



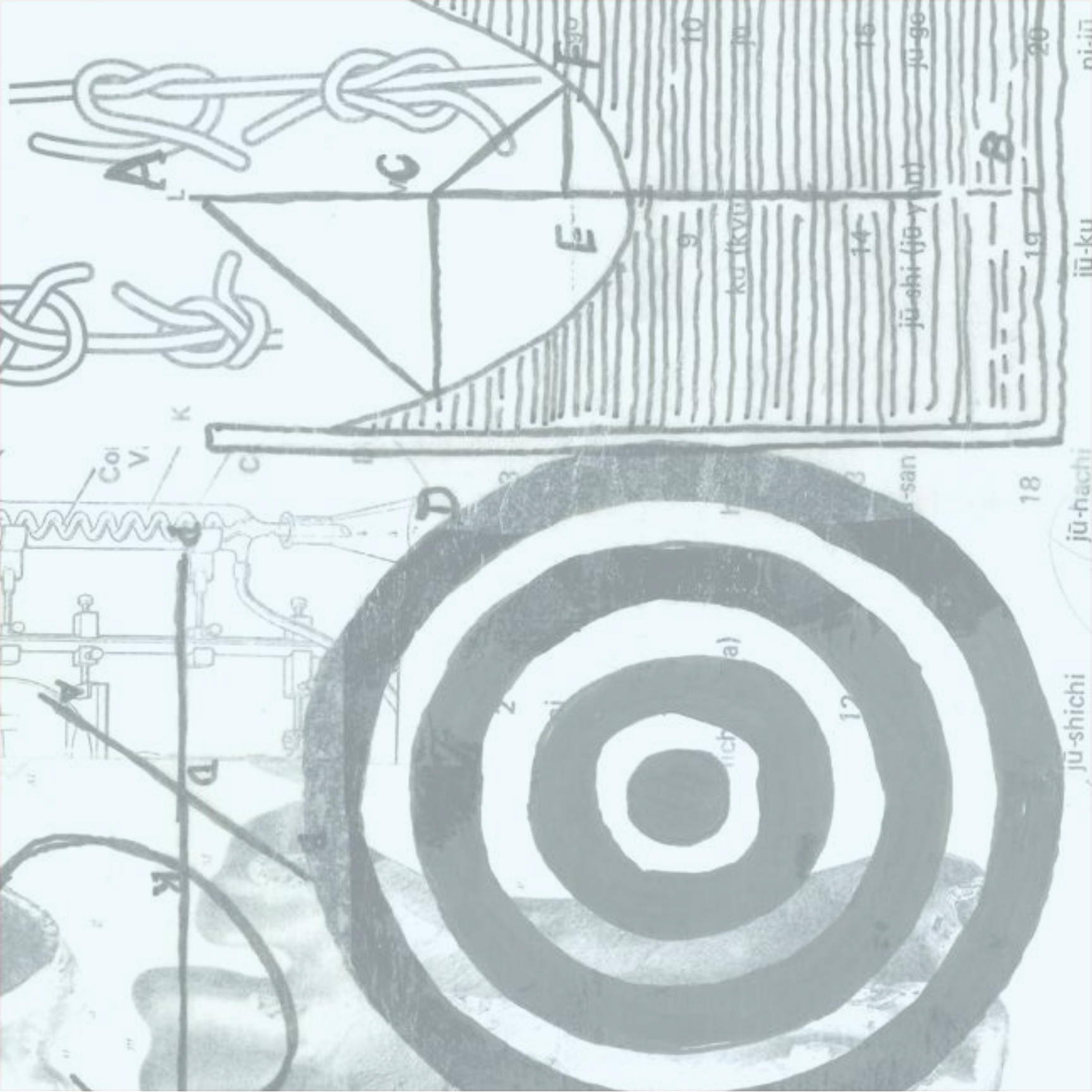
COLLAGE IDEAS:

Prompts & Strategies to Build Your Skills

includes
60
prompts &
strategies

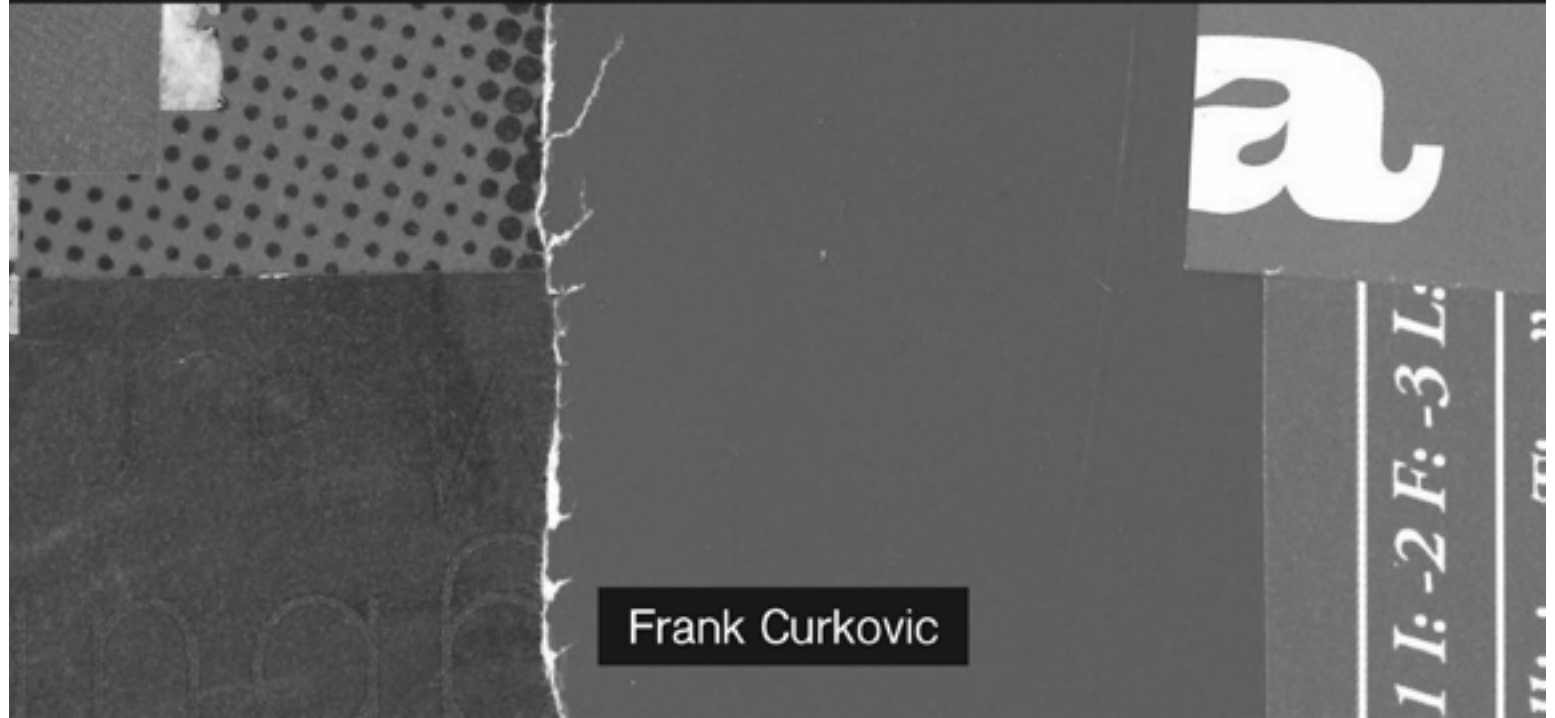
Frank Curkovic





COLLAGE IDEAS:

Prompts & Strategies to Build Your Skills




Frank Curkovic

1 I: -2 F: -3 L:

About This Book

This book has been designed as a source of inspiration for creating collage work. It isn't a "how to" book, but the explanations and examples given provide ideas and prompts to get started to create your own collage work. The secret is to try, play and explore, but this can often feel daunting and make people nervous. Hence, sixty ideas are presented here to inspire and challenge you.

