

Layer upon Layer

A 3D mixed-media landscape

Juliette Orton

After a brisk walk in the beautiful Chilterns in Buckinghamshire last year, I felt inspired to try and recreate the inspirational landscapes I had seen, using mixed media. Landscapes generally have a variety of textures which lend themselves to a mixed media format and this enabled me to consider using a range of different techniques such as printing, machine embroidery, paper cutting and also more general material manipulation for my piece.

I studied 3D Design at university many years ago and often revert back to three dimensions in my creative work, even though my starting point is generally the two dimensions in my sketchbooks. With this in mind, I started to consider ways in which I could create my landscape with real depth, not just by using different textures on one layer but by considering multiple layers. Using foam board and a deep picture frame gave me the look that I wanted. Several different layers gave my scene the depth required.



Materials required:

Masking tape
 Personal visual references of landscapes
 Standard A4 printer paper
 Small blocks of wood (for printing support)
 Several sheets of A3 160g/m2 cartridge paper
 Quickprint foam sheet or a flat piece from a polystyrene veg tray
 Scalpel and cutting mat
 Card
 Scissors
 Watercolour paints and acrylic paints
 A variety of textured/interesting papers
 Sewing machine
 A range of embroidery threads
 A selection of wools and textiles in a range of textures
 Beads, wire and wire cutters (optional)

Suppliers: A number of these items can be found at Art Van Go, Rainbow Silks in Great Missenden or most good art shops.

How to make your own 3D Landscape

Firstly, you will need to work out which materials you want to use for each layer. The instructions here are based on four landscape layers. Read through the article to see how this works and this will give you an idea of what is required for each layer. This really depends on what you have available, your choice of colours and what works well together (textured wools are effective, as are silk sari ribbons). At this point it is worth taking time to see which materials complement each other well whilst offering enough of a contrast to be interesting and effective.

This is what works well for me (but your choices may be different): a block printed or watercolour layer for the background, stitched wool, wool felting or thin strips of fabric for one of the layers and textured paper with stitch for the other one. The front layer described here is block printing and stitch but a suitable piece of textured paper which complements the piece would also be a good choice.

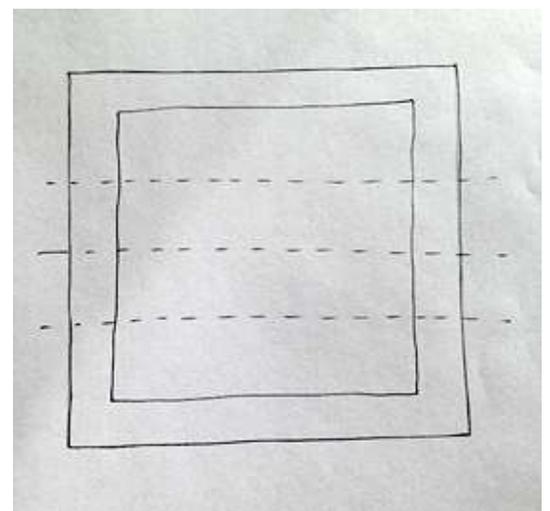
You also need to consider how many layers you want your landscape to have – I would recommend a maximum of four, otherwise your piece will be too deep for your frame and you will not be able to see enough of each layer. Ikea do a suitable low cost frame that would work (RIBBA). The card mount frame will be your guide to plan the size each layer is going to be.

Leave a good border around the main piece and the mount card to emphasise the work; as in this instance, less is more! You will find that the actual size of the work in each layer is not that big but you must ensure that you leave enough of a margin around the work to ensure that the edges are not seen when you come to assemble the layers together.

Make sure that you use the same type of card for every layer as you want the edges of your layers to match and almost disappear leaving the focus on your artwork. I tend to use 160g/m² cartridge paper as it is stable enough to hold its shape but still thin enough to cut easily with a scalpel.

On an A4 piece of standard printer paper, draw around the inside of the mount card opening in pencil – as shown above right.

Remove the frame and draw another square inside the first square allowing a ½ in (1.25 cm) margin all around the edge. Divide the internal square into four equal strip sections using dashed lines and number each section 1 – 4.



