



Abstraction: Sarah Altee & Susan R. Michael

FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 22

Craft Kit #31

Log Cabin
Quilt Block

108

CONTEMPORARY

Art. Craft. Design.

About the Artist: Sarah Atlee



- Sarah focuses on working with used or discarded fabrics. She uses quilting to help reduce landfill waste.
- Sarah wants to connect the craft practices of the past with being self-sufficient in today's "consumer culture." How does her use of discarded fabrics serve her purpose?
- Sarah has a background in painting. She painted both abstract and realist art.

About the Artist: Susan R. Michael



- Susan spent many years making and teaching traditional quilting.
- When Susan starts a quilt, she first uses leftover scraps from a previous quilt. How might this affect or connect her work as a whole?
- She enjoys balancing the ratio of small scraps with large pieces. Susan wants to challenge the traditional focus on symmetry in quilting.

What is a quilt, exactly?

Unlike blankets, quilts have three layers: the quilt top, the batting, and the backing fabric. The quilt top is the most decorative layer. The batting makes the finished quilt warm, but must be thin enough that a needle can easily reach through it. The three layers are sewn or tied together. Many quilters created designs with their stitches to accentuate the decorative top, which was very time-consuming! Quilters today frequently choose to quilt with a sewing machine to hasten the process. If a quilt is tied together the three layers must be stretched over a large frame first. Can you imagine why?

Historically, quilts were often made from recycled textiles. Quilters would use scraps, old garments, and worn linens in order to save money and make the most use of what they had in their homes. Therefore, many traditional quilts have a patchwork appearance of mixed prints, patterns, and even different kinds of fabric. Modern quilters might use old textiles to make their quilts, too. However, most choose to buy new fabric. What are some pros and cons to making a quilt from new fabric?

Let's talk about quilt tops!

Creating a quilt top involves cutting fabric into smaller pieces, arranging them in a pattern, and sewing them together. Sewing in straight lines is the easiest way to join two fabrics together, which means that most quilts are made of straight-edged shapes. In order to hide raw edges (and to make the quilt last longer), quilters have to cut each piece slightly larger than the shape they plan to sew. However, they plan carefully so that they don't waste fabric. Quilters use a lot of math, especially geometry!

The most common method of creating a quilt top is to sew multiple small "quilt blocks," sewing the blocks together to form a large, symmetric, repeating pattern, and then adding a border around the combined blocks. Many traditional quilt block patterns have names such as Log Cabin, Star, Bear Paw, Flying Geese, and Nine Patch. Quilt designers today often based their quilt blocks on these traditional patterns, finding new and unique ways to combine or change the basic shapes.

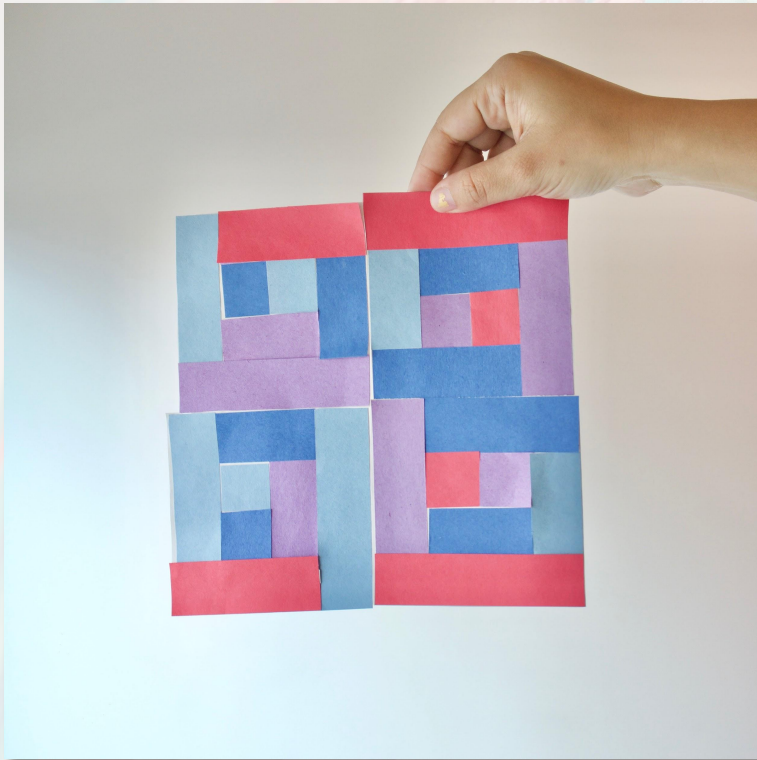
How are the quilts on exhibition contemporary craft?

