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## Paint a Geometric Star with Lisa Congdon

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### Chapter 1 - Introduction

#### Introduction

(friendly music) - Hello, my name is Lisa Congdon, and I am an artist, an illustrator, a surface designer, and hand-letterer. I make most of my living doing illustration. I worked for such clients as the Museum of Modern Art, Martha Stewart Living Magazine, Chronicle Books, Simon & Schuster, Cloud Nine Fabrics, to name a few. I am the author of four books, including *Art Inc.*, *Whatever You Are Be a Good One*, *Twenty Ways to Draw a Tulip*, and *A Collection a Day*. I also make part of my living as a fine artist, I make paintings on canvas and wood and I also make collage on paper. One of my favorite things to do is play with shape and color. I'm gonna show you how to draft an eight-point star on a surface, and the surface we're gonna be using is clay board, which is a really great, smooth surface for this project. We'll also be talking about masking off the triangles using artist tape, and figuring out what colors you're going to use, cause color choice is, as you can see, are really important in making your piece shine. Finally, once all the tape is removed, we'll talk about cleaning up your artwork so that it looks really crisp and clean and beautiful. (friendly music)

### Chapter 2 - Materials

#### Materials

- The materials you're going to need for this project are all things you can get at the art store. And some of them you might even have lying around your house. We're going to be using an eight by eight Claybord. But the important thing here is that your Claybord is square. I like the eight by eight, it's a great size, but you could have 10 by 10 or six by six. And Claybord is similar to a Gessoed panel or a Gessoed canvas, or even a plain wood panel. Typically they have some kind of cradle. Sometimes it's really narrow, and sometimes it's deeper like this. That part doesn't really matter, it just depends on your aesthetic. I really like this Ampersand Claybord. It has a really great, smooth finish and that's actually why we're using Claybord and not any of the other surfaces. Because we're gonna be taping off some lines and painting inside of them. And when you use tape on a surface you want the surface to be really smooth so that the paint doesn't leak underneath the tape. We'll talk a little bit more about that later. So, that's our surface. We're also going to be using a straight edge ruler. I really like the metal rulers because the edge's really hard and typically they have some cork on the back side which helps stabilize the ruler on your surface. You'll need a sharp pencil and an eraser. But I like to use a soft eraser, like this Factis eraser is great. Because often the erasers on the end of pencils are hard and can leave a mark on your surface. For this project, we're going to be using acrylic paint, which cleans up with water. And I like the Heavy Body paint for this project 'cuz it's a little bit thicker. Some of these, we're going to mix together to make different shades. I can show you here that I have a few greens, a couple different blues, one pink, a brown, a yellow, and a white. We'll definitely need white, but the other colors probably depend on whether you wanna use the colors that I'm using, or use your own choice of colors. We'll also be using artist tape, which you can get at any art supply store. And the great thing about artist tape is that when you put it on the surface of whatever it is you're painting, it won't pull up what's underneath it. So you can paint and then lay the tape on top of it, and then take the tape off, and it typically doesn't peel up the paint that's underneath it. You know it's artist tape because it says artist tape. So make sure you're getting artist tape and not just regular masking tape. You'll also need at least one, maybe two

different brushes. I really like these brushes with a flat edge, and they're pretty stiff. So you don't wanna use watercolor brushes which are really soft, or any brush that has a lot of straw-like bristles. You might wanna get either a rag to clean off your brushes, or a paper towel. You'll also need a palette. I'm just using a regular ceramic plate. And something to put your water in.

### **Chapter 3 - Paint Star**

#### Prep background

- The first step is to paint the background of your clay board white. And you might be asking yourself, it's already white, why do we need to paint it white? And that's because you want the whole surface of your painting to be painted. And clay board is so smooth it's almost like porcelain smooth, and you want it to have some paint texture. That paint texture will also help the acrylic paint that we're gonna lay on top of the white stick a little bit better to the surface of the clay board. I'm gonna put a little titanium white on my palette. Then I'm gonna grab my largest brush, you could even use a brush, since you're painting a background, that's even larger than this one. Always wanna get a little bit of water on your brush first before you dip into the paint. You want it to be thick, but you don't want it to be too thick because you don't want it to make little blobs of paint on your panel. Start off, and it's pretty easy since there's not any teeth on clay board like there is on a regular fabric canvas or on wood. So the paint will go on pretty smoothly. It's kind of hard to see because you're painting white on white, but for the most part, titanium white's gonna look a little whiter than the slightly off-white surface of the clay board. And you'll notice here that I'm making paintbrush strokes in one direction and then going back over there in the other direction, and that's both to smooth things out, and also to add a little bit of texture. But also smooth enough so that when you lay your tape down, there's not really any bumps. When you're done and it's dried, you can run your hand over it and see if there are any bumps and then you could take a piece of sandpaper and lightly sand those bumps out. You're gonna let your panel dry for about 15 to 20 minutes, you can also speed up the process with a blow dryer. And you wanna make sure that it is actually really dry because we're gonna be drafting the star on top of that painted surface next.

