

---

## **Beginning Collage** with Courtney Cerruti

---

### **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

#### Overview

(bubbly music) - Hi, I'm Courtney and I started as a painter but I've become to make many things. I used to do display in windows for anthropology, I made custom art installations for weddings, and no matter what material I make something in, I always come back to paper. Collage is a perfect project for playing with paper if you haven't done it before. It's very forgiving. We'll talk about what kind of materials and mediums to use. We'll go over composition. I'll show you some different ways to create marks and transfer imagery. We're gonna dive in and experiment. And even if you make a mistake, I'm gonna show you how you can layer over it, paint on top of it. Collage is very forgiving. All of those layers will add to the beauty of your piece. And even if you don't yourself an artist, you'll be amazed at what you can make. (soft guitar music) (bubbly music)

### **Chapter 2 - Materials**

#### Materials

- You can use almost anything for a collage we've got a lot of materials in front of us, I'm going to walk you through some of my favorite things and then you can gather what you have at your house and figure out what you like to use best for your practice. You want to begin with some kind of base for your collage. This could be a canvas, the inside of a sketchbook, I'm using a wooden panel and you can pick these up at most art supply stores. But you can also do the same techniques that we're going to use on a canvas or on a piece of paper even if you like. Once you have your base determined you'll want to determine what medium you're going to use for your collage and medium is essentially your glue. You may have heard of Modpodge or Decopodge and you can use something like that if you have it in your cabinet but I prefer to use gel medium and gel medium is essentially a clear acrylic paint, it cleans up with water, it was originally designed to mix in with paints to change the body, but it's an excellent medium it's a miracle medium. You'll definitely need a pair of scissors, we're going to tear and cut a lot of paper so scissors are key. If you're working in something small like a sketchbook or you're just wanting to add a tiny little element and you don't want to use your gel you can also use a glue stick for a lot of applications. I prefer the craft stick it's a really wide tip and it goes on really smoothly. And this is an optional tool it's a heat gun and you can use it to expedite the layers while they're drying if you lay down a layer of paint and you want to speed up the drying process you can use a heat tool, but if you don't have one you could also use a hairdryer or you can just be patient and not use either and just wait for the paint layers to dry naturally. Now we get into the fun stuff and this is where you get to gather all of your goodies and bring them out to play with, this is a vintage set of stamps and you can use it to add text to your piece or you can use it to create texture and I like to use mine actually with paint as opposed to stamping but if you have something like this lying around it can be really fun to use. You'll want to gather a selection of papers and we'll use some of these to create our base layer I'll talk about how to pair down and figure out exactly what you want to use on a per-project basis. But go ahead and gather things that you like initially. So as you might imagine I really love vintage ledger papers they're fairly monochromatic but they already have some type and texture which will give me something to bounce off of as I start to create my piece. Maps are really good for a base layer, the insides of envelopes have a little surprise inside if you peek into your next water bill, there's always

these lovely little patterns inside of security envelopes so you might want to save those. Things like tissue paper are a great way to add some texture, I wind up saving all of these random types of little tissue papers, this came from a shopping center and then sewing pattern paper is really fun again because it has a vintagey look but it has some nice graphic elements that you can use to enhance your collage. You can also just add color with traditional gift tissue, so those are an option so you can start saving these when people give you presents. You can create texture by painting in layers and I like to use stencils or things like this this is from the dollar store it's one of those hideous plastic dollies but it makes an excellent stencil when you push paint through it, so you might be on the lookout for those. You want to introduce some mark making and you can do this with lots of materials but I've been experimenting recently with sewing pattern transfer paper, which is usually sort of a chalky finish it comes in lots of colors and you can pick this up at any sewing supply and it's really inexpensive and it comes with these tools, they're little rotary wheelers and you'll use them to make marks sort of scribble marks on your collage. If you have something like this. Check your grandma's sewing basket a lot of people have these kinds of things tucked away and they don't even realize it. At some point you'll want to probably add some imagery to your collage, if you don't feel comfortable using your own photographs or drawings, clipart is a great resource for finding imagery to use in collage work and my two favorite resources, the first one is Dover and you've probably seen these books around. They've made hundreds if not thousands of books just gathering different types of clipart. And what's great about these is they go from big bold designs to really fine little detail work you can find floral patterns, animals, random Victorian household objects, you really can't go wrong with Dover books and you can find them at used bookstores and online. My other favorite clipart resource is Crap Hound magazine, you heard right, Crap Hound. And this guy's up in the Pacific Northwest he gathers all of these random images together and then usually puts them together by theme. So this one is hands, hearts, and eyes. You may not realize that those go together but they do. And then superstition this one's the newest Crap Hound and it's one of my favorites because it really has a lot of different kind of materials. Whatever imagery you choose to work with you'll want to make photo copies that way you can use the images over and over and really explore them. If you're working with a theme, let's say for butterflies or birds, if you have multiple copies then you can really continue to use that imagery over and see how you work with it, so make some photo copies. But don't be afraid to also cut things up, magazines and catalogs are a great resource for imagery and you can use them right off the page as they are. And you might want to start collecting imagery and putting it in a little file folder or shoebox so you have a nice pile of material to pull from when you're ready to create a collage. They're also other little bits of goodies in (mumbles). Got papers in here, some foil stickers, vintage stamps are a really fun way to play with color and graphic elements if you're starting out and I can show you some samples of that, wax paper and baby wipes may seem like an odd thing to have but I tell you I go back to it no matter what project I'm working on. You can use wax paper to actually collage with but it makes a great surface to paint on top of, or to layer in between two sticky pages if you're working in a sketchbook and baby wipes I use for everything. You can wrap them around a paintbrush if you're still wanting to use it and not wanting to wash it out yet, but don't want it to dry out in the meantime. It also is good for wiping away a layer or cleaning up sticky fingers as you go so definitely keep those on hand I have to tell you I go back to them over and over. Having some basic mark making tools on hand is always a good idea, colored pencils you could use crayons or oil sticks, I really like these china markers which we'll use a little bit later. A little fine paintbrush is nice for coloring in sections of your collage and then you can use things like palette knives and scrapers,

