Experiment. Be Creative. Have fun…
You’re a collage artist!

From basic methods to the latest innovations, this guide illustrates more than 60 exciting collage projects complete with detailed instruction, quick tips, charts and glossaries. In addition, seven start-to-finish demonstrations show you how to use these techniques to create your own stunning work. You’ll create:

- Fantastic found-paper collages formed from items right within your reach
- Compelling collage designs using decorative and ready-made papers
- Mixed-media collages combining acrylic, watercolor, rice paper and more
- Compositions featuring textured backgrounds made from paper, paint, natural objects and other collage materials
- Original paper (handmade by you) artfully arranged to form collages that are uniquely yours
- Collage that stands the test of time through the use of archival materials and techniques

Packed with diverse work from 60 featured artists, New Creative Collage Techniques will inspire you to push the potential of this limitless art form.
NEW CREATIVE COLLAGE TECHNIQUES
New Creative Collage Techniques

How to make original art using paper, color and texture

Nita Leland

NORTH LIGHT BOOKS
CINCINNATI, OHIO
www.artistsnetwork.com
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This book is dedicated in loving memory to Virginia Lee Williams, a talented artist, loyal friend and co-author of the original Creative Collage Techniques.

AND TO THE JEWELS OF THE SEA
Virginia Lee Williams
Torn papers, acrylic paint and iridescent plastic film, 26” × 35” (66cm × 89cm)

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Introduction

Come Ride With Me

Collage is like an amusement park with something for everyone, from dignified rounds on the carousel to wild ups and downs on the roller coaster. Anyone can do it, regardless of age or skill level. Non-intimidating to the beginner and challenging to the accomplished artist, collage offers exciting visual effects, spontaneity and creative expression.

Unlike painting and drawing mediums, where a stroke of the brush or pencil is a commitment, collage is a treasure hunt for just the right piece to fit a puzzle. Pieces can be shifted, added to, removed, glued down, covered over or torn off. Some artists say that a collage is never finished. It's easy and fun to freshen up an old collage.

This new version of the classic collage guide Creative Collage Techniques offers sixteen more pages, with updates on materials, new techniques, lots of exciting art and a whole new chapter on color.

Do you know how collages are made? I’ll share a brief history of how collage began centuries ago. Then I’ll help you make your own collages with simple materials you’ll find in your home. Trust me—you don’t need drawing or technical skills to begin. You’ll use found and ready-made papers first. Inside you’ll find doable collage projects, dozens of examples, demonstrations showing you how to use collage in your work and lots of ideas to stimulate your creativity and originality. Eventually, you’ll make your own richly colored papers and textured supports to use in original, fine art collages.

Many art critics called collage the most revolutionary artistic innovation of the twentieth century. In some ways collage is revolutionary and reactionary at the same time. Collage techniques range from simple craft creations based on centuries-old customs to innovative constructions made possible by modern technology.

Collage can be as simple or as complicated as you like. Anyone can do it. Take this fascinating medium as far as you want to go. Reach for the stars from the top of the Ferris wheel. Just turn the page—and hold on tight.
PART 1: About Collage
CHAPTER 1
What Is Collage?

Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque launched collage into the mainstream of art early in the twentieth century in Paris and popularized the term, based on the French word *coller*—"to glue." Today, the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines collage as "an artistic composition of materials and objects pasted over a surface, often with unifying lines and color." Anything glued or pasted onto a support might be interpreted as collage.

Collage probably existed before the invention of paper, certainly long before the technique was thought of as artistic. Many people today view collage as more craft than art, but the fine art of collage can be as formal, challenging and expressive as painting.

No special skill is required, so collage is an easy way to access your creativity. Techniques and materials range from pasting items found in every home, such as newspapers and greeting cards, to inventive arrangements of materials like personal diaries or religious artifacts that invite emotional and psychological interpretation. Subjects range from personal observations to social commentary, as well as artful design.

In this book we’ll begin with *papiers collés*—pasted papers—and add other materials by whim or by design. Most collage comprises ordinary materials, such as magazines, photos and fabric, arranged creatively. You’ve probably unwittingly made many collages. Have you ever cut and pasted black and orange construction paper for Halloween jack-o’-lanterns? Put together a scrapbook or photo album? These are collages. It’s a short step from these activities to the fine art of collage.

**EGYPTIAN PRINCESS** | Nita Leland
*Found paper collage on illustration board, 13" × 10" (33cm × 25cm)*

**CROW ATTITUDES 3**
Sharon Stolzenberger
*Acrylic and paper collage on canvas
6" × 6" (15cm × 15cm)*
*Collection of the artist*

Stolzenberger uses antique images, pages from old books and newspapers and handmade stamps to create bird-and animal-themed pieces that capture the viewer’s curiosity.
Here are some of the many collage techniques, terms and materials that we'll explore in this book. Much experimentation in collage took place in France, so some of the collage vocabulary has a distinctly French accent.

**acrylic skin**
thin, dried layer of acrylic paint or medium that can be applied to collage

**adhesives**
mediums used to attach collage materials to a support

**affiches lacerés**
(a-fish’ lah-ser-ay’) torn papers, posters and signs

**assemblage**
(ah-sem-blahj’) combination of three-dimensional objects glued to a surface

**bas-relief**
(bah ree-leaf’) low-relief three-dimensional collage

**brayer paper**
tissue paper coated with gesso and paint

**bricolage**
(bree’-ko-lahj) odds and ends used in collage

**brûlage**
(brew-lahj’) burning or scorching of dampened collage materials

**cast paper**
a paper shape molded for use in three-dimensional collage

Download free desktop wallpaper at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
collage (ko-lahj') pasting or gluing paper or objects to a surface

collage rescue adding collage to improve an artwork
crystalline paper tissue paper encased in gloss medium or gel

cut-paper collage collage with hard edges, in the style of Matisse
décalcomanie (day'-kal-ko'-mahn-ee) placing wet paint between two surfaces and pulling apart to create patterns
déchirage (day-shur-ahj') distressed or torn paper collage

décollage (day-koh-laaj') removing, ungluing or otherwise subtracting material from the layers of a collage
digital collage collage involving the use of digital images, computers and printers, with or without adhesives
embossing pressing a raised image into damp paper

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encasing
sealing a support, paper or objects

environmental collage
recycling of natural and man-made materials for a collage

fau\textproc{\textregistered} texture
impressions made in paint or medium on a flat surface

froissage
(fwahs-ajh\textsuperscript{t}) crumpling or creasing of collage materials

frottage
(frot-ajh\textsuperscript{t}) rubbing a design onto collage papers from a textured surface

found papers
miscellaneous collected papers (tickets, posters or programs, for example)

layering
building a low-relief surface with blotter paper and gesso

magazine collage
collage created from magazine images or text

marbled paper
handmade patterned papers for collage

mixed media collage
any combination of art media with collage
photomontage (fo-to-mahn-tah’) collage of glued photographs or cut-out photos

rice paper overlay thin rice paper laid as a glaze over a collage
textured support surface prepared by imprinting textures in gel

theme collage a collage having a unifying concept or images
torn paper collage ragged or soft edges of collage papers
type collage a collage that makes a statement or design with printed words

woven collage strips of paper or fiber woven into a design and applied to a collage

montage (mahn-tah’) combining pictorial elements into a composition

objet trouvé (ahb’-jay troo’-vay) found object (shell, stone or wood, for example)
papier collé (pah-pee-ay’ ko-lay’) pasted paper

papier collé (pah-pee-ay’ ko-lay’) pasted paper
New artistic ventures have a way of unleashing anxiety about skills and creativity. Don’t let that stop you. Collage is the least intimidating art medium I know. Anyone can do it, with just about anything that sticks when glued down. And always remember, it can be as simple or as complex as you like.

Here’s an easy project to begin with. Make a quick newspaper collage using fragments of headlines or ads based on a common idea: something funny or political or newsworthy. Use a glue stick or white glue to paste the pieces to any handy piece of cardboard, or embellish an old watercolor or drawing. Add markers or watercolor if you want.

**Materials**
cardboard, or an old watercolor or drawing  
| newspapers  | white glue or glue stick  | optional: markers, watercolors

After seeing a rodeo at a county fair in Colorado, I combined clippings from a local newspaper to create a rodeo-themed collage. The theme unifies the picture. The beat-up fence, painted in watercolor, adds color and texture.

**GO FOR IT**  | Nita Leland  
*Newspaper collage and watercolor on watercolor board*  
15” x 30” (38cm x 76cm)  
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Dale Marcotte

Bierbaum uses newspaper columns to construct buildings in a realistic cityscape. The printed material relates to a specific place, making the piece cohesive. Opaque washes and brushstrokes representing figures bring the architectural subject to life.

**WALL STREET**  | Gretchen Bierbaum  
*Watercolor and newspaper collage*  
13” x 21” (35cm x 53cm)
Go on a Treasure Hunt

Make a collage from odds and ends you find around the house. Don’t think about making art. Don’t buy anything new. Artists, stay out of your well-equipped studios; pretend you’re a beginner and play for a while. Do you have a junk drawer in the kitchen? Scraps of fabric, yarn, ribbon and buttons in the sewing room? Glue whatever you find to a cardboard or heavy paper surface with white glue or other adhesive. Don’t worry if the whole thing self-destructs tomorrow; the fun is in doing it today. GO!

Materials
- cardboard or heavy paper
- glueable odds and ends from around the house
- white glue or glue stick
- optional: crayons, markers

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT’S IN STORE
The more objects you collect, no matter how ridiculous, the sooner you’ll find something to kick-start your creative process. Toss your collage materials into your treasure chest—a storage box.

What’s in Your Junk Drawer?
Cut up items such as soap boxes, gift wrap, mesh bags, artificial leaves, old greeting cards and colorful scraps of paper to make a quick collage on a piece of cardboard or heavy paper.

Anything Goes
Arrange a simple background and a center of interest composed of the colorful bits you’ve collected, then glue it down. Embellish with crayons or markers, if you like.

Sign up for our free newsletters at Artistsnetwork.com/Newsletter_Thanks.
Collect colorful scraps of paper, fabric, yarn, ribbon, wallpaper and gift wrap to create one-of-a-kind greeting cards. You need only five or six items per card for a pleasing design. Send your cards to family and friends. Making these little works of art helps to develop your sense of color and design.

**Materials**

- blank note cards or inkjet cardstock
- scraps of paper, fabric, yarn, ribbon, postage stamps, gift wrap, wallpaper
- white glue or glue stick

**Made With Love**

Valentines were once homemade collage confections of lace, cutouts and pretty pictures, unlike the mass-produced, printed greetings of today. Make your own valentines with materials such as colored papers, lace doilies, ribbons, stickers and glue—an easy way to get started in collage.

**Design Your Own Art Cards**

I chose a postage stamp for my focal point, gluing it on a torn piece of marbled paper. I then glued those two pieces to a 5” × 7” (13cm × 18cm) blank greeting card. Bits of fabric and rice paper accent the composition with complementary colors.

This example of affiches lacerés uses torn fragments of posters from a French opera house for an abstract collage. Bold color, strong shapes and interesting textures are overlaid with type to move the viewer’s eye through the picture. This is a larger work, but you could easily try something similar with playbills for a smaller card.

**PARIS IN SHREDS**  Phyllis Lloyd

Mixed media, corrugated cardboard and found papers (discarded opera billboards found in Paris)

30” × 40” (76cm × 102cm)

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Make Rubbings for Collage

If you’re afraid of white paper or a blank canvas, pencil rubbings will help you overcome your anxiety. No drawing skill is required; simply rub a design or pattern onto a piece of paper, then use the simulated texture in a collage.

**Materials**
- cardboard or heavy paper
- bond or copy paper
- assortment of textured objects
- no. 2 or 2B pencil
- white glue or glue stick
- scissors

1. Collect objects with textured surfaces: embossed wallpaper, coins, wood, mesh bags, berry boxes, leaves, feathers, stencils. Place paper over these objects and rub it with the broad side of a soft graphite or colored pencil to transfer the patterns. Rub lightly for subtle texture; rub heavily for dark, bold patterns (or use a softer pencil).

2. Cut out and tear the patterned rubbings into interesting shapes. Arrange them on a background of cardboard or heavy paper, then affix them with white glue or a glue stick.

**TIP**
Try making rubbings using colored papers, colored pencils, charcoal or pastel. Smudge to blend colors; erase to lighten them.

A stark black background contrasts beautifully with the graphite texture impressions in the rubbing. Play with positive and negative shapes as you arrange the pieces into an effective design suitable for framing.

**GRAPHITE FROTAGE** | Nita Leland
Acid-free bond paper with 2B graphite pencil on black mat board
9½” × 12½” (24cm × 32cm)
CHAPTER 2
The Origins of Collage

Collage has a long and distinguished history. Chances are, no matter what you do in collage, it has been done before—but not in the same way you will do it. Study early collages of the Japanese or Dutch, for example, and revive an old idea with a new twist, giving a contemporary look and feel to this very old process.

The story begins with the invention of paper in China around 200 B.C., but the earliest paper collages are believed to be made by twelfth-century Japanese calligraphers, who prepared surfaces for their poems by gluing bits of paper and fabric to create a background for brushstrokes. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Near East, craftsmen cut and pasted intricate designs and used marbled papers in bookbinding. Today's collage artists invent exciting variations of these ancient collage techniques.

Artists in medieval times often enhanced religious images with gemstones, elegant fibers, relics and precious metals. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nuns used cut and colored papers to decorate bookmarks for their prayer books. Frequently, they selected materials for their symbolism, a practice that continues in contemporary collage.

Renaissance artisans of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Western Europe pasted paper and fabric to decorate the backgrounds of coats-of-arms in genealogical records. Cut-paper silhouettes appeared in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. Craftsmen in many parts of the world used seeds, shells, straw, feathers and butterfly wings as collage material. Shamans and holy men secured these and other materials to masks used in sacred rituals. All of these materials appear in artists' collages today.
During the nineteenth century, collage developed as a hobby, rather than an art form. People pasted family photos into arrangements and framed them, glued postage stamps into albums and covered screens and lamp shades with magazine illustrations and art reproductions.

Antiques shops display nineteenth-century scrapbooks, photo albums, silhouettes and lamp shades made of assorted materials: paper, fabrics, human or animal hair and memorabilia. Most of these objects began as mementos and family heirlooms, not art objects.

A few serious collage artists in the late nineteenth century pasted intricate paper cutouts onto backgrounds. Hans Christian Andersen created illustrations for a book this way. Carl Spitzweg made collages for a recipe collection with cutouts from woodcuts, which he colored by hand and pasted onto marbled papers. In the 1890s, graphic artists arranged type and bold cut-out shapes to create theater posters and illustrations. The introduction of photography led to photomontage, combining photos into artistic compositions. In time, the photos and posters themselves became collage material.

Collage makes poetry with the prosaic fragments of dailiness.

—DONALD B. KUSPIT, ART CRITIC

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This Victorian-inspired collage includes a photocopy of a page in my grandmother’s autograph book, signed by her mother in 1891. Everything else I found in magazines and boxes in my house. These mementos became a new family heirloom.

MEDIEVAL ARTISTS FREQUENTLY GLUED PRECIOUS STONES AND EXOTIC MATERIALS ON THEIR HOLY IMAGES, IN THE MANNER OF THIS COLLAGE.

BOSCI’S MADONNA | Virginia Lee Williams
Silk, paper, gold leaf, gemstones and acrylics
24” × 18” (61cm × 46cm)
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Eugene J. Huffman

This Victorian-inspired collage includes a photocopy of a page in my grandmother’s autograph book, signed by her mother in 1891. Everything else I found in magazines and boxes in my house. These mementos became a new family heirloom.

AUTOGRAPH | Nita Leland
Paper collage and potpourri on illustration board
8½” × 11” (22cm × 28cm)
Collage as a Modern Art

The twentieth century shed an entirely new light on collage. Art historians generally attribute the first fine art collage to Pablo Picasso in 1912; he glued patterned oilcloth to a cubist still life. Georges Braque incorporated wallpaper into his artwork. The two artists experimented with papiers collés as an extension of cubism. Instead of creating an illusion of reality, they invented a new reality, comprising textured and printed papers and simulated wood patterns on their drawings and paintings. The use of foreign materials in paintings inflamed critics, adding more fuel to the creative fires of experimental artists.

The avant-garde adopted the new approach and quickly branched out. Cubists used mostly paper and paint, sometimes in a patchwork-quilt fashion, with the occasional realistic object added to support a pictorial concept or philosophical viewpoint. Futurists incorporated typography for political commentary and added found objects to connect art with the real world. Dadaists found collage an ideal means of expressing anti-art nonsense, bringing together outrageous combinations of materials for shock value. Psychology, the new science of the mind, led Surrealists to see collage as a revelation of unconscious thoughts brought to the surface through random selection and placement of materials.

Collage may be seen as a quintessential twentieth-century art form with multiple layers and signposts pointing to the possibility or suggestion of countless new realities.

—KATHERINE HOFFMAN, ART CRITIC

McClure’s collage bears a resemblance to those first paintings to which early twentieth-century artists applied oilcloth and cardboard. The emphasis on design and texture instead of image launched a new direction in fine art that continues to expand over a century later.

THE RAIN GAME | Cheryl McClure
Linocut, painted papers, acrylic on paper
11½” × 20” (29cm × 51cm)

Download free desktop wallpaper at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
Henri Matisse was well known for his brilliant collages of cut-and-pasted papers. Sometimes he made preliminary drawings; often, he improvised, painting his papers with gouache and cutting out the colored shapes with scissors. Many of his collage designs were incorporated into large murals and stained glass windows.

Make a bright, playful collage, à la Matisse, using assorted colored papers or magazine pictures with colorful illustrations and advertisements.

**Materials**

8½" × 11" (22cm × 28cm) cardboard | colored papers and magazine pictures | white glue or glue stick

**Cut and Create**

Cut out simple, interesting shapes from your brightly colored papers and pictures. No need to draw; just cut them out free-hand. Glue your cutouts onto colored paper or board, repeating some of the shapes and colors throughout your design. Voilà! Your own Matisse-inspired collage.
Other Developments in Fine Art Collage

Kurt Schwitters was among the first to see collage as a medium in its own right rather than as an extension of painting. He picked up trash and used it in collage. Max Ernst defined the “collage idea,” the principle of accepting as valid whatever occurs on the support during the process. André Breton and other European artists carried collage to the frontier of American abstract expressionism, where it was advanced by Robert Motherwell, Lee Krasner, Louise Nevelson, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and others.

Early twentieth-century collage represented a radical break with artistic tradition, through the addition of a few scraps of paper to a painting. By the end of the century, artists had become aware of the tremendous potential of the medium for creative artistic expression. Robert Courtright, Miriam Schapiro, Romare Bearden and other artists exemplify the best of modern collage.

... Collage better than any other technique permits us to single out the successive stages of the artist’s work. The eye is no longer content with an overview of the surface.

—FLORIAN RODARI, ART HISTORIAN

Much of the new art of collage is based on the work of abstract artists like Nepote, who integrated paper collage and watermedia, suggesting natural phenomena in a painterly manner.

ROCK MOSAIC | Alexander Nepote
Watermedia and torn papers, 30” x 40” (76cm x 102cm)
Courtesy of Hanna-Lore Nepote and “The Gallery,” Burlingame, California

Davis’s Urban Rain Forest series explores color and shape relationships with paper collage. Thin straight lines pierce a flurry of torn organic shapes and anchor this abstract composition.

URBAN RAIN FOREST #13 | Willis Bing Davis
Cut and torn paper on illustration board, 30” x 20” (76cm x 51cm)

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Collage for the Twenty-First Century

In spite of its short history as a recognized art form, collage seems destined to become the art of the future. Collage can reflect the disposable mind-set, the urban environment, conservation and ecology—a novel way to recycle bits and pieces that might otherwise end up in the trash. New techniques and materials, including acrylic polymer mediums introduced in the 1960s, are continually being developed. Ideas have proliferated about the symbolic or psychological aspects of selection and arrangement of collage materials. Realistic collages often suggest a deeper meaning beneath the visual image. The Society of Layerists in Multi Media includes many collage artists who explore symbolic interpretations in their art, along with mysterious imagery and spiritual connections.

People are entranced by the transformation of disparate elements and the intermingling of ordinary materials that they’re familiar with in other contexts. Viewers examine the layers and objects for recognizable fragments, then attach their own meaning to them. They become participants, instead of merely observers. You become a part of their experience when you explore this fascinating medium.

[Collage], which takes bits and pieces out of context to patch them into new contexts, keeps changing, adapting to various styles and concerns.

—KIM LEVIN, ART CRITIC

A great variety of new materials are now available in collage. The use of mica tiles as transparent overlays, plus Dicrofibers and gilding, enhances the depth and texture of this collage.

SLEEPING LEAVES | Susan Pickering Rothamel
Natural materials, mica tiles and flakes, gilding, Dicrofibers and acrylics, 7” × 5½” (18cm × 14cm)

An unusual juxtaposition of cut-out pictorial elements results in a strangely surrealistic effect of light and shadow in this collage made from magazine pictures. The collage pieces selected suggest a common light source.

THE DRAWN DRAPE | Deborah Krejsa
Paper collage, 13” × 12” (33cm × 30cm)

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Chapter 3

Getting Started in Collage

Collage papers are readily available and affordable. Begin by collecting odds and ends, such as photos, mementos, magazine pictures and wrapping paper. As art historian Florian Rodari aptly said, “Anything that addresses itself to the eye will do.” Store your collection of collage materials in zip-top plastic bags or a cardboard box.

If you’re a beginner, let yourself enjoy making collage pictures without worrying about artistic concerns. It’s easy and fun. If you’re a more experienced artist, approach this exciting medium as a beginner and build a solid foundation for more complex processes introduced later in this book. Collage can be a serious art or a playful change of pace from your usual medium.

Start with paper and white glue or acrylic medium. If you want to add paint to your collage, use water-soluble media—transparent watercolor, acrylics, gouache or casein—but not oil-based paints, which require strong solvents for cleanup and may cause papers to deteriorate.

Kilvert’s palette for this visually exciting still life—an arrangement of torn pieces of patterned magazine papers—is richly colored and textured. Value and color contrasts are used masterfully to suggest the forms of the objects.

THE IRON KETTLE | Bob Kilvert
Paper collage, 32” × 45” (81cm × 114cm)
Courtesy of The Old Corner House Gallery, Weobley, Herefordshire, England

POEMA #1 | Shirley Eley Nachtrieb
Paste paper collage, 30” × 22” (76cm × 56cm)
Simply Play on a Theme

The materials you need to do this collage project are simple, affordable and easily accessible. Unify your composition with a theme reflecting your special interests: fashion, show biz, family, art, animals, nature, and so on. If your theme is sports, focus on a specific one, such as golf or baseball. Look for theme ideas in magazines and brochures you have around the house. Collect a large assortment of pictures relating to your subject. You may not use them all, but you need a good selection to choose from. Save the leftovers for future projects.

ON THE EDGE
Most papers show white on one edge when torn, which is useful to create a contrasting or linear effect. Practice tearing with and without white edges. Papers are all different in this respect.

Materials
- cardboard or illustration board
- magazine images
- white glue or glue stick
- old synthetic brush
- a damp cloth or sturdy paper towels
- scissors
- pin
- wax paper
- optional: crayons, watercolors or markers

STEPS
1. Cut or tear your collected papers. Create a variety of sizes, shapes and colors.
2. Try different arrangements. Create interest across the surface and move the viewer’s eye around the picture.
3. When you like your arrangement, glue it down on your board, big pieces first. Brush glue over the entire back of an image, then press it down firmly, smoothing gently from the center out. Wipe off excess glue with a slightly damp cloth or paper towel; dried glue may reflect shiny spots. Repeat until all pieces are adhered. Prick any large bubbles with a pin, then pat gently. Most wrinkles will disappear as the paper dries.
4. When the collage is dry, fill in background spaces with crayon, watercolor or colored marker, if you like. Then, turn the collage face-down on a piece of wax paper, lightly dampen the back and weight it down overnight to flatten it.

A theme may be developed around the simplest of ideas: here, I’ve emphasized women’s eyes. You might want to do a collage on wristwatches or garden tools or teddy bears. Your chosen theme unifies your picture.

THE EYES HAVE IT | Nita Leland
Magazine paper collage on illustration board, 7½” x 8½” (19cm x 22cm)

Download free desktop wallpaper at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
Let Printed Words Speak

Creative type designers use flourishes and spacing to bring personality to words. Gutenberg, who invented the first printing press in 1450, would be astonished at the variety of typefaces available today. Collect interesting specimens of type from magazines, newspapers, posters and other sources, and file them. Study the different shapes and spacing of type, and the light and dark contrasts of the letters. Then, make collages without pictures by combining words and letters. Unique arrangements of words entice viewers to “read” your picture. Use printed matter relevant to a theme—a hobby, your family, your life philosophy, something you love or something you hate.

Words don’t have to be complete, as long as your viewers can decipher the meaning of your collage. Be sparing with upside-down type, which confuses the viewer.

WORDS OF ART | Nita Leland
Magazine clippings on illustration board, 11” × 15” (28cm × 38cm)

In this collage, the pieces connect and overlap to create interesting negative shapes between some of the words. Small pieces of type have been combined to create large design shapes.

OH! | Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Print collage on illustration board, 15” × 20” (38cm × 51cm)

Materials

| cardboard or illustration board | word and letter images | white glue or glue stick | old synthetic brush | a damp cloth or sturdy paper towels | optional: crayons, watercolors or markers |

Steps

1. Use words based on a theme or mood. Select words or letters in type styles that emphasize the power of bold black letters against a stark white background or the Victorian delicacy of lacy bits of type.

2. Move the pieces around until you like the arrangement; then, glue them down on cardboard.

3. Include color accents in type if you wish. Or, you may enhance a typeface collage with touches of colored marker or watercolors, as long as you don’t overpower the type.
Combine Words With Images or Textures

Make another collage, this time working with words and pictures. Keep this simple, even though you’re combining elements. Don’t worry about art rules. You’re not making art for museums or galleries now, so relax and have fun. You might plan some surprises by selecting amusing images or placing them in unexpected positions. Or, work with words and textures alone, without introducing specific imagery.

Materials

- cardboard or illustration board
- your collection of words, images and textures
- white glue or glue stick
- old synthetic brush
- a damp cloth or sturdy paper towels
- optional: crayons, watercolors or markers

This simple travel collage was made from a small map, a travel folder, a few fragments of newspaper and colored paper. Before you glue your pieces down, try different arrangements to create interest throughout the picture.