#### Draft pattern onto panel

- [Female Speaker] The next step is to draft your pattern for the eight point star onto the panel. So the supplies you need for that are the ruler, your sharpened pencil and an eraser, which you may or may not use; but we'll talk about that in a second. We've also provided a guide for you. We're actually gonna be drawing the pattern for the star with the ruler and pencil, but we're gonna be drawing so many lines on here that we have this little guide, which you can download as a .pdf that shows you which of the lines you're gonna using for the eight point star. Because you'll see, when we get the pencil marks on here it might be a little confusing. So the first thing I'm gonna do is take the ruler and put one end of it at one corner and the other end at another corner and you're going to be essentially making an x. When you draw with the pencil, you want to make sure not to press down too hard because you might dig into the paint a little bit and also it might be hard to cover up or erase the pencil marks. So light enough so that you can see it but not so light that obviously you can't see it. And then you're gonna draw another one from corner to corner. Again it doesn't have to be super exact. Then you're going to draw one from the middle point across both ways through the x. You'll notice here that I have the edge of my ruler up against the edge of the panel and then the middle part crossing through the middle of the x. Then you'll do the same thing on the other side. You could sort of measure what was exactly the halfway point but you don't really need to do that

as long as the edge of your ruler butts up against the side of the panel and the ruler runs through the middle of the x once again. So you can see that you've just made two intersecting crosses, one through the middle and one through the sides. And so your panel is essentially divided in half so actually four different ways and you've got one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight segments. Now we're going to be drawing a few more segments. The next step is to put your ruler up at the top and you want to make sure that the starting point of the ruler, of the first inch of the ruler, is at the edge of the panel. And you're going to make a mark at the two inch mark. This is an eight inch panel and we're dividing it essentially into four parts. And then again at the six inch mark. You should already have a mark at the four inch part from when we divided the canvas in half. I'm going to do the same thing down at the bottom; at the two inch mark and at the six inch mark. So if you're working on a smaller or larger panel, you just want to make sure that you divide the panel into four different segments. Now we're going to do the same thing on the other two sides. Once at the two inch mark and again at the six inch and again at the two inch mark and at the six inch. Now we're going to draw a grid using the marks that we just made. So you're gonna connect the two inch mark with the other two inch mark on the other side. And again at the six inch mark and the six inch mark. Same thing on the other side. There are a few more lines we have to draw and this is where the template comes in handy. I advise putting the printout of the .pdf next to your panel and the next line we're gonna draw goes from the corner of the two inch mark into this mark here. Same on the other side, the six inch mark to this point here. I'm going to be doing the same thing all the way around the other three parts of the panel. So you're gonna be drawing a line from here to here and on your panel it's from here to here. And then again from this point to this point and from this point to this point and we'll finish up on this side. Once you've finished drawing all those lines, you should see the outline of your eight point star. You'll also see that there are some lines that we're either going to need to erase or paint over. The areas that are going to be painted in I show on the template that have little dots in them. But all of these areas are just going to remain white and so we want to make sure that any lines that are inside of those areas either get erased or painted over. Sometimes erasing works, it depends on your eraser. And that's always the best way to start. But sometimes it doesn't and we might have to paint over them. I like using a soft eraser, so let's give that a try. You'll see that the eraser picks up some of the pencil mark but not all of it, and that's pretty normal. We can paint over whatever the eraser doesn't erase. But it's good to try to get some of it up with the eraser. Just make sure that you dust off any eraser from the actual panel so you don't end up painting on top of it. So you'll see that the eraser picked up a lot of the pencil mark but there's some left over. We're not gonna worry about that right now. We are gonna go back in and clean up the white area after we've painted the triangles. So we'll clean up the pencil marks at the end.

