

Developed with Sara Shearman-Huther
Louisiana
Grade 9 and up

Quilling Self-Portraits

A Unit on Intricate Paper Filigree
Inspired by Yulia Brodskaya

Time Required

15 days (54-minute class periods)

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Draw an enlarged self-portrait using a grid.
- Demonstrate skills using a precision knife to cut paper strips for quilling.
- Fold and roll paper strips to create tight quills.
- Create tints, tones, and shades by folding paper to create blended colours.
- Create form by gluing paper on its end to follow the planar structure of facial features.
- Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.
- Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.
- Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.
- Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.



Overview

During a three-week unit of study, students will learn about the intricate art of folding paper to create quills which will be used like Impressionistic brush strokes to “paint” a self-portrait.

Day 1

1. Start the unit by introducing students to the works of Yulia Brodskaya. Brodskaya’s works are a stunning example of how simple materials can be elevated to an exquisite art form. Have them watch the *Amazing Paper Quilling Art* video. The video was produced by My Modern Met and introduces Brodskaya and her contemporary style of quilling. Following the video, utilize Yulia Brodskaya’s website to research her work. Pay special attention to how she uses two or more colours in a single, folded quill to create blended colours and tones.

2. Demonstrate cutting strips of paper for your students. Be sure to use a cutting mat, a metal ruler, and a precision knife. Demonstrate measuring the strips of paper using the marks on the cutting mat to create uniformity. The strips should be either 5 mm (0.5 cm) or 7 mm (0.7 cm). Most students use 5 mm because it is easier to measure. As you demonstrate, be sure to discuss cutting safety: use a metal ruler with cork backing, firmly hold the ruler with two fingers using the non-dominant hand, keep the supportive hand out of the path of the blade, cut on the same side of the ruler as the hand you’re using, and make a smooth pass with the blade using medium pressure.

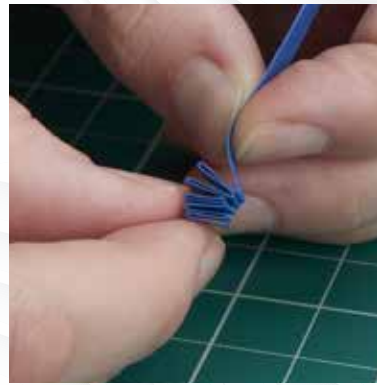
3. Next, demonstrate how to create quills. There are four different techniques you should demonstrate:

- An accordion or zig-zag fold
 - Fold a small tab on the strip
 - Flip it over and crease it the same size as the first tab
 - Continue flipping and creasing until the strip is used
- Fold the strip in half, then in half again, and so on, until the desired size is reached
- Fold a small tab, then fold it over and around itself until the whole strip is used. This is similar to rolling the paper, but creasing it over the tab each time.
- Rolling a coil using a quilling needle
 - Insert one end of the strip into the quilling needle, surround the needle tip with your pincher fingers, and twist the needle repeatedly until the whole strip is coiled
 - You can keep the roll tightly coiled or let it expand between your fingers for a loose coil, then squish the coil to a flat oval
 - If you don’t have quilling needles, a bobby pin will work

NOTE: Each quill can be secured with a dot of glue once complete, but does not have to be.

4. Have students practice using a cutting mat, a metal ruler, and a precision knife to cut five uniform strips of paper. Once all strips are cut, they should practice each of the quilling techniques, including both versions of the fourth technique. They should keep each example in their folder for reference for when it’s time to quill their portrait.

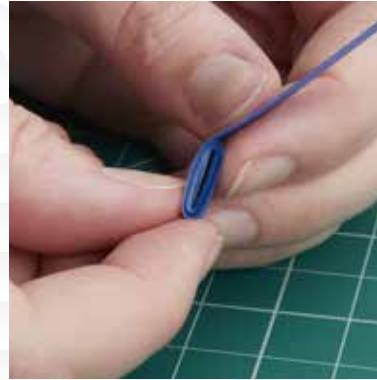
5. Homework — Have students bring in a 5" x 7" photo of themselves. Their face and head should occupy the entire 5" x 7" space — limit negative space, neck, and hair so the face and features are the focal point. If a student forgets to bring a photo or doesn’t have one from home, you can take a photo of that student and print it. Having students bring a photo makes it more likely that a variety of facial expressions will be displayed instead of having the entire class pose for on-the-spot photos.