Some time-lapse videos of the work created for this book are available as YouTube shorts if interested. When available for certain artworks, you will see this symbol  with the provided hyperlink in blue. You can also view the entire collected playlist here: <https://tinyurl.com/bbzhz772>. Some areas of the book also include page hyperlinks within the book, or to external sites. They are indicated with *blue text*.

All collage art work included in this book has been created by the author. Some have been resized for design purposes and/or for layout clarity. Each activity is outlined as a dual page spread. Theoretically, the collage activities could be done in any order, but they have been sequenced to assist in building awareness, skill and complexity.

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Contents

(pages titles below are hyperlinked)

[p.08 Tools & Materials](#)

[p.10 Creativity](#)

[p.11 Elements & Principles](#)

[p.12 Composition](#)

Collage Ideas:

[p. 16](#) Activity 1: Nifty Fifty

[p. 18](#) Activity 2: Shifty Nifty Fifty

[p. 20](#) Activity 3: Thirds

[p. 22](#) Activity 4: Partners

[p. 24](#) Activity 5: Black & White

[p. 26](#) Activity 6: Black & White Colour Accent

[p. 28](#) Activity 7: One Colour

[p. 30](#) Activity 8: Colour Scheme

[p. 32](#) Activity 9: Pattern Fillers

[p. 34](#) Activity 10: Cardboard Texture

[p. 36](#) Activity 11: Negative Space

[p. 38](#) Activity 12: Shifted Space

[p. 40](#) Activity 13: See 'scapes

[p. 42](#) Activity 14: Stacks

[p. 44](#) Activity 15: Arranged Grid

[p. 46](#) Activity 16: Strip Slips & Flips

[p. 48](#) Activity 17: Alternating Strips

[p. 50](#) Activity 18: Rearranged Mosaic

[p. 52](#) Activity 19: Decorative Cut

[p. 54](#) Activity 20: Circle Cuts

[p. 56](#) Activity 21: Face Off

[p. 58](#) Activity 22: Renegades

[p. 60](#) Activity 23: Hybrid Creatures

[p. 62](#) Activity 24: Mirror, Mirror

[p. 64](#) Activity 25: Gestalt

[p. 66](#) Activity 26: Fashion Passion

[p. 68](#) Activity 27: Persona

[p. 70](#) Activity 28: Number

[p. 72](#) Activity 29: Typography

[p. 74](#) Activity 30: Décollage

[p. 76](#) Activity 31: Children's Literature

[p. 78](#) Activity 32: Abstract Garden

[p. 80](#) Activity 33: Hands

[p. 82](#) Activity 34: Cartoon Parts

[p. 84](#) Activity 35: Scale / Juxtaposition

[p. 86](#) Activity 36: Surrealism

[p. 88](#) Activity 37: Absurdist

[p. 90](#) Activity 38: Geometric Combos

[p. 92](#) Activity 39: Architecture

[p. 94](#) Activity 40: Still Life

[p. 96](#) Activity 41: Empty Space

[p. 98](#) Activity 42: Small Against Big

[p. 100](#) Activity 43: Culture Jam

[p. 102](#) Activity 44: Narrative

[p. 104](#) Activity 45: Designed Graphic

[p. 106](#) Activity 46: All Over Repeater

[p. 108](#) Activity 47: Junk Mail

[p. 110](#) Activity 48: Portrait

[p. 112](#) Activity 49: Organic Shape & Form

[p. 114](#) Activity 50: Sharp Shape & Form

[p. 116](#) Activity 51: Art History "isms"

[p. 118](#) Activity 52: Abstract Structure

[p. 120](#) Activity 53: Abstract

[p. 122](#) Activity 54: Abstract Packaging

[p. 124](#) Activity 55: Graffiti

[p. 126](#) Activity 56: Extravagant

[p. 128](#) Activity 57: Creature Feature

[p. 130](#) Activity 58: Tribal Notan

[p. 132](#) Activity 59: Doodle

[p. 134](#) Activity 60: Scraps

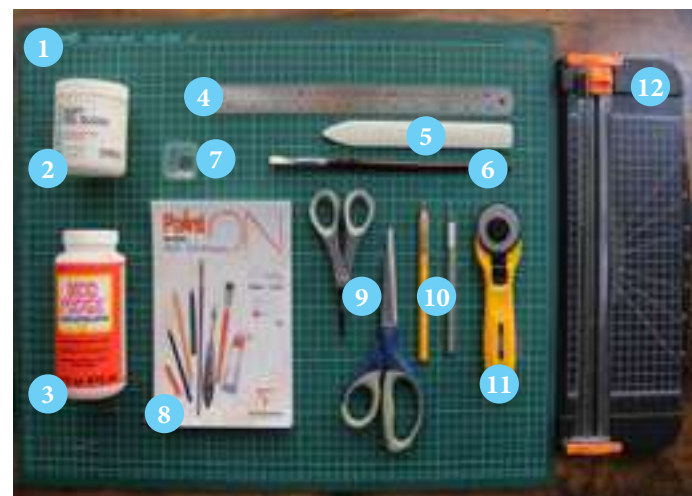
[p. 137 About The Author](#)



Tools & Materials

It is up to you how big or small you wish to make your collages. A lot of the collage examples in this book started off small between 10 to 15 cm. However, a collage size may be determined by the size of the source material being used. I often mount my work on 250g paper (*item 8 pictured below*), which is like card or Bristol board. You can also create them in a sketchbook if you wish. Sketchbook paper can be thin, so note when you glue things down, the pages can curl or warp. This can be fixed by closing them flat afterwards with some heavy books placed over them.

Some of the essential tools you will need are scissors (*item 9 pictured below*), an x-acto knife (*item 10*), glue and a metal ruler (*item 4*). A cutting mat (*item 1*) is needed if you intend to use an x-acto knife. I use an A2 sized cutting mat. To mount my work, I like to use Mod Podge (*item 3*) or a gel medium (*item 2*) instead of glue, as some glues can lose their adhesiveness over time. I also place the gel medium in a small plastic container (*item 7*) when working and apply it with a cheap paintbrush (*item 6*) to the cut collage pieces. Applying a coat of Mod-Podge or gel medium over your work afterwards can also act as a sealant and give your work a shine. If you do not like the shine, purchase a matte medium one instead of a gloss. Note that this can make the work a little sticky. If you stack or store work on top of each other, sometimes edges can stick to each other, which could affect the appearance of your work. I often store mine in cheap plastic sleeves (*item 13*).



Another item I find handy is an A4 paper cutter (*item 12*), a rotary cutter (*item 11*) and a circle cutter (*item 14*). A bone folder (*item 5*) can also be handy to smoothen out air bubbles, but these items are all optional. Some other materials used in these activities involve pencils/coloured pencils, paint pens (Posca brand) or permanent markers like Sharpies. The activities in this book will use magazines, storybooks, junk mail, ephemera (old books), tracing paper, origami paper, coloured card or papers, candy wrappers, product packaging, etc.

You will probably mostly use magazine images as you create, but as you progress, you tend to accumulate a lot of unused pages of images. A sort of library or storage system is useful. I started by just keeping pages or images in a box, but it would often take a while to find the papers I wanted.

