4 free digital art tutorials:
creating digital artwork for photo collage

presented by cloth paper scissors®

Chrysti Hydeck takes digital photo art techniques a step further in "Art-Ography: Enhance Your Work with Digital Art." She walks you through the photo editing process and shows how you can combine your photos with scanned backgrounds to create digital collages that simulate transfers. Best of all, you can use your images again and again, in unlimited combinations.

In "Branching Out with Digital Prints," Kathyanne White explains how she prints her own digital photos on Lutradur® and lace paper, with the help of a substrate prep called Digital Ground. Then she cuts the printed pages into pieces and layers them onto copper mesh, wire, and hardware cloth to make unique abstract collages.

Mixed-media fabric collages take on new life—with new possibilities—when you use digital photo art. In "Printable Cotton Collage," Jane Davies explains how to manipulate your own or copyright-free images in Photoshop® and print them on cotton. She then shows how to and bring them together with paper, fabric scraps, and other collage elements, finally altering the collage with paint and matte medium.

The world of digital artwork and photo collage is growing and expanding every day. If you haven't begun, this free eBook is the perfect place to start. If you have explored digital media design or photo collage artwork and are looking to do more, **Cloth Paper Scissors Presents 4 Free Digital Art Tutorials: Creating Digital Artwork for Photo Collage** will give you the tools to take your photo/collage art to new creative heights.

Enjoy!

Jenn

Jenn Mason
Editor, Cloth Paper Scissors

i t wasn't that long ago that if you wanted to see how your photos "came out," you had finish up the roll and have it sent away to be developed—unless you were lucky enough to live near an expensive one-hour service. And if you wanted to make a copy of your images or other artwork for collage work, you had to find a copy center and pay a dollar or more for each color page.

Now we can do all this electronically in our own homes and studios, making photo collage and digital art easier, less expensive, and more creative than ever. In fact, there are so many techniques you can use to make a digital collage that some guidance from the pros is very welcome.

In our free eBook, **Cloth Paper Scissors Presents 4 Free Digital Art Tutorials: Creating Digital Artwork for Photo Collage,** you'll find four tutorials on using photography in your artwork. From the basics of using photo-editing software to turning your photos into a mixed-media collage, we have your bases covered.

In "Pixel Perfect: Fun with Digital Collage," Marie Otero takes you through all the basics of photo editing and digital collage, including scanning, layering, filtering, and fundamental terminology. Even if you don't know a dpi from a gif, Marie's tutorial will get you started.

pixel
perfect
Fun with digital collage

BY Marie Otero

twelve months ago when I moved from Delaware to Charlotte, North Carolina, I mourned the loss of my big, rustic basement studio. But what I have gained in my new, tiny, indoor studio is a place to hook up my computer, my scanner, and several trusty printers—all right next to my workbench, which is, as always, resplendent in layers of papers, scraps, and paint. Having my computer and all the electronic gadgets right beside me is an excellent trade-off; not a day goes by that I do not scan, print, re-size, or digitally fiddle with some piece of art that I have created.
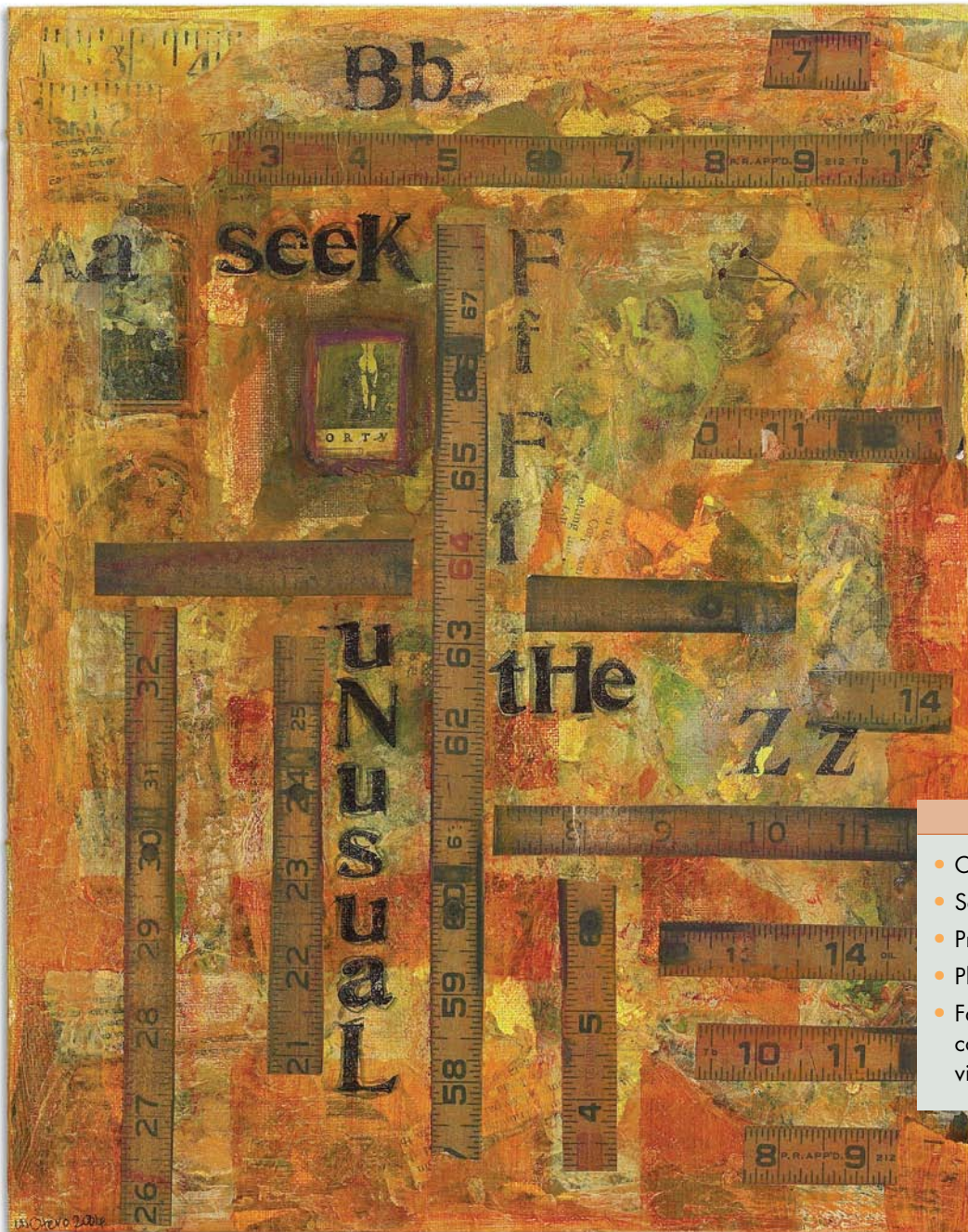
MATERIALS