Many of the elements are the same, such as creating a larger whole from many smaller pieces and the presence of three layers. However, both Sarah Atlee and Susan R. Michael deviate from traditional quilting by applying modern art concepts to their process.

- Sarah practices “improv quilting.” Improv quilting involves sewing traditional patterns without measuring pieces, combining blocks without planning how the finished quilt will appear, and focusing on an intention instead of perfection.
- Susan combines the principles of improv quilting with collage. She wants her quilts to have the appearance of brushwork rather than patchwork.

These approaches require an understanding of traditional quilting techniques. Improvising and collaging quilts can be as unique to the maker as a signature!

Log Cabin Quilt Block Step-by-Step Instructions



Both Sarah Atlee and Susan R. Michael use elements of a traditional quilt pattern called the “Log Cabin” in their work. Let’s learn how to create our own log cabin blocks with construction paper. We’ll then combine 4 log cabin blocks to make one larger piece, like quilters do!

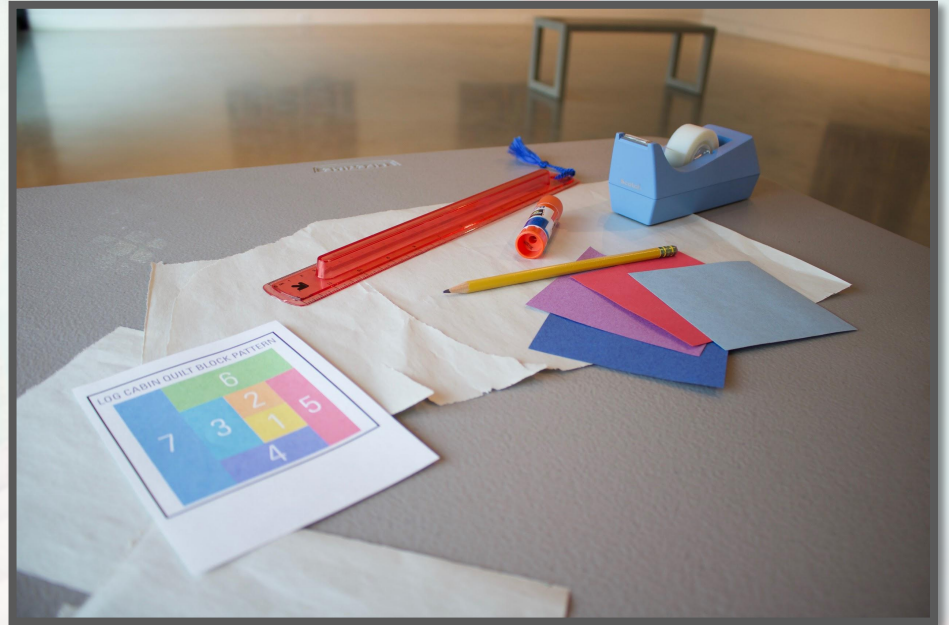
Materials

In your craft kit you'll find:

- 4 squares of construction paper
- 1 Log Cabin pattern
- 1 Instruction sheet

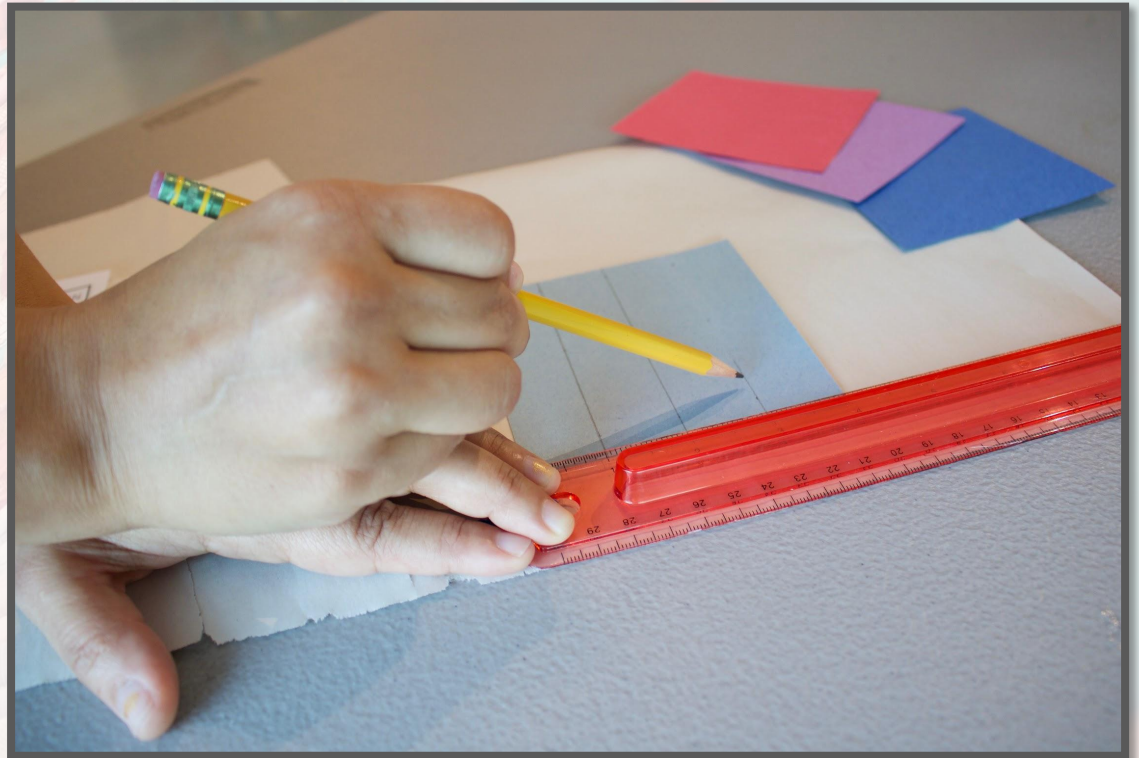
You'll need:

- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scrap paper to use as a base
- Glue
- Tape



Step One

Measure, mark, and cut all construction paper into 4 strips 1 inch wide.



Step Two

Determine which colors to use with each block of the pattern.