I then started a simple filing system with the previous mentioned plastic sleeves (*item 13*). As my collection grew, I moved to larger folders and then storage boxes as in item 15 below. You don't need to do something like this right away, but if collage is something you really enjoy and will do regularly, you may want to keep this in the back of your mind for future use.

As you rummage through books and magazines, don't discard everything that doesn't have a picture. Currently, I keep folders for people, places, architecture, typography, numbers, colour, animals, plants, patterns and science amongst others as demonstrated in the plastic folders below (*item 15*).



Creativity

Let's talk about the creative process. It is exactly what it sounds like; a process! Some things will work out, some might not. It's OK. It's all a learning opportunity. As you do the activities in this book, the skills and composition strategies used will be highlighted. When you look back at your collage work, reflect on areas you like and which areas could improve. As you progress, you will notice growth with techniques, arrangements and use of composition, but some areas may take longer than others and this is OK.



Elements/Principles

As you develop and progress, you will gain an increased awareness on implementing the elements and principles of design into your work. The **elements** are line, shape (form), texture, colour, value (tone) and space. These are the ingredients that will create our work. The **principles** are balance (symmetry, asymmetry, radial), proportion (scale), emphasis, repetition, pattern, contrast & rhythm/movement. These are like the recipes of how to structure or build a work of art. Implementing these will take time to develop. Be patient. You will improve. The key is to explore and try ideas out.

The Elements of Art:



Line



Shape/Form



Texture



Colour



Value/Tone



Space

The Principles of Art:



Balance



Proportion



Emphasis



Repetition



Pattern



Contrast



Rhythm/Movement

Composition

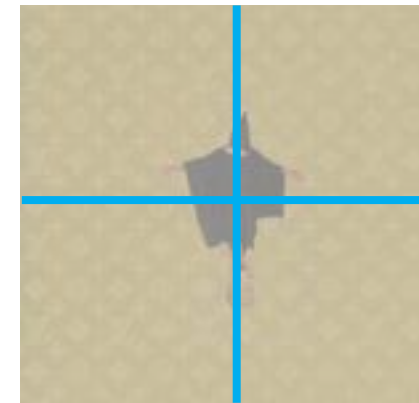
Composition refers to the organisational elements within your frame. With our collage compositions, we want to eventually move away from placing things randomly. There are some composition tricks that you will be able to implement. The easiest and probably most popular one is the rule of thirds. Imagine your frame is divided into 3 horizontals and 3 verticals. Wherever these lines intersect make good focal points where to place certain images. Our brains like this. Some other simple ones include centred rule, vertical, horizontal and “all over” composition. You can see examples on the following page.

Layering materials is essential to collage. You will grow by further considering background, middle ground and foreground whilst you work. This will help create depth and balance in your work. As you start making collages, think of differences that could be highlighted such as big vs small, light vs dark, cut vs torn. This will create contrast in your work. Contrast can also be utilised through the balance of light and dark. We want to experiment and try all the collage activities presented in this book to help build our own personal visual library. With collage, we deconstruct resources to construct new works and communicate new ideas. Let's get started!



Carefully consider your composition and the use of elements and principles. In this example, is there too much? We lose sight of the head statue, which could have been the focal point. Would it have been better to put this in the foreground with the blue circles behind, or leave the circles out completely?

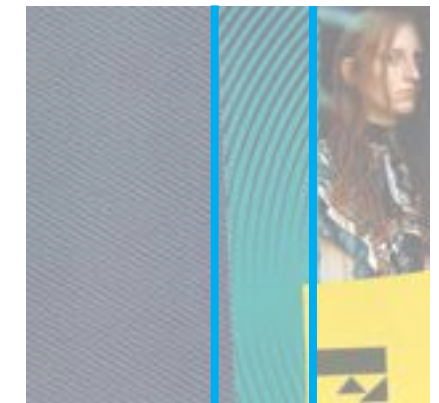
Basic Strategies for Composition:



Centred



Horizontal



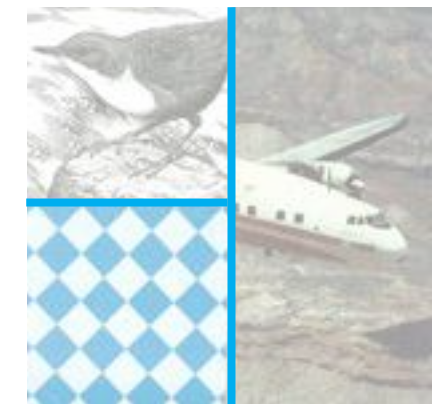
Vertical



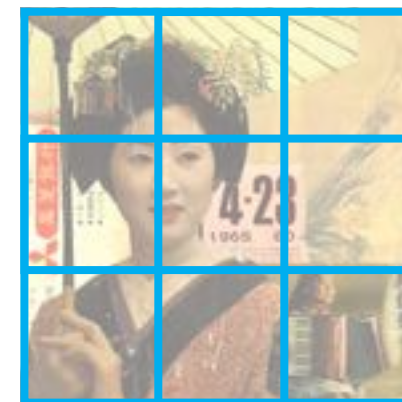
Symmetrical



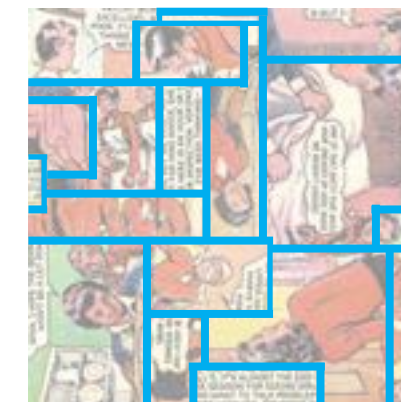
Asymmetrical



Cruciform (or, L Shape)



Rule of Thirds



All Over



Radial

Collage Ideas:



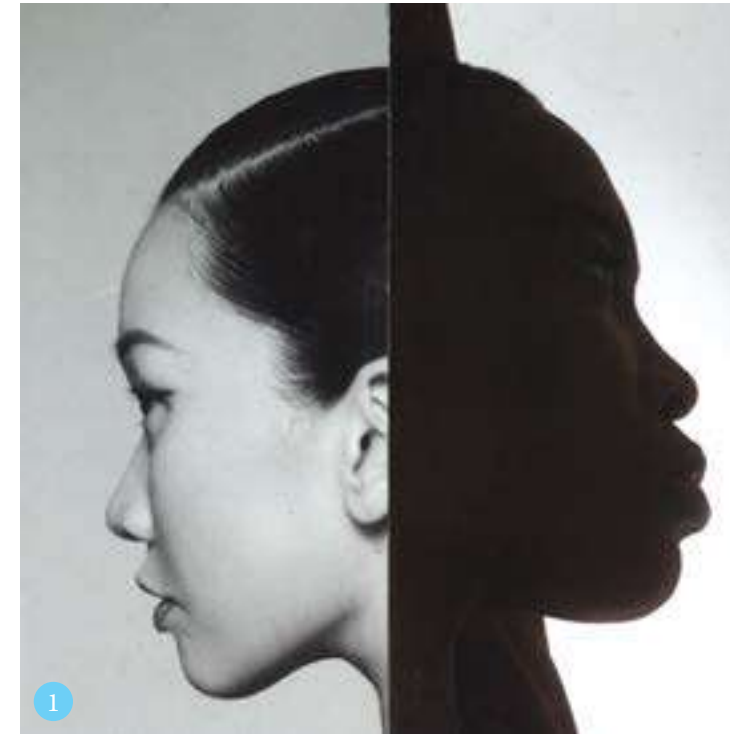
1 Nifty Fifty

This simple collage composition strategy will force you to realise the relationships images can have when montaged next to each other.

