

## Water Media Collage Workshop

with Carrie Burns Brown, NWS

Review by Adele Greenfield  
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"I love options," says Carrie and that's exactly what she gives us – loads and loads of options. Making art is about making choices and she offers up a smorgasbord of ideas so you can pick whatever you want to create your personal artistic feast and then go back for more. Plenty more.

If you want to start collage work, or if you're a collage artist looking for another approach, this will give you ideas for enough projects to last a very long time. Or if you're like so many of us and have lots of partially developed art in your studio and need that extra something to pull a piece together, this is definitely one video you don't want to miss.

Taking you every step of the way from creating the "raw materials" you'll use, to developing your work, and on to the final touches that complete your collage, Carrie leads you through her process with demonstrations for each stage. See how she prepares her materials, then begins with a grid and modifies it into a design. This will strengthen your own work and, by the end, you will have the tools to create unique and vibrant abstract compositions.

A Southern woman who loves beauty, her rich colors, interesting textures, and wonderful juxtaposition of shapes go beyond geographical boundaries and speak a universal language.

First, she talks about color harmony so your collages are unified. You'll get a project working with tints and shades in a color family that can remain just an exercise or possibly turn out to be a good piece of artwork.

Then you'll see what kind of paper she likes and how she stains, embellishes, creates textures, uses brayers, sandwiches fibers, and creates stamps. You'll even learn how you can make your own original stamps at virtually no cost. And you'll see what she calls a "pull-off" to get wonderful designs.

Carrie knows exactly what works and what doesn't, what's lightfast and what isn't, and she'll tell you what materials you will need and in what proportions to mix them. She loves to teach and there is no dead time. Throughout, she explains what she's doing, what she's thinking, and the "how to" information you'll need to get great results.

After the stained papers dry, you're ready to begin applying them to your surface (she suggests what to use). Have fun and let loose. No matter what you do, it's right. After all, it's just an underpainting of mostly transparent papers.

Now comes the part where you develop your piece. Since she talks you through everything so you know what's going on in her mind at all times, you get a bird's eye view of the process. She incorporates newspapers, light bulb cartons, coffee grounds, and other everyday items. She even considers edges and gives you several options. It's a real learning experience to watch her try various shapes, colors, and textures to see where they fit and what she prefers.

At one point, Carrie put a piece of paper on her collage and the black line was not quite in right position. She said, "I know how to make that work," then tore off a piece and placed it down again so there was a better flow. But it still wasn't quite right. Later she connected it and made it work.

Throughout, she tells you what she enjoys about the materials and the process. You know she gets joy from what she does and wants you to enjoy it too.

While the techniques for making and pasting papers can be done easily by just about anyone, the part on developing your work, and finally, unifying the piece is what makes us the creative artists we are. In her section, "Top Layer Details," here's where we dig deep, use

everything we ever knew about design and composition, and express ourselves through our art. Here's where the learning and growing takes place.

"Design is everywhere," she says. We just have to learn to look for it . . . to recognize it when we see it." Carrie constantly thinks about color and texture, especially when she makes refinements and pulls her work together. By adding a new contrasting color and incorporating organic shapes, she gets out of the grid. Try different things until you feel satisfied. Find areas you enjoy, move papers around to look for pleasing arrangements and figure out your design.

Ask yourself questions. If I put this down, would it be too busy? Am I overdoing texture? Can I have more texture? When you're not sure if you have the right answer, just wait. Live with it for a while and then make a decision. We all know there is no one right answer but there is one that will come to you. And it will feel just perfect at the time.

At the end, you'll see many examples of her work. Carrie says, "A wonderful thing about collage, it is never lost. You can always do something to it. You can add more papers to it, you can paint, take your old painting, your old watercolor, old acrylics, add your collage to it, add your paint to it and you can have some wonderful pieces of work."

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**Adele Greenfield** is an artist as well as a consultant/coach who has led workshops on the international lecture circuit in creativity and change, communication and image, and coping with stress. She is also author of a handbook on creativity and several recorded programs. Topics include public speaking and how to relax and re-energize. Her articles have been published in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Woman's Day*, and *Industry Week*. Adele lives in Charlotte, NC. Email her at [colorusgreen@yahoo.com](mailto:colorusgreen@yahoo.com).