



**Create a
Dimensional
Collage
on
Canvas:**

*an all-level
mixed-media
exploration*

with

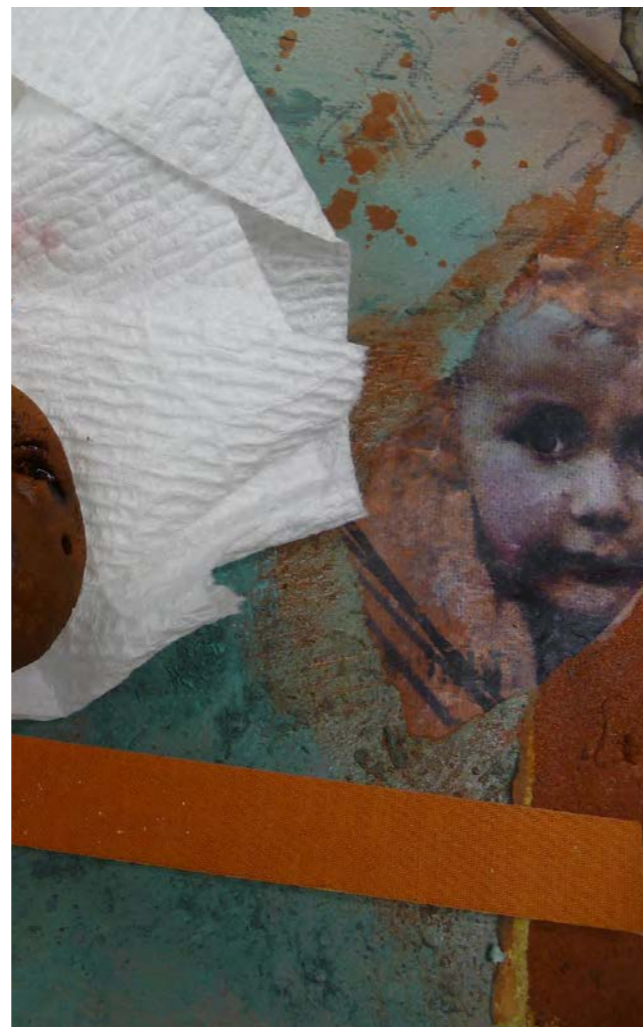
**LYN
BELISLE**





Lyn Belisle is an artist, author, graphic designer and educator who lives and works in San Antonio, Texas. Lyn works in painting, mixed media collage and earthenware sculpture. This allows her to combine technology, photography, clay, and studio art. Her blog, [SHARDS](#), chronicles many of her explorations in various media.

In January of 2013, she founded [Lyn Belisle Studio, A Place of Creative Belonging](#), where she works as Artist-In-Residence and hosts cultural gatherings and workshops. She has written articles for *Cloth Paper Scissors* magazine on mixed media projects and is currently working on a book about composition and mixed media. She has three cats and a giant pet tortoise names Dudley.



Have you ever wanted to try a mixed media exploration that includes just about every little thing? *Create A Dimensional Collage on Canvas* takes you on a personal journey of artful exploration, including how to use your own images and words as creative content for a stunning collage on stretched canvas. Lyn Belisle takes you through a *mélange* of techniques that will expand your mixed media horizons

You'll use the techniques she demonstrates with your own images and materials to create a memorable personal statement on a 12" x 12" stretched canvas that can work as a wall piece or table display. AND each technique that you learn in this book can carry over as unlimited inspiration for your other mixed media work.

Create A Dimensional Collage on Canvas is a perfect way for beginners to gently enter the mixed-media world, and it's great for experienced artists who've never used canvas as the basis for assemblage.

Lyn says,
"This class has more potential than any other that I teach for self-amazement—it brings out everyone's artist soul."



Creating A Dimension Collage on Canvas - Lyn Belisle

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

This project was especially designed for the wonderful women of the Gaian Soul 2015 Retreat at Aldermarsh on Whidbey Island. I'm honored to teach there this year. Led by Joanna Colbert Powell, the gathering allows us to replenish and refresh ourselves with creativity, contemplation and community. The Creating a Dimensional Collage on Canvas project unites the visual, the spiritual, and the joyful aspects of the creative process. You may substitute your own "ingredients" from the Materials List on the right.



