. If you all of a sudden start a little darker, that's okay. As soon as that layer dries you can go back through and add a lighter tone to it. I'm already noticing that this interior arch might be a little darker than I'd like it to be, so I'll come back and rework it as I go along. I'm moving around a lot. I'm trying to not be super specific as I work out the way that the paint wants to move on the page. I am trying to have a steady hand when I come around and glide through the arch and I'm modifying that pencil line a little bit as I go along as well. Just playing around with the different tones that you can get in a specific color can be really helpful when establishing an intention in your visual language. Now that I've got my darkest arch, I'm gonna come back in here to this middle section and try to differentiate this kind of mid-range tone. Sometimes the interior fold of the sketchbook can kind of be a little precarious to work with so I like to rotate my sketchbook around so that I can really get into those areas. Sometimes you have to kind of shove and smudge the paint in there, and that's okay. I like to have a paper towel with me so I can blot my brush immediately. You don't ever wanna leave your paintbrushes upside down in a jar of water for too long. It's gonna make the bristles kind of sit a funny way and then your paintbrushes just won't last as long. I'm gonna use a little bit thicker brush this time and I'm actually gonna do this next arch in black. I'm definitely gonna wanna start with the lightest tone, the white before I begin because the moment that you tint white with black it's really hard to go back. So again, I'm gonna put the lightest tone on the inside of the arch. I'm gonna move the paint around. I might even save some of this white paint here. Leave it a little bit heavier so that I can come back into it and I just need the tiniest bit of black just a little bit 'cause a little bit goes a long way. You could spend hours and hours creating tonal shifts in your work that provide really interesting backgrounds for the layering approaches that I'm gonna share with you. But one thing I really like about this is it helps us to understand the material and how color combinations can really work or cause us a lot of frustration. Sometimes when I get frustrated with a piece I like to set it aside, let it completely dry and then gesso over it. It's always okay to start over if you're not feeling a piece. So I have quite a bit of that white paint still in my bristles here. So to get a really true black, I'm gonna have to switch to another paintbrush. I also, before I do that, might want to add a bit lighter gray area here to show just a tiny bit more of the transition in the tone. Tinting and shading in your work can be a really fun way to add dimension and to give it a different type of a feeling. We're gonna talk about that as this course goes along. I'm gonna finish off with a true black. I think I need to add just a little bit more to get it fully covered. By leaving this negative space here, I've also created a diagonal. When I come back and use a different approach as we move along in this course, I'm gonna have some white area or some negative space to work with and that's a really good thing to remember. Sometimes you might start a sketchbook spread and come back to it later with a different approach. Or for example, sometimes when I'm out and about and working in my travel sketchbook, I might only

have with me a pencil or two paint pens, and so I have to kind of make them work. Those are always the fun opportunities to come back to a spread like this because you've already got a foundation and a design to work with and who knows on a different day your piece might look a little bit different because of the setting that you're in and how you're feeling on that particular moment. Now we've created several different spreads. I'm excited to get into the fine details as we go along.

Day 6 - Big lines

- We're gonna return to some of the spreads that we've put our initial layers on, and we're gonna use wide tipped posca markers. These are the ones that I showed you when we went over materials, and what I love about them is that they have sort of a squared tip to them so they make a really wide line. One of the things when working with posca markers or molotow paint pens, 'cause I have a few of those as well, is that you want to engage them by shaking them to get the paint moving around and then you pump them on your surface. I'm gonna do some different line work on three different spreads because we've gotten started already with layers on three different spreads of our notebooks. You can work in just your notebook at your own pace. You don't have to explore all three pieces at the same time. So I pump the paint pens like this to get them started and you can see, they make a fun little sound too, that when I'm working with big lines I can choose to go in any direction I want. For this half of the sketchbook spread, I'm gonna go horizontally and make some parallel lines. You can even see that I've got a little bit of yellow paint in that paint pen, probably from another spread that I went over before paint was dry. I'm really enjoying the layered look of the paint pen over the top of the acrylic that we swiped on earlier. On this bottom half of the spread, I'm going to continue with the blue, but I'm gonna do some lines that are a little bit more organic, maybe some twisting and turning lines to give it a little bit different feeling about it. Maybe create a little bit more movement. I'm gonna try and make the paint pen work for me by holding it at the same angle and not letting the line get too thin. I like the consistency of the thick line so I'm holding the pen in a way that creates the same thickness of line the entire time. Now I'm just kind of following the lead of that original shape that I made and trying to add to it by creating a little bit more movement and overlap. Every time I work with the wide tip posca paint markers, I like to make sure to go off the edge of the page. It creates just a really nice consistency and composition to your work. I like how that one's looking. I'm gonna move on to another color on different spread. Same idea, still using the wide tip pens to create lines that are parallel either horizontally or vertically. Let's do some vertical ones on this next spread. I can tell this one's really full. Sort of unexpected nature of the sounds. On this smaller sketchbook, I decided to go the length of the entire spread. I think that it just kind of gives it a little bit of a connection with those long lines connecting the top and the bottom spreads. There. That one's pretty fun. I'm gonna demonstrate one other type and that's with a posca paint pen that's a little more transparent. A color like yellow might not necessarily cover all of the layers that we've started with but it's gonna work really well on the gesso'd paper here. I've already clipped this side down but I'm gonna remove the clip so that I can really get the lines all the way to the edges. And I'm gonna start this one in the middle of the spread and do kind of an arching line that goes off the side of the page. I love seeing how the yellow changes from being over the top of this peach color to the black and then how it creates another color off of the teal. I like to rotate my sketchbook so that my arm doesn't go and smudge what I've already worked on, especially if the layers are wet and are still drying. All right, there are three different spreads using three types of wide tipped posca markers.

Day 7 - Unconventional materials

- I like to think of unconventional materials as the sort of hero of the sketchbook process. It's really fun to find everyday items around your home that you can use to incorporate really interesting textures and ideas into your sketchbook. I'm gonna be using a few different materials in this spread. The first thing is my cardboard straight edge. You could use a ruler or the edge of a book but I just had some discarded cardboard that I used earlier. So I'm gonna pick a color of Posca paint pen, again, give it a little bit of a shake and then decide how to use my straight edge in a way that's gonna show repetition and also just give a little bit more composition to my piece. All of the unconventional materials that I use are sort of spontaneous, I like to find them when I'm around the house or out on a walk, sometimes little discarded items in the recycling bin end up being tools that really help to shape my work. Great. The next material that I'm gonna use is a found object, these are leftover from a canvas that I had stretched that I was going to put into to help stabilize it, so they're sort of stabilizing pieces of wood but I'm gonna use them here to stencil around and again give a little bit more geometric composition to my work. I'm just gonna use a ballpoint pen for this. Get it started just by doing a scribble, I'm just gently tracing around the found object to give my piece a little more structure. Found objects in general are not gonna be perfectly straight or perfectly balanced, the unconventional nature of them really help to give your piece structure, but also remind you that it's just another layer in the process, it doesn't have to be the finished look of the piece. I might come back into these shapes and fill them in with color, doing color blocking later. I'm actually gonna come back in here now with my ballpoint pen and just fill in some of the space in between these shapes that I've already traced on my spread. The texture that this is gonna create is gonna be pretty cool when we swipe over another layer of paint on top of it. I'm not being too careful to stay outside the lines but I am making sure to diversify the type of marks that I'm making, moving from horizontal to vertical to diagonal scribbles. My favorite unconventional material to use is the netting from a plastic produce bag. And as you can see, I've used this one before so I'm repurposing it one more time, this was from a bag of lemons and the way that I like to use this material is I like to spread it over and sometimes I have to tape it down actually, right now, I'm just gonna clip it into place with my binder clips here so that I can hold it with one hand while I use the foam brush to put the paint on with my other hand. I already have a palette full of paint here but these colors aren't gonna provide enough contrast, so, what I'm gonna do instead is I'm gonna add my diarylide yellow to my dried palette and then I'm gonna use my two-inch wide foam brush, I'm dabbing the brush into the paint to get a pretty good amount on there and then I'm gonna come back onto the spread and I'm gonna do the same dabbing motion. This is something that's not too precise and the one thing I do need to kinda pay attention to is where I've dabbed so that my hand doesn't smudge it out. I'm also trying to hold the netting pretty still so that I get that look of the grid from the netting. I think this is gonna show up really well in the white areas and then also over the top of this lighter magenta color. I happen to like to go from edge to edge in my work so, I've gone all the way to the edge of the bottom half of the spread, I'm gonna try and come all the way down into the corner to give it a compositional connection. All right, let's peel it away and see what it looks like. Ooh, I like that color. So I'm actually gonna take the same netting that I was just working with and I'm gonna put it up onto the top part of my spread, again, to kind of connect these two spreads together. I need a little bit more paint and I'm gonna secure it again with the binder clip so that I can work much in the same way. And again, I'm realizing that it's showing up best on those areas that I didn't paint with a really dark layer. So it's showing up really nicely in the areas that just have the gesso on them. I really feel like we're getting into the process now. Okay, let's peel it away,

