

2016

Creating a Collage Step-by-Step

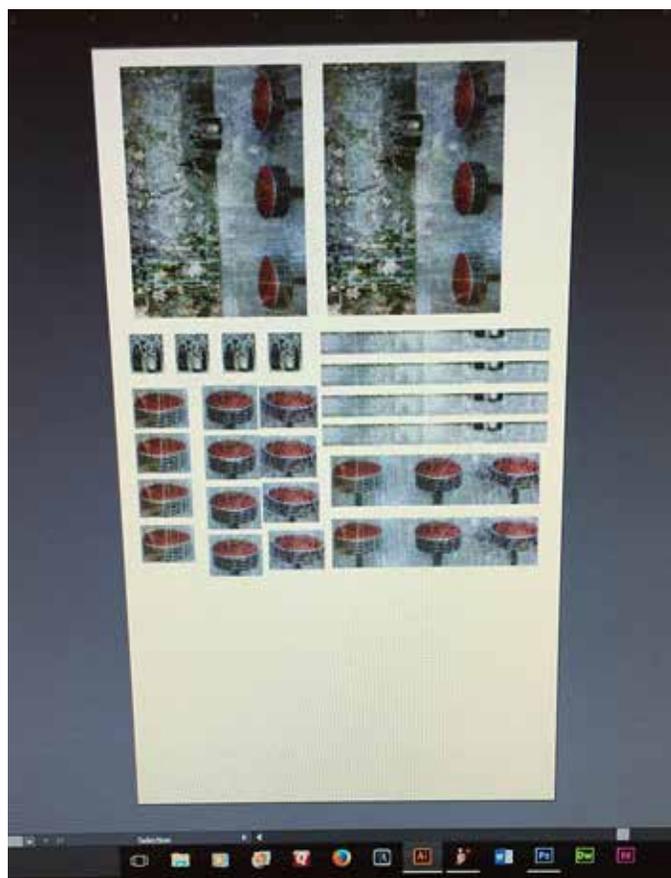
Sara Slee Brown

Virtually all of my artwork is done on my computer in Adobe Photoshop. I use photographs that my husband or I have taken and manipulate them in layers in the computer in a method that I call Digital Painting.

DESIGN



The example above, entitled “Baronne Street Diner” 9” x 12”, is made from a photograph of the interior of an abandoned diner. I have combined it with bits and pieces of some of my other paintings and photographs.



Once the design is complete I copy it electronically and using Adobe Illustrator place the image on the exact size paper I will be using in my old HP DesignJet 130 Wide Format Inkjet Printer. The paper is 26” x 40” Domestic Etching Paper. I manually trim it down to 24” but leave the length at 40” I use this paper because it is uncoated, has straight edges and easily moves through my printer. The layout above shows the whole image and various details of the work that I want to build up with extra layers of paper to form a somewhat three-dimensional aspect in the final artwork.

PRINTING



Here you see the printed sheet as it exits the printer.

PREPARE SURFACE & PASTE

While the ink dries on the print I prepare the wood-panel or stretched canvas with a coat of gesso.



When it is dry I sand the first coat of gesso and apply a second coat which I also sand.



I use YES Paste to paste the image to the prepared surface. This paste is designed to dry smooth and flat. It will not leave air bubbles or wrinkles in the paper.



The paste is too thick for me to spread on easily with a paint brush so I thin it with water.



I use an old hand-held mixer with one beater to mix the water and paste into a smooth batter consistency. WARNING: hold on tight to the paste jar so it doesn't fly around and throw glue all over.



CUT OUT DESIGN ELEMENTS

Next I cut all the pieces out of the large printed sheet of paper.



PASTING ELEMENTS

With the paste the correct consistency I evenly brush a coat of it onto the prepared surface.



For this small piece I can paste a full print of the artwork onto the wooden panel.



After I place the image properly, I smooth out the paper with my hands from the center out to the edges with a circular motion. This pushes any air or wrinkles out as the paper stretches to the edges of the support.

Next I cut out the smaller elements of the image that I want to layer more for emphasis and design.



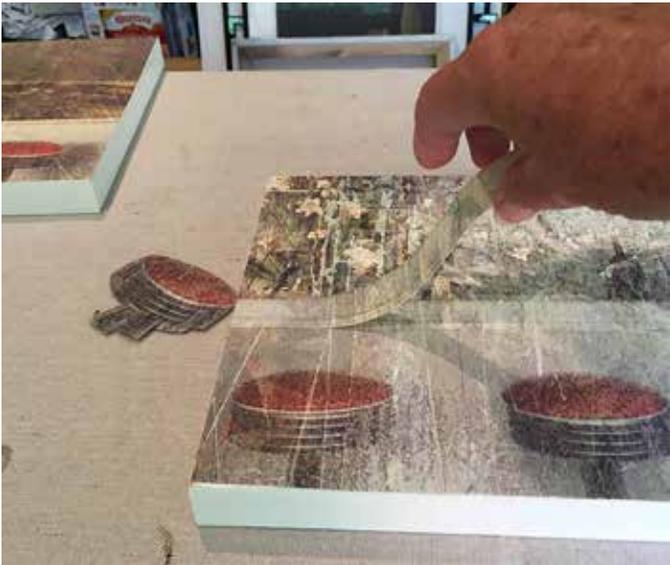
The second copy of the print is then cut into the elements that I want to emphasize with built up layers.



Ready for paste.