Materials List

Here are the things you should wrap in your bandana and bring with you to art camp:

- Three small (2 oz) tubes or jars of acrylic paint, one white, one warm color (your choice, such as orange, red, magenta) and one cool color (your choice, such as blue, purple, teal) – put these in a plastic bag so they won't squish all over everything else accidentally)
- Two paint brushes, one as wide as two of your fingers, one as wide as one of your fingers
- Three small twigs (6" or so) from a well-loved tree or shrub (or bring dried flower stems from a bouquet you were given or made for yourself)
- A teaspoon-sized bit of earth from a favorite spot near your home (wrap in plastic wrap if you like so it doesn't escape)
- Three feathers that you found or that someone gave you
- Three small photographs of places or people that you love (best if you make scanned copies of these to bring with you so the originals will stay safe)
- A piece of loosely woven fabric about 9" square from an old scarf or blanket or garment (you could also use a square of cheesecloth). Sleep with it under your pillow for at least one night before you come.
- Three coins – your choice, but you will know them when you see them – found pennies work nicely
- A large-eyed darning needle and some dental floss for sewing (or for flossing, actually)
- A copy of a favorite poem handwritten on a sheet of plain ordinary paper – you can fold it up if you like
- A piece of coarse sandpaper, about 6x6"
- A pencil
- A small sketchbook for playing with ideas and random flashes of brilliance
- Three memories:
 - o One of a truly unexpected incident or event that totally surprised you
 - o One of being in water
 - o One of getting warm after you were really cold
- A small bag to collect stuff – nothing fancy, a Ziploc thingy will do
- Masking tape – share a roll, we won't need much
- A small pair of scissors (tape the point so you don't stick yourself or anything else in your art kit)
- Nice warm socks (not required for the project, but they will keep your feet happy)

1

You will need a 12x12” primed (white) stretched canvas. These are available quite inexpensively at local craft stores, sometime in multiple packs and often with a coupon discount.

Squirt out a blob of your white acrylic, your warm color acrylic, and your cool color acrylic on a white paper plate. For the example, I’m using Turquoise and Georgia Clay (a craft paint) but you can choose what you like within those warm/cool limits.

Why limit the color? Because it makes your decisions easier, and it shows you the amazing range of hues that can be made with one warm and one cool color – including a vast array of beautiful grays and neutrals.

Using just these limited colors also makes it simple to coordinate your work throughout the process so that you never have a color clash or a distracting hue.