- Computer
- Scanner
- Printer
- Photo-imaging software
- Favorite photographs, original collages, copyright-free pictures, vintage images

"Seek the Unusual"—an original mixed-media canvas worked with paper, fabric, acrylics, and pastels.

The quality of your digital art will depend on the quality of the images that you use to compose it. Before you begin, learn the basics of your scanner, printer, and digital software. Think about the output of your piece: do you plan on it being used for the Internet, being printed, or both?

In this article, I'll show you an easy way to create a digital collage by taking a real collage, scanning it into your computer, and adding images and text.

the digital collage

collage it

To begin you will need a collage. You can use something you have made previously, or create a new collage for this project. For my collage "Seek the Unusual," I created a collage on canvas that I happily gessoed, painted, and glazed. I incorporated strips of plain muslin, tissue, and other collage papers for dimension and texture. I also added some numbering and letters in permanent black ink for interest.

scan it

Following the steps necessary on your system, scan your collage at the correct dpi and dimensions and save it as a TIFF file.

tip *Before scanning you need to decide the final dimensions of your digital collage (for example, 4" × 6") and the correct dpi. Correct dpi is based on the end-use of the art (72 dpi for online work, 300 dpi for printed work.) I scanned my collage at 100% of its actual size (4" × 6") at 300 dpi. You must scan your art at the correct dpi and dimensions or your image will be blurry.*

layer it

Once your collage image is open as a file in your digital software, you can

Further depth and interest was created for the original canvas with the digital addition of a monochromatic ballerina whose red heart was preserved with hand coloring and layering techniques in Photoshop.

add imagery or text to the original artwork by using a series of "layers." Simply stated, layers are like parts of a sandwich with the added advantage of being able to make some layers more or less transparent than others. You can add one layer right on top of another to create a single, more complex image. For simplicity, you can name your layers. The first or bottom layer could be labeled "background," the second layer could be "ballerina," with each layer being created successively over the other and manipulated to achieve the desired effect. This enables you to manipulate each layer independently, thus not changing the content on the rest of the layers.

Most graphics programs offer the opportunity to alter the color balance of your scanned image, enabling you to produce a stunning new look with little more than a click of your mouse.

A simple way to achieve the black-and-white effect is to "desaturate" the image, thereby removing all color. As the ballerina's heart is the focal point of the piece, the color for this is preserved in a separate layer of the "art sandwich."

tip Duplicate a layer before launching on a series of filters and alterations. Then, if you find after many edits and changes that you want to return to where you began, you can do so with ease.

filter it

Not only can you simply overlay other images and text onto your original artwork, you can also change colors, apply filters, or simply cut and paste different pieces, giving your artwork a whole new look. For instance, a piece that was originally red and yellow can become blue and green, black and white, or sepia-toned. Filters and special effects in your graphics program offer you a world of opportunity and excitement to change and alter a piece at will, without changing the general composition. They are like placing a screen, a colored window, or a glaze effect over your collage. Many filters come standard with graphics software, but there are also secondary filters that can be bought or downloaded as freeware off the Internet and uploaded quite safely into your software programs.

tip Keep notes as you make edits and changes to the layers so you can easily duplicate interesting results on other pieces of the collage or even on other digital collages.

images for digital art

Where do you find the stuff that makes digital art cool? Having your own stock of images to use in your digital art is a great asset. I have a huge collection of vintage postcards and paper ephemera

A fun thing you can do with your digital collages is to turn them into your signature Artist Trading Cards (ATCs). Simply size them down to 2.5" × 3.5", laminate, and voilà: your own artistic calling cards.

that I constantly scan and use. There are also copyright-free stock photo sites on the Internet that allow you to download pictures for use in your work. Of course you can capture your own images on your personal camera (be it film or digital), which is actually an excellent way to amass a collection of copyright-free pictures to use in your work. You'd be surprised how useful the images of bare winter trees or spring flowers in bloom from your garden can be!

definitions

DPI (dots per inch, or pixels per inch) is a measurement of the output quality of an image, and refers to the resolution of images on a screen or printed page. The more dots, the better the resolution.

PIXELS are the picture elements which make up an image, similar to grains in a photograph or dots in a half-tone. Each pixel can represent a number of different shades or colors, depending on how much storage space is allocated for it. Sometimes the preferred term is pixels per inch (ppi), as it more accurately describes the digital image.

JPEG is the abbreviation of Joint Photographic Experts Group file format, which is a compression "recipe" for condensing the size of image files. JPEGs are helpful in allowing access to full-screen image files on-line because they require less storage and are therefore quicker to download into a web page. This is generally the best format for photographic images being used on the Web.

TIFF stands for Tagged Image File Format, typically used for saving files to be used in print applications because they are uncondensed and lose no quality in the file-saving process, unlike JPEGs.

GIF is Graphic Interchange Format file format, typically used for saving files to be used on Web pages because it employs an efficient compression method and allows the image to be represented with a transparent background.

software

Experimenting with digital art software isn't as expensive as it sounds. The latest PC and Mac computers usually have word processing or graphics programs installed that you can play with. There are plenty of mid-range software programs that will run happily on your home computer: Photoshop Elements, Print Shop, Print Master, ARCSoftware, to name a few, as well as the name brand programs that come with your digital camera. All of these programs will enable you do a modest amount of editing and formatting, too. Paint Shop Pro comes with many tools and tricks similar to those in Adobe Photoshop, but for those who are serious about their digital art, the expense of software such as Adobe Photoshop (CS and 7.0 are the current versions) is probably worth it in the long run.

final note

I have many friends who profess to being consistently befuddled by all the options out there for digital art and are afraid to incorporate it into their world of mixed media. My honest counsel is just "load it and play." Fiddle with it, mess with it, and see what it can do, because no option is wrong, and each time you will end up with a composition that is both fascinating and different.

