

COLLAGE painting

Collage is a contemporary art form that is fresh and filled with surprises. It teaches value and design skills that will apply to other artwork. It can integrate nicely with watercolor by using painting in your collage or by adding paper collage over the top to salvage paintings that aren't working.

Steps to success

- 1. Choose a simple, interesting subject** with a strong value pattern that will break into large and small shapes.
- 2. Make a value study** – reinvent it so the shapes you want to be forward are light and the shapes you want to recede are darker. This creates depth and dimensionality. Give your focal point area the lightest lights and darkest darks.
- 3. Using your value study, draw a pattern** of shapes. Be sure every line closes to make a shape. Simplify to include only the necessary shapes. Mark dark shapes with an X, white areas with a W. Make a copy on tracing paper, for a pattern.
- 4. Collect a palette of paper colors**, choosing dark, light and several mid values, some colorful and others neutral tones. Have more to choose from than you will need.
- 5. Using the pattern**, decide how your shapes will overlap if layering. Pieces on top will show all edges, overlapping the pieces that go underneath. Where edges are covered they don't need to be precise. Mark and tear or cut your shapes. Cut edges are "hard" and torn edges are "soft". Either draw the pattern on your paper by using light to see the pattern through the paper. For cut edges you can slice through both the pattern and paper simultaneously with an X-acto knife on a cutting surface.
- 6. Move pieces around** until you like it! **Tack them in place with tape** - a loop of tape under each if they don't overlap or flat tape on the back side of overlapping pieces.
- 7. Glue together** by applying acrylic matte gel (a high quality, acid free and permanent glue) to the back side with a brush. Allowing time for the paper to stretch before attaching minimizes wrinkles. I usually use a soft gel, or Nova FLEX gel. If your gel is too thick or dries too quickly, add matte medium or water to thin it. Matte gel accepts watercolor paint better than gloss gel and isn't as shiny, but gloss can work also.
- 8. Painting a layer of watercolor** over collage papers can add the sophistication of shading to your work. I often do this BEFORE gluing them. Then spray with acrylic varnish before coating with acrylic gel.

Note: There's no need for papers to be acid free if you coat them in archival acrylic. I coat the entire painting in acrylic gel when finished, both front and back.

