

## Paper Collage with Attila Olah

In preparation of your creative venture into the world of paper collage, you will need to gather newspapers, magazines, fliers but any packaging material that would normally end up in your paper recycling will work well as long as you are able to cut it easily with a pair of scissors.

### Set up your tools:

- A pair of scissors
- A glue stick
- A ruler

Set up your workspace on a table and, if possible, sit by natural light or switch on a table lamp so you can see clearly when you sort through your materials for inspiration as well as when you begin cutting things out.

Lay down a sheet of paper in front of you. This is the surface you will use as the backing for your collage. You will place and eventually glue down your cut outs on top of this backing paper. Be mindful that it is easy to lose your cutouts, especially the small ones, so separating what you want to incorporate in your artwork from what will be discarded is really important when working with collage. I recommend you keep a tidy workspace and have a box or bin next to you for your offcuts.

### Exercise One

Your first exercise you may start by spelling out a name, a word or sentence. If you are feeling inspired you may even spell out a favourite quote or poem of yours.

- Start by flicking through your raw materials; your newspapers, magazines, fliers, etc. and then begin your collage by cutting out letters or words of your choosing. Think about scale and how the colour of your letters and words compliment or contrast each other. Your letters may be coherent in style or you may decide to go for a more eclectic feel where you mix different font types together. If you like to work with precision you may want to cut letters out following their outline or guidelines you have drawn using a ruler, or you can cut them out in blocks or rectangles which has a more playful effect.
- When your cutouts are ready for assembly, think about how you want to arrange them: horizontally, vertically or you could go for a more organic arrangement. There is no wrong or right way of doing this. When you are ready to glue things down onto your backing

paper you may want to take a photo on your mobile phone or simply spend a few moments memorising where everything goes.

- Grab a sheet of paper that you are happy to sacrifice and use this surface when you apply glue onto the back of your cutouts. You only need a small amount of glue but make sure you spread some near the edges so that your cutouts will adhere well onto your backing paper. Stick down your cutouts and smooth them down with the back of your fingers. Take your time, the glue will take a few minutes to dry.

## Exercise Two

Your second exercise is about creating a collage of a landscape. Generally speaking, the most iconic landscape paintings and photographs have three components in common: they have a background, a foreground and a subject. How these three relate to one another can tell a story.

- I recommend you start by laying down your background which can be a vast sky or sunrise for example, but you may want to capture the ocean. For this you may use a number cutouts of different blues and whites. Your cut outs can take the shape of waves. Remember, some of the materials you use have a very shiny or matt finish. Think about how you can use these to communicate brightness, intensity and distance.
- For your foreground you may capture a field, rolling hills or snowcapped mountains. This layer will partially overlap your background image and will create a sense of depth.
- Next, add a subject which could be a person, an animal or a house. How your subject blends or stands out becomes part of the story your picture tells.
- When your landscape collage is ready, be mindful of gluing down your layers one by one starting with the background layer.

## Exercise Three

This last exercise I find especially meditative. For this activity I recommend you work A4 scale or larger. The aim here is to gather cutouts that immediately grab your attention.

- Place different textures, imagery, text and colour next to one another as well as partially overlapping. Allow your collage to come together organically and keep layering, adding, removing as well as moving things around until there is a sense of “rightness” about your composition. You need to suspend your judgement and allow abstract compositions to emerge. Working with no expectations allows you to discover colour combinations,

textures and themes that trigger and captivate your imagination. This exercise is less about looking and searching, and more about letting things come to you.

- When you have finished editing your cutouts and rearranged them a number of times you will find that certain elements of your composition speak to you more than others. It is good practice to keep the sections you gravitate towards and use these as springboards when starting your next piece.

Like any other creative discipline, paper collage requires some practice and patience. Feel free to explore other themes of your own choosing such as black & white, floral design, geometric.

And most importantly immerse yourself in the process and enjoy!