Pearl at Home

Art projects designed for suggested ages of 5 and up, designed to be completed at home with easily-accessible art materials.

SIMPLE PRINTMAKING: COLLAGRAPHS

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MATERIALS

• **Paper:** Any paper that will stand up to paint, in any color

• **Paint:** Tempera, acrylics, or water-based non-toxic printing inks
  *Make sure your paint color will show up on your paper*

• **Substrate to use as the “printing plate”:** Cardboard, foamcore, or scraps of wood

• **Items for printing surface:**
  Select items that will create patterns once glued to the “printing plate”:
  cardboard, foam shapes, heavy string, textured shelf liner, discarded puzzle pieces, rubber bands, beads, thick fabric, etc.

• **Glue:** Use liquid glue for heavier items, and liquid glue or glue sticks for cardboard and other lighter items.

• **Sponge roller** or sponge brush

• **Paper towels**

• **Work mat:** Newspaper, wax paper, freezer paper, or copier paper
  *This work surface should be larger than your printing paper*

• **Optional:**
  - Scissors or Xacto knife
  - Hand brayer (roller)
  - Hot glue gun
  - Baren (a round, smooth pad used in printmaking)

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Printmaking is a process of creating art by printing an image from a block or plate onto another material, usually paper or fabric. There are many forms of printmaking, including woodcut, linocut, etching, lithograph, screenprinting, collagraph, and more.

Fine art printmaking requires tools, such as the printing press, that can be harder to access than other materials for the casual artist. A printing press exerts the pressure needed to produce an accurate and high quality print.

The collagraph technique presented in this lesson doesn’t necessarily require a printing press, making it a great way to try printmaking at home!
Definition of a Collagraph:

*colla* = "kolla," from the Greek word for glue
*graph* = from the Greek root word meaning writing or drawing

Collagraph, sometimes spelled *collograph*, is a simple method of printmaking where collage materials are glued onto another surface (called a printing plate). Ink or paint is then applied to the printing plate and transferred to paper to produce a print. There are different types of collagraph techniques, but all generally involve attaching shapes, fibers, texture mediums, or other items to a piece of wood or cardboard.

Typically, ink or paint is applied to the upper surfaces of the plate with a roller to create a relief print. Alternatively, ink or paint may be applied to the entire board and then removed from the upper surfaces (but remain in the spaces between objects), resulting in an intaglio print.

The directions that follow will guide you in producing a relief print.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Keep in mind that as with most printmaking processes, our technique here will produce prints that will be REVERSED – like a mirror image from what is on your plate.

So if you want something to face a certain direction, you MUST put it on the plate in REVERSE, from right to left. This is particularly important if you want to add lettering to your printing plate.

If you glue down your letters like this:

It will print reversed like this:

If you glue your letters reversed like this:

It will print correctly like this:
DIRECTIONS

1 Prepare your items to be glued
Some items you selected may be ready to use as is, but others may need to be trimmed or cut into a certain shape. You can draw shapes on your materials using a pencil or marker, then cut them out using scissors.

REMEMBER that any shapes or letters should be drawn in reverse if you need them to print a certain way.

2 Arrange your items
Lay out your items and arrange them on your printing plate – without gluing anything down. You can make something representational (like a face, animal, or flower) or an abstract pattern.

Depending on the material of your printing plate, you can also cut your printing plate into a certain shape if you’d like!

3 Glue your items onto the printing plate
Once you like how it looks, pick up ONE piece at a time, apply glue on the back, and stick it onto your printing plate. If you are using small items, like paper clips, to create a pattern to print, dip them in enough glue to hold them on the wood or cardboard printing plate.

Optional:
• You can create blobs of regular glue to use as texture.
• Older artists, or kids under parent supervision, can use a hot glue gun to draw shapes or lines of hot glue on the printing plate.

Let all items and glue dry COMPLETELY before moving on to Step 4.
4 Apply paint to the printing plate
Place your paper onto your work mat. Use a sponge brush, roller, or brayer to apply paint to the raised surfaces of the printing plate. You can use several colors of paint, but be sure to apply it quickly so all the paint is wet when you’re ready to print.

TIP: Don’t apply too much paint, or it will collect in the lower areas of the plate. Try to not get too much paint on areas you don’t want to print.

5 Time to print!
Lay your plate PAINT SIDE DOWN on your piece of paper WITHOUT sliding it into place. Then put a paper towel over the top of your printing plate. Rub the top of the paper towel/printing plate firmly with your hand (or baren) to make sure the painted surface touches the paper and transfers the paint. Try NOT to let anything slide at any time.

Take off the printing plate by pulling it straight up, then let everything dry.

You can make another print with this printing plate – without adding more paint – by immediately pressing it down onto another sheet of paper. It will create a lighter print called a ghost print.

To reuse this printing plate with different colors, wipe the paint off the plate or let it dry before adding the new paint.

You can also make additional printing plates!

Experiment with layering multiple prints. Make a new print on top of an old one in a contrasting color (once the first one is dry), or make multiple prints on the same paper.