

Collage Paper Inventory and Organization

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Organizing paper is perhaps the most troublesome aspect of paper arts. Paper must be protected from damage such as wrinkling and tearing as well as from dust and water. Any system used must also make papers easy to locate. The information about various organizational systems was gleaned from experienced collage artists. They have each solved organization problems using their available space effectively and to fit with how they each work with paper.

If, papers are pre-painted, paper organization is generally based on color. If, the papers are left natural, the organization is based on paper type. If, papers are uncut, flat files or hanging systems are utilized. If, papers are cut, sheet protectors in notebooks are preferred.

Paper Inventory Samples:

Although not necessary, it may be advisable to have a system to control paper inventory. What one has, what one needs and new papers not yet tried can quickly become overwhelming in variety. Further, it is good to know what each paper is and where it was purchased in order to acquire more of a favorite paper and avoid buying too much. The system may be simply a file folder or a sheet protector containing a small sample of each paper. If, papers are purchased from more than one source, perhaps having a file for each source would be advisable.

For more organization, have pages of samples in sheet protectors or simply pasted in a small notebook. The samples may be glued to neutral colored card stock or to black paper. Washi textures and translucency can be better seen with a black or dark paper behind. The pages should be labeled by paper type and a source for each included. Another method is placing small samples in business card file sheets. These may also be arranged by paper type and a blank business card included for paper information. Take the small papers with you when replacing dwindling stock.

A Foam Core sample board might organize an inventory in a more immediate, visual way. The sample board could be attached to the back of a door or on a wall or tucked out of sight until needed. Although, small pieces of paper are easier to organize, the actual papers may also serve as an inventory method.

Full Sheets:

Full sheets of watercolor, printmaking and drawing papers are generally 22" x 30" and 24" x 36". Oriental papers, Washi, have considerably more variety in size: generally 25" x 33, 37, 38 or 39", the sizes may vary from 18" x 25 to 26" x 43.5". The storage of these large papers can create space problems. Some artists prefer to work from these original sheets rather than cut them down to more easily managed sizes. A Flat File is the preferred storage for large papers however, they are expensive and take a considerable amount of floor space. A large drawer or chest of drawers may be more readily available or rolling under-bed plastic bins utilize a convenient space.

Paper can also be rolled and stored upright in 8" square boxes. Organized these rolls by color. Rolling prevents wrinkles and the standing rolls provide inventory information at a glance. The paper can also be clipped to skirt hangers and placed on a closet rod. Again the papers are easily arranged, pieces removed and replaced and individual papers quite easy to find.

Paper can be stored upright in a large flat box behind a door. Use supports, such as foam core, in the box to act as dividers between paper types and to keep papers from slipping down in the box. Cardboard is acidic so, do place paper in large plastic bags or use the foam core between papers and the box.

Black Artist Portfolios (buy during the year with Michael's coupons) are excellent storage for artwork as well as paper. Use one for each paper type, color or for works-in-progress. If, papers are used frequently in workshops, this portfolio method may be the most useful. Rather than taking several portfolios, however, move a selection of papers to an empty portfolio.

1/4 Sheets:

If, the work does not require large papers, quarter the sheets by either cutting with an envelope opener or by folding and tearing. These smaller sheets are easier to store and to paint. Torn paper sheets can be organized using the same methods used for the larger sheets. Papers can be sorted in plastic bins with handmade dividers (cool/warm-light/dark) or in 2.5 gallon zipper bags (Hefty One Zip bags are 14-3/8" x 16"). The arrangement can be either vertical or horizontal. The important consideration is keeping the papers from unwanted wrinkling, creasing or tearing: protection and easy accessibility are the primary considerations for any system.

Painted papers can also be stacked by color on shelves of a bookcase; stored in a flat file; hanging by binder clips or on skirt hangers in a closet.

Make an inexpensive file using a discarded display box (14" wide,; 10" deep from Costco) with cardboard dividers (13-14" wide and 20" high). Cover all of these with matching contact paper. Put the divider into a 16" x 20" plastic bag. Place cut papers on both sides of the divider by paper type. Label each side of the divider to locate papers easily.

Small Papers (8.5 x 11 or 12x12):

Perhaps the most popular way is to cut papers to either 8.5" x 11" or to 12" x 12". The papers are then stored in appropriate sheet protectors. The papers can be organized into notebooks or in hanging files by paper type or by color. The advantage of sheet protectors are many: the papers are protected; easily portable in a notebook or file; easily pulled for a project file; and little bits can be stored in the same sheet protector.

For those who use magazine or printed papers, keeping a stack of magazines is messy and inconvenient. When a printed paper with interesting texture, color or motif is found, keep those clippings in sheet protectors. Organize by color or patterns: the method that will best allow easy access to just the right paper.

Small papers can be stacked on bookcase shelves by color. Magazine holders are inexpensive and will keep papers, especially those in slippery sheet protectors, tidy while making the search for specific papers easy. The empty sheet protector box can be recycled into a holder by covering it in contact paper. A paper sorter or in-and-out office trays make good organizers as well particularly on the work table. Hanging files labeled by paper type or color can be effectively used with sheet protectors or loose papers. The method for storing the papers is personal and should work with one's personal style.

