

## DESIGN TIPS

- Firstly, try to study other things that are designed or composed.
- Study the layout of a newspaper page – analyse where the most important area is in a two-page spread. Is it the top right-hand corner or the bottom left; where do they put the juiciest picture or the dullest advert?
- What makes you linger on the page and not turn over; and are there spaces and gaps between text and photographs?
- Study a painting that you like. Why does it attract you? Is it the colour, texture, style or subject matter? Is there a particular area that is the focal point, and if so where is it? Does the picture have different areas that give it depth, and are there hidden areas? Some pictures may be very complex; others may be quite simple, but just as effective.
- Think about arranging objects on a mantelpiece or a window ledge; you might even try it, if you like. Would you arrange them in a symmetrical fashion – clock in the middle, candle at either end, with perhaps a pair of vases in between? Would you place the clock at one end and group the candlesticks together towards the right, perhaps with the vases in between? Everyone will have different preferences, but some arrangements are more pleasing than others. How you use an arrangement depends on how you want to express your design ideas.
- Having a slightly wider frame, border or piece at the bottom of a composition will give it weight and make the design feel stable. Putting the weightier pieces at the top of the composition, on the other hand, will make the design both less stable and less static.
- Compositions can become over-crowded and congested with colour, pattern, texture and shapes. If you remove some of the elements, a design may become livelier; and you can give greater emphasis to areas that you want to highlight.
- Plain papers can give a sense of space, with areas of calm.

► Two sheets of printed paper were selected – one roller printed, one block printed. Both papers were cut into equal strips and kept in order. The strips were then laid out; spaces were left between each strip, and the second print was laid at right angles to the first. The resulting grid was glued together and laid on various coloured grounds. Finally, the red background was selected as this enriched the colour and emphasized the texture and pattern of the printing.

Here are some further ideas for composing a design:

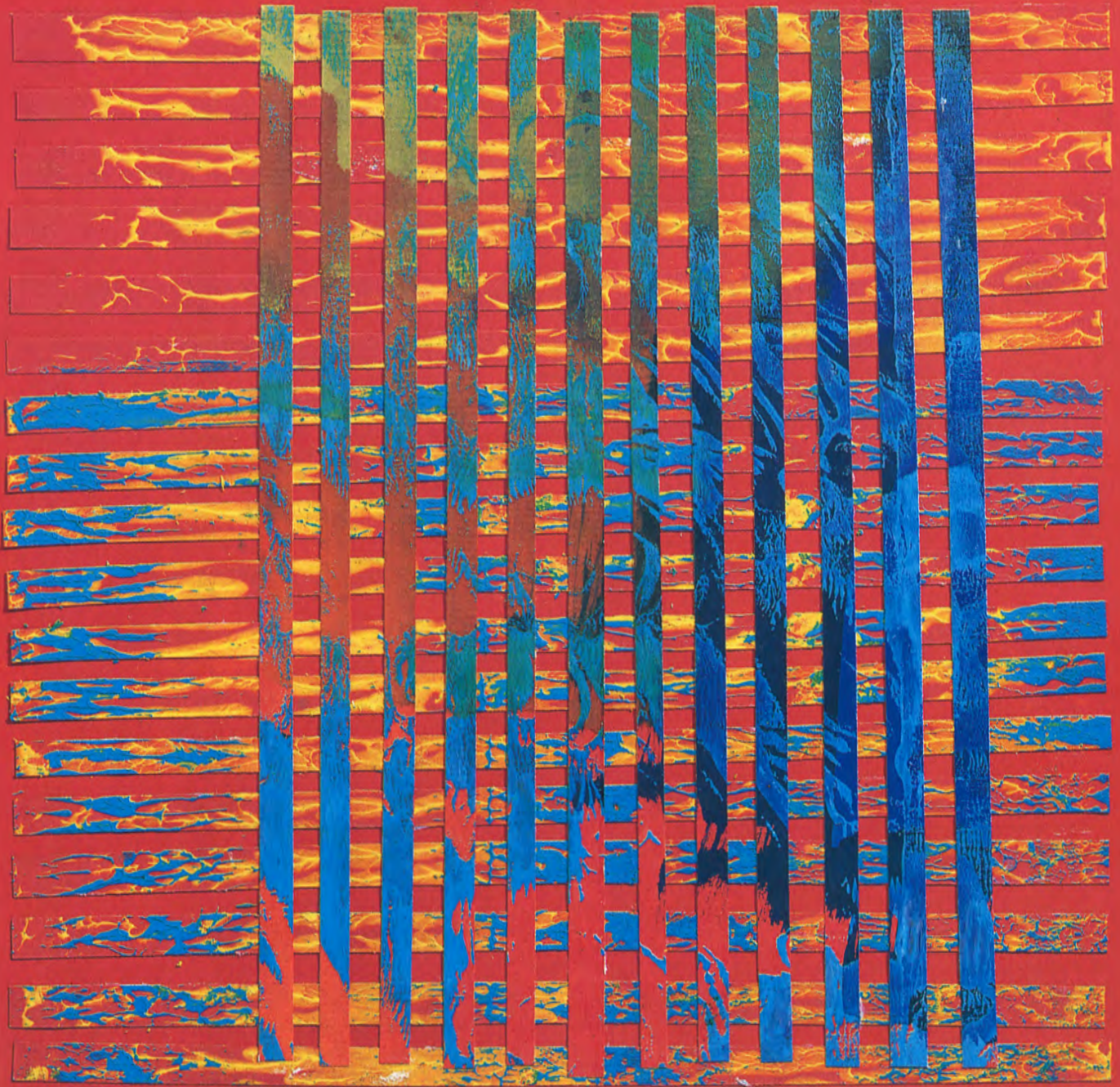
- To give a sense of flow in a design, so that the eye is led naturally from one area to another, it helps if you create the impression of a line in the desired direction. This may be solid or dotted, or can even be formed by the edges of various shapes. The eye will jump gaps in a line, so do not feel that it has to be continuous.
- Lines can be used tie up parts of the design into little self-contained packages or sections.
- A line that is intersected by other lines will interrupt the rhythm. This can be used to be disruptive or can give a sense of juddering, jumpy movement.
- Undulating, curving lines will give the feeling of gentle movement, like waves, whereas zigzags will give sharp pointed effects.
- Allow the design to lie in the middle of the background, leaving space around it, almost like a frame.