So whether you're importing artwork that you have created and adding finishing touches, or are creating a new work on the computer and printing it out to use in another piece, digital manipulation creates endless and exciting options; the limits are really only set by your imagination.

note *Creating digital artwork often requires a large amount of working memory (RAM), so unless you have a fairly up-to-date computer system, many of the graphic software programs will seem like they are running like turtles.* ●

Marie Otero is a self-taught mixed media and digital artist with a penchant for photography. Visit her website: marieotero.com.

"Going Blue"—application of a blue filter across the base layers of the scan results in yet another new and different look. The tools in your graphics program really make endless options for creating exciting changes in your artwork without permanently altering the content of the original work.

art-ography

BY Chrysti Hydeck

enhance your work with digital art

The result of the photo and journal layers mixed together.
I now have a lovely, artistic photograph, or a background for future use.

mention digital art to a group of artists and at least one person will proclaim, "There is no way I could ever do that." When using a computer to create, an intimidation factor comes into play that even some of the most creative minds are reluctant to tackle. It's very easy to understand why. Open any graphics program and you are immediately bombarded with unfamiliar terminology, controls, and options that most of us would find confusing, or at the very least overwhelming.

But digital art doesn't have to be that complicated. Often, the most difficult step is simply starting. As with any other medium of art, you don't start out creating complex pieces. You take baby steps, you practice, and as your comfort level and confidence increase you take on new challenges. With digital art, mistakes can easily be fixed, supplies aren't wasted, and when all else fails you can revert back to your original image. No harm, no foul. Think about each step individually, versus focusing on the big picture, and suddenly it's not quite so scary. Take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the basics of your preferred graphics program. Use Internet search engines to find easy-to-follow tutorials. Familiarize yourself with what I think is the most critical step any digital artist should use— layers. They are a perfect starting point
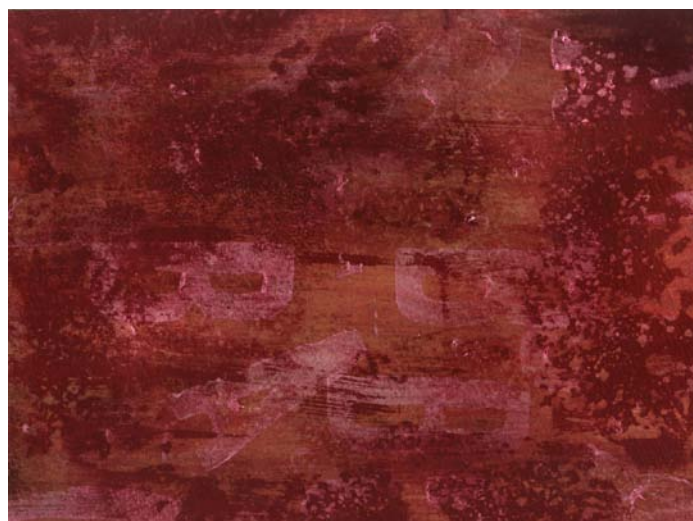
Original photograph (see Creating a Dreamworld instructions).

Scan of a background I painted in my mixed-media journal. I re-sized the scan to fit my photograph (left) and set the journal page as a new layer. The blend mode chosen was overlay, with an opacity of 85.

MATERIALS

- Camera
- Photos and scans of copyright-free textures or backgrounds for use in your art
- Computer
- Graphics editing software with layering capability
- optional
- Scanner and printer

and the fastest way to obtain the creative results you crave. Marie Otero wrote a fantastic primer on layers in Issue 2 of Cloth Paper Scissors, and it's an excellent place to begin. Another great reference is Gloria Hansen's two-part article: "Digital Design Principles" in the June/July and August/September 2008 issues of Quilting Arts Magazine.

why create digitally?

As a mixed-media artist, I rely on images to tell stories in my paintings. I love what I do, and creating has always been very fulfilling for me. Yet, solely depending on stock and copyright-free images held me back; a part of me never felt like my work

was completely my own. I craved to be raw with my work. I wanted it to be more organic. In my soul, I needed to feel as if I owned each element.

Enter photography—or, as I like to call it, Art-ography. By taking and processing my own photographs, I can incorporate these images into my artwork. I am free of the hassles that come with researching copyright, and my work has been transformed into something far richer, far more personal. With the help of my scanner and computer I can easily process my images to look like vintage photos, re-color or crop them, combine them with my handmade works, and much, much more. Simply put, I can customize an image to suit any one of my needs. Just one photograph can yield thousands of spectacular results. Digital art opened doors for me, and I'm convinced it will for you, too.

texture tricks

Now, let's play with textures and layers. The following effects were all achieved using basic steps and playing with layer blend modes. Try these techniques alone, or combine them to see what you

end up with. For these demonstrations I chose my mixed-media artwork to use as textures, but I often use photos of pavement, scans of paper, and close-ups of plaster walls to add interest to an otherwise boring photograph. Lower the opacity of the different layers, adjust the hues, and experiment a bit to see what provides you with the results you like.

creating a dreamworld

1. Using an original, unedited photo, duplicate it and create a new layer.

2. Select the new layer, and use the Gaussian Blur filter at a radius of 30. This adds a nice, ethereal quality to photographs, gives them a painted feel, and makes details pop. Experiment with the blur radius for different results.

3. Set the layer mode to multiply, with an opacity value of 75. I also decided to increase the brightness and contrast on that same layer.