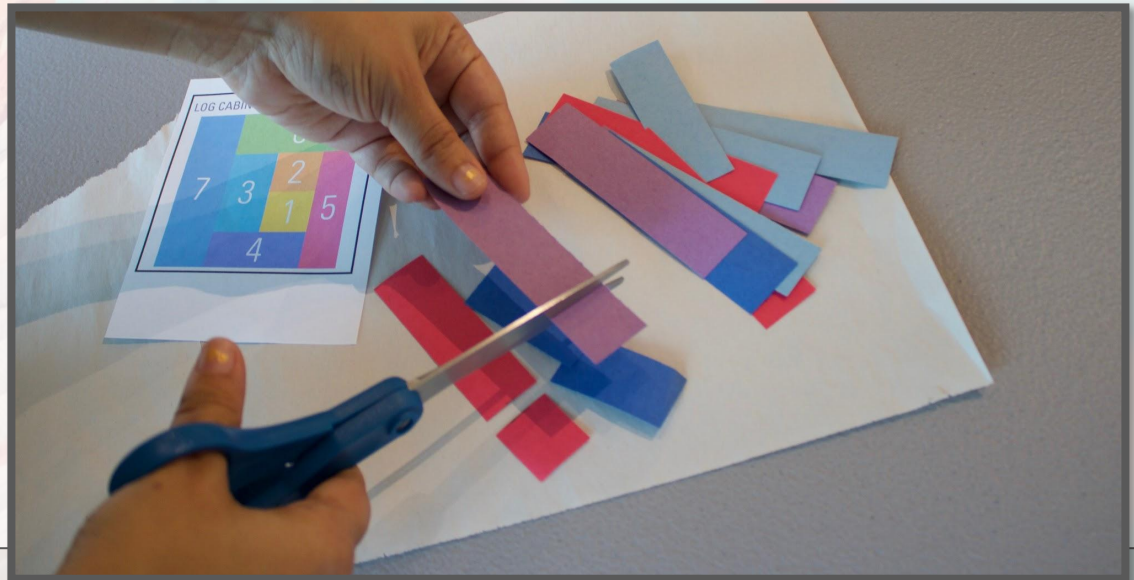
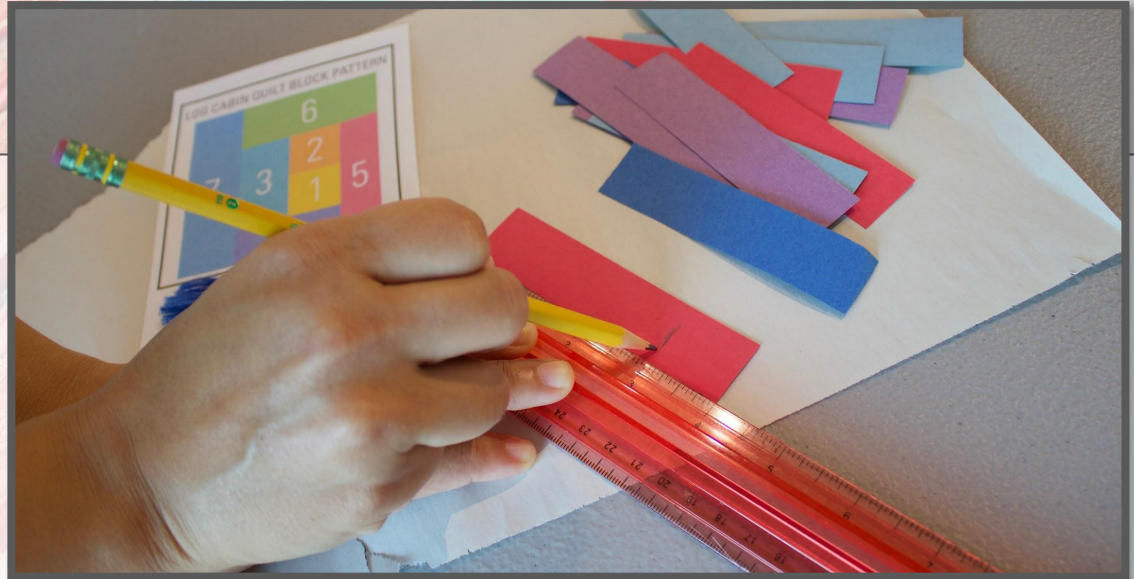


Step Three

From your strips of paper, mark and cut the following lengths to make the building blocks of your log cabin pattern:

- 2 strips 3 inches long
- 2 strips 2 inches long
- 2 squares 1 inch long

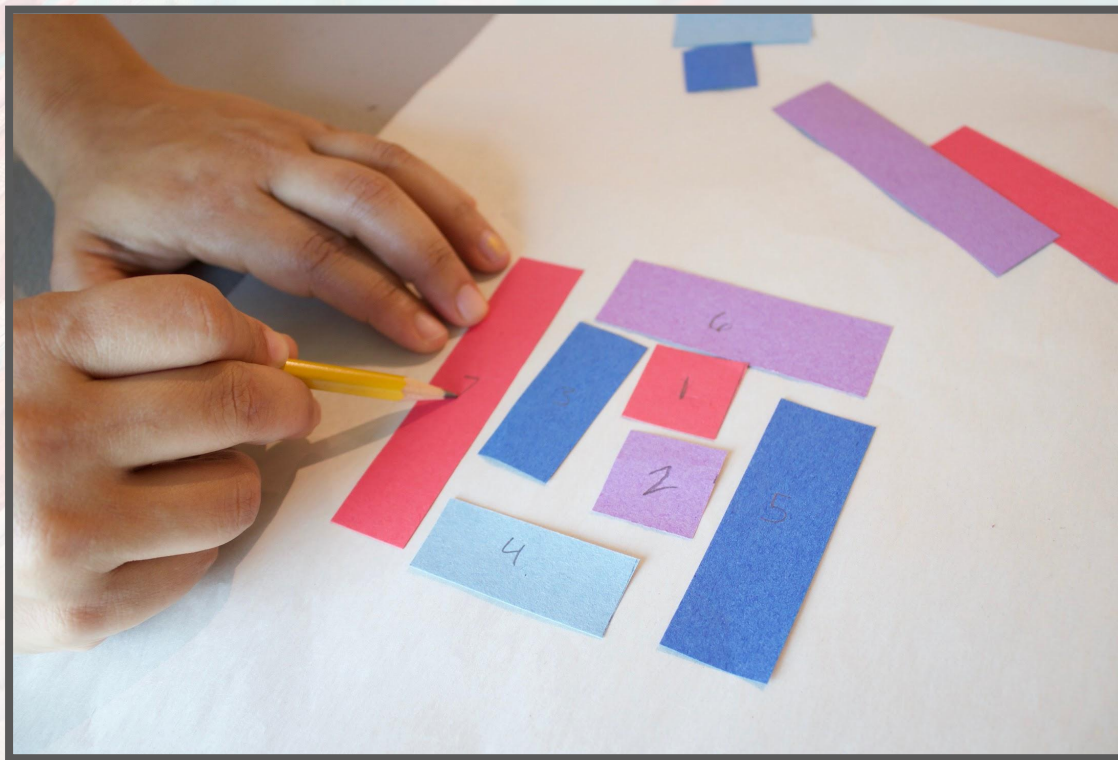
You'll use one of your 4-inch strips as the last piece in your block.



Step Four

Using the Log Cabin Quilt Block Pattern as your guide, arrange your pattern pieces into a block. Use your squares to start from the center and work your way out.

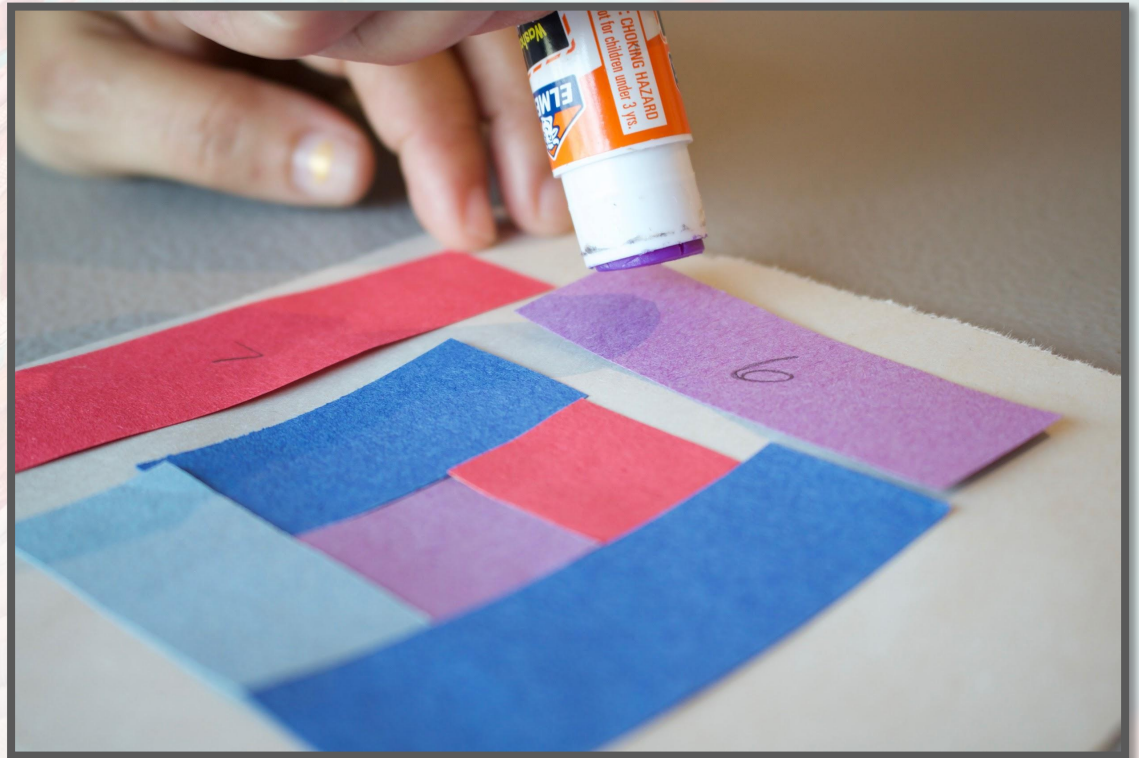
We used a pencil to number each pattern piece.