ROAMIN’ IN WYOMIN’

Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Found and colored papers on cardboard
9½” × 12½” (24cm × 32cm)

Dubiel calls this “a study in textures and type.” She sets off assorted papers and type styles effectively against a harmonious color scheme that doesn’t draw attention from the collage elements.

DYLAN THOMAS
Carolyn Dubiel
Bark, handmade paper, leather and type
19” × 16” (48cm × 41cm)
Collection of Joan and Howard Simpson

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Collaging With Found Papers

Keep your eyes open around the house and on your daily rounds for unique and interesting collage materials. Sort your papers according to color, subject matter, texture or type of material and place them in envelopes marked by category; for example, Maps, Music or Labels. File your paper collection, so you can find specific pieces easily when you need them. As it grows, expand your system to hanging folders filed in a plastic crate. As you become more involved with collage, you’ll be glad you’re organized.

This collage was made entirely with found papers. Follow along to see how I pieced this one together from collected papers.

**Materials**
- illustration board
- found papers including joss paper, rice paper, brochures
- soft gel and matte medium
- synthetic brushes
- damp paper towels
- soft rubber brayer

**ANYTHING CAN BE ART**
Potential collage materials are all around you, so start looking and collecting!

- art reproductions
- engravings
- posters
- bills
- receipts
- price tags
- labels
- catalogs
- magazines
- newspapers
- comic strips
- greeting cards
- corrugated paper
- paper packing materials
- diaries or journals
- sheet music
- wallpaper
- letters
- envelopes
- postcards
- stamps
- maps
- travel folders
- photos
- playing cards
- shopping bags
- ticket stubs
- programs
- tissue paper
- computer paper
- wrapping paper
- dress patterns
- foil papers

1 In my collage treasure box is a folder containing Egyptian images. This collage began as a workshop demo. I laid out an assortment of clippings and papers, including a brochure, joss paper (a Chinese ceremonial paper) and rice paper, that suggested a general Egyptian theme.

Milks crates with hanging files work well to keep your bits and pieces in order.

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I built the composition by adhering large pieces of torn marbled papers onto an illustration board that I’d coated on both sides with acrylic gloss medium, as described in chapter four. The borders enclose the Egyptian princess in an ambiguous interior space and make her my focal point. The burnt-earth colors and gold work well with black accents. Now I need to turn my attention to the area at the bottom and introduce contrasting color accents.

**STEPS TO ASSEMBLING YOUR OWN COLLAGE**

1. **Search your found papers for favorite colors, interesting textures or unique patterns.** Choose a theme: springtime, birthdays or something nostalgic, imaginative or futuristic. Limit the found papers you use—five or six different kinds are about right to begin with. If your papers are transparent, thin or lacy, adhere acid-free white wrapping tissue to a cardboard support so it won’t show through (or use white illustration board for your support). Let the tissue dry thoroughly before arranging your papers.

2. **Focus on a dominant element, such as one large piece, an interesting shape or a beautiful texture.** Place this on your support. Arrange other pieces around this focal point, overlapping edges or tucking the corners under the edges. Play with the pieces before adhering them. To aid in composing your collage, cut a 2” (5cm) wide viewing mat out of white cardboard or poster board. Lay the mat over your collage to study its composition. Step back for a better view and squint to see the overall design.

3. **When you’re satisfied with your basic design, glue the pieces to the cardboard.** Adhere small pieces to the larger ones beneath them before attaching the whole to your support. Then, starting with the bottom layer, glue each piece carefully onto the cardboard or illustration board. Add accents of color or contrast. Remember to wipe off excess glue with a damp cloth. If the collage isn’t flat when it dries, turn it over on wax paper, dampen the back side slightly, weight it down with heavy books or magazines, and let it dry overnight.

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Collages often evolve as you work, becoming somewhat different from your original intention. I originally visualized this as an interior but began to feel a need for connection to the real world. Hence, I added the landscape forms. The blue crescent accents add emphasis to the space around the hands and face. I brushed the finished collage with a coat of matte medium.

EGYPTIAN PRINCESS  |  Nita Leland
Found paper collage on illustration board
13" × 10" (33cm × 25cm)

3 I anchored the composition with rhythmic shapes in dark values across the bottom. I tore the dark papers to create a white edge against the background, representing the outside world.
CHAPTER 4

Getting Serious About Collage

Collage has universal appeal to artists wishing to add excitement and creativity to their artwork. This versatile medium offers myriad opportunities for invention and innovation, including unusual juxtapositions and transformations of images and meanings. The possibility of change is ever present: Add something; remove or cover up something else. Anything that can be manipulated and pasted contributes to the visual and tactile sensuality of the collage surface. No other medium provides such a variety of exciting alternatives.

So far, you’ve used common household items like magazines, scissors and glue for your collages. Now, let’s upgrade your materials to assure that your finished pieces will last for a long time. This chapter shows you how to set up your work space and describes the tools and mediums to use for fine-art paper collage. Using the materials described, follow the basic collage procedures given step-by-step at the end of the chapter. Your collages will be well-crafted and you can exhibit them without fear that they will self-destruct. Record in a journal the techniques you use and ideas to try in the future. Get serious—but don’t stop having fun.

Parry created her dynamic image using the process described in this chapter: encase, adhere and seal. However, her style requires patience in the tearing and placing of numerous magazine fragments. She also has a good eye for color and makes her subject stand out against the contrasting background.

WILD ONE | Tomoko Parry
Paper collage, 10” × 14” (25cm × 36cm)
Acrylic Mediums

Acrylic mediums play a triple role in paper collage: as an adhesive, a protective coating and a paint extender.

Medium as Adhesive
Use only the best adhesives for fine-art paper collage. Rubber cement and white polymer household glues are not reliable; they may deteriorate and contaminate other materials. Acrylic mediums, which are water-soluble when wet and form a permanent plastic film when dry, have excellent adhesion. Experiment with a variety of mediums and watch for new products as they become available.

Medium as Protectant
Acrylic mediums protect your collage materials from deterioration and from contact with other materials that could cause damage to the art, such as non-acid-free items you might include in your collage. The best practice is to seal everything you apply to the surface in layers of acrylic gloss medium or gel, a procedure called encasing. Every support and all your collage pieces should be fully encased, unless you are certain you’re working entirely with 100-percent acid-free materials. Treat acidic materials with paper protectant spray such as Krylon Make It Acid-Free!, applied in a well-ventilated room or outdoors, followed by a coating of acrylic gloss medium or gel for further protection.

Medium as Extender
To achieve the paint consistency you desire without diluting the brilliance of the acrylic colors, add acrylic medium rather than water. To prevent traditional watercolors from crawling on surfaces treated with acrylic mediums, add a drop or two of ox gall to your water to improve the paint flow.

Avoid mixing retarders with acrylic paints and mediums used in collage because uneven drying may interfere with proper adhesion of collage layers.

APPLICATION BRUSH TIPS
- Apply matte or gloss mediums with a ¾” (19mm) or wider synthetic flat one-stroke brush. Use a stiff bristle synthetic brush for gels and pastes. A no. 8 synthetic round works best to apply medium to small pieces. Add other brushes as needed, but don’t use your good watercolor brushes.
- It’s vital to keep your brushes damp while you’re working, either resting in the medium or in a jar of water; otherwise, if the medium dries, the brush will be useless. Rinse your brushes well when you’re finished; wash them thoroughly with liquid detergent and warm water.
- To partially restore a brush that has dried acrylic medium or paint in it, let the brush stand in a glass of rubbing alcohol for a day or so. Work detergent into the bristles and rinse well. Repeat if necessary.

For this piece I used matte soft gel to avoid shine on the handmade papers and printed rice papers. I sprinkled mica flakes over a layer of gloss gel and, when the layer was dry, dabbed gloss gel on the flakes to brighten them.

GUARDIANS OF THE GOLD | Nita Leland
Handmade and marbled papers, printed papers, rubber stamping and mica flakes on illustration board, 10” × 15” (25cm × 38cm)
Visual Effects and Finishing Touches

Combine mediums for different effects; for example, adhere papers with matte medium, then use matte gel to bond coated natural materials like leaves and shells to the same collage. Experiment with new products and record your findings with swatches and notes. You’ll like some better than others; as you become more experienced with acrylic mediums, you’ll use many of them interchangeably.

To reduce shine, apply a coat of matte medium to the collage before photographing it. For maximum fine-art protection, apply one or two isolation coats of soft gel to seal the collage, followed by a removable varnish, such as Golden’s Polymer Varnish with UVLS (ultra-violet light stabilizers). Then, if your collage needs cleaning, you can remove the varnish, using the manufacturer’s recommended solvent, without damaging the artwork. Once the old varnish is removed, apply a fresh coat of varnish.

HOW TO ENCASE COLLAGE PAPERS

Many papers aren’t acid-free. Encase them in gloss medium or soft gel so your collage will last.

- **To encase papers as you work**, when you brush medium or gel onto a scrap or layer of paper, cover the entire back side or apply a generous coat to the support where you plan to apply the scrap. Lay the paper on your collage support and roll it with a brayer. Brush medium over each newly applied layer as you go along to encase it. Some artists prefer to wait until the collage is finished to apply the final coat of medium.

- **To encase papers and store them for later use**, coat one side of each clipping and let it dry on the waxy side of freezer paper, lifting occasionally to prevent sticking. Then peel the pieces off the freezer paper and coat the other side.

- **To prevent bonding when you store your encased papers**, dust them lightly with cornstarch when they’re dry. Store in a cool, dry location—vertically, if possible—and separate occasionally, especially in hot, humid conditions.

- **Be sure to clean your brayer** with a damp cloth between rollings.

ACRYLIC MEDIUMS AND OILS

Note that acrylic mediums used to adhere papers and to coat supports and finished art collages will not bond to oil-based materials. Oils or oil pastels may be applied on top of a collage, but should not be used as a background or underpainting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRYLIC MEDIUMS</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Finish</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>matte medium</td>
<td>flowing</td>
<td>transparent; translucent in multiple layers</td>
<td>matte</td>
<td>adhesive; coating supports; paint extender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gloss medium</td>
<td>flowing</td>
<td>transparent</td>
<td>high gloss</td>
<td>adhesive; coating supports; paint extender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft gel, gloss</td>
<td>creamy; medium body</td>
<td>transparent</td>
<td>high gloss</td>
<td>excellent adhesive; less wrinkling of papers; paint extender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft gel, semi-gloss (satin)</td>
<td>creamy; medium body</td>
<td>transparent; translucent in multiple layers</td>
<td>satiny; reduces gloss</td>
<td>excellent adhesive; less wrinkling of papers; paint extender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft gel, matte</td>
<td>creamy; medium body</td>
<td>transparent; translucent in multiple layers</td>
<td>matte</td>
<td>excellent adhesive; less wrinkling of papers; paint extender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular gloss gel</td>
<td>medium thick body; holds soft peaks</td>
<td>transparent; translucent in multiple layers</td>
<td>high gloss</td>
<td>excellent adhesive for papers and objects; paint extender; textures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavy gel</td>
<td>thick; holds stiff peaks</td>
<td>transparent; translucent in multiple layers</td>
<td>high gloss</td>
<td>adhesive for heavier papers and objects; paint extender; textures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modeling or molding paste</td>
<td>thick; holds stiff peaks</td>
<td>opaque</td>
<td>matte</td>
<td>textures; mix with gel; use palette knife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gesso</td>
<td>medium thick, flexible</td>
<td>opaque white, black or colors</td>
<td>matte</td>
<td>coating supports; adds tooth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not shown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acrylic UV varnish</td>
<td>thin coat or spray</td>
<td>transparent</td>
<td>matte</td>
<td>protective final coat; removable for cleaning artwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collage Supports

A support (sometimes called ground) is the surface on which you paint and adhere collage materials. No more cardboard or poster board—upgrade to 3- to 5-ply acid-free or pH neutral illustration board, 140-lb. to 300-lb. (300gsm to 640gsm) watercolor paper, stretched canvas or canvas board from the art store. Check your local frame shop for archival or museum-quality textured mat board scraps for interesting collage backgrounds. Heavyweight, rag-content supports are pricier than other materials, but the end result is more satisfactory. The texture or tooth of the surface—hot press (smooth), cold press (medium) or rough—is a matter of personal taste. Try them all.

All supports should be coated on both sides with gloss medium, gel or gesso to protect them from the collage materials you adhere (unless you use only acid-free items). Papers or boards that have rag content are recommended. Those designated as pH neutral or acid-free are less subject to discoloration or deterioration. Test these with a pH pen.

Always allow a coated support to dry thoroughly. I like to prepare several boards at the same time and store them, dusting the surfaces lightly with cornstarch and separating with a sheet of freezer paper to prevent them from sticking together. Store vertically in a cool, dry place.

PUTTING pH PENS TO WORK

Test collage papers and supports to make sure they are pH neutral or acid-free. Make a mark on the paper using a pH testing pen, available at art and craft stores. The mark changes color from yellow to purple if the paper is acid-free. If the paper fails the test, spray it with Krylon Make It Acid-Free!, or encase the paper in acrylic medium (as described earlier in this chapter) to neutralize your materials.

Asian paper overlays create a glazing effect, similar to layers of transparent paint. The transparent paper allows colors and patterns of underlying layers to show through, instead of covering them up. Watercolor paper adds its own textures when used as a collage support.

GHOST RANCH | Shirley Eley Nachtrieb
Masa, lace and Thai unryu papers and gauze on watercolor paper
15” × 11” (38cm × 28cm)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLLAGE SUPPORTS</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bristol board</td>
<td>3- to 5-ply</td>
<td>adhere papers,</td>
<td>gloss medium or gel on both sides</td>
<td>pH neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canvas board</td>
<td>Fredrix and others</td>
<td>object</td>
<td>gesso medium or gel on back</td>
<td>gesso coated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canvas (stretched)</td>
<td>cotton or linen</td>
<td>adhere all; staple or sew on objects for extra stability</td>
<td>gesso front surface, if untreated</td>
<td>cover staples with gesso; won’t warp; brace back if heavy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claybord</td>
<td>multi-media panels for painting and collage</td>
<td>adhere paper, objects</td>
<td>no preparation necessary</td>
<td>archival and acid-free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illustration</td>
<td>medium or heavyweight cold-press</td>
<td>adhere paper, objects</td>
<td>gloss medium or gel on both sides</td>
<td>rag content or pH neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masonite</td>
<td>untempered; medium density fiberboard</td>
<td>adhere heavy objects; assemblage</td>
<td>gesso front surface; brace back</td>
<td>extremely heavy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mat board</td>
<td>colored, textured</td>
<td>adhere papers, small objects</td>
<td>gloss medium or gel on both sides</td>
<td>rag content or pH neutral; colors may fade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plywood</td>
<td>½” (12mm) thick or more</td>
<td>adhere, screw or staple objects on</td>
<td>sand edges; 2-3 coats gesso front and back; brace back</td>
<td>not recommended, except for small works</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>printmaking paper</td>
<td>90-lb. (190gsm) to 140-lb. (300gsm) or heavier</td>
<td>adhere papers, small objects</td>
<td>gloss medium or gel on both sides</td>
<td>rag content or pH neutral; may be stretched</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watercolor paper</td>
<td>140-lb. (300gsm) or heavier; any texture or tooth</td>
<td>adhere papers, small objects</td>
<td>gloss medium or gel on both sides</td>
<td>rag content or pH neutral; may be stretched</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create and Apply a Transfer Film

There are innumerable ways to use acrylic mediums to produce a film, or “skin,” with an image from a magazine or other source embedded in it, for use in collage. Here’s one that results in a soft, painterly version of the original image, in reverse.

1. Coat a magazine picture on the image side only with three to five coats of regular or soft gel gloss, drying each coat thoroughly. Let the coated image dry until clear.

2. Soak the coated clipping in warm water in a shallow bowl for fifteen to thirty minutes, then peel or gently rub the paper off the back of the acrylic film. Resoak and rub off any paper that continues to cling. The ink will remain on the film.

3. Brush a heavy coat of gloss gel onto your encased support where you wish to transfer your image. Place the film, ink side down, on the wet medium and roll with your brayer. Let stand ten to fifteen minutes to allow the image to transfer, then carefully peel off the film. A ghost image remains on the board, and some may also remain on the acrylic film.

TIPS

- Some magazine inks transfer more easily than others. Experiment with different ones to see which give the best results.

- Don’t use a hair dryer to speed the transfer process. Peel back a corner of the picture to see if it is transferring; if not, wait a few more minutes before peeling off the film.

- Transfer more ghost images to your board using the same piece of film, as long as the image remains on it.

- You can also adhere the film itself to the board, overlapping earlier applications and making interesting juxtapositions. To fasten the film to the collage, brush matte or gloss medium on the support, place the transfer on the wet medium, and pat down or roll gently with a brayer. Dry, then finish with a top coat of medium. Add paper collage, if desired.

Materials

- illustration board
- magazine image
- regular or soft gel gloss
- synthetic brush
- water in shallow bowl
- soft rubber brayer

Here are three stages of acrylic film transfer. Upper left: The film is pulled from the transferred image. Lower right: The image is completely transferred to the support. Bottom left: After the image was transferred, I adhered the film itself to the support.

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Make a Background Transfer

Methods of creating transfer images in collage range from packaging-tape transfers to acrylic skin transfers. I avoid any that call for toxic chemicals. This transfer technique is a favorite because I like the hazy effect caused by paper that remains on the image.

Original Photo
When I use my own inkjet-printed photos, the technique results vary with the thickness of the paper I printed the original on. This one was printed on presentation paper.

Materials
- illustration board
- photo or magazine image
- soft gloss gel
- gloss or matte medium
- synthetic brush
- soft rubber brayer
- water

TIPS
- Magazine images will also work for this technique, but be aware that some magazines varnish their pages, resulting in inks that won’t transfer.
- Test your papers first to see which ones transfer best. Sometimes the image will break up when you rub the wet paper off, but that often adds to the antique look of the transfer. Work with sample cuttings before starting your project.

1 Brush soft gloss gel generously on the surface of illustration board and lay your background image face-down in the wet medium. Pat or roll with a brayer. Let stand for about fifteen minutes. You can peek to see if your image is transferring. Pull off the paper before the gel dries. After the gel dried, I rubbed off some of the transferred image and liked the effect.

2 After the gel is dry, brush warm water over the paper that remains and rub gently to remove it. Rub all the paper off, or leave some for texture. I brushed gloss gel over the background image to bring out some of the color. Now the dry transferred background is ready for collage elements to be added. Seal the background with a layer of gloss or matte medium and finish your collage.

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Acrylic mediums and gels give body to paper. Mold interesting low-relief shapes or textures on your support and incorporate them into your collage—a three-dimensional collage technique known as bas relief. Absorbent paper such as bond paper, rice paper or tissue paper works better than highly varnished magazine pages. Use an encased board or heavyweight paper for your support.

**Materials**
- encased illustration board or watercolor paper
- bond, tissue or medium-weight rice paper
- soft matte gel
- water
- 1” (25cm) or wider synthetic brush

**Sculpting Rice Paper**
Brush soft matte gel onto medium-weight rice paper to saturate it. When the paper is limp, but not fragile, lay it on encased illustration board or watercolor paper that has been pre-moistened with medium. With your brush and fingers tease the damp paper into a three-dimensional free-form shape.

**Try Bark Paper**
Medium-body bark paper withstands manipulation better than many other papers for low-relief sculptures.

**Finished Bas-Relief**
Heavily textured rice papers make elegant low-relief sculptures. I layered three different types of paper to build up this free-form. Other collage elements, such as found objects, may be added, or the piece can stand alone. Frame a bas-relief sculpture in a shadow box and light it so the shadows enhance the forms.

**STEPS**
1. **Dampen** a dry, encased support with water.
2. **Generously coat** your paper with gel on both sides. Using your fingertips and a brush, mold the limp paper into a three-dimensional shape on the support. Work quickly, as some papers won’t take much manipulation when wet. Let your piece dry thoroughly.
3. **Incorporate collage, found objects and acrylic paints** on the surface. Add bas-relief sculpture to create a focal point or texture on the surface of your collage.
4. **Let three-dimensional pieces dry thoroughly** and store them vertically to avoid flattening.

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Adhere Items With Gel

All acrylics are versatile, but when in doubt, use gel. Fluid mediums are ideal for encasing supports and collage papers, but may not hold items to your collage securely. I use regular acrylic gels to adhere found objects heavier than magazine papers, such as photos, cards and beads. Apply your gel liberally for the best adhesion.

Materials
- encased support or unfinished collage
- found objects such as tickets, cards, buttons, beads, tiny shells and stones
- gloss or matte gel
- synthetic brush
- water

Adhering Heavier Objects
Apply a daub of gel to an encased support or the surface of a collage you want to embellish. Press objects into the gel, then let it dry until clear. Drying takes longer with gel, so you have a little time for repositioning if needed.

TIPS
- Be sure your items are clean, with no oily residue on them. Wipe with rubbing alcohol if necessary.
- Adhere with matte gel when working with natural papers to avoid too much shine around the objects.
- Wipe excess gel from around the edges of objects with a damp cloth or cotton tip, but don’t fuss—the gel usually dries clear.
- Once the objects are set and the gel has dried, you can add a transparent layer of tissue, like a glaze, over your collage items, for additional security. Coat a small sheet of the tissue on both sides with gloss gel, and then press the damp tissue around the objects to secure them to the support. Or tear pieces off the saturated sheet of tissue and apply them to individual objects in small areas. The tissue will hold them tight and become transparent when dry.

After brushing gel onto both sides of a sheet of bark paper, I laid the paper on illustration board and created horizontal folds in the damp paper. After it dried, I arranged and secured the potpourri and silk flowers to the collage by pressing them into wet matte gel.

POTPOURRI | Nita Leland
Bark paper, potpourri and silk flowers on illustration board, 9” × 12” (23cm × 30cm)

Sign up for our free newsletters at Artistsnetwork.com/Newsletter_Thanks.
**Basic Steps for Paper Collage**

The basic collage process used in this book is simple. Follow these steps for most of the collages you make. Refer to them when you need to refresh your memory.

**WORK AREA SETUP**

Find a corner where you can get messy and leave things undisturbed—perhaps in the basement or utility room. Protect the floor with a plastic or canvas drop cloth. Set up a card table or lay a board on a countertop to serve as a flat work surface.

Your work surface must be waterproof, leakproof and easy to clean. First, cover it with newspapers to cushion it and to ensure that your glues and paints won’t leak through to the table. Lay plastic-coated freezer paper (available at grocery stores) on the newspaper, waxy side up, to cover the entire surface and wrap around the edges. Secure the freezer paper at the edges of the table and join any seams with masking tape. As you work, wipe this surface clean with a paper shop towel (found in the automotive aisle).

Cover your work area with coated freezer paper on top of newspapers. Have two large buckets of water and heavyweight paper towels on hand. Gather all your materials together before you begin working.

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN EACH PAPER COLLAGE**

- Plan your subject and collect a variety of printed materials relating to it.
- Prepare your work area, covering the surface and having mediums and tools ready.
- Use a support you’ve encased with gloss medium on both sides.
- Start with a general idea for the arrangement, but be prepared to change your mind as you move your materials around.
- Review the "Basic Steps for Paper Collage" and "Materials for Basic Collage."
- Be sure to use quality materials and procedures to assure that your finished artwork will last.

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**Materials for Basic Collage**

- encased support
- magazine, newspaper or other paper clippings
- gloss medium, matte medium
- soft gel, scissors, synthetic brushes
- soft rubber brayer, paper shop towels
- drop cloth, plastic-coated freezer paper, newspaper and masking tape, for work space
- two buckets of water, cornstarch

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1. Coat heavy paper or illustration board with undiluted gloss medium on one side and let dry. Then, coat the other side and seal the edges with medium. Let dry. This is your encased support.
2 Arrange your composition before adhering or design as you go. Use **synthetic brushes** to coat each collage piece liberally with undiluted **soft gel**. Adhere pieces to the support, working from the bottom layer up. Roll a **soft rubber brayer** over the pieces while they are damp, from the center out, to remove air bubbles and bond the paper to the support. Gently wipe off excess medium from the collage and your brayer with a damp **shop towel** as you go. Let your collage dry.

3 Seal the completed collage with a smooth coat of **gloss medium or gel**. Dry thoroughly. If the collage needs flattening when dry, lay it between two sheets of **freezer paper** (waxy side facing the art). Weight it down with heavy books or magazines.

**SOUTHWEST SUN** | Nita Leland
Color-aid papers on encased mat board, 8” × 10” (20cm × 25cm)

**TIPS**

- You may use semi-gloss or matte mediums, if you prefer. However, gloss mediums offer greater protection and transparency. Soft and regular gels tend to cause less wrinkling than fluid mediums.
- To reduce shine, or prior to photographing, apply a smooth coat of **matte medium** on the finished collage with a **soft, wide synthetic brush** and let it dry.
- Before storing, dust the finished collage lightly with **cornstarch**. Wipe off the cornstarch before framing.
- Store collages vertically to avoid pressure on the art.
- Use mat or illustration board scraps as supports for your practice collages.

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Additional Materials and Tips

Here are the items I can’t do without when I’m making collages. I’ll introduce other materials in the projects and the Appendix.

• Use plastic-coated freezer paper for your work surface and as a palette for acrylic mediums and paints.

• Have on hand lots of masking tape, buckets of water, newspaper and industrial-strength paper towels (shop towels on a roll are ideal) which can be rinsed out and used repeatedly.

• Collect different sizes of scissors (I like Fiskars Soft-Touch Scissors, which are easy on arthritic hands) and keep them sharp.

• A printmaker’s 4” (10cm) soft rubber brayer is useful for rolling out air pockets underneath collage papers and smoothing away wrinkles. Use a dressmaker’s pin to release air from small bubbles.

• One of my favorite tools for prepping small collage scraps is a crafter’s 1½” (4cm) Xyron sticker machine found in hobby and scrapbooking stores.

• If your skin is sensitive, use vinyl or latex gloves and protect your hands with a non-greasy cream or lotion. Acrylic mediums are relatively easy to remove from your skin. I use a non-scratch kitchen scrubber such as a Scotch-Brite Dobie Cleaning Pad with soap and warm water to remove acrylic medium from my hands.