the plastic kind you don't have to have anything fancy here and if you don't have those you can use credit card or an old library card, you can use this for burnishing down paper, adding glue, adding paint, and nice wide swaze of color. A couple of brushes from the hardware store are really nice I love to do a dry brush technique with this, you can even use a nail brush. If you want to add a little bit of glitz you can do some gold leafing, so I have set of gold leaf here and adhesive size and then you know I love my washi tape. So things like washi tape and decorative tapes, you can use these to create masks but you can also use them to add a pop of color or a little bit of pattern to a collage. Acrylic paint is a nice thing to have on hand I've got my neon pink and my ochre yellow which I always go back to and a bit of white paint I like to use this a lot in collaging as well for unifying elements. All of this looks like really a lot of materials but just look through your corners and your cubbards and see what you can pull out, anything from an old catalog and a piece of mail can be the beginning of a collage and we'll talk about next how to really pair down your elements to begin.

### **Chapter 3 - Building Collage Layers**

Creating a base layer with found paper

- Once you have all your materials gathered in front of you it can be really hard to determine what's gonna go into your collage. And there's no hard and fast rule about what you want to make something with, just start to reacting to what you like, and then to pair it down. It's hard to have an editing eye, but it's really gonna help you create a solid foundation to then build your collage. So, let's figure out what we're gonna use. I like to work with vintage ledger paper, and things like maps, or book pages. And all of this would make a good first layer for a collage, a good base layer. But I want to pair it down a little because it's a lot of different elements. So I'm gonna start by just pulling a couple things I like. I like that guy. I might want to use a little bit of that. I really like this pattern, but right now I want to keep my base layer sort of monochromatic. And this is too bright, it has too much contrast. So I'm gonna save it, and maybe use it as an element later. But I'm not gonna include it in my base layer, so I'm gonna put that aside. The map could be a really nice base layer, but right now it's got way too much color. It's making everything go on the green end, and I want to keep it more yellow and white. So I'll save that for another project. This has a lot of green, but I might tone it down a little bit later or just use a small snippet of it. Just these two on its own I feel like is not enough. I could use a little bit of graph paper or a book page. I want things to be unified, but I don't want to use just a single piece of paper. I want to start that collage feel right away. So I want it to be made up of multiple elements. I might also want to use a book page. This yellow works nicely with the graph paper. I could also play with the scale of the type in here. That's gonna get me two different textures, so I might keep that as well. And then I can set aside these other elements. I have a piece of music paper here, but I think this has too much black, so I'm not gonna use it. But if later you decide that you have to have that piece of music paper in here you can add it back in. There's no right or wrong way to start this base layer. And the nice thing about collage is you can always add another layer. You can always paint over something. You can always cover something up. So start with a tighter grouping of elements. And then if you decide that you want to add to that you, of course, can. Now, let's look at these other elements to see how they're gonna factor into our collage. Tissue paper is a nice way to add some transparent layers. And I like the sewing pattern paper because it fits with the color palette I've got going, this nice warm ochre color. And it has a little bit of graphic texture, but it's not high contrast. It's not a saturated black, it's like a soft black. So I'm gonna keep a little bit of that. This guy, although I like the navy, I don't think it's working with the other elements as much. I've got black and neutrals here. I don't want to start adding in blue.

I've already got the green as a potential accent. So I'm gonna set this aside for another project. Colored tissue paper is a good way to add a little bit of color if you're not gonna use paint or instead of paint. So I might use this later, but for the base layer it's definitely not gonna make an appearance. I've got my stencils that I might use to create some texture. You could, of course, cut this up and include it as well. And then I have some goodies over here. Let's go through these, and see if there's anything that might be appropriate. Again, this has the nice ochre color. It has a little bit of red. Red and green complement each other on the color wheel. That might be a nice addition and pop. I don't know that I'll use it, but I'm gonna set it into this pile for keeping. These little silver dots would be an accent at the end anywhere, so I'll come back to those later and see if we like them. Just go through here. I love me some neon, that could potentially work. It goes with the red a little bit. Save that for an accent at the end. I really love stamps, you can make your own little collages just based on color palettes of stamps. I may pull out a couple of these. But this is starting to look way too vintagey for me, so I don't think I will use stamps on this collage. So I'll just set those aside. I'll try to remember about these neon dots. I might come back to those. Again, if you want to use something from a magazine or a newspaper it might be helpful to figure out what kind of background you'd like to use. I feel pretty confident with the base layer that we're starting with, but something like this could make a really nice background for a collage. It's a completely different look than what I'm going for with this layered paper. If you wanted to create something that was more scenic this would be an excellent choice. It's got a lot of negative space. I'm gonna go with this paper background of different textures and elements. I'll set this aside, and this could be used for another project. And for imagery, if you want to include some animals or people into your collage this can be a really good way to create a narrative and pair things down. If all the materials are in front of you, and it feels really overwhelming, you can decide that I really like a bird, or I really like a woman, or I like this picture of my grandpa. And that's gonna begin how you determine what elements are gonna go into your collage. This is a good way to start as well. I have a lot of photo copies of various imagery here. You can see a lot of bugs and moths. I've got some birds, some silly clowns, and some ancient art, gods, and things. I can look at these and decide, maybe if I want to create a collage that has a particular focus, an image, or a theme that I want to create. And I'm really drawn toward this super large moth. I've got it in a couple sizes. And I'll set the moths aside so that I can come back to them. They won't be as part of my base layer. There'll be something to create a focal image. But I know that I want to use them. Now that we've selected all these elements, let's actually start making a collage. And when you get this from the store sometimes it can be sort of dusty, so you'll just wipe it off. You can use a baby wipe or a damp cloth. Don't get it wet, you just want to dust off any residue that might be there because things won't stick to it. We're going to use our gel medium to create our base layer and our paper. You can cut or tear pages. That's really up to you, whether you want a hard aligned edge or a soft edge, like this torn. And I tend to use a combination of both. This one's my biggest paper. And I could glue it right down like that. But if this is your first time gluing down a really large piece of paper you have the potential of getting air bubbles. So it's better to start smaller, tear things down, and glue them on top of each other. (paper tearing) I can see when I'm tearing that the grain of the paper is going this way because it's wanting to tear along these lines and not this way. That's fine, just tear with the grain. (paper tearing) It's gonna give us longer skinner strips. (paper tearing) I might wind up reassembling this in a large block, sort of how it was in the beginning. But it's easier to work with these smaller pieces. And we'll get some nice texture over these torn edges. We're gonna start with our gel medium as our foundation for gluing down all of our paper base. The kind that I'm using is a