and see what we've got. Cool, I'm even gonna take and flip this over, get my hands a little messy, oh, I like that too. So I'm kinda picking up on the negative space from the actual produce netting so it's not the area that the paint went through it's what sat on top of it and I'm just kind of blending and smearing the rest of that off. Cool. All right, I'm gonna set that to the side because I have one more unconventional material that is probably the most fun to work with and that is this circle stencil that was found from a children's board game that my kids received a few years ago. What I love about these kinda materials is that you can find them from everyday objects and things that you maybe would've recycled but instead you can give new life to them. I'm gonna go ahead and clip this down to my spread and I have two ways of working here very similarly to using the produce netting; the first way that I wanna work is I'm going to take a Posca marker and just go ahead and stencil in the circles. I can stencil every other one or I can do them in some kinda pattern, it's really up to you. You can see that this part of the process can happen pretty quickly because as you're working, you don't have to be super precise, these are elements to the process that may or may not get covered up. It's gonna be kinda tricky here to draw one on the spine or the opening so I'm just gonna go back up and do one here. I'm using black right now because I feel like it's a nice contrast to some of these other electric colors that we're using but I might come back in here with a softer pen as well in a moment. Another option that you can do is again to go back to your pencil or your ballpoint pen and you can use it to trace the shape and you don't have to fully commit to coloring in the shape completely. I'm actually gonna take one other color here, I'm gonna introduce this lighter blue color, it's got a little bit of white to it, so it's got a kind of a pastel blue to it, so that has a nice way of sitting on top of the other colors and kind of acting as its own. Okay, let's check out the composition and then I'm gonna show you the other way that I like to use this circle's template. Cool. So the last way that I like to use this as a material is I like to paint directly onto it and I'm gonna do that again with black 'cause it's just a high contrast color that's gonna show up really nicely, I'm not gonna wash out my brush because I'm adding black to the yellow, so it's really not necessary that you clean out your brush for this part and what I'm gonna do is I'm actually gonna take these kinda tinier circles, and I'm going to just put the paint directly onto the stencil getting a little bit into monoprinting here, printmaking techniques, but I'm just gonna paint quickly on and then I'm going to lay it onto my surface, I might end up making a mess here and that's okay. But now what I'm doing is I'm just putting a lot of pressure and smoothing the stencil onto the sketchbook spread to create hopefully a grid of circles. And while I'm at it, while I'm waiting for this to dry, again, this is kinda how I work, I like to exercise a lot of different approaches in the same moment because I often find that it makes a much more spontaneous piece of art. I can always go back through and make it a little bit more concrete or tighten up the details but when you're in the moment, you just gotta try what feels good. All right, let's pull this away and it didn't work, I guess there wasn't enough paint on it. Let's try again. I'm gonna add a little bit more paint this time around. Sometimes it's the paint application, sometimes it's the amount of pressure that you've put onto the stencil, but we'll give it another try, mistakes are okay, sometimes things don't turn out the way we anticipate. Oh, I'm definitely making a mess this time. Okay, three, two, one, oh, there's a little bit more of the painted grid there, so, we've tried a whole bunch of different approaches with unconventional materials, I hope that you can find things that are around your home to incorporate into your sketchbook process.

Day 8 - Organic lines

- Let's explore a little bit less permanent material, a pencil. In this lesson, we're going to use a pencil

to create organic lines. I'm going to start by closing my eyes and using my hands to feel the edges of the sketchbook. Once I know my parameters by touching the edges, I'm going to start in the upper corner, and I'm going to do something called a blind scribble. I can tell that my pencil is going across the page on top of different materials. When I open my eyes, I can see what I've worked on, and maybe from there, I can add different things. If I liked certain areas, like for example, this area down here is still a little bit empty, so I'm going to close my eyes again but start with my pencil from the lower corner this time. Essentially what I'm doing is I'm creating an organic free-flowing line across the page so that I can then go in and block out certain areas to make my composition a little bit more dynamic. Remember, we can always go in onto graphite and smudge and smear it to give it a little bit more dimension, a little bit of texture. And then the wonderful thing about using graphite is sometimes acrylic layers don't completely cover it anyway. So there's going to be a part of this linework that we might still see once we add another layer to it. I'm going to take a paint pen or a couple paint pens now and work around blocking out some space before I add more pencil lines. I'm not being super precise with this, but I am letting the graphite lines kind of dictate where my painted areas are going to be. I really like these closed forms that the line created, but here, I'm noticing that the pencil went over the top of some really dark acrylic, so I'm going to have to get a POSCA pen that's a little bit heavier so that I can pull out that shape. I'm going to use the teal one. (marker scribbling) And again, when I get over to this part, that loop-de-loop created on top of the darker area needed this thicker more opaque POSCA pen. Something that I really like to do when I'm working with POSCAs is I like to take a really coarse brush and actually kind of blend them into the acrylic that's already dried on the page. A lot of people don't tend to use the POSCA markers in this way, but I find it to be really fun, and kind of in a different way to stretch the material. Using the material in this way actually expands the possibilities of how to use a POSCA paint marker, because really on top of an acrylic layer, you can blend that color really, really delicately. Sometimes in the same section, I like to leave a little bit more solid line and then come back later to work more into this blended section. Now I'm going to go down into the second half of the spread and I want to look for some areas that might benefit from some finer details with the pencil and with some maybe squiggles or other kind of loose line work. I'm going to start here on the gessoed area, because the graphite is showing up really nicely. Another thing I like to do at this point is I actually like to use my non-dominant hand, so I might hand my pencil over to my left hand and see what I create. And this time my eyes are open, but I have a little bit less control over my hand. Got caught there. So now I'm going to pick another pen, and I'm going to come in here and color block out a few sections. This is a process that can be ongoing. You can layer on top of layer on top of layer, and really the fun thing is that once you pick a certain area or a color scheme, you don't have to stay in that space permanently. You can always change your mind and go back over it. I do like to provide balance in my pieces by spreading out the areas that I color in, not putting all of these red areas all really close together, but making sure to look for ways to provide that visual balance. I think that's a really important part of the creative process is learning to look for where the visual balance is. I could also do that same technique again where I blended the color. Let's see what happens if I take the brush, I might even get it a little bit wet this time, and play around with the POSCA. There was a little bit of residual paint from that teal. It's actually coming together, has a really nice neutral to it. It's always nice to have a neutral in your work so that your eye can rest a little bit. I'm noticing that this piece doesn't have much cohesion between the upper and lower spreads, and that's okay. The process might take me in a different direction next time I come back to it.

Day 9 - Transparent layers

- Another material I wanna share with you are the Golden high fluid acrylics and they make really awesome transparent layers on your sketchbook spread. I have a few colors here that I really tend to use a lot. Pretty frequently, this fluorescent pink. I've got a purple, a neon yellow, a green that I kind of mixed up myself so it has its own tag on it. It's like a teal and a phthalo green. I have a fluorescent orange and I've got a quinacridone red. I'm gonna put these paints onto the spreads and move them around with our swiping tool. But I wanted to show you two different approaches to doing this. On a blank spread, if that's where you're starting, that's just been gessoed or on a spread that you've already prepped with some of our other layers. To get these open, you'll want to twist them a little bit and sometimes a little bit of paint gets dried in the nib. I'm gonna go ahead and just put down a dot or two onto my spread. Remember, once you start swiping with your swiping tool or your piece of cardboard, you can always pick that paint up and move it to another surface as well. So I'm putting two different tones down, the red and the pink, and then I'm gonna get my wedge tool to move them around and move the transparent layers. You can see already that there's a transparent nature to them that allows you to really see through back down to the gesso layer. I'm gonna take the same paint and bring it over here. Same thing goes when we go over the top of the acrylic layers. There's sort of a layering nature to this material that allows it to give your piece a little bit more depth. The other nice thing about high fluid acrylics is that they tend to dry really quickly. So if I want to take a sponge brush and blend some of them together, it's gonna dry even more quickly. This spread's almost ready for another color. I'm gonna come over here and do a little bit of that blending as well. I tend to use a lot of primary-based colors in my work, so oftentimes I'll start a spread with our tonal variation of red, blue, and yellow. In this case, it's pink, blue, and yellow. But again, as soon as I pull that transparent high fluid acrylic over the top of the blue, it gives it a little bit more depth. And then I'm gonna come back in and blend it again. Let's try the neon yellow. This is a color that I think a lot of people are intimidated by, but I think it's a fun one to see how you can add a little bit of pop to a spread. That's blending really nicely. I'm even gonna remove my clips so that I can pull that fluorescent neon yellow all the way to the edge of my spread. You can also see that when you add that yellow to the pink and to the quinacridone red, it gives it a little bit more of an orange-y tone. We're gonna throw a little bit of it on here as well. Again, I'm not being too precious. I'm just kind of blotting it on there and then we're gonna pull it around on the page. I wanna rotate my book so that I'm pulling toward myself so I have the most amount of control. I like how these layers are coming out. These high fluid acrylics have really helped me to develop a more delicate approach to layering in a sketchbook spread.

Day 10 - Repetition

- Repeating multiple marks on your page can really have a high impact value when we're talking about the visual language. So I'd like to repeat some messy marks and some more controlled mark-making on this spread. I'm gonna start with repeated marks using a matte flat heavy body acrylic paint and I'm gonna use a brush that's kind of flat and long. I'm picking a section of my page that might seem otherwise kind of empty. I'm working in the gessoed area that doesn't yet have much acrylic paint in it. By repeating marks on my page, I'm creating little areas that bring cohesion to the piece. I also decided to use a color that was really similar to the color that we swiped around on our page earlier when we began this spread. When repeating these marks, it's also important to go into other areas like here where I'm going from the gessoed area over the top of the peach color. That's what's actually going to bring this spread together is by using these repeated marks. They're