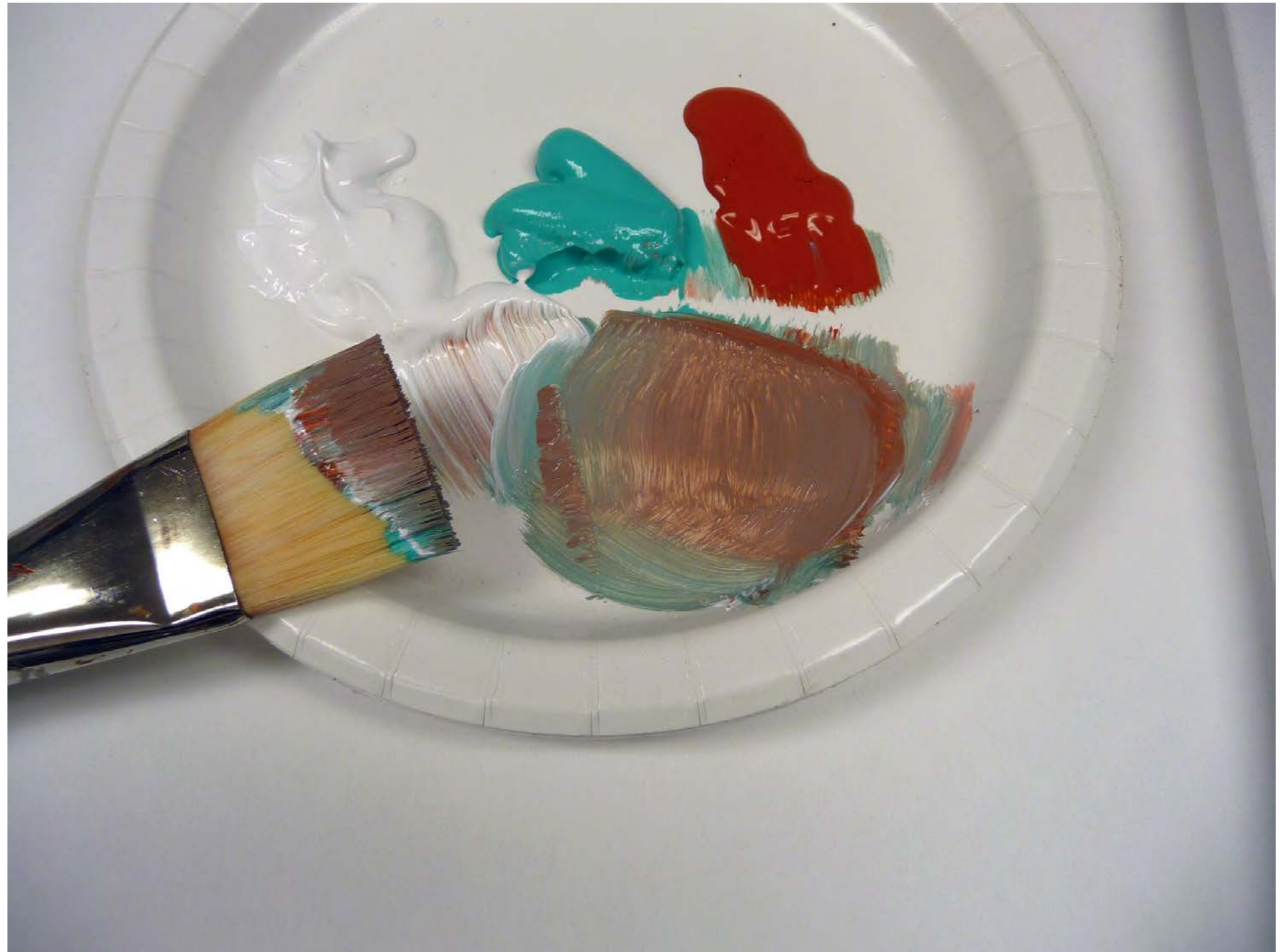


2

Experiment with your paint mixture. Pick up a little white with your brush, and into that, put a tiny drop of your warm color.

Mix and test directly on your canvas. (You will be covering the entire background, so one swatch won't make a difference). Add a little of the cool color to the mix.

Working back and forth with your colors, try various combination of white, warm and cool. Familiarize yourself with what makes what, and what you like and want to remember.