regular gel. It's a medium body, almost like a hair gel or a Vaseline. But it cleans up with water, it's not an oil-based product. This one seems a little thicker than I would normally use. But I don't want to add water to it. I could add other mediums. You can get like a liquid body gel medium. You can get a heavy body gel medium. You can get this in matte, or you can get it in glossy. You can also just really work it until it kind of loosens up a little bit with your credit card or with your paintbrush. Don't add water to it though because that's where you're gonna start introducing air pockets and bubbles, and you'll get really frustrated. I'll begin dipping in my brush. And I know this is a lot of info on all these different types of mediums. But this is a really good basic place to start if you haven't used gel medium before. Brush this onto the surface. And I'm gonna work in small sections. I don't want to brush it over the entire surface and then lay paper down because it can dry quickly, especially with an unprimed piece of wood like this. It's very porous, and it's gonna absorb. I can also use my palette knife to put on gel medium as well. Ooh, it's like frosting a cake. The main point is that you want to get a nice coat. And you want to go all the way to the edge. Because anywhere that there is not gel medium your paper will not stick to the wood. You can place this right up to the edge. Or if you go over you can always trim it later. Lightly, press it down with your fingers. And then bring in your library card or your palette knife to burnish out those bubbles. Different kinds of papers will absorb the gel medium a little differently. This feels pretty thick and solid. And that's why I'm using this tool to burnish. But, usually, you can just press things down with your hands too. You can also take your brush, and go over these edges to really seal them in. I don't have any gel medium here. And on this first layer we're gonna apply the glue right to the surface. We're not applying it to the paper, and then sticking the paper down. All right, that's gonna get that guy nice and stuck down. And then we'll keep adding our elements. I'm not burnishing here, I'm just using my brush to push out the bubbles and seal down those edges. And I can use that straight edge there if I want. I was thinking about maybe turning this over to use that deckled edge. You can leave a space, and then cover it up later. Again, there's no right or wrong way to layering. You just want to make sure that everything is getting stuck down nice. Since I'm there I'm gonna cover that up. I would say the one thing you definitely do want to avoid is getting hair trapped in your piece. I see like little bits of fuzz, or like your own hair, or animal hair, or your brush hair if you're using a really cheap brush. That can get trapped in the gel. You want to try to avoid that for sure. So, this guy, I could use the backside too. This has a nice clean edge. I might as well just use it against that bottom edge. Line it up, working from that center out, getting out all the air bubbles. I can tear away this edge. I've essentially made a single line or column of this paper. Maybe I want to break out of that a little. Or if I want to keep within it I can just make a small piece here. I've got other elements to add. I don't like this perfect white line down here, so I'm gonna tear this. (paper tearing) I don't mind the black, I'm having to tear it away just so I don't have that crazy white line that's just from the photo copy machine. Again, I could use my card also to apply glue. (card scraping) Or my brush, whichever you like. (card scraping) If you are using this card to burnish down your paper, and you just used it with gel medium, use a baby wipe to wipe off that extra gel medium. Just because things will get messy quickly. If you're using the credit card to burnish, and you're using something like tissue paper which is very thin, this is too strong a tool. Use your fingers or use the brush. But all of this paper is pretty sturdy, so I'm okay using my scraper tool. Use a book page, ooh, it's a little zebra. I could add him if I wanted. I think I just want the texture, not the imagery from the book page. I got a little hair in there, don't want that. Let's layer this back. If I orient this in the correct way, right, from right to left, top to bottom, you're gonna really be able to read that text. But if I just wanted to add texture you might want to turn it on its side, so people read it as just an element in



your collage, and not part of the content necessarily. I've got another little hair. We're almost there. I can use more of this book page down here. Where do I want this, maybe here going in this direction. Make sure there's nothing incredibly offensive. I'm gonna probably obliterate some of this later, but I've got yo-yo in there, and young. This part's really fun, you can just be intuitive, and play, and begin adding layers. If you don't like something you can pull it off or you could cover it back up with another piece of paper. Don't think too hard, you've already paired down a lot of your elements. And now we're just about getting that first layer on because you're gonna cover up most of this anyway. It's just about creating some texture in the beginning. And I've got this raw wood still here and here, so I want to cover that up. I had pulled that green paper originally, but now I'm not sure if I want to use it. But maybe could use a graph paper. This has very subtle texture, this has a lot of high contrast with these bars in green and white. So I think I'm gonna stay away from that right now in this first layer. (paper tearing) Just tear. (paper tearing) You can tear to fill shapes, or you could just tear random shapes. â™ª Doo doo doo â™ª Let's make sure that this is still wet. This stuff dries pretty quickly actually. I'm not crazy about those shapes. I'd rather something a little bit longer. (paper tearing) Yeah, let's use something like that. Oh, yeah, I like that. Those other two pieces that I had kind of auditioned, they felt too scrappy. I felt like I had two similar size elements going on. This nice vertical piece references this piece. It also references this long piece on the right here and across the second half of the collage. So I feel like that one works. Again, I could cover it up later or paint over it. That's good for our base layer.

