

Watercolor Still Life

Session 4: Textures/Mixed Mediums/Collage

Let One Element Dominate

Mixing other mediums with or adding collage to watercolor can provide additional ways for you to express your personal vision. Once you've taken the leap to go beyond pure watercolor, the choices can be unlimited and sometimes daunting if you don't narrow them down. Good design/composition can help here - letting one element dominate and direct the others. If you like collage, try sorting failed watercolors according to color, so that when you need collage pieces you can easily find them. Or handpaint lightweight papers for use as collage. Try crumpling up paper, then flattening it out and painting it. When dry, these papers can add textural interest when used as collage.

In Rachel Paxton's piece (right), she uses circles and stripes repetitively, and restricts her color palette. She also has hand-painted her collage papers (with the exception of the sheet music).

Collage, if you use it, needs to be "neat" - that is, all the pieces must be completely glued down. Some artists like to seal the finished work with several coats of acrylic varnish or gel medium so that the finished work can be framed without glass. It still needs a solid backing board (foam board, archival corrugated board, etc.) as it is a work on paper.



Rachel Paxton, watercolor with collage



In Ruth Sklar's painting (left), she uses both opaque acrylic and transparent watercolor to create her bouquet. A wet-in-wet background was painted all over the paper with watercolor and allowed to dry. Then she used opaque white acrylic to "negatively paint" the background and pull out the pot shape and many of the flower and leaf shapes. Finally, she hand painted papers and cut additional flowers from them for collage and also used colored opaque acrylic for some of the flowers.

*Ruth Sklar, "A Mixed Bouquet"
watercolor, acrylic and collage on paper
15" x 22"*

In my painting, *Tea Time* (right), I used hand-painted collage papers (some crumpled then flattened out before I painted them), Japanese rice paper, and parts of a failed watercolor (the pomegranates, and teapot) as my collage elements, along with watercolor, india ink, crayon resist and hand-written pencil notations about my Mom, who had tea nearly every afternoon.

Ripped flower shapes from hand-painted papers

Crumpled, flattened, hand painted paper

Japanese Rice Paper

Part of a failed watercolor

watercolor with crayon resist



Tea Time, mixed media (watercolor, wax resist, collage), image 22x30 inches, Collection the artist

In my painting below, *Hibiscus and Glass*, I used the hibiscus (from a failed painting), along with rice paper and opaque acrylic over a wet-in-wet watercolor base (all dark values). Using negative painting with the opaque acrylic, I pulled out the dark leaf shadows and the edge of the wine glass. The rice paper was collaged on in the lower section as well as the extreme upper right area, and then glazed over with both watercolor and thin glazes of acrylic.



Assignment:

Create a still life using watercolor with one or more other mediums and/or collage.

Dark transparent watercolor base over the whole paper

Hibiscus and leaf was cut from a failed watercolor and collaged in place

Opaque acrylic painted on top to pull out edges and shapes and create the checked pattern

Japanese rice paper collaged and painted over

Hibiscus with Glass, mixed media (watercolor, acrylic and collage), image 22x15 inches, © Ellen A. Fountain, private collection.