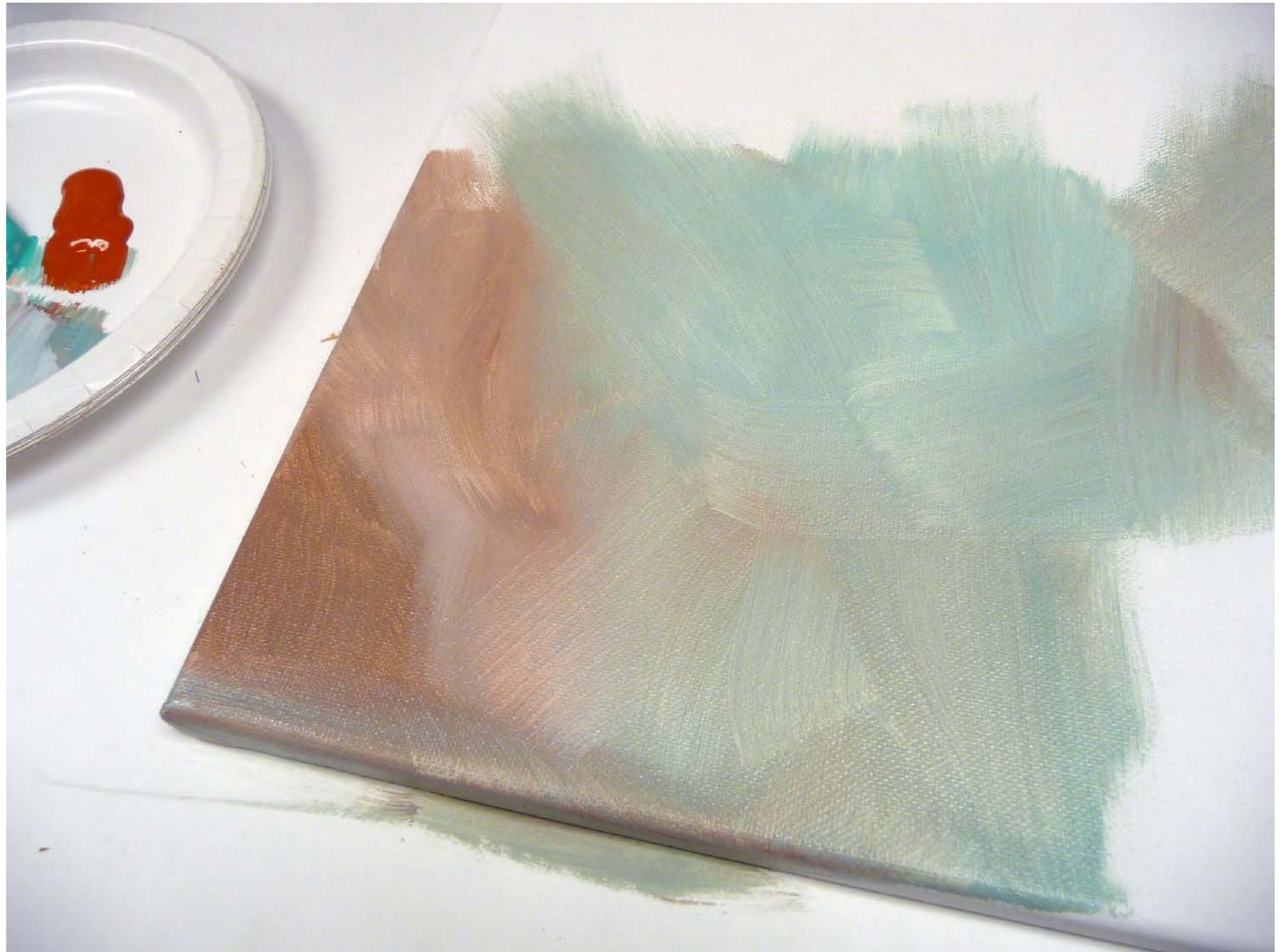


3

You can mix your paint on the plate or directly on the palette, but try not to mix everything into one glob of mud.

Keep the proportional colors separate. Use a largish brush (1.5-2") and make "X" strokes to blend the areas between the different values.

Try to eliminate brushstrokes at this point – we will add texture later.



4

Your canvas should look somewhat like this when you've finished with the base coat background.

There should be a variety of combination of your two colors plus white. There should be some areas of almost pure warm color and pure cool color for accents.

Let this dry – next we will add a bit of dirt or sand for texture.



5

At the Gaian Soul Retreat, we mix a bit of dirt or sand from our home to ground us in the process – and also to add interesting texture to our background! Just sprinkle a little bit next to the paint.

If you prefer, you can use a textured medium like pumice and mix it with your colors on your palette.



6

I like to use a palette knife to mix the grainy material in with the paint, but you can also use a plastic knife or a cardboard spreader or an old credit card.

Don't over-mix – you will have a few chunks in the mixture that may or may not stick on the canvas.



8

This next part is fun – using a cardboard spreader or palette knife, gently smear some swooshes of textured paint across your background.

Don't worry about crumbs falling off or creting irregular lines and shapes. Random is good in this step.

Cover no more than one-third of the canvas with the texture mixture.



9

You can stabilize the textured paint by covering it with a paper towel or painting rag and gently pushing down.

When the textured layer is dry, brush off any loose particles.

You'll still have plenty of texture to add interest to the background.



10

Now's the time to get out one of the main images you want to use. You can use a regular inkjet printout for this.

I found this wonderful image on Flickr Commons and just printed it out on my inkjet printer on regular letter paper. You can use a favorite photograph of any kind, or a graphic that is meaningful to you.

Please don't use an original image on your collage – scan it or have it copied, and save the original image in a safe place.