Finish base layer and begin mark making

- Once my base layer is dry, I wanna unify the elements a little bit. And you can do that by using paint or you can use tissue paper, also. I'm gonna use white paint and a dry brush technique to bring some of these different colors together and give it an overall base. Grab some of my white acrylic paint. And I'm using my wax paper as a palette. And my hardware store brush. I don't wanna add any water to my paint or to my brush. I wanna keep this rough, coarse texture and do a dry brush technique. So I'll just put a little of this paint out. And come in and start to unify some of these elements. I don't want the text to read as words, specifically, I just want them to be texture. So I'm gonna lightly come in. Going right off the edge. I'm using this as a dry brush, not adding water, this isn't a wash. You're really gonna beat up your bristles, so don't worry about pressing down or pressing too hard. This is just a hardware store brush, it's not a fancy brush. Using the white paint is a good way to unify a lot of different kinds of elements. So if you find that you have something that you've glued down that has a little bit too much contrast, you can just do this layer of dry brushing paint over top. And you can do this with other colors, too. It doesn't have to just be white. And go right to this edge. We're gonna let this dry just a little bit because I'm gonna transfer some marks onto here and the transfer paper will stick to anything that's wet. You can let this air dry, or you can use your heat tool. And this works like a hair dryer, except for it has less force, it blows out less air, but it's much hotter. So you don't wanna put your hands right in front of it or let kids use it. It is fairly hot. You also wanna be careful not to get it too close to the surface of your collage because you can potentially have things bubble or burn. If it starts to smell really funny, then you're way too close. Just back off the heat tool a little. (tool whirring) Just keep moving your heat tool around the surface. (tool whirring) You wanna let this come back up to room temperature. Right now, it's still warm to the touch. It can be a little sticky if it's too cool or if it's still really warm, you just turned off your heat tool. And anything that's sticky will have a tendency to capture other medium or other paint or transfer powder, which I'm gonna show you in just a minute, and you don't want that on the

surface. So let it come back up to room temperature and then we can use our transfer paper. I mentioned this in the materials. This is essentially chalk on one side of a piece of paper and it allows you to transfer pattern lines. And you can get it at the sewing supply store. You can also get a similar version at the art store that has a graphite or a sepia-toned charcoal. This comes in blue, yellow, red, white. It's pretty faint in color and it's a chalk surface. You can use it over and over again. And it comes, usually, with these little rotary tools. This one has sort of a rick-rack pointy edge, and this one just has a smooth circle edge like a pizza cutter. Let me show you what kind of marks these make on a scrap piece of paper. Place the chalk side down. This is the rick-rack rotary tool. It creates these really faint little dots, just to give us some texture. And then the one's that's just a regular rotary tool gives you a straight line, sort of like a scribble. Let's make some marks with these on our canvas. Let me just get some dots on there. They stand out a little bit better on this surface. Maybe I wanna have some up here as well. And I'm picking this up every time I make a line. I'm not just going back and forth like this because you'll wind up with dots in exactly the same place. I want them to look more layered. And we can try the pizza cutter version. This one I can go back and forth. I'm essentially making like little scribbles. And if you don't like something, you can go back in with your white paint and get rid of it. Remember, I said this was very forgiving, which it is. Let's do some horizontal ones here. I like this little surprise of what happens. You're never really sure. You can see on that transfer paper, how that chalk is lifting off. Let's add some more up here. I've added those three scribble marks and then the two dot marks. And this is an indirect form of mark making. We're not taking a pencil and drawing right on the canvas, we're using this tool and the transfer paper to create these marks. It gives us a little surprise, and it's also gonna loosen us up a little bit to get ready to make marks. I know it can be a little uncomfortable, but you're just adding texture at this point. I didn't evenly disperse these marks over the whole surface of the canvas. I've got odd numbers, so three of the lines and two of the dots, that's five total. In general, most artists will tell you to do things in odd numbers. That gives a sense of balance that's maybe a little counter-intuitive. I don't wanna place each little grouping of mark making all over the surface. It creates this polka dot effect. And what I mean by that is not actual polka dots, I love actual polka dots, but it creates elements that are all the same size, weight, and shape, and they're evenly dispersed, and unless you're making a deliberate pattern, your eye is just gonna travel over the surface and not really see anything. It just moves your eye over, instead of unifying elements or creating a focal point. You want a balance of negative and positive space. So you don't wanna start this texture and do it all over the surface evenly, unless you're making a pattern. In this case, we're not, we're just creating texture. We'll come back to that transfer paper again and I'll show you how to use it to add a more gestural or figurative element, but I wanna continue adding just our abstract texture right now. So we're gonna go to those rubber stamps that I mentioned in the materials. And I'm gonna use the O, just because it can read as a shape, as opposed to a letter. I mean, if you were to use something like the E, which is a really specific letter, depending on how you use it, it may read as an E. But right now, I just wanna make texture with the O and not have it read like a letter. I've got some paint still here. I'm gonna flatten it out a little bit so I can stamp into it. I'm just gonna stamp with my paint off the edge and in this top left corner. You can overlap the stamps a little. I just wanna vary them a bit. Just building up a different kind of texture. And you can see that the scale is much larger. So we've got these little tiny dots, and these thin, skinny bits of line, and now we're using a bigger, circular shape here. It's very subtle, and I like that. I'm just trying to create texture, I'm not trying to draw the eye there, necessarily. If you're using your stamps with paint, then you want to clean them off after you're done using them. So grab a baby wipe. Just give your stamp