a little bit at an angle. They're not super perfect. Some of them have some texture to them and some of them are thicker. Even if I bring some of them down to overlap this black area, it's gonna create more movement in the piece. As those are drying, I'm gonna grab another tool, my ballpoint pen to do some repeating mark-making that kind of connects the pieces together. This black area is gonna be connected to the edge of the spread by the ballpoint pen marks that I'm gonna create. So again, I'm repeating a line or a pattern of some sort and in this case, I'm gonna do a few layers of it. These arch symbols are kind of fun to work with. I'm stopping when I get to the black area though because you can't see the ballpoint pen in that section. I am gonna pull the line all the way over to the other side though because that repeated line is gonna help give a little bit of structure to the spread. This is one of my new favorite colors the Molotov kind of mauve purple. It's gonna look really nice over the top of this black. I'm gonna continue with that pattern or that repetition of the line work but I'm gonna connect it over the area that was black. I am gonna come back down here with the pen and finish out that repeated line. I'm sticking in the same color family here using another version of teal but I'm gonna make smaller repeated marks in a little bit more of a controlled way. This is just a basic dot. Something I'm noticing is that as I'm getting into this darker area with the black and the teal, a color that's really gonna pop is this red. I'm gonna stick with that dot and keep repeating it as I go throughout the rest of the spread. It's okay to change your mind as you're working on your spread. It doesn't have to be perfect and you can make mistakes and shift gears as you're working. My original painted repetition marks here are dry enough now that I can almost layer over the top of them with these dots. I'm gonna bring a few more down into the spread to connect them. There we go. What this needs is a little bit more contrast. I'm gonna come back in with my super wide POSCA marker and block out a little bit more space so that we can then come and add some white gel pen. The Uni-ball Signo white gel pen flows really nicely across a lot of different surfaces. Even when it gets a little bit caught up you can go back over and do a second layer of it. Sometimes on the spread, I'll just take my pen and do a little squiggle to get it started. But the wonderful thing about these is that they are a permanent ink that lays right over the top of all of your acrylic work. The shape I'm gonna pull out here is kind of like a tulip, repeating bigger shapes over the top of a high contrast area really pulls the piece together. And while this white pen won't show up really great on the lower contrast areas, it still gives it a little bit of fluidity to go over the top of both color swatches. Something I'm trying to do here also is kind of work at a little bit of an angle. I'm not really concerned about everything being super precise. Playing with repetition allowed me to take my basic mark-making and push it in a totally new direction.

Day 11 - Scale

- We're gonna play around with scale. I'm gonna choose one geometric shape and I'm gonna repeat it over and over again by changing the scale from small to large. It's gonna connect the two sides of the spread really nicely. This spread is feeling a little bit busy right now to me so I'm gonna start by gessoing over a few of the areas. I'm actually gonna jump right in with my foam brush that we used earlier and I'm just gonna move around gesso so that I can block out spaces to do a little bit more of this geometric work with scale. I'm just softening the spread. I am gonna leave some areas, though, that have that higher contrast to them. All right. When working with a foam brush, sometimes I wash it out immediately and sometimes if I'm working really rapidly, I'll set it to the side on a towel still with the fresh paint in it. That way I can come back to it and use it and blend that color again. I'm also gonna add a little bit of white and a little bit of teal to this piece so that I can then really get the scale and the shapes in there. Softening the contrast of a piece when it's really busy can be kind

of tricky but I really want the shapes to stand out which is why we're working in this way. Using a ruler or a straight edge, I just have another piece of cardboard. I'm gonna go ahead and start from the bottom of the spread and work my way up. I'm gonna trace out some triangular shapes to start getting going on the scale of this piece. One way that I like to connect triangles together is with a horizontal line. I think that that often sets a little bit of a stage for me to then work in a smaller scale all at once. This is pretty rapid, also. It doesn't take much time. So down here at the bottom portion of the spread, I have two dominant triangles that I'm gonna pull out a little bit even more after I color block the background. But I wanna get some other scaled size triangles in here, maybe some medium sized triangles and maybe a few more large ones. I'm also going to invert this one so that it points back toward the other spread. I'm gonna start filling them in. The gesso has dried pretty quickly, and as a result, I now have these sort of softer areas that I can then come in and really highlight the shapes that I've chosen to do. I'm gonna block in sort of a medium size triangle and then I'm gonna come in and start blocking in some of these smaller triangles. One part about working around your spread instead of in one designated area is that it allows you to balance out the piece with the colors that you're choosing. Right now, I'm kind of working around with my POSCA paint pen in a few different areas as I start to set the tone for what this piece is gonna feel like. I also see an opportunity to put another triangle up here. I'm not even gonna grab my pencil. I'm just gonna hop right in here and work with a little bit larger triangle. This might be a good chance, actually, for me to take that teal paint that we worked with earlier and to highlight the size and scale of this particular triangle. You can tell that this turquoise is a little bit darker than the POSCA paint pen I was working with and I don't mind that. Look at how these faint layers are starting to pop out when we put that darker turquoise in there. I really enjoy that. I'm gonna take that same color and come down here to the bottom portion as I, again, work around the spread, paying attention to each area. The scale of these triangles down here are pretty narrow and tall, so you can play around with different types of triangles as well. This spread would work really nicely with circles and even with rectangles. I'm gonna grab one other paint color that I haven't used yet and that's the Heavy Body Fluorescent Pink. A little bit of it's getting on my spread as I open the jar. Sometimes I like to throw the lid directly onto my spread here and pick up the leftover paint that's on the top of the lid. I'm gonna come in and actually work in the background of this triangle because it's gonna really help the negative space of the triangle that I drew to pop out. Oh yeah, this is really fun. And again, you can always go back to your foam brush and blend in those areas even with a little bit of the gesso that's left over, the residual gesso in the brush, that's gonna kind of soften this background. So as a result of painting behind this triangle, the one that's in the yellow and green and dark blue here, the scale of that triangle is really popping out. I'm getting a little bit of the messy brush effect here too. So now that I have pink down in this portion I'm gonna head diagonally up into the upper portion to work on these triangles up here. Their scale might be smaller, but they're gonna have a high impact because I've repeated them. So there's a repetition element here that's also important to pay attention to. Just for the fun of it, I'm gonna put a little bit of the High Fluid Orange in here. What! Because when we put the complementary colors of orange and blue next to each other, they really pop. So I just had a teeny tiny drip of that High Fluid Transparent Neon Orange and look at the pop that it makes. So I like that so much that I want to come back down to the bottom portion of my spread near this teal triangle and add a little bit more. This is something I do a lot of in my work, is I hold two brushes at the same time. I think it's 'cause I get so excited about what I'm working on that I don't want to reach over and pick something else up but I just wanna have it on hand right away to work with. Again, working with these fluorescents,

they really make the piece pop and I really am enjoying where this is heading. So the scale that grounds this piece is what's really important, is that I balanced out the piece with the larger triangles and the smaller triangles and in between mid-size triangles.

Day 12 - Messy mark making

- We're going to make messy marks. I'm going to use a lot of tools, and overlap a lot of different materials. So, let's get messy. Starting out, I'm going to use the black, wide tip Posca marker, and I'm just going to make some, really, kind of, aggressive marks on the pages. I'm going to start over here, and then move on, to this main sketchbook spread. Messy mark-making can go in the form of lines, or it could be shapes. Nothing's too precise, or precious. Next up, I'm going to drip some paint. I like to use the Golden fluid acrylics for this, because they have a little bit of body to them, but they also, there we go. I'm dripping over on the side of the table, too, but what I like, is that they flow right out of the bottle. I might have way too much paint on this particular spread, but that's okay, I can always grab another piece of paper to put it onto. So, now again, with this mess that I'm creating, I'm using a different approach to pushing the paint around. Instead of my wedge tool, I'm using my foam brush, and, right now, the fun part about making a mess is that, at some point, you're going to get to an element that really ties it together. I don't know when that's going to be, so I'm just going to, kind of, keep going with it. The reason I'm working on two different notebooks for this particular lesson is, because the paint might take a few moments to dry, and so, I can keep busy, by working on another piece of paper at the same time. Sometimes, I'll have a piece of cardboard next to me, or a sketchbook that, maybe, isn't bound, maybe, that has paper that I can pull out, and that way, I can stay active while my paint is still fluid enough to work with. You can even see some of the little drips in here, from when I originally dripped that green-gold paint, and they have little circle shapes in them. I'm ready for some contrast, so I'm going to keep getting messy, but I'm going to do that right now, using my fan brush. I've got a clean palette, and some white paint. The nice thing about a fan brush is, that it makes a different kind of mark, and right now, I'm just, kind of, flinging the brush away from myself, as I make these marks on the page, you can even see that the white is blending together a little bit with that green-gold. As I'm working, and I'm, kind of, just cool with going with it. I need a little bit more white. I'm going to scoot this one to the side for a moment. I'm going to repeat those same, kind of, messy marks. You can really tell that this particular page has changed a lot in the last couple minutes. I think I'm ready for another type of messy mark. I'm going to take this, kind of, vial of heavy body acrylic, and I'm going to drip some of it onto my page. This, kind of, feels like I'm frosting a cupcake, but I love the way that those little squirts of paint land on the page, and I'm going to move them around here in a second, but I want to prep both of these, at the same time, before I do that, and now, I'm going to take my piece of cardboard, and, again, I'm going to, kind of, make a mess. We now have three, four layers of work here, all with different kinds of mark-making. I am going to find areas that are dry on the pages, and I'm going to take my Posca pen to create some circle shapes that are a little bit more fluid. They're not quite so constrained. So, I'm going to ignite them. And then, I'm just going to scribble, kind of, rapidly, and, again, I'm trying to find the areas that are already dry, only because that'll help preserve my Posca pens for a little bit longer. If Poscas start to get wet paint on them, they'll get clogged up, and won't work very well for you. Got a little bit of wet black paint there, but I'm looking for these white areas, mostly. Also, I'm working, again, kind of, at that angle. I feel like that gives a little bit more motion and movement to the piece, and it helps it to stay a little bit playful. I'm going to come over here, to the bottom spread. These pieces, as companions, are really having a similar vibe to them, so, the more that I

work on them, I might try to figure out a way to help them each look a little bit more unique, and it really is looking like a mess. Let's do some more messy marks with a larger Posca pen, before we finish up. I'm going to go really large-scale here, kind of, like, how we started on this first initial spread, with the large black marks. This one's almost running out of ink. You can, kind of, hear it, when it starts to make a more empty, shaking sound, so, it might mean that it's time for a new one. These two sketchbooks are such a mess right now, and maybe, you don't know quite when to stop, and that's okay. I see an opportunity here, for adding delicate marks, or color-blocking, or using a stencil, like we've done in some of our other lessons.