For our first activity, we will start off simple. All you need is to find two images to collage together and cut each image to take up 50% of the frame. You can divide this either vertically as in examples 1 and 3, horizontally as in example 2, or even diagonally. Source material can be portraits, animals, objects, or even patterns.

Faces are probably the easiest to get started with, but you can utilise and explore with whatever you have available. Sometimes things that are completely unrelated can make striking compositions. Our brains will often make their own connections and create stories.

You can also get more creative with this in the future as in example 4 on the opposite page, where two images were divided with circular cuts. We will explore this in [activity 20 \(Circle Cuts\)](#). Feel free to experiment and place random images together, or even play off opposites, complimentary colours, or explore themes such as gender, identity, wealth etc.



1 https://youtube.com/shorts/KfcP15_WObE



2 <https://youtube.com/shorts/Mc699CaGzFA>



3



4 <https://youtube.com/shorts/Ao1O7ccVnAw>

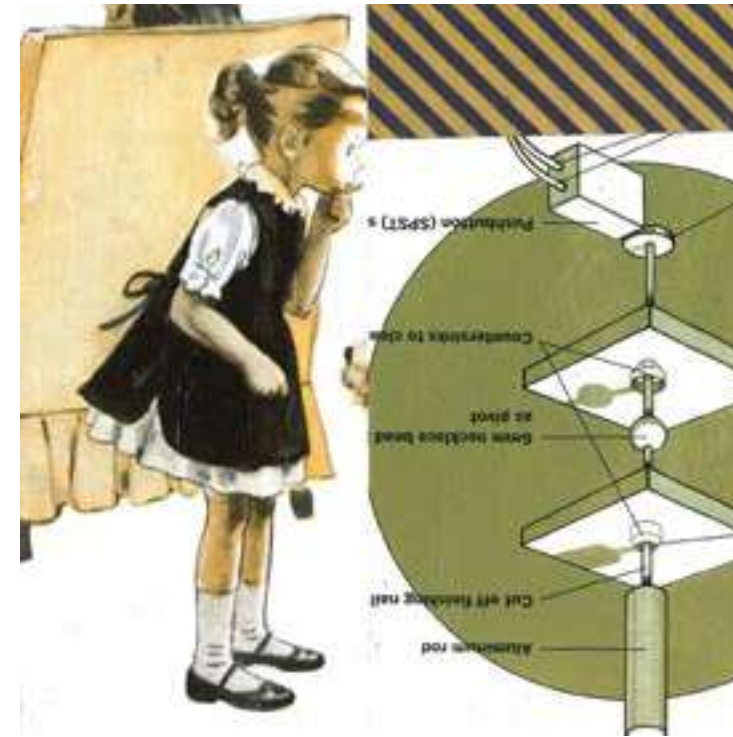
4 Partners

This activity demonstrates that collage works can have connections and relationships through theme and imagery.

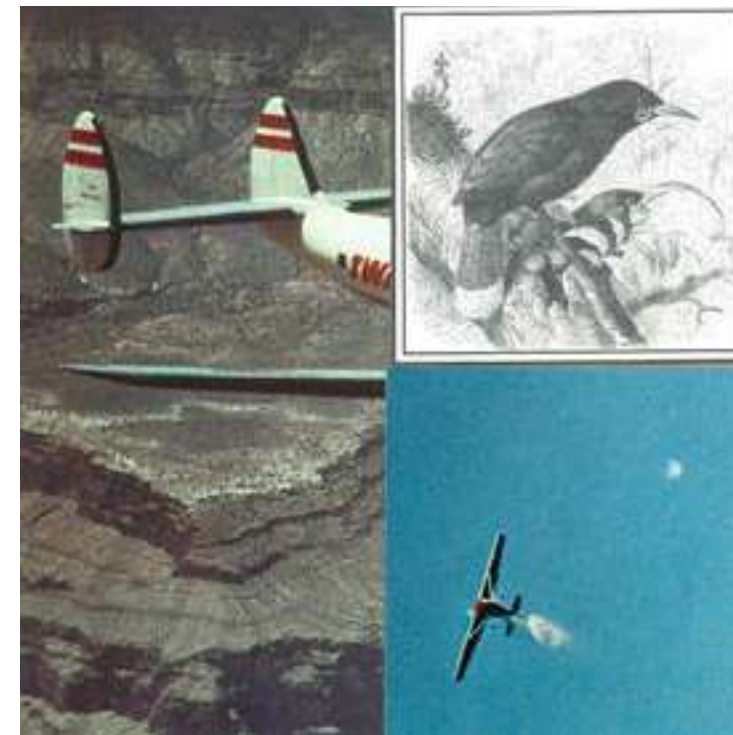
For this *Partners* activity you will actually create two collage pieces. First, find an image that fills your frame and then cut it in half. Use each half separately on each collage frame. Fill the remaining spaces with other images. These secondary images can thematically connect to the main collage image, or they can be united through colour, or be completely random.



1



2



3



7 One Colour

This activity forces you to consider your use of colour to create a collage.

Create a collage using various shades of one colour. You can consider using old book pages, envelopes, tissue paper, and of course magazine images etc. To start, gather all your source materials first. If you plan to use coloured images, check and experiment to see which image could be the main focal point and build the other materials around it as in examples 4 and 6 on the opposite page. Play and experiment with layout before committing to glueing the papers down.

With an abstract approach, you can be more free. You can create different textures by cutting (example 2) or tearing (example 5) your papers. You can also decide if you want a minimalist approach as in example 1 below, or an “all over” approach (example 7), or to organise it in grids. You may also work abstractly by using a vertical (example 2), horizontal (example 5) or even diagonal approach.



1



2

<https://youtube.com/shorts/D2-zYLMmTaQ>



3

<https://youtube.com/shorts/ouU10woq3Ac>



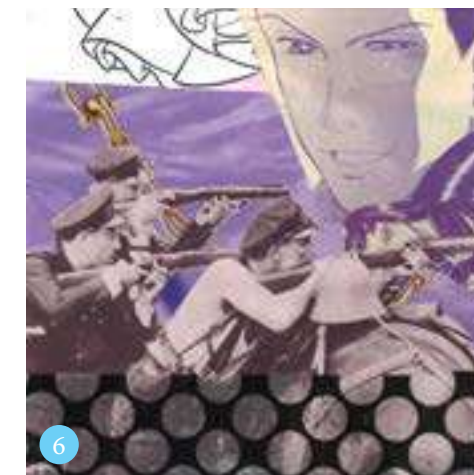
4

<https://youtube.com/shorts/twHZ8LPDENQ>



5

https://youtube.com/shorts/_hqWZ3rx9cl



6

https://youtube.com/shorts/UZfG4L_0TWk



7

10 Cardboard Texture

This collage activity involves manipulating your source material as a textural technique for artistic effect and helps you to re-examine the use and possibilities of materials.

Technically, this collage activity is fairly straightforward. Find different types of cardboard and manipulate it for artistic effect. This can be done through colour or the type of cardboard, the lettering that appears on the cardboard or its texture. Use these elements to build a composition.