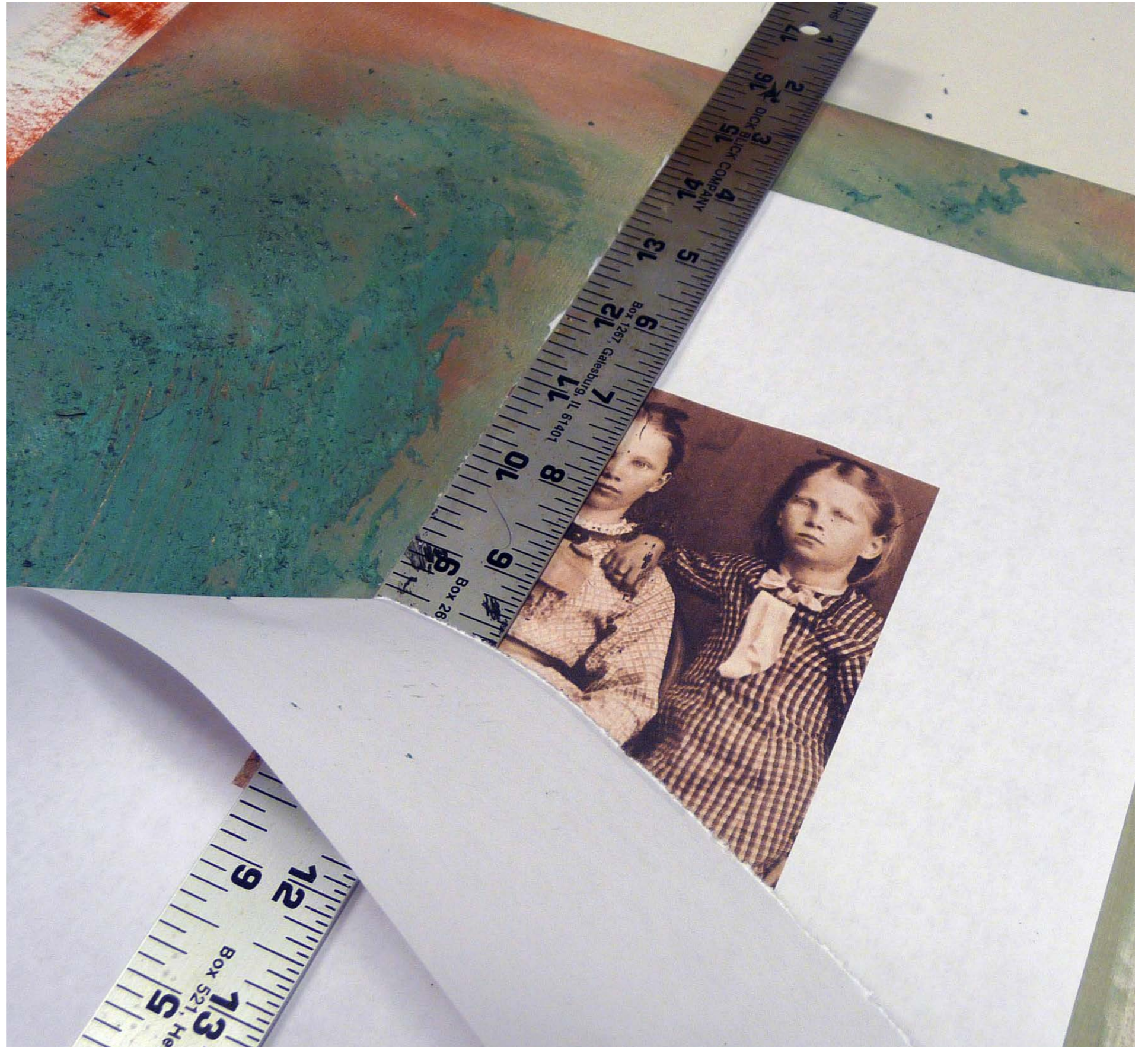


11

Your image will integrate better with your composition if you trim off the white edges.

I like to tear them off rather than cutting them with scissors or a paper cutter. The edges look softer and more hand-made.

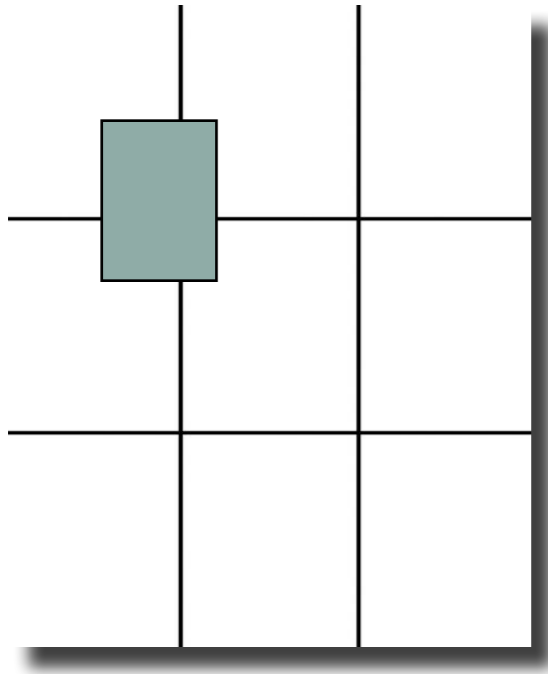
Lay a metal ruler along the border of the image, and then pull and tear off the extra paper all the way around.



12

Remember your compositional AB3's – **Alignment, Breathing Room, and Thirds.**

You image should be placed on a spot where two of the gridlines meet if the canvas is divided into sections like a tic-tac-toe grid. Here, the image goes on the top left intersection.



13

It's important to adhere your image to the canvas securely without tearing the paper.

The best way to do this is to paint the back of the image with clear acrylic matte medium, then press the image down and gently smooth it with a cardboard spreader.

When it is secure, paint a light coat of clear acrylic matte medium over the front of the image and let it dry.



14

With your brush, pick up a little of your acrylic paint and “veil” the edges, blending them into the background. The paint is guaranteed to match or at least coordinate because of your brilliantly limited color palette.

Try not to outline the photo – be random and loose with the veiling. You can always add more if you like later on.



15

You can see a good example of the veiling technique here – the edges are not outlined, but different color washes and paints are used to integrate the edges.

Add a little water to your dark color to create a glaze, and try painting that over one or two of the corners to push it back, visually, into the background.



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While you have the watery diluted glaze paint on your brush, give the brush a flick of your wrist and create some energetic splatters.