Day 13 - Texture part one

- Today, we're gonna play around with texture, and over the next two days, I'm gonna demonstrate a few different ways to apply texture to your sketchbook surfaces with a few different approaches and several different materials. Today, we're gonna work with wax crayons and Stabilo wood crayons. These are really fun and are able to be sharpened with a really thick sharpener, and right now, I'm gonna start off with them on this spread that's been gessoed. I'm also gonna work today on the larger spread that already has one color of acrylic and gesso swiped around on it. So if you need to prepare your surfaces before you get started, go ahead and do those. Since we've already worked with messy marks, I'm gonna take my liberty here and kind of fill the pages with a lot of messy marks using the Stabilo crayon and the wax crayons. I'm really pushing the material into the sketchbook to get a super textured look. You can already see, that because of the gesso that's on the sketchbook page, it's starting to create a texture that's not super smooth. I'm gonna play around with a few different color combinations on both spreads. One thing that I also like about working with this material is that you can really get in here and blend it together with just a little bit of water. I'm just using my hands to do this, but you can also use a brush or a paper towel. I'm gonna let that dry for just a second and move over to the other side of the spread with a different color scheme. I like the way that this purple color is coming out. I'm gonna give it a try over here on top of this green gold. It also really kind of sits on top of that initial acrylic layer. Again, I find it really helpful to work all the way to the edges of my sketchbook pages. I feel like this gives me the most amount of freedom compositionally, and it really helps me stretch these materials with their texture, not being too worried about the edges. Let's try some red. I can even blend this around without getting it wet. It gives it a little bit more of a controlled blend. Okay, I'm gonna try a little bit more water here. The drying time of this is pretty quick so I'll be ready to add other layers in acrylic or in Posca pen or in my white ink pen, not too far in the future. I might even take what's left over here and come on over and smudge into these pages. Let's try out the crayons now. I'm pushing pretty hard and noticing that the wax resist when water is over the top of it, is going to give a little bit different effect. It's not gonna blend the same way as the Stabilo crayons did, but I like combining them to get the two different effects and texture. All of this texture is sitting just gently right on top of the pages. There's not a whole lot of dimension to it, but the materials work really well going into the paper, into the little grooves of the watercolor paper. At this point, I'm just kind of going with the flow and filling up my pages so that I have this sort of dance between the wax and the Stabilo. One of my favorite colors, cerulean blue. I'm trying to layer up some of the wax crayon areas because in our next texture lesson, we're gonna work on adding paint layers to it. I'm really darkening in these areas. Again, I like to rotate my work surface to get a different look at what I'm doing. Because I'm right-handed, I often pull and push in a diagonal that goes from right over to left. So I find it helpful when I rotate my canvas, that that actually gives my pieces a little bit more symmetry when they're

finished. Otherwise, a lot of my things end up looking in one diagonal direction as opposed to two different directions. I'm gonna take the highest contrast color here, my black Stabilo, and fill in the rest of this area here. Remember, this is the material that can be moved around with a little bit of water and blended into the surface. I'm gonna work with this color sparingly because, oftentimes, a black that can be blended or smeared can overtake the piece. You can really get lost in this process. It's really important to build up this texture so that we can then use it as a contrasting element in our next lesson. You can even get these wet. And see how they interact a little differently with the paper. Okay, I'm gonna balance out this piece with one more color. The seafoam green is one of my favorites. On both edges of the spread. Okay, we're gonna let this dry and come back to it later to enhance it with a little bit more applied texture.

Day 14 - Texture part two

- There are so many ways to explore texture, and this next layer, I'm going to use a variety of acrylic paints and heavy body paints. I have a jar of leftover house paint that I've tinted with a variety of different colors. Right now it's kind of a sea foam green. And I'm also gonna use some heavy body paints to build up on top of these two surfaces and then carve into with a couple different materials. I like the unconventional nature of this step, but it does take a little while to dry. So think about using a piece of wax paper if you're on the go and need to close your sketchbook, because that'll help preserve the layers until you can open it up and really let it fully set. It might take 24 hours for that to happen. I'm gonna start with the black acrylic, or maybe just this phthalo blue. It's a pretty dark shade, so the black or dark blue will work nicely over the top of these more delicate shades that we did in our last lesson. I'm just using a cardboard piece to pull the paint around. We've done this before so it should feel familiar. But I'm really trying to establish a dark contrast here in a thicker way. I'm gonna squeeze on some of this to get a few dark, solid, thick lines. Before I get going too much farther, 'cause I am gonna cover this up with a lighter tone as well, I'm gonna go ahead and take the back of my paintbrush and I'm gonna see what happens when I try to carve into that freshly applied thick paint. I'm just lightly carving into the page. I'm not getting a whole lot of contrast with this so I might try it with another shade. Gesso can be really great at this stage because the gesso's drying time, when it's layered on here, it'll stay a little more fresh for a little bit longer than the acrylic. Got a little left over here I'm just gonna smear on and blend in. I'm gonna put the piece of cardboard aside and grab my wedge tool here. I'm feeling like I need to get a little bit more detailed and gentle with how I pull around the texture. I'm building up a layer that I then can carve into. There we go. Gonna use my paintbrush again, the tip of it. And right now I'm working with continuous line, but you can do other designs in here as well. I'm trying to keep it pretty abstract at this point but later on I might add in other recognizable shapes or abstract shapes as well. I really like how that titanium white of the gesso and the Tahitian buff kind of connected and made a more neutral surface. So I think I'm gonna use that a little bit more. But first I want to explore a little bit using this old wall paint. I'm gonna scoop it directly out of the canister. All right, and I'm just gonna start to slather it on. I'm gonna pull it over the top of this black and see if I can get another layer of carving into that section as well. Back when I was in art school a long time ago I was in love with the work of Vincent Van Gogh and the way that he layered oil paints and pigments and gave such a tactile feeling to them. I'm kind of getting a little bit of that here. These days you can use a variety of acrylic mediums to build up layers, and I typically don't use them in my work because of the drying time and the nature of working in a sketchbook doesn't always allow you to use them real effectively, but they're fun every once in a while. I'm using my paintbrush to get a little

bit more texture in here, but you can see the thick layers. It might be fun to use a fan brush also. The wide fan shape is gonna be sort of repeated here. Yeah, I'm getting some kind of bristly looks to it. The latex paint that I'm using and the Stabilo are kind of blending together in this spread so I'm gonna leave it alone for a little bit and move over to my smaller sketchbook. I'm gonna use a heavy body acrylic directly from the tube and I'm gonna put it over the top of the wax crayon that we worked with earlier and the Stabilo. I'm using my wedge to pull the paint really thickly across in a horizontal way. And this is gonna give us a really great surface to carve into. I'm gonna use a pencil to carve this time, in part because the tip is sharpened and a little bit tighter. I'm wiping it off every few marks so that it doesn't get too heavy with paint. With a spread like this that has a lot going on, I tend to try to make these delicate marks go in one direction so that they lead the viewer's eye in a certain way. Oh, I like how it's going there. Because the paint covers a variety of colors, you get those different dimensions as you look really deep into the teal and the black underneath that pink magenta color. I'm kind of finishing with doing some pencil marks in some of the other space to replicate that same shape that we were just working with. All right. This feels like a really nice place to stop.

Day 15 - Tiny details

- We're at about halfway through our course, and a lot of our work together has been creating really large marks on the page and filling areas with color. Today, I want to start to get into the details, the tiny details of different shapes and marks that I like to make that enhance my pieces to go a little bit further in their dimension and detail. I'm going to start today with some of the high fluid acrylic on a blank spread, and I'm going to start to create some horizontal lines that go across my pages. This is going to start to build up the framework for creating the tiny details using other materials. I'm combining high fluid acrylics and Posca pen and fluid acrylics, just to get my spread sort of organized. Again, I'm just pulling the paint across the page so that I have multiple horizontal lines to work with. I'm also going to squeeze some more paint out of the fine tip liner pen by Sennelier. This is a black heavy body paint. I want to use this to create a darker layer. That's not moving quite as much as I'd like it to, so I'm going to use some of the fluid acrylic. I've got a lot now. To finish up some line work here, I'm going to use my wide-tipped Posca pen. Remember, sometimes you have to pump it to get a little bit of the ink going. I am just kind of testing the page to see if the fluid acrylic has dried yet, because sometimes if I go over my wet paint with my Posca, it can damage the nib of it. Looks pretty good. All right. The fine detail marks that I want to start with today are dots. I can do this with Posca pens. I can use my ink pen, the Uniball one that we worked with earlier, but I'm really going to start to work with dots and circles and then I'm going to move on to a few other shapes that I'll mention in a moment. A dot is a filled in circle. I'm going to offset the second line, so that there's a little bit of visual interest here. They're not lined up perfectly. This would also be a fun chance to use that fine liner pen again, the little squeeze bottle, and add some dots that have a little bit more dimension. These ones are a little bit tighter, but they get the same effect. I'm being careful to lift my wrist and arm up when I work across the spread, because I don't want to smudge any of the paint that I already have on there. I kind of squeezed out a little bit more of a messy mark there, so I'm just going to blend it in. Another way that I can make dots of the similar size, sorry, larger than the dots I was making just a moment ago, but similar size to each other is just using a POSCA or a Molotow paint pen. And then I'm ready to move into kind of a messy circle. This is a mark that I like to make a lot, and a lot of times, I like to connect the messy circles, and then fill in the background to take up some of the negative space. Let's do a few of those. You can see that the

