

Some great ideas on how to recycle old works into new creative masterpieces.

Taking Drawing off White Paper

By Tricia Reust



I have been experimenting with drawing on differently prepared surfaces for several years. I like to draw underneath layers, in between layers, and on top of layers, and on all types of surfaces, and with all types of mediums.

I either prepare paper and canvas surfaces specifically for drawing, or renew canvases and papers from old works.

Drawing almost every day means that the studio and home are filled to overflowing with the results, and along with the works that have been created through demonstrations and workshop sessions, these all become subject to further processes.

Works which have been “hanging around” too long, I consider to have reached their use-by date, so they are therefore unframed or cut up, to take their place in a new creation, or they are painted over - the paper or canvas is much more valuable to me than the old work on top of it.

Roughly once a year, I go through everything stored in the studio and throughout the home – under beds, stacked against walls etc, in order to enter into a severe assessment. Unfortunately, family and friends no longer allow me to take back works they now own, to let me have another fiddle

At Kathy's in Nanango, 39 x 55cm

On a large piece of heavier cartridge paper, drawings, actual leaves and a dead dried-up gekko were collaged with binder medium; leaves were stencilled with colour pencil; leaves were printed with acrylic paint and a brayer; and some drawing in black ink was done on the paper and on tissue paper, which was then attached with the binder medium. The whole piece was covered with Art Spectrum clear pastel primer, and the frogmouth (which lives on my sister's property) was drawn in charcoal. It is important to let the underpainting show through, so that the bird remains as one with its environment. This work was a finalist in the arcYinnar 2012, and won the Theresa Whiting Award in Redcliffe, QLD in 2012.

– they have found that something completely new is given back to them – so my “wincers” (works which cause me to wince when I see them in people's homes a few years later on) remain untouched. Alas.

Basically in my annual assessment of accrued works, I ask myself what do I still feel has merit, and what would I be embarrassed for people to find after I have died? This works every time!

Old canvases are covered with a fresh layer of gesso, and old drawings if not preserved for use in collage, are covered with a layer of Art Spectrum clear pastel primer, or gesso, (or Atelier Free Flow). I find the resulting textures under these new surfaces particularly beautiful, and my preference has developed for drawing on collaged and textured surfaces.

Each of the accompanying images in this article has a detailed description of its preparation and process. I have found through my teaching that participants are more comfortable drawing on a surface that has already been prepared in some way, rather than making that first lonely mark on a brand spanking new clean white piece of paper or canvas, where they can sometimes feel quite intimidated.

I hope to inspire others to enjoy the process of drawing, and get stuck straight into making those marks, and finding their own personal visual voice.

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Kangaroo, 71 x 71cm

The canvas was prepared with collaged papers, texture compound medium pushed through a plastic lace doily (technique courtesy of artist Jenni Kelly) and a wash of Red Gold acrylic paint. Art Spectrum clear pastel primer was applied to the area for the drawing, and the kangaroo was drawn in compressed charcoal. I am lucky to live close to Australia Zoo, and can source many reference subjects from this fabulous place.



My Country Aches, 71 x 71cm

The canvas was collaged with papers and fabric jute. Pastel was applied and pushed into the canvas with water. Charcoal was placed and water was used to create charcoal drips down the surface of the canvas. Clear pastel primer was applied over the whole canvas, then the portrait drawing was placed in charcoal and white pastel. This work was the demonstration piece during the Mortