
Make a Geometric Paper Collage with Lisa Congdon

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(cheerful music) - Hello, my name is Lisa Congdon, and I am an artist, illustrator, surface designer, and hand letterer. I love collage because it's a really forgiving medium, and it doesn't require a lot of technical skill. We're going to be playing with one specific shape: the diamond shape, and combining those together to make stars. We'll talk about how to work with different kinds of paper, from origami paper to old vintage paper, and even new paper where you can create your own designs. This is a great project if you're a beginner and you've never done collage before, 'cause it's really straightforward. And if you have done a lot of collage, this is probably different than what you've done before, so it's a great way to mix up your collage practice. (cheerful music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- The great thing about collage is that you have very few materials to work with, and a lot of them you probably have laying around your house already anyway. So we're gonna start with our background paper, and I like to use a really smooth Vellum Bristol, which feels like a cardstock, but it's really nice, quality archival. Most paper comes in a 9 by 12 size, or 11 by 14, but you can cut it down to whatever size you want. For the purposes of this activity, I'm going to make a collage that's 8 by 10, and that's because I want to fit it into a particular shadow box frame that is 8 by 10. So, that's really easy to do, and we're also going to collect some scraps of any kind of paper you want, and you want to be looking for a variety of colors and patterns. I really like to use vintage paper from vintage books, so I have some examples of that here. I also like to use really brightly colored paper. Origami paper's a great resource for that, and I also have this bright neon pink paper. I also collect envelopes that come in the mail because on the inside, you often have really fantastic patterns, and this is, of course, free paper. I like any kind of paper that has really cool geometric patterns like this, diamonds with circles, but find a variety that have different colors and designs. I'm going to show you how to create a doodle, and for that, you'll need like an O2 or an O3 Micron pen and white paper. You'll also need a pencil with a relatively sharp tip. I like the soft eraser. You'll need a diamond template, and you might need to search around a little bit at your favorite art store for a template. I like to use the diamond shape that's about an inch wide. They usually come on the same template as the triangles. You'll also need some scissors and some adhesive, and there are lots of different kinds of adhesives. I really like to use an archival, neutral PH glue, and this Lineco brand is really great. Since it's not on a stick like a glue stick, which you can also use if you prefer that, you're going to put it in a dish and use a brush. You might even mix a tiny bit of water with it to make it a little less thick. Because we're working with glue, it's really important when you're doing collage to have a wet rag or a wet paper towel nearby so that you can wipe your hands off because you will get glue on your hands and if that glue gets on your paper, it can smudge and look dirty.

Chapter 3 - Cut Out Collage Elements

Trace and cut

- One of the most exciting parts of making collage, for me, is picking out the paper. I like to use a combination of vintage paper and scrap paper which comes in catalogs, and mail, and other things

that you might find and otherwise throw away. This whole collage is made up of diamonds. When you cut a diamond out of a solid piece of paper, you don't really have to worry too much about where the diamond is placed. So I like to place the edge of the template along the edge of the paper so that we can use as much of the paper as possible. So that's my fourth edge right there. And then I grab my scissors and cut along the pencil line. A little bit of pencil may be showing, even in your final collage, and I think that's just fine. You can also flip the shape over if both of the sides are the same, and use the side that doesn't have any pencil markings on it. When you cut diamonds out of patterned paper, sometimes you might wanna be more strategic about where you lay the template, to make sure that aspects of the pattern are centered inside of the diamond. So, this piece of scrap paper is one of my favorites. And I'm going to place the dot that's on the pattern in the middle of the template, and I'm going to draw around it. Let's try cutting out another diamond with a different kind of pattern paper. This one you can tell is very used and loved. I found this paper in the back of a catalog. I'm going to center the template over this so it looks a bit like a shooting star. And you see how I've centered some of the lines in the paper in the middle of the template. Go ahead and cut several dozen diamonds in a variety of colors and patterns. That way, when we're ready to start making the collage, you'll be all set.