Step Five

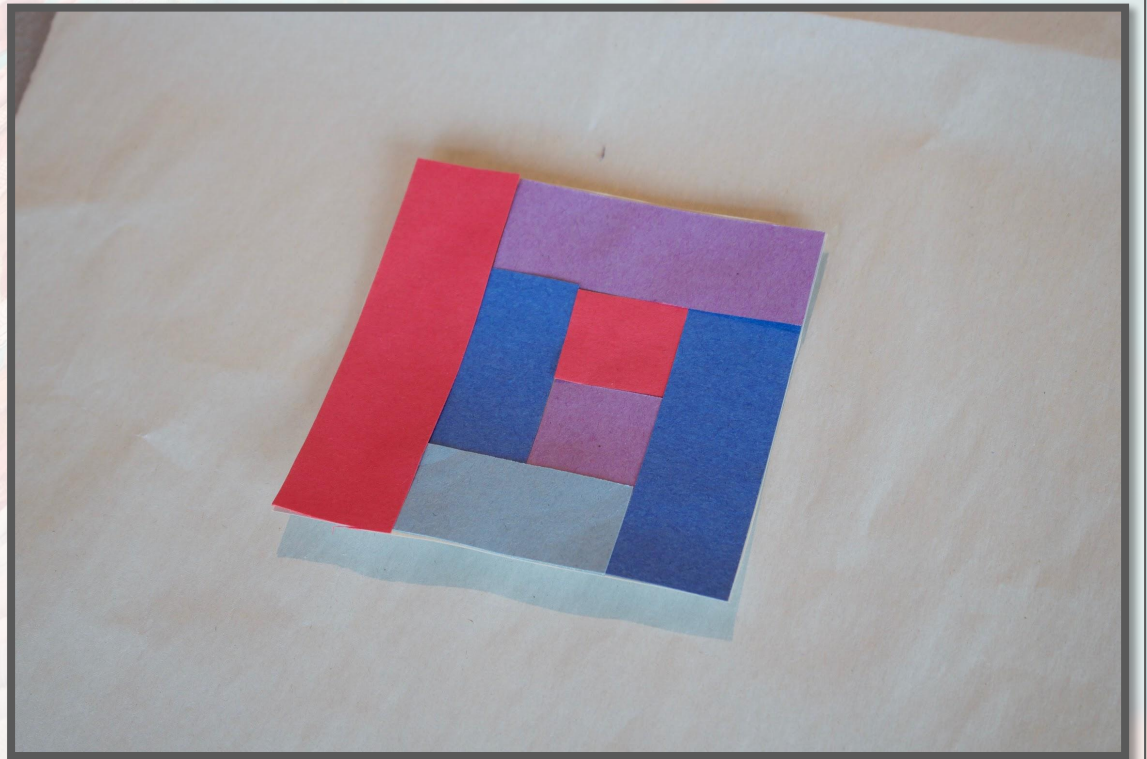
Glue your pieces to the scrap paper to create your first Log Cabin block.

(We applied glue to the side we numbered.)