4. Create a third layer. I used a scan of an old piece of paper for texture
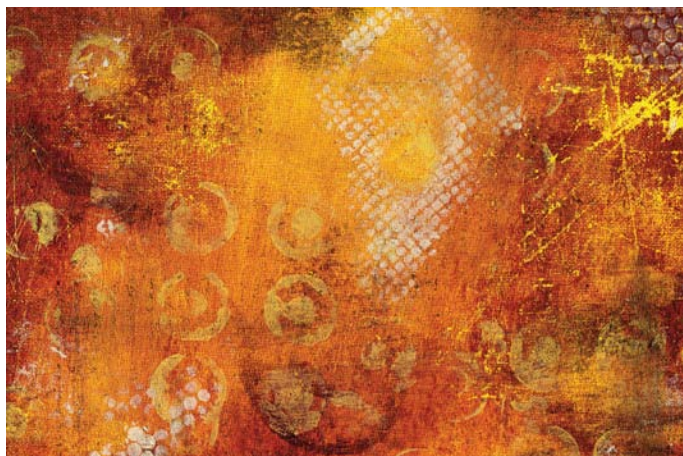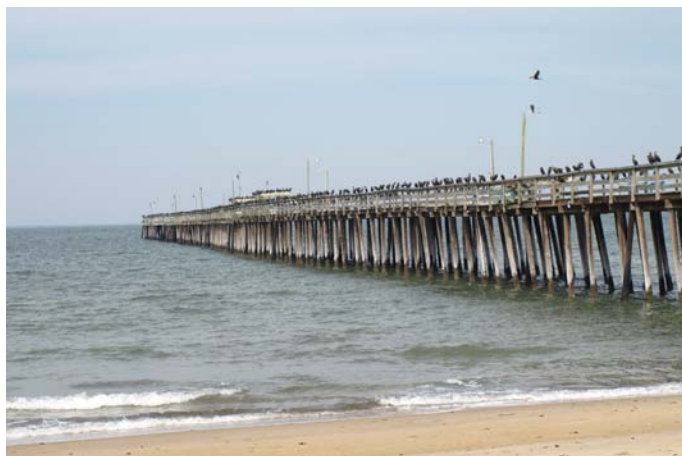
Above: Original photograph
(see Faking a Transfer instructions).
Above right: Scanned art for the second layer.
Right: The two images merged together.

and increased the saturation on that layer, to bring out the golden tone.

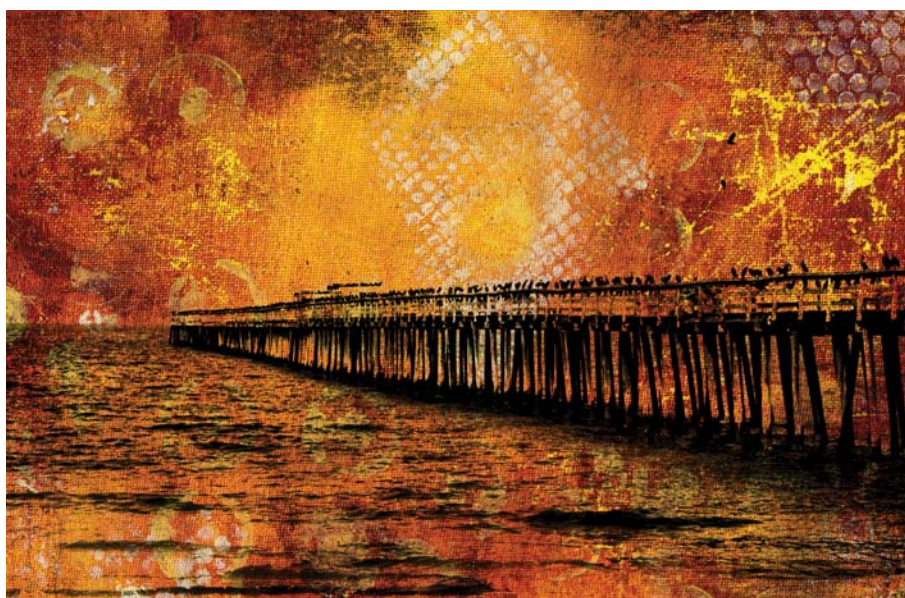5. I experimented with the blend modes. I chose soft light and left the opacity at 100.

faking a transfer

1. Take an original, unedited photo, convert it to black-and-white and increase the contrast.

2. Scan a piece of your art and add it as a second layer. I set the blend mode to multiply; the opacity was left at 100 percent.

3. The final result is of the two images merged together. You get the effect of a gel transfer, without all the mess!

note: *You can combine the basic techniques mentioned in both previous examples. I experimented with different blend modes and opacity levels, and I duplicated the original picture several times.*

more layer ideas

• Duplicate your photo and make several new layers of the same picture. Make one layer black-and-white; give another layer a sepia tone. Experiment with the blend modes and the opacity levels and see how it affects the toning.

• Layer different photos on top of one another to create a digital collage, or mimic a double exposure.

These are merely jumping-off points; where you take them is entirely up to you. Give yourself permission to play. Practice and experimentation are the key to success!

how to use your images

• Start a photo-a-day project. At the end of your pre-determined time period (a week, a year, a month), create a handmade book using your prints.

• Use one of the many online printing services. Turn your work into t-shirts, gallery-wrapped canvases, postcards, bookmarks, wall clings, and more.

• Use digitally altered photos of your pets and children in lieu of vintage counterparts.

• Just journal, baby! Journals are the perfect place to store snapshots of your life. Print them as a photo, transfer them, gesso and paint over them—there are lots of options.

- Print photos onto fabric paper and create a cloth book, pillow, quilt, or tote bag.

- Print onto canvas or fine art paper, and then mount it on a piece of wood. Embellish, add paint, and seal it with beeswax.

- Crop, print, and mount to an ATC-sized mat board so you'll always have art on hand you can trade!

texture mania

Despite the fact that there is an abundance of free textures offered on the Internet, creating your own allows you the freedom to use them without restrictions and often yields a better quality image to work with.