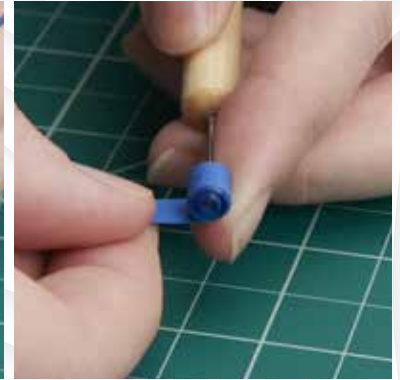
Accordion/Zig-Zag



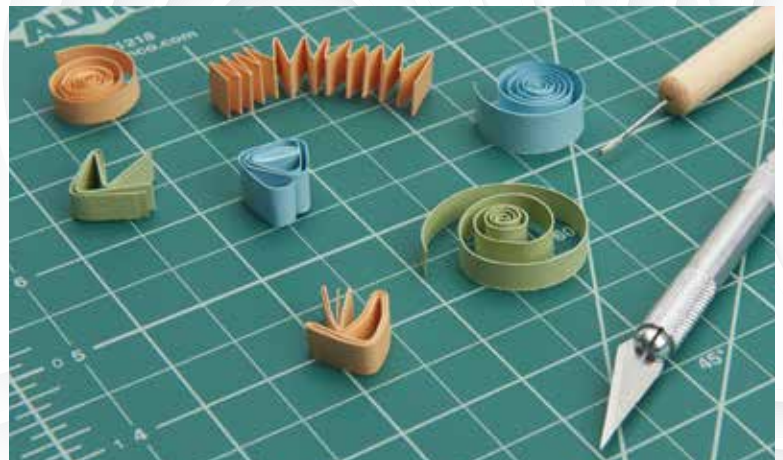
Fold in Half



Fold Over Tab

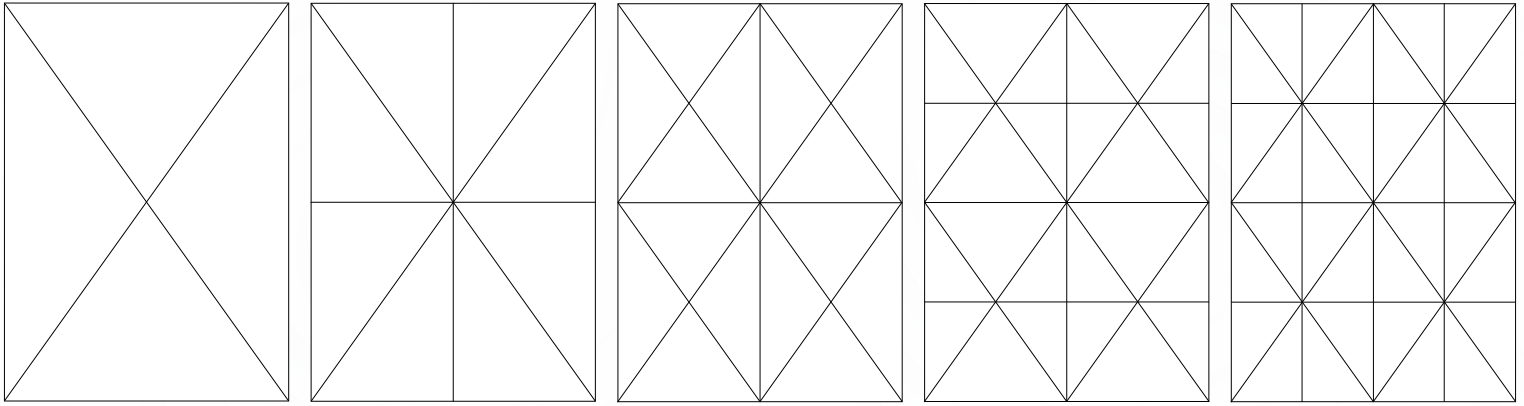


Roll Using Needle



Day 2 and 3

1. Briefly review drawing a portrait using a grid. This is a skill students should have had some experience with. Have them draw using a proportion grid rather than a square grid. To do this, they will draw an X across the 5" x 7" photo, draw a vertical and horizontal intersecting line through the center of the X, draw a diamond where the intersecting lines meet the edge of the photo, draw two horizontal lines and two vertical lines through the "mini" x.



2. Repeat the above steps on the 11" x 15" watercolour paper in pencil, which will be used as the backing for gluing the quills.

3. Students should look at what is in each space of the grid on their photo and draw in pencil what they see in the corresponding space on their watercolour paper. They will do this just as if they were drawing a portrait using a square grid. Setting up the grid and drawing the portrait will take all of Day 2 and most of Day 3 to complete.

4. Once students finish drawing their portrait, they should have you approve it for accuracy.

5. Once it is approved, students can trace the line drawing of the portrait in Sharpie® and erase all pencil marks — including the grid.



Days 4-6

1. Students should use the cutting mat, metal ruler, and precision knife to cut two sheets of black construction paper into 5 mm or 7 mm strips (their choice).