## SELECTING PAPERS AND COLOURS

When using your coloured papers to create designs, you will need to choose some plain coloured papers to complement them. Excellent ranges of commercially produced coloured papers are available through the larger art shops. These are now often available in A4 sheets or in pads. Many people consider that a pack of cheap sugar paper will be adequate, but the limited colours and dull paper surface will do little to complement your papers.

Accumulate a stock of coloured papers from which to select when the need arises. Make sure your store includes tints and shades and colours from the entire spectrum. If you are unable to purchase a sufficiently varied collection, mix a range of dyes or acrylics and spend some time painting your own range of plain coloured papers.







## ORGANIZING YOUR COLLECTION

By now you will have gathered together a varied collection of glorious decorated papers. There will be flat colour, mottled textures and patterned surfaces, as well as varnishes and resists. There will be metallic surfaces and shimmering lustre finishes, and some pieces incorporating a number of techniques.

Collect all these papers together and add some plain coloured papers. Spend time sorting out your collection: take a good look at the papers, lay them out on the table, and observe them from different directions and in different lights. Try to get to know them. You might sort them into colours – reds, blues and yellows together – or textures, or techniques. You could put patterns together, or the metallic surfaces, or glossy finishes.

It is often helpful, and fun, to document small areas of each paper into a small spiral-bound sketchbook, making brief notes about each paper, including the techniques and materials used. The book will be your own unique diary, a really useful reference document, and you will feel very worthy because you have filed all this information!

When sorting, you will be looking at the papers and analysing them. Try to decide why you like one piece better than another. Would some of the pieces look better if they had another coat of ink or if more printing were applied?

It is worth trying out some of these ideas to see what happens. Select a piece that you feel is not 'working'; add more colour, and see how it changes. Somehow it feels less dangerous working on an unsatisfactory piece than on one you love.

Some papers you will never want to cut up, while others may seem a mess and you might even want to put them in the bin. Before you go to that extreme, stop and try some of the following ideas.

## ISOLATING AND FRAMING

A large area of randomly painted, printed and coloured paper can be overwhelming. Too many patterns, colours

and elements can seem to fight for your attention. There are a number of ways to overcome this.

- Select areas by cutting the paper into regular shapes, such as squares, strips and blocks.
- Isolate areas in order to look at limited parts of the paper and then select specific sections you might want to use.
- Divide the paper up by adding pieces of plain paper, either inserted or attached to the first piece.
- If the paper is really too precious to be cut up, get a colour photocopy or a scanned print and cut this up instead.

