



Susan Ruddick Bloom

Digital Collage and Painting

Using Photoshop and Painter to Create Fine Art

Second Edition



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Dedication

Special thanks to my loving parents, Dorothy and Earvin Ruddick, who have supported my artistic efforts throughout my life. They launched my love of art with art classes at age five. They put up with the mess of paints, clay, and plaster throughout my college years. Dad was always ready to create frames in his woodshop to showcase my artistic productions. Mom, who is a fine artist on her own, was always ready with supportive comments and advice. They alone have seen the thread of art run through my entire life. Their presence in my life has been such a joy and blessing.

Susan Ruddick Bloom
October 2013

I Planning and Inspiration



1 *Concept*

Where does that kernel of inspiration come from? Does it hit you when you are in the shower or when you are driving on the turnpike? Wherever it takes hold of you, it marks the beginning of the process of making a piece of art. Some artists agonize over each step of the creation process, whereas for some the work flows seamlessly from an inner fountain of inspiration.

There is an endless array of possible starting points. The *ah-ha* moment can be when you look at the texture of an old wall with peeling paint, the detail on a moth's wing, or the sweep of landscape contours on a hillside. As artists, we can be surprised by almost anything as we explore our world. Anything and everything is at our disposal to serve as possible elements for inspiration.

Often we are taken by surprise when a particular element “suggests” itself to us. The making of art is very intuitive, and the artist learns to follow his nose. The actual making of the art is seldom a smooth ride. Instead, I would compare it to a roller-coaster ride. The process involves many unexpected twists, turns, and bumps. It is full of thrills and can be harrowing at times, but you wouldn't miss it for the world!

Art is an affirmation of life.

—ALFRED STIEGLITZ, in *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs & Writings*, by Sarah Greenhough and Julian Hamilton (1983)

Once the seed of thought is planted, where do you go with it? It is important to think this thing through before you begin. What is the total concept? How can you integrate images into the complete work that might enhance that beginning concept? What additional imagery do you need? How do you see it coming together?

Visually, there are many things to consider. If you are using several images, as in a collage, how will you make them read as a whole? There needs to be a uniformity that unites the piece. You want to create a cohesive feel or mood. What will accomplish that for you? There are many unifying factors. Color can be the tie-in for you, or it might be scale, contrast, directionality, or more. We will cover some of these unifying factors in [Chapter 2](#).

We will assume that the creative bug has gotten hold of you and you are now compelled to make a piece of art. So, hold onto your socks—here we go.

What Is a Collage, Montage, or Assemblage?

What form will the imagery take? Artists throughout time have used marble and stone for sculpture

canvas and panels for paintings, paper for drawing and printmaking, and photographic paper for photography, to mention only a few formats. But, there is a dawning of a new age in art materials. We are fortunate to be living in the beginning of the digital age. For the artist, this introduces a whole new array of artistic tools and possibilities. The computer can be used to make imagery and is yet another tool in the imaginary tool belt that artists have at their disposal.

I attended a superb art college, where I was grounded in all the basics: strong drawing and painting skills, intense study of art history, and a good exposure to a variety of different artistic pursuits, from ceramics to fiber art, from lithography to photography. Mastery of the tools and techniques was a must in every field of endeavor. The artist needs to become so well acquainted with the materials and equipment available that creative applications become second nature. Once some mastery of the materials is in place, the work flows more easily. When a more complete understanding of the tools and techniques is in place, the inquisitive mind of the artist can explore variations on the technique. So it is with the field of computer imagery. The artist needs to prepare by obtaining a basic body of knowledge about computers, software, and printing devices. Once these elements are in place, the artist can begin to fluidly make art using the digital tools at hand.

The role of the artist is to hold up a vision of spiritual reality.

—JOSEPH CAMPBELL, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949)

In this book, I have chosen to concentrate on two digital applications in the field of art: *digital collage* and *digital painting*. I will attempt to explore the endless possibilities in this arena with you. How does the dictionary define *assembled imagery*? The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* definitions include the following concepts:

- *Collage*

An artistic composition of fragments (as of printed matter) pasted on a surface

- *Montage*

A composite photograph made by combining several separate pictures An artistic composition made up of several different types of elements

A varied mixture: jumble

- *Assemblage*

A collection of persons or things: gathering

The act of assembling

An artistic composition made from scraps, junk, and odds and ends The art of making assemblages

For the sake of consistency in this book, I will refer to assembled images as collages, keeping in mind that in the field of art assembled images could mean many different things, in both two and three dimensions. Traditional collage materials might vary in form, from magazine photos to flattened chewing gum wrappers, from dried plant materials to beach pebbles. Everything is fair game if it can be used for a purpose that enhances the imagery. Our imagery will be digital in nature, but, as you will see later, that won't stop us from making artwork that has a more three-dimensional quality. No digital police will stop you from pushing the artistic envelope. I would encourage you to experiment and explore where these digital tools might take you with your artistic expressions.

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