2. Once all the strips have been cut, glue together three strips of paper one on top of the other so the strips are in a stack. Use just a few dots of glue down the length of the strip — enough to make it stick, but not so much that the strip becomes wet. This will form a strip of black paper that is three times the thickness of a single sheet of construction paper.

3. Use the glue to trace a thin line along a part of the portrait line drawing. Then, standing on its end, glue the thick strip of black paper along the line. Be sure to bend and contour the paper to the exact curve of the line drawing. Trace the entire portrait using thick strips of black paper glued on their ends. This step ensures that the portrait will retain the detail of facial features as the quilled paper is glued in the space. Be sure to include directional locks in the hair so the hair is also dimensional.

4. This portion of the project is where everyone stops working at the same pace. It will take 1-3 class periods to accomplish, depending on the individual level of each student.



Days 7-15

NOTE: The rest of the instructions are not intended to be completed on any certain day since students will be working at their own pace. You may want to print out these steps for students so they have them as a reference as they work. You may also want to show one of Yulia Brodskaya's works on the projector as an example so they have some direction when blending colours to create the tones. When the entire project is complete, congratulate yourself and your students, because this is a project that requires endurance and drive to see it through to the end.

- Once the entire portrait is outlined in the thick black strips of paper, it's time to choose colours. Follow these guidelines when selecting colours:
 - Pick **at least** three colours for the skin. The three colours should come across as a highlight, midtone, and shadow so the skin appears to have value and not look flat. The colours can be realistic or unrealistic. If they are unrealistic, the colours do not have to be analogous.
 - Pick **at least** three colours for the hair. These colours must be different from the three colours used in the skin. The hair colours don't have to contrast the skin colours necessarily, nor do they have to be complements from the colour wheel.
 - You are encouraged to use **more than** three colours for both the skin and hair, but it's not necessary.
- After choosing colours, cut all the paper into 5 mm or 7 mm strips. The same measurement should be used for this step as used for the black strips.
- Once the paper is cut, it's time to start quilling.
 - Use one, some, or all of the quilling techniques — it's up to you.
 - If mixing techniques, have a plan. Gluing some techniques all in a row will make the face come across as flat rather than a form.
 - It is helpful, but not mandatory, to use a dot of glue at the end of each quill to ensure that it keeps its shape.
 - Quill two or three strips of paper together at a time so it creates a thicker quill to glue to the portrait. This will occupy more space. Avoid using more than three strips as they will create holes and show gaps of white paper.
 - Use two or three colours in each quill so the colours blend to create tones.
 - Put glue on the portrait, on the quill, and on the sides of the surrounding quills so everything is secure and won't fall out after drying.
 - Pack the quills tight against each other as they are glued to the portrait so the white of the paper doesn't show through.
 - Glue quills to the paper with planar structure in mind to give the portrait one last bit of form.
- Work on the skin first. Begin with the highlights on the face, blend into the midtones, and blend into the shadows. Don't forget the neck. If it's visible, it must be included so the portrait isn't a floating head.
- Next, work on the hair following the same order. Begin with the highlights in the hair, blend into the midtones, and blend into the shadows. Make sure the planar structure of the hair follows the directional flow of the locks.
- Finally, work on the features: eyes, nose, mouth, and ears (if they are visible). Be sure to include appropriate anatomy in the eyes and mouth. The white of the paper is not enough for the whites of the eyes and teeth. If left empty, these places look incomplete or like a hole because that surface isn't flush with the rest of the quilled portrait.

Materials List

- Large Self-Healing Mat with Grids—[214406](#)
- Nasco No. 1 Precision Knife with No. 11 Blade — [4100418](#)
- Array® Card Stock Hot Hyper® Colours, pkg. of 100, 8½" x 11", 65 lb. — [9710767](#)
- Array® Card Stock Pastel Colours, pkg. of 100, 8½" x 11", 65 lb. — [9717661](#)
- Tru-Ray® Fade Resistant Construction [9708564AR](#) - 50 Sheets, 12" x 18" - Assorted
- Pacon® Multicultural Construction Paper, pkg. of 50, 9" x 12" — [9710471](#)
- Bright Paper, 96 sheets, 8½" x 11" — [9731898](#)
- Aleene's® Turbo Tacky Glue™ - 4 oz.—[9731479](#)
- Canson® XL® Watercolour Pad, 30 sheets, 11" x 15", 140 lb. — [9734676](#)
- Richeson® Quilling Tools, pkg. of 12 — [9716632](#)
- *Amazing Paper Quilling Art* video — view on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oZhEIoH_I8
- *Painting with Paper: Paper on the Edge* book by Yulia Brodskaya
- Yulia Brodskaya's website — <https://www.artyulia.co.uk>



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Revised January 2022