Textures are all around you. They are the often overlooked fragments that give our lives character. Go on a texture scavenger hunt to see what you can discover. Be open to the possibility of unexpected beauty.

tip: *Be sure your digital camera or scanner is set to take the highest quality photo/resolution it will allow. This will give you greater flexibility in using it.*

favorite textures

- Cracked sidewalks and pavement
- Old baking trays and cookie sheets
- Painted or drawn backgrounds
- Papers: handmade, stained, wrinkled
- Vintage lace, organza, linen
- Old book covers, tile, dirty glass
- Stucco or plastered walls
- Blurred light and scenes
- Anything rusty and crusty
- Chipped and peeling paint

- Carved tree trunks
- The backs of old tombstones

Subtle textures tend to produce the best effects; while a bold image can be used successfully, it will often dominate a photograph. A crumpled-up, old piece of paper tends to complement a picture rather than overpower it. ●

Chrysti Hydeck is an artist, writer, photographer, and instructor. Visit her website: christyhydeck.com.

take action

Adobe® Photoshop® has this wonderful, popular little feature that I have yet to see elsewhere: Actions. Actions can be created and downloaded for free, or they can be purchased. Though I am a thrifty kind of gal, it is the Action sets I have purchased from Nichole Van Photography that have become indispensable to me. Her sets are skillfully made, work correctly (something a lot of free Actions don't), and she offers a variety of artistic photo finishes. The license allows me to use them in a professional capacity and the unique sets also give me some control for customizations, a trait I find essential. After all, as no two photographs are the same, why would I want to treat them as if they were? Her step-by-step prompts help me to further my Photoshop education, and the results are often breathtaking.

Still not convinced? Have a look!

Original, unedited photo.

I cropped the image slightly, then used Nichole Van's Outdoor Color Pop Action.

I used Nichole Van's Tilt Shift + Color Texture Action, then ran her Green Acid Tint Action followed by her Vignette Action.

I de-saturated the image and added my own film texture and vignette for a softer, vintage look.

These edits took just a few minutes to perform, and the results shown barely scratch the surface of what Actions can do. If you have wanted to venture into digital art and photo editing, Actions are the perfect place to start.

branching out
with digital prints

BY Kathyanne White

MATERIALS

- Rubber gloves
- Plastic to protect your work surface and drying area
- Foam brushes
- Digital Ground Clear (Gloss) or Digital Ground White (Matte) coating from Golden® Artist Colors
- Lutradur®, in chosen weight
- Lace paper
- Inkjet printer
- Carrier sheets, the size of the print you will be making (See "printing on lace paper," Step 5, for more information.)
- Double-faced tape (I use Scotch® brand.) Do not use a good, permanent kind of adhesive tape that makes it difficult to lift the paper from the carrier sheet.
- An inkjet printer (I use printers through which the paper makes a direct pass, such as the Epson® R2400.)

note: *You will need to experiment with your printer to see how to get the best results. Some printers have what are called pizza wheels to transport the paper through the printer. If this is the case, you will only want to use the Digital Ground White (Matte) coating, since other coatings may leave marks in the printed image.*

For years I have printed on ready-to-print fabrics with great results, and more recently I have branched out to other substrates. My experiments have led me to such surfaces as Lutradur, lace paper, vellum, watercolor paper, handmade paper, transfers, and

Above (detail) and previous page: "El Capitan" • 15" × 15" • This piece is composed of five digital prints layered with copper mesh and assembled on hardware cloth with copper wire.

my visits to forests all over the world—full of some of the largest trees on the planet—have been some of the greatest experiences in my life. I was inspired to use my pictures and images of these forests in my artwork, and these photographs of trees and their surroundings have transformed into a series of work that depicts my response to the rich environment of these special places. Experimenting with surfaces, then printing them on an inkjet printer, allows me to add texture to enhance my artwork.

substrates that I created myself to express the forests that I so love.

working with lutradur

Lutradur is a spun-bond web material that was originally created as a roofing product. Artists are now using it for many different applications. I discovered it while searching for a way to obtain a

quality digital print that could be pieced into my art quilts. Today, I use Lutradur in many forms in my mixed-media artwork and journals. I use a heavier-weight version of Lutradur when I want a vivid print, coating the surface with Golden's Digital Ground White before printing. For printing on the lightweight version, I use Golden's Digital Ground Clear, which allows the airy look to show through the print.

"Forest Surfaces 3" • 21" × 27" • This piece is composed of seven digital prints layered with aluminum screen on copper mesh with copper wire.

This thinner Lutradur can also be easily distressed and distorted with a heat tool for added interest.

printing on lutradur

1. Cover your table with plastic. Stack 2 pieces of Lutradur on the plastic covering, making sure there are no creases in the Lutradur. I like to layer the Lutradur since it is porous and some of the coating will seep to the bottom piece, wasting less.

2. Read the manufacturer's directions with Golden's Digital Ground White (Matte) for use and the safety precautions. Wearing rubber gloves and using a foam brush, coat the top surface in one direction. Once dry, coat the surface with a second coat in the opposite direction.

3. Once coated, carefully remove the wet Lutradur from the plastic and pin up to dry on a plastic-covered piece of wall board or similar surface. Be sure to cover the drying surface with plastic since the wet Lutradur can stick to other surfaces.

note: *Don't rush the drying process. I always wait overnight before I print; if the surface is at all wet, it could damage your printer.*

4. When it's dry, trim the Lutradur to the desired size for printing.

5. Print your surface. Lutradur can be sent through the printer without a carrier sheet, but you might want to hold the Lutradur as it starts its pass through the printer to make sure everything goes in correctly.

6. Let your print dry before using. If desired, you may use a spray coating to enhance the life of your print. (I have been using Krylon® Matte Finish. For results on spray coatings

for permanence visit wilhelm-research.com.)

printing on lace paper

note: *Lace papers are very fragile and will need a delicate hand. Start with a small sample until you get the hang of it.*

1. Get started as in the Lutradur instructions (Steps 1–2), but in this case use a single sheet of lace paper and coat the surface with Golden's Digital Ground Clear (Gloss). Be very careful; when it is wet it is very fragile and can tear easily.

tip: *Put the coating on in 1 or 2 light passes with the foam brush. Any more can damage the paper.*

2. Carefully separate the coated lace paper from the table and gently move it to a flat, plastic-covered drying surface. Allow it to dry before touching it again.

3. Lightly iron the paper from the back side, being sure to cover it with muslin or a Teflon® cloth so it doesn't stick to your iron. The lace paper needs to be pressed flat to print.