• Wear your grubbies or an old paint shirt when you work. If you splash acrylic medium on your clothing, rinse it off immediately in lukewarm water, sponge with rubbing alcohol and machine wash in hot water.

Preserving and Protecting Your Collages

Ideally, it’s best to use all-rag or pH-neutral supports and materials for collage. Or spray or coat newspapers, magazines and inexpensive papers with Krylon Make It Acid-Free! (follow safety precautions) to prevent deterioration, discoloration or brittleness; then, encase them in acrylic medium or gel. Use magazines and newspapers printed on quality paper. National Geographic, Connoisseur, Vogue, House Beautiful or art magazines and calendars are some of the better sources. If thin washes of watermedia bead up on the illustrations, try a thicker application of medium or sponge lightly with a cotton ball soaked in rubbing alcohol. Before you begin your collage, test your papers to make sure they won’t resist acrylic mediums.

A coat of soft gel gloss on the collage encases the entire piece in a protective coating, and a final layer of matte medium cuts down on glare. After the acrylics have cured, apply a UV protective acrylic varnish by brush or spray, following the directions enclosed with the product. These procedures help to protect your collage from fading and air pollution. I recommend framing under glass or Plexiglas, because contrary to popular opinion, acrylics can attract dust and pollutants and may be difficult to clean.

Faster Drying

To speed the drying process, hang one or two hair dryers from a rod over your work area. Rest the rod on brackets attached to poles at each side of your space, not too close to the art. Raise or lower the rod as needed. Set the dryers on low and run them until the collage is dry. Turn the dryers off if you leave the room.

TEST FOR FADING

Cut a magazine page or other colored paper in two and place half in a sunny window and half in a dark location for several weeks to test for fading (lightfastness). Avoid paper sources like supermarket magazines which use inexpensive papers and inks that fade quickly. Also, avoid commercially tinted tissue papers and gift wrap, which are seldom lightfast. Several coats of gel may extend the life of an inferior paper slightly, but you don’t want to take a chance that your artwork will degrade or discolor.
Making collages is like packing for a trip. First, you lay out everything you want to take along. Then you simplify, organize, coordinate and leave half of what you laid out at home. Gather lots of materials, and then pick and choose as you zero in on your theme.

This chapter introduces exciting ways to use newspapers and magazines in collage, beyond illustrating a theme. You'll learn intriguing ways to describe form with clippings. Think of words, letters and snippets of color as your palette, selecting colors and values, as you would with paints, then designing landscapes, portraits or still lifes.

Arrange columns of type, advertisements or printed boxes to suggest a cityscape or an architectural subject; use a fashion magazine, selecting the flowing lines of richly colored fabric photos for an organic abstraction or a landscape; cut and tear colored pieces from magazine ads or junk mail and use them like small brushstrokes to develop shapes and contours of objects. Be on the lookout for unusual and colorful printed matter. When a clipping intrigues you, cut it out and save it in a file box or plastic bag. The larger your collection is, the more distinctive your collages can be, with unusual juxtapositions and bizarre combinations of materials.

The artist suggests painterly brushstrokes by the way he uses bits of color, texture and value. He applies the basic collage technique of pasted papers masterfully to depict the figure and the landscape. Kilvert’s selection of patterned papers for the hair and skin are ingenious—examine this piece with a magnifying glass and you’ll see what I mean.

THE APPLE | Bob Kilvert
Paper collage, 32” × 45” (81cm × 114cm)
Private collection
Create Form With Clippings

Suggest the form of an object by using bits and pieces of cut or torn magazine pictures. Gather old magazines, and ask friends for theirs. Use high-quality publications such as Architectural Digest, National Geographic, Vogue and Art in America. From them, collect an assortment of color and texture clippings; this is your color palette. Pick out many variations of your favorite colors—light and dark, bright and dull. Trust your instincts and just play with color. File leftover clippings with your found papers for future use.

1. Choose bits of color and texture from your clippings to represent different areas of the object you plan to depict. Ask yourself: Where are the light areas? The shadows? The textures? Find clippings to represent each area. Cut or tear many small pieces to fit the shapes. For example, to depict a pumpkin, collect bits of brown, orange and yellow in a range of values; arrange these pieces to suggest the highlights and shadows of the pumpkin, making shapes that follow its curving form. For hard edges, cut the clippings; for soft edges, tear them.

2. Arrange and secure the larger pieces to an encased support using soft gel and rolling a soft brayer over them. Before you do this, adhere any small bits that go on the large pieces. Then, after the large pieces are affixed, attach the smaller pieces to your collage. Things get jumbled easily when you’re working with so many small bits. If you need to, number the pieces and the support and “collage by number.”

To soften areas or create an antique patina, rub dampened areas lightly with a sponge to wear away the ink. Encase the completed collage with gloss medium or gel.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
| encased illustration board | paper clippings
| matte or gloss mediums or soft gels | scissors | synthetic brush | soft rubber brayer | sponge | optional: Xyron 150 sticker machine

Make Small Pieces Adherable

When I work with small pieces, I sometimes use a Xyron 150 sticker machine to make acid-free stickers I can apply neatly to my collage. This handy tool is inexpensive and fun to work with.
Finish
A suitable selection of colored magazine cuttings allows you to suggest light and shadow on a form. Light-to-dark gradation reveals the form, and a dark shadow beneath the pumpkin completes the illusion.

Sharp Edge Tip
Small bits can also be added to sharpen edges in a painting or monotype like this one. Use a Xyron machine with permanent adhesive to make the pieces into stickers, and they won’t disturb the paint.

TIP
To keep from getting confused about where the pieces belong, collage by number. Before you move a piece to apply adhesive, trace lightly around its edges with a pencil to mark its placement. As you set the piece aside, mark the back with a number and write a corresponding number on the underlying piece or on the support. Adhere the highest numbers first, finishing with number one.

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project 14

Collage a Creative Landscape

Constructing a landscape introduces some novel challenges in collage, especially if you’re aiming for a realistic image. Your paper materials should suggest depth in the landscape through changes in intensity and contrast. Consider perspective and scale, as well. Also, don’t forget that a creative and exciting landscape can result from distortions of landscape shapes and colors. Play with both approaches and see what you like best.

You can go the more traditional route with nature and gardening magazines, or see what you can do with automobile or other specialty magazines to pep up a landscape. Among my favorite resources for this are fashion magazines. The curves in fabrics suggest rolling hills; blocky handbags with decorative hardware might represent houses and barns. One time I used green-dyed hair for trees and shrubbery in a wacky landscape collage.

TIPS

• Spread out your landscape images and see which pieces work together. For example, make a sky from a blue background on which you collage fluffy clouds from another image.
• Work from the top down in realistic images to maintain perspective from back to front.
• For abstract designs anything goes, as long as it works for you. Play with your collage pieces to create a design that suggests landscape in color and shapes.
• Generally, adhere your biggest background pieces first. If you have several small bits to collage on top of it, you can do these before attaching the larger piece.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased illustration board | paper clippings | matte or gloss mediums or soft gels | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer

1 Assemble your landscape clippings according to the subject and colors you want to use. You probably have some in your files already, but it usually takes a lot of images to find a few that work together.

2 I covered some extraneous pieces and expanded the landscape pattern with similar pieces from my collection of clippings. Then I added contrasting color accents from hand-marbled paper.

Download free desktop wallpaper at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
The elements in this 7” × 7” (18cm × 18cm) paper collage landscape study came from magazine articles on Africa, Italy and Arizona. My goal was to make the pieces look as if they had been photographed at the same time and place. When you’re making a realistic collage, try to keep the elements in the proper scale. The exception would be if you want to exaggerate proportions or perspective to add an element of humor.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE | Nita Leland
Paper collage, 7” × 7” (18cm × 18cm)

Your collage needn’t be complicated. Express your sense of humor and create an amusing piece by placing familiar figures in an unfamiliar setting. In this case, Clark has taken two people out of an Impressionist painting and put them together in a contemporary landscape.

YELLOW POLKA DOT BIKINI | Pat Clark
Paper collage, 13½” × 15½” (34cm × 39cm)
Assemble a Paper Mosaic

Other paper collage variations include the mosaic and the quilt, using small bits of paper to build up larger designs in sections. Use any combination of colored or magazine papers, selecting colors that work well together. Arrange the papers in patterns, to create an overall design or a realistic image. Unlike most projects, you won’t lay out the pieces before you adhere them, but you’ll build up smaller areas in sections. Plan the overall effect or image before you begin, but don’t hesitate to revise your plan if the image changes as you work on it.

Mosaic Collage Process
Tear and adhere bits of colored paper and magazine clippings to your encased support with soft gel or using a Xyron sticker machine, allowing the background to show through like grout on a decorative mosaic panel. A pair of craft tweezers will help you handle the smallest pieces.

TIPS

• Instead of arranging the entire mosaic before adhering, sketch the general design; then tear and adhere small areas. Otherwise, if someone opens the window (or if you sneeze), your pieces may fly away.
• Build up forms and patterns like small brushstrokes of color, leaving white spaces between some pieces to create sparkle.
• If you apply several pieces to an area with gel, wipe gently with a damp cloth to remove any excess; roll gently with a soft brayer.
• Pay close attention to colors, values and textures. Keep the sizes of the pieces fairly consistent in each area; but change sizes here and there for variety.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
| encased illustration board | paper clippings |
| matte or gloss medium or soft gel | scissors |
| no. 8 round synthetic brush | soft rubber brayer |
| craft tweezers | optional: Xyron sticker machine with permanent adhesive

Mosaic Collage Process

The encased white support represents white clouds and makes the collage sparkle between the paper bits. The small pieces of multi-colored papers blend like the brushstrokes in an Impressionist painting.

SOARING
Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Paper collage, 10” x 7” (25cm x 18cm)

TIPS

• Instead of arranging the entire mosaic before adhering, sketch the general design; then tear and adhere small areas. Otherwise, if someone opens the window (or if you sneeze), your pieces may fly away.
• Build up forms and patterns like small brushstrokes of color, leaving white spaces between some pieces to create sparkle.
• If you apply several pieces to an area with gel, wipe gently with a damp cloth to remove any excess; roll gently with a soft brayer.
• Pay close attention to colors, values and textures. Keep the sizes of the pieces fairly consistent in each area; but change sizes here and there for variety.

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Create a Collage Portrait

Paper collage doesn’t require mastery of drawing or painting skills. Imagine that! You’ll be surprised how easy it is to do a portrait collage. Work with magazine illustrations having a lot of peach, creamy yellow orange and red in them, using the lighter colors for highlights and the darker shades for shadows. For darker-skinned races, select a range of colors from warm browns through golden yellow, reds, greens and violets.

**Build Skin Tone Palettes**
Collect and file a broad palette of portrait colors. Use scraps of flesh tones from dark to light, as well as vibrant colors and rich darks, so you won’t have to stop and search for every nuance of color as you develop your collage.

**Materials**
- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- HB pencil
- encased illustration board
- paper clippings
- matte or gloss medium or soft gel
- scissors
- synthetic brushes
- soft rubber brayer
- optional: acrylic or watercolor paints for background

**STEPS**
1. Sketch the portrait lightly on your encased support with an HB pencil, indicating value changes and colors right on the board.
2. Tear magazine pieces into smaller fragments and arrange them, building the form and likeness with changes in value and color. Gradually create facial features, adding small bits of color to the basic shape of lips, eyes, nose and ears. Keep adding pieces until you get what you want. Use interesting textures from your clippings to represent skin, hair and clothing. If the color is right, disregard any words on the piece, as long as they aren’t distracting or inappropriate.
3. Enhance the portrait with a collaged or painted background, using colors that harmonize with the portrait colors.

Notice how the torn collage pieces follow the shape of the shoulder and the hat, while strong value contrasts add emphasis. Paper highlights on the cheek draw attention to the face.

**THE BLACK FELT HAT** | Bob Kilvert
Paper collage, 22” x 15” (56cm x 38cm)
Private collection

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Combining Basic Collage Processes

Chickens seemed like a fun subject for this demonstration. In addition to magazine papers, wallpaper, fabric samples and feathers, pictures are used to make rubbings (see Project 4) and transferred acrylic film (see Project 9). Patterns were emphasized as the theme in this piece, because of the availability of so many beautiful magazine ads.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)

| HB pencil | colored pencil | tracing paper | encased illustration board | magazine papers, wallpaper and fabric samples | matte or gloss medium or soft gel | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer

1 First, we coated the board on both sides with matte medium. After it was dry, we drew our subject carefully on the board. The background will be kept simple, because the collage materials are patterned and busy.

2 A few of the collage materials we gathered relate to the chicken theme—pebbled wallpaper for corn, a magazine picture of stones that resemble eggs, and some chicken images. We also texturized a piece of paper with rubbings, using colored pencil over a circular-patterned grid (shown along the bottom of the finished collage).

3 The chicken images were coated with five layers of gloss medium. After the last layer had dried, the images were soaked for fifteen to twenty minutes and the paper backing was rubbed off, leaving a transfer film. The transfer was placed ink-side-down on wet matte medium on the encased support and rolled with a soft brayer. After ten to fifteen minutes, the transfer film was peeled off, leaving the chicken images on the support.

4 We began adding cut-paper collage, filling in small spaces. It was fun finding just the right color or texture for each area. After we selected the most important areas, such as the tail and wing, we trimmed the pieces and put them in place without adhering, to get a general idea of the overall effect.
When we were satisfied with the placement of the pieces, we marked around the edges and began adhering them to one section of the drawing at a time. We used a brayer to gently roll the pieces flat on the support. Then we began the same process with another section of the collage, keeping a sharp eye on how the colors and patterns played against each other and against the background.

After all the pieces on the chicken were secured, we completed the background in simple, dark shapes and colors to emphasize the rich patterns on the rooster. We used tracing paper to outline the intricate feathers on the tail and transferred the shape to a colored background piece, then cut it out and adhered it. Finally, we encased the collage beneath two layers of medium, first gloss, then matte, to seal the collaged papers and protect them from deterioration.
In this chapter you’ll see how design helps you create unity in your collages, not only from magazines and newspapers, but also from other types of colored papers. Design makes your pictures work. Don’t panic! You’ve been designing from the very first collages you made from ideas in this book. You unified your designs with a theme or a few words of type.

Start with a main idea and use design elements to support the concept; for example, to express the energy of a stormy sea, use powerful diagonals, dominant greens and blue-greens, strong wave patterns and rhythmical brushstrokes. Learn design by doing; designing will soon come easily to you.

Post “The Elements” and “The Principles” in this chapter near your work area and refer to them often. Don’t tie yourself down to rules, though. Use rules to get started or to bail you out when your inspiration fades. They keep you in the game until your creativity kicks in. Rules are useful as guides in planning and as checkpoints for discovering strengths and weaknesses in your collage.

Study the collages throughout this book. Which do you like best? Why do you like them? Identify the design elements and principles that make each piece distinctive. This will give you a better sense of which elements will work in your own collages.

Sogabe used printed Asian papers for her cut-paper collage design. The colorful diagonal quilt pattern draws the viewer’s eye to the sleeping child’s face, which is framed by a quiet, neutral background.

NAP | Aki Sogabe
Cut rice papers and acid-free paste
16” x 20” (41cm x 51cm)
The Elements

Use these elements of design to construct your collage. Choose elements that integrate your collage materials with your subject and the emotional content of your artwork, ultimately defining your artistic style.

Lines
Lines define boundaries, make connections and describe contours. In collage, line is often a surface element rather than a structural one, as it might be in a painting or drawing. String, ribbon and other fibers or small twigs can be used to create linear rhythms.

Shape
Shape is the foundation element in collage. The arrangement of cut or torn papers into larger design shapes establishes the overall effect of the image. Maintain the integrity of the shapes as you develop your collage, arranging your collage materials to strengthen the basic shapes.

Value
Value refers to light and dark contrast on a scale that moves from white through gray to black. Create visual strength with strong contrasts, using high-key, light values for upbeat feelings and low-key, dark values for somber moods, such as despair.

Color
Color has tremendous expressive potential in collage, as in any art medium. There are no absolutes in the use of color. Honor your personal responses to color, but also use color theory to support your intuition. Random selection of colors is risky in collage because it’s easy to lose color dominance and destroy the expressive impact of the collage. Chapter seven explores in more detail how to use color in collage.

Movement
Movement expresses energy and direction. Move the viewer’s eye around your collage and control the speed of movement. Horizontal movement is calm; vertical is stable; oblique is energetic. Arrange your collage pieces so they emphasize a dominant direction. Then add counter-movements for contrast, such as a meandering diagonal that enlivens a static horizontal composition.

Size
Size contrast is a useful design element. Begin with large pieces to establish a basic design and embellish it with small pieces to suggest significant detail in a realistic subject. Combine small pieces to build large shapes, using them to enhance the big shapes in a decorative manner without detracting from the importance of the shapes.

Pattern
Pattern refers to texture, as well as the visual patterns you create in your collage through repetition of lines, values, shapes and colors. The viewer’s eye follows these patterns—distinctive colors, flickers of dark values or flashes of white—throughout the composition. You have absolute control over this response.
The Principles

The principles of design are the rules you apply to the elements of design to organize your collage into a unified whole. You select design principles to reinforce the expressive idea you wish to communicate and rely on dominance of one element or principle to establish unity.

Harmony
Harmony occurs when your design has similar elements that express serenity and calm. Create harmony by selecting adjacent colors on the color wheel, basing a composition on similar geometric shapes or using a narrow value range.

Contrast
Contrast, which keeps your collage from becoming boring, is based on differences between elements. For example, add energetic diagonals to a placid, horizontal composition or inject a strong value or color to increase visual entertainment.

Rhythm
Rhythm is created when the spaces between shapes and colors create a cadence in the movement through the picture. Evenly spaced objects are sedate. A syncopated, irregular rhythm creates excitement. Sometimes you want to waltz; sometimes you want to boogie.

Repetition
Repetition creates movement and keeps the eye moving around the picture. Repeat materials, shapes, colors and directions with several variations.

Gradation
Gradation, the gradual change of any element of design, provides transition between areas of the design and contributes to the movement in the picture. Change color temperature from warm to cool, soften a jagged line to a gentle curve or round off the corners of a square to change it into a circle.

Balance
Balance is intuitively felt. Move the pieces and objects, adding and subtracting them until the design works for you. A symmetrical design is evenly divided. An asymmetrical design has unequal elements distributed according to visual weight.

Dominance
Dominance unifies your design. One design element must be more important than the others; one of the design principles must rule. Dominance resolves conflict among elements: one piece is bigger than another; one shape is repeated; one color is more intense than others.

Unity
Unity is the ultimate objective of design. When you've organized all of the collage fragments into a cohesive whole, whether it is serene or energetic, realistic or abstract, you've created a unified design. Several elements and principles of design may be integrated in a collage to create a meaningful visual expression with a sense of completeness about it.
Robert Paschal’s collage is unified by the theme reflected in the title, but is also an effective contemporary design using a strong framework of shapes and colors.

**PARKING**
Robert Paschal
Paper and photo collage
10½” × 13½”
(27cm × 34cm)

**MAKE COLLAGE DESIGN CARDS**
Create your own design cards to develop your design awareness. Play with different combinations of shape, size, color and so on. Once you become comfortable with the elements and principles of design, you’ll find yourself mixing and matching them easily in your collages. Nearly all of them will appear in every collage, but your choice of which ones are the most important will contribute to the sense of style in the piece.

This still life is a fine example of cut-and-pasted paper collage enhanced with touches of acrylic paint in the background and subtle shadows. The solid shapes and clean edges of cut paper work beautifully in this well-balanced composition.

**ORCHIDS AND PEARS** | Maya Farber
Acrylics and collage, 24” × 36” (61cm × 91cm)
Designing With Ready-Made Papers

As you’ve discovered, newspapers and magazines aren’t the only sources of materials for paper collage. Many beautiful, high-quality papers are available in art and school supply stores, craft shops and online. Your design sense improves as you work with ready-made papers and create stunning collage works at the same time, using unique combinations of colors and textures.

Ready-made papers should be acid-free or pH neutral and their colors lightfast, if you want your collage to last. Quality papers will last longer than those from newspapers and magazines; however, even these papers should be encased with medium or sprayed with Krylon Make It Acid-Free! to assure permanence. Avoid colored tissue and construction papers, which tend to fade or deteriorate quickly.

Some of the papers you might use include Asian rice or mulberry papers, Color-aid papers, textured charcoal and pastel papers, tinted watercolor papers, marbled papers or printmaking papers. Remember that the different characteristics of papers (weight, texture, rigidity, etc.) call for different methods of handling. For example, Color-aid papers are stiff and require a heavier application of gel than rice papers.

Experiment with different types of paper and keep notes on their behavior for future reference. Your collage style may evolve as you respond to the texture or handling qualities of a particular paper. In the projects that follow, you’ll learn more about how to handle several kinds of ready-made papers.

PAPER TERMS TO KNOW

acid-free Manufactured under acid-free conditions (neutral or alkaline); may be internally buffered with substances that neutralize environmental pollutants and prevent deterioration

deleckle The natural edge of handmade or moldmade papers

deterioration The result of acidity, pollution, insects, strong light, dust

grain The alignment of paper fibers; paper tears easily with the grain

lightfastness Resistance to fading

lignin Destructive property of wood pulp papers, which are high in acid.

pH neutral Paper that is acid-free or treated with an alkaline substance to control acidity, preventing discoloration and deterioration; 7 pH is balanced (neutral).

rag content The amount of linen or cotton fiber in a paper; high rag content usually means higher cellulose content and stronger paper.

size or sizing A material mixed into paper pulp or into which paper is dipped to make it less absorbent

surface Hot-press paper is smooth; cold-press paper is medium-rough (sometimes called “not”); rough paper is heavily textured.

watermark The manufacturer’s imprint on a sheet of paper, applied during manufacture

weight The thickness of paper is measured in grams per square meter (gsm) or pounds per ream (500 sheets).

Tissue paper overlay creates a glazing effect, similar to layers of transparent paint. The colors and patterns of underlying layers show through the transparent paper, instead of being covered. Dunning’s delightful image is small, but eye-catching.

DRAGON’S LAIR | Brian L. Dunning
Mixed media with tissue paper, cutouts, watercolor and photomontage
4½” x 6” (11cm x 15cm)
**Build a Torn-Paper Organic Design**

Create a collage that emphasizes the soft organic shapes natural to torn edges. Begin with a general subject or work intuitively, playing with big shapes and letting a strong, basic design evolve. Remember the principle of unity and establish dominance of one color, a distinctive shape or directional movement. Be sure to have a center of interest or focal point. Think of these design factors as you work out every collage.

**Materials**

- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- Encased illustration board, canvas board, Claybord or heavy watercolor paper
- Five or six colors of Color-aid, colored charcoal or pastel papers
- Matte or gloss medium or soft gel
- Synthetic brushes
- Soft rubber brayer

**TIPS**

- Handle your papers carefully; some of the smoother surfaces scratch easily.
- If you plan to cover the entire support, you needn’t use a white support, since these papers are opaque.
- Some of the colored papers reveal an interesting white or colored edge when torn. Make this part of your design.
- Note that the matte surface quality of the papers makes it preferable that you use matte soft gel to adhere them to your support so there will be no shiny spots on the collage.

Tear several random shapes from your colored papers and arrange them in a horizontal landscape pattern. Torn paper lends itself to effective landscapes, because of the organic nature of the soft, torn shapes. Keep design in mind as you balance the colors and shapes and adhere them.

**Varying a Torn Edge**

To create a white torn edge, tear your paper upward. Some papers produce a wider edge than others. With practice, you’ll learn to make this edge wide or narrow by changing the way you hold the paper and the direction you tear it.

**BLUE MOON | Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams**

Torn paper collage with Color-aid paper, 7” x 14” (18cm x 36cm)

Download free desktop wallpaper at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
Designing Collages in a Series

Working in a collage series provides you with a great opportunity to explore design with realistic images. Many artists move freely between realism and abstraction, frequently combining them in the same collage or developing their ideas in a series based on a theme or a design idea.

Collage artists use design elements and principles to abstract or reveal the “essential” nature of real things: the wavy lines of a turbulent sea, the solid shape of a rock wall and delicate lines of climbing ivy. By reducing the picture to just a few indications suggesting the subject, you needn’t provide a detailed image. In fact, the image may disappear completely, leaving only the symbolic lines and shapes that represent its origin.

As you design, look at your collages from different directions, upside down and sideways, or hold them up to a mirror for a fresh perspective. Stand back and squint to discern areas that need correction. When a design is working, whether abstract or realistic, it looks balanced, even when you hold it upside down. When the collage is finished, make another based on the same idea, and another. Set a goal—maybe five to ten in the series—but don’t stop if you’re still having fun!

In the first of his series (The Policeman, the Priest and the Cavalryman Await Their Companions) based on variations on a theme by Marcel Duchamp, Talbot superimposed photographic images onto strong design patterns suggesting a chessboard and an old architectural drawing. A surreal conflict arises between the realistic figures and their strange background. The artist used this image to launch the adventures of The Bachelors, creating historically correct environments and repeating elements in a different—but correct—perspective in each of his cut-paper collages.
Experimenting With Abstract Design

Try your hand at abstract collage. Keep in mind that all art requires solid design underlying the image. There are good examples in this book, such as the realistic Wall Street (see Project 1) and the surreal The Drawn Drape (see the end of chapter two).

Collages have a way of changing as you work on them. An abstract design may develop into an exciting, realistic image, or what started as a realistic picture may become abstract when you eliminate details and simplify shapes. Working with design elements and principles allows you to go either way, creatively and confidently.

With non-objective design, the picture has no apparent reference to a subject. Instead, design is the subject of the picture. Coalescence (see chapter seven) exemplifies nonobjective design. The picture is about color, line or shape without a specific image.

Decide which elements and principles of design will dominate; then, work intuitively. If you get stuck, refer to “The Elements” and “The Principles” (in this chapter) to break through the block. For example, suppose you want to make shape the subject of your collage. Decide what kind of shapes will be dominant—organic or geometric. How will you arrange these shapes? What colors will you use? Will you incorporate lines? What elements will you repeat; how will you vary them to create interest? As your plan evolves, subordinate all other elements to shape.

Based on a traditional cruciform design, this non-objective collage is well-balanced from every viewpoint. Varied shapes, patterns and colors keep the viewer's eye moving.