a clean. Put that guy back. You can also draw directly on the surface of the canvas. I'm using a china marker. It's essentially the adult version of a crayon. It has a waxy feel and it'll pretty much draw over everything. It comes in primary colors. You can get it at the art supply store. Something like a Sharpie or a pen with this surface that has paint or gel medium, those pens will start to run out really quickly. And so this wax marker or china marker will create a nice, drawn line right on top. And unlike charcoal, it won't smear. So let me show you what kind of mark it makes, just on a scratch piece of paper. You might be afraid to draw, but just practice making some lines in a row. Again, we're just making texture here. You could try doing shapes. Start with a triangle and just come off of there, connecting the dots. We're just gonna draw some lines. If you don't like it, we can always paint over it, so don't worry. I think I'm gonna add some lines here. We've got this open space, I don't wanna fill it in, but I wanna create a second layer of texture on top. I'm just doing a little grouping here. Maybe a second little set there. I like to drop things off the edge. I don't want everything to be right in the center or leave this weird, awkward border around the outside. So let's work something off the edge here. Don't be afraid to play with the mark making. It can feel really odd at first, but it's super fun. And if you're tempted to draw something really specific and make it look like an object, take a stick from your back yard and dip it in some paint and force yourself to feel awkward. This marker kind of does this for you, this china marker. And so I'm just gonna channel my inner kindergartner and just draw some marks on here. Got that part going off the page, I've got a little tiny reference of it here, and I think maybe I wanna build up something here. I'm gonna switch into making triangle shapes. And you can start with just a single triangle and work your way down. You can also do an X and come off of it from there. So it's like you're pretty much always making parts of an X. Then you just fill in the lines. It's very bosque-iat. The surface of the canvas is also gonna force your line to be very irregular because we're building up texture, it's not smooth. Again, I'm gonna go off the page here. Can fill in this shape if I want, continue working it. Just drop this down. I feel like a little kid. In fact, if you wanna enlist your first grader to help you, you can, you can make this a collaborative piece. Okay, I think that's good. I wanna bring this down because it has too much contrast, it's very black compared to everything. I can go back in with my paintbrush and dry brush over parts of it to lighten it up a little. But I actually like the black, I'm not that worried about it. I just wanna show you that you can take it down a notch, if you feel like it's too bright and bold. One other thing that we can use our transfer paper for is starting to create some recognizable imagery. So far we've been making abstract images, sort of doodles, and little sketches here and there. But what if you wanted to introduce something like a flower shape or a botanical shape or even like a silhouette? I've got my clip art here of these floral designs and I've made some photocopies of just a few that I liked. Botanical shapes are actually really easy to draw, but if you feel like you want a very specific shape or image in mind, let's transfer that onto the surface of our collage. So I was gonna use an image like this, but I want it to be a little larger in scale. So if we look at this against our collage, this element is fairly similar in weight and size to this element. This is a little bit bigger, but they're pretty close. I want something that's really large that's gonna take up this space. So I've increased my photocopy. And that has a nice feel. And I could transfer this onto the surface, I could try to freehand it. If I took a scrap piece of paper, I could look at my botanical shapes and just start with the base shape and come out from there. And I'm stylizing this, it doesn't have to look exactly, it's just a point of reference. I can add the things that I like or take away the things that I don't like. I kind of love these doodles, they're really fun. And I can go from there. Or if I want something that looks just like this, we can go back to our transfer paper. Again, we're using that same sheet. And this time, it's really long and I can see that my image is wide, so why don't we



cut this in half. We'll put the chalk side face-down on the surface of our collage. Have our image face up, and then you wanna take something like a ballpoint pen or a stylus and you're just gonna trace. And the pressure from the tip of your pen is gonna transfer the blue chalk line down onto the surface of your collage. Going sort of slow, but I'm not being perfect. I don't need it to look exact. I want this to have a handmade, hand drawn quality. And I'm just starting with the outline. And then we'll, I've outlined that entire shape, and we'll move on to this shape. Try not to shift your paper because then you'll wind up with a staggered image. If you do, it's just chalk, you can paint over it underneath and start over. Or you can just go with an irregular shape and that's okay too. You can feel, too, below you, the surface isn't perfectly smooth because we've created various layers and paint strokes in the gel medium using our brush. And that's fine, also. If you're having trouble seeing where you've traced, you can always use a red ballpoint pen or a blue ballpoint pen and then you can really see the lines that you're making. You can also just lift up and check. That's transferring really nicely. In fact, it transferred in to all these black marks and you can't really see them, so I don't need to go any further in that direction. And I'm actually happy with the way it looks on that edge. So why don't we remove this. I've got this really soft, pretty blue line drawing of my flower shape. Now, this is chalk, and it can rub away over time. If you like the softness to create texture, then you can leave it. You could add some gel medium to seal it in. Or, we're gonna actually use this as a way to create our own line drawing. We're gonna re-trace this with our china marker so it looks like we just freehand drew this right onto the surface of our collage. And I'm not being exactly perfect with this. That's totally fine. The surface is rough. And I like those little shadow of the blue lines. I'm gonna leave that, I'm not gonna erase it or paint over it or anything. If your china marker starts to get fat, you can pull this down and expose more of the tip, but I have plenty of tip there, I just wanna sharpen it. And I learned this from Amanda Brown. She does this with her chalk. You just take your scissors and cut at an angle. And you get a nice little point on the surface of your crayon. So keep tracing. I like how this is growing out of these weird marks I made earlier. Go right off the edge here. Yeah. If I look back at my original drawing here, you can see, I don't have any of those internal shapes. I can go back in and freehand them or go back and trace them with my blue tracing paper. I don't think I want to add, I like these circle shapes, but I don't really like those teardrop shapes. So maybe I'll just add a few circle shapes in the center. Very loose and rough circles. These are not perfect circles. And I could add more circles up here, if I wanted, but I think I'm okay just like that. Once you've created some texture by transferring on some lines and drawing some lines of your own, you've created a second layer on your piece and then we can add our focal imagery and some pops of color.

