Collage at Snow Farm alexandrasheldon.com

Cut samples of colors from magazines and put them on a white paper. You are creating a palette. Collect colors you like and are drawn to. Have a variety of darks, lights, pastels, jewel tones, neutrals, etc.

Choose 7-10 colors to mix. Using your sample swatches mix colors with acrylic paints. Add enough water to paints so that the paint has the consistency of light cream or tomato soup. As you are mixing, notice if you intuitively sense the need for other colors. Your palette can change and you can always mix more colors later.

Begin painting paper (basic white drawing paper) with brushes. Make a series of solid colors on 8”x11” papers. Try pouring a bead of paint at end of paper, then ‘pull’ paint with scraper (plastic scraper, found in hardware stores for spackling). Pour several colors and pull paint. Drip one color on paper, then pour a bead of a different color and pull paint across. Speckle page using a toothbrush, paint over that, and speckle again with a different color.

Paint a piece of paper. Let dry (5-10 minutes when the paint is thin). Paint a different color onto another paper and while it is wet, turn it over on to the dry paper. Peel off. This makes a cool print.

Begin to put painted papers up on the wall. Collages start on the wall sometimes!

Roll paint on paper with a rubber brayer (roller).

Take stencils and weird objects like ropes and scissors and trace them onto painted papers. Use markers and choose colors that feel right with your painted papers.

Keep putting stuff onto the wall. Make sure you leave some painted papers simple and solid—you will need them later.

Tape a greeting card (blank) to newspaper. Use painter’s (or ‘artist’s’) tape. Eyeball it to cover about 1/8 or ¼ inch of your card.

We will use ACRYLIC MATTE MEDIUM as the glue in this class. It is silky, transparent, and effective. It can protect the art from fading and it is durable. It will come off your hands and brushes in warm to hot H20 and soap and a scrubby sponge. Make sure to wear an apron as this medium (and all acrylics) will stain clothing.

Begin a quick collaged card using only your painted papers. Make sure you work INSIDE the tape—otherwise it is difficult to remove the tape! Make a piece in 15 minutes. Make another. For the third piece we didn’t use tape, instead we collage right over idiotic advertisements or ‘Flyers’ (announcements, art invitations, etc.).

 

taped piece brayer plastic scraper

Gluing Technique

Brush matte medium on Bristol card paper (Bristol paper is a heavy stock so it makes a nice foundation—any kind of Bristol will do.) Put cut paper down and brush medium over it. Scrape with plastic scraper. Put excess medium back into glue pot or wipe on newspaper. Keep scraping paper down, then wipe with sponge. For wrinkles and bubbles put some medium on your finger and rub. If you have large bubbles and wrinkles and the glue has dried underneath you can try ironing the piece with an iron (or a craft iron) or you can make a slice with an exacto blade and put more medium into the hole. And scraper again.

When gluing transparent and delicate papers (like sewing patterns and nice papers) you have to use the scraper with delicacy!

Paste Paper

I mixed up “Elmer’s” ART PASTE (methyl cellulose) and water and let it stand overnight. It is a clear jelly/paste.

Mix a dollop of paste with acrylic paint. Don’t use your watered down paints. Paint should be thick. Add 1 part paint to 3 parts paste. Stir. Brush onto a piece of paper making a nice even coat. Use various patterning tools to make patterns and textured pasted papers. These will dry in a few hours. Use the paste technique with some of the solid colors you made the day before (the papers).

Paste Papers are a beautiful touch to collage. They add texture, color and MOVEMENT.

Backgrounds

Tape a piece of Bristol paper down. Take a light painted paper and glue down. Add a few more painted papers. Now look through magazines and collect images, shapes or colors that look as if they might belong in your collage. Sit and relax and cut stuff out of magazines—put the things you cut out on a white piece of paper next to your collage.

Making art is sometimes a matter of starting something and then ‘following it’.

Glue only one or two magazine elements into your piece. Let dry about 5-7 minutes and then lightly sand the entire thing. You can use a light to medium grade sandpaper. Sponge dust off piece and then go over the collage with a wash of color.