CONVERGENCE | Annis Allen
Acrylic paint and Prismacolor pencils with found papers
19” x 15” (48cm x 38cm)
Photograph by Jeff Rowe

Design With Mini-Collages
Enhance your design awareness by making small 4” x 6” (10cm x 15cm) collages that emphasize design. This one is based on shapes, patterns and contrast.

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Make Geometric Designs With Cut Paper

For this geometric, nonobjective abstraction you will cut rather than tear paper because a geometric design seems stronger with hard edges. This project calls for Color-aid papers, but you can also design geometric abstractions with found papers from magazines, as long as you don’t allow printed lettering and patterns to interfere with the nonobjective geometric design. The point is to create a strong abstract design and not an image. Nevertheless, if an image should appear, let yourself go wherever your collage takes you.

DESIgn QUESTIONS

Base your nonobjective picture on the elements and principles of design. Is your picture about color, shape, movement or pattern? Do you want curved or straight edges? Will the composition be horizontal, vertical or diagonal? What other design elements do you want to incorporate? How will you use repetition of shapes and colors, rhythm and gradation? Which element will dominate?

Colors and Shapes

Cut large squares, triangles, rectangles and other geometric shapes from your papers to build up a simple, nonobjective design. We selected violet as the dominant color for this design and decided on a whim to use a blue-green accent.

Value contrasts create a sense of form and help move the viewer’s eye across the picture. The hard, geometric shapes and analogous colors make a powerful combination.

PUSH/PULL

Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Cut-paper collage with Color-aid papers
10” x 14½” (25cm x 37cm)

The strong emphasis on shapes repeated with variations unifies this design. Although the photos are realistic, the design is abstract. Analogous blues flow throughout the composition, with a complementary rusty orange for contrast.

ABANDONED COAL SILOS

Robert Paschal
Paper and photo collage, 10½” x 13½” (27cm x 34cm)

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
| encased illustration board or heavy paper
| Color-aid papers (or other found papers you prefer)
| matte or gloss medium or soft gel
| scissors
| synthetic brushes
| soft rubber brayer

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Combine Cut and Torn Papers

Experiment with both cut and torn edges in the same collage. Play with combinations of a variety of colored ready-made and rice papers, which we’ll explore more extensively in chapter seven. Do you want to feature texture? Color? Shape? Determine at the outset whether you want a hard-edged, geometric abstraction with some soft contrasts or a flowing, realistic composition with a few sharp accents. It’s all up to you.

Abstraction defines an “essence,” or essential nature of a subject. Here, combining cut and torn edges, simplifying shapes and taking liberties with nature creates an abstract design that is strongly rooted in realism.

SUMMER LIGHTNING | Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Ready-made paper collage on illustration board
10” x 15” (25cm x 38cm)

I enjoyed contrasting the torn edges and intense colors of Color-aid papers in this abstract background. The cut edges of the outspread wings and the neutral colors of the eagle stand out in sharp relief against the vivid landscape.

CANYON CRUISE | Nita Leland
Color-aid and magazine paper on illustration board
7½” x 9½” (24cm x 19cm)

TIP

To adhere small pieces of thin rice papers, use medium instead of gel. If the adhesive shows through, add a tiny spot of rice paper on the bonded spot.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased illustration board | colored ready-made papers and rice papers | matte or gloss medium or soft gel | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer

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Perhaps you work intuitively with color when you make collages; still, your work will be even better if you base your intuition on knowledge. Color theorists recognize that artists’ color personalities influence their selection and use of colors. Learn basic color theory and develop your color perception through practice. When you work with color, keep in mind the design principle of dominance, an important factor in the unity of your collage.

Begin your collage with a theme or design idea and, as you gather your materials, search for color fragments that are harmonious. This chapter guides you in developing distinctive color combinations. As you work out your color plan, you needn’t sacrifice your spontaneity. It’s easy to add and subtract colors by applying new ones. Let your intuition tell you what’s working. You want your collage to be unique and expressive—color is the best way to achieve both goals.

Color dominates this dazzling piece with strong contrasts of pure, high-intensity hues and warm (red) and cool (blue) temperature contrast. Unity results from the subtle repetition-with-variation of handprints, colors and textures. The figurative elements lend an air of mystery to the abstract design.

**COALESCEENCE** | Delda Skinner
Mixed media collage including frottage and monoprint with acrylic, watercolor, rice, handmade and bark papers, pencils and stamps, 22” × 21” (56cm × 53cm)
Courtesy of Spicewood Gallery, Austin, Texas
In collage, as in all art mediums, the four properties of hue, value, intensity and temperature are the foundation for working with color. Use these to strengthen your focal point, unify your design and enhance the expressive content of your collage.

**Hue** is the spectral name of the color: red, red-orange, orange, yellow-orange, yellow, yellow-green, green, blue-green, blue, blue-violet, violet and red-violet. Color words like geranium, dragon’s blood or maroon are not hues.

**Value** is the range of lightness or darkness of a hue. A light value is a tint; a dark value is a shade.

**Intensity**, sometimes called saturation or chroma, indicates the brilliance or dullness of a hue. Adding gray or the complementary hue (opposite hue on the color wheel) to a pure, bright color results in lower intensity.

**Temperature** is the relative warmth or coolness of a hue. Red, orange and yellow are warm; green, blue and violet are cool. Any hue may seem warmer or cooler depending on what is next to it. And you may have reds that appear cooler than other reds, or blues that look warmer compared to other blues.

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**Make a Color Wheel**

Learn the relationships of hues on the color wheel and you’ll soon be a color expert. Make your own wheel with magazine clippings to familiarize yourself with the placement of colors around it.
Play With Color Contrasts on Cards

Paper collage artists can’t mix colors as painters do, but there are strategies to help them select and organize color for dynamic compositions. Six color contrasts—of pure hue, value, intensity, temperature, complements or size—play key roles in the impact a collage has on the viewer. Choose one of these to dominate your collage.

Juxtaposing colors in collage trains your eye to see color and design, and it’s easy to do. Cut out an assortment of small squares and rectangles in various colors and sizes up to 3” × 3” (8cm × 8cm). Play with color contrasts by arranging the pieces on 4” × 6” (10cm × 15cm) index cards in contrasting compositions. Glue the combinations you like to the cards and file them for future reference.

Miller boldly juxtaposes bright colors and patterns with a keen eye for complementary contrast. Value is important, but the emotional content comes from his deft handling of the colors he selects for his cut papers.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | 4” × 6” (10cm × 15cm) index cards | magazine and colored paper clippings | white glue or glue stick | scissors | soft rubber brayer

SIX KINDS OF COLOR CONTRAST

Pure hue contrast provides decorative, bold color excitement, such as the pure joy of a child’s painting or a powerful abstract collage.

Value contrast provides compelling visual impact, whether in the full range of values or in the expressive high- and low-key ranges.

Intensity contrast plays pure colors against lower-intensity hues; colors of similar intensity create harmonious color expression or mood.

Temperature contrast suggests depth, light and form, as well as weather, seasons and time of day.

Complementary contrast causes opposites on the color wheel to vibrate when placed next to each other, creating a powerful visual energy.

Size contrast refers to the relative quantities of colors used to create expression, movement or focal interest.

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Using Color Schemes in Collage

Without a color plan, collages have a way of becoming busy and muddy-looking. Reduce the number of colors in your collage to maintain unity.

Be confident in your color choices by using color schemes. Logical relationships of colors on the color wheel enable you to unify your collage designs using distinctive color harmonies with a broad range of expressive potential. The more colors you use, the more important it is that you choose them according to a system. Color schemes prevent you from falling back on repetitive tried-and-true combinations.

Two common color schemes, based on similarities, are monochromatic (a single color used in different values and intensities) and analogous (three to four hues that are adjacent on the color wheel). Complements (opposites on the color wheel) include split- or near-complements (one hue plus one or two hues on either side of its complement). Other color schemes include triads (three hues with a balanced or logical relationship on the color wheel) and tetrads (four hues with a balanced or logical relationship).

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR COLOR

Study the work of collage artists to see how they use color. Search online for collage art; bookmark sites you like. Comb through magazines and product folders for new color ideas to use in your collages. Make collage swatches of combinations to try in your next collage.

This abstraction strongly suggests natural forms. It might represent a geode or the rings around the heart of a tree. Whatever the subject may be, the abstract design is solid with the unifying elements of analogous colors and organic shapes.

FLOATING WORLD  |  Arthur Secunda
Handmade paper collage, 28½" × 22" (72cm × 56cm)
Limit Your Palette: Try a Triad

Maintain the color integrity of your collage by limiting the number of colors in your basic scheme. Color triads are a good place to start.

For a triad collage, limit yourself to three colors, collecting variations in values and intensities. Keep bright colors together for upbeat collages; use neutrals and earth hues for more subdued pictures. Make a sample card of each combination and write on the back your reaction to the colors. Choose a theme, select a color combination that expresses that idea, and consider how you might incorporate the color contrasts discussed in Project 20 for greater impact.

This intriguing color plan is called a modified triad. Red-violet, red-orange, and yellow-orange have one space between them on the color wheel and are far enough apart at each end to provide contrast. Nachtrieb makes the scheme work even better by adding a touch of gold for highlights.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | 4” × 6” (10cm × 15cm) index cards | magazine pages or colored papers | white glue or glue stick | scissors | soft rubber brayer

Triad Possibilities

Most painters use the red-yellow-blue primary triad. Magenta-yellow-and-cyan primaries have become popular as manufacturers continue to add magenta variations to their color lines. The secondary triad of orange-green-violet is a delightful combination that deserves more attention from artists.

 FOUND OBJECTS #11 | Shirley Eley Nachtrieb
Mixed media on 140-lb. (300gsm) cold-press watercolor paper, 8” × 8” (20cm × 20cm)
Design a Monochromatic Collage

A monochromatic collage includes a full range of values (light to dark) and intensities (bright to dull) of a single color. This simple color scheme enables you to balance value and intensity relationships as you work with line, shape, pattern and other design elements.

In this project you’ll plan a simple design and create a pattern of values in a single color. Cut or tear large pieces that are similar in shape, but not identical, adding smaller shapes to indicate one or more of the following: value contrast, size contrast or pattern repetition. Establish a focal point and dominant movement or direction.

Value Rules

Collect swatches of a single color in a complete range of light-to-dark values. Slight shifts in color, as in the blues shown here, add spice, but the key to the monochromatic scheme is value.

A monochromatic color scheme is beautifully harmonious because there is no competition with another hue. A bit of value contrast is provided in this collage by the neutral black and flickers of iridescent color. The addition of the linear element adds a touch of surprise in what is essentially a shape collage.

SEA FRAGMENTS | Jean Deemer
Acrylic and iridescent paint on hand-painted papers, marbled paper, gold cord, shells and iridescent cellophane on brayer-painted illustration board, 14” × 21” (36cm × 53cm)

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | 4” × 6” (10cm × 15cm) index cards | magazine pages or colored papers | white glue or glue stick | scissors | soft rubber brayer

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Use Analogous Colors in a Collage

Create a collage, realistic or abstract, with an analogous color scheme to unify your design. Select a range including three or four colors next to each other on the color wheel. Use magazine pages or other colored papers for your palette. If you include patterned or textured papers, make certain that these elements are harmonious with the color scheme and don’t conflict with the color dominance. Cut or tear edges as you please.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | 4” x 6” (10cm x 15cm) index cards | magazine pages or colored papers | white glue or glue stick | scissors | soft rubber brayer

Friendly Neighbors
Close relationships of analogous colors create a dominant mood. Value changes add to the impact of these colors.

Here, realistic images and patterns are integrated with rectangular shapes for an abstract design. The unifying analogous colors speak of autumn.

SPLENDOUR OF THE SEASONS—FALL | Lynn Lawson Pajunen
Acrylic collage, 24” × 18” (36cm × 46cm)

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Incorporating a complementary color scheme into your design makes an exciting collage because these colors vibrate when they’re placed next to each other. All of nature is designed around organic shapes, from spiral sea shells to tree branches and rolling waves. Find a design you like and make a natural subject fit the design shapes. Add a dynamic complementary color scheme and you have a unique collage design.

Choose a complementary color scheme of unusual colors. For example, instead of red and green, try red-orange and blue-green—or red-violet and yellow-green. Base your collage on natural designs, like spirals, branches or waves. My favorite natural shape is the cross section of a green pepper.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four):
- 4” × 6” (10cm × 15cm) index cards
- magazine pages or colored papers
- white glue or glue stick
- scissors
- soft rubber brayer

Intense blue makes a striking complementary contrast next to analogous colors ranging from yellow-orange through orange to red-orange. Pajunen combines paint and papers in this richly textured image.

**BUTTERFLY MAGIC** | Lynn Lawson Pajunen
Acrylic collage, 24” × 24” (61cm × 61cm)

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Weave Colored Papers

Weaving colored papers creates collages rich in color and texture. Combine colored papers and magazine illustrations, along with posters, old watercolors and wallpaper. Select both solid and patterned materials with strong color dominance to unify the different colors and textures in the design. Cut your papers into strips of different widths to add variety. You may also incorporate nonpaper items such as fibers, ribbons, string and yarn. Use the finished woven piece as a focal point or background in your collage.

Weaving Paper

Lay out columns of contrasting colored paper strips of varying widths. Tape along the top to keep the strips from moving; then weave more colored strips of paper plus lengths of ribbon or yarn through the row.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased illustration board | magazine pages or colored papers, posters, old watercolors, wallpaper, fibers, ribbons, string, yarn | matte or gloss medium or soft gel | low-tack drafting tape | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer

The complementary color scheme of blue and orange is enhanced with patterned strips and red accents. Yarn instead of paper strips was inserted across some rows. Once adhered to an encased illustration board, matte medium was brushed onto the background and bits of cut paper sprinkled on to add energy to the composition.

CELEBRATION

Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Cut paper and yarn on illustration board
15" × 10" (38cm × 25cm)

The large squares that dominate this design are repeated in the small squares in the woven pattern, making this piece wonderfully consistent throughout. Analogous blues and greens dominate the color scheme and further unify the design. The linear squiggles in the background make the solid shapes appear to float. The effect makes this a very active piece. Simple shapes don’t necessarily mean a simple design.

MAVERICK MOMENT SERIES #2

Rochelle Neuman
Acrylic paints and woven elements
16" × 23" (41cm × 58cm)
Many fine collages simply “evolve” from start to finish. However, this demonstration of a larger-than-life orchid shows you how to plan a striking collage design and carry it through to completion. If you have never worked this way before, you’ll discover that thinking through the whole process helps you to better understand color and design. You’ll be glad you did; your work will be stronger for it.

To enlarge our drawing, we made a grid on our value sketch and a similar grid on tracing paper the same size as our encased collage board, then copied the drawing into corresponding squares on the larger grid. We rubbed the back of the tracing paper with 2B graphite pencil and wiped the paper with rubbing alcohol on a cotton ball to keep the graphite from smudging the board. Finally, we laid the paper with the graphite side down and transferred the drawing to the board by tracing over the lines on the tracing paper.

Colors found in nature are a safe bet, so we chose violets and greens for the color scheme. We laid out an array of colored papers and picked those that gave us the color and value contrasts we wanted, with the violet leaning toward red and the greens an assortment of analogous hues. We chose a sharp accent of red-orange that was complementary to the blue-greens in the background.

We coded the shapes with numbers and letters on the tracing paper pattern to correspond with numbers and letters on the support. Then we cut up the pattern and traced the outlines on the colored papers, writing the numbers and letters lightly on the backs of the pieces. Background pieces were cut a bit larger so they would fit under the intricate edges of the flower petals.

We researched our subject first so we could make a believable flower in a simplified design form. We tried several different arrangements in preliminary value sketches. The dominant elements would be shape and color, with contrast and repetition of elements controlling the design.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased illustration board | selection of rice papers and ready-made papers, coordinating with chosen color scheme | sketching and tracing papers | 2B graphite pencil | rubbing alcohol | cotton balls | matte or gloss medium or soft gel | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer

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We worked our way across the support, tracing, cutting and adhering shapes to the drawing as we went along. The big background shapes were broken up into different values and colors to suggest the flickering light of the rain forest surrounding the orchid. These contrasting pieces were carefully selected to emphasize the petals of the large flower. Occasionally, we stepped back to study the overall effect.

Some final touches were added to complete the piece. Narrow strips of fibrous rice paper gave form to the petals. The red-orange focal point was placed on the dark throat of the larger orchid. And a tiny woven-paper piece was attached to the background for a decorative touch, suggesting a grassy texture and bringing an element of surprise into the picture. The entire piece was encased in one coat of gloss medium and a final coat of matte medium.

**TROPICAL SPLENDOR** | Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams

Paper collage on illustration board, 15” × 20” (38cm × 51cm)
PART 4: Mixed-Media Collage
Countless rice and mulberry papers, including kinwashi, natsume, chiri, unryu, taiten, washi, masa and hosho, are available to the collage artist. They’re sold in sheets, pads and rolls used for Asian brush painting. Although art supply stores usually carry some of these papers, a greater selection can be found at online retailers. Use a search engine to find specific papers like the ones listed here.

Rice papers come in a variety of colors, weights and textures, some lacy and glittering, with fibers, bark, petals and other interesting materials embedded in them. These papers provide unique tactile sensations that enhance your enjoyment of the collage process. Many rice papers are somewhat transparent, so if you wish to retain the natural colors of the papers, use white illustration board or prepare a support by coating it with white gesso. Dry the coated support thoroughly before arranging your collage.

Some rice papers, such as the lacy-patterned ones and lightweight unryu, become fragile when wet and tear easily, so you may need to apply matte medium or soft gel to your support and lay the paper onto the wet gel. When adhered over strong colors, these rice papers make lovely glazes that soften the color like a delicate, textured veil.

Here are some of the elegant Asian papers found in art and craft stores. What we call “rice paper” is usually imported mulberry paper. The term rice paper is so widely recognized that I will use it to refer to most papers of this type and origin.
Create a Rice Paper Collage

Choose three or four different types of rice paper in variations of a natural bark paper, whites or off-white to create a harmonious picture. For this project, manipulate shapes and textures only, without a subject. As you arrange the pieces, keep in mind the elements and principles of design. Experiment to learn how to handle delicate papers when they are wet with medium.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) |
encased illustration board | three or four types of rice paper, slightly varied but harmonious |
matte medium or soft gel | synthetic brushes |
HB pencil | soft rubber brayer | hair dryer

Adhering Rice Paper
A selection of natural papers, including my favorite bark paper, can be torn and layered on an encased support in a pleasing arrangement. Brush matte medium or soft gel (not gloss) on the back of medium- to heavy-weight pieces. Adhere papers that seem too fragile when wet by brushing the gel directly on the support and applying the papers to the wet medium.

Shape wet papers as you adhere them, or loosen the edges while the adhered paper is still wet and work them with your fingers to soften and roll them. Thin, transparent papers allow the layers below to show through. Light causes shadows to play across the richly textured surface.

CLOUDS | Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Rice paper collage on illustration board, 12” × 15” (30cm × 38cm)

STEPS

1 Start with two or three large pieces of rice paper, adding contrasting pieces and overlapping edges. Create a focal point and connections between areas.

2 Trace lightly with an HB pencil around pieces to mark their placement on your encased support. Then adhere the pieces, starting with the bottom layer. Bond small pieces to the larger sections before you move them. Use matte medium or soft gel (not gloss) to preserve the natural beauty of the papers. Brush medium gently on the back of the piece to be adhered. Lift and place carefully on the support. For large pieces or fragile paper, brush medium directly on the support, then lay the paper on it and pat down or roll gently with a soft brayer.

3 Dry your collage as you go along with a hair dryer set on low; rice papers look darker when they’re wet, which can be misleading as you work.

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Assorted Asian rice papers are enhanced here by rubber stamping and found materials, such as gauze, twigs and leaves. The materials are deftly distributed to keep the viewer’s eye circulating around the focal point, which anchors the composition in the center. Artists usually avoid the center, but here it works.

**ETERNAL SERENADE** | Sharon M. Eley
Acrylic handpainted tissue, handmade stamps, digital images and leaf
20” × 20” (51cm × 51cm)

Another way to use rice paper collage is to add textural interest to a painting done on rice paper. Here, bits of natural rice paper add texture to the background; colored papers applied to the green leaves create more depth.

**HIBISCUS** | Virginia Lee Williams
Acrylic and rice paper collage on illustration board
24½” × 12” (62cm × 51cm)
Private collection

**TIPS**

- Torn rice papers are particularly beautiful when long fibers extend from the edges. Most rice papers are fragile when wet, but difficult to tear when dry. To control the direction and shape of your tear, use a wet pointed brush to moisten along the edge to be torn. A soft, feathered edge remains when you tear carefully along the dampened line.

- Rice papers are especially effective when used with similar papers. Observe how some layers are transparent and allow underlying textures to show through to different degrees. This creates an interesting push/pull effect in the final design.

- Test your papers for their transparency before applying them. Your design may change slightly as you shift the pieces around.

- Some rice papers tend to stretch slightly when wet. If the result isn’t what you planned, simply add another piece. The element of surprise is part of the fun—and challenge—of collage.
Tint Your Rice Papers

Try tinting rice and mulberry papers with lightfast inks, watercolors or acrylics before adhering them to a collage. Dilute liquid acrylics, heavy-body acrylic paints or watercolors to a thin consistency, so they make transparent washes. Plan a color scheme and tint with these colors. The rice paper should be similar to medium-weight unryu. Lighter weights are too fragile, and heavier weights too opaque. Papers with long fibers work beautifully.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- unryu or other textured rice paper
- matte medium or soft gel
- thinned watercolor or acrylic paints or lightfast inks
- 2-inch (51mm) wash brush, no. 8 or larger pointed brush
- freezer paper

How to Tint Your Papers

Drip or paint watercolors or acrylics on medium-weight, textured rice paper. The paint crawls into the veins of the paper, creating a batik effect. Coat with matte medium or soft gel on both sides. Let it dry, and then tear the painted paper into pieces and arrange in a collage, or file your hand-colored papers for later use.

I tinted strips of unryu rice paper with acrylics to coordinate with the watercolor washes on the background. The gradation of analogous colors in this collage, from yellow to red-orange, contributes to a whirling motion.

SIX LESSONS LEARNED

1. Crumple your papers (wet or dry) to create a network of veins throughout.
2. Stain them by dripping thinned water-based paints from a round brush onto the paper.
3. For more saturated color, tint several times or add more color to the thinned paint. Lightly spritz the paper with water to help the colors spread; or, dip a large wash brush into liquid colors and stroke them liberally over the paper.
4. When the papers are dry, encase them in medium on both sides. Place the encased paper on the waxy side of freezer paper to dry, lifting occasionally to prevent sticking. The tinted paper will be nicely textured, with darker colors in the veins.

STEPS

TIPS

- Place several layers of rice paper beneath the sheet you’re painting. The paint will soak through the papers, and you’ll have extra color-coordinated papers for your collages.
- Brightly colored rice papers and craft tissue may not be lightfast. Some fade quickly and degrade your artwork. If you use such papers, spray them with a protector like Krylon Preserve It! and encase with several coats of matte medium or gel.
- After tinting, store leftover paints in sealed jars to use another day.

SIX LESSONS LEARNED

Nita Leland
Mixed-media collage on watercolor board
22" × 22" (56cm × 56cm)

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Encase Flat Natural Items in Rice Paper

In previous projects you used mediums alone to seal your collage materials in order to protect them from exposure and deterioration; here, you’ll encase natural items between transparent rice paper or tissue to create lovely customized collage papers. Use white unryu or any other translucent rice paper. Silk papers also work nicely with this process. Gather an assortment of relatively flat natural items; we’ll use leaves in this project. If necessary, I soak dry leaves to restore flexibility before encasing. Some fresh material will retain colors when encased, but others fade. Experiment!

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | assortment of flat natural items (such as leaves and flower petals) | unryu or other translucent rice paper, or silk papers | freezer paper | gloss medium or soft gel | synthetic brush | soft rubber brayer | pin

1. Lay two same-size pieces of rice paper on freezer paper and coat one side of each sheet with gloss medium or soft gel and let them dry, lifting the edges gently now and then to prevent sticking. Turn both pieces over and coat the back of the sheets. Arrange leaves in the wet medium on one sheet. Lay the second sheet, still wet with medium, on top of the leaves.

2. To bond the leaves and rice paper together, roll gently with a soft brayer from the center to the edges, pricking air bubbles with a pin to force air out. Roll again. Lay the finished piece on freezer paper to dry overnight. The paper will become translucent as it dries.

3. Use the encased leaves as a small composition or as a focal area in a larger collage.

This piece of onion skin encased in kinwashi paper could be framed without backing or applied to a collage as a focal point or textural enhancement. Notice how the fibers show up against the color of the onion skin.

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Watercolor and collage work well together in several ways. Start with bold, splashy washes as a background and build up a collage design or image on it. Or collage your support with rice paper and glaze the surface with watercolor washes. You might even strengthen values in a watercolor with dark bits of collage or add rice paper texture to the surface. Just remember, either the collage or the watercolor technique should be dominant but not overpowering.

Papers encased in acrylic mediums behave differently with watercolor. Some absorb and others repel the color. Test your papers with watercolor and experiment with watercolor mediums such as ox gall to improve the flow or Winsor & Newton Aquapasto to give the paint a heavier body or shine. To make corrections, paint over areas with opaque acrylic gesso, then use Golden Absorbent Ground to coat the surface so it will accept watercolor with less crawling.

Several mediums qualify as watercolor: transparent watercolor, gouache, casein, and even acrylics thinned with medium to watercolor consistency. The term “watermedia” is used in this book to include these and other water-based mediums applied in an aqueous manner, as washes rather than a thick paint film. When working in pure, transparent watercolor, coat only the back of watercolor paper with gloss medium if you wish to retain the handling characteristics of the paint on the surface.
Enhance a Watercolor With Collage

When adding collage to a watercolor, use matte medium or soft gel as your adhesive because they won’t create shiny areas on the surface. If you want to use collage pieces that have already been encased in gloss medium, simply brush matte medium over them after they’re adhered. For this technique allow the watercolor to dominate; try not to overdo the collage treatment.

Apply the medium to the collage pieces, not to the watercolor. Handle the pieces carefully so you don’t drip medium or gel on the artwork.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | HB pencil | heavyweight watercolor paper or illustration board | collage papers | watercolor paints and brushes | matte medium or soft gel | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer | hair dryer

Steps

1. Begin with watercolor washes over a light pencil sketch of your subject, or flow paint boldly on the surface and draw into this background after it dries.