The cardboard can be torn, cut, ripped and the corrugated area separated as in the first example below. The second example uses a complementary colour scheme (green and red) and the example on the opposite page uses a horizontal strips approach for its composition.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/DA5RN4x1lc>

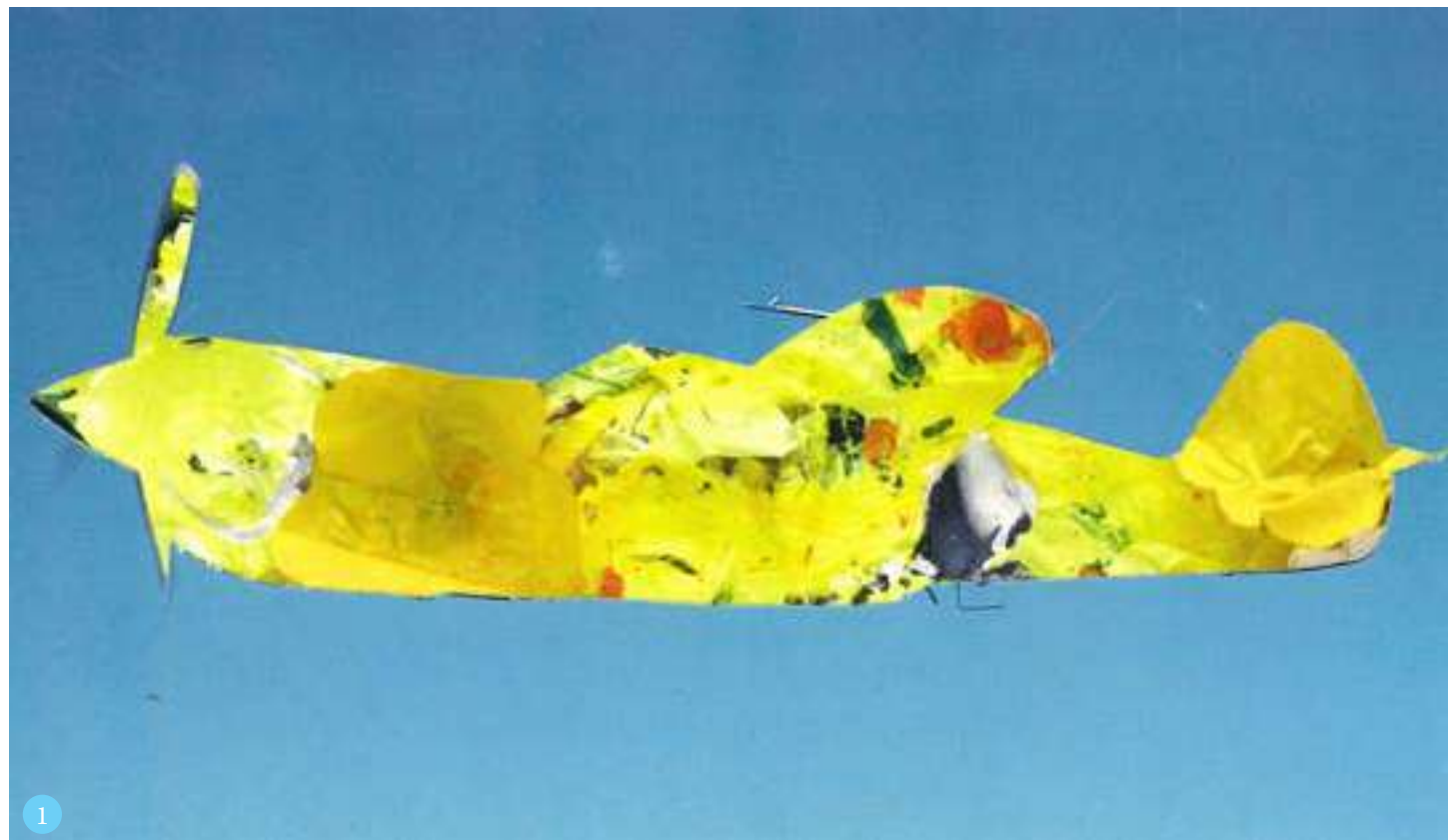


<https://youtube.com/shorts/4Gu5prW2C7g>

11 Negative Space

This useful technique will force you to pay attention to negative space and how it can be used a collage technique.

This *Negative Space* activity will explore cut out silhouettes, or negative space. This can be used with an image cut out and leaving the negative space blank as in examples 2, 3 and 4, or by cutting an element out and using the reverse side of the paper instead, as in example 5. In the airplane example below, the negative space has been filled with another image placed behind the window cut-out. How can you creatively make negative space work?



<https://youtube.com/shorts/rUJGzhwiAE>



13 See 'scapes



1 <https://youtube.com/shorts/rItmp4E5uds>

This collage activity allows you to experiment with space and implementing a torn or cut paper technique. Each have their own personality and texture.

For this activity we will create a landscape or a seascape. Hence the title *See 'scapes*. There are two ways to approach this; either by tearing paper or cutting with scissors. You can see the difference in examples 2 and 3 on the opposite page.

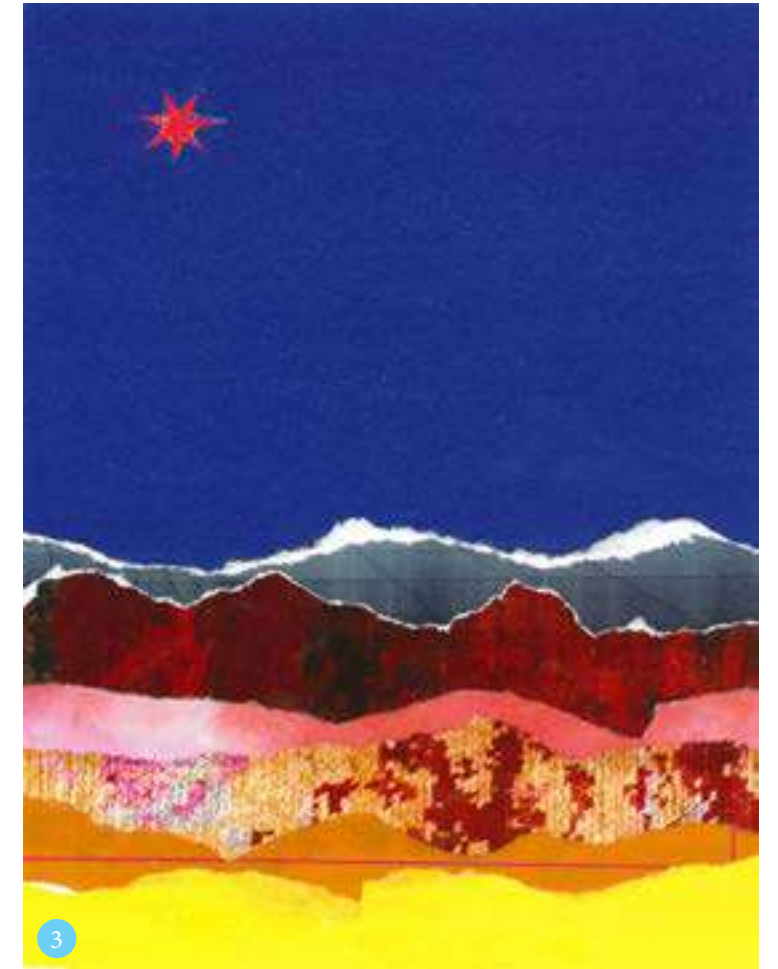
In your source material, you could find similar colour combinations to use, especially if you wish to create mountain ranges. Meaning, if I plan on using red, I need to find about four tones of red ranging from dark to light. This will mimic **atmospheric perspective**. With atmospheric perspective, the colour generally lightens as we move further back creating the illusion of depth. But, to be honest, finding these colours can sometimes be difficult depending on how much source material you have available.