#### Adding color and focal points

- Let's add some color to our collage. We've created all these wonderful elements, and now let's brighten it up a little bit. I'm gonna use just a standard acrylic craft paint. You can use any store bought acrylic for this. Some will be more transparent or see-through, and some will be more opaque or solid. This guy is an inexpensive craft paint, and so it'll be fairly transparent. I wanna add some color in these triangles. So just with my brush, add in some pink. I can let that dry and hit it with a second coat so I get a little more saturated, or I can leave it pale like that. Just gonna do a few of these. I'm not gonna do all of them. Maybe... Remember, I like those odd numbers. I'm gonna do this one over here. Three is actually my favorite number, so we'll have three, at least for now. I could change my mind and go back and add more if I don't feel like it has enough color. I could paint all of these in in different colors. That would be fine too. Also wanna add a really clear line. A

lot of these elements, although some have hard edges and are bold with this black line, I wanna add something that's just very clean and graphic. Feel like a lot of these shapes feel organic or soft. Gonna use some masking tape, not as a collage element, but to mask off a line. You could do a line, the top. I'm doing it just below center, not on center, but just below center. Just eyeball it. Press it down along that top edge 'cause that's where the paint's gonna go. I don't want it to seep under. We're using this just as a mask to create a line. It's not perfectly straight, but I'm trying to get it fairly even. You can use washi tape to add this color, but I like the paint because this is transparent, even more so than washi tape. And my black line work will still show through. It's almost just like a tint that we're adding, little tint. If I were to use a really heavy-bodied paint, this would not be transparent. Peel this off. Little bit of your crayon is gonna come up, that's fine. You get a lot of excess here. You can just come in with a clean paintbrush and clean up that edge. Looks good. The only thing that I might love as much as neon pink is a little bit of gold. So we're gonna add some gold leaf. You could of course use gold acrylic paint also. It comes in a booklet of tissue sheets with these very finely super thin, you can see, hammered thin sheets. And it's not 24 karat gold. This is imitation gold leaf. You can also get silver leaf or copper leaf. There's even a mottled, kind of rainbow-colored metallic leaf that you can buy. So I'm gonna have my gold leaf there. And the way that you adhere gold leaf to any surface is with sizing. It's essentially glue. It's called adhesive sizing. And we're gonna paint this on like we would paint. It's white to start, like a milky white, and it will dry clear. Your brush in. You'll see that the sizing is white. It's like milk, the consistency of milk. And we're gonna carefully paint in this triangle. And we wanna be careful because this is going to dry, and wherever it dries, it will be sticky, and that's what the gold leaf is gonna stick to. So you don't wanna get it anywhere else. And you don't wanna apply gold leaf if your paint anywhere else on the surface is wet because the gold leaf will stick to that too. Triangle will be gold. And where else are we gonna put this? Maybe this entire leaf shape could be gold. That could be pretty. We don't have to do the entire flower, but just the leaf shape. Might be kinda hard to see, but you can definitely get a feeling of how it's going on milky. And it will dry clear. Doesn't have to really puddle and be super thick. Don't worry about that. Again, there's nothing else on the surface of this canvas that's wet other than the sizing that I'm putting down. If there was any wet paint or gel medium on the surface, the gold leaf would stick to that also. So you just wanna make sure that you have a clean dry surface before you add your sizing. And if you're having a hard time seeing where you've painted, you can tip your canvas, and you'll see that shimmer and sheen. You wanna let this dry just a few minutes. This feels a little counterintuitive. Most glues you would use while they're wet. But remember with the adhesive sizing for gold leaf, this needs to be completely dry for it to be sticky enough for you to attach the gold leaf. Usually takes about five or 10 minutes to dry. And if you're unsure, one thing to note is it goes from being a milky white to clear. And then if you're still not sure, you can always read whatever gold leaf sizing you're using. On the back of the bottle, they'll usually tell you roughly how long it'll take to dry or what to look for to make sure it is dry. I know mine is dry. I can see a little bit of sheen, but it's definitely not white anymore. And I'm gonna do the triangle and the leaf stem. Stuff is really delicate. I'm just gonna start with the triangle so I can use a portion of this that's already been used. Just carefully tear off a little section. That will overlap my shape, so that fits my triangle shape. This will stick wherever there was sizing. And remember, if you had left anything else that was wet, like paint, it'll stick to that too, so be careful. Then you can tear away the part that's not sticking to the adhesive size. Careful, be careful. You do wanna be gentle. But it pretty much knows where to go. Pull off that little bit. You can take something like a stiff brush and rub away to try to get the part that did not have the adhesive size but is just kind of

static stuck to this. Try to get that off. Let's add our gold leaf to our stem as well. For this guy, I'll work in small sections at a time. This little corner here. Oops, I got two pieces. Just laying it over wherever there's glue. I'm not being too precious about (laughs) this. I'm just sort of rubbing it on. It should stick in most places. You can see how it's pulling up right away on parts that don't have the sizing. You can see that a lot of these pieces, I'm rolling away and then placing back down. If you start to get a really mottled look and you don't like it, then you can go back to a clean sheet. That will give you a really smooth, even look of gold leaf, but this is totally fine for me. And tear away some of these bits. Add them back on top. Wipe away. This gold leaf will be everywhere. Just embrace it. If your fingers start to get sticky for any reason or are wet, you'll wanna dry them off 'cause the gold leaf will start to stick to your fingers instead as well. Go back and use my brush. You don't have to be too precious about this. The gold leaf knows where to stick. And if you wind up with a more cracked or crazed look in the gold leaf, that actually can be a nice way to distress it, and you could go back in with black acrylic paint or white acrylic paint and rub it in to those portions. But I'm just gonna use it like this. Let's try to get some of this out of the way. I'm gonna go back in with my china marker and just clean up this edge. Just go back in wherever you wanna clean up the edge. You can draw right over the gold leaf. If you get adhesive sizing, the glue, down on a spot that you don't wanna add gold leaf to, let it dry. I mean, initially you could try a baby wipe to try to get it away. And if it's drying sticky, then you can let it dry completely and cover it with gel medium. Once that dries, it won't be sticky anymore. If you get your adhesive size on, place your gold leaf on, it's gonna be pretty permanently stuck on there. And if you don't like it, you can paint over it. But depending on how opaque or nontransparent your paint is, you may have the gold leaf showing through because it's metal. It's of a different substance, so it will show through a lot of things, kinda like pencil marks show through paint because they're graphite. So what I would do is collage over that piece that you don't want with a piece of paper, and then you can proceed to add gold leaf or more drawings or more layers where you do want them. I made some photocopies of the moths in different sizes, and we're gonna figure out which one we like the look of. I'm gonna roughly cut these out. I'm not gonna finite cut them right along their edge. This is just to start. Okay. Start with the biggest guy first. Well, I'm looking at this, and we've got negative space running throughout the center, so I have two objects here and I don't really know exactly where my eye is gonna land, so I want something that is a little heavier in weight, a little darker in color, and that's where the moth comes in. So I've got a really large one here that we could place and see if we like it. You can fold this down if that helps you visualize it. And I think he's too large. He's almost the same size as all these other elements. And if I have three elements that are all the same size, my eye's just gonna keep going in this infinite loop and there's nothing that's gonna bring me in. So I think he's too big. I'll set him aside. I've got a mediums size one. He could go off the page or off the canvas or sit right there. I like him okay too. He's a possibility. Got one that's lighter in weight, has more white space in it, so it reads overall more gray. And these other elements have dark black lines with a lot of open white space, so in that way they're too similar. Here's the same moth we looked at earlier, I think. Yeah, he's the mini version of the big version here. We looked at him first. Actually really like this small. I had thought originally that I might want a really large moth, but I like the small one. He brings this sort of moment of clarity to the work. This stuff's all coming off the edge of the page. It's open. The line work's open. I have a lot of white space. But this has a lot of dark space, and I think I like him the best. So I'm gonna cut him out. I'm not gonna worry about his little legs. I could draw those back in or disregard them entirely. You have complete artistic license here to modify your imagery and your shapes. This is totally up to your imagination. So if your moth is missing its