Molotow paint pen is sitting really nicely on top of that acrylic layer, and there's not even a whole lot of blending that's happening. This reminds me a little bit of the repetition that we focused on yesterday, but the details here that I'm working with are just a little more specific than some of the marks we worked with. Okay. I'm going to go back to using my ink pen, and I'm going to play around with dashes. I'm going to move down to this band of color here. I'm going to work pulling the pen horizontally and vertically, making tiny dashes. I might even make dashed lines that follow each other, that create a longer line. You can play around with making the dashed lines go at an angle or in a solid line. You can spread them out or make them a little bit tighter knit together. Here, I smudged a little bit of them, and that's okay also. Remember, your white gel pen is going to show up a lot better on high contrast areas, so that's why this burgundy color really works nicely. I'm going to grab a black Posca pen and do some more dashes, but have them kind of connect in a different way to create a few different shapes. Remember, you can change the direction of the mark that you're making and help it to frame out other areas of your pieces. I've been working in a pretty linear way so far on this spread, so I might change things up by making some of these dashed lines have a little curvature to them. Starting first with the black Posca, and then I might introduce the white gel pen again. You can also get going kind of quickly on this part as long as your marks and your dashes are lining up really nicely. I'm kind of noticing that I'm creating this sort of arch shape in my work, so I'm going to keep going with that idea with the white gel pen and kind of finish it out before I move on to the next shape that I want to work with. These are the tiny details that start to really direct a piece, so in a sketchbook spread, it's good to practice these on all of the different layers that we've prepped so far. You can go back into some of the other spreads that we've worked on and you can add these kind of details in some or all of the pages. I'm having a lot of fun with this one. Another shape that I want to incorporate here is a block or square. The block symbol is kind of fun, because it's pretty concrete, but I can change the size and scale of it as I go if I'm feeling like it's taking up too much or not enough space on my spread. I'm even going to put a few blocks over the top of the dashed marks that I just made and that creates just another layer. You'll notice that I'm skipping these kind of white gessoed sections, because the white gel pen won't show up there. Okay, the last shape that I want to play around with is a drop. Being from Portland, Oregon, raindrops are a really important part of our daily life, and so I like to incorporate raindrops into a lot of my work. I'm going to use another color of the Molotow paint marker, and I'm going to do raindrops that are going in a few different directions. Sometimes they look a little bit more like an exclamation point if you turn them upside down, and I think that that's a fun element to bring into your work as well. So I'm going to start with a few upside down raindrops. And then I'm going to work in some smaller tiny details with that raindrop shape. I like to make sure that the tip top of it is really pointy. It's just a personal preference. Throw a few more upside down ones in here. These details can get really small or you can make them a little bit larger. I've introduced you to a lot of tiny details here. You're welcome to use as many of them as you'd like.

Day 16 - Line work

- I'm going to start to work some darker layers into these two spreads so that I can show you how I like to use my fine liner pen. This is a really cool tool, and it's sort of an unconventional tool for painting, because the tip of it is really, really fine, like a syringe. One thing you have to know is that when you open it up, it probably needs to be cleaned each time. There's a really fine needle here that helps to stop the fluid acrylic from coming out of the syringe, so make sure that when you cap it, it really gets in there nice and sturdy. I'm going to pull it apart and I'm going to wipe it down with

my towel before I start to use it. I also might need kind of a test area to see what the fluidity is coming out. I usually dilute my fluid acrylic paint two parts paint and one part water to fill up the syringe when I get started. If you're looking to get one of these tools, I would recommend an art store or an online retailer. I really like to pull the fine liner toward me so that I can get solid, thin details. I notice that if I start to go in different directions, it starts to bubble and move a little bit out of my control. I'm just going to do some elongated pod shapes on this first area. If it starts to flow too much, utilize your paper towel and just dab it a little bit. I also find it really helpful to move my entire arm as opposed to just my wrist when I'm working with this tool. It just helps me stay a little bit more stable and it keeps my lines a little bit more clear. I would probably select this tool to work with in more of a finished piece, but it also sits above the surface of the acrylic spread, so when I come back over it to do another layer, it kind of gives it a little bit of dimension. I really also like the fine detail of this tool as opposed to my Posca pen, which is a little bit broader tipped. One thing that I try to do when working with this fine liner is keep my details going in the same direction so that they're very uniform. You might see that I'm using repetition, I'm using scale again. A lot of the elements that we've worked with are coming together in this piece as I'm working with this new tool. I'm going to rotate my sketchbook around, so that I can work in this section as well. But before I do that, I'm going to take a quick break with the fine liner and add a little bit more contrast. You can fill these fine liner pens with any color acrylic that you want. I just happen to fill mine with white. I am also using that technique that we learned earlier, making large, broad lines. Originally when we started this spread, we did those pencil lines that you can now see underneath the pages. I'm going to go over them with the fine liner to kind of reestablish their line work. You have to sort of keep a steady hand and also push the paint out at the same time by squeezing very gently. Again, this material really highlights fine detail and contrast while creating really, really thin detailed lines. Let's go in and make a few more marks before we finish up. I'm going to connect these dots together with some fine lines. I'm sort of making this up as I go along, and I'm experimenting with a lot of different approaches that we've learned so far. Remember, before you put your fine liner away, wipe the tip, line up the needle to put it back away, and secure it really tightly. Whenever I'm on the go, I make sure to store this in a plastic bag so that it doesn't leak all over my other materials.

Day 17 - Color blocking

- Sometimes I'm not feeling the process, and that's okay. A technique that I use is called color blocking where I use different shapes to outline on my spread and then I go ahead and fill in spaces around them so that I can kind of have a fresh start. I collected these ginkgo leaves on my way to the studio this morning and what I'm gonna do is I'm going to draw them out over the top of this spread so that I can use them to color block out certain areas. It's hard to see on this messy spread, so I'm gonna go ahead and draw some ginkgo leaves over on this other sketchbook. One thing I'm looking for in the fan shape is how the ripple of the leaf changes with every single leaf. I'm gonna go ahead and draw out using a ballpoint pen some of the ripples that I'm seeing in these leaves. Even as I'm working, I can modify my design if I make a mistake in the shape. The practice of observational drawing is to help me familiarize myself with the shapes before I go into the other sketchbook and actually start to paint with them. I'm gonna draw one more and then I'll show you where I started on the spread. I'm ready to go over to the spread. On my palette, I have some gold, yellow, Titan Buff and gesso. I'm gonna use these colors and mix them up as I color block. I decided to use this gold and Titan Buff color because it was a really similar color to the ginkgo leaves. I'm working around the shape of the ginkgo leaves that I've previously drawn on the pages. What I

really enjoy about color blocking is that it helps to minimize some of the distractions in the pages and it helps you to sort of reframe what you want as the center of your work. I'm gonna add a little bit of the Diarylide yellow. I want a little bit brighter effect as I'm working down the page. Sometimes I like to stumble the brush a little bit to sort of let it fade out on the rest of my piece. I don't have to color block the entire page just around those ginkgo leaves. I'm feeling like I need a little bit more opacity in the color, so I've added a little bit of red to my mix and I'm really enjoying how the contrast of the red against the green areas and the blue are really popping out. It's okay to change your mind as you're working. I'm gonna finish up with using my foam brush to kind of soften some of the areas. Color blocking has really transformed this piece a lot. I can imagine coming back in with finer details and line work in my next session.

Day 18 - Personal motifs

- Personal motifs are a really important component to making your work feel true for you. What I really enjoy about incorporating personal motifs into my work is that when you look at it, you can tell that's a piece by Abby. I wanna walk you through a few of the personal motifs that I enjoy working with the most. I'm gonna start today with some marks on the page that set the stage for the personal motifs I wanna use. I've already gessoed the pages, and so I'm adding in a few different tones of pink on this spread. A few of the personal motifs that resonate with me include arches or rainbows, raindrops, clouds, and one of my favorites to incorporate, our items from nature. So I'm gonna go ahead and create a composition here using some of those personal motifs so that you really get the idea that it's a piece created by me. I'm carving into the paint similarly to how we did in a previous lesson. The scale of your motifs can change as you're working. For example, I'm adding in some sort of leaf-like motifs, but those are gonna kind of interact with the arches that I've already created. Near the bottom of my spread, I'm gonna go ahead and write out some of the motifs that I want to keep in mind for later work in my sketchbook. The paint is still pretty fresh, so I'm gonna layer in some darker tones using acrylic paint instead of my Posca pens so that I don't get them messy. This seems like a good time to do some more color-blocking, but this time, I'm gonna go into the interior of my motifs. In order to get these arches to really pop off the page, I'm gonna work behind them and treat the negative space a little bit with a different color. The high fluid acrylic, I think, is gonna help the paint move a little bit more smoothly across the paper. I really wanna make those arches pop out as they're a personal motif of mine. I'm gonna use the back of my paintbrush to do a little bit of carving in here. Let me cover that spot up and then try again. Sometimes it's hard to know when to stop. Motifs that are personal to you help you to connect to your artwork in a more authentic way.