### Paint star

- To get really clean edges on the triangles inside of the eight-point star, we're going to use artist's tape to mark them off. I've already ripped off a few pieces ahead of time and I suggest that you do the same. And we'll start with about one, two or three triangles at one time. I'm going to start with this upper-left triangle. What you want to do is tape right along the edge of the pencil mark like this. We're going to do the same on the other side of this triangle. And on the third side. On the edge, use your finger to press down the tape because you don't want the paint that you're going to put on the inside of this triangle to get underneath the tape. And now we're going to do two more. You want to choose two more triangles that are sort of far away from the one that you've already taped

off. And I'm going to do this one here which is on your template, is this sort of right-hand lower one. On the first side, the edge of the tape up against the pencil mark and rub down with your finger. And then do the second side. Again, it doesn't have to be perfect. You just want to get as close as you can to the edge. And then the third side. And then to see if there is a third triangle you can tape off, look to see if there are any that are far enough away so that the tape doesn't cover up that triangle. So, for example, we couldn't tape off this triangle because the tape, taping off this triangle is covering part of it up. But several of the triangles down here are unobstructed, so let's choose one of those. And I think I'll do this one here, which on your template is this one. So now we've taped off three triangles. And usually that's the maximum amount that you can tape off at one time. So the next step is to paint inside of those triangles. And before you do that, you want to make sure that you've sort of thought the color choices that you want to use. You're welcome to use the paints that I use and mix them in the same way that I have, or you can use your own colors. Some people like to plan ahead what they're going to do. You can use your template for that with some colored pencils and some other colors as your paints, or even put a dab of paint in each of the sections. So the paint that use is Liquitex and it is a great heavy-bodied paint. I also like Golden, it's another great brand. I've got here a cobalt blue, a medium magenta, which I'm going to mix also with some other colors. I love this chromium oxide green, which is a dark green. And we also have a light more neon-y green, brilliant yellow green. And then we have cadmium yellow medium. And I love this sort of orange-y red cadmium red light hue. I've already got our titanium white which we're going to need again because we may mix it with some colors. Raw umber which is our brown. And I've also got a turquoise that's called bright aqua green. I've laid out all my paints on my palette and before you take any of those paints and put them on your panel, you want to sort of think about how to compose your colors. I'm going to show you one of my earlier eight-point stars that I made a few years ago and talk you through how I chose how to lay down the color. You'll notice that there are color families sort of clustered together in some areas and what that does is gives a bit of dimension to the piece. So that also requires some color mixing. These are different colors than we're actually going to use today, some of them. But you get the idea that I've put a cluster of sort of pinks and reds together. I put a cluster of yellows and greens together. And then I put a cluster of blues together. And there's some random colors, like one brown triangle, and to balance it out, one blue triangle across from the cluster of blue triangles at the bottom. And to balance out the red side, we've got another red one over here. You can lay yours out however you want. But know also that when you lay out colors, you don't necessarily have to disperse them evenly. That sometimes when you cluster things together it makes a more interesting look. We're going to lay down a very similar palette but use a few different hues. Like I'm not going to be using neon pink paint today. So let's get started painting. I'm going to use a blue, a dark turquoise blue in this corner. And to get my dark turquoise, I'm going to take one of my brushes, dip it in a little bit of water, grab some of my turquoise paint. It's not quite dark enough, so I'm going to add a little cobalt to it. I want it even darker than that. I'm going to grab a little bit more water. It's important to completely mix your paints with your brush before you lay them on the panel. In fact, you might even want to mix more than you think you'll need so you don't have to mix more color later. It's fine if you do have to mix more later, but it's good to get enough going at first. This is going to be one of my dark turquoise. A little bit more water, which helps the paint to mix. Once you've got it mostly mixed together, you want to lay down your first layer. Most of the time it's about two, sometimes three layers per triangle. You'll notice that you can see the brush strokes. You can still see the white underneath. And that's okay if you overpaint in the beginning. You just want it to be light and smooth. And you'll