You can practice this first, if you like. If you are afraid of splattering your image, cover it temporarily with a piece of scrap paper to mask it off.



17

At our retreat, we were asked to bring a poem that we liked. Now's the time to write some lines from that poem on the canvas in one of the more open areas. The words are more of a design element than a literal message, so don't worry if it's a little hard to read – in fact, it can be pretty illegible and still give an air of mystery and beauty.

Handwritten words are always a fascinating addition to any collage. Here are the words I wrote, a portion of a poem called *Morning Offering* by John O'Donohue:

*I place on the altar of dawn:
The quiet loyalty of breath,
The tent of thought where I shelter,
Wave of desire I am shore to
And all beauty drawn to the eye.*

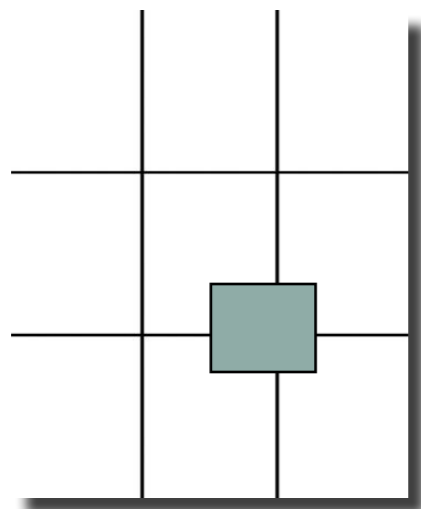


18

It's looking good! Let's introduce some new elements into the collage.

First, here's an idea that I use a lot – sandpaper. It has such a great texture, and the paper back makes it easy to attach a piece of sandpaper to the canvas with matte medium or glue. You might want to paint it first with a mixture of your cool and warm color, or you could just leave it natural.

Remembering our Rule of Thirds, this piece goes on the bottom right intersection of the grid.



19

I decided to add interest to this area by adding another image of a girl's face, slightly different but still within the theme that seems to be developing.

The torn image, again printed with an inkjet printer on regular printer paper, is attached with acrylic matte medium just like the first one was.

Notice how the same kind of glazed veiling is applied around the edges with diluted acrylic. By now, you should start to feel familiar with this technique.

I also punched some holes in the sandpaper with a hole punch, just to give an "industrial" look to that lower right corner.



20

Two more pieces of collage paper are added – they came from the same abstract image so they coordinate with each other – the stripes repeat, but not in the same direction because one piece was reversed after it was torn and before it was attached.

More glazing is added to the pieces and the background, lightly and sparingly.

You can always take a paper towel and “lift” some of the glazing while it’s still wet to make it more transparent.



21

It's play time! I love this part because I get to try all kinds of objects on the canvas, taking them off and putting them on, and moving them around to see what works.

Here is the final arrangement (at least at this point). I've included some coins, a strip of mat board, one of my Shard faces, and some curved twigs.

Notice how I've placed everything in a way that agrees with the rule of Alignment and draws the viewer's eye back into the composition.

Start with the girl's face at the top left, let your eye follow that left edge down to the clay face, then across to the sandpaper and coins, up to the branches, and back to the starting point.