Day 19 - Diagonals

- I'm ready to start using diagonals in my work. I'm gonna do that in two different ways. First, with washi tape throughout one of the pages, and then on the other page, I'm gonna use a straight edge or a ruler and a pencil to work out some diagonals. I feel like diagonal lines help your composition to move in a certain direction and also draw your eye around the canvas or paper that you're working on. I'm gonna start by using a washi tape. Any kind will work, and FrogTape or masking tape also work really nicely. The washi tape is gonna mask over the gesso and color that I've already put onto my page. I don't have to secure the edges because they're gonna end up being pulled off after I go ahead and add another layer of paint. I'm gently pressing them into the page and then I might even just test one to make sure that they come off really easily. I'm working on the bottom portion right

now and extending the diagonal line across the page so that it connects the two together. Your washi tape can be applied at any step of the process. A lot of our workup until now has been pretty fluid and abstract and kind of messy, so these really clean lines that are gonna be created by masking certain areas in our sketchbook are gonna be a nice refreshing look for our spread. I'm also making sure to work with areas that are odd numbers. I really like blocking out certain areas in groups of three or five or seven. I just think it adds to the composition. I'm gonna begin with the same tone that I worked with on the bottom color, and I'm gonna do a little trick that I've learned, which is gently doing a layer that goes right up to the edge of the washi tape. So I'm just using my foam brush and I'm very gently going right up next to the gap where the tape and the paper connect. This might seem like a funny approach, but it really helps to seal the tape down so that when I pull up the tape in a few moments, it's gonna be a very clean line of a contrasting color. I am just loading my paintbrush back up again. Again, I'm just smudging the paint into that sort of area between where the paper and the tape want to separate. I'm almost finished putting the similarly toned color on top of the tape so that it seals in the lines. I'm about to add the contrasting color. Let's take some of this bright yellow and mix it together with this mustard color. My paint is basically dry, so I think I'm ready to go. I wanna work swiping away from the tape so that I avoid getting the paint underneath the tape lines. Sometimes that's gonna happen and that's okay, but my goal here is to have a really clean line when I pull the tape away. I'm also layering this paint pretty thick so there'll be a little bit of different dimension when I pull the tape off as well. Again, I'm painting away from the tape line so as to try to avoid getting the paint underneath the tape. Okay, I'm gonna let this set for just a minute and dry a tiny bit, but I'm gonna flip my sketchbook around and I'm gonna use my fineliner pen again to create some diagonals going in a different direction. I've got my blotting towel here to get the original paint out of the syringe, and then I'm gonna delicately work with some diagonals. I'm starting these lines on the tape, which is kind of helpful, because the little pool of acrylic will be pulled away and it'll reveal a cleaner line. All right, remember to cap your fineliner so that the syringe doesn't clog. Let's check and see if some of the lines have firmed up here. Yeah. Super clean lines. This one pulled the paper away a little bit. Not a big deal. All right. So I have my three distinct contrasting yellow lines on my spread that I've also added the fineliner detail to. I'm really excited to keep going with this and push it a little bit further with some of the other details that we've worked on.

Day 20 - Negative space / positive space

- Working with negative and positive space is a really great way to stretch yourself as an artist. On these pages, I'm going to work on one side using the positive space as the focal point and on the other side using the negative space. I'm also going to be using this lemon that I picked up on my way to the studio today. I think it's a really cool shape and it's not perfectly oval or round, but I'm really excited about the color and about the shape that it's going to help my work to create. I'm going to start out with a POSCA pen just to get the general framework of my piece. This piece hasn't been gessoed yet, but I'm gonna do that after I do the initial drawing. I'm looking at the shape of the lemon and I'm kind of using it as a guide to the shapes that I'm drawing on my page. Let's put a line going off the edge of the page as well so that we really use the full dimension of the sketchbook. You can use any kind of fruit or really any round object to help inspire your shapes in this spread. Cool. Since I'm going to focus on the negative space on the spread that I just worked on, over here, I want to create a little bit different kind of design that allows me to focus in on the positive space or the actual element that I'm drawing. All right. I'm ready to swipe some paint over

the top of the spread and then get started paying attention to the negative and positive space. The gesso and the paint are going to be applied at the same time this time, 'cause I want to see if I can get a nice mixture or a flow of color going while I'm putting them both on the page. Sometimes it's fun to break little rules like that just to get color on the page so that you have something to work from. I'm using my foam brush to blend around instead of my swiping tool. I'm making sure to blend the gesso together and pick up the pigment along the way. I want it to be a little bit brighter yellow to match my lemon a little more, so I'm going to dip in here and get just a tiny bit. If I have too much paint, I can always put it over on the side on the paper towel or onto a palette. I like that color a lot better. While the negative space area is drying, I'm going to go ahead and take a paintbrush and start painting in the areas over here in the area that I established as my positive space. (cap clicking) I like to balance my elbow on the edge of the table if I'm taking a more precise look at trying to paint something in. It helps to stabilize my wrist as well. Okay, I'm going to move over to the other side and focus in on the area that's going to make the lemon shapes really pop out. I'm going to focus on the background or the negative space. I've got some red and magenta on my palette, so I'm actually going to play around with those mixed together a little bit with the Mars Black. I'm not pressing my brush down very hard. I'm really working with the tip of it so that I can get a really fine line around the lemon shapes. It's loaded with paint also. I'm going to add a little bit of this high fluid purple as I'm working across the spread, just 'cause I think it might be kind of fun. I want to show you another sketchbook spread that incorporates the negative positive space activity, but also adds some fine details into it. I've added here with the white gel pen some little tiny detail marks and sort of a faint circular shape, and I've done some extra detail over the top of the positive space on this side of the spread. It gives me some extra ideas for thinking about working on this one in the next steps.

Day 21 - Paper painting

- We're gonna take a break from our sketchbook at this point and work on some loose paper. We're gonna do what I call painted paper by taking cold press watercolor paper and practicing the techniques that we've learned up until this point. Those pieces, over the next few days, are gonna be cut up into collage pieces to be put back into our sketchbook. I love creating painted papers and holding onto them and cutting them up from time to time so that I can always add them to my end process pieces. This is the paper I'll be using for my painted paper. I'm gonna anchor it down to the table just with a piece of tape so that it doesn't move around too much while I'm getting started. I am still starting with gesso and then I'm gonna be sprinkling color on and doing some of the techniques that we've been working on through all of our sessions. I am gonna try that technique again where I sprinkled paint on and blended it with the gesso directly on my paper. My foam brush already has some paint left over in it, so I'm just gonna go with it. When I'm at home working, I like to work on a table that's really distressed, similar to this one in the studio, and I don't worry about getting paint on the table in front of me, but if that's gonna be an issue, go ahead and put a piece of construction paper or cardboard underneath your surface while you're working so that you can really get your paint to the edges without creating too much of a mess. It's a little different than working in a sketchbook, because you're working directly on the table. I'm gonna add some messy marks. Those need to be a little bit darker. Let's try that again. I often keep another piece of paper to the side of my area when I'm working, so that if I have any leftover paint that I need to get out of my pallet or my brush, I can just pull it over to the side. I also want to get this extra paint out of the brush. That way I don't have to go and wash my brush every time I switch to new color, but this can

be an ongoing piece that I'm working on on the side. That actually pulled away some of the paint in a really cool way and made a really fun texture. I wasn't anticipating that. It's drying out a little bit, so the carving isn't working super strongly. This area down here is already dry so I'm gonna use my wide Posca marker. I'm gonna use the tape as a circle template to draw with my ballpoint pen onto the piece in a few different areas. I'm trying to give myself enough contrast and different areas and textures so that when I cut up this piece, you can tell that everything came from the same piece, but you can also see variation in the different lettering and shapes. I haven't used my chrome pen yet, but I'm gonna look for an area to put some special little details using the silver liquid chrome pen. It's just another Molotow paint pen, and when you look at it from different angles, you can see the shimmer and the dimension that it gives. I am gonna add a few more delicate details before I finish up and get ready to cut up this piece to make some collage items. I could sit here and make painted papers all day. We'll return to this tomorrow when we start our collage lettering.

Day 22 - Collage

- We've painted our papers and now we're gonna deconstruct them. I find it really helpful to cut up pieces that I've already worked on and put them back into my sketchbook as an ongoing ritual and a way to put a little more concrete definition to some of the things that I'm working with. I'm gonna take these papers and cut them into similarly sized rectangles so I can then space out the lettering that I want to work with. Henri Matisse was a pioneer in the movement of drawing with scissors, the art of cutting out papers to create shapes and lettering that enhanced his artwork to a whole new level. I really take a lot of that influence in this particular lesson and I'm excited to see where this is gonna take us. I have two papers that I'm working with, the one we worked on in the previous lesson and an extra scrap piece that was just lying around that I was adding extra paint to. With my scissors, I'm going to layer them up and start cutting out some rectangles that provide a little bit of definition in each one and spacing them out on my page so that I know the general idea of the size of each letter. This isn't too precise. It's all part of the process. I really like the fine lines that are detailed down here at the bottom so I'm gonna make sure to cut some of those out. Think about what you wanna say before you start cutting out letters. Sometimes I make notes in my sketchbook or sometimes I just randomly pick a statement. I already know what I'm gonna work with today so I'm gonna begin. As I'm working, I like to line out my letters on my page so that I get them spaced out in a way that feels really balanced. I don't take the time, though, to cut out the interior of the letters. I'm going pretty quickly. Now I'm ready to glue my letters down into my sketchbook. I'm gonna use Mod Podge and a foam brush. I wanna make sure that my brush is really dried out before I get in there with the adhesive. Mod Podge is a water-based adhesive. That if you use over the top, can also act as kind of an acrylic sealant. While I'm working with it, I do need to hold my letters in place so that they don't start to flip up. It can be kind of a tricky balance, but it's fun to do. I'm trying to decide where to put my next letter and I think I've decided to put it up on top in this spread and that way I'll leave this section down here for some other collage work. I chose "Begin again." It seemed appropriate given all of the times that I've made mistakes and I start over and I layer over. I just like it. It feels nice for today. Here are a few other examples of statements that I've cut out of my own painted papers. I really love seeing how the literal interpretation of my abstract work comes to life and just gives me a different way of connecting with my sketchbook process.