4. Trim the paper to the desired size for printing.

note: *The paper can tear when removing it from your carrier sheet. In order to keep your image intact you may want to leave a large, unprinted border around the image. The border will allow you to lift the print away from the carrier sheet without damaging the image; only the white space will be compromised.*
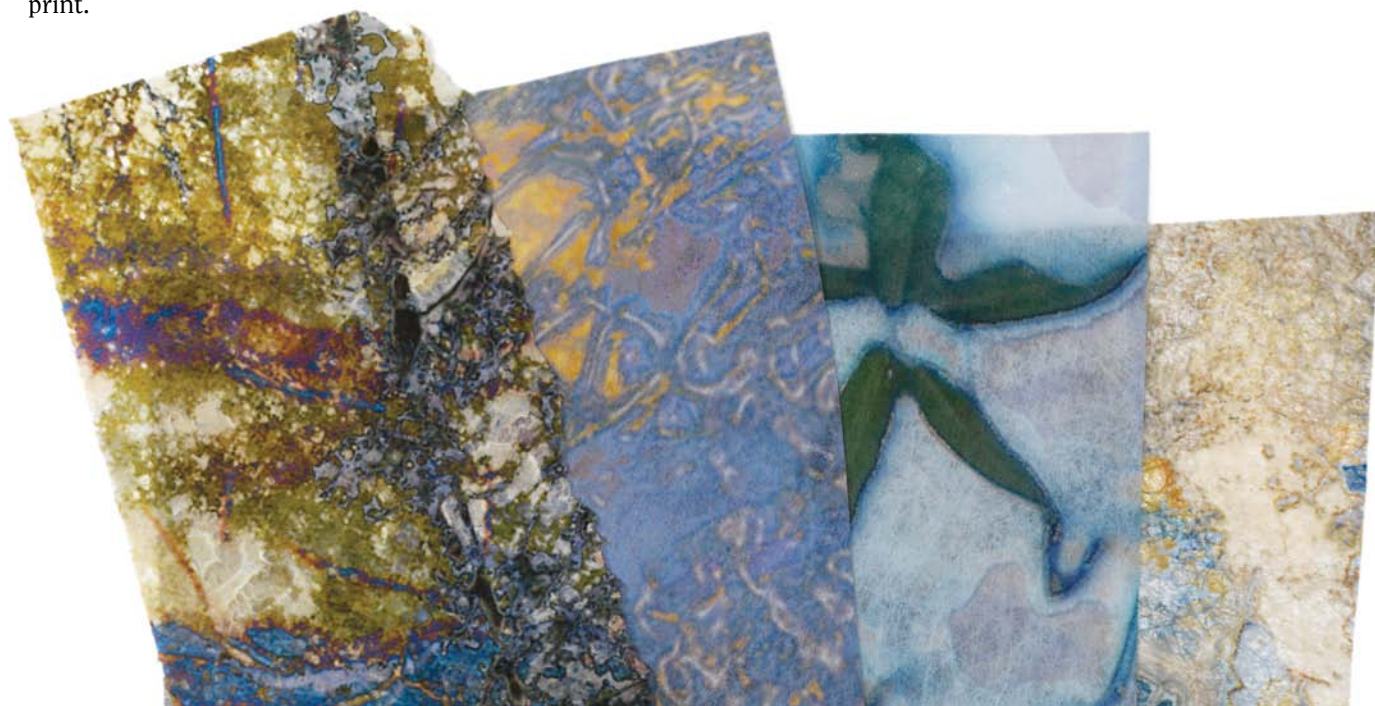
5. Place double-faced tape along the edges of your carrier sheet. I use a sheet of Epson watercolor paper or their matte paper for a carrier sheet; regular inkjet paper will also work, but you will have to replace it more often since it is lighter weight.

6. Lay the lace paper, coated-side up, on the carrier sheet and smooth it onto the sheet, with the edges pressed to the double-faced tape. You are ready to print.

7. Print the paper and then very carefully remove the paper from the tape on the carrier sheet. It is important to remove the print from the carrier sheet right after you print.

a word about print settings and color

In order to get a quality print you will need to adjust your print settings, usually using an enhanced matte or a matte paper setting. I do not use glossy paper settings for any of my work. If you are not familiar with paper profile settings, it is something that you need to know to get a quality print. Refer to your printer manual, or call the manufacturer of your printer.

If you are using a program such as Adobe® Photoshop® or Photoshop Elements, always allow your photo program to manage your color. Color is very important in getting a quality print. I calibrate my monitors often, and I use Photoshop to manage my color space, never my printer. You can choose how to manage your color space somewhere in your settings if you are not using Photoshop-based software. ●

Kathyanne White is a fiber and digital print artist who creates workshops and tutorials. Visit her website: kathyannewhite.com.

4 Free Digital Art Tutorials *presented by* cloth·paper scissors COLLAGE MIXED MEDIA ARTISTIC DISCOVERY clothpaperscissors.com

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printable
cotton collage

Several years ago a friend sent me some printouts of Greek vase paintings, thinking I might incorporate them into my collage work. They sat around for a couple of years before inspiration struck. Then, suddenly, I became obsessed with Greek mythology and had to use these images somehow. First I scanned the images into my computer, and then I played with them in Photoshop, experimenting with color, size, and layering one image over another. This resulted in my "Greek collection," images that formed the basis for my series of printable cotton collages.

BY Jane Davies

MATERIALS

- Scanned images: found images, photographs, or pieces of your own artwork
- Printable cotton fabric sheets (or muslin and freezer paper)
- Computer and inkjet printer
- Photo-editing software (I use Photoshop® CS3.)
- Acrylic paint(s) and/or drawing ink
- Spray bottle or brush and water for wetting fabric
- Acrylic matte medium
- Paper, fabric scraps, and other collage elements

optional

- White glue or PVA for adhering heavier collage items
- Beads
- Thread(s) and needle

I discovered printable cotton ($8\frac{1}{2}$" × 11" sheets of cotton fabric backed with stiff paper) and was excited to print my own fabrics to use for sewing projects. However, the color came out too pale for my liking, so I put it aside. The idea of using printable cotton sheets for collages rather than for sewing projects or fabric samples dawned on me one day when I was playing with my Greeks in Photoshop. I printed them out, painted them with acrylics, and used them with both cloth and paper for collage. Treated this way, the cotton cloth acquired an ancient parchment-like feel and I found that I loved working with it. This process has elements of quilting and painting on canvas, as well as collage, and the pieces can be stitched and beaded more easily than paper.