You can also experiment with where to place your horizon line to highlight the use of space. Examples 2 and 3 on the opposite page experiment with this, with one being placed high and the other low.

This activity is also a simple experiment to get you thinking on how to divide your frame and whether to explore clean cuts or jagged tears. These jagged tears can have personality and add to your collage as in example 1, where tearing the paper actually helped create the wave surf. In example 5, a seascape was created mixing coloured paper with magazine images.



2



3

<https://youtube.com/shorts/HobChD4Cngo>



4

<https://youtube.com/shorts/2PiZiWoSkAk>



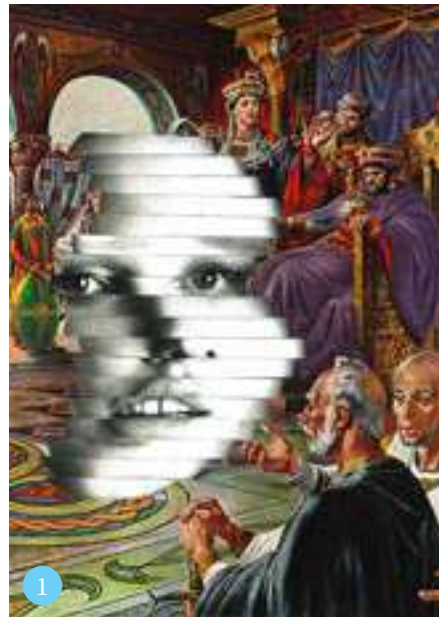
5

<https://youtube.com/shorts/dl3iPLaYYyQ>

16 Strip Slips & Flips

This activity allows you to create and experiment with cutting strips and altering their position for artistic effect.

For this activity, we are going to cut an entire image into strips. First, find an image you would like to use. As in example 4 on the opposite page, cut the image into equal strips and then glue them down on a smaller piece of card. As you glue each strip, slightly slide them up or down. It's important to note that since each slip is moving up or down, the mounting paper or board needs to be slightly smaller than the image strips. Otherwise, your mounting board will be exposed. However, this could also have an interesting effect. In example 1 below, a secondary image was cut horizontally and mounted over an existing image. In the second example, each second strip was flipped upside down. The same was done for the third example, but with a diagonal cut. The image was originally a Mexican wrestler and the result is rather abstract. How could this technique look if you altered the thickness of each strip?



25 Gestalt



This activity demonstrates gestalt, which allows a viewer to see a whole, though only certain parts are visible.

Humans naturally create a sense of spatial relationships between images, even in the absence of visual cues. Gestalt theory attempts to make sense of how our brains process visual stimuli or create meaning out of chaos. For this activity, create a collage with a person, but only use the head and limbs of the figure. Let the negative space be highlighted.

Leave cut out areas blank as in example 2, or feel free to make marks with pencil, markers or paints as in examples 1, 3 and 5. Looking at the examples, our brains still connect where the body should be, even though it is not fully visible.

In example 4, empty space has been substituted with solid blocks of coloured paper. This is an extension of gestalt and illustrates how the process can be adapted and applied in other ways. Look at some of the screenprints of British Pop artist [Gerald Laing](#) if this is something you like.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/4ulGIoY50Zw>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/TbgmLSI7o0I>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/xEN7SNP9Amw>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/rc6WqQpOR90>

27 Persona

The creative strategies of eliminating, hiding and substituting can help build techniques to recontextualise existing images.

For this activity, we are going to consider different ways to use the face, or persona. There are so many different options for this and it is useful, as many of the images you find will revolve heavily around portraits. One strategy that is fun to use with good results, is the “Anti-Portrait” (see examples 5 and 6 on the opposite page). This is where we hide or eliminate parts of the face, or the face entirely. American artist [John Baldessari](#) was well known for his dot artworks. He placed circles over faces. We can easily do this with collage as illustrated in example 4 below.

You can also create an entirely new person by mashing several facial parts into a new whole as in example 8. In example 7, a smaller face has been aligned and placed upside down over another face. Another idea is to take one image and slice a thin section out to create an abnormal portrait as in example 2. Look at the work of [John Stezaker](#) if you find this interesting. There is so much you can do with people’s faces; hide them, eliminate them, substitute them, combine them (see example 7), or even eliminate them completely as in example 3!