Day 23 - Collage leftovers

- I have a lot of leftover collage pieces from our last lesson. I'm gonna repurpose them and continue

to deconstruct the shapes that I've already cut out and put them into a new spread. These are the pages in our sketchbook where we worked on diagonal lines. So I'm gonna continue with geometric shapes and add in another layer on top of what I've already started. I'm planning on using a lot of these papers, but I also wanna be selective in the types of shapes that I'm putting together so that I have an organized spread and not something that feels overworked. Sometimes, I'll cut pieces and kind of put them in different piles as I'm starting to come up with a plan for how I want the spread to look. You might notice that there's repetition, and scale, and shape, and color. All of these approaches are intertwined into this particular spread. I also wanna make sure that I'm working with different shapes and sizes. I'm gonna cut some longer pieces out here and see what they do when layered in. Nothing's too perfect and it's okay to change your mind as you go along. I do wanna get one of my personal motifs in here, which is the arch. So I'm gonna cut those pieces out and set them to the side because I know I wanna have a special place for them. I'm gonna start playing around with different layouts. I prefer to glue things down once I've tried it a few different ways. That gives me a little bit of freedom in changing things up if I don't like the way it is before I glue it. I like stacking objects and repeating them to create a new set of line work. These triangles are really fun. I might also go in and clean up this upper edge from earlier when we pulled away the tape and it made a little bit of a tear. Nothing a little bit of POSCA can't fix. I'm also noticing that I really like the contrast of the white on the back of some of the painted papers, so I might incorporate that in order to have a little bit more interest visually. I'm also finding precut pieces over here in my pile that I haven't even worked with today, but I really enjoy so I'm gonna set those aside to include as well. These tall triangles are really cool. I'm ready to start gluing things down. Again, I've kind of made a few decisions about what I wanna do, but nothing has to be permanent. I can always peel it up or paint over it or decide to change my mind. It's just the process. I'm gonna use a glue stick and Mod Podge. I prefer to glue directly onto the page because I know that the glue is gonna dry clear. Whenever you're gluing on the side of your spread, it might be helpful to put another piece of scrap paper underneath your piece. That way, you're not gonna get glue all over your table. For right now, I don't really mind 'cause I'm working in the studio. I'm gonna set these pieces aside and work with them in a little bit. But I also just noticed this little piece that I think is leftover from one of the letters I cut out yesterday. So I'm gonna use that. These pieces aren't sticking very well 'cause they're on the spine of the sketchbook. I'm actually gonna peel these two pieces off. Using a little Mod Podge and getting this stack of triangles set in place. My fingers are starting to stick to the pieces a little bit, so I might need to wipe them off with a damp towel if that gets in the way of the process. Right now, I'm okay with it. My arch is gonna take center stage, but before I do that, I'm actually gonna put a little bit more contrasting POSCA down. I think that stands out a lot better. As I'm piecing these papers together, I'm reminded of one of my favorite illustrators, Eric Carle, and how he pieced together painted papers to make lovely little creations. Later on, once this has all dried and secured itself, I'll probably come in with my scissors and cut off the edges that are hanging off the side of the sketchbook. I'm establishing a little bit more contrast here 'cause a lot of the colors in the painted paper are kind of blending in with the design of the original spread. I'm gonna flip over the painted paper and use the bright white side. I'm also layering over collage, so I have a few different layers that are gonna create a nice relief. This feels really playful. And when I look at it, it seems a little bit off-balance, but I like leaving it where it is right now 'cause I can always come back and add more painted paper layers or I can go through and gesso it, and move on from there.

Day 24 - Gesso over your creation

- This lesson might be a little challenging, but I guarantee it's gonna help you to trust the process even more. We're gonna take gesso and cover both of these spreads. The idea is that by thinking about our sketchbook as not a precious item but a work in progress, it helps us to remember that we can make these kind of marks again. We can build layers again. And sometimes, we might even carve into the gesso layer. Let's get started. I'm gonna work with my gesso directly on these two spreads and just go for it. I'm masking over what we've already worked on. (foam brush sweeping) This piece has collage layers, so it's gonna be kind of cool to see when they're all the same tone again with the gesso. (foam brush sweeping) The imagery doesn't disappear completely but it definitely gives us a new starting point for another work of art. (foam brush sweeping) (foam brush sweeping continues) Some of these areas that had really dark tones underneath might be kind of fun to do a few scribbles in. And that might help us get started when we come back to this another time. I'm gonna take the back of my foam brush and just do a few squiggles before I move on to covering the other spread. (foam brush scratching) That's enough. (foam brush sweeping) And that's it. We can always start over in a new way.

Day 25 - Organic Shapes

- As we head into the final week of our time together, I wanted to look a little bit more deeply into the influences that affect the way that I create art. In particular to the way that I design my work in a sketchbook. I'm often taking my sketchbook with me on the go. I'm a busy working parent, and I love to record the world around me as I experience it in real time. The theme for today is being in flux, noticing things around you that might be moving or all of the different energy that affects the way that you create your work. I'm gonna start by going through some spreads that we've created together to pick out a piece that I want to work a little bit more in depth on. As I flip through my sketchbook, I'm looking for colors and tones that might reflect an awareness of things that are moving or the energy that I experience when I'm outside. And then I'm gonna work a little bit more through those adding details that might feel personal to me. I'm feeling like this is a good spread for us to work on. I'm gonna begin with adding some softer tones and just let the process sort of reflect some of the things that I experience on a daily basis. The energy of my kids being outside in nature, what the color of the sky is on a particular day. Even when I was walking to the studio today I noticed the sound of children playing in the playground yard and cars going by and the busyness of the city. I'm gonna try to incorporate all of that as I work on this spread. I wanna start with this green gold because it really has a fresh feeling about it. And I'm always incorporating teal because when I add white to the teal, it gives me a range of different sky tones. So I'm incorporating those in an abstract way as I start to look into this spread. These lines on here are kind of reminding me of the spokes of a bicycle wheel, so I'm gonna color block around them and try and pull that out with a little bit of contrast once it dries. I'm just using the can directly on here and it's getting a little bit of paint on it. I'm making some decisions to cover up certain areas which might feel a little uncertain for you. What's going through my head right now is I'm thinking movement and life around me when I'm outside. So a couple images that I'm thinking through have to do with bicycles and the movement of wheels. I'm trying to take a little bit of the busyness away from this so that I can get a little more connection to what's going on in my head. I'm not getting rid of these angles completely. You can still see them underneath the layer of paint. One way that I connect the pieces together and move on to a new color is by scrubbing or stumbling the brush on the paper. You get sort of remnant of the color as it fades into the next portion of the piece. This piece is almost dry, so I'm

ready to do another layer. I am also noticing that I don't want super hard transitions up at this end of the sketchbook, so I'm going through and stumbling those out as well. I'm making sure to use the weight of the brush to help me create thick and thin lines as I do these sort of leaf shapes that are coming up from the side of the spread. Very delicately, and then push down to get a little wider mark. This is also reminding me a little bit of my garden in the springtime. Oh, I grabbed this one thinking it was black. I haven't used this neon orange yet and might save that for later. With my family, we spend a lot of time outside at playgrounds, in nature areas, on rainy day walks so right now I'm thinking about a merry-go-round and my kids splashing around as they move from one part of a playground to another. Taking my sketchbook along with me always provides me a chance to stay off of my phone and engaged with what they're doing as I'm observing. And then recording it down in my sketchbook. (marker scratching) (instructor chuckles) I am gonna take a brush again and smudge around the freshly applied Posca paint. There might be some personal significance for you in the amount of shapes that you put into your piece or maybe a reflection in an abstract way of certain people or places in your life, and I would invite you to experiment with different groupings of items and numbers of objects as a way to be significant to you and your story. Your work isn't gonna look exactly like mine and it shouldn't. In fact, the more personal it gets, the more you're gonna be motivated to continue to come back to your sketchbook practice on a regular basis. I am gonna stop here.

Day 26 - Angles

- I wanna share a little bit about a sketchbook spread that I did recently when I arrived in the city of San Francisco. Right here, I worked in a really different way than my typical style and I can tell by looking at it the structure within the different lines that I worked with are definitely a reflection of being in a new space and a new place. I think this is a good example of how your work can change when you're in a new environment. I'm gonna take inspiration from this piece influenced by the art deco buildings that I looked at and the structure of the different textures on the buildings and I'm gonna work a little bit today in another spread that's inspired by being at the studio this week and in a new neighborhood as I'm experiencing the world around me. As I'm looking again at this piece, I noticed the different spires of the bridges and the colors influenced by the city and the street below me from my hotel room. This was a really, really inspiring piece for me thinking about how my work changes when I'm in a new place and in a new space. Let's get started on another spread. I've decided to come back and work on this spread that we did when we added the collage elements and then gessoed over it. I think the first thing that I just want to cover this with is a different color, a sort of peachy orange tone that I noticed when the sunlight came up this morning. I'm gonna get in here with a rough brush to try to get some of the color moving around. The collage pieces here provide some really nice barriers for the paint so that I really am creating with angles. I'm remembering, in particular an arch on a doorway from a building when I was walking to work this morning. I can already tell this spread is gonna really transform in the next few minutes. Working with more concrete influences can be as simple as looking at the room that you're sitting in and deciding to look at walls around you or angles that you find on a table. Giving an abstract representation of those objects can help you define the space and place that you're in and it can really give your piece a lot of character. I am still working with the collage items that are here, as well as the lines that were created from our diagonals lesson. I'm incorporating them into this new piece that I'm creating. This shape down here is reminding me of a fence that I walked past earlier that was made out of iron, so a little darker color a little more solid angular shape. My pens are

getting a little stuck on the collage elements, but that's okay. I'm just trying to work through it and make it as clean as possible. And you know what? If that doesn't work, you can always paint over it. I'm working directly from the paint on my sketchbook kind of treating my sketchbook like a little palette in process right now. I'm starting to see some different buildings emerge here. Now that I'm putting in this darker tone that feels a little bit more like the night sky. Nearby the studio, there are some railroad tracks, and so I think that these are starting to feel like the presence of the tracks. To connect these pieces together, I am gonna come down and take away some of this pastel by putting a little bit more of that yellow over the top of it. Then I'll be ready for some smaller details. A light color like this yellow can be easily applied over another lighter area that's been just gessoed or that has a lighter tone to it. Otherwise, yellow is a kind of a hard color to layer. I wanna add just a few more fine details with my pen before I move on, but I know that this is gonna continue to be a work in progress. Other experiences might influence this piece and so I can always come back to it on a different day. That feels good for today.