2. As you paint the shapes, watch for areas where collage materials might create interest, such as rice-paper textures on rocks or newsprint on the side of a building or fence.

3. Adhere your collage pieces to the watercolor. Then brush a coat of matte medium over them, being careful not to brush medium on the watercolor.

4. Dry with a hair dryer on low. Then paint back into the collage pieces with watercolor, so they blend into the picture.

When the collage bits were dry, light values were sponged out, carefully avoiding the collage areas. Watercolor washes enhanced contrasts and colors. Details and glazes sharpened the image.

DESCENDING EAGLE | Nita Leland
Watercolor collage on illustration board
15” × 20” (38cm × 51cm)
Spontaneous washes create a watery background for the fish cutouts. A peacock feather provides an interesting accent, picking up the rhythms of the underwater plant forms. Notice, too, how Clark picked up those rhythms in the patterns on the fish and repeated the colors of the fish in the background. Good design thinking.

**BUDDIES**

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Pat Clark  
*Mixed-media collage, 18” × 14” (46cm × 36cm)*

Nachtrieb’s collage materials are well integrated into the watermedia background, which might be watercolor or acrylic used in an aqueous manner.

**NATURAL ELEMENTS #2**  
*Shirley Eley Nachtrieb  
Watermedia collage, 22” × 30” (56cm × 76cm)*

Nachtrieb’s collage materials are well integrated into the watermedia background, which might be watercolor or acrylic used in an aqueous manner.

**Upp’s trompe l’oeil** collage consists of an arrangement of leaves hand-painted on watercolor paper. Some were cut out and adhered to a background simulating a mat. The shadows around the leaves were painted on to create a convincing three-dimensional effect.

**AUTUMN CARPET**  
*Jan Upp  
Watercolor collage, 17½” × 28” (44cm × 71cm)*

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*Jan Upp  
Watercolor collage, 17½” × 28” (44cm × 71cm)*

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Recycle a Watercolor With Collage

Some artists throw away their failed artwork. Please don’t do that. Those pieces could turn out to be resources for new collages, either as backgrounds or as enhancements to watermedia paintings that need a lift. Keep everything you draw or paint. Revisit your archives now and then—especially when you’re stuck—to find something you can resurrect as a collage. At the very least, you can practice collage layering and glazing techniques without endangering your current work-in-progress.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) 
| encased illustration board | your cast-off paintings: old watercolors on paper or acrylics on canvas (no oil paintings) | matte medium or soft gel | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer

Use Those Torn Edges

Take advantage of beautiful torn edges on watercolor paper collage. Dampen the pieces and use gel to adhere them to a firm support, such as illustration board.

Collage to the Rescue

Just a few bits of paper can make a difference. Cut or tear small pieces of colored magazine illustrations and place them strategically on your painting to emphasize edges or highlight a focal point.

STEPS

1. Pull out two or three abandoned watercolors or acrylics that appear harmonious in color and technique. One might serve as the background, or you can use an encased illustration board.

2. As you cut or tear the art into pieces, set aside any with special effects or images that might be developed into a center of interest. Sort the rest by color, shape or subject.

3. Play with different arrangements. When you’re ready to make your collage, transfer the pieces from the background up. Dampen the back of a piece with water, then brush matte medium or soft gel onto it and roll it flat onto your support. For large creations, work in sections so the pieces are secure.

4. Cover the collaged surface with freezer paper (waxy side) and weight it down until dry.

TIPS

- Watercolors may be on heavy paper, so it helps to dampen collage pieces on the back and use gel to adhere them. Saturate the paper with medium; then apply the papers to a support that is covered with wet gel. After the collage is assembled and partially dried, lay freezer paper waxy side down on the collage and weight it down with books overnight.

- If you enter juried exhibitions, bear in mind that most watercolor shows don’t accept entries that include collage.
Use Watermedia on Rice Paper

Watercolors look quite different when applied to a collaged support. The paper absorbs the paint unevenly, resulting in subtle variations in hue and value that are beautiful yet challenging to work with. The paint crawls through the fibers and settles into wrinkles in the paper, making a batik-like surface. The paint has a mind of its own, don’t try to control it. Go with the flow. Try using thin, translucent layers of rice paper, with or without fibers, or acid-free wrapping tissue and your watercolors.

How Watercolors Can Look Different on the Surface

Watercolor washes across this illustration board look different in each section, with paint soaking in and fading in the rice-paper-coated panel on the left, crawling and remaining fairly intense in the center (another type of rice paper), and retaining hard edges and richness on the uncoated right.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased illustration board | watercolor paints | rice paper | matte medium or soft gel | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer | pin | optional: ox gall

Steps

1. Brush an encased support with matte medium or soft gel and lay a sheet of rice paper on top of the wet medium. Roll the surface gently with a brayer to adhere the paper, allowing it to wrinkle. Puncture bubbles with a pin and bray again to remove air.

2. If the paper tears, simply patch it with a small piece of rice paper and matte medium. If you prefer a heavily textured surface, adhere layers of torn rice papers across the support.

3. When the collaged support is dry, paint on the rice paper as you would any watercolor paper. Adjust creatively to the unusual effects that result; for example, where the paint soaks into the crevices in the wrinkled paper, make a textured area. If necessary, put three or four drops of ox gall in your rinse water to improve the paint flow.

I laminated heavily fibered rice paper to encased illustration board and encouraged wrinkling. After braying the wet paper, I brushed a coat of matte medium over it. When the surface dried, I applied watercolor washes to the background, and the tree forms magically appeared in the crevices of the laminated surface.

MORNING LIGHT  |  Nita Leland
Watercolor on rice-paper laminated illustration board
15” × 20” (38cm × 51cm)

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Rice paper overlays give you a second chance with watercolors, freshening up muddy, overworked areas or modifying garish color. The hazy overlay of semitransparent rice paper is sometimes called a rice paper glaze.

Try combining several rice paper techniques in the same painting. For example, paint bold colors on a laminated rice paper support, then use rice paper as a glaze over the painting to modify colors and create textured areas.

**Materials**

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- watercolor that needs improving
- thin, textured rice paper, such as light kinwashi or unryu
- matte medium or soft gel
- synthetic brushes
- soft rubber brayer
- watercolor paints or watermedia of choice
- hair dryer

**STEPS**

1. Apply a thin coat of matte medium or soft gel to the back of the watercolor to keep the paper from curling after the rice paper is applied. Dry it with a hair dryer.

2. With a big brush, spread a heavy coat of matte medium or soft gel quickly over the entire surface of the watercolor. Immediately lay a sheet of thin, textured rice paper over the wet surface; pat it down or gently roll it flat with a soft brayer. Don’t worry about wrinkles; they add interesting texture. Let the rice paper dry.

3. Complete your picture with watermedia, stopping frequently to let it dry and to evaluate what’s happening. The rice paper will absorb the colors so they’ll look different when dry. Repeat the rice paper application in small areas to build up textures or recover whites. Repaint where needed to enhance colors and strengthen values.

**THE LIGHT BEYOND** | Nita Leland
Watercolor and rice paper collage
15” × 20” (38cm × 51cm)
This artist layered rice paper, tracing paper, gold papers, plastics and other materials on a laminated tissue support, then painted with acrylics and added collaged figures. She sees this layering process as symbolic of the multidimensional “spirit world.”

**SPIRIT DANCE IV** | Marilyn Stocker  
Mixed media collage, 21½” × 17” (55cm × 43cm)

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Smith made a monochromatic underpainting on illustration board, then bonded fibrous rice paper to the entire surface. He finished the piece with transparent watercolor glazes. The rice paper fibers add sparkle to the landscape.

**MAIN STREET BRIDGE, DAYTON** | David L. Smith  
Watermedia, laminated rice paper on illustration board  
14” × 20” (36cm × 51cm)

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Brommer, well known for his mastery of collage, developed strong shapes and effective colors and textures in this watercolor enhanced with rice paper.

**EARLY SPRING, YOSEMITE** | Gerald F. Brommer  
Watercolor and rice paper collage, 22” × 30” (56cm × 76cm)  
Courtesy of Fireside Gallery, Carmel, California

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Overlay a painted support with thin silk paper to create a delicate pattern on the surface. These papers are available in many different designs. Before collaging, they are nearly opaque white, but after being adhered with gloss medium, the pattern stands out against the colors.

**ANOTHER OVERLAY TO TRY**

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The versatility of acrylic paints makes them an excellent medium to use in your collages. They’re quick-drying, flexible, durable, highly saturated in color and very forgiving. Most acrylic paints have more body and flexibility than watercolor, wet or dry; and, as an added benefit, acrylics act as an adhesive when collage materials are applied to the wet paint.

As with most opaque mediums, acrylics hide your mistakes. They bond to most surfaces; once dry, they cannot be removed. Acrylics won’t bond to a surface with oil or wax content, however. Matte or gloss medium extends or thins this paint without weakening color and may improve paint transparency.

There are virtually no limits to what is doable in collage using acrylics on paper or canvas. Every experiment leads you to new discoveries. Just keep in mind some basic points, including this one: Oil and acrylics don’t mix. Use oil paint or oil pastel on top of an acrylic base, but don’t use oils underneath acrylics or the paint will peel off.

Be aware that slow-drying acrylic products may cause uneven drying of collage layers, which could affect the appearance and longevity of your collage.

Acrylic mediums and gels are the most popular adhesives for collage. As it happens, acrylic paints are equally effective for securing collage pieces to a mixed-media piece. Baspaly’s work is as much painting as collage, with the emphasis on color and design.

THERE IS NO END TO THE SEARCH
Donna Baspaly
Mixed media with collage on canvas
48” × 36” (122cm × 91cm)
Kurbatoff Art Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
All About Acrylics

Acrylic paints come in a wide selection of hues, including interference, iridescent and metallic-effect colors. Paint viscosity (thickness) varies from creamy paints in tubes and jars to fluid acrylics in plastic squirt bottles, concentrated heavy-load high-viscosity colors and airbrush colors. Try acrylic paints in different brands to see which you prefer.

Undiluted, thick acrylic paints create rich textures and opaque layers without the cracking associated with impasto oil painting. Or they can be thinned with water or medium. Fluid acrylic paints provide a watercolorlike effect and are useful for tinting medium-weight rice papers to make colored paper glazes on your collages. Add water cautiously, though; too much water may create a weak paint that doesn’t bond properly to the support.

Keep track of the techniques you try as you work through this book. Paint samples of textured acrylic mediums and color mixtures, combined with paper collage materials, on scraps of illustration board or mat board. Record the methods and materials you use on the back. Keep a detailed journal of your results with the procedures in the chapters that follow.

Use gloss medium or soft gel for most applications, including coating the support. To cut down on glare and prevent shiny spots, add a coat of matte medium. Heavier mediums work best for heavy papers and objects. Clean excess medium from around the edges of an adhered piece before it dries. Use any acrylic medium—including paint—to secure papers or objects. You can incorporate collage into an acrylic painting while the paint is wet. Don’t forget to encase your collage with gloss medium or soft gel to protect the collaged bits. (Note: Watercolor may be disturbed by coating, and some rice papers look better encased in matte mediums and soft gels.) Review the mediums chart in chapter four to find the acrylic medium most suitable for your project.

From start to finish, from simple to complex, procedures for all collages are much the same, aren’t they? Coat the support with gloss medium on both sides, adhere the collage material with matte or gloss medium or soft gel, and coat the finished collage with gloss medium and an optional top coat of matte medium to reduce shine. Now, let’s see how much fun it is to add acrylic paint to the process.

CLIFF DWELLERS #1 | Katherine Chang Liu
Mixed-media collage, 44” × 31” (112cm × 79cm)
Courtesy of Louis Neuman Galleries, Los Angeles
Private collection

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The materials in this collage are unified by an analogous color scheme in acrylic paints. Acrylic mediums and paints are versatile as adhesives, body color and unifying glazes. In thin applications, acrylics and watercolors look similar, but watercolor doesn’t work as an adhesive.

CHACO REVISITED | Ann L. Hartley
Poured acrylic paint, torn papers and bags, and hand-spun, hand-dyed yarns
30” × 23” (76cm × 58cm)

Acrylic painting and drawing combine here with paper collage and image transfers in a lively composition based on a theme. The artist uses her considerable knowledge and experience with animal subjects to enhance a powerful abstract design.

COWLLAGE SERIES | Sharon Stolzenberger
Collage, acrylic and image transfers on watercolor board
18” × 28” (46cm × 71cm)
Collection of the artist

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Collage materials take a back seat in this vibrant collage—less is more. The artist appears to have incorporated intense color into the collage bits to unify the design. Or she might have pulled her dominant color from the pattern in found papers.

CELEBRATION OF RED | Cheryl McClure
Found and painted papers and acrylic paint
20” × 11½” (51cm × 29cm)

Rosen incorporates a variety of objects in her collages, including drawings, paintings, found objects and images from old books. My fascination with this piece is the diagram of the brain, which she found in an old book. She used acrylic mediums to transfer the line drawing and painted it on the back with iridescent acrylic so it would show up on the background.

BRAINY | Merle Rosen
Acrylic gels and paints on Yupo, collaged on 300-lb. (640gsm) cold-press watercolor paper and board, 8” × 8” (20cm × 20cm)
Create a Crystalline Free Form

A crystalline free form combines beautifully with other materials in your collages. Gather a number of small, colorful objects to embed in the free-form shape you make; look for objects such as gold or silver string, ribbon, painted sticks, metal shavings and dried floral materials. Use fluid or airbrush acrylics for the paint colors in this project. Plan a color scheme of three or four colors.

After you experiment with the basic procedure on this page, invent your own variations. What if you used matte gel instead of gloss? What if you combined the two mediums in a swirling pattern? What if you used earth colors instead of bright hues? What if you embedded sticks and stones, instead of glittery things? Let your imagination play.

1. Pour or spoon several puddles of a creamy mixture of half gloss gel and half gloss medium or soft gloss gel onto freezer paper (waxy side) that has been taped to mat board or heavy cardboard. Shape them with a palette knife into a single interesting form, about 8” (20cm) around and ¼” (6mm) thick. Leave a few openings in the shape as you spread the medium.

2. Drop paint here and there (perhaps with an eyedropper) on the wet form and tease it into swirls in the medium with a toothpick or small stick to create a pleasing pattern, bringing color to the edges of the form.

3. Gently press small objects, such as beads, bits of metal or colored sticks, into the wet free form.

4. Allow the free form to dry flat until the medium is transparent. (Note: Acrylic mediums appear milky until completely dry, except for matte gel, which doesn’t dry crystal-clear.) This may take several days. Don’t try to speed up the drying, or the shape may shrivel up like a raisin. Peel the dried shape off the board and use it in a collage. (See this one used in All That Glitters in the demonstration at the end of chapter 15.)

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)  
gloss gel and gloss medium or soft gloss gel  |  acrylic paints  |  cardboard or mat board  
masking tape  |  small objects to press into the free form  |  freezer paper  |  palette knife  |  eyedropper  |  toothpicks

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Make an Acrylic Appliqué

Acrylics—tube, jar or fluid—dry as a plastic film or “skin” that makes a fascinating collage material. Drip or pour a layer of acrylic paint on freezer paper. After this film dries thoroughly, apply it as a focal point in a collage; or, if it’s large, use it as a background for other collage materials, attaching them to the appliqué using acrylic medium or gel. Cut the film into smaller pieces and arrange them on a support, as you would collage papers, or make several appliqués in different sizes, repeating the colors and shapes with variations. Then arrange a collage around them.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased support | acrylic paint | matte or gloss medium or soft gel | freezer paper | palette knife | synthetic brushes | optional: found objects

1 Pour or spread acrylic paint onto freezer paper (waxy side), making an interesting color design in a free-form shape about 6” (15cm) around. The appliqué may take several days to dry, depending on how thick the layer of paint is.

2 When the paint is dry, slip a palette knife under the edge to work it free and carefully peel the color off the freezer paper to use in a collage. If the paint is thin, it may tear in places, making a more interesting piece. Bond the appliqué to an encased support by brushing a layer of medium or soft gel on the support and patting the piece in place.

A piece of sea fan and other found objects were embedded in a wet paint film. After the film dried, the entire piece was removed from the freezer paper and bonded to acid-free mat board.

MARGARET ROSE | Virginia Lee Williams
Acrylic paint and found objects, 9” × 15” (23cm × 38cm)
Rescue a Painting With Gesso and Collage

Sometimes it’s difficult to make corrections in a painting without making mud. Gesso and collage to the rescue! Acrylic gesso, which is opaque, covers your mistakes and provides a matte surface to repaint or collage into. The finished product may bear little resemblance to the original. That’s OK; your objective is not to save the old picture but to make a successful new one.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- old or unfinished watermedia painting
- rice paper and clippings
- white gesso
- acrylics, watercolors
- Golden’s Absorbent Ground
- matte medium or soft gel
- synthetic brushes
- soft rubber brayer

Painting in Trouble
This unfinished mixed-media and watercolor painting is fragmented and lacks unity. The color scheme works, so we decided to take a shot at fixing it with collage.

Cover and Collage
Painting out some areas with opaque white gesso recovered light areas and simplified some of the busy ones. We painted over the gesso with acrylics and used rice papers tinted with watercolors to enhance the color scheme.

Creating Unity With Collage
We selected collage pieces in colors coordinating with the underpainting, carrying out the blue-green dominance and picking up red-orange accents. Fragments of rice paper were tinted with watercolor and the pieces adhered to the underpainting.

Paint in Trouble
This unfinished mixed-media and watercolor painting is fragmented and lacks unity. The color scheme works, so we decided to take a shot at fixing it with collage.

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We selected collage pieces in colors coordinating with the underpainting, carrying out the blue-green dominance and picking up red-orange accents. Fragments of rice paper were tinted with watercolor and the pieces adhered to the underpainting.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- old or unfinished watermedia painting
- rice paper and clippings
- white gesso
- acrylics, watercolors
- Golden’s Absorbent Ground
- matte medium or soft gel
- synthetic brushes
- soft rubber brayer

Steps
1. Cover the troublesome area with white gesso. Let it dry to see if the underlying color bleeds through. (Some watercolor dyes, inks or colored pencils tend to do this.) If it does, seal with a layer of gel and another layer of gesso.

2. Watercolor and thinned acrylics tend to crawl on a gesso surface, and some artists love to play with the unexpected consequences. For more control, treat the surface with a couple of thin coats of Golden’s Absorbent Ground and let it dry before painting.

3. Add collage pieces to complete the work. Coordinate your selection of papers with the colors in the picture or tint rice papers to match. Introduce color and value contrasts.

4. A thin wash of gesso may be used to make a translucent veil that unifies discordant elements in a design. If needed, add this after the collage pieces are adhered and dried.

CASCADES
Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Watermedia collage on watercolor board
13” × 18” (33cm × 46cm)
Create Faux Textures With Watermedia

Items such as shells, doilies, burlap and bubble wrap produce interesting patterns and textures when imprinted on collage papers with fluid acrylics, liquid watercolor, lightfast inks or gouache. In this project you’ll create a large sheet of imprinted paper to tear up and use as collage texture. Since you’re not making a painting, you don’t need to plan a composition for the imprinting.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | stretched cold-press watercolor paper (140-lb. [300gsm] or heavier) | fluid acrylic ink or paint | textured objects | spray bottle with water

Imprinting in acrylics is simple. First, slowly pour two or three colors (ones that will create an exciting color scheme) onto stretched, wet watercolor paper. Let the colors run freely, but not out of control. Brush into the paint, spatter or spray lightly to keep the color moving. Blot with a paper towel or damp brush if the paint becomes too soupy. Cover the entire sheet with rich, wet acrylic color.

1

Place an assortment of patterned materials on the wet paint and leave them in place until their patterns and textures have printed. Remove the materials before the paint dries completely or the pieces may adhere permanently to the paper.

2

• Gather all materials before you begin; you won’t have time to hunt for textured objects after you’ve poured the paint.
• Encase items such as lace or paper doilies, stencils and leaves with two coats of medium and then let dry before using to make them easier to handle. Wipe them clean after imprinting; use them again and again. Dust them lightly with cornstarch, so they don’t stick together when stored.
• Thin your paints to the consistency of coffee cream so they pour easily. If your paints seem too thin, add a small amount of gloss medium to give them more body. Store leftovers in small jars with lids.
• You may repeat the pouring process and overprint with color or white acrylic paint when the paper is dry.

Tips

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Papers were printed randomly and then cut up and combined with other textured papers to create a collage. You can see some of the printed textures repeated throughout this design.

**ATLANTIS** | Virginia Lee Williams  
Acrylic and paper collage  
17” × 19” (43cm × 48cm)  
Collection of Dr. Michael W. Aveyard

**TIPS**

- Cut stencils or lay objects such as leaves, keys or doilies on the surface of an imprinted sheet or a collage you’re working on. Paint into the stencil or spatter liquid color (not too thin) over the stencil or object with a toothbrush. Move the stencil several times to repeat the shape; use different sizes for variety. Remove these objects and stencils or adhere some of them to your collage to create positive/negative image contrast.

- There are many ways to use imprinted and stenciled papers. Look for mini-compositions in the patterns and textures to serve as unifying design elements or focal points in collages. Cut or tear the patterned paper into collage pieces or print textures directly on a watercolor board, illustration board or canvas support for use as the background for other collage materials.

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Monotype is a simple way of creating a unique image, focal point or background for collage; use the monotype whole or torn up. Draw into the wet plate with a palette knife or wipe out color with a sponge for other interesting effects.

1 Tape along the edges of a piece of Plexiglas or transparent plastic cutting board. This is your printing plate. Brush, spatter or roll acrylic paint over the entire plate and spray lightly with water or alcohol to keep the paint wet or move it around.

2 Lay on the wet paint a sheet of slightly dampened, acid-free paper that’s a bit larger than the plate. Pat the paper gently or roll it with a brayer. Then, holding the paper at the bottom corners, pull it up to create the monotype. Pull straight back to preserve a representational image, or drag and twist the paper for distortion and texture.

3 If any paint remains on the plate, make a second (ghost) print or add more paint for a new, unique image. Remember that your image will be reversed, so any writing will appear backwards.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
| monotype papers (acid-free): computer paper, medium-weight rice paper, light- to medium-weight watercolor paper, light- to medium-weight printmaking paper | fluid or thinned tube or jar acrylic paints | Plexiglas or transparent plastic chopping board | masking tape | synthetic brush, brayer | spray bottle with water or alcohol | optional: sponge, tea towel, palette knife

Tips
- For a larger print, use your freezer-paper work surface as the plate.
- Dampen the papers to be printed (except for rice papers) before painting the plate: Wipe the surfaces of several sheets of paper with a damp sponge and stack them beneath a moist tea towel until you’re ready to use them. The moisture will penetrate the papers, making them flexible and more receptive to paint.
- When you apply paint to the plate, place a drawing or design under the plate as a guide or work freehand on the surface. Or, draw into the wet paint or scrape it with a palette knife to create an image or abstract design. Work fast so the paint doesn’t dry before you print.
- Wipe the taped edges of the plate before printing if you want a crisp edge around the print.
- Roll off excess paint onto scraps of paper and add these to your collage palette. Wash the brayer thoroughly.

Download free desktop wallpaper at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
Acrylics and watercolors were combined with dry pigments and interference paints to make the monotype used in this collage. Any combination of watermedia will make a monotype; experiment and see what happens. Monotype creates subtler textures and color blending than direct brushstrokes, adding a sense of mystery to the artwork.

**FOOTPRINTS OF THE PAST** | Betty Keisel
Watermedia monotype collage
15” × 19” (38cm × 48cm)

The monotype papers used were printed at different times and filed according to color until I put them together in this collage. In this case, the textures suggested the subject. I cropped the floating skull from a photograph I took at a Santa Fe Jackalope shop.

**CANYON SPIRIT** | Nita Leland
Monotype and printed papers on illustration board
15” × 10” (38cm × 25cm)
So far you’ve used the traditional methods of paper collage—cutting or tearing papers and adhering them to a support or encasing them. These techniques are pretty straightforward: using acrylic mediums and gels to fasten materials to an encased, rigid support such as heavy paper or illustration board, sometimes toned with watercolor or acrylic washes. You’ve also learned how to incorporate rice paper, watercolors and acrylic paints into your collages.

This chapter encourages you to explore further, using additional mixed media and photographs to enhance color and texture or to unify design elements in your collages. I’ll also introduce exciting new techniques for working with photographs, including a few basic digital processes to help you work with collage images on your computer.

Tytla began with a 20” × 30” (51cm × 76cm) enlargement of one of his own photos for the sky and background. Then he added cutouts from as many as two hundred photos of old cars, people and places he has taken around the country. The process may take up to five weeks, but his enjoyment at taking his photos and his sense of humor are evident in every piece.

RUST IN PEACE | Peter Tytla
Photo collage, 40” × 30” (102cm × 76cm)
Compatible Mediums

Most art mediums are compatible with paper collage, including watercolor, gouache, casein, inks, acrylics, pastels, charcoal, oil pastel, crayon and colored pencil. Your favorite medium will probably work with collage, but you should try everything. As you use mixed media, you’ll soon discover which you prefer.

Start with the projects on the following pages, then try your own medium combinations and variations to create a distinctive look to your artwork. Your collage style will reveal itself as you work.

WATCH WHAT YOU LAYER
Be aware that acrylics do not adhere properly to any surface that contains wax or oil, but mediums such as oil pastel, crayon and wax-based colored pencils can be applied on top of an acrylic base.

The earliest twentieth-century collages were mixed media: oil paint and graphite, paper clippings, wallpaper, oilcloth and newspaper. Photos also appeared in collage early on and continue to be an excellent source of collage material, particularly when the artist is also the photographer with an interesting viewpoint or story to tell.

SHADOWS FLEE AWAY | Richard Newman
Acrylic paint, colored pencils and photos, 16” × 20” (41cm × 51cm)

Lovely collages can be created with watercolor and mixed media. The elegant, courtly figures here are arranged on a contemporary abstract background, creating ambiguous time and space.

MADRIGAL REGALIA | Marta Light
Ink, watercolor pencil and collage, 40” × 30” (102cm × 76cm)

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Share Your Personal Story in a Collage

Design an autobiographical collage: the story of your life or a day in your life in pictures, incorporating journal entries, photos and personal mementos. Write personal statements on the surface in crayon or pencil. Use newspapers, magazines, photos, colored papers, rice papers, drawing tools and paints.

