
Collagraph: Printing Without a Press with Sarah Matthews

Chapter 1 - Collagraph: Printing Without a Press

Overview

(bright music) - Hi, I'm Sarah Matthews, printmaker and book artist, and collagraphs are my jam. A collagraph is a collage of textures on a printing plate that you can use to create custom stamps. I discovered these techniques while working with materials found in my home. We will create collagraphs with cardboard, foam, string, and hot glue. We'll first do a test print with an ink pad, and then we'll move on to using a brayer, and block printing ink. This is great for beginners, and it's an activity you can do with your kids. If you have wanted to make a stamp in the past and didn't have the materials available, this is the class for you, because anything can be made into a stamp.

Materials

- The materials for this class are: Sticky back foam sheets, string, cardboard, block printing ink, and you need at least three colors, plus black and white, Bristol, various papers to print on, a pencil, ruler, glue gun, extra glue sticks, brayers, pair of scissors, utility knife, paper coasters, a stamp pad, black, and a Gelli Arts gelli plate. Make sure you have something to cover your surfaces, because it might get messy.

Cardboard collagraph

- The first collagraph we're gonna make is with a glue gun. A collagraph is adding any texture to a plate for printing. So the first thing we're going to do is measure out. I'm going to cut out a square that is four inches by four inches. So I'm gonna mark. I'm gonna go ahead and mark the whole thing. Using the scissors, I'm just gonna cut out the square. (cardboard crunching) It's good to have heavy duty scissors. Otherwise it'll be difficult to cut. Here we go. So I have my glue gun heated up. And I'm just gonna place dots of glue and space them across. So we're gonna do all the way across, all the way down. You can create any design that you would like with the hot glue, but I'm gonna do the little dots. All right, this is the last one. And I wanna clean up some of like the little glue hairs, but it's not a deal breaker. All right, make sure all your glue dots are nice and cool before you do a test print. This piece is sticking up, so I'm just gonna trim that off with my scissors. Okay. We're all nice and dry and ready to print. For the test print, we're gonna use block printing ink. This is VersaFine Clair Nocturne. (block print ink slapping) All right, and right in the corner, press. There we go. So I noticed that maybe a few of these are just a little bit too low. And that's okay. So I'm just gonna go in with my glue gun again and fill them up a little bit. So that would be just so that they're all at similar heights. Now we should be good to go. So I'm gonna let this dry and then we can move on to the next collagraph. All right, same piece of cardboard. This time it's gonna be four inches by two inches. So I'm gonna mark that two, and then cut that out. Next we're gonna cut random shapes and glue them on to the other piece of cardboard. So I'm gonna do some circles, triangle, and a square. You can do any shape that you would like. Have fun with it. And the triangle. All right. So we have our three pieces so far, 'cause I might wanna add as we go. I'm going to add the glue to each piece and place it onto our main block. Yeah, I think I'm gonna move this up slightly. Okay, that one final piece. Just make sure that it's a little bit thinner, and then glue into place. And now we're ready for our test print. (block print ink slapping) You're gonna press down with your fingers. Lift; that did not do anything. Get in there nice and juicy. There we go. Let's see if it does it now. Bam. That's much

better. The cardboard's gonna show up differently because it has ridges in between when you look at it from the side. So you're gonna see those lines potentially in your print and that's okay. Now that we've finished with the cardboard collagraph, we're gonna move on to foam.

Foam collagraph

- This time we're gonna do foam. It's the same process but it'll look different. With this process, we're using paper coasters. So I'm going to line it onto our sticky back foam. I'm gonna cut out two of them. And my foam has the sticky back so I would suggest getting that because it's just easier to place it onto your collagraph. I'm just gonna cut them out. The first time I made foam stamps or collagraphs, I used the regular foam. And then I discovered this later on. (laughs) I was like, "What?" So this is gonna be the background of our stamp. Just for extra protection 'cause sometimes the cardboard wears down quickly. So this will just maintain it so you can use it longer. Okay. All right. So this one is gonna be the one that we cut out and in different shapes. I'm gonna just free hand cut with my scissors. I'm gonna do a couple of diagonals. And then free hand place them on and fill out the space to figure out how we want the stamp to look. So I'm thinking how I'm gonna do this. Okay, and think I'm gonna add some circles in there. Cut some of these. Might need some more foam. Add some more circles. Smaller ones. And when I do circles I kinda keep it in odd numbers. Gonna use this long one here. Yeah, this may require a little patience, but that's okay. Breathe. And I can use this in other areas. And I think one more small piece. And if it hangs off just trim it with your scissors. It's all good. And I feel like I need something right there. Much better. Let's clear the decks and get ready for our test print. VersaFine Clair Nocturne. Let's ink it up. (ink pad tapping) Turn it over and place. And lift. And that's our test print for our foam collagraph.

String collagraph

- The last collagraph will be string, and it's the easiest. Gonna unravel. Place a dot of glue, place the string over that dot. Okay. I'm gonna let it dry before we start pulling on it, and we can wrap all the way across. You want some space in between each one. Okay, and then trim, and then add a dot of glue. Place. Gonna let that dry. And then this side is what we're gonna print with. And you can move it and get it to where you want it, but yep. Make sure it's nice and tight. Okay, you're ready to do a test print. Our handy-dandy test paper. Okay. Ink up. (ink pad tapping) And then place. And here we go. String collagraph.