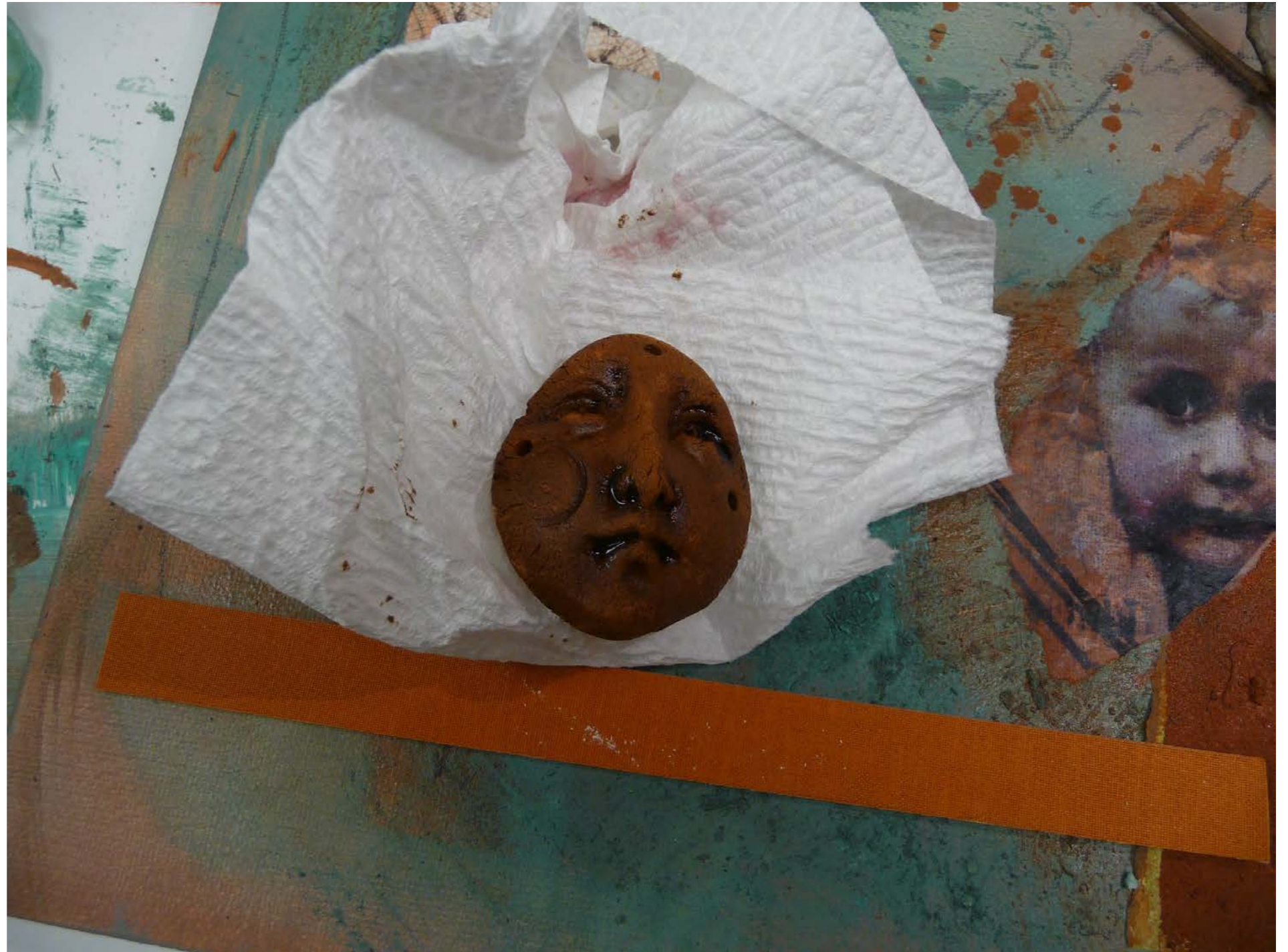


22

Before we starting attaching everything, I want to emphasize the contours of the face with Tsukineko Walnut Ink. I spray it on and let it sit for a few seconds, then wipe off the highlights.

Walnut Ink is so great for so many things in mixed media work. My workshop students tell me that “Walnut Ink” is my middle name.

Once the face is dry, I’m ready to sew it on right through the canvas with strong thread (or dental floss!).



23

I'm using a large needle and imitation sinew (the kind that leather crafters use) to sew right through the canvas to attach the objects. You can see this in detail on the coins.

This is one of the huge benefits of using stretched canvas on a wood frame – you can treat the canvas substrate as fiberart as well as collage art and stitch and tie on almost anything that inspires you.

