



WORKSHOP 4

PLAYING WITH GEOMETRIC SHAPES: CASTLES AND CITIES

I love to create workshops that make use of old, forgotten art projects. Painted papers are so full of texture, color, and pattern, which make them inviting collage materials:

Cut up left-behind paintings, drawings, or prints and divide them up by warm and cool colors so they're easy to dig through. If you don't have any leftover paintings to work with, check out the workshop on creating your own painted papers on page 139. Just like building with blocks, arranging and attaching geometric paper shapes is an invitation to create for all ages.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- heavier paper for a background surface
- scraps of painted paper cut into rectangles, squares, circles, triangles, and other shapes
- paper punches
- kid scissors
- glue sticks
- brayers



THE PROCESS

1. Place a sheet of the heavier paper at each child's place.
2. Set out a variety of painted papers, paper punches, and scissors.
3. Invite the children to "build" with the papers, arranging the shapes into cities, castles, or anything they can imagine. Some will delight in paper-punching shapes; others will use whatever you have on the table just as it is. For this reason, I keep all the paper scraps a little smaller than the palm of my hand.
4. Allow time for arranging and rearranging before offering glue sticks.
5. Hand out the glue sticks and let the fun begin.
6. Use brayers to smooth down papers that have rolled up.
7. Invite the children to glue smaller shapes onto the larger shapes to add details to their work.





FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS

Having a variety of beautifully painted paper scraps really engaged this group. They loved looking at each of the scraps and thinking about how it was made or what it could be used for. These conversations helped slow down the process of selecting, arranging, and rearranging, before glue was even mentioned.

OTHER IDEAS TO TRY

Set out wrapping paper or tissue paper that has been cut into small shapes or paper for paper punching, instead of painted paper.

Invite children to draw a geometric city, castle, or any other architecture and then collage on top of the drawing.

Ask children to imagine just one building and all of the details that go into that particular building. (It's helpful to look at photos and children's books for reference.)

Try switching out the background paper for something else—a cut and flattened brown paper bag, black paper, or aluminum foil. A new surface will totally change the feel of the project.

Help kids talk about their work by offering a format in which to do so. I love using Harvard's Project Zero protocols for visible thinking. Ask kids to share what they see in a friend's artwork, what they think, and what it makes them wonder.