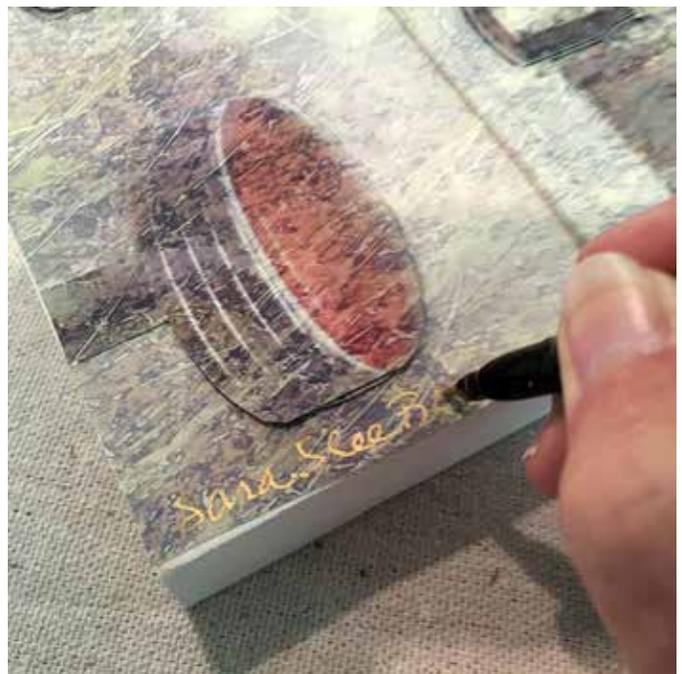
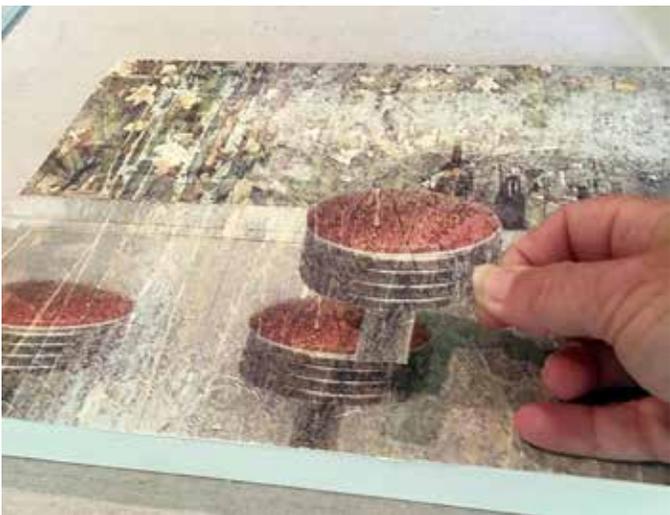
Turn element over and brush paste onto the back.



Place and paste element onto the image to build up areas.



Once all of the built up areas of the design are finished and the paste is dry sign then I like to sign the work directly on the paper.



FINAL COATING

There are two types of coatings that I use to finish, seal and protect the surface of the finished work. It also deepens and brightens the colors to give the work much more richness and depth.



The first is Winsor & Newton Artists' Acrylic UV Varnish. It comes in a number of finishes from gloss to matte. After mixing it in the jar I brush it directly onto the paper being careful to work quickly so as not to smear or run the ink in the print. This product gives a beautiful finish but is a time consuming process. Each layer of varnish applied requires 24 hours to dry before the next application. I usually apply 2-3 coats.



The second product that I use is Z-Gel Semi Gloss Finish which is a coating used primarily by photographers. I also thin it down with water and the hand mixer to get the consistency that I prefer. When this product is brushed on it is white with visible brush-

strokes. Again, just keep applying it as quickly as possible so that it does not streak or smear the ink print. Z-Gel dries very quickly like any other acrylic paint product. It is possible to apply several coats in a day.

I have never used both products on the same work. I use one or the other with time being the main factor.

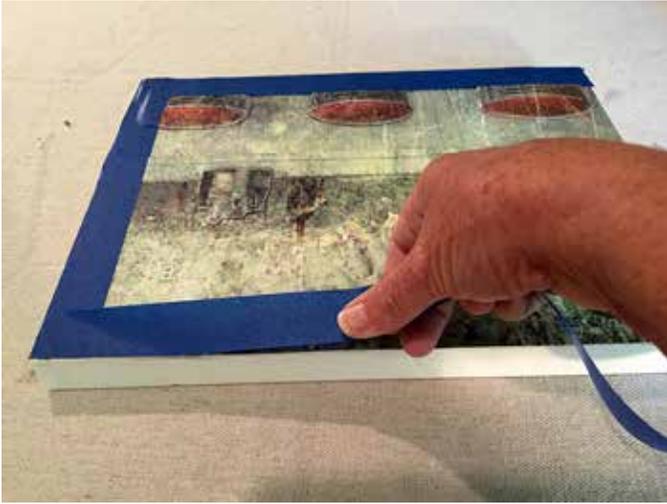


You will notice an immediate change in the color of the ink as soon as you apply the coating. It will become brighter and more saturated. I like this transformation.



Here you can see the enriched color and texture.

After all the coats of finish are dry I apply blue painter's tape to the surface of the work in order to paint the edges of the white canvas or wood. I do this so that when I'm framing the work the white does not distract from the frame.



To finish I apply two coats of any kind of clear acrylic finish I have on hand.



Two or more coats assures complete coverage.



Finished piece.



Remove tape.