1

<https://youtube.com/shorts/h1RhjMn8nZU>



2

<https://youtube.com/shorts/zlvPNd-KdVOI>



3

<https://youtube.com/shorts/ND-QgTUf63RI>

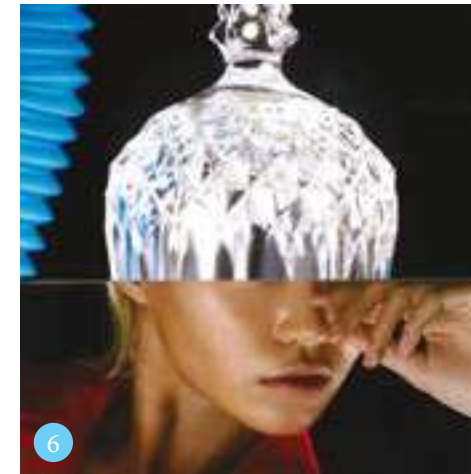


4

<https://youtube.com/shorts/GaG-bLZaE1bQ>

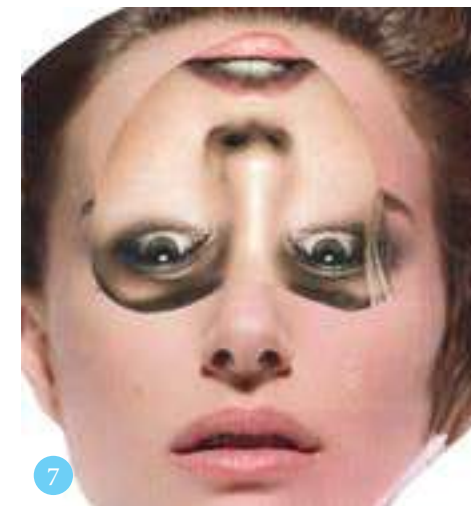


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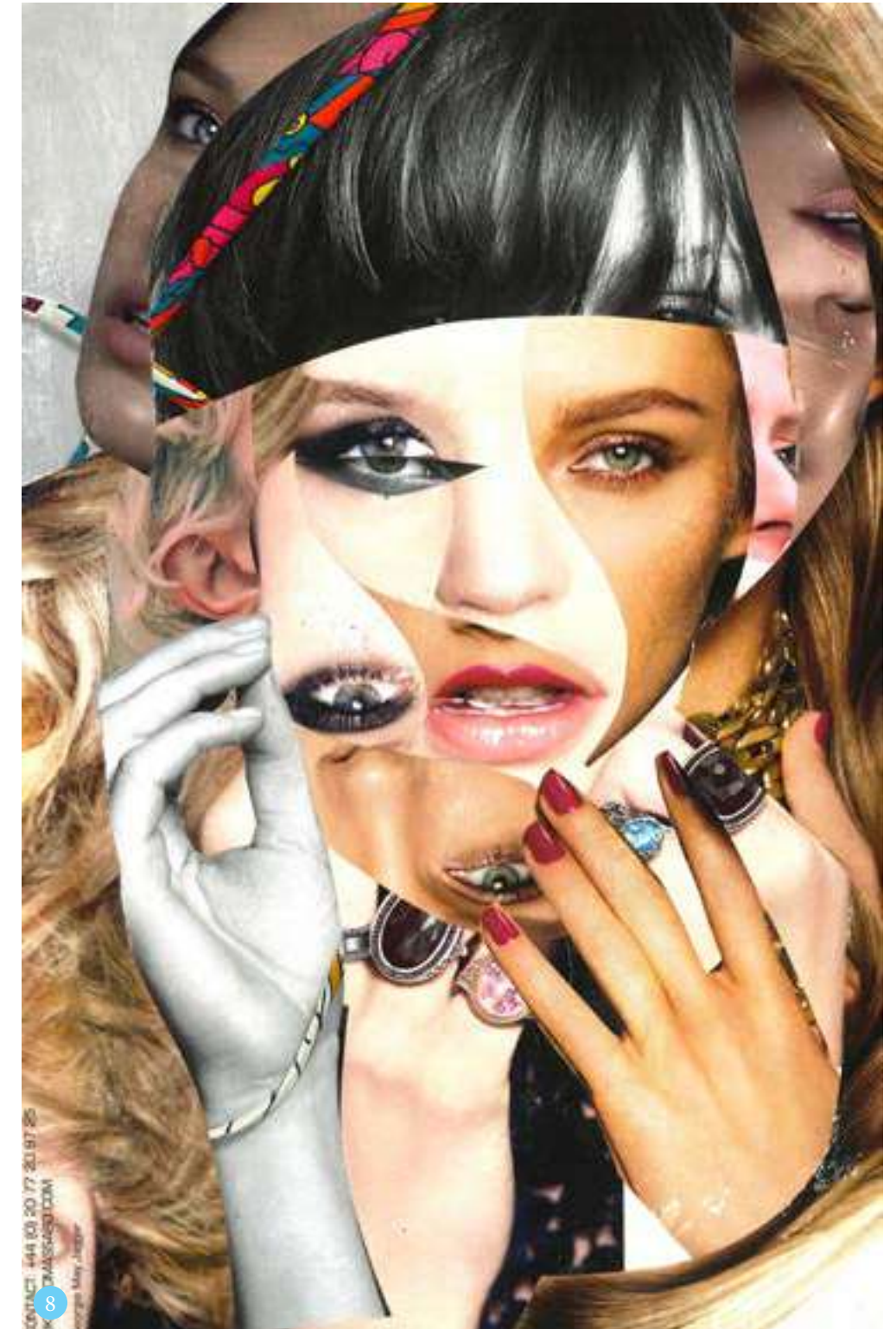
6

<https://youtube.com/shorts/SUgcj6EzPXw>



7

https://youtube.com/shorts/_AKGjM3TE_o



8

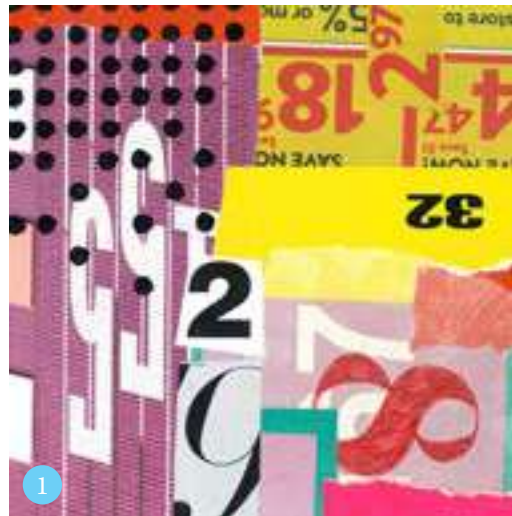
<https://youtube.com/shorts/9TYQj11NwWU>

28 Number

This activity forces you to apply design elements and principles whilst reconsidering your use of forms and layout.

For this *Number* activity, you will create a collage that uses numerals. You will need to think about how to arrange the elements within your frame, especially if your source material has varied weights or font styles. The element of size or colour can be a focal point as in example 4, or you can take an all over approach as in example 2 below. Here, the numerals were cut into squares and rectangles, or “Stacks” which was outlined in [activity 14](#). In example 3, a large numeral three is the focal point by placing it on the rule of thirds within the frame, surrounded by mostly white and a few colour accents.

Before glueing, experiment with orientation by rotating elements and having sections run off the frame as a creative strategy. You can approach this literally highlighting the aspects of the numbers, or take a more abstract approach.



36 Surrealism

This activity asks you to reconsider the context of particular objects and settings, and to use them in surrealist and creative ways.

Growing from the Dada movement, Surrealism was an art movement in the early to mid 20th century which sought the creative potential of the unconscious mind to create illogical, dreamlike and bizarre scenes. Look at the artwork of [Salvador Dali](#) and [Rene Magritte](#) from this time period.

For this *Surrealism* activity, use images out of their usual context. Substitute body parts, locations and specific functions of particular objects. Scale and juxtaposition from the previous activity will also be useful to incorporate.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/oHz9Zw3UUbE>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/tF-kBQycpKI>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/sQwgVDpKfws>



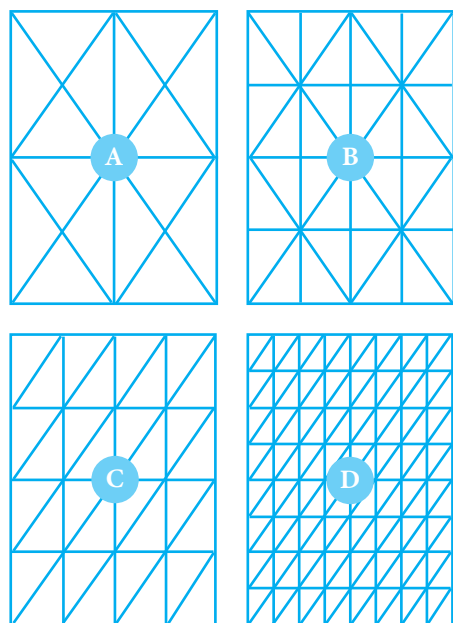
https://youtube.com/shorts/wkwSYAv_IIE



38 Geometric Combos

This activity rearranges images into geometric forms, either individually or through a combination of two images for artistic effect.

Building from previous *activity 17 (Alternating Strips)* and *activity 18 (Rearranged Mosaic)*, find two images to combine into two new collages. You will cut each image following a certain pattern as in the four template options labelled A to D provided below. Each template letter has been assigned to each collage example. Draw out these patterns on the back of your image and then cut them out. Once cut, arrange them in order off to the side. Combine the two images by either alternating pieces, or slightly altering the order for artistic effect. Mount the cut pieces onto card paper. It is easier to start in the corner and work along the edges first. To assist in understanding, the first collage example below was reassembled using only one image and template A. The second example below uses template D with two alternating images. The collage pieces on the opposite page were created by alternating two images together. When this is done, two collage pieces can be created as the cut pieces are divided and shared.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/mAEnLOFZqpk>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/mAEnLOFZqpk>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/Fsp5v11cri0>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/Fsp5v11cri0>



<https://youtube.com/shorts/HsxDd-9hJtY>



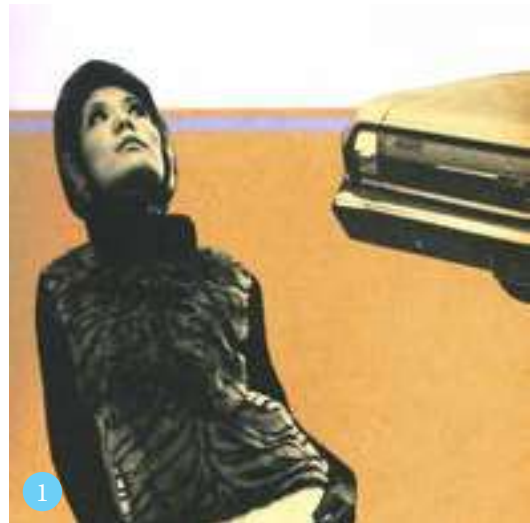
<https://youtube.com/shorts/HsxDd-9hJtY>

45 Designed Graphic

This activity allows you to simplify figures and reconsider how you use colour, shape and incorporate design principles within your work.