notice also that I'm painting on top of the tape and that's because the tape is protecting the edges. That's how we get those clean edges. I'm going to leave that like that and let it dry before we put the second layer on. But remember not to take your tape off until the second layer or third layer, if you go to three layers of paint, dries. If you have enough brushes, you can have a different brush for every color of paint, but I tend to use the same brush and just wash them between coats. While the blue one is drying, we're going to paint a yellow layer down here. And you can use either your towel or your rag to dry off your brush a little bit. Maybe get a tiny bit of water on and then we're going to go to yellow. And I want to do sort of a lightish yellow so I'm going to add tiny bit of titanium white to this layer of yellow, because I want to differentiate it from the other yellow triangle that we're going to paint so that they look slightly different and not so uniform. So I've mixed together my yellow and that's going to go down here. So, same thing, one layer. And it's looking pretty opaque already but we're definitely going to want to put a second layer on. Again, we wash off our brush and we have already decided what's going to go here, which is going to be a lighter turquoise. So I'm washing off my brush to make sure all that yellow is gone. Dabbing it here which helps remove some of the yellow paint. I get a little bit more water on it and then I'm going to mix a little bit of this original turquoise with a little bit of titanium white. I want it to look distinctly different from this. In the same color family as this aqua, but much more green and less blue. And then we're going to lay that down. Even though the hues are different, we're going to be using this previous painting of mine as a bit of color reference. And I've done a sort of darker teal up in this corner. I think on the second layer I might add a little bit more green to that. And then on the bottom here we've got a lighter teal, and yellow over here. Before we remove the tape, I'm going to add a second and possibly a third layer of paint to each of these triangles until the color is very solid. The two teal triangles that I painted each needed three coats of paint. The yellow one, only two. And I was looking for making sure that there was no white showing underneath, not very many brush strokes that were visible to the eye. You want a really flat, opaque layer. We're ready to remove the tape. And before you do that, you want to make sure that if you've used a heat gun or a hair dryer, that the paint has completely cooled. Acrylic paint is actually made of plastic and so when it's heated up, it loses its stick and it can melt a little bit. And so, often, if it's hot, when you peel off the tape, it will peel the paint off. So you want to make sure it's completely cooled off before you remove the tape. I'm going to start with the top-left triangle here. The more layers of paint that you have on, the more likelihood that your paint will peel up a little bit on the edges, so you want to work really slowly. You can even see there's an edge here that I'm going to just push back down. I'm going to go really slowly when I peel this off. You'll see this edge is really nice. I'll just rip this off here. We can get the rest of that off later. Take the second side off. You'll see how that's peeling up right there? I'm going to hold that piece of paint down with my finger and go really slowly here. The corners are the areas where the paint is most likely to peel up so you just want to go really slowly and just press it back down with your finger and it should dry. Let's do this one next. And then the third side. Again, very slowly and deliberately. I also added a little bit more aqua color to this triangle in the upper-left corner because I realized as I was painted that it was a little too blue. I'm going to take the tape off for this second teal triangle and again, super gentle and slow on the corners, holding the paint down with your finger. Very slowly pulling the tape off. Start with the layer of tape that is at the top. Gently pull up the corner so you don't scratch your panel. Super slow. Very slow at the corners. And then there's your second. Now we're ready to tape off three more triangles. It doesn't matter where on the panel they are because we're using artist's tape which you can tape over existing paint and it won't peel it off. So I'm going to do this one here. And one last one I'll do right



here. Make sure that you go back through and press down those edges really tight. I've got three more taped off. I'm going to look at my color reference to see what colors I'm going to put in these triangles and you should look at whatever you sketched out. So I know I'm going to put a brown here, and orange-y red over here and in this triangle a medium green. For my brown triangle, I'm going to mix in a tiny bit of white which is going to help the paint lay down a little bit more opaquely. You've got to make sure that you mix in that white really well. Don't worry too much on your first layer of paint that it doesn't look terribly opaque. It's okay that it's a little streaky. You're painting on a very smooth surface so you're just going to have to add more layers. So to get this medium hue of green, I'm going to take little bit of this darker green and a bunch of this lighter green and mix it up so it's somewhere in-between the two. And that looks about right to me and it seems like it's nicely mixed. I'm going to lay that right here. Again, not overworking the paint on the first layer. Next, I'm going to lay down some red in this triangle. I may want to add a little yellow to this red to make it a dark orange color, but I think this may go down out of the tube just fine so let's try that first. Yeah, I like the way that looks. I'm going to wait for these to dry and then we'll add our second and third coats. Next we're going to peel off the next series of triangle tape. Again, work really slowly as you peel it off so that the edges don't come up. And remember when you're peeling tape off, to peel away from the colored triangle and not into it and that will help. It's always so satisfying when you pull the tape off and you can see the clean lines underneath. And last but not least, this green triangle. Continue taping off and painting all of your triangles until you've completed your eight-point star. While you're painting, always refer to your color reference. I'm going to refer to this one. You will refer to whatever you've drawn or planned ahead of time, paying attention to color balance and composition and making your eight-point star really unique and interesting.

