Lois Ehlert: Mess to Masterpiece
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Look at all these books. Lois Ehlert wrote every one of them. She made up all the stories, and she created all the pictures, too. When you read Lois’s books, the bright colors seem to jump right off the page.
When Lois was just a little girl, she loved to make art. So her parents gave her a table where she could work. They put colored paper, scraps of cloth, scissors, and paste on the table. That was Lois’s special place to make anything she wanted.

Lois when she was a little girl

Lois worked on a table that looked like this one in the living room of her house.
Lois liked to cut up pieces of paper and cloth and put them together to make pictures. Lots of scraps piled up in the wastebasket and on the floor, too. Lois made a big mess when she worked at her table. But her parents didn’t mind.

Some artists draw or paint pictures. Lois creates her pictures out of scraps of paper and other materials. This way of making art is called **collage**.
When Lois was older, she left home to go to art school.
She took her table with her.
Lois kept making art,
and she kept making a mess.

Now that Lois is a famous artist,
she still makes a mess when she works.
Out of that mess grow orange and purple berries. A yellow butterfly flies onto the page. Birds come to life from bits of paper and cloth.

Lois gets ideas for her books just by looking around. Her garden gave her the idea for a book called Growing Vegetable Soup. Her sister's cat gave her the idea for a book called Top Cat.
Sometimes Lois uses real things in her art.
Forks and popcorn pop into her pictures.
A snow dad wears a hat made out of wool.
Colorful laces form the hair on a snow girl’s head.

snow people made out of cut paper and real objects, too
Lois Ehlert thinks everyone needs a place to make art and a place to make a mess. That’s why she has workshops for kids where they can be messy and make anything they want.

Kids go to Lois’s workshop and work at tables covered with art supplies. They make a mess, and they make art. Everyone has a great time!
If you like to make art,
Lois has something to tell you:
Find a place to work.
Don’t worry if you make a mess.
The mess doesn’t matter. The art does.
A mess can turn into a masterpiece!
Meet Lois Ehlert

Lois Ehlert is an award-winning author and illustrator. Her parents encouraged her to make art when she was a little girl. They gave her a special table where she could keep her supplies and make a mess if she wanted to. When she grew up, she continued to make collage art with brightly colored paper, fabric, and items that she had at hand.

Lois has written and illustrated many delightful, well-loved books for children. Her book *Color Zoo* won the Caldecott Honor award, which is given to an outstanding children’s book illustrator.
That's what Lois Ehlert did.
And now, she’s a famous artist.