Find an image of a person or an object. Use acrylic paints as in examples 1, 2 and 4, or coloured papers as in example 5 to create bold coloured areas. Think as a designer utilising composition and minimalistic design elements.

If using a person, feel free to go further by creating new stylised bodies with designed blocks of colour as in examples 3 and 6. You do not need to follow correct proportions whilst doing this. Feel free to add further ornamentation should you desire.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/fmol8awc9Eo>



53 Abstract

This activity involves creating an abstract collage with emphasis on developing a composition strategy and the use of space.

Some people find abstract art challenging. Consider some of the previous activities involving colour (activities 5-8). In *See 'scapes* (activity 13), we also looked at the effects of cut paper versus torn. To further assist, consider a composition strategy. Some strategies are simple such as horizontal, vertical and diagonal as outlined on page 13. Others include grid, rule of thirds, symmetry, asymmetry, radial etc. You can also use a central element or focal point with other pieces supporting it.

Utilising various scraps and types of papers, the key is to experiment. Before gluing parts down, move them around to see how parts interact, contrast or support each other. Collage example 1 on the opposite pages was inspired by the work of colour field painter [Mark Rothko](#). In the collage, emphasis has been placed on colour and space. Examples 2 and 4 use a horizontal compositional approach with torn papers for artistic effect, whilst example 3 uses a vertical strategy, torn papers and a hidden image.

With practice and experimentation, your collage work will become more sophisticated. If interested, check out this YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJ9T0RF7EI4>) explaining some basic, but popular abstract composition strategies.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/HLnan5iVMBM>

55 Graffiti

Inspired by graffiti, this activity utilises layers of texture, images and mark making, asking you to carefully consider compositional balance within your work.

Graffiti has come a long way from its origins in the 1980s. For this task, gather various images to use. These could include images of people, advertisements, fonts, numbers, pieces of colour etc. Using some of the previous strategies, such as *décollage* or eliminating parts such as faces or eyes etc., build up your collage in overlapping layers. This may involve a push and pull strategy where you will add elements and then tear or remove ones to create balance and effects in your work. You may decide to use a certain image as a focal point. Utilise design elements or the rule of thirds to assist in placing it within your frame. Scrap pieces with blocks of colour or text can also assist in filling the frame. Imagine ads pasted to a city wall that have been removed and added to over the years. In the pictured examples, permanent markers and acrylic paint pens have been utilised. These marks are simple doodles, but you are welcome to add graffiti tags or drawings if you wish.



About The Author

Frank Curkovic has been an art educator with over twenty years of teaching experience ranging from the kindergarten to the high school level.

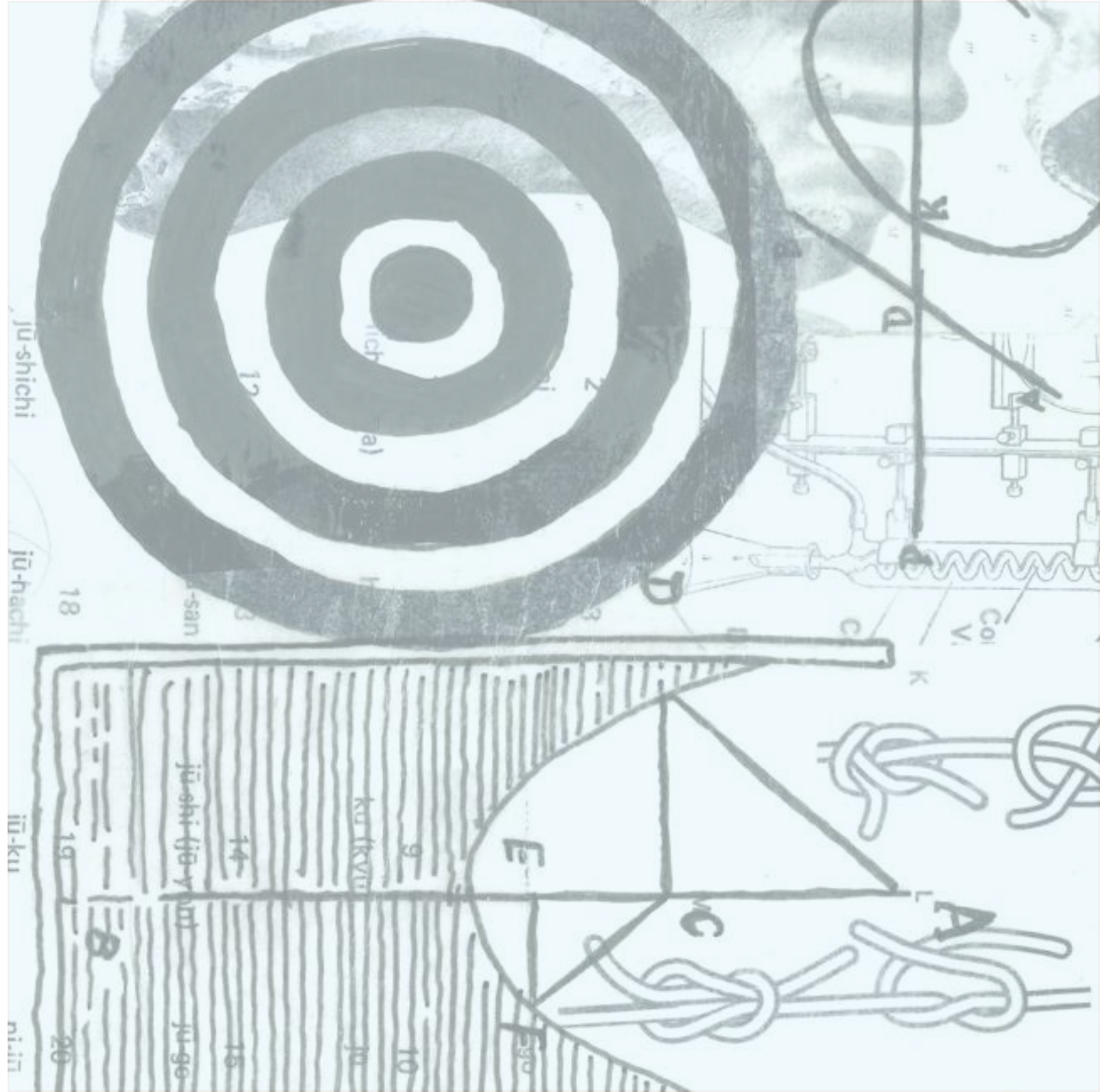
Originally from Canada, he has also lived and taught in Australia, South Korea, England, Japan and Singapore.

He has spent about a year and a half creating this book; writing its content and creating over 270 collage works...mostly on Sundays!

He is so grateful that you have checked out his first self published book!

Feel free to connect with him on social media here:
<https://linktr.ee/frankcurkovic>







COLLAGE IDEAS:

Prompts & Strategies to Build Your Skills



Art educator Frank Curkovic takes you on a collage tour with inspirational ideas and examples to help develop your own work. With basic supplies, materials and compositional strategies, you will be shown 60 ways to start successfully creating and exploring the art of collage.

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