## **Chapter 4 - Finish**

### Clean up and finish

- I've completely finished painting my eight point star. The last step is to take the last bits of tape off. As you can see, as I peel the paint off it's not lifting up the paint from underneath it, which is great. We've also got some areas here that we're gonna need to fill in. What we're gonna talk about, how to make all of your edges super-clean without the tape in just a moment. When you're taking off these last layers of tape, sometimes it's a little hard and you might need to put your fingernail into the painting a little bit, but just make sure you're doing it gently so you don't scratch the paint. I love artist tape because, for the most part, it doesn't take the paint up, see? So, we've got some tape here that's hanging on for dear life, but we can get that off, peel back around this direction. And, we've got one little tiny piece of tape that doesn't want to come off, and we just gently pull that off, and there's our completed eight point star. This is the point at which you look at your overall color composition and, if there's something that you want to change, now's the time to change it. Let's say you decide that there's a particular triangle that you think should be a different color, or you want something to be slightly lighter. This is your opportunity to re-tape any of the triangles and paint over them using the same process that you used before. The great thing about working on a hard surface is that you can paint over paint, where working on paper you can't really do that, so that's one advantage. Once you're happy with all of the colors that you've chosen for your entire piece, you want to look to make sure that there are spots that you need to clean up, and I've got a few. So, there's a spot here where the tape was covering up and we've got to add a little green, and a spot here where some of the aqua paint peeled up and we're gonna need to fill that in.

There's also some spots here and up here, and we also want to look at the white to make sure that our pencil marks get covered up as well, and I've got a little bit of pink paint here that I need to cover. This is why it's really important to use a flat edge brush, and I'm gonna show you how to paint edges with this very flat edge. I think I'm gonna use a smaller brush to start, and I'm gonna start in the upper left hand corner so that I can move down without worrying that my hand is going to smudge something that I've painted previously. So, for this upper left corner, I'm gonna get a bit of this turquoise, and I'm gonna take the edge of the brush and very, very gently go along here, very lightly, and just sort of fill in some of that area, and, again, if you go over the line, you can always paint over in white. So, I'm pretty happy with that, it's not perfect, but we're not looking for perfection here. I'm gonna fix the green on this middle triangle. So, as you do these edges, you want to hold this very flat edge of the brush right up against the line and really just dab, you don't want to paint too hard, kind of nudge it in there very delicately. I'm gonna fill in this last bit here. Again, very delicately dabbing into those little white spots where the paint peeled up. Next, we're gonna fix the white areas. So, I'm gonna do the same thing here, a little brown spot, got a little piece of pink paint that I want to cover up, see a little pencil mark here, a little bit of pink edge here, a little bit here. Again, you can see how these flat edge brushes are great for filling in corners. Just gonna take one last look and make sure I have everything covered up. Once this dries, you could go back over again if you needed to. And, it's okay if a little bit of your pencil marks show. And, there is our completed eight point star. One thing I wanted to say is that it's really important to let go a little bit in this exercise because we could spend the rest of the day trying to make this look absolutely perfect and clean up every single line, and when you're cleaning up lines, then you end up messing up other lines, so at a certain point you have to stop and say this is just good enough, and the imperfections are going to be so slight that no one but you will see them. Let's look at the one we just made compared to the one I made a couple of years ago, and they're pretty similar, but you can see that the color choices are a little different, like I made a conscious choice in the one on the left to use some neon colors that really pop and are bright, and, in this one, I decided to use colors that were more muted. This one is actually also painted on wood, which is a little bit more of a sort of grainy, porous surface than the smooth surface of the clayboard, so if you're interested in painting on wood you could experiment with that. I also love the idea of playing around with color and scale in these, I could really see doing some really large ones, 20 by 20, for example, that you did three of and hung them over your bed or sofa. They're great, very simple, easy, meditative, decorative pieces for your home.