The next step is to plan your landscape outlines and you might find that a photo or an image of a landscape will help you as a reference point.

Try to make sure that you use a variety of shapes in your outlines to keep it interesting and avoid straight lines where possible.

Draw a 1 in (2.5 cm) margin around the outer edge of the larger square to finalise the template size. This margin ensures that you won't see the edges of the layers when you look at the finished piece from an angle – see right.

Layer templates

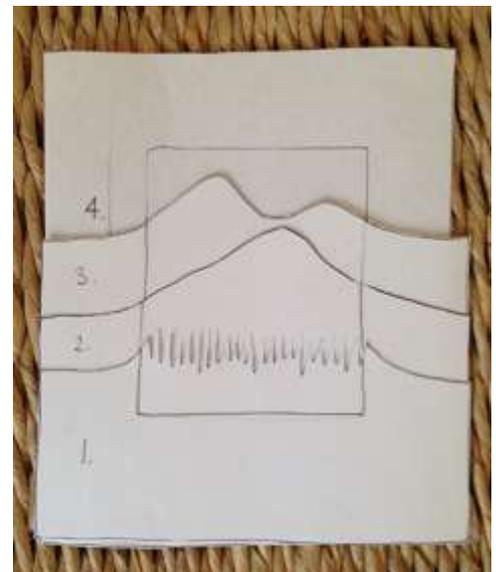
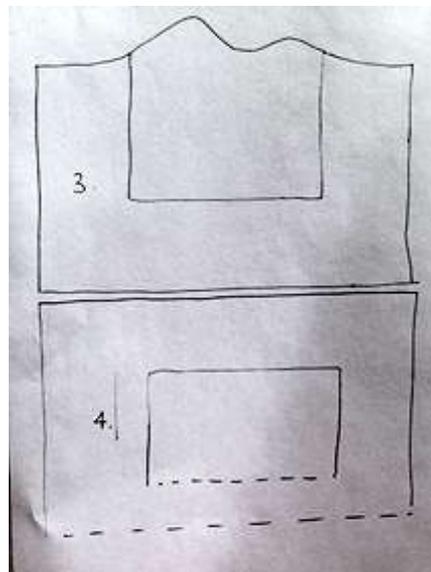
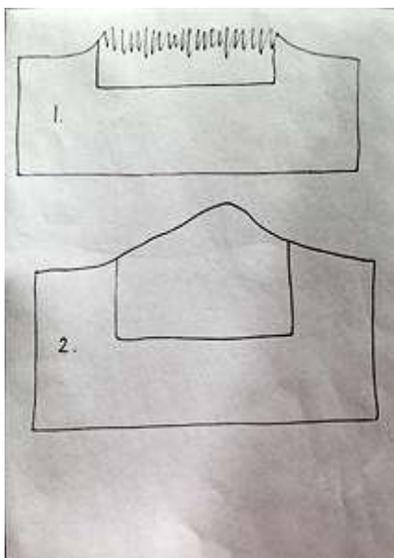
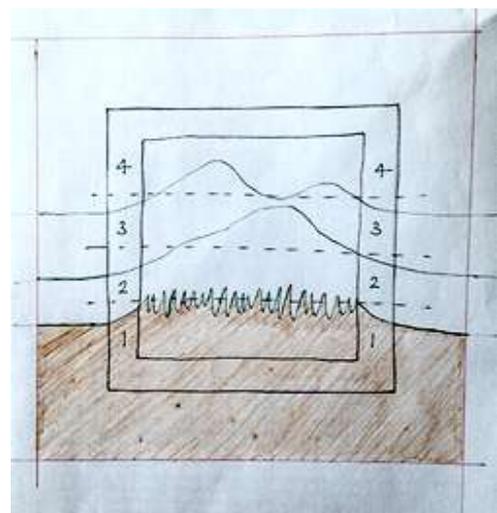
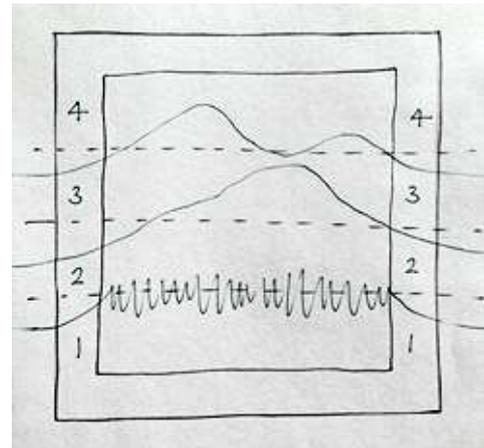
The next step is to make the templates for each of your four layers and I use standard printer paper for this so that you can trace the outlines through it.