Combine methods and materials in creative ways for a unique work of art. Show your individuality in this collage. Your self-portrait collage may be a likeness of you, or it may describe you abstractly through your choices of personal themes and design symbols.

**Materials**

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased illustration board | autobiographical materials (photos, clippings of likes and dislikes, personal symbols, etc.) | assortment of found and ready-made papers | watermedia and drawing tools | matte or gloss medium or soft gel | scissors | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer

**Start Your Collection**

Start a collection of autobiographical materials—pictures of things you love and symbols that mean something to you. Include some things you dislike, as well, because these can sometimes trigger a powerful response that comes through in your art.

Szelestey is a skilled figure and portrait artist in watercolor. In this radical departure from her usual medium and techniques, she used found papers and snippets of photos to assemble a self-portrait. Acrylic matte medium is the adhesive.

**TIPS**

- Determine a focal point and plan distinctive color.
- Organize, but as you put it all together, relax and have fun with it. Be open to change as you add new pieces or take others away to reshape the design.
- Draw and paint images in the background. Add lines and colors with watermedia or drawing tools.
- Stand back from time to time to view the overall picture. Squint to check the values, colors, design movement and center of interest.
Add Pencil or Paint to Paper Collage

Draw on your collaged surface, adding lines, textures or figures. Test your materials to make certain they will show up on the colors and surfaces you’re using. See what happens when you draw with watercolor paint or pencils on wet paper. Try wax-based colored pencils, oil pastel, pastel, crayon, charcoal, soft graphite pencil or waterproof India ink. Use opaque colors to make certain they show up, and select colors that harmonize with your collage.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
| encased illustration board | collage papers |
| mediums of your choice, in opaque colors |
| matte or gloss medium or soft gel | scissors |
| synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer |

Test to See What Shows

Make a simple collage using big geometric shapes and contrasting colors. Test an assortment of colored pencils on scraps of Color-aid paper first. Some will be much easier to see than others.

Draw or scribble lines on your collage, creating connections between the pieces to move the viewer’s eye around the picture.

PICTOGRAPHS

Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Paper collage with Prismacolor pencil on illustration board, 10” × 12” (25cm × 30cm)

A network of graphite lines crawling across the collaged and painted surface ties different elements together into a cohesive design. The lines define and repeat the jagged edges of the torn papers and have a dynamic energy of their own.

OH SACRED SOLITUDE
Virginia Lee Williams
Acrylic paints, graphite pencil on rice paper and brayer-paper collage 30” × 22” (76cm × 56cm)

TIPS

• Work with a theme, a subject or abstraction to unify your basic design. Reinforce the abstract design or emphasize your concept with images that support your theme.

• Enhance textures with a pattern of crosshatching (evenly spaced, overlapping lines) or stippling (fine dots of paint). Connect shapes with colored lines. Occasionally, add a few gestural scribbles to contribute energy to a piece. Use restraint so the design doesn’t get too busy.

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Collage With Photographs

Photo collages are to artists as memoirs are to writers—a trip down memory lane or a peek at the unconscious. A carefully assembled group of antique photos of people you may or may not know is an invaluable memento that speaks of times past. Your own wonderful old candid pictures probably languish in a box high on a closet shelf. Dust off the box and see what you find inside to put into a photo collage. Your collage may be a commentary on your family heritage or a statement about the “good old days.”

Design a photo collage using photos as part of a paper collage, or assemble an assortment of photos in a photomontage. Start with a watermedia background or connect images with painted lines and colors. For consistency, use either black-and-white or color photos, not both, in your collage. Select your photos around an event or a theme; choose photos that are in good condition with clear, clean images.

Working with antique photos requires special care. Be particularly careful with irreplaceable photos. You may prefer to scan, edit and print them yourself (see Project 41). To protect the originals, spray them with Krylon Preserve It!

**Materials**

- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- photos (duplicate or digital prints if possible)
- Krylon matte or Preserve It! spray
- encased illustration board
- soft gel (matte or gloss)
- scissors
- HB pencil
- synthetic brushes
- soft rubber brayer
- optional: art mediums for enhancement

**STEPS**

1. **In a well-ventilated area, spray glossy images** with Krylon matte spray to create a non-glare surface or with Krylon Preserve It! to protect the images from UV damage or moisture. Let the images dry before handling. (Follow the directions on the product.)

2. **Plan your collage on illustration board**, arranging photos around a focal point. Repeat colors to draw the viewer’s eye around the collage, and emphasize value contrasts at the focal point. Trim some photos to make interesting shapes. Overlap edges. Draw lightly around the edges of the shapes to mark their placement on the support.

3. **When you’re ready to secure the photos**, adhere the bottom pieces first, and weight them down until dry. Build the collage layer by layer, letting each layer dry before adding another. Be careful not to smear the images. If you must clean medium off the photos, use a barely damp cloth and pat gently.

4. **Adhere the photos with soft gel (matte or gloss)**, which is less likely to run. Spread the gel generously where your photo will go on the support and on the back of the photo, thinning it out to the edge so it won’t squeeze out when you adhere the photo. Pat the applied picture firmly or roll with a brayer. Wipe any excess gel off the edges.

5. **If your photos curl** after you apply the medium, affix them one at a time. Place freezer paper (waxy side down) on each mounted photo and weight it until dry, before adding more photos or collage materials.

6. **Add line or color to the background** with pencil, watercolor, acrylic, pastel or paper collage to finish. If you are using old photos, you might add watercolor or acrylic washes of burnt umber or burnt sienna to blend with the antique patina of the photos. Or enhance Victorian gingerbread or lace with colored pencils or pastels.

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Wolff painted the house with acrylics, collaged photos and cut papers, and finished up with ink and paint glazes. The beautifully integrated elements are scaled in size to suggest depth.

• Handle all photos with clean, dry hands, wiping fingerprints off with a soft, dry cloth.

• Scan and print your more valuable photos; then store the originals in acid-free boxes or scrapbooks and use the digital prints in your collages.

• Print your pictures on good-quality photo paper and test the prints to make sure the inks won’t smear when you brush medium on them.

• Scan damaged or faded photos and repair them on your computer using photo-editing software such as Adobe Photoshop Elements.

• Old photos were often mounted on heavy cardboard. Make a small practice collage with one to test the amount of gel needed to adhere it.
Scan old photographs and small art and save them on your computer to print out for collages. You don’t need a dedicated scanner if your printer is equipped to scan. I’ve had good results with my Epson all-in-one printer.

There’s some trial-and-error involved in determining which photo papers, supports and adhesive gels work best. Print out some photos and test their reactions to gels. I’ve had good results with Epson printers on Epson papers—not so good if I use off-brand papers. Brush test coats of gel on the back of a photo to see how much the paper curls and on the front to see if the ink smears. Find a combination of paper, ink and adhesive that gives you the results you want.

**Materials**
- digital photos
- inkjet printer (using water-resistant, lightfast inks)
- good-quality photo paper or heavyweight presentation paper, coated for inkjet color printing
- encased illustration board or other firm support
- soft gel or heavier for photos
- collage materials for background
- scissors
- synthetic brushes
- soft gel
- soft rubber brayer

**Printed Photos**
I scanned each photo at 600 dpi, then saved the scans in grayscale mode at 300 dpi. I printed them on glossy photo paper (use matte or luster if you prefer) and sprayed them with Krylon Preserve It! Then I trimmed them and made a trial arrangement.

This photomontage tells the story of a charismatic musician early in his professional career. I collaged the photos to sheet music from a solo cello piece created especially for this musician.

**PORTRAIT OF THE MUSICIAN AS A YOUNG MAN**
Nita Leland
Scanned inkjet photos and paper collage on illustration board, 12” × 16” (30cm × 41cm)
Collection of Stephen Katz and Beth Fairservis

**STEPS**

1. **Scan photos into your computer** or use digital images on your hard drive. Open them in your photo-editing software and resize to 300 dpi at 4” × 6” (10cm × 15cm) or so for your first digital-photo collage. Print the photos and trim as needed.

2. **Encase a 9” × 12” (23cm × 30cm) support** in medium or gel and collage the background to coordinate with your pictures.

3. **When the background is dry, adhere the photos** one at a time, using soft gel and the same procedure described in Project 40.

4. **Brush soft gel (matte or gloss)** over the finished collage after it dries.
**Build a Collage on Your Computer**

Most digital photos never see the light of day once they’re uploaded to a computer. You can have nice books and scrapbooks printed with stock layouts at photo kiosks and big-box stores, but it’s fun to put together your own photo theme-collages on your desktop monitor and then print them or have them printed. You can even make poster-size prints without using up all your ink—just be sure you check with the store on how to prepare and save your images for their setup.

There are many good photo-editing programs available, and most digital camera packages include software for image-editing. Select a suitable background for your collage—a theme or event, for example. Edit the photo according to the directions in your program so you can make a print-size background, either 8½” × 11” (22cm × 28cm) or larger for commercial prints. Adjust the color and light, and sharpen the image slightly, if needed. Add borders if desired to help the images stand out on the background. Copy and save the file under a new name and work only on the copy, in case you need to start over and work from the original.

**Materials**
- digital photos
- image-editing software, such as Photoshop Elements
- inkjet printer or access to a print shop or photo kiosk

**Original Digital Photos**
I saved a TIFF file of my background photo of the woodland path at 300 dpi, size 9” × 13½” (23cm × 34cm). I also saved TIFF files of each of my flower pictures at 300 dpi, size 4” × 6” (10cm × 15cm). I never edit JPEG files for prints—they may degrade in the editing process.

Once I had moved all the photos onto the background, I arranged and resized them using the tools in my editing program, Photoshop Elements. To help the flowers show up, I added borders to those pictures and lowered the opacity of the background to 95 percent.

**NATURE WALK | Nita Leland**
Digital photography, 9” × 13½” (23cm × 34cm)

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Collaging With Mixed Media

In this demonstration we used a potpourri of materials and techniques from projects in earlier chapters. It began without a drawing or a design plan. All the same, Virginia Williams and I thought about movement, pattern, dominance and color, among other design considerations, as we assembled an “art-o-biographical” collage based on the two of us as artists.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- assorted items with personal meaning
- encased illustration board
- watercolor and acrylic paints
- textured items
- matte or gloss medium or soft gel
- scissors
- synthetic brushes
- soft rubber brayer

1. All sorts of items have interesting possibilities for an “art-o-biography”: bumper stickers, brochures, magazine advertisements and logos, all based on an art theme. Each of us contributed things that had some particular importance to us as artists. We assembled these materials, then set them aside to prepare the background.

2. Although we didn’t expect much of it to show, we wanted a richly colored, dark background to contrast sharply with the brightly colored materials we selected for our collage. A blend of primary hues gave us some strong violets that would work with the colors of some of the materials we expected to tie in later. We applied acrylic paints to encased illustration board and sprayed water to help the colors mingle.

3. We didn’t want the background to get too busy, but we thought a little texture might be useful where it would show through between collage bits. We imprinted three different grids on the wet acrylic paint to provide background texture. The shapes varied enough to create interest in the areas.

4. The palette, which we created using the acrylic appliqué technique in Project 34, provides the focal point and a cardboard glove-liner sets the palette off perfectly. We collaged ribbon onto the glove and stuck a paintbrush under the finger. Then we began to look for other materials to coordinate with our background.

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To tell our story, we selected materials we had set aside earlier. We used only a small percentage of what we started with. We also worked in some of the monotype we printed back in Project 37, tearing it into pieces and placing it to enhance the background and edges. Most of the pieces were arranged over the entire surface before we adhered anything.

Once the pieces were adhered, we stepped back to study the collage. We made a few adjustments—added or covered up pieces. As a final touch, we added a rice paper cuff to the glove and tinted the glove with watercolor so it blended in delicately with the colors throughout the collage. Other areas were also glazed lightly with watercolor or acrylic washes to unify them and simplify the design. We encased the piece in gloss and matte mediums.

ART-R-US | Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Mixed-media collage, 15” × 20” (38cm × 51cm)
PART 5: Making Collage Supports
Richly textured foundations add visual and tactile interest to your collages. Adhere a variety of natural and man-made materials to any collage support (see “Collage Supports” chart in chapter four). Add natural materials, such as grasses, seeds, beans, pods and herbs. Use heavier items found in treasure hunts on the streets at building sites or junkyards. All of these require solid support. (For basic information on preparing supports, see chapter four.)

Pre-mixed and special-use acrylic texture mediums are available from several manufacturers. These include mediums with blended fibers, pumice, stucco or sand. However, you can easily create your own textured supports for collage; the next group of projects shows you how. Use discretion and good taste when you make a collage support. Include just two or three techniques and establish movements and pattern repetitions throughout the support rather than placing them randomly. Retain a few texturally “quiet” areas, just as you do in designing a painting or collage surface. Be selective.

This piece illustrates several of the techniques you’ll learn in this chapter and the next, including a support built up in low relief, using rice paper, layered blotter paper, fibers and textured wallpaper. Shells, stones and sand can also be used to texture a support.

CAPE OF CORNWALL
Virginia Lee Williams
Acrylic paint with rice paper, blotter paper, fabric, embossed wallpaper and gold leaf on canvas, 14” x 18” (36cm x 46cm)

FULANI | Virginia Lee Williams
Sand, modeling paste, gel and acrylic on canvas, 18” x 14” (46cm x 36cm)
Décalcomanie is a fun, easy way to create textures for collage supports as well as decorative features for your collages. Practice on small pieces, about 5" x 7" (13cm x 18cm), until you get the hang of it. Combine these later in a larger collage, or use the pull-apart technique on several areas of a large surface to create interesting pattern repeats. Add paint and other collage elements to the textured surface.

**Materials**

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | encased illustration board, mat board or 300-lb. (640gsm) watercolor paper | gloss or matte gel or soft gel | acrylic tube or jar paint | acrylic gesso | tablespoon

**The Pull-Apart Technique**

Spoon a few generous tablespoonfuls of gloss or matte gel or soft gel on a piece of encased illustration board, mat board or heavy watercolor paper. Place a second board or paper on top of the wet gel, press together briefly, then quickly pull the two pieces apart. Both surfaces now have intriguing branch-like patterns. Let the gel dry thoroughly and use these pieces as supports or focal points for paper or painted collages. Gesso the surface and add paint or collage to it.

Décalcomanie takes paint beautifully. Flow thinned acrylic paint or watercolor into the crevices on the surface.

You can also prepare a focal point or an entire background with this technique, using blobs of acrylic paint.

**TIP**

If you slide the boards or twist them as you pull them apart, the patterns will vary. Experiment with different approaches.
Texture Supports With Acrylic Mediums

Acrylic mediums are terrific for imprinting patterns and textures right on the support, giving a dimensional effect. Use a strong support, such as stretched canvas or a watercolor or mat board that has been encased with medium. The canvas is sturdy and lightweight, a major consideration if you work large and ship your work.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- encased illustration board, 300-lb. (640gsm) watercolor paper or stretched canvas
- textured flat objects
- acrylic regular gel (matte or gloss)
- modeling or molding paste
- white gesso
- palette knife or synthetic brush
- acrylic paint
- optional: stick, paint roller, string

Tips

1. Gather an assortment of textured materials that will leave a deep mark in a heavy layer of a mixture of half gel and half modeling or molding paste. The gel is essential, preventing the paste from cracking as it dries.

2. Apply the gel/paste mixture thickly to your support, then press the materials deeply into the layer of medium. Remove some pieces and leave others embedded. Let everything dry overnight. Coat the finished support with gesso and let dry. Then it’s ready to paint and collage.

The canvas support was textured with embossed shipping material, blotter paper, sand and corrugated cardboard, then collaged and painted with acrylics after the support was thoroughly dry.

LITHOSPHERE | Virginia Lee Williams
Acrylic paint on textured canvas support, 16" × 20" (41cm × 51cm)

TIPS

- Use this half-gel/half-paste mixture to adhere heavier objects, such as stones, shells and metal pieces, to textured surfaces.
- As you select objects to embed and imprint, repeat some textures and shapes to create design patterns. Arrange them on the surface to direct the eye around the composition.
- Draw into the wet medium with a stick or brush handle or texturize with a paint roller. Twist string around your roller to make an interesting pattern.
- If you want some items to retain their natural appearance, adhere them after you have applied the gesso or paint.

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Create a Layered Paper Support

Although all collage is layered, this surface is special, because the layers absorb paint differently for beautiful and surprising effects. For this project, use untextured blotter paper to build up a low-relief surface. Art supply stores, catalogs and paper supply companies carry blotter papers that work well. Experiment with different papers. Office blotters are usually too thin and don’t peel or tear well.

**Materials**
- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- stretched canvas or other heavy support
- blotter paper | acrylic regular gel | white gesso | acrylic paint | synthetic brushes | spray bottle with water

1. Untextured blotter paper works well for creating a low-relief surface. Tear the paper into strips of varying widths, lengths and shapes. Coat the back of each piece heavily with gel.

2. Adhere the pieces in layers to a stretched canvas or other heavy support. Stagger the edges and distress the paper by tearing holes in it as you build up the layers. While the layers are still wet, move them around and insert pieces between them. Rub with your fingers to roughen them and add more texture. Let the layered piece dry overnight.

3. Coat the dry layered piece with two heavy applications of gesso, allowing each coat to dry thoroughly. Let this surface dry overnight. The result will be a white-on-white dimensional surface that might suggest mountain ranges, rock formations and abstract organic shapes. To this support, you could apply thin acrylic washes and spray with water. The paint will settle beautifully in the crevices between the layers.

Download free desktop wallpaper at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
The stretched canvas circle was heavily layered with blotter paper and peeled paper. Found metal objects and glass were embedded in a modeling paste/gel mixture. Then the entire piece was painted with acrylics.

CUSTOM DELUXE | Virginia Lee Williams
Assemblage with found objects on canvas, 36” (91cm) diameter
Collection of Bob and Nita Leland

**TIP**

You can also do the layering process on the waxy side of freezer paper. Dry the pieces. Then peel them off and collage them to a support, or use them to introduce texture into a watercolor painting or to enhance a paper collage.
Make Distressed Paper

Déchirage refers to the tearing or peeling of heavyweight papers into layers. Use this technique to make layered or textured supports that are three-dimensional or sculptural. Try using 200-lb. (425gsm) rough India watercolor paper (available online) or substitute 300-lb. (640gsm) rough handmade or moldmade papers in other brands. Experiment on a small piece of your paper first.

1 Score handmade India or other heavyweight watercolor paper with a utility or craft knife. Pick at the edges of the cuts with the point of your knife and loosen the edges. Then peel back small layers of paper with your fingers. Repeatedly score and peel additional layers.

2 The distressed paper layers cast shadows and create intriguing patterns. Try cutting through the paper completely to create openings. Coat the peeled layers with matte soft gel and manipulate the shapes while they’re wet. Then, apply them to a collage using soft gel and gesso or paint the piece if you wish.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)

| 200-lb. (425gsm) India watercolor paper or 300-lb. (640gsm) rough watercolor paper | utility or craft knife | soft gel (matte) | synthetic brushes | acrylic paints | found objects

TIPS

• When you adhere the peeled paper to a painted or collaged support, let the background colors show through the openings in the peeled paper or adhere objects in the openings.

• Try painting the peeled paper with a thin wash of acrylic paint or watercolor. Then scumble other colors, rough-brushing over the support, or spatter and pour thin paints over the surface. To make the peeled paper look like twisted metal, use metallic paints or create a rusty look with earth reds. Experiment! You’ll love it.

This detail of Moon Sees the Dreaming by Virginia Lee Williams shows how peeled paper can be painted and used as a focal point with collage materials adhered to it.
CHAPTER 13

More Textured Supports

Natural materials and found objects provide unlimited resources for collage. They also connect with environmental thinking, because materials are put to use instead of being discarded. Often, when these materials are used to create a support, they make such interesting surfaces that the support becomes the feature of a nature collage. Random textures of natural materials also make beautiful backgrounds for paper collage, providing a dimension not possible in most painting mediums. Traditional collage materials can be integrated into the textured surface, which can be left unpainted or coated with gesso and painted. The play of light and shadow on a textured surface adds an intriguing element of mystery.

Finding suitable materials calls for creative awareness on your part. Look around you and see what is at hand that you might not ordinarily use for collage supports. Collect sand and shells from beaches, wood chips and shavings from a workshop, small bits and pieces of rusty, twisted metals or hardware found on the sidewalk. How about dried peach pits, lint from the dryer, twigs and dried flowers? Make a list of possibilities. Take a walk right now and see what you find. Notice the shapes of things, the richness of textures; see the beautiful colors of rust and oxidized metal scraps. Visit a junkyard and come away with a wealth of material. In the projects that follow, you’ll find ways to put these materials to artistic use as textured collage supports.

Many of these materials will need to be prepared for use. Brush off rust or dirt; wipe wood and metal with a cloth dampened with water or alcohol. Encase found objects with matte medium or gel. Sift sand through a strainer to remove foreign matter.

Use a solid support, such as stretched canvas, encased illustration board or heavy watercolor paper for these materials. Coat both sides of the support with matte medium or soft gel before beginning the texturing process.

With their elegant textures and forms, the bounties of nature make wonderful collages. Tints of earth hues unify the background with the natural elements.

BALLET | Marilyn Coppel
Mixed-media collage with acrylics, natural materials and found objects
12½” × 14½” (32cm × 37cm)
Tiny shells that collect in tidal pools along a sandy beach and small stones that pile up on the shores of a stream make great textured surfaces for collage. Collect your own at the beach or quarry, or buy them. Follow a theme relating to the ocean or seashore, stream beds, forest paths and associated subjects to unify your art. The natural beauty of larger shells and stones can be a focal point in a collage while the smaller bits can be used to enhance the background.

**Materials**

- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- denatured alcohol
- diluted chlorine bleach
- water
- encased illustration board, mat board or heavy watercolor paper
- crushed shells, small shells or pebbles
- sand
- semi-gloss (satin) gel
- matte gel
- shell-shaped stencils

**STEPS**

1. **Wash or brush the materials gently** to remove loose dirt or sand; medium adheres better to clean surfaces. Soak stones with denatured alcohol to remove traces of oily substances. To sterilize shells and eliminate odors, add 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach to a half gallon of water and soak the shells for an hour or so, but no longer. Rinse well. Let them air dry before use. Brush a coat of semi-gloss (satin) gel on shells before adhering them to your collage.

2. **Apply a thick layer of matte gel** to an encased support.

3. **Scatter shells or stones over the wet gel.** Pat them lightly and let them dry. To attach larger shells or stones, brush gel on the edges or surface of the object that will touch the support and press the shell firmly into the wet gel. Let the collage dry thoroughly before handling.

These small shells were sifted from beach sand, cleaned and sprinkled into a layer of wet gel on watercolor paper.

The dried shell paper was torn up and adhered to colored mat board in a simple abstract design. A layer of matte gel was applied in selected places on the board, and sand was sprinkled over shell-shaped stencils; the patterns showed up when the stencils were removed.

Matte gel was used throughout this collage to avoid creating shiny spots on the mat board. A coating of satin-finish medium could be added to add luster to the shells.

**TIDAL POOL | Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams**

Shells, paper and sand on mat board, 9” × 12” (23cm × 30cm)

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# Make a Sand-Textured Support

Add a pile of clean, dry sand and a kitchen strainer to your growing supply of collage tools and materials. Any kind of sand will do, whether you dig it out of the sand pit, haul it from the beach or buy it at the craft store. It really depends on how rough or dark in color you want the surface to be. Some sand is sharp and gritty, and other types are very fine-grained.

**Materials**

- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- sand
- kitchen strainer
- stretched canvas, encased mat board, illustration board or heavy watercolor paper
- matte or gloss gel
- white gesso
- palette knife
- rollers, sticks and textured items

**Sandy Supports**

These supports were created by sifting white sand onto wet matte medium (left), using darker sand on a support (center) and painting a sand support (right).

**STEPS**

1. **Create a spreadable sand mixture** by combining the sand with gel to the consistency of soft peanut butter. Then scoop it onto your support and spread it with a palette knife. Use a firm support that will hold its shape and support the weight of the sand as you work.

2. **Print into the sand mixture** with rollers, draw on it with sticks, press textured objects into it, or embed small objects for dimensional effects.

3. **When the surface is thoroughly dry**, leave it natural as a background for a nature collage with shells, stones and dried plant materials, or paint it with two coats of white gesso and proceed with other collage processes. This highly textured, grainy surface takes paint and collage well. Store any excess mixture in a tightly covered glass jar.

The sand and gravel embedded in the lower area of the canvas support adds dimension and reality to this collage painting.

**BIRCH STAND**  |  Pat Deus
Acrylic on canvas with papers, sand and gravel
48” x 36” (122cm x 91cm)
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Arnold H. Lipschutz
Create a naturalistic collage by mixing wood materials with medium. Take advantage of the natural colors of the materials or add paint and collage to this wonderful textured surface. It’s easy to do. Use illustration or watercolor board, stretched canvas or 300-lb. (640gsm) watercolor paper.

Go to your local woodcarver, handyman or lumberyard and ask for wood shavings and chips. Shavings come in all sizes and shapes, some short and curly and others long and stringy. Use sawdust, too, if it isn’t too fine. Look for wood chips that have been trimmed from the ends of thin strips of wood trim. Get small flat chips, not large ones. Also, look for circular, oval and triangular cutouts from jigsaws.

**Materials**

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)

| stretched canvas, encased illustration board, mat board or 300-lb. (640gsm) watercolor paper | wood shavings and chips | gloss medium or gel | white gesso | synthetic brushes | acrylic paint |

**Sprinkled On**

To use wood shavings or sawdust in a collage, sprinkle them onto wet gel that has been brushed onto your support. Shake off excess material when the support is dry.

**Mixed In**

Another method is to put wood shavings in a jar with gloss medium and stir until the shavings are fully coated (for adhesion, and to protect the support) and spreadable. Spread the mixture on the support, creating textured shapes and patting gently in place. Dry thoroughly.

**Natural vs. Gessoed**

Leave the adhered shavings natural when dry and give them a clear coat of medium or gel, or coat them with white gesso.

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Wood chips coated with gesso suggest crusty ice and snow perfectly in this winter abstraction. Nothing else would give quite the same effect.

UNCLE GENE
Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Acrylic matte gel and wood chips on mat board
10” × 7½” (25cm × 19cm)

Wood chips coated with gesso suggest crusty ice and snow perfectly in this winter abstraction. Nothing else would give quite the same effect.