## CUT STRIPS

For a basic arrangement of strips, select a piece of patterned paper, perhaps about A4 in size, and carefully divide it into parallel strips, either of equal widths or a variety of widths. Keeping the cut strips in the order in which you cut them, separate them with pieces of plain coloured paper, chosen to enhance the patterned surface of the original paper.

## FURTHER EFFECTS

- Lay the strips in a straight vertical or horizontal arrangement to create weaves, meshes and grids.
- Step the strips up and down to create waves.
- Lay the strips diagonally.
- Vary the width of the spaces between the patterned strips by using differing widths of plain coloured paper.

## TEARING SKILLS

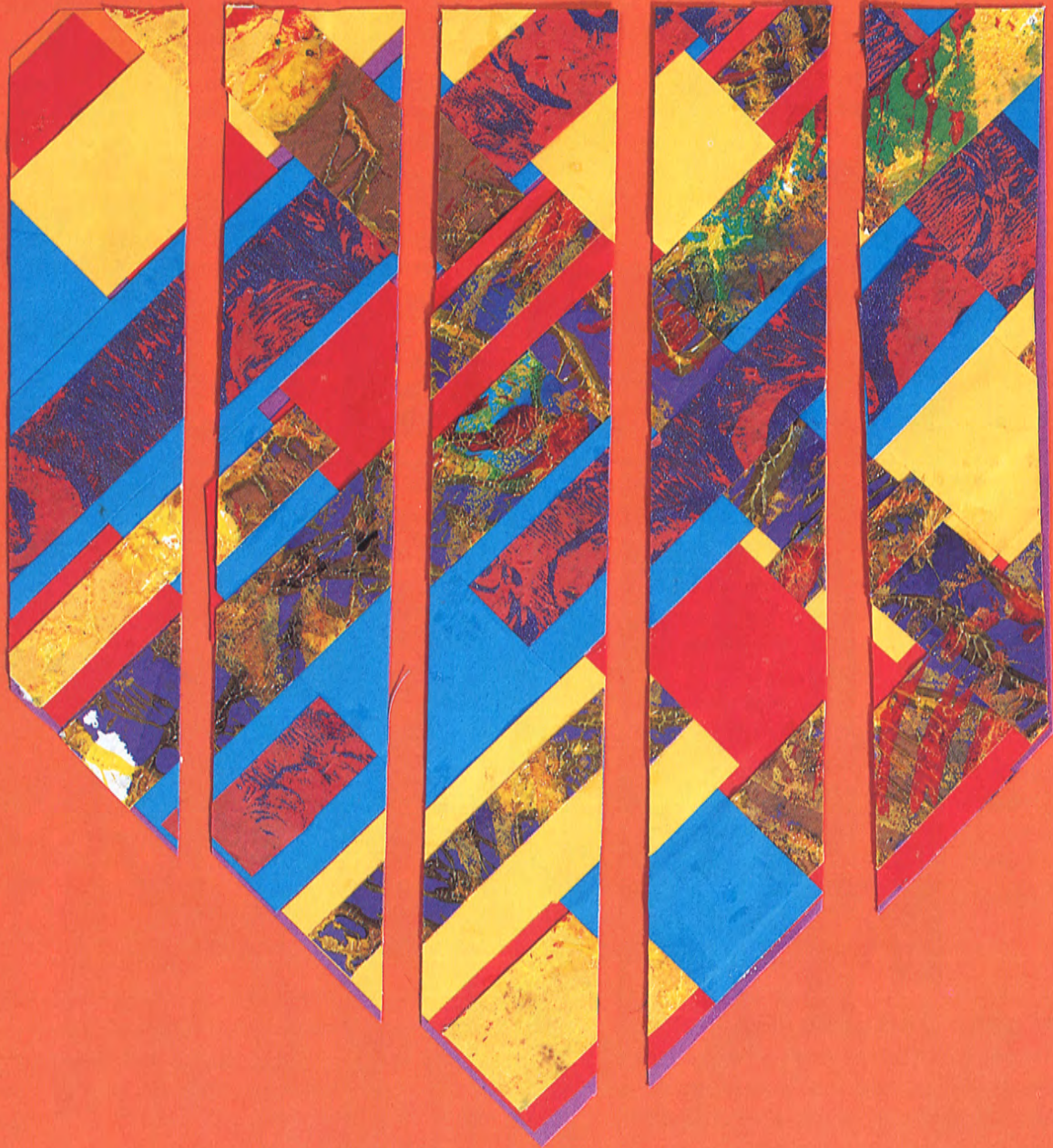
Apart from cutting your papers, you can tear them to create a variety of effects. The paper that you select will dictate the nature of torn edge: some will be difficult to tear, some too thick, and some too fine, but others will give soft, almost fringed edges. There will be a contrast in sheen, texture and colour between the torn edge of a coloured paper that has been printed and the printed surface. The applied media will affect the tear: acrylics and

► Strips of equal size were cut from two areas of the same sheet of paper – one area printed and inked, the other just inked – and were laid on a contrasting paper in an alternating pattern. The strips were kept in the correct order and the inked half was stepped up and down to form a curve.