Make a wash by watering down a color. I like bright colors for washes. The wash will go into all the sanded, raw areas and will pull the piece together. It will also make it look more than a background than a finished work. Now add a few touches of fresh painted papers and perhaps a magazine element.

If you have ‘washed’ the piece with a dark color you might want to use glowing colors, golds, silvers, etc. when you collage back in. Contrast works well with collage.

Work on several pieces at once. If you are stuck, put the piece up on the wall and let it breathe. Work on something else or go get tea or take a walk. Later, you might look up and say “Oh I know what that needs!”

Transfers

Tape down a white piece of Bristol paper. Brush with medium and put Face down a piece of newspaper or a page from a N.Y. Times Magazine or a catalog. (Glossy magazine paper does work but takes longer and sometimes doesn’t work.) Peel off after a minute or so. This technique takes TROUBLESHOOTING. Beautiful ‘prints’ can be made but more often its pieces of prints. If the paper gets glued down and peeling it off becomes a battle—that becomes the technique called “peeled paper”. From Claudine Hellmuth’s wonderful book “Collage Discovery Workshop”. Peel as much paper as you can, using a scraper or your fingernails, add wash of color—boom—a beautiful background.

Put wash of color over transfer prints (or ‘peeled paper’). Sewing patterns, architect’s blueprints or lines from the newspaper.

Add painted papers. Make a stamp with a wood block or cardboard. Find a shape in one of your trace drawings or painted papers. Using trace paper, trace the shape. Cut that out and trace shape onto foam (“sticky foam” from an art/craft store). Stick foam to block or cardboard. Let dry one hour. Brush stamp with white Gesso (Acrylic white paint with crushed chalk in it—Gesso has a nice texture to it but you can use any acrylic paint to stamp). Stamp into a collage. Then ‘glaze’ using a wash of color. (Gesso should be dry before you glaze it.)

Crackle (to use in collage)

Take a blank piece of paper and pour a glob of Elmer’s Glue on it. Smooth glue using a plastic scraper. While glue is wet brush one of your acrylic colors over glue. Acrylic paint much be somewhat liquid—like cream. The brush must be soft, otherwise it will not glide over the glue. Let dry. The glue and the paint dry at different speeds and a crackle will appear. This technique works well with CONTRAST—dark on light or …?

Leaf Prints (to use in collage)

Collect fresh leaves. Pat moisture off of them with paper towel. Brush acrylic paint onto a leaf. Paint should not be watered down. Put leaf face down on rice paper (or any paper). Put a square of newspaper over leaf and gently ‘burnish’ with your hand (rub). Carefully remove newspaper and the leaf. You will have a print. These prints are beautiful on sewing patterns or transparent rice papers.

‘Washes’ and ‘glazes’ of color are really the same thing. A wash of color is lovely over the gesso stamping. I use washes/glazes constantly in my collages.

Trace Paper Technique

Trace paper (or ‘Vellum’—a heavier trace paper I prefer because it doesn’t curl up). When you want to fit a piece of paper into a collage but you don’t want to eyeball it, you want to be more exact: put the trace paper over your collage. Draw the shape you want to add onto the trace paper using a pencil. Cut that shape out and trace it over your desired paper and cut that piece out. Voila, now you have your shape you can glue right into your piece. I like this technique because it gets me to slow down and be more meticulous (I tend to move too fast). It really adds a different feeling to the collages—a carefulness, an exactness, that I like.

For people who are very meticulous and exact, try the ‘timed’ card exercise: sit down with your stuff around you, or even just a stack of magazines, and make a card in 10 minutes. Set as a goal: 4 cards in 1 hour. This forces you out of your comfort zone. Just as the trace paper technique forces us speedy ones to slow down a bit. It’s good to challenge yourself to do things that you wouldn’t ordinarily think of.