antennae because that's how you like it, then that is just fine. I am gonna try to remove a lot of this white space. If you wanted to lay down something that was transparent, you would do that with an image transfer. But with collage, you have a white background, right? Whatever paper you're cutting out, you cut it out and it's opaque, you're not gonna be able to see through this. And in this case, that's what I want. I'm gonna cut off his antennae. I can draw them back in later. All righty. Clear that away. Let's look at him there. Actually like him just black and white. Again, these are the decisions I'm making as I play with the elements and combine them on my collage, but you should do whatever sings to you, whatever you feel. If you wanna add a pink butterfly or an orange moth, then please feel free to do so. I'm gonna show you how to add some color so that you know how to approach the collage with color if you'd like to do that. Mine overall is reading a little bit monochromatic, but then I have these pops of pink and gold, and that feels like a good balance for me. Grab your ochre paint or whatever color you like. I've already got my hot pink from earlier still out there. Let's use a piece of wax paper, just to protect our surface. And because we're working with craft paint that's transparent, you can literally just brush on a swathe of color here if you wanted, and this will give a tint to your butterfly. You don't have to worry about going outside the lines 'cause you're gonna cut this. So I could add a butterfly with a bit of pink in it or could do that ochre. You can see the ochre has a little bit more white in it, and I can see that because where these black markings are from the photocopy, now they look more gray. Where I did the pink over it, they still look black. So this has more white in its base. That's just something to keep in mind depending on what effect you're going for. So just because something's black and white doesn't mean you can't add color. You can also use colored pencils to add color or crayons. And a lot of colored pencils, you can see when you color over the black, they'll show up. They'll be like a sheen on there. So I would use them just to color in the white open spaces. I wouldn't use them to go over the black. If I just wanted to do a tint, then I would go back to my acrylic paint. So we could audition that butterfly. That is too matchy for me. It's like pink, pink, pink. I don't want that. I wanna keep him just black and white, but I do need to glue him down. Before we were adding gel medium to the surface of our canvas as a way to adhere the next layer, but this time we're actually going to apply the gel to our little mothy. Put him face down on my wax paper. And I'm working on the wax paper because I really wanna brush this gel all the way off the edge. If he starts to curl like that, make sure you don't stick him back down into the gel medium. Move him to a clean place on your wax paper. And you always wanna be working from the center out. Okay, he's got glue on him. Line him up. Just make sure he's in the place you want him to be. And I'm gonna add a little gel medium on top of him just to really seal him in fully. And I think with that moth on there, all of my collage elements are on, and we're almost finished.

## **Chapter 4 - Finishing Your Collage**

### **Adding text and finishing touches**

- When I'm close to finishing or have finished and I have these little bits of paper hanging over the edge, I can do two things. I can add gel medium to the back and press them over the edge, and wrap the sides, and gel medium them down for a finished look. Or I can just trim them off. Can use your scissors at an angle to trim along this edge. And if that's feeling too hard to do, or you have a lot of glue there that you can't get off, you can just use an X-ACTO knife as well. Let's go to this side, just trim that off. It's easier for me to just do this from the back edge, but if you wanna do it from the front edge 'cause of the way your scissors are, that's fine too. You can tear that. Can go back in and just seal that little edge where I pulled that paper up with some gel medium. These