Monoprinting

- And now we're gonna play with the collagraphs that we just made. First, we're gonna start with the glue dots and if you want to clean off your collagraph, go ahead and do so with a baby wipe. I think we're all good. I'm using Blick Block Printing Ink in yellow. I'm gonna squeeze it onto my Gelli press. And I'm kind of using it as a plexy and you'll see why as we go, okay? So I'm gonna roll. (paint rolling) Grabbing some more ink and then rolling. (paint rolling) We're looking for that (instructor imitating paint rolling) sound. (paint rolling) That's good, we're getting there. (paint rolling) Okay, when we're inking up our collagraphs, you wanna add more ink that you would do than if you were using lino. Okay. Lift. And we're printing on Bristol. Push. Make sure you get all the corners and the center. And lift. Nice. (paint rolling) Another trick that you might wanna think about doing is marking where the top is. So that way you can be consistent when you're printing. (paint rolling) And that's okay. You can always wipe your fingers if you get a little ink. Okay. And then place. And because I don't see anything here, I'm gonna just press down. Make sure that that gets inked this

time 'cause I may have missed that. There we go, that's better, that's better. (paint rolling) Okay. There you go. I'm gonna use this as a scratch sheet to stick under. (paint rolling) Again, keeping that arrow pointing up. All right, I think we have a good idea of what it looks like, and we can move on to the next one. Now we're moving in the cardboard. (paint rolling) Yes. There we go. Let's move on to the foam stamp. Grabbing ink from the top. (paint rolling) And then roll. And the foam is going to like absorb the ink pretty quickly. So it's gonna need it even more. (paint rolling) Okay. I'm gonna place. And then while we have it here, let's go ahead and mark where the top is. You could use this side of your hand to get a good impression. Nice. Okay. Again. (paint rolling) And then the string. (paint rolling) Since the string is vertical, we're going to just go up and down. (paint rolling) Okay. Place. And push. And lift. (paint rolling) The cool thing with printing with this string, you can create a pattern by turning it on the side horizontally and then they cross over on each other. Like that. (paint rolling) And just for funsies, I'm going to put it on a diagonal. So we have done test prints of all our collagraphs using the Blick Block Printing Ink. Let's use all of these in one print. I'm gonna use craft paper this time. We're gonna start with yellow. Ink up the Gelli plate. (paint rolling) And I'm gonna be free with my placement. So have fun with it. (paint rolling) Starting with foam and I marked an arrow and you'll see why, okay? So we're gonna start up. Press, press, press, press, press. Lift. Re-ink. (paint rolling) And now I'm gonna go to the right. Okay. Re-ink. (paint rolling) And then down. (paint rolling) And then left. Because we printed it like that, you get a unique pattern when it comes together. So let's keep it going. (paint rolling) And don't worry, you're gonna get a little messy. It's all good. (paint rolling) We're gonna set this to the side and I'm not gonna waste this ink here. So what I'm gonna do is spread it all the way across the Gelli plate. (paint rolling) You can grab another piece of paper, ink it with the brayer. (paint rolling) I love using a Gelli plate so you can pull the additional ink and use it for other backgrounds. Grab another. Place. Pull. Turn it to the other side. Place and pull. So we've got more residual ink. That's okay. So now we're ready to start adding the second color. It's okay to add additional layers even though it's still wet. I always do, no problem. So now I'm gonna add green. (paint rolling) Excellent. And what I'm gonna do is stay on green but add the cardboard collagraph. (paint rolling) And I'm gonna go across here. Now let's switch. I'm gonna do the same thing. I'm gonna switch colors. (paint rolling) I'm gonna use pink for the next layer. Let's ink it up. Next to yellow, this is my favorite color. Okay. Yes, love it. Okay. Let's go ahead and roll this out. (paint rolling) I cleaned off my pink. I'm gonna add black and white. I'm gonna do a rainbow roll. So I'm gonna squeeze a little bit of black here and a little bit of white right next to it. I'm gonna use my brayer and I'm gonna go up and down. Tap and bring straight down, and keeping it the same direction because we want to create that rainbow roll. Again. (paint rolling) Okay. Let's start with the string. Up and down. You don't wanna go to the side, you wanna go up and down to maintain that rainbow roll. (paint rolling) Look at that. Three black, one gray. (paint rolling) All right. This time, I'm gonna cross it over. Make sure we push. And lift. Nice. Make sure the black and the white are together. This time I'm gonna put white down and black up. I'm gonna repeat the same steps on the whole sheet. Nice. So there's so many options that you can do with your collagraphs. Have fun with them and makes lots of prints. These are all made with foam. On this one, I actually put some foam on the back and printed on it so that I can see my design when I'm printing. I used these two collagraphs to create this print on top of the backgrounds I created from the extra ink on the Gelli Arts Press. Keep exploring with the collagraphs that you created in this class and experiment with other materials.