MAKE COLLAGES (Taped or not taped) USING:

\*Painted Papers

Leaf Prints

Washes & Glazes

Sewing Patterns

Drawings & Tracings

Transfer Prints

Peeled Paper

Trace Paper method

Crackle

Stamps (with Gesso or Paint)

Magazine Elements

Stuff from Old Books

Musical Scores

Maps

Thread/Stitches/Sewing

Toothbrush Speckles

Drawing with colored Pencils

Xeroxes

Old Photographs

Handwriting

Printmaking

Attention to:

Composition

Edges

Movement

Color

light contrast

Suggested Reading: Artists to Look At:

If You Want to Write by Brenda Veland Romare Beardon

The Artists Way by Julia Cameron Joseph Cornell

Effortless Mastery by Kenny Werner Fred Otnes

The Creative Habit by Twyla Tharpe Hannah Hoch

Art & Fear by Ted Orland & David Bayles Nick Bantock (Griffin & Sabine)

Robert Motherwell

Collage Notes

Good methods in Finishing Pieces:

Work on several pieces at once so that when you get stuck you can let a piece rest on the wall. Or take a walk. Drink water. Take a break.

Ask yourself: Is there light? Movement? Story, atmosphere, color, line, texture?

What is missing? If light is missing, can you put it in? If the piece is static, how can you add movement? Making art is problem-solving.

These are things that help me finish collages:

1. Having a deadline when I have a show or a deadline I am inspired to work a lot and do my best.
2. I set goals for working in my studio as much as I can. 4-5 hours a day for 3-5 days a week will get me thru any blocks. I know people who work every day for 20 minutes. Any consistent work ethic helps. Try to think like a musician or dancer: spend time warming up, practicing, putting in some time.
3. Working in a series helps me to be productive, usually a series the same size.
4. I put things up on the wall. The piece often will tell me when it is done. It is often when I like it.
5. It is helpful to come in fresh the next day and see the work anew. A voice might tell me the left corner is weak, it needs something. Or: the whole collage is too washed out, I need something vibrant, etc.

We are working in an intuitive way and this can be simultaneously easy and very difficult. When it gets hard, try:

1. Using time: Say—okay I will just work for 2 more hours in my studio. I will listen to music and keep my hands moving. I will banish all critical thought. I will try to have fun. I will do whatever I want to.
2. Make cards. Cards are excellent “lighten-uppers”. Make color-study cards and send them to friends the same day. Sometimes I cut colors and shapes from magazines to relax. Or I paint lines and shapes on my painted papers. Sometimes I sit and look at art books. Relax. Breathe. Drink water. Stretch.

Additional Notes AlexandraSheldon.com

Basic Colors to have on hand in Acrylics

Raw Umber, Burnt Umber, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Yellow Ochre, Cad Yellow Med., Cad Yellow Light, Alizarin Crimson, Magenta, Cad red, Pthalo Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Cobalt Blue, Cerulean Blue, Pthalo Green, Hookers Green, Payne’s Grey, White, Black.

Great Glazes/Washes to mix

Burnt Sienna and Anything (Pthalo Blue, Alizarin Crimson, Cad Yellow, Pthalo Green, etc.)

Any Blue and Black makes a nice dark indigo.

Any White mixed with tiny amounts of any colors makes nice white washes.

Cad Yellow & Alizarin Crimson makes a honey-glow wash.

Pthalo Blue & Pthalo Green make a nice turquoise wash/glaze.

Try many combinations. Experiment.

Acrylic Matte Medium used as glue.

Acrylic Matte Gel used as fake encaustic (add a drop of yellow paint to look like wax).

Elmer’s Glue for crackle effect.

Tape Pieces (Tape Drawings)

With Painter’s (or artist’s) Tape, make a ‘drawing’ on Bristol Paper. Brush with Matte Medium (to seal edges). Let dry. Peel off tape and wash/glaze piece with a color. This is a nice background to work into. These can be beautiful drawings just as they are. Experiment with layers of tape and making plain colors (different washes of colors; taking off or adding new layers of tape).

Silly Cards

Tape down a card and make a silly card. This is good for lightening up and putting things in perspective.

Use Stencils (great for texture)

Make your own stencils by cutting shapes in Bristol Paper. Or use store bought. Lay stencil down on paper (or collage. Brush a generous amount of Gesso or white paint (thick, not watered down), then smooth paint over stencil with plastic scraper. Lift stencil. Let dry. Glaze.