

Mixed Media Watercolor

Week 4

Watercolor with Collaged Rice Paper

The term collage covers a lot of ground. It can be a work composed entirely of pieces of paper, either handmade, machine made or “recycled” from magazines, newspapers, wrapping papers, etc., or it can include dimensional found objects. Collage can be combined with all kinds of other mediums, both wet and dry, and collage can even be incorporated into some printmaking techniques (chine collé).

All collage has one thing in common, and that is the inclusion of materials that are glued to another surface or ground. The weight of the glued on objects determines how sturdy the backing surface must be.

Rice papers, a general misnomer that describes a wide variety of relatively thin, relatively translucent Oriental papers, are quite complementary to transparent watercolor. They can be painted on “as is”, and when dry mounted to a heavier backing paper for framing, or they can be collaged to a sheet of watercolor paper initially, covering either the whole paper surface or just part of it. It is this latter technique that we will explore.

Materials:

Assorted Oriental papers (Chiri, Goyu, Hosho, Kinwashi, Kochi, Kozo, “lace” papers, Unryu, Unryushi Sume, etc)

140 lb. watercolor paper

adhesive (methylcellulose, Elmer’s glue-all or SOBO white glue, acrylic gel medium, etc.)

watercolor paints

The glue you use affects how the dried rice paper will accept paint. If you use one that is “re-soluable” even after it dries (methylcellulose, cornstarch, rice or wheat paste, etc.) you have to be somewhat restrained in how wet you get the collaged area when painting on it. Acrylic gel medium and other non-resoluable glues will be unaffected by water once dry, but they also “resist” the paint applied to them, particularly transparent watercolor. You will need to experiment with different types of adhesives with the papers and paints, inks, etc. you want to use to see which works best with your particular materials.

Oriental papers may be painted, tinted, or dyed and allowed to dry before using them in a collage. They may also be crimped, crumpled, folded, cut, ripped, woven, sewn on (by hand or machine), etc. to create a particular effect.



“Tea Time”, watercolor with crayon, ink, graphite, collage on Arches 140 lb. cold press, by Ellen Fountain

I used “crumpled” oriental paper to create the white napkin; other painted/stained and crinkled pieces of more opaque oriental papers form larger shapes. A third piece of rice paper was imprinted with left over blue paint and collaged into the upper right corner.

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Exercise:

Make some small samples of papers to paint on by adhering pieces of oriental papers to 140 lb. watercolor paper. Some of your samples should be covered completely and others just partially. Try one sample with acrylic gel medium, and another with methylcellulose. Let these papers dry completely, and then paint them.



“Against the Sky”, watercolor with rice paper collage, and ink on 140 lb. cold press paper, 12” x 14” by Ellen Fountain

The oriental paper was slightly crumpled and applied in a “C” shape that rund through the large tree and then diagonally to the lower left part of the paper. When dry, I scumbled watercolor over this textured area beneath the tree, and then used linear brushwork and larger washes to paint the sky, bush, rock shapes and tree trunk and branches. Finally, when the watercolor was dry, I added some drawing with black india ink.

GLUTOLINE is one brand of wallpaper paste (methyl cellulose). I use 1-2 Tablespoons in 1 quart (32 ozs) of water for oriental papers. You can add more of the powder if you need a heavier bodied paste. Stores nearly indefinitely without refrigeration in an airtight container. Wallpaper paste is available at most hardware stores. Look on the label for “methyl cellulose”.

You can also make your own paste from CORNSTARCH, but it must be stored in the refrigerator or other cool place and even then only lasts for a few days in the gel state. To make paste, dissolve 1 cup cornstarch in 1 cup water, and heat slowly in a pot. Gradually add 3 more cups water, stirring constantly and heating until mixture boils. Stir and boil for 2-3 minutes until a thick gel forms. Let cool completely. Thin the paste with water up to half strength (1 cup gel to 1 cup water). This works best in a blender, and the paste should be strained before using. The paste can be tinted with watercolor for colored glue, and can be brushed on and textured (with a comb, fingers, etc.) before being allowed to dry.