WINTER’S SNOW SPELL | Jane Cook
Watercolor and gesso collage with wood chips and found materials
25½” × 31½” (65cm × 80cm)
collection of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Smith

TIPS
- To complete a naturalistic collage, add materials such as leaves, shells or unpainted rice papers to your wood-textured support. Beg or buy less-than-perfect dried flowers and foliage from your local florist to use. Fall is the perfect time to collect dried natural materials.
- Encase all natural materials in medium before using them in collage. Soak dry leaves or bark in warm water; pat them dry. Coat both sides with matte or gloss medium, drying thoroughly between coats. Dip dried flowers or weeds in diluted gloss medium to hold their shape. If your materials are too fragile to withstand dipping or brushing, they’re too delicate to be used in collage.
- To use the natural textures as a background, brush a heavy-weight support with two coats of white gesso. Then paint or apply natural materials and collage papers to the textured support.
Incorporate Fibers in a Support

Dig into your rag bag for this one. Any material that has fibers is fair game: sailcloth, lace, cheesecloth, burlap, webbing, netting, rope, string and vegetable bags. Coarse fibers are particularly effective. Most fiber textures work well with natural materials. An interior design shop may sell you sample books or remnants of textured fabrics at a reasonable price.

The hand-loomed fabric, yarn, burlap and cheesecloth shown here are just a few of the fibers you might use in collage. Others are mesh bags and ribbons or heavily textured fabrics.

This design is unified by color and the repetition of the block pattern. The pulled fibers at the edges create an exciting tension that prevents the checkerboard design from becoming static.

REMNANT GLOW | Pam Brooks Zohner
Watermedia with cloth and natural materials, 27½” × 42” (70cm × 107cm)

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- stretched canvas, encased illustration board, mat board or heavy watercolor paper
- matte gel
- white gesso
- fabric or other fibers

STEPS

1. Tear holes in fibrous materials or fray edges to add interest to the pieces. Save the fibers that you pull out to use somewhere else in the collage.

2. Brush a thick coating of matte gel on the back of solid, heavy materials and on the support.

3. Pat the fabric into place, arranging rhythmic, flowing shapes characteristic of the material. The damp fibers are usually pretty pliable and can be manipulated. Combine fibers, textures and patterns; but remember to select a dominant element and repeat it with variations.

4. When the fiber support is dry, apply two coats of gesso if desired; then paint and collage over it. Make smaller fiber pieces by applying fibers to watercolor paper and then tearing up the papers and adhering them to any support.
Combining Texture Techniques

Chapter twelve describes several different ways of creating textured supports with paper, mediums and gels. This chapter covers the use of natural materials, such as shells, stones, sand, wood chips and fibers to enhance a collage support. Mix and match these techniques in any manner that suits your fancy. Use a support that can handle heavier materials. Make certain your collage elements are clean and encased in medium or gel to protect the surfaces you adhere them to. Experiment with these methods and keep samples on file to inspire you when you’re looking for new ideas for your collages.

In this artwork, an acrylic painting on handmade paper is beautifully enhanced with a variety of textured collage materials, including fabrics. The handmade paper is naturally textured (you’ll make some in chapter fifteen), and spattered paint suggests additional texture.

FAMILY SERIES #3  |  Mary Langston
Acrylic collage with beads, fabric, foil and found objects on handmade paper
52” x 32” (132cm x 81cm)
Represented by Eleanor Jeck Galleries, Tucson, Arizona
Working With Textured Supports

This demonstration provided an opportunity to combine texture techniques in a nature collage with an abstract design based on horizontal bands. A solid design structure lay beneath the materials on the textured surface. Once we established the design and selected the materials for the basic textures, we let the collage evolve, then finished it with an intuitive approach.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- stretched canvas
- sketch pad
- HB pencil
- masking tape
- blotter paper
- handmade India watercolor paper
- dark sand
- encased leaves
- wood shavings
- bark, stems
- matte gel
- white gesso
- acrylic paints
- synthetic brushes
- spray bottle with water

1. First, we made several design sketches based on parallel lines to suggest stratified layers. We wanted different widths and planned to use distinctive textured supports in each area, with a secondary focal point in each band. We transferred our final design to the canvas support.

2. After taping some of the edges to mask the strips dividing the design segments, we sprinkled dark sand into a heavy layer of matte gel along the top. Then, we pressed encased leaves into the sand. The leaves were placed symmetrically across the top, with one leaf turning down to provide a contrasting movement. One of the leaves was made to overlap the strip below.

3. We layered the next wide band with blotter paper. This step took a while to complete because we first tore and arranged the paper in different ways to get a nice landscape feeling to it. After the layers were adhered and dried, the surface was gessoed and allowed to dry again before painting.

4. Thin acrylic washes of earth-toned primary colors were brushed onto the layered surface. The surface was sprayed with water and again we waited until the paint settled into the crevices of the layered blotter paper and dried. Darker colors were then scumbed and dry-brushed over the surface.

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We sprinkled on a few wood shavings coated with medium for more texture. Then we removed the protective strips of tape from the narrow bands. For the next wide band we made a déchirage strip from handmade India watercolor paper and tinted it with acrylic washes.

We adhered three natural stones within the openings on the déchirage strip. Picking up a color from the layered section, we painted the narrow strips between the textured bands a solid blue-violet, giving an ambiguous earth-sky-water look to the whole piece. We placed the focal point, a woody stem adhered with matte gel, and underlined the lower band with strips of bark. The stem was weighted down until dry. Since everything used had been encased with medium, no final coat was applied.

AUTUMN SONG
Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams
Mixed-media collage
16” × 20”
(41cm × 51cm)
The ready-made papers available at art supply stores are richly varied with brilliant colors, exciting textures and many different weights and finishes to choose from. But you haven’t seen anything yet. Create your own customized collage papers, unlike anything you might see in a shop.

This chapter and the next are filled with projects for making unique collage papers. The projects aren’t difficult; the techniques have been simplified to their basic components to get you started. Then invent your own variations. You’ll do projects that enhance your collages—experiencing new tactile sensations with brayer papers, exploring crystalline papers, and creating exotic marbled papers with paints and inks. You’ll even make your own handmade papers for your collages. This is creativity at its best. Get ready for a creative trip through the fun house.

Occasionally, an elegant piece of your customized paper will inspire an entire collage based on color ideas or rhythms found in the paper. Sometimes you can use these papers as the dominant element that unifies your collage. When you use your customized paper, just remember that no one else has anything like it, because you made it yourself.

Set aside a special day in your studio for preparing papers according to the techniques that follow. Then use your papers in a specific collage or store them for future use. The techniques are easy, but to get satisfactory results, follow the instructions carefully.

How do they do it? Serious collage artists make it look easy. There is a spirit of fun and childlike abandon in this delightful piece, but Skinner carefully crafted the collage with quality materials so it will last.

RED BOX EXPRESS | Delda Skinner
Mixed media with boxes, airbrushed and marbled papers and acrylics on illustration board, 34” × 41” (86cm × 104cm)
Courtesy of Austin Thomas Vaughan

WINTER FIELD | Rosie Huart
Japanese kozo and cotton-rag handmade paper, threads, sumi-e ink, 28” × 22” (71cm × 56cm)
Create exquisite collage papers with body and texture, using good-quality craft tissue paper. To check craft-tissue quality, hold a single sheet to the light. Fibers should be relatively evenly distributed throughout the tissue. Inferior tissue has clumps of fiber distributed in the sheet; these papers will not hold up when wet and aren’t suitable for tissue techniques. To make the tissue easier to handle, cut each sheet into 10” × 15” (25cm × 38cm) pieces before you begin.

**Apply Gesso to Craft Tissue**
Roll gesso on good-quality craft tissue from the center to the edges. For heavier paper, roll several coats, allowing each to dry before applying the next. The first coat will take longer to dry than subsequent coats. Let the paper dry naturally. Then coat the back. The leathery-textured coated paper is no longer so fragile.

**Colored Gesso and Special Effects**
Gesso also comes in black and colors. Here I sprinkled Pearl Ex gold dry pigment onto the wet surface after applying black gesso with a brayer. *(Caution: When using dry pigments, wear a breathing mask or be careful not to inhale them.)*

This piece looks like oxidized metal on wood, but it’s really brayer paper on textured canvas. A bit of real copper was used as an accent.

**EARTHLY ESSENCE**
Dorothea M. Bluck
Mixed-media collage with brayer paper 18” × 24” (46cm × 61cm)
Private collection

**Materials**
- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- good-quality white craft tissue paper
- gesso
- 3- or 4-inch (8cm or 10cm) soft rubber brayer
- freezer paper

**STEPS**

1. Lay a tissue sheet flat on a freezer-paper work surface, and spoon about a cupful of gesso onto your freezer paper near the tissue.

2. Gently roll your brayer in the gesso until it is evenly, heavily coated. Then place the brayer in the center of the tissue and lightly roll the gesso out to the edges. Do not roll back and forth; rather, coat the brayer again and roll it over a different area of the paper from the center out, repeating until the sheet is completely coated.

3. Carefully pick up the wet paper and move it to a separate piece of clean freezer paper to dry. To prevent sticking, lift up the corners and edges frequently as the brayer paper dries.

4. When you finish coating all your papers, clean the brayer thoroughly in warm water to keep it soft.

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Paint Your Brayer Papers

You can achieve many beautiful effects with painted brayer papers, depending on how you combine the colors and which color is laid down first. The paint rolls unevenly on gesso-coated brayer paper, making a broken layer of color through which previous layers of color are partially visible. Paint both sides of the paper, if you like, using harmonious color combinations. Plan a color scheme and limit the number of colors you use to four.

**Materials**

- Gessoed brayer paper
- Soft rubber brayer
- Thinned or fluid acrylic paints
- Freezer paper
- Fluid medium (matte or gloss)

**1.** If necessary, thin your paints with fluid medium to the consistency of sour cream. Pour one of your colors onto freezer paper. Coat your brayer evenly with paint and lightly roll onto the gessoed paper from the center out to the edges to deposit a broken layer of paint. Let the paint dry.

**2.** Repeat the braying process with other colors, alternating layers of light and dark colors and letting the paper dry between applications. Vary your pressure on the brayer to create variations in the texture, color and value. Store your dried brayer papers until you need them.

Brayer papers have a leathery texture that belies their origin as tissue paper. Cut or tear painted brayer papers to use as background elements or collage materials in either realistic or abstract designs like this one.

**DESIGNING PATTERNS** | Virginia Lee Williams

Brayer paper collage on illustration board, 14” × 20½” (36cm × 52cm)

**TIPS**

- Roll excess paint from your brayer onto blank sheets of collage paper (for example, rice paper or acid-free computer paper) for later use.
- Place stencils, lace and mesh bags on dry brayer papers and roll your paint over them to print textures.
- If you bray both sides of your paper with contrasting or harmonizing colors, mix and match the papers in your collages.
- Bray with a final coat of iridescent or metallic acrylics to enhance the color effect of your paints. Tear your brayer papers into smaller pieces to use them in your collages.
- Wash your brayer in warm water in between colors. Then dry it well. Lay the brayer on its back when not in use so the roller won’t become misshapen.
Richly colored crystalline papers look like transparent stained glass. They are more exciting than any collage material found in an art store. Gloss medium strengthens craft tissue paper, makes it transparent and intensifies paint colors.

Use these papers as contrasting textures in your collages, as an elegant overlay on gold or silver paper, or as a glaze over colored backgrounds. Underlying colors show through transparent crystalline paper. You can even frame a free-hanging crystalline collage, sandwiched between pieces of glass, or construct a standing screen of transparent collages to be viewed from both sides.

Materials

- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- Good-quality craft tissue paper, cut into 10” x 15” (32cm x 38cm) pieces
- 1½- to 2-inch (38mm to 51mm) soft synthetic brush
- Gloss medium
- Thinned or fluid transparent acrylic paints
- Spray bottle with water
- Freezer paper
- Cornstarch
- Optional: Iridescent snowflakes or glitter

1. On a clean freezer-paper work surface, brush gloss medium on craft tissue paper, stroking from the center to the edges and coating heavily, using a wide, soft brush. The paper will crinkle slightly. Let it air dry. Then coat and air dry the back of the paper and let that dry.

2. Spray the coated paper with water. Then brush or pour on your acrylic paints, allowing the colors to mingle and flow. Use three or four pure, bright colors. If you like, sprinkle iridescent snowflakes or glitter into the wet acrylics before you set the tissue aside to dry.

Finished Crystalline Papers

The shiny gold papers have metallic paints on them, and the bright pinks incorporate iridescent colors. The painted side will be slightly brighter in color than the other side. Dust the dry paper lightly with cornstarch to store. Wipe gently with a damp cloth to remove the cornstarch before using your crystalline sheet.

Tip

While your paper is air drying, lift the corners and edges occasionally so the sheet can be easily removed from the freezer paper when it is thoroughly dry.

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This interesting piece is a combination of shaped brayer and crystalline papers accented with gold trim and peeled paint. Metallic and interference paints suggest the luster of silk fabric.

**AWAITING**
Virginia Lee Williams
Acrylic paints on brayed tissue and rice paper on illustration board
35” × 24”
(89cm × 61cm)
Throughout the centuries, tradition has dictated methods of the ancient art of marbling, the process of pulling a print from swirling colors floating on a viscous liquid bath. It’s fun to experiment, though, so in this chapter I’ll show you some shortcuts that will give you satisfying results with just a little effort. Your marbled papers will give your collages originality and distinction.

You’ll also learn how to mold paper around three-dimensional objects to create cast paper pieces that add low relief or sculptural effects to your collages. Such three-dimensional pieces cast dramatic shadows and provide a surrealistic note in your collages.

Another technique in this chapter, embossing, is the transferring of a low-relief impression of a dimensional shape to damp paper, a relatively easy process calling for simple tools. The challenge of the embossing process is designing and preparing a suitable “plate” from which to make the impression.

You’ll also see a simple handmade paper process to do in your kitchen or utility room, using materials found around the house. An added benefit is the recycling of old newspapers and other soft, absorbent scrap papers.

Once you’ve mastered the relatively easy methods of doing these processes, you may want to seek out more complicated procedures. Use your beautiful marbled, cast, embossed and handmade papers in your collages as fantastic focal points and fascinating backgrounds.

This beautiful paper was made from cotton linter with objects embedded during the formation.

SPIRIT SHIELD  |  Stephanie Nadolski
Handmade paper collage with found objects
14" x 14" (36cm x 36cm)
The beautiful organic patterns of freeform marbled papers can be enhanced with painted areas, extended with rhythmic lines and used as a background for other collage materials.

**EPHEMERIS I** | Virginia Lee Williams
Marbled charcoal paper, gold powder and acrylic paints on acid-free mat board
18” × 11” (46cm × 30cm)

The handmade papers in the focal point of this elegant piece were made from a blend of abaca, cotton and kozo fibers, using a papermaker’s mold and deckle. Then the pieces were shaped, painted with metallic paint and arranged on a satin background. Silk fibers and threads completed the design.

**GEORGETTA’S FOLDS AND GULLIES** | Rosie Huart
Handmade paper collage with paint, thread, silk and satin fibers, 24” × 30” (61cm × 76cm)

This striking piece is what marbled collage is all about. The traditional stone pattern of marbling has been cut and combined with acrylics and watercolor in a rhythmic monochromatic design.

**EARTH FRAGMENTS** | Karen Becker Benedetti
Watermedia and marbled paper with gold leaf, 35” × 42” (89cm × 107cm)
Marbled papers lend themselves beautifully to collage. Use the free-form organic pattern as the focal point in your design or cut along the flow lines, arranging the pieces on your collage to create beautiful rhythms and repetitions of color. Connect marbled collage pieces with watercolor or acrylic washes to coordinate with the colors in the marbling, or combine your marbled papers with your brayer and crystalline papers in larger works.

For marbling, you can use almost any paper (charcoal, pastel, bristol, watercolor, printmaking), any weight 80 lb. to 140 lb. (170 to 300 gsm) and any surface, except rough. Medium- to heavy-weight textured rice papers also work. Try some colored papers as well as white.

**Materials**

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | paper for marbling | cellulose sponge | alum powder | latex gloves | Metylan dry cellulose wallpaper paste | large rectangular pan (big enough for paper) | wire whisk | distilled water | plastic or glass containers | Dr. Ph. Martin’s Spectralite and Golden Fluid acrylic paints | eyedroppers | pointed tools (comb, hair pick, craft stick) | toothbrush | baking sheet | newsprint | cool iron

**PAPER PREP: THE NIGHT BEFORE**

Coat your papers with a mordant alum powder dissolved in water the night before marbling, so the paint will adhere to the surface. (Google “marbling alum” or “Jacquard alum” or call art and craft stores to find this product.)

1. **Mark the back of each piece** with a small “X” so you know which side is treated.
2. **Mix two tablespoons of alum in one pint of hot distilled water.** Stir until dissolved and let cool. Store in a plastic or glass container and label clearly. The solution is caustic, so keep it out of the reach of children.
3. **Lightly sponge the alum solution over the unmarked side** of the paper to coat the entire surface. The paper should be damp, not wet. Wear latex gloves to protect your hands from the drying effects of the solution.
4. **Let each sheet air dry.** Then stack the papers neatly, treated side up, and place a weight on top to flatten them. Before marbling, flip over the stack so the “X” (the back of the paper) is on top.

**MARBLING BATH PREP: THE NIGHT BEFORE**

Prepare the marbling bath the night before marbling. For the bath:

1. **Place three quarts of distilled water** in a large rectangular pan.
2. **Sprinkle one scant tablespoon of Metylan dry cellulose wallpaper paste** (not vinyl paste) per quart of water and whisk well. Whisk every ten minutes four more times, making sure to mix in the granules at the bottom of the pan and any granules that cling to the sides.
3. **The bath should be clear,** with the consistency of thin liquid laundry starch. If it seems too thick, add a small amount of distilled water.
4. **Dip out one quart of the bath mixture** and set aside to add later if needed. This solution will keep for several weeks if you store it in a tightly sealed glass jar to prevent evaporation.

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3 Pull a comb, hair pick or craft stick lightly across the paint to create a pattern. Then pull the tool across the first pattern at right angles or zigzag across it. Spatter paint on the bath with a toothbrush, if desired. To create dark outlines around light colors, put the dark color on first and drop the light one into it. The light color will spread and compress the dark colors into lines.

4 Place your alum-prepared paper on the bath (“X” side up) and hold it at diagonally opposite corners, slightly curving the center. To avoid air bubbles, place one corner gently on the bath and hold it there as you carefully roll the paper onto the bath toward the other corner. Don’t stop in the middle. Wait at least ten seconds and up to a couple of minutes.

5 Pull the print directly upward from one end and hold it over the bath to drain. Then, let the paper rest for ten minutes face up on a newsprint-covered baking sheet. Over a sink or bucket, squeeze a water-filled sponge over the paper to rinse off any excess until the water runs clear. Lay the paper on clean newsprint to dry.

6 Before marbling another piece of paper, clean the surface of the bath by pulling strips of newsprint across the surface to pick up excess paint. This is absolutely essential to the success of your marbling.

Tip
Some colors are more active than others and will spread beautifully if the paint sinks to the bottom instead of spreading. Give the bath a good whisking and try again. Or stir one teaspoon of white gesso into the bath. Or add a drop of pure ox gall or one or two drops of rubbing alcohol to the paint.

Finished Marbled Papers
If your initial marbling image is weak, re-marble the paper after it dries. If the papers curl when dry, press gently on the back with a cool iron. Make marbled papers in myriad patterns and colors and use them as focal points or beautiful accents. The organic nature of the marbling provides rhythmic elements for collage.
Marble With Ink on a Water Bath

Suminagashi (Japanese ink marbling) is a subtle variation using water as the printing bath. Elegant suminagashi papers make beautiful backgrounds or design elements in your collages. Experiment with different weights of paper. I prefer medium-weight sumi-e papers without fibers. When I set up to do marbling, I make a lot of papers and file them for future use. Suminagashi papers are easily stored in a folder with no danger of sticking together.

**Materials**

- Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- sumi-e papers (medium weight recommended)
- Bombay India inks
- dispersant (such as Kodak Photo-Flo) or liquid dish detergent
- water in a shallow tray
- clean palette with small wells
- pointed brushes
- tray
- newsprint (see Appendix for marbling supplies)

**Zebra Patterns**

Marbled papers made with suminagashi inks are more subtle than those created with watercolors and acrylics, but the delicate patterns are lovely, and the technique is simple.

**STEPS**

1. **Put 2” (5cm) of water in a shallow tray.** Place a teaspoon of Bombay India Ink in one palette well. Place a teaspoon of water in another well and stir in a drop of dispersant or liquid dish detergent.

2. **Using slightly damp, pointed brushes, load one with ink and the other with dispersant.** Gently touch the tip of the ink brush to the water in the tray. A pale circle of color film spreads on the surface. Touch the circle with the tip of the dispersant brush. Alternate between touches of paint and dispersant.

3. **Print on the rough side of sumi-e paper cut smaller than your tray.** Holding the paper at diagonal corners, roll it onto the bath from one corner to the other without pausing. Lift and place on a clean tray. Carry the tray to your sink to gently rinse off excess ink. Lay the rinsed paper on clean newsprint to dry.

**Zebra stripes and fabrics are emulated by the subtle patterns of Japanese marbling.** I used my suminagashi papers as the background for a collage featuring these patterns and added magazine cuttings for accents.

**ZEBA PATTERNS**

*Nita Leland*

*Magazine and suminagashi papers on illustration board 10” × 7” (25cm × 18cm)*

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Make Cast Paper for Collage

You can create three-dimensional paper pieces for collages easily from ready-made papers. Kinwashi paper (heavy, with embedded fibers) is used here, but try others, too. Select an object with a distinctive shape and contours to cast. Paint or collage your cast-paper piece and use it to add dimension or a dramatic focal point to a collage. Before you adhere the cast-paper piece, examine the collage under directional lights to locate the most effective shadow patterns.

Materials
Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
- object to be cast
- kinwashi heavy rice paper
- gloss gel
- modeling paste
- synthetic brush

1 Clean the object well; in this case, a gear was scrubbed and wiped with rubbing alcohol. Coat with gloss gel.

2 Coat the paper on one side with a mixture of half modeling paste and half gel. Wait until the paper is soft but not fragile, then place it coated side down over the object and coax it around the object’s contours, carefully stretching and pressing. Spray the paper occasionally with water to keep it pliable. If it tears, patch it with bits of paper softened with the medium mixture.

3 As the paper begins to dry, gently loosen it around the object’s edges. Continue to work the paper free as it dries. Remove it when firm, but still slightly damp. Set the paper aside to dry. Don’t let the paper remain on the object until fully dry, or it may adhere permanently.

Ray uses a variety of materials, including handmade cast paper, found papers and layered painted papers, to give a dimensional effect to his collage pieces.

OCHRE, BLACK, RED
Roy Ray
Acrylic collage on board
15” × 13”
(38cm × 33cm)

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Emboss Paper for Collage

Emboss almost any slightly raised shape on paper. Embossing casts subtle shadow patterns on paper; use this effect to add interest to your collages. Make small embossed papers, repeating a shape or theme, to add to collages. Or emboss areas of a large sheet and use this as a background or focal point for a collage. Adhere cutouts or other objects to the plate, too, such as string, punch cards, gravel, toothpicks, broom straws, bamboo, thin buttons, latchhook canvas, berry basket pieces, textured wallpaper or corrugated paper.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)

| buff or white 90-lb. (190gsm) printing or watercolor paper (100% rag or acid-free) | mat board for embossing plate | self-healing cutting mat | thin shapes and found objects for plate | stencil knife | matte medium or soft gel | molding or modeling paste | gloss medium (optional) | plastic wrap | embossing tools (smooth, such as a spoon or brush handle)

1 Use a stencil knife to carve design shapes for the embossing plate out of a single thickness of mat board, or select suitably thin found objects. Protect the surface beneath the mat board you're cutting with a self-healing cutting mat. Adhere the cut shapes with matte medium or soft gel to a piece of encased mat board, which will be your embossing plate.

Trim the edges of the design shapes with the stencil knife to a slight bevel so they won't break through the dampened paper when you do the embossing. All objects should be raised about the same distance from the plate. Set thin objects on a layer of modeling paste to raise them up to the thickness of the other shapes. The surface depth of the plate should be fairly consistent. Fill in any deep areas between objects with modeling paste. Let the plate dry, then coat it with three layers of matte or gloss medium.

2 Soak the paper in water for a half hour and then drain. Place the damp paper on the plate and cover it with plastic wrap for protection from the embossing tools. The tools must have smooth surfaces; use brush handles; spoons; small, soft brayers; or even your fingers. Work in an area with strong side light, to see the shadows of the embossing. Emboss by rubbing the edges of the objects on the plate firmly, but gently, with your smooth tools or fingers until you can see them on the softened paper.

When you have embossed the complete design, leave the paper on the plate until it is nearly dry; then, remove the paper and place it between two sheets of clean, dry paper. Anchor the paper loosely at the corners and let the embossing dry completely. Don't place any weight on the design or you will flatten the embossing. To repair holes, patch them on the back with matte medium and bits of matching paper after the embossed paper is dry.
ADDING COLOR TO AN EMBOSsing

To add color to an embossed piece, work in side lighting on dry paper, using a small brush and very little water with the paint. Don’t brush color all the way to the edges of the shape; the color will spread on the paper because the sizing has broken down, so control is essential.

The artist embossed Arches cover paper, then mounted blue marbled squares around the embossing—a nice combination of techniques.

THE BLUES III | Thelma Frame
Oil marbling on paper with embossing
20” x 13¾” (51cm x 35cm)
Create Handmade Collage Papers

Try your hand at basic papermaking. To enhance your papers, embed materials, such as weeds, seeds, ribbon, glitter, feathers or dried flower petals in the wet pulp. Or pour and spatter liquid paints onto the surface. Or place flat objects on slightly damp sheets of handmade paper, covering the objects with blotter paper and applying heat and pressure with an iron to imprint their shapes. Or make three-dimensional forms by pressing a still damp piece of handmade paper into a mold, creating your own handmade cast paper. Experiment with tinting handmade papers and using a variety of papers for your pulp.