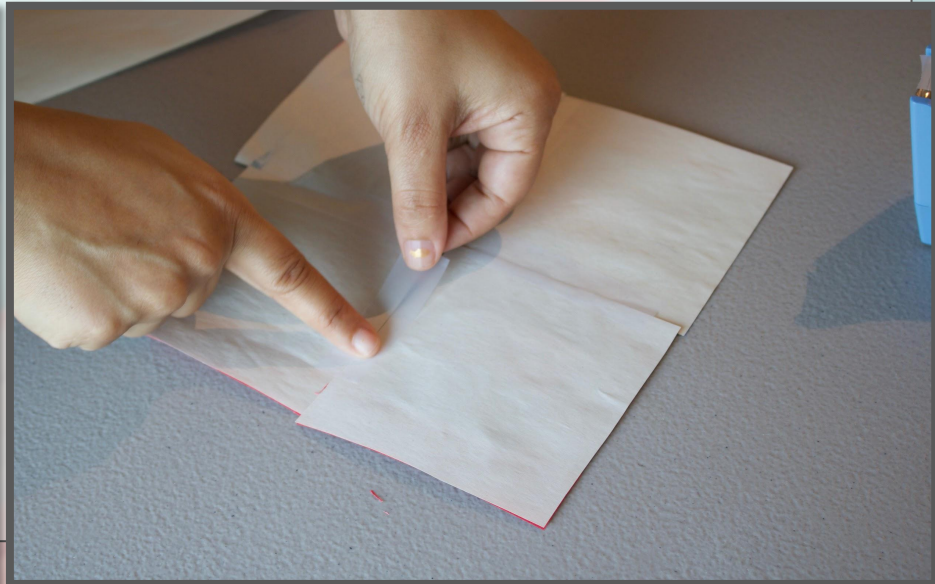
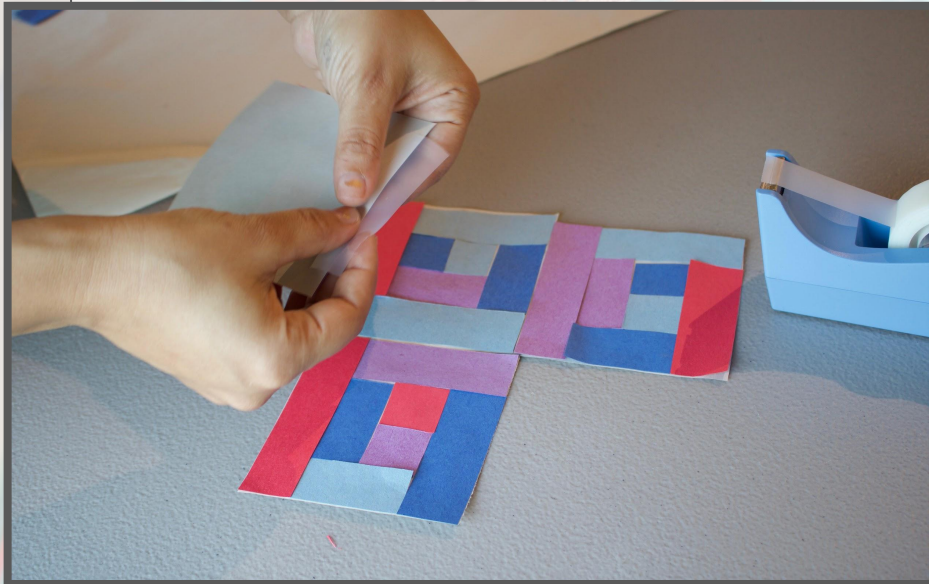
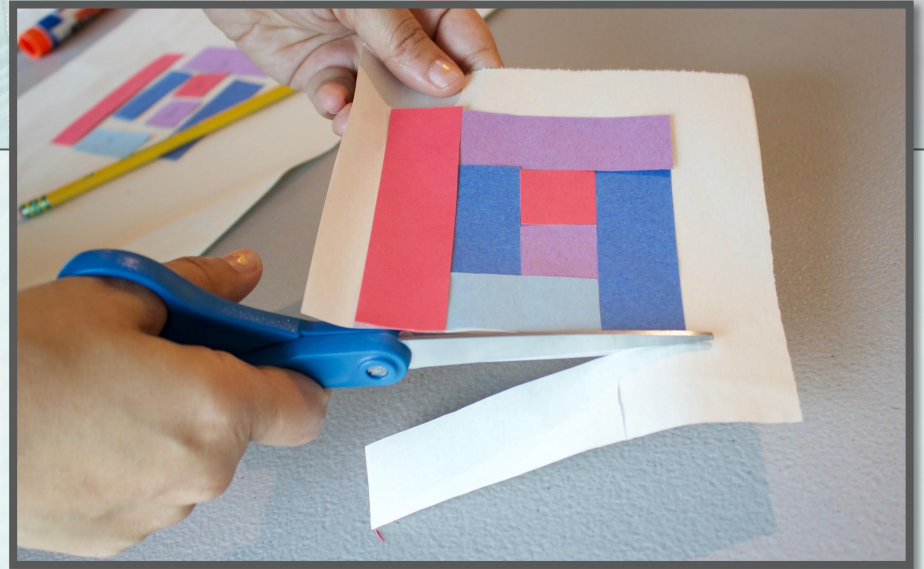
Step Six

