

Snipping and Sliding

Collage for textiles

Sue Dove

This exercise is easy and highly effective. It will enable you to create your own artwork on paper, where you can explore ideas and images before committing to textiles. You will need:

A couple of glossy magazines
PVA glue and brush
Cartridge paper
Oil Pastels (I use Caran d'Ache but
Pental are good).

Begin by finding colours and textures that you like in your magazine. Pull out the pages and start ripping some shapes and sticking them to your A4 (letter) sheet of cartridge paper (see below). DO NOT make the ripped shapes too big and leave plenty of white paper around your shapes.



You can rip your shapes intuitively or work from an abstract painting or such like. Glue them to the page, making sure they are fully stuck down, especially around the edges. However, don't overdo the glue; it will take ages to dry.

Once dry, apply colours using your oil pastels. Go around your shapes, leaving no white paper showing. Make a point of not going all around a shape in one colour; change the colour or tone as you go around. The reason for this will be obvious when you come to the last part of the exercise. When you have covered all the white paper with colour, you are ready to cut up your collage.



It is a good idea to cut your A4 (letter) sheet in half. Turn one half over and continue to cut into smaller squares or rectangles from the back. Don't look, as it is better **not** to be in complete control all the time. If you feel that you don't like one or more of your compositions, continue cutting them into smaller shapes. You can then arrange them into grids (this is a great way of designing quilts).



Glue your shapes into your sketchbook, deciding whether to give one of your abstract 'paintings' a whole page to itself or to arrange two or more together. Before you know it, you will have a sketchbook full of abstract miniature 'paintings' that you can interpret into textiles, enlarging them if you choose to do so.



I also like to continue working into them with sharp coloured pencils, adding small details, drawing into the oil pastel, see below left.

Shown below right is a fabric collage/embroidery I developed from the design, using it as a starting point and not necessarily staying absolutely true to the artwork.



Shown below right is an embroidery I stitched directly from the artwork on the left.



You can extend this technique to produce all your artwork, with ripped paper as a form of drawing rather than pencil. Alternatively, you could use paint or chalk pastels instead of oil pastels, building your confidence as an artist on paper as well as cloth.

The technique works particularly well when used as a design basis for work produced on the embellisher machine. The main colour blocks could be cut from soft fabric and the soft blending of oil or chalk pastels achieved by merging silk or wool fibres.

All my examples are very colourful but try the exercise again using a restricted palette such as a range of greys, whites and black.

Abstract paintings could form an alternative source for your work. I particularly like Patrick Heron's 'Garden Series' for this exercise.

Alternatively, try using the exercise with your own source material, working directly into your sketchbook, not cutting it up, as shown in the design shown top left of page 4.

The method could also be used to produce less abstract effects, as shown in the vase on the right and the teapot on page 1.

These miniature 'paintings', just mounted up, also make great cards.



Sue Dove is artist, teacher, curator; she paints, stitches and prints; she is head of HND Textile Fine Art at Cornwall College and runs 'Art for Health' and 'Alternative Doll' workshops. She graduated from Liverpool School of Art in 1974. After travels in Cornwall, Morocco and ten years living in Australia, she settled back in Cornwall in the mid-nineties. Her book, 'Painting with Stitches' is available from Amazon.