**Materials**

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)  
| materials to enhance paper such as weeds, seed, ribbon or glitter for embedding or liquid paints or flat objects for imprinting | fiberglass mesh screen | two 8” × 10” (20cm × 25cm) frames or canvas stretchers, heavy-duty stapler and staples | bits of soft paper | blender  
| water | plastic dishpan | newsprint | wire cooling rack | blotter paper | iron | measuring cups | two ½-inch (12mm) plywood boards | damp sponge

**MAKE A MOLD AND DRYING RACK**

There are two ways to make a simple mold (the screen onto which you pour your paper pulp) and deckle (the frame that shapes the edges of your paper):

- Use an 8” × 10” (20cm × 25cm) set of canvas stretchers and a small picture frame that measures 8” × 10” (20cm × 25cm) at the outside edge. To make the mold, assemble the stretchers and staple fiberglass mesh screen tightly across the flat side of the stretchers.

- Or make two 8” × 10” (20cm × 25cm) frames out of flat picture molding and stretch screen across one of them.

To make a drying rack, place several thicknesses of newsprint on a wire cooling rack and lay a large sheet of blotter paper on top.

**MAKE A SIMPLE MOLD AND DECKLE**

1. To create a simple mold and deckle, staple fiberglass screen to a small frame for the mold and assemble a same-size frame for the deckle.

2. Soak small bits of soft paper. Chop them in a blender with plenty of water. Pour the pulp onto the screen in a random free-form shape. Drain and flip the screen so the pulp falls onto layers of newsprint to dry.

3. To make small paper sheets, hold the deckle tightly on top of the mold and scoop up pulp from a plastic dishpan. Shake gently side to side to mesh the paper fibers and drain the water.

4. Lift the deckle off the mold and flip the sheet over onto newsprint to dry.

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Finished Handmade Papers

Handmade papers are colored by the materials used in the pulp. Embed fibers and natural materials in the wet pulp before the papers dry.

Note that your handmade papers are not acid free. The papers and the boards used for pressing and drying contain acids and lignin. Before using your papers in collage, spray them with Krylon Make It Acid-Free! or encase them with gloss or matte medium.

(handmade papers by Nita Leland)

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PAPERMAKING PROCESS

1 **Gather discarded copy papers**, gift tissue, dress patterns, scraps of lightweight watercolor and rice papers and other soft papers to make your paper pulp. Toss in a small piece of colored paper to add flecks to the pulp. Old newspapers (excluding glossy, colored ads) and paper bags yield soft, neutral-colored papers.

2 **Tear some of the scrap papers** into stamp-sized bits and place these in a rectangular plastic dishpan slightly larger than the mold. Cover the paper bits with water and soak them overnight.

3 **Place the presoaked paper** in small quantities (about ½ cup) with two cups of water in an old (not your everyday) blender. Grind the mixture for 10 to 15 seconds to the consistency of heavy cream. If the motor is straining, grind smaller quantities of pulp or add more water. The pulp should have a silky feel to it. Pour the liquefied pulp into a one-quart measuring cup. When you have finished making your papers, drain excess water from unused pulp and place the pulp in a trash container. Do not pour it down the sink drain.

4 **For a free-form shape**, place your mold in a plastic dishpan, screen side up. Stir the pulp in the measuring cup. Then pour the pulp onto the mold to create the shape. The deckle isn’t necessary for this. Let the pulp drain for a minute or two. Then flip the screen over onto the blotter on the drying rack.

5 **To make small sheets of paper**, stir the pulp before pouring it into a dishpan larger than your mold to a depth of three to four inches (8cm to 10cm). Holding the deckle firmly on top of the screen-covered mold with the flat sides together, dip one end of the mold into the pan. Slide the mold through the pulp to pick up an even layer of pulp on the screen. Lift the mold and shake it gently from side to side, allowing the water to drain off. Then remove the deckle and flip the screen over onto the blotter on the drying rack. If the paper does not release, gently push on the back side of the screen with a damp sponge. If you let your papers dry naturally, they will have interesting textures and curly edges. For a smoother surface, iron the paper gently while it is slightly damp.

6 **If you wish to make flatter sheets**, make a stack consisting of alternating layers of handmade paper, blotting paper and clean, dry newsprint. Place this stack between two ⅜-inch (12mm) plywood boards and press firmly to remove excess water. Then weight the stack down overnight. The next day, leaving the blotting paper attached, spread your handmade papers on newsprint to dry, replacing the damp papers beneath them frequently.
Using Customized Papers in Collage

The crystalline free form shown in Project 33 made a colorful focal point for this collage. We were able to find lots of our own customized papers that picked up the striking colors in the free form. Except for a tiny strip of gold paper for contrast, the entire collage is made of papers we created ourselves by braying, marbling, embossing, and using simple handmade paper techniques.

1. In addition to the free form created in Project 33, we had brayer and crystalline papers, as well as handmade and marbled papers, to work with. These materials lent themselves to organic abstraction and the pieces we selected were harmonious in color. We adhered the collage to stretched canvas.

2. After adding gold mesh to the opening in the free form, we adhered white paper to the back of it to keep the color bright. We placed the free form on top of our crystalline paper and framed the paper with gold trim, backed by pieces of torn brayer paper. We trimmed marbled paper to make a strip along the bottom of the canvas and added gold paper to the edges.

3. We tore the brayer papers and arranged them around the focal point, which wasn’t yet adhered. We marked their placement on the canvas, but we assembled the pieces and attached them to each other without securing them to the canvas. We were still undecided about what to do with the background.

4. Handmade paper was the solution to our problem. We tore up bits of paper and layered it around the focal point, building up an attractive textured surface that wouldn’t distract from the center of interest. After the handmade paper was adhered, we bonded the brayer-paper frame and the marbled-paper strip to the canvas.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four) | stretched canvas | brayer, crystalline, handmade and marbled papers | crystalline free form (see Project 33) | gold trim and mesh | scissors | pencil | matte or gloss medium or soft gel | synthetic brushes | soft rubber brayer
We had already cut out the area where the free form would cover the crystalline paper and used some of the scraps for accents. Now we adhered the crystalline paper to the canvas, using a brayer to roll it down. We cut out bits of marbled paper that matched the bottom strip and adhered them to the canvas, along with pieces of gold mesh.

We placed the crystalline free form carefully to cover the cutout in the paper, then lightly marked the placement with pencil. We applied gel to the back of the free form and bonded it to the background. We placed weights on the piece until it was completely dry. Then we brushed a coating of matte medium over the piece, except for the free form.
CHAPTER 16
Making Collages That Last

Experimentation is inherent in collage, leading to questions about conservation procedures. Artists should always be concerned about the permanence of their artwork. No one can guarantee your collage art will last forever, but you can take precautions to keep it intact for a long time.

- Use quality materials whenever possible: acid-free papers and supports, artist-quality paints and mediums. Consider lightfastness and reaction of pigments to pollutants to be matters of great importance.
- Encase supports with acrylic gloss medium or gel.
- Spray non-acid-free collage materials, such as cardboard or newspaper, with Krylon Make It Acid-Free! archival spray, and encase with coats of medium on both sides.
- Avoid fragile materials that can’t be coated, such as dried flowers and crumbling leaves.
- Clean found objects thoroughly with rubbing alcohol and let them dry before coating them with medium. Acrylic paints and mediums will not adhere permanently to dirty or oily surfaces.
- Dry each layer of your collage completely before adding succeeding layers, except when blotter-paper layering.
- Shake or brush off loose materials before framing.
- Finish your collage with a coat of gloss medium or soft gel. For further protection, use removable varnishes with ultraviolet protection, following the manufacturer’s instructions.

In the rest of the chapter, we’ll cover other concerns of today’s collage artist, from framing your artwork to trusting your instincts.

Opposite page: QUINTANA ROO | Nita Leland
Acrylic inks, crystalline papers on rough watercolor paper, 24” × 18” (61cm × 46cm)

The success of this striking abstract collage is the result of good design and integration of collage materials and paint. The artist’s connection with her collage process seems profound to me; I feel her presence in the work.

“A” | Leslie Crespin
Antique Chinese papers, watercolor, pastel, pen and ink, and leather
12” × 14” (30cm × 36cm)
Collection of Gay and Roger Falkenberry

ONLINE EXTRA!
See a step-by-step demonstration of how I assembled Quintana Roo at Artistsnetwork.com/NewCreativeCollageTechniques.
Choose (or Make) a Mat and Frame

Coordinate framing with your artwork to achieve a distinctive look. A mat isn’t always necessary. Use a 1-inch (25mm) or wider plain wood frame with no carving to collage mats or frames with materials that complement your artwork. Apply brayer papers, crystalline or marbled papers, even coated newspapers. Cut or tear papers and adhere them to the frame with gel. When dry, coat the mat or frame with semigloss medium or gel for a satin finish.

Here are some more ideas for matting:
• Create a faux mat by adhering strips of coordinating papers around the edges of your collage.
• Mount the collage on a piece of mat board several inches larger than the artwork.
• Marble a mat board before cutting the mat.

Give Old Frames a Fresh Look
Cut strips of antique sheet music, brush adhesive on the back and wrap them around an old picture frame to match your found-paper collage.

Coordinate Mats With Your Collage
Make your own decorative mat treatments to enhance your collages. Left to right: Brayed paper strips, lacy rice paper, bark paper, textured rice paper, marbled paper, grass-cloth wallpaper.

TIPS
• Select a frame suitable to the collage. Sometimes simple is better.
• Use a frame deep enough to prevent the collage from touching the glazing, or insert spacers between the artwork and the glazing.
• If possible, seal the back of a wood frame with acid-free paper to protect the piece from insect damage.
• Frame dimensional collages, such as memorabilia, in acrylic box frames to preserve them from deterioration.
• If you mat your collages, use acid-free matting.

PROTECTING YOUR ARTWORK WITH GLAZING
If possible, protect your artwork with glass or acrylic glazing. If weight is a factor or shipping is necessary, use acrylic glazing. Avoid non-glare glazing, which tends to deaden color. UV protective glass provides additional protection from ultraviolet rays. Museum quality glass, such as Tru Vue, is worth using for your best pieces. Collages that are properly varnished to protect materials from exposure to air may be framed without glass or acrylic glazing.

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Shooting and Showing Your Collage

Photographing Collages
Newer digital cameras make it easy to point and shoot, but a quick photo of your collage may not be suitable for exhibitions or publication. High-resolution digital SLR cameras with quality lenses are required. If you don’t have the necessary equipment or know-how, have your artwork photographed by a professional.

However, if you choose to do it yourself, photograph collages before matting and framing. Coat your collage with matte medium to reduce shine. Set your lights to avoid hot spots—overly bright areas in your photo. Fill the viewfinder with the image, unless photographing for reproduction; in which case, tape a color scale or grayscale next to the artwork to assure good color reproduction. Use a black background or a temporary black mat around the art.

Save your digital images as 300-dpi files in TIFF format rather than JPEG, which compresses files enough to cause important image data (usually affecting color) to be lost. If the color bias or exposure is off, reshoot or make adjustments with photo-editing software, such as Adobe Photoshop Elements.

Galleries and Exhibitions
Many galleries require digital submissions. Offer a CD, DVD or flash drive containing your best work, or a portfolio of good color photos. If you do artwork other than collage, offer these separately to suitable galleries. Prepare a biography or résumé, an artist’s statement and a professional photo of yourself. If you’re showing originals, have quality framing and archival mats on all pieces.

For exhibitions, read the prospectus carefully. Some shows do not allow collages; others set limitations on how much collage is acceptable. Even if your work is accepted from a digital submission, it will not be hung unless it complies with all restrictions. Frequently, there are size limitations as well.

Size and weight are major factors in shipping collages. You need shipping crates large enough to accommodate adequate packing and sturdy enough to protect the collage. Keep packing material as simple as possible (bubble wrap works well; no Styrofoam peanuts), so it will be easy for shippers to return the artwork with the same protection. Ask artists in your area where packing and shipping services are available.

Don’t take competition too seriously. Win or lose, the decision is one person’s opinion. Today’s reject may be tomorrow’s best of show.

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Never Stop Experimenting

Collage artists are limited only by their imaginations. In your home, on the street, at the beach—everywhere are materials that might become collage art. Here are a few ideas to whet your appetite for experimentation. Acrylic gels adhere most materials, but you should use a gel/modeling paste mixture to assure the adhesion of heavy objects.

- Include stitchery, weaving, knitting, quilting or soft sculpture in a collage to enhance color and texture. Pad the layers to make your collage three-dimensional.
- Use plastic sculpture materials, such as Sculpey or Fimo polymer clay, to create a focal point in your collage. Shape your sculpture and then paint it with acrylics. Make several small ones to emphasize a theme and establish dominance.
- Make a three-dimensional collage inside a deep frame using textured, embossed or cast papers with small objects. Adhere the objects with a mixture of modeling paste and gel to a support that fits inside the frame.
- Create collage “books” like a shadow box, adhering layers in a box (such as a cigar box) to create an illusion of three-dimensional space and then gluing the box between the covers of an old book.

Papers and fabrics are draped and objects are placed in this collage to create shadow patterns on the background.

WES T II | Jeny Reynolds
Oil on canvas, handmade Indian paper, with beads, wire, leather and string
40" × 30" (102cm × 76cm)

Handmade paper curls back over the marbled mat to reveal a painted clay figure, the focal point in this simple but clever collage piece.

TRICKSTER | Joanne Peltz
Mixed-media collage with clay sculpture
7" × 5" (18cm × 13cm)

Shadow boxes make beautiful assemblages. Fill small boxes with collage elements, add found objects and paint with acrylics.

RELIC BOX II
Patricia B. Cox
Assemblage with found materials and Sculpey clay
11" × 12" × 4” (28cm × 30cm × 10cm)

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Assemble an Environmental Collage

Do your part by recycling trash into art. Make an environmental collage or assemblage with bits and pieces of discarded objects: paper bags, beads, bottle caps, broken pottery or glass, clock parts, gears and wheels, jar lids, metals, mirrors, nails and screws, nuts and bolts, bits and pieces of Plexiglas or plastic and wire. Incorporate your collage papers as a foundation or a textural feature into an assemblage.

Select materials for their patina, shapes, colors and textures, looking for similarities that establish unity. Include a variety of sizes and subtle differences to create interest. Design your environmental collage to take advantage of the contrasts and harmonies of the objects in their natural state.

Materials

Work Area Setup materials (see chapter four)
| encased canvas or heavy watercolor board | recycled objects | modeling paste | matte gel |
| wire or fishing line | rubbing alcohol | gloss medium or soft gel | synthetic brushes |

Created from a variety of found objects and paper, this piece is beautifully designed with limited color and striking value contrasts.

GRANDMOTHER’S BROOCH | Nita Leland
Bark paper bas-relief with recycled jewelry
10” x 7½” (25cm x 19cm)

LUNA SHIELD | Frances Dezzany
Assemblage with found objects and handmade paper
27” x 17” x 3” (69cm x 43cm x 8cm)

Assemblage doesn’t have to be complicated to be effective as an artistic statement. Feature memorabilia on a background of sculptured rice paper, bark paper or a textured support.

1 Clean your objects. Brush off loose dirt and rust flakes. Wash if necessary or wipe with rubbing alcohol to clean off oily residue. Encase with gloss medium or gel.

2 Use a support of stretched canvas or heavy watercolor board encased with gloss gel. Spread a thick mixture of modeling paste and matte gel (a bit more paste than gel) on your support. Imprint your objects in the wet medium in a few areas; then embed some of them permanently. To adhere more objects, apply the paste/gel mixture to an area on the support and directly to the object, then press them together firmly. With a small, damp brush, wipe off any excess medium or gel that oozes out around the edges, because modeling paste is opaque and cannot be removed after it dries. Let the support dry thoroughly.

3 If an object is too heavy for the paste/gel mixture, wrap thin wire or fishing line around it in several places. Make a small hole in the support; push the line through the hole and secure it on the back. If necessary, conceal the wire with a bit of the paste/gel mixture.

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Making Meaningful Collage

The fine art of collage has infinite possibilities for artists, although collages often take on a life of their own. Your collage is likely to tell a lot about who you are and what matters to you. I once started a collage about my mother, but I was surprised when my grandmother turned out to be the subject. One of my workshop students began a lovely nature collage with a blue sky and open fields; it morphed into a brooding plea to her father to quit smoking.

Trust your instincts. Find your themes and symbols and use them to give meaning to your art. Make a statement or tell a story in your collages and your viewers will find their own meanings. At the same time, enjoy the process. Have concern for quality and the product will be worthwhile. Use design as a framework to bring order out of the chaos of mind and materials.

One of the great things about collage is that it can be challenging and fun at the same time. Nothing is more satisfying than working at something you love to do. No matter where you begin, you get better the more you do it. Even a professional can play and experiment with collage, always learning and growing as an artist.

Bluntzer uses found materials such as wood and bone to create “images that are symbolic of aspects and experiences in [her] life.” This highly original collage is very personal to the artist in terms of the materials and images she has combined.

**HOLDING ON** | Chispa Bluntzer
Oil on canvas with found objects
36” × 42” (91cm × 107cm)

This compelling image was part of an exhibition with the theme of laughter. The artist’s paper collage makes us think about what remains when the laughter has faded away.

**YITZAH: AFTER THE LAUGHTER #1**
Willis Bing Davis
Cut and torn paper on illustration board
30” × 20” (76cm × 51cm)

Bluntzer uses found materials such as wood and bone to create “images that are symbolic of aspects and experiences in [her] life.” This highly original collage is very personal to the artist in terms of the materials and images she has combined.

**HOLDING ON** | Chispa Bluntzer
Oil on canvas with found objects
36” × 42” (91cm × 107cm)

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Conclusion

Collage Attitude

Collage is like a hall of mirrors. Every direction you look, you see something different and visually stimulating. For collage artists, this is the fascination of collage and the origin of the “collage attitude.”

Collage attitude isn’t a special talent—it’s a state of mind. You may already have some of these characteristics; others develop naturally as you work and become a part of your artistic style. Every attribute you have helps you to be a better artist.

Whatever direction you take, use quality mediums and suitably prepared supports. Base your collage on design principles, but invent and innovate. Collage truly lends itself to this. Virtually no stone, or shell, or paper will be left unturned when the creative collagist is on the move. Surely, the world and all that’s in it was created for us to put into our collages.

Use restraint and good taste to elevate your collage art. No one can predict what direction the art of tomorrow will take, but the potential for originality, experimentation, change, growth, personal expression, spirituality and environmental impact exists in collage to a greater extent than in almost any other art medium.

And the best part is that you can do it. Experiment. Be creative. Have fun. You’re a collage artist!

As a collage artist, seek to be:
artistically aware • environmentally aware • spiritually aware • open-minded • playful • fun-loving • child-like • hard-working • creative • spontaneous • intuitive • original • flexible • open to change • non-judgmental • patient • adventuresome • impulsive • energetic • risk-taking • daring

Ready for anything

QUILT OF MIND | Ann L. Hartley
Mixed-media collage, 14” × 14” (36cm × 36cm)

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Appendix

Collage Materials and Resources

Experiment with these and other materials and products you discover. Instructions for using many of these materials are given throughout this book.

**Mediums and Paints for Collage**
- acrylic mediums (Golden or Liquitex): gloss medium, matte medium, matte gel, modeling paste, soft gel (gloss, semi-gloss, matte), molding or modeling paste, clear tar gel, self-leveling clear tar gel, Golden Absorbent Ground, Golden removable varnish with UVLS
- adhesives (other): Perfect Paper Adhesive, Yes! Paste, wheatpaste
- acrylic paints: jars, tubes or fluid (including iridescent, metallic and airbrush colors): Golden, Liquitex, Winsor & Newton
- colored pencils and crayons (pastel, wax-based, or watercolor)
- gesso, white or colors: Golden, Liquitex, Daniel Smith
- graphite pencils
- inks or liquid watercolors (lightfast and waterproof), Daler-Rowney FW Acrylic inks, Dr. Ph. Martin’s
- Krylon sprays: Make It Acid-Free!, Preserve It!, UV matte spray
- markers (lightfast, water-resistant)
- oil pastels, pastels, charcoal
- watercolors or gouache (artists’ quality): Winsor & Newton, Holbein, Daler-Rowney, Daniel Smith, M. Graham, Maimeri Blu
- watercolor mediums: ox gall, Aquapasto

**Tools and Equipment**
- brayer (Speedball soft rubber 4” [10cm])
- brushes: synthetic in various sizes, bristle brushes, hog-bristle brushes from hardware store (Don’t use good watercolor brushes with acrylics.)
- cutting mat (self-healing)
- hair dryer
- pencils, erasers
- pliers
- rubber spatula, palette knife, old spoon
- ruler or yardstick (heavy, metal)
- scissors, tweezers
- spray bottle (pump)
- staple gun, staples
- strainer (mesh)
- toothbrush or denture brush
- utility knife, craft knife
- Xyron 150–250 sticker machine and permanent refills

**Ready-Made Papers for Collage/Printing**
- charcoal and pastel paper
- Color-aid papers
- computer or bond paper (24 lb., acid-free)
- Cosmos blotting paper
- handmade papers: India watercolor paper, metallic papers, printmaking papers
- rice papers (kiriwashi heavy and light, kozo, umyu and others)
- stencils, stencil paper
- textured papers, wallpaper
- tissue paper, white, acid-free
- watercolor paper (90 to 300 lb. [190 to 640 gsm], acid-free or pH neutral)

**Supports**
- bristol board (3- to 5-ply)
- canvas, stretched
- canvas board
- Claybord
- illustration board, medium weight
- mat board (4- to 8-ply)
- watercolor board

**Miscellaneous Materials**
- buckets (1-gallon plastic)
- cornstarch
- drop cloth
- freezer paper (waxed on one side)
- Gatorboard
- gloves (plastic or latex)
- masking and cellophane tapes
- notebook
- old towels or cleanup cloths, heavy paper shop towels
- petroleum jelly (Vaseline)
- plastic bags (biodegradable HDPE)
- plastic wrap or sheeting (different weights)
- Plexiglas for palette and monotype plate (approx. 12” × 18” [30cm × 46cm])
- plywood (¼” [10mm] thick, 18” × 24” [46cm × 61cm])
- rubbing alcohol
- soap in a jar for final brush cleaning
- sponges
- tracing paper

**Electronics**
- computer
- digital camera—10 megapixels or higher
- inkjet color printer
- photo-editing software
- scanner (flat bed)

**Miscellaneous Materials**
- art reproductions, posters, prints, engravings
- bags (mesh, paper, foil)
- beads, marbles
- berry boxes
- bills, receipts, labels, price tags, punch cards
- bottle caps, lids

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broom straws, drinking straws
bubble wrap, packing material
burlap, gauze, cheesecloth
buttons, keys, pins, combs
catalogs, comics, playing cards
coins, stamps
colored Mylar, metallic paper
computer paper, copy paper
corrugated paper, sandpaper
craft shop items, glitter
diaries, journals, programs, tickets, maps
doilies (paper, fabric, plastic)
dress patterns, sheet music
fabrics, fibers, lace, ribbon, yarn
feathers, dried flowers, leaves, shells, stones, twigs
junk mail
letters, greeting cards, postcards, envelopes
magazines (good quality) such as National Geographic, Architectural Digest, Vogue
metal, wire scraps
mica flakes
mirror, Plexiglas (broken)
natural materials (beans, seeds, pods, herbs, weeds)
needlework canvas
newspaper
nuts, bolts, nails, screws, gears, wheels, clock parts
objects with raised design
photographs, memorabilia
pottery, broken
press-on type
sand and gravel, from craft store, gravel pit or beach
stencils, stencil paper
string, rope
unfinished paintings, drawings
wallpaper (embossed, textured, grass cloth), waxed paper
wood chips, scraps, shavings, sawdust
wrapping paper

Marbling and Suminagashi Supplies
acrylic paints: Golden Fluid Acrylics or airbrush colors
alum powder
brushes, Asian pointed round
bucket (at least 4 gallon)
craft sticks
dispersant (Kodak Photo-Flo 200 Wetting Agent or liquid dish detergent)
distilled water (2 gallons)
gloves (plastic or latex)
hand cream (non-greasy)
jars (small, with lids)
newspapers
palette for inks (small)
papers
paper towels (heavy)
plastic combs, hair lift
plastic container (12" × 16" [30cm × 41cm] or larger with low sides or litter pan)
sponges
suminagashi inks (Dr. Ph. Martin’s Bombay India Inks)
tablespoon
wallpaper paste, cellulose: Metylan
wire whisk

Handmade Paper Supplies
blender (not your everyday one)
blotting paper sheets

canvas stretchers (one set 8” × 10” [20cm × 25cm]); wood frame for deckle 8” × 10” (20cm × 25cm)
fiberglass mesh door screen 10” × 12” (25cm × 30cm)
large measuring cup (4-cup)
newsprint, unprinted
objects for embedding in pulp
plastic pan (12” × 16” [30cm × 41cm])
plywood boards (at least 9” × 12” [23cm × 30cm])
scrap papers: computer paper, white wrapping tissue, dress patterns, watercolor papers, rice (mulberry) papers, soft white papers, small bits of colored paper, newspaper, (not glossy advertisements), paper bags
sponges

COLLECTING WHAT YOU NEED FOR COLLAGE
Search the Web for resources and articles and search YouTube for collage-techniques videos. Check for quality collage materials with your local art materials dealers. Craft and school supply stores also have useful items. Many items are available online or through mail-order suppliers; write, e-mail or call for catalogs. For found objects, explore flea markets, antique shops, hardware stores, lumberyards, building sites, junkyards, fabric shops, garage sales, and at your feet along the streets.
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Contributing Artists

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About the Author

An Otterbein University graduate with a double major in English and speech/theater, Nita Leland started her art career in 1970 in a YMCA watercolor painting class, while raising four children. Now, she is in demand throughout the United States and Canada as a professional artist, teacher, lecturer and juror of art exhibitions.

Nita has taught hundreds of art workshops on color, creativity, design and collage. From her experiences as a participant in more than seventy art workshops, she has developed student-centered workshops and books for the practicing artist and teacher, as well as the novice.


Nita’s award-winning artwork, which includes transparent watercolor, collage and experimental water media, has been juried into many shows. In addition to her classes and workshops, she manages her website Exploring Color & Creativity (www.nitaleland.com) and a blog (www.nitaleland.blogspot.com). Nita is the designer of the Nita Leland™ Color Scheme Selector and the featured artist in the DVDs Creating Confident Color and Paper Collage Techniques.
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