Repeat steps 3-5 with your remaining 4-inch strips to create three more quilt blocks.



Step Seven

Cut each quilt block out of the scrap paper. Tape the edges together to make a large square.

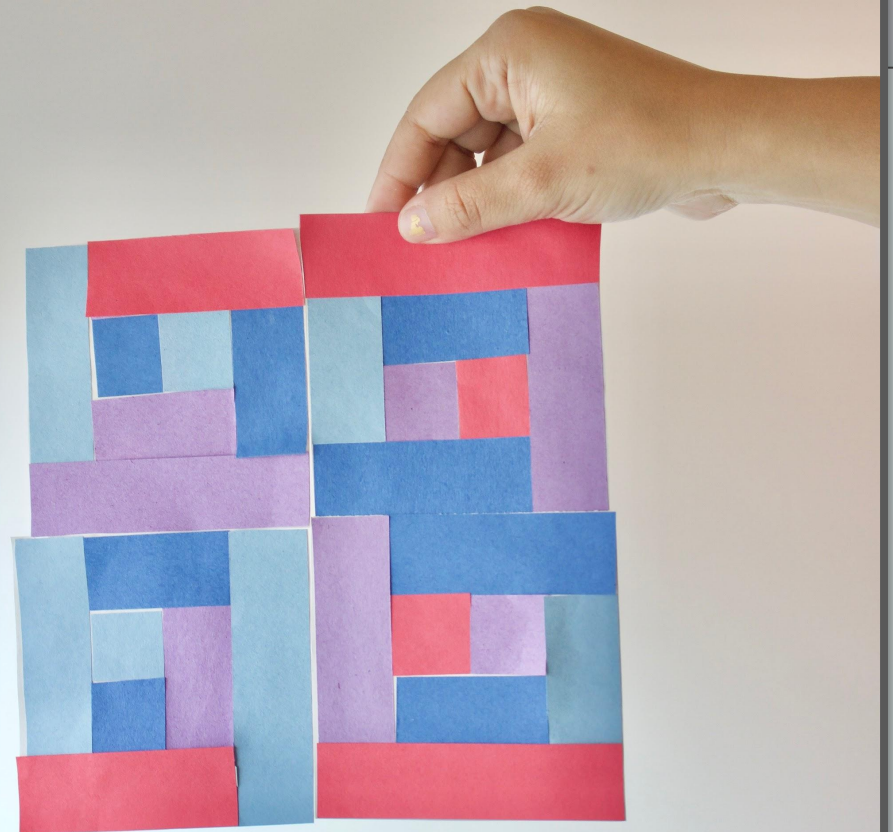


Step Eight

Share your creations with the @108_Contemporary Instagram with the hashtag #108craftkits!

Option 1: Create your own quilt design! After Step 3, try putting your pattern pieces together in a different arrangement. How many ways can you make a quilt block?

Option 2: Use fabric scraps instead of construction paper. What changes when



Other Resources

- Visit [108 Contemporary.org](http://108Contemporary.org) for more information about the exhibition.
- Visit Sarah Atlee's website <https://www.sarahatlee.com/>
- Visit Susan R. Michael's website <http://smittyandjunebug.com/>
- View traditional log cabin quilt blocks in modern quilts
[All People Quilt Log Cabin Slideshow](#)