



The Still Life Course

Module 5: Printing and Pattern

Painting Project 3: Creating a semi-abstract still life

Materials Needed

- Canvas 40x40cm prepared with a layer of matte medium (dried overnight)
- Matte medium
- Fluid colours
- Silicon sponges cut into different geometric shapes (suitable for stamping)
- Qtips (cottonbuds x 10)
- Palette knife
- Optional balloon and loo role cylinder for printing.

Objective

For this project a few simple tools are used to create basic shapes, used in repetition to create a backdrop for a layered artwork using stamping or *printing* techniques to lift the wet paint with silicon sponge shapes cut into different geometric shapes.

Fine lines done with scraffito techniques as well as negative painting are used to develop this still life painting. Additional stamping can be done as the painting progresses.

This is an exercise in colour and rhythm to create a very simple yet expressive still life. Geometric shapes stamped onto layers of paint mixed with medium create a background for the final composition that is visually varied and interesting.

Process

Start off by covering the entire area of the canvas with a mixture of matte medium and colour by using a fan brush. As a guide, use a teaspoon of medium per quarter of canvas. Use colours, P red on top corner, magenta, then a mixture of magenta, red and blue in the third corner, and a mixture of hansa yellow and red and magenta on the fourth corner. Keep the areas roughly as clean colours, so wipe off the brush on the fourth canvas. Even out the paint, if you have areas where the layer is too thick, scrape some off with a palette knife and smooth over with the brush. Where colours overlap, blend it in without overworking.



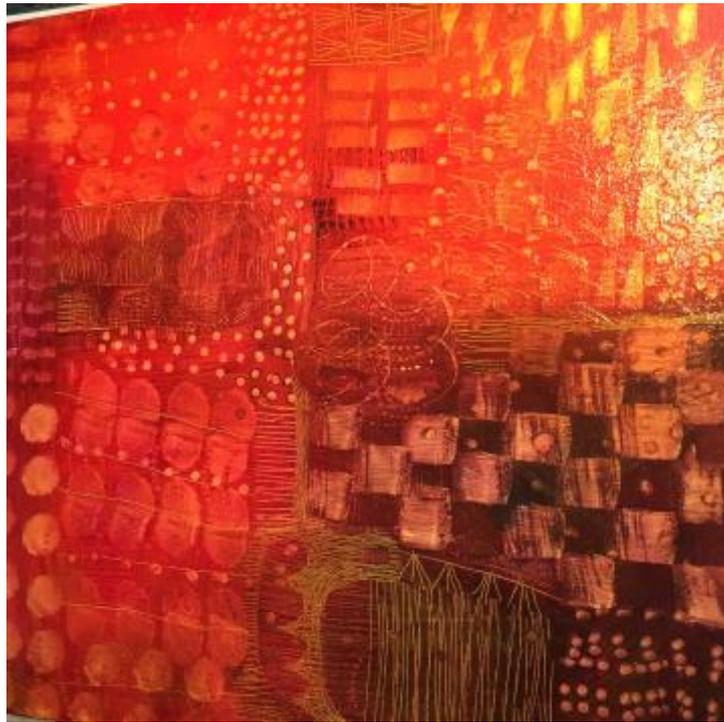
Start the stamping with the silicon sponges, Qtips (cotton buds) are also handy for small dots, and for thin circular lines use a cardboard loo roll. If you want bolder shapes, try stamping with a balloon, this takes some practice, but is an effective tool.

TIP: Even though this is a bit chaotic, repeat shapes within the canvas. Keep shapes to *blocks* of forms, about the size of your hand, squares of nine shapes is a good way to start building the layers. The sizing and squares of 9 shapes is helpful when looking for shapes such as a vessel or a surface area of. Have at least two areas within the canvas where the shapes are repeated in this format.

It is good to have some 'calm' areas within the background. If you print an area with a shape, make it go right up to the edge of the canvas. You do not want to limit yourself to the middle area of the canvas; it makes it difficult to 'find' a composition.

Move the canvas around so you can create marks in different directions. You do not at this point know what the composition will be, and this is part of the fun, it really is! The element of surprise is important.

Make the shapes well - if you print, e.g. an area of triangles, do it clearly rather than by just dabbing without a pattern in mind.



Observe, and engage with what you are doing, not to solve the painting into something coherent, but rather to see what areas you like more. Create subtle areas by lifting paint and adding some more. If not sure, leave the painting to dry and then add another layer. This first layer is predominantly a darker background. Limit the scraffito lines so there is a balance with the stamping. Once the whole area is covered in with marks leave to dry.

It is optional, but a helpful tool is to cover the entire canvas once dried, with a layer of matte medium, and a few drops of azo yellow if the backdrop is green or red, or if it is blue, consider pthalo green or a purple. The purpose of this is to retain the subtle first layer, and make it easier to figure out a composition with colour hues rather than strong contrast. Let this layer dry completely.



Use stencil shapes cut out in negative and positive shapes, to assist in looking for shapes in your artwork. Move the canvas in different directions to find the most interesting shapes for your components. Draw the basic outline in white pencil, or paint freestyle and start the negative painting around the shapes. Take your time as this is an ongoing stage of discovery. Use your composition drawings, imaginary flowers and leaf shapes to guide you in figuring out your artwork.

Paint out the entire composition in white, you will paint out some beautiful background shapes with this process, but that is part of this way of creating.



Once the white layer is dry, you can cover the area once again with a thin layer of matte medium and a few drops of colour. Azo yellow is my choice (only a few drops used!) You can now add printed shapes with the silicon

sponges, dipping them in paint; no medium is needed at this point. Create flower or leaf shapes with the sponges.



Take time in between layers, this way of working is challenging in that it is more of a discovery process, than a planning process.

Simplicity is key to this project, with clever use of limited colours, and good shapes as components. The magic comes from the background and the subtle variations achieved with the stamping process. This technique is effective when used for more abstract artworks, as well as when patterned backgrounds are needed for more conventional or representational themes.

Links

For some pattern inspirations take a look at these links:

<https://uk.pinterest.com/estemacleod/basic-patterns-and-simple-printed-shapes/>

<https://uk.pinterest.com/estemacleod/pattern-and-surface-design/>