12" x 12" papers can be organized in plastic scrap booking containers. When cutting, paper should be cut no larger than 12"x 12". Sheet protectors are available in this size which can then be organized in a notebook: keep bits and pieces and coordinating 'stuff' in the same protector. Warm and Cool notebooks could be used or papers organized in single color notebooks as with standard size papers.

Small plastic bins can be used for individual colors and coordinating materials. Some like to sift through looking for just the right touch. If, dimensional materials are

frequently used, storing coordinating materials in a plastic box may be preferable. Each box can be effectively organized using plastic bags. Small drawer organizers work well for sorting dimensional bits and pieces.

Unpainted Paper:

Papers that are used most for hand coloring include Washi, tissue and watercolor paper. Watercolor paper in sheets may be stored as other large papers. Pads of paper may be preferred as this paper does not need to be taped or stretch, just painted and allowed to dry. Pads should be stored flat to protect corners and edges. Tissue and Washi are stored as for any paper. The ultimate use may determine the most user friendly way: Skirt hangers hung in closet; Labeled plastic boxes; Sheet protectors in notebooks; Stacked on shelves; or in Flat Files.

A small amount of paper may be kept at the work area separate from the entire stock and replaced as needed. Layering requires unpainted papers; Collaging requires colored papers; and Assemblage requires the addition of 3-dimensional objects. The more organized the materials means less time looking for things and more time creating.

Painted Paper:

Painted papers may require more protection than unpainted papers depending on the finish. Papers prepared with mediums or paste papers may inconveniently stick to other papers. It is important to keep them separated. Sheet protectors or plastic bags are both inexpensive investments for protecting papers. Spending time experimenting with various painting techniques is a great learning experience: protect those special papers. These can be organized by color or technique or texture for future use.

Painted papers can also become wrinkled and distorted. Wrinkled paper can be ironed between sheets of parchment and then neatly stacked in plastic bins; Stored in sheet protectors in a notebook; Stacked by color on bookcase; Placed on skirt hangers and hung in closet making it easy to tear off a piece or replace papers; or Stored in a Flat File. Make certain that painted papers are completely dry before storing.

Small Scraps:

Without a doubt, every paper artist collects bits and pieces of paper. Small pieces can be sorted back into sheet protectors or simply dumped into a small plastic box. They can also be used for making handmade papers. Edges torn off of cut papers can be

recycled into handmade papers if, cut edges are avoided.

Supports:

Whether mat board, illustration board, watercolor paper or board, canvas or hardboard panels are used as supports, storing them is space consuming. Most find the space behind a door or bookcase convenient spots. Some can be stacked on shelves or in under-bed storage containers. Use the shipping box to hold boards and canvas either behind a door or in a closet. Some supports need to be stored on edge vertically and some flat. All supports benefit from good storage to prevent warping or damage. Make or recycle a box to hold supports. Use dividers to make compartments within the box for finished art work and blank supports. These can be filed and organized by size and type.

Handmade Paper:

If, you make your own paper with pulp and paper scraps, protecting the papers is very important as they can be easily damaged. The flat file and under-bed storage containers are good choices. If, paper is to be stacked on shelves, used plastic bags to keep the papers dry and clean. Plastic bags can be used to separate paper types or colors within the container or on a shelf.

Works in Progress

Projects in process can be paced in individual portfolios or plastic bags. Include everything associated with the project so, nothing becomes separated, missing-in-action or just plain lost: drawings, papers, accessories, photos, ideas, the support, mat - every item to be used in the project. The portfolio or plastic bag should zip or snap closed to keep things from sneaking out on their own. Creativity can dim quickly when a hunt for something begins: the fundamental reason for organizing in the first place is to avoid wasted, creative time looking for something.

A Summary of Paper Organization

Paper Inventory Systems

File folders

Business Card Holder

Sheet Protectors

Foam Core Display Board

The purpose of organizing paper is to protect the paper from damage and to make papers easily accessible. Not every system will work for every artist as space and working processes differ. The major ways to organize a paper inventory are:

If, papers are kept in sheet protectors:

- Sort into notebooks
- Sort into hanging files in a portable file box or mobile cart
- Sort into a paper sorting rack or in-and-out stacking files
- Stack on shelves or keep in magazine holders
- Store in the empty sheet protector box covered with contact paper

If, papers are kept in plastic boxes:

- Label boxes with paper information such as type or color
- Store the boxes on shelves, in a closet or under the bed
- Use drawer dividers to organize small pieces or accessories within a box
- Use large zippered bags to stand papers on edge in an open box
- 12"x12" papers store in scrap booking plastic storage boxes (sheet protectors)

If, papers are clipped to skirt hangers:

- Hang in a closet by paper type or color
- Keep papers inside zipper bags to keep them clean: clip the bag to the hanger

Organize Full Sheets of Paper:

- Lay Flat in a Flat File or large plastic box
- Roll and store upright in boxes
- Stand sheets on edge in box or plastic bag
- Hang on skirt hangers in closet
- Store in artist portfolios