Day 27 - Find The Story

- I use my sketchbook, kind of like a diary or a journal. I put a lot of personal information into it. As an art therapist, I like to remind myself even that it's an important thing to process emotions on the range of scale that they come in. So I use my sketchbook and my creative process to do just that. Today, I wanna talk about mood and how different mark making or pieces can reflect a certain mood in my work. Let's pick a spread that we're gonna really focus on mood. How about this one? There was a lot of textural and tactile experience that went into this spread, and as I look at it now, I'm really struck by how active it is. I wanna calm it down a little bit. I wanna reflect on calming colors, and sort of the way that I can experience a piece reflected in my mood. I'm gonna use sort of cool blue tones to get started. Something that initially even pops out at me is this shape, this fan shape here created with the dark black, kind of reminds me of a mountain top. I'm gonna go with that, and sort of reflect on the sky here, and how I want to create a mood that feels refreshing and calming. Maybe even like I'm out in nature. These marks might feel a little active, but I'm gonna smooth them out and blend them with my foam brush here. Sometimes, I'll take a little bit of fluid acrylic paint, and get right in there into the Posca paint marks to blend the two together. In my work as an art therapist, one thing that I always felt was really important when working with clients and also just in my own work, was finding a safe contained place to work with materials that were easily controlled. Working with acrylic paints for me is a really comfortable process. I like the fluidity of them, but I also like that you can go over them. They're not permanent. One thing I will recommend though is that if you're feeling like working with a new material, make sure that it's something that feels within your control. There's a balance between working with materials and also working with them to a point, where it gets so messy that you feel frustrated. We like to call that building a frustration tolerance. I think that's also why I like to work with collage and deconstructing materials. The process of deconstruction in art and in art making is really transformative to the process. It also still holds onto the story, or the narrative, or the mood that you're working with. Already, I can feel the mood of this piece is really starting to settle down. I'm gonna continue with this sort of abstract landscape, and I'm gonna work with a few other tones to sort of soften the piece. I'm using the ballpoint pen to sort of mirror this shape that's in this side of the spread over on the other half. I really like working with balance and mirror images in my work. Even though these shapes are really angular, I'm also getting a really relaxed vibe from this piece. I wanna take a moment and reflect on the fact that sometimes my children will run into the studio, and create

chaos like you've never seen before. And make it a priority to value their presence in my studio space, and also, use my work to reflect on that experience. I might be covering up a little bit of the chaos here, but it's still there. The STABILO crayon that we worked with, the wooden STABILO crayon is over here in this section and is mixing really nicely with the acrylic paint. It's kind of smudging and smearing around. This is also reminding me sort of of a winter sunset. This has changed so much. When I look at it, it makes me feel calm, and like I've done something for myself. I've put a little bit of myself into this piece. I also love that when I'm finished and it's dry, I can close up my sketchbook like a diary and put it away. This was only made for me, and I would invite you to do the same. Think about putting a little bit of your mood or a reflection of yourself into your piece each time you work.

Day 28 - Gratitude

- What does gratitude look like in our work? In a sketchbook, you have an opportunity to put different representational or abstract imagery into your work, and oftentimes, I like to fall back on a reflection of things that I'm grateful for in my life and in my creative practice. I've gone ahead on this side sketchbook and written down a few things that I wanted to incorporate about gratitude into this spread that we've already worked on. (marker scratching) Coming back to this spread after letting it sit overnight, I really feel like my values and the things I'm grateful for are able to be incorporated now that I've thought about it a little bit. As I work throughout the pages, I'm making sure to move from writing to POSCA paint pens to painting. I'm being really gentle and fluid with the way that I'm incorporating my gratitude into my journal here. My sketchbook practice is always changing, and I like to stay open to the fact that it might end up turning in a different direction than even I anticipated. (marker scratching) I'm working with kind of a limited color palette here as well because I'm really trying to focus on the aspects of gratitude that I mentioned, and I'm trying to incorporate those in a really organic way in my piece. (marker scratching) It's kinda surprising that I decided to actually write the words into my spread. And I might cover them up later. And for now, I really enjoy that I'm literally acknowledging the things I'm grateful for in my sketchbook. I invite you to be more specific to the moment of your experience when expressing gratitude.

Day 29 - Perspective

- Sometimes it can be really helpful to have some parameters when working abstractly. I find it really helpful when I don't have a lot of time to do two things in my practice. I set a timer for the amount of time that I'm gonna work on a sketchbook spread, and I also like to change my perspective by rotating my canvas or my sketchbook around. We're gonna do that today by working on a spread that might seem finished, but also might have some opportunities to change up a little bit. Let's get started. I'm gonna work with my sketchbook oriented this way for two minutes. When my timer goes off, I'm going to rotate my sketchbook and work again for another two minutes. We're gonna rotate it all the way around in a circle so that we work fluidly and have an open idea of what we're gonna work abstractly with. I'm starting my two minute timer. Here we go. I'm working a little bit more quickly than I normally do but that also is good to change your pace up and change your perspective from what you are used to. I already feel like this piece has changed so much. Time to rotate it. I'm gonna reorient my sketchbook to look at it from a different perspective. I'm also going to challenge myself by grabbing a totally different material to work with. Let's start our timer again. You can work on any part of the sketchbook but it really gives you a new fresh look when you just rotate the canvas a little bit. I'm replicating some of the imagery that I

worked with originally on this spread. New ideas can be generated from an old spread just by giving it a little bit of time and effort. Time to rotate again. We're gonna reposition the sketchbook back into this vertical orientation and I'm gonna try another material. Let's get our timer started. I'm really focusing on staying engaged with my piece the entire two minutes. The parameter of setting a timer can be really helpful for executing a piece that you don't know where it's going but you know that you have a certain amount of time to work on it. All right, I'm done with this material and even though it feels unfinished it's time to rotate my sketchbook. I have two more minutes to work on this piece and then I'm gonna walk away from it and get to the rest of my day. That timer means that we're finished. I really enjoyed this activity because it challenged me to work within the confines of a timer. It gave me some parameters and kind of kept me on schedule. Trying new things, switching up my materials. I really feel like I want to go back into this piece later and try to change up things even more with more details or with a little bit more of my story.

Day 30 - Pulling it all together

- We're wrapping up our time together working in a sketchbook, and often the question comes up, "How do I know when a piece is finished?" I want to work toward finding resolve in my sketchbook spread today as opposed to having it finalized. I'm going to revisit adding tiny details, because a lot of the work that we've done on this particular spread is already there. We swiped color across it. We went ahead with unconventional materials. I added POSCA pens. I went ahead and put some theme into it and reflected on how this piece is personally connected to me, and now it's time for us to add some final details. I'm going to show you how to balance out those final details in a piece when ultimately you also get to decide when a piece is ready to be done. I'm working with a little bit more limited materials, because oftentimes when I'm out and about, I only take a few things in my zipper pouch with me to work in a sketchbook. Let's finish up this piece with a few tiny details that really pull it together and make it feel resolved. I'm starting with a POSCA pen that's a little more fine tipped, 'cause I want to come back in here and replicate some of these leaf motifs that I added earlier when I was making this more personalized and reflecting a little bit about my personal day. I'm going to repeat that same leaf pattern and change the scale a little bit down here. Because of the contrast, these details are going to sit a little bit above some of the other acrylic paint that we've created on this spread. I am seeing one area where I want to add a little bit more contrast so that I can come back in with my fine liner pen. It's right down here in the bottom portion. That diagonal is moving through the spread. Remember to test your fine liner before you start on your spread. These white details are really making the piece pop. I'm feeling like it's almost finished. As the fine liner is drying, I'm going to make a few more gentle details with this light pink to pull it all together. I'm looking at the initial layer of the pink acrylic paint that I swiped on the sketchbook in the first session, and I want to bring a little bit of that to the top layer of the work. I'm really feeling like this spread is finished. There's a resolve to it, but I think what is the amazing thing about a sketchbook process is that I always want to return to my work, even if I've finished a piece, and I invite you to engage in that kind of a practice with everything we've learned, because sometimes, a piece will feel done to you and you might come back to it and work on it a little bit later. As I reflect on this process and the spread in front of me, I can see all of the different layers that went into making it happen. Putting all of these pieces together really shows how this process is a work in progress.

Day 31 - Show and tell

- I feel so grateful for the time that we spent together in this course and the day-in and day-out process that you have engaged with me in. I wanted to take an opportunity to share with you some other work that we haven't looked over. I think it'll give you a good idea of some of the different directions that you can go in as you continue your daily practice of painting in a sketchbook with abstract design in mind. Here are the two sketchbooks that we've worked on during our time together, and I've brought a few others to share with you. Let's look through the process together. I really notice that a lot of the themes that I shared with you in this course are really clear in some of the spreads here. I can see color blocking. I love the energy of this piece. Sometimes there are spreads that are unfinished and ready for me to come back to. I can definitely tell when I've taken a piece and rotated it and worked in a different orientation. I can recall the exact time and place where I was creating this piece, outside, my kids playing in the sprinklers, and having a really fun time on an uncharacteristically warm autumn day. I can see the flowers and the energy, even some water here and there. I can see here some really organic shapes, maybe stones that are in the water and some brighter colors that are color blocking around them. And this piece is really familiar. It's the piece inspired by my time in the city just before coming to the studio here. It was a really different take on my style, and I appreciate knowing that it had a lot to do with place and time and looking around me for inspiration. On this spread, there's an intention written down in pencil in the under layers. It says, "Welcome the goodness that is today." I feel like that's a really special intention that I wanna keep in mind as I'm moving forward into other sketchbook work. The last spread is actually one that we worked on in class together. This one needs a little bit more prep work, and I'm excited about it being a work in progress. There are a lot more blank pages in my sketchbook, and I know there probably are for you as well.