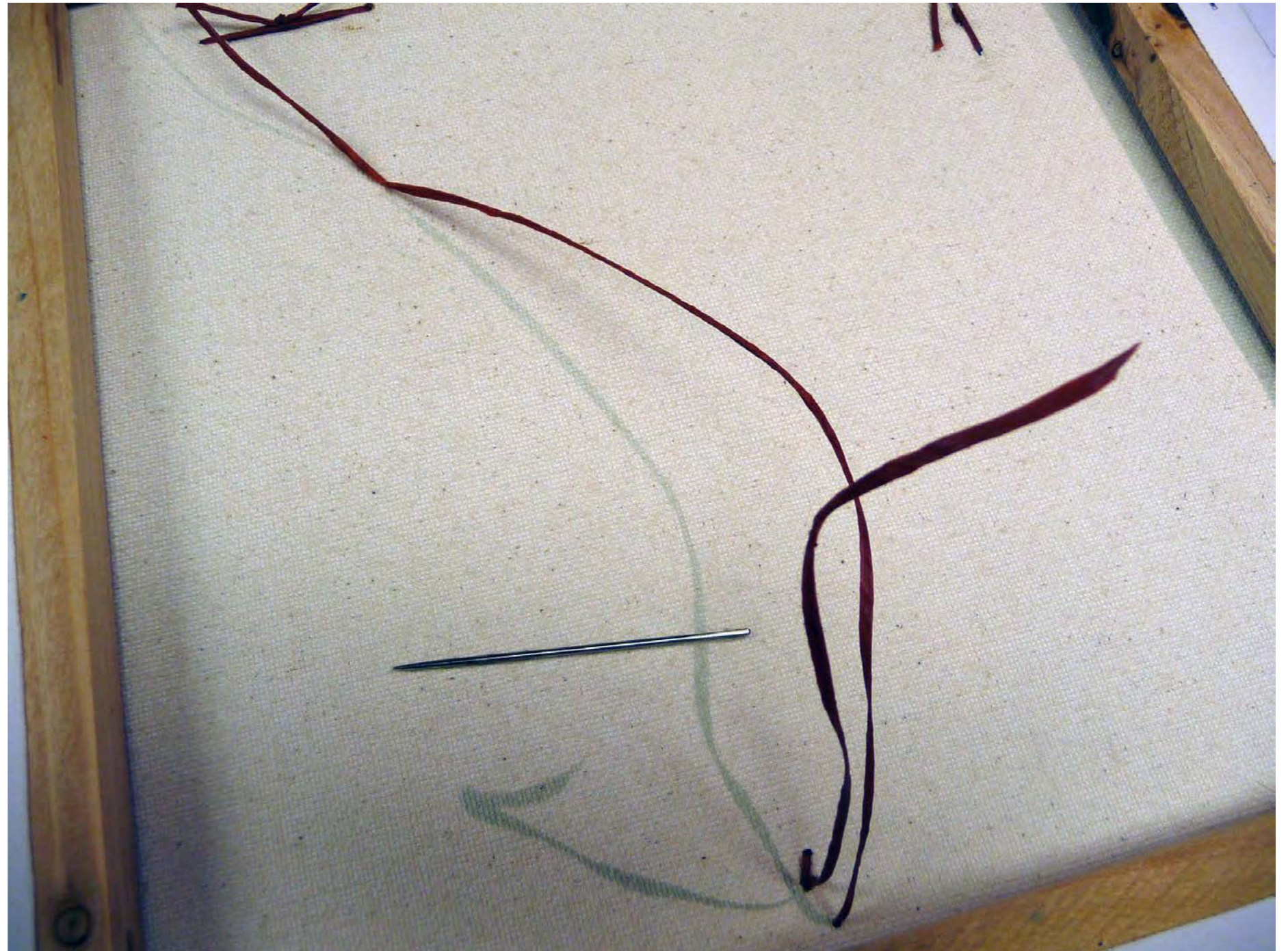
I've started to stitch on the branches and also found a little cloth scrap to bind them with – the color is perfect.



24

When the canvas is turned over, it's easy to see how the dimensional elements are attached. Once the objects are secured to the front, the heavy thread is tied in the back and trimmed off.

It will eventually be covered with brown paper or heavy cardboard.



25

A feather adds a touch of natural whimsy. It also serves to strengthen the lower horizontal part of the collage by stopping the viewer's eye from going off the canvas at the bottom of the composition.

The feather is attached on the back with white glue. When the collage is finished the whole surface will be given a light coat of clear acrylic spray to protect delicate additions.



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The sinew-wrapped crystal on the left is not too big to distract, and it gives an iridescent gleam to the left side of the canvas. These collages can have great meaning when small personal objects are incorporated into the theme.

You can see a small turquoise bead on the right. These little touches add grace notes that keep the eye moving and engaged. They compliment the main elements like the spaces between the notes in a musical composition.



27

To add a little energy to the collage, diluted white acrylic paint is speckled and stamped onto the upper right corner. If the speckles are too heavy, just lift them off with a paper towel.

White can liven up an artwork just like the white dot on an eye gleam can give it life and sparkle.



29

Here is the completed dimensional collage on canvas.

Thanks to strong composition, a limited palette of colors that keep it from becoming muddy and disorganized, and thoughtful inclusion of appropriate images and objects, it's a success.

It's also a personal statement about interests and feelings and treasured themes.

What title would you give this piece?



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No artwork is really complete without a critique of some kind, a dialog with the piece.

If you keep a journal, write down your feelings about how the piece turned out – what you expected, how the colors and objects guided you, what happy accidents made you change course.

Share your work with a friend, and then try other dimensional collages on canvas to explore the possibilities of this fascinating and limitless approach to creativity.

Cabin Twelve
Collage on Canvas
Lyn Belisle 2015



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I hope you've enjoyed Creating a Dimensional Collage on Canvas – and if you have questions, comments, or would like to share your work with me, feel free to email me at lyn@lynbelisle.com.

Please remember that this material is copyrighted and, while I am happy for you to use it as a guide in making your own collages, please do not use it as a handout to teach a class or use the images separately from the credited publication. Happy collaging!

Lyn Belisle
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www.lynbelisle.com