The orange shaded area on the picture, right, shows the shape of the template for layer 1 and you need to trace all 4 layer template pieces like this.

Make sure that you use the full depth of the piece for layers 2 and 3 so that you don't see any gaps in the final piece – see below.

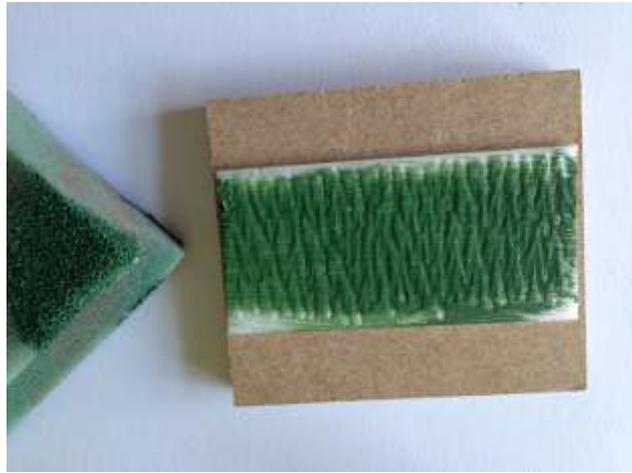
This is also important for the back piece (layer 4): it must have the extra length below to avoid any gaps.

Make sure that you also trace the outline of the inner square onto each template piece as you will use this as a guide to show you where your stitch/print areas should be on each layer. You can see, below right how it all fits.



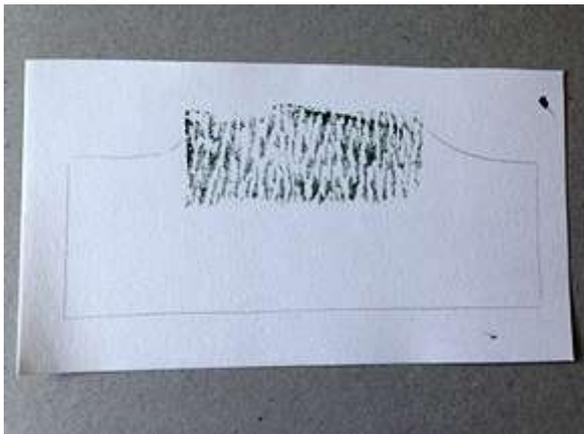
To Make the Front Layer (1)

Make a printing block with a piece of Quickprint foam glued onto a block of wood. Using the template ensure that the width of your foam is the same as the width of the final stitch/print area (below left). With a blunt pencil, draw your design into the foam (below right).



Using acrylic paint in your choice of colour, use the block to print your design on the cartridge paper. I usually do a few and then choose the one which fits the best. Position your template in the appropriate place over your print and draw around it (below left).

With an embroidery foot on your machine and low tension, stitch several rows of close tall zigzag stitches to look like grass (below right). Using a scalpel cut a jagged edge along the top of the printed area



To Make the Next Layer (2)

On a new sheet of cartridge paper, draw around template 2. Mark the edges of the inner stitch/print area lightly with a pencil and paint a watercolour wash inside the pencil lines in a similar colour to the wool that you are going to use.



Once dry, rub out the pencil and spread a glue stick over the painted area to stick some wool lengths on top (below left). Allow a little time for the glue to set.

On your machine, again with the embroidery foot, stitch over the wool in wavy lines to add a variable texture and secure the wool in place. Finally, cut out the card making sure that you can't see it behind the wool on the top edge (below right).