In general, I create my collages with reproducible material or materials that I have in abundance. Rather than use an original photo, print, or scrap of handwriting, I like to scan it and print it out on paper, fabric, or other material to use in my work. This has three advantages for me: first, I can re-size, re-color, or otherwise manipulate the image in Photoshop, creating multiple possibilities for collage material; second, I can choose the material on which I wish to print the image—various kinds of papers, fabrics, or transparencies are some of the possibilities; and third, if it doesn't come out as I planned, I can print the image again and start over. The control freak in me loves the freedom to manipulate color, size, and material, while the timid artist in me—afraid to wreck a good piece of paper—gives way to the spontaneous one only when I know I can re-create my materials, if necessary.

directions
making a collage on printable cotton

I suggest working on several collages at once, giving yourself room to develop themes and play with images over a series of pieces. You might choose to print out one image several times and develop each collage differently from the same starting point.

"Fig Leaf" • 8¾" × 15¼" • "I had no idea where 'Fig Leaf' was going when I started, as is the case with most collages to some degree or another. This piece stayed at a kind of midway point for many days while I worked on others in the series. I tweaked it frequently, but nothing was jumping out at me screaming for emphasis. Finally, it occurred to me that the figure in the image was badly in need of a fig leaf. I found a photograph of one, scanned it, and printed it out in several different sizes. When I found the size that worked, I painted over it and added a little glitter for fun. I tried many ways of applying my fig leaf to the appropriate spot, but it just didn't work visually. Hanging it off the bottom of the collage seemed to work, and then I added the top row of iridescent glass leaves."

manipulating
images in
Photoshop

play with the color

- Use the Hue/Saturation box by clicking on Image>Adjustments> Hue/Saturation and adjusting the sliders.

- Use the Paint Bucket tool at various tolerances to fill areas with color.

- Use the Replace Color box by clicking Image>Adjustments> Replace Color to vary one color at a time.

re-size your image

- Use the Image Size box to make it the appropriate size for your 8½" × 11" substrate. Click on Image>Image Size, check the "constrain proportions" box, and type in the appropriate width or height. I usually start with 5" × 4" or 6" × 8".

- Find a composition within your image that you want to enlarge and use the Crop tool to cut out that chosen piece. Then use the Image Size box to make that composition the appropriate size for your substrate.

layer one image over another

- Use the Move tool to drag one image on top of another and then reduce the opacity of the top image in the Layer Style box (double click on the layer in the Layers panel, and use the Opacity slider) so that the image underneath shows through. You may flatten the image at this point by clicking on Layer>Flatten Image, and then play with color and composition per above.
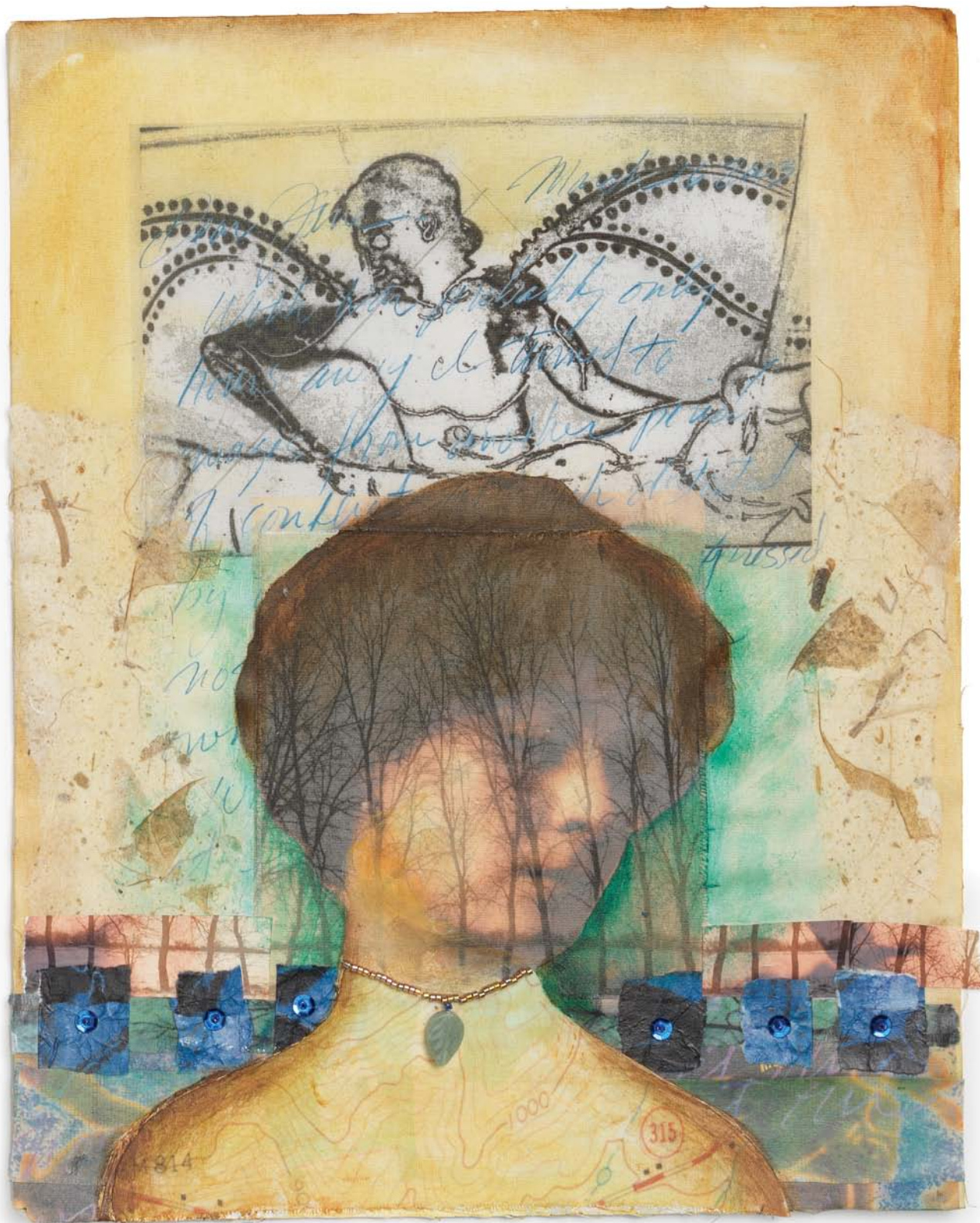
"Forest Dream" • 8 1/2" × 10 3/4" • "'Forest Dream' began with the black-and-white Greek image layered with blue handwriting and printed on printable cotton. I toned down the black-and-white contrast with pale washes of neutral colors and added strips of collage to the bottom of the piece—more from the 'Greek collection.' Then I decided to introduce another central image. In Photoshop I'd layered a photo of a woman with a line of trees and printed that out on cotton as well. I created the upper torso with a contour map of my town (I live on route 315), and suddenly the image made sense to me. The bits and pieces of collage, the paint, the beads, and the necklace fell into place as I contemplated dreams, forests, and a sense of place."