edges look pretty good. Can always add some gel medium, oh, like right here. Just use my finger. Think my scissors just pulled that up. Seal in that edge. I tend to be a very visual person and the elements, the objects, and the drawings that sort of create the narrative for me within a piece, and I always struggle with the words. Sometimes I wanna add a little bit of text and so I have a hard time figuring out how I would add text or why to add text. And you can include text in your collages or paintings to add to the meaning, it can enhance the narrative. So if you're wanting to tell a story about nature, botanicals, the moth in particular, you can pick out some text that goes with that and you can use your handwriting. You can cut something out of a magazine and adhere it in the same way that we did all of our paper elements. You can also take text and change your narrative by having it juxtapose the imagery. So if you had something with like a dog playing, but then you had some phrase about a mouse or a cat, that would make your viewer kind of question what's going on in the piece. And I like to look through books, and they don't have to be stories necessarily. They could even be the dictionary. What I'm gonna do is just flip through and look for phrases or words that pop out. Like she felt as though she would never go to sleep. I could cut that out and add it to this collage. In the hands of another boy, oo, I like that one. That one I could maybe choose to do. And if I wanted to add that, don't be scared, I'm just gonna rip this out. If I wanted to use this phrase, I could just cut it out with my scissors. And you can also start your collage by choosing the text first. Like I said, I'm a visual person so I always start with the imagery and the text follows if I use any at all. But if you really are inspired by words, or you have a phrase that you'd like to illustrate, you can start with the phrase first. I'm gonna set that aside, normally I would just add it with my gel medium, but I picked out some other text earlier, I'm gonna show you another technique that you can use also. And I found the text in the same way, just going through a book and finding a phrase. But the technique that I'm gonna use instead of just cutting something out of a magazine, I actually added the text to a piece of masking tape. So this is project from my book, *Playing With Image Transfers*, it's called *Typewrite Tape*. And you essentially lay masking tape down on a sheet of wax paper and then you type on it with your typewriter or your aunt's typewriter that she left in her closet and no one's used in 60 years. Should definitely ask your family because a lot of people have typewriters hanging out. And I had this text in mind and I was saving it for a project and I feel like it fits this, so I have people tend to forget. Works just like a sticker, you can peel it right off. And it's not that sticky anymore. I'm gonna just place it down and see where I wanna add it. I don't want it to be smack dab in the middle, that's way too obvious. I like that certain elements will kind of recede, and then as people look at your collage, they'll pop out and surface. I kind of like that space. This width of the masking tape is almost the same width of that line, and so it's kind of nestled in their nicely. And because the masking tape is slightly transparent, you still get some of the blue texture below, so that could be a spot. I'm gonna try out a few other spots. We had it up here. I also like that because it's hidden in that the masking tape and the color of the paper are similar in their color, and so it's not immediately revealed. Think I want it there, or here. (tongue clucking) Think about it for a minute but don't overthink it. Okay, I think it's gonna go there. That feels good. Now it's not super sticky, so I could use a bit of my glue stick, or I could brush on some gel medium and then stick it down. Grab a little bit of that gel medium. You can even use your finger, you don't have to use a brush. Just gonna put a big layer on there. Lay my tape down. And then just for good measure, I'm gonna go back over with the gel medium to really seal it in there because you never know with masking tape. Over time, it could peel off. And any tape for that matter, same with washi tape. You could totally use washi tape in a collage but you should seal it in if you're gonna use it. There's this little shadow of a V there that I actually wanna cover up. I've got a



lot of white paint here, so I'm gonna go back in with my white paint and very lightly just get rid of it. Just grab a tad of that white paint. And I don't wanna just put this big white blob, I just wanna kind of blend it out. There we go. Just blend out the edge of your tape. I really like it, I just need to sign it and find a place to hang it. If you want to finish off the edges instead of just leaving the unfinished wood, you can paint them of the colors that you used in the collage itself, like the hot pink. You could also gold leaf the edges, which would be really pretty. Or you could pull out a color like the black and give it a really dark edge if you wanted to finish it that way. I like the unfinished wood because it blends in with my background, that first base layer that we created, so I'm happy with it just like it is. I wanna share with you some variations and some little collages that I made in a sketchbook. Move this stuff out of the way. Just to give you some ideas of other things that you can do with collage. Collage works on a small scale or a large scale. This is just a little loose leaf of paper and I started with a big brushstroke in that same dry brushstroke technique we used of white paint. I added mark making in red colored pencil here. Little pop of neon colored pencil and then gluing down elements. This is actually a packing tape transfer and you can find out how to do that in my image transfer class. So that adds, the transparency allows you to add layers underneath that will show through. So you can use a combination of image transfer with collage. This has a lot of the elements that we worked up today. I started with the base layer of this vintage graph paper. Using my credit card, I put down a layer of the pink craft paint, dry brushed on some white paint, and then started to build elements. This is just a photocopy from clip art I found online of this horse, and instead of using him entirely, I cut him in half and split him up. You get some interesting movement this way by them going off the page. And again, I added some text. This one was from Alice in Wonderland, and it says, it sounds like a horse, Alice thought to herself, which obviously references the imagery as it is unlike the collage we did where the text and the images were opposing. Saving this for a later collage. This was a bit of black paint and I just really liked the way it looked. This is the beginning of a collage that I haven't finished. This a sketchbook, so really feel free to play with collage and the sketchbook application is the perfect opportunity to do that. You can start building layers and if you go to another page and then come back to them that's okay, you don't have to finish to this point where you're like, oh, this is a final piece of artwork. Start adding layers, it's a good base and then if you wanna start adding imagery you can, or create a bunch of layers and then come back to them. So this one is unfinished, it's just the beginning. Again a good base is just tearing up little, relatively same size squares of paper. And this one I began with black gesso, which is another one of my favorites. Added some acrylic paint on top. Again, a transparent image transfer, which allowed me to layer this red under her lips. And I just started to add elements and made some marks. And I don't know that this one is finished, but it's a good beginning, and I might come back to it later. Again, just playing with having torn shapes, juxtaposed by these really graphic bold lines here. They have a clean finite edge 'cause it's tape. You have this bright neon, it's playing off these neutrals. And then I've got just some random little elements in here. This is another collage where I started with the tissue paper, that sewing pattern paper. I stenciled black over that and then I used that same white paint dry brush technique to kind of push those elements back. And I wanted the focus to be on this image transfer. If you do wind up making collages in a sketchbook, be aware that if you have two facing pages that both have a lot of gel medium or acrylic paint on the surface, they can have a tendency to stick to one another, especially if you leave it in like the back seat of your car on a hot day. You can just skip pages, or try to alternate your medium so that you're not having two facing pages that are really sticky and tacky. You can also slip a piece of wax paper in between if you need that for some extra security. You've seen me do a collage from start to finish.

We've created it on a wooden panel so you get a sense of a mixed media finished piece, but what I really want you to understand from this process is there are no hard and fast rules. Really gather the materials that you're drawn to, edit them down either by color, or by theme, or just experiment, your process can be the thing that you wanna explore, and you can do it in a sketchbook, you can do it on a canvas, really give yourself no limitations. Get out your markers, get out your crayons, and really make marks. Like I said, channel your inner kindergartner and just play with it until you create something and settle into a set of techniques that you really like.