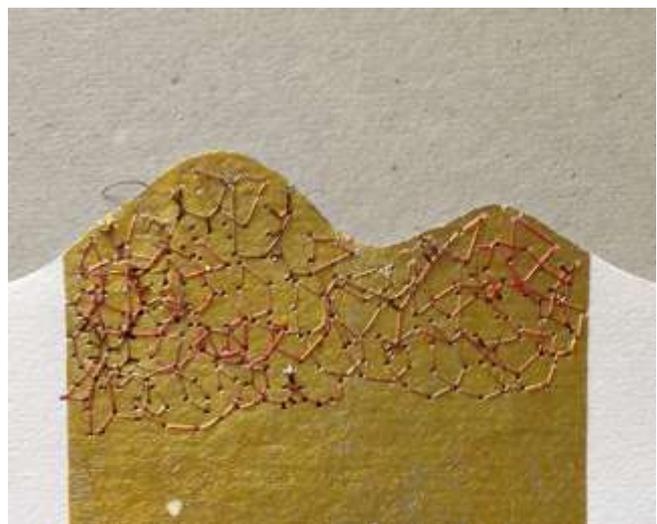
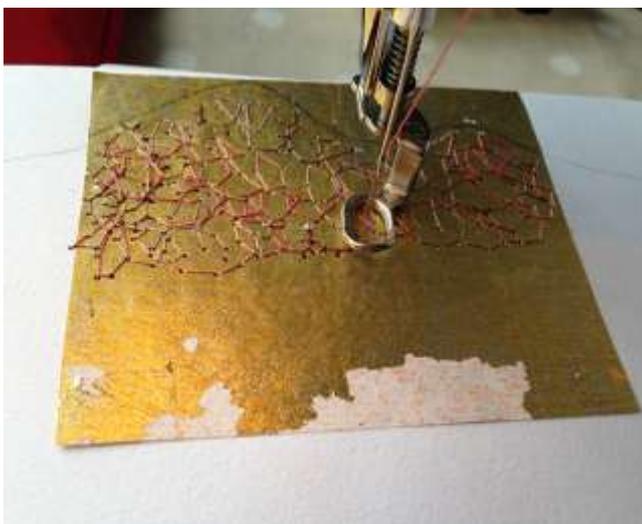
To Make the Next Layer (3)

Using the template for layer 3 cut out the cartridge paper in the required overall shape but **leave the shaped edge straight** as it will be trimmed later.

Select an appropriate piece of interesting paper to use as a background and cut it to fit the stitch/print area, leaving the top edge for trimming later. Glue in place onto the cartridge paper and mark where your shaped top edge should be with a pencil.



With the embroidery foot, create a random stitch pattern on the machine with a contrasting colour thread and stitch the area that will be seen making sure that you avoid going over the pencil line on the top edge. Cut along your pencil line to finish this layer.



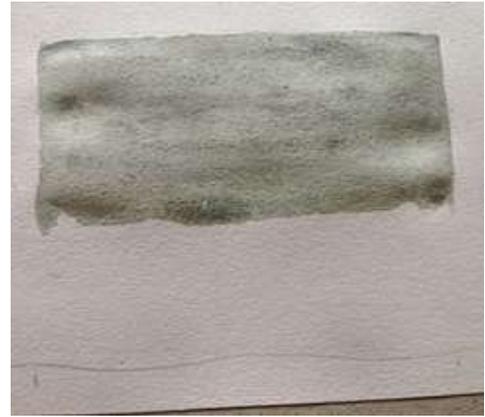
To Make the Top Layer (4)

Cut out the cartridge paper using the template and lightly mark in pencil where the stitch/print area should be.

Decide which colour sky would suit your landscape and paint a wash within the pencil lines and leave to dry. Rub out any visible pencil lines.

Assembling the Layers

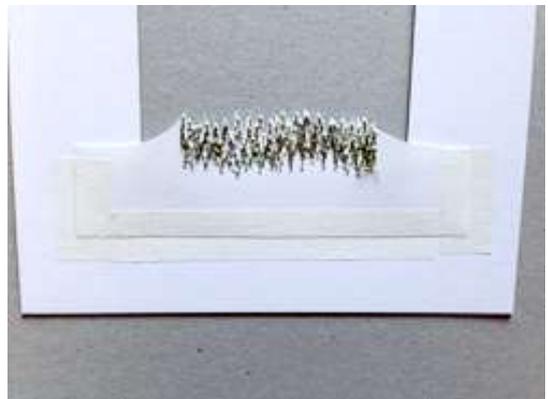
Group all of the layers together (below right) and use the mount card to check you have the correct position for each layer (below left).



Tape layer 1 to the **back** of the mount card in the appropriate place using masking tape (right).

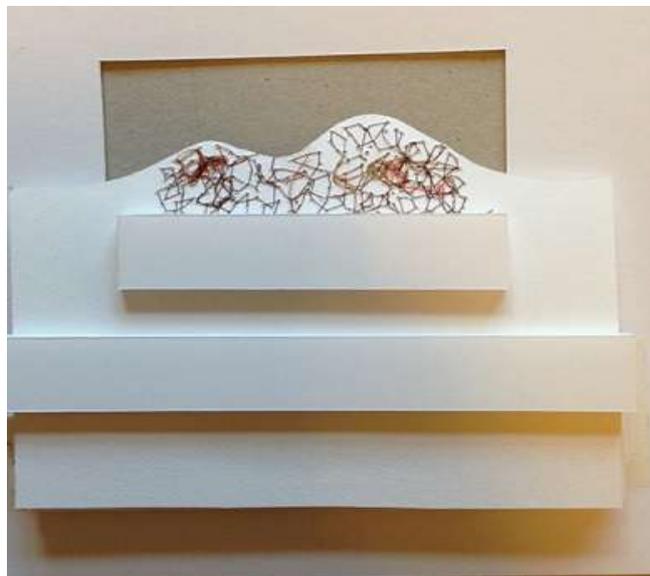
Cut the 5mm foamboard into several 1 in (2.5 cm) strips no longer than the width of the layers.

Glue one strip of foamboard to the back of layer 1, making sure that it is not too near the shaped edge or it will be seen in the finished piece. See below right.



Now stick layer 2 on top and again glue foamboard pieces to the back taking care with their placement then do the same again with layer 3. See pics below.

Before gluing the final layer, cut three $\frac{3}{4}$ in (1.5 cm) wide strips out of foamboard (these will be supporting the gap between the mount board and the back layer). One strip should be cut to the length of the top edge of layer 4. The other two strips need to be the side length of the assembled layers.



Glue layer 4 into place on the back of the other layers whilst also attaching the 15mm strip at the top between the mount board and the card. This is affixed at right angles to the layers to box them in and create a neat finish. Use masking tape to secure it all in place onto the mount card. Glue and tape the other $\frac{3}{4}$ in (1.5 cm) strips either side of the piece to enclose everything and prevent any gaps being seen in the finished piece. There does not need to be a strip at the bottom as there will be no gaps there.



To finish this piece, I have drawn a couple of birds in the sky and added a wire tree to complete the composition. The tree can be made quite simply by cutting 5 short lengths of wire, making one length a little longer than the others. Use the longer piece to twist around the others half way down their length. Shape the wire branches and trim as necessary. You should be able to push the tree between the layers into some of the backing foamboard, or you may prefer to glue gun it at the back too. Your piece is now ready to frame.



You can try lots of different variations of colour and media to achieve different landscape looks. Sometimes I knit wire bushes on larger pieces to help balance the composition or I may glue small glass beads on silk sari ribbons to add more texture. More pics on Facebook.



Juliette Orton is a mixed media artist living in South Buckinghamshire, England.

She has a BA in 3D Design; a background in silversmithing & jewellery and extensive experience as a Product Design and Textiles teacher.

She exhibits regularly and is about to take part in Bucks Open Studios which runs from 7th – 22nd June.

Further details of this and other forthcoming events can be found on her website

www.julietteodesigns.co.uk