creating texture
with matte medium

1. Apply a generous coat of matte medium or soft acrylic gel to your painted and collaged surface.

2. When almost dry, use a dull-pointed tool such as a knitting needle to make random marks, patterns, or handwriting in the medium and allow to dry.

3. Rub a contrasting acrylic paint into the texture using a stiff brush or your finger. Immediately wipe the surface gently with a dampened cloth or paper towel, making sure to leave some of the paint visible in the crevices. You can repeat this step as many times as you like to build subtle layers of color and texture.

"Pedestal" • 8½" × 12¾" • "Unlike the pieces using Greek vase painting imagery, 'Pedestal' began with a printout of a small collage study I'd done a year or two ago. At first, I simply extended the color areas with quinacridone gold on top and ultramarine blue on the bottom, dividing the composition into two unequal parts. Then I added another image—one of my Greek layered images from the original series printed out on cotton—and filled in the top background with yellow squash quilting fabric (from one of the fabric collections I've designed for Free Spirit). From there, I added a few more collage details, then stitched the beads on for a final touch."

1. Take your scanned images and, using your photo-editing software, manipulate the color, size, composition, etc. *(See Manipulating Images in Photoshop.)*

note: *If you are not Photoshop literate, or are not interested in digital alterations, you can simply find or create an image, mount it on an 8½" × 11" sheet of paper, scan it, and then print it onto printable cotton. The result is your starting point and your substrate; it does not have to end up as the central image of your final collage.*

2. Once you have created several images and sized them appropriately, print them out on 8½" × 11" printable cotton.

tip: *You can make plain cotton into printable cotton by ironing freezer paper to it and cutting it to 8½" × 11" to fit your printer, but I prefer the convenience of ready-made sheets. I do use plain muslin (backed with freezer paper but not printed) as a substrate sometimes, if I want a piece bigger than 8½" × 11". Then I use the printable cotton for collage elements.*

3. Wet the fabric using a spray bottle or a brush, and then apply washes of acrylic paint and/or drawing ink. Let it dry completely.

4. Apply a coat of acrylic matte medium to the whole piece. Remove the backing when the matte medium is dry. Once the cotton is infused with acrylic matte medium, it is stiff enough to work on.

5. Now the fun begins: add paper, fabric scraps, and other collage elements to make your piece come to life and give it direction. I like to let these elements extend beyond the boundaries of the original 8½" × 11" format, giving the piece a more interesting shape. My favorite materials for these collages are other images printed out on cotton, cotton quilting fabric, joss paper (available in Chinese markets), and heavily textured but lightweight papers such as unryu, banana leaf, and mango

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"Silver Shoes" • 10¾" × 13¾" • "I began 'Silver Shoes' with the idea that I'd exploit the tree imagery in my original print. Trees hold such metaphorical and visual possibility that this seemed an inviting place to begin, but as the piece developed, it wasn't getting any more interesting than simply a tree and a background. It needed something hanging from or sitting beneath the tree, but I auditioned image after image and nothing seemed to work. Just when I was about to give up on it—send it to the recycle pile—I decided to insert a picture of my grandmother (printed on translucent paper) that had been sitting on my workspace waiting for a project. I put her on a swing, and voilà! It finally came together."

can be used to create new elements that make the piece come together.

note: *If I want to stitch or bead on a paper collage, I back the desired section with fabric for extra strength.*

when is your collage finished?

Developing the collage after the main elements are in place is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak—where the collage will stand on its own or remain unresolved. Some collages come together almost effortlessly, while others resist resolution and need to be put aside for a while. Working on several pieces at a time gives you breathing room and perspective so that you don't get too attached to any one piece. Let each piece be what it wants to be, even if that means it remains unfinished for a while. ●

Jane Davies is a collage artist, designer, writer, and teacher. Learn more at janedavies-collagejourneys.blogspot.com/.

paint, texture *(see Creating Texture with Matte Medium)*, drawing, more collage, etc., until you are satisfied with the piece *(see When is Your Collage Finished?)*.

leaf. I apply my collage materials using matte medium as the adhesive as well as for the top coat. If you are using heavier materials such as cardboard or canvas, you may want to use white glue or PVA for the adhesive.

6. When the main collage elements are in place, continue to apply layers of

7. Finally, when all of the collage and painting elements have come together, you may embellish the piece with beads, stitching, or other attachments. Such embellishments add emphasis and sparkle to existing features within your composition, or

"Two Poppies"
• 9" x 12 1/2" •
"The original print for 'Two Poppies' is an image I created by layering a painting of poppies (my own painting, that is) with a random tissue paper collage I did for a demonstration. I love poppies, and the bright, springy colors contrasted nicely with the deeper hues I'd been using for my other printable cotton collages. After the initial washes of acrylic paints, I added fabrics from my Free Spirit collections (the greens, yellow on green dots, and the turquoise and green floral) and bits of another printout from my 'Greek collection.' I collaged on some scraps of paper doily to echo the doily in the original collage piece, and a scrap of joss paper just below the poppy stems to anchor them. Finally, I embellished it with a few beads to add a little sparkle."

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