## designing with papers

varnishes will strengthen the paper and give firmer stronger edges, while dyes and repeated crumpling can soften and weaken paper, giving a softer edge.

Before rushing headlong into tearing up all your decorated papers, spend a short while considering and practising your tearing technique! The following points should all be borne in mind.

- Paper has a grain, and a horizontal tear will look different to vertical one.
- Realise that you work with a left- or right-hand bias, and that the angle at which you hold the paper will alter the width of the torn edge.
- If you want a torn edge that is shallow but straight, tear the paper against a ruler.
- If you tear a curve or circle from the printed side of the paper, the tear will remain close to the surface

colour. Tear from the reverse, and there will be an edge of torn plain paper around the printed area.

- Machine-made industrial and commercial papers, such as printer paper, cartridge and brown paper, will tend to tear fairly evenly and easily.
- Fine Asian papers, such as lokta, ruched paper and Indian cotton rag papers, will tend to tear less evenly, and the edge will reveal fibres of different lengths.
- Fine papers, such as mulberry tissue, silk papers or straw silk papers, are also difficult to control, as they tend to rip, but sometimes they give a very soft fluffy edge, often with long fibres.
- It may help you to control the tear if you gently dampen the paper where you wish to tear it.
- Finally, be aware of the individual deckle edges that are part of all the handmade papers and use these to best advantage.

◀◀ A printed paper was cut into strips of different lengths. The strips were then woven with strips of varying widths cut from plain papers. The woven paper was glued to a backing paper to hold it in position. This sheet was then cut into strips, diagonally across the weave, and these were spaced out and mounted on a sympathetic background.



◀ An area of inked paper was carefully torn to make best use of the quality and colour of the torn edge. This was glued to a page of an Indian cotton rag sketchbook.



# glorious papers

▶ A light card template was cut using bead shapes, ovals, and strung together. This template was used to frame areas of selected papers that were then cut out. The papers were then arranged, with other areas of the papers that complimented the composition. Different surface finishes and paper types are more noticeable when placed next to each other and finally set on a background colour.

## LAYERING TORN PAPERS

If you take care to select different weights, textures and types of paper, you can create further sheets of paper by layering torn strips or areas of papers together. These sheets of paper can be made of uncoloured natural papers, such as different weights of lokta, straw silk, and rucked paper, so that the surfaces and textures are emphasized.

Layers of torn coloured papers create a very useful subtle texture when combined with printed and dyed papers. For support, the layers can all be glued to a lightweight background paper.

You might like to explore some of the following suggestions.

- Take a sheet of patterned or dyed paper and carefully tear it into strips. You might tear at a slightly diagonal angle. Rearrange these strips on a plain piece of paper in a contrast colour, maybe overlapping the strips or spacing them out to create a pleasing arrangement.
- Tear and cut strips of printed and plain coloured paper, and then rearrange them into stripped patterns or simple grids or weaves. The contrasts between the soft torn edges and the hard cut ones will add variety to the design.
- Create a paper that is composed of a torn printed, plain and textured paper. This can create a complicated and complex image. Carefully cut this paper into regular strips or squares and reposition on a sympathetic background. The careful regular cutting will emphasize the areas of complex irregular pattern by framing them, and this also offers an opportunity to add space and colour to the composition.

## TWO RIGHT-ANGLED TEMPLATES

The following is a useful way of deciding which areas of a paper to select for a design.

### MATERIALS

- paper(s) for design
- card
- scalpel or craft knife
- metal ruler
- cutting board

### METHOD

- 1 Using the scalpel or knife and metal rule, make yourself two L-shaped pieces of light card. These can be placed together to make a frame which can then be adjusted to enclose different areas of your paper – squares, rectangles, wedges, or narrow strips.
- 2 As you experiment with your adjustable frame, you will discover more areas of your paper that you like. You might try making a particular rectangle larger or smaller, to see how the decoration and colour alters.
- 3 Next, you might cut some of these squares, rectangles or other shapes from the sheet of paper to isolate them. Use a small craft knife, a safety metal ruler and a cutting board rather than a pair of scissors. The paper will stay flat when it is cut with a craft knife, and you can easily see where and what you are cutting. Cutting with scissors often damages the paper and is less accurate.
- 4 Remember to check the paper that has had the shape cut from it; this can often make an attractive frame for later use.

## SHAPED TEMPLATES

(Preceding page) A number of different circular and oval templates were drawn and cut out. A range of different papers was selected, inked, varnished, textured and printed, but all within a bright blue/green purple colour scheme. A few additional papers were required to give vibrancy and variety, including a touch of yellow and orange. Areas of the papers were cut out with a sharp craft knife, and the pieces were then arranged until the composition was complete. The result was then placed on a piece of natural lokta walnut paper, which seemed to bring out the richness of the colours and the differing surfaces.

The logical progression from simple right-angled frames is to make a more complex template or stencil.

- Make a shaped frame so that designs can be created using multiple images taken from a range of coloured and patterned papers.
- Moving the template across the paper, identify attractive areas; cut them out, and gradually build up a pile of shaped papers ready to use. This is like selecting colours, textures and patterns for a patchwork or samples for decorating a room.
- Be aware, as you cut out, of the negative areas of paper, the areas cut around the image, which could also be used in your design.
- Cut out some further plain coloured shapes to complement the painted and patterned pieces.

## USING THE CUT SHAPES

- Take a large sheet of paper, probably bigger than you ultimately want your design to be, and start to place your cut pieces on it.
- Be aware of the spaces between the shapes; notice how they relate to and complement each other without detracting from each other.
- Watch the space between the shapes; do not allow this to become too great or the design may appear rather dismembered.
- Try to build up areas of interest with a few shapes very close together, almost grouping. Some shapes might even be overlapped, which will alter their

relationship, and this might perhaps be countered with an area of plain coloured paper.

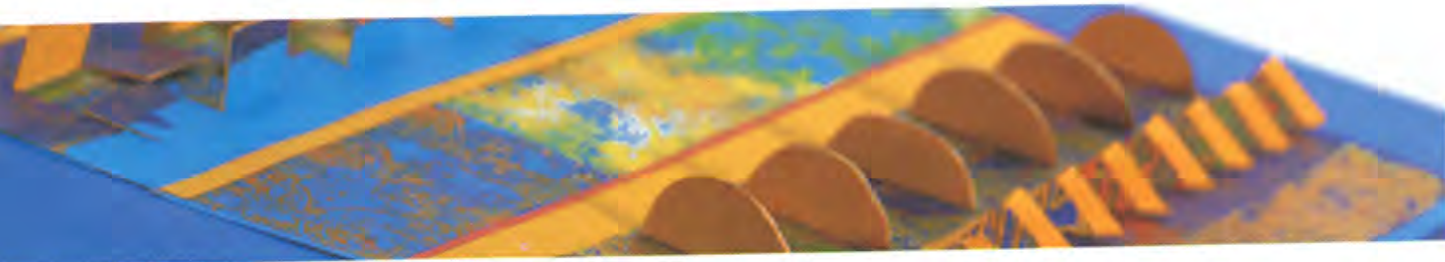
- Move the pieces around on the sheet of paper, experimenting with different colours of paper beside, behind and on top of the patterned pieces.
- Try several background colours until you find an arrangement that is pleasing.
- Some arrangements will appeal to you, while you will find others less attractive, but only you can decide which arrangement is best and why.
- To check whether you feel that the arrangement is working well, temporarily hold the pieces in place by lightly attaching them to the background with small pieces of masking tape.
- Pin your arrangement to a vertical surface and step back to view it.
- It is often worth leaving the piece for a while. After this, you can come back and view it again with a fresh eye.

## CONCLUSION

Having made a pile of glorious papers, keep them readily available in a folder or a drawer, so that they can be used for all kinds of projects or events. Note the techniques in your sketchbook, so that you have a record of your artistic journey.

Little isolated rectangles can either be used to make personal cards, or pieced together to cover books, portfolios and boxes. Combined with further drawing and painting, these coloured papers can be the basis for a multitude of designs, plans and pictures.

Hopefully, the papers and techniques described in this book will only be the beginning of an exciting voyage of experiment and discovery.







# GLORIOUS PAPERS

TECHNIQUES FOR APPLYING  
COLOUR TO PAPER



R U T H I S S E T T