Create your own shapes and work on your composition

- Because I like drawing my own patterns, I like making my own patterned paper to use in my collages. If you took my basic line drawing class, you probably are familiar with what I'm about to show you. You can use any kind of white paper. You just begin by drawing one triangle, and then creating some line work inside of it, going one direction. Then add on another triangle, and alternate the lines. And another. They don't have to be uniform. You can make a long and skinny one, or a tiny one, and then you can connect them, like so. Eventually, you'll have a big cluster that looks like this. Let's cut a couple of diamonds out of my patterned paper. Sometimes, when you're working with patterned paper, it's hard to see where your pencil marks are. But look closely and cut slowly, so you don't miss them. You'll notice that with this pattern, I didn't really pay much attention to where I placed the template. So, sometimes it's okay to be more random. You can use any size paper for your collage, but I've chosen to work in eight by ten. To compose, we need two pieces of the same size paper. So I have two pieces of the white, eight by ten Bristol in front of me. We'll compose on the left-hand side paper without gluing, and then we'll transfer over small parts of collage, a bit at a time, and glue them down on the right-hand side paper. So, let's start by creating a star that falls off the edge. Compositionally, it's always really great to have a few elements in your collage that are going off the edge of the paper. I'm gonna add some pink, next, for some contrast with the green. Since the blue is another bright color that I'm going to be using in this collage, I'm going to also use that. I'm also interchanging, just with these three diamonds, two different patterns, and one solid. I'm gonna put my next star right around here. Again, I don't want it to be at the same eye level as this one, because we want to alternate where things are on the paper. So, let's start with a piece of paper that we haven't used yet. I'm gonna do this vintage book page, and choose another solid one. For this star, I'm going to use entirely different paper than I used on this one, and I'm going to rotate it a little skewed, so it's not perfectly upright. For now, I like how that looks. Actually, these look a little too symmetrical, the two pattern pieces, so I'm gonna move these around a little bit. That's why it's important not to glue these down right away, to play around with composition. We may even end up changing the composition more once all the stars are laid down. I think I'll put another one right here and I'm actually gonna connect the tip of one of the diamonds, with the tip of this

diamond. I'm gonna start, I'm gonna add some more pink back in. I use that right here. Let's take one of these yellows. I think it's time for some more blue, but I wanna make sure that it's not facing exactly the same direction as the blue diamond up here. I want it to alternate a bit, so I'm gonna put it here for now. I'm gonna take some of the orange that's here, or dark yellow, and add it here. Maybe put a bit of green to contrast the green one that's here. I'm gonna move these, maybe, slightly up this way, and I think I'm going to add one more, down here at the bottom, that's going off the edge. We haven't used this solid blue yet, so I'm gonna start with that. One of my hand-drawn, and maybe one more pink. But I'm gonna move this here, and put this here. I like this collage, so far, but I think it needs one more star, and in order to make room for that on my surface, so that it makes sense, compositionally, I'm gonna move this guy down a little, with my fingers, and then I'm gonna take my two hands, and move these up. Because, remember, I don't want either of these at the same level as that one. I'm going to add another star down here. I definitely wanna use another bit of green in the same pattern as I have here. I also want this green one to angle at a different direction as this one, since it's the same pattern, we want some variation. Now I'm gonna float in one of these more graphic black and white pieces, and maybe one of these. And again, as I'm playing around, I can move these. Now I'm down to my last bit. I'm going to think about whether this is angled at the right direction, and look at my overall composition. I like that, but I'm also noticing that I only have one diamond in this contrasty black and white pattern. So, I'm gonna take another one and replace something somewhere else, and I think a good place to do that, might be here. Then, I'm going to take this guy out of here, and add this color here. I think I like that just how it is.

Chapter 4 - Assemble Collage

Arrange and glue

- Now we're going to begin transferring our stars over to the paper where we're going to be gluing them down, and we're going to do that one star at a time. If you're worried you're going to lose track of the exact composition, you can always take a picture with your smartphone. I like to work from left to right and down, so I'm gonna start with this star. So you'll need your brush, and put a little bit of glue on it. You might even want your brush to be a little bit wet, so it's helpful to have a glass of water nearby, and you're going to pick up one of the diamonds and very thinly coat the back of it with the glue. You don't want too much glue because when you lay it down, it will seep out the sides, and then you're going to transfer it over to the other piece of paper, approximately the same place. In the process of gluing down your diamonds, you may get a little bit of glue on your fingers, and you want to make sure that you clean that off pretty quickly because if you don't, you may glue swatches and a little bit of dirt on your paper. So, I like to keep a wet rag next to where I'm working so I can just wipe my fingers off. This also keeps your hands clean so you don't get dirt on your white paper. I think the star I'm going to move over to my final paper next is the one in the upper right-hand corner. Because I want the tip of this orange diamond to be at the edge of the paper, I'm going to start with that one. You'll notice that once the first piece is down, the others fall easily into place. Continue gluing down your stars one by one.

Finish collage

- Once everything is glued down and in place, there's one last step. You may notice that there are some pencil marks on some of your diamonds. It's actually easier to erase them once they're glued down. So you can grab your soft eraser. And I think a soft white eraser is your best bet. And very

very lightly, once the glue has dried, you can run the edge of the eraser along the edge of any papers that might have pencil marks. But very softly. Sometimes a good eraser will also remove any clumps, tiny clumps of glue that might be on your paper. And then very lightly with clean hands brush away any of the eraser debris. Now you're ready to frame. I like to frame my collages in a shadow box frame. But you can use a flat frame also where the glass goes up right against the paper. This is a great shadow box I got at Aaron Brothers Art Mart. And this is one of the collages that I made the other day. And you can see it here inside the shadow box. It gives a great sense of dimension. The great thing about using geometric shapes is that they allow you to make a really unique and structured collage. But you can also play around with mixing geometric shapes with more organic forms in your collages. The important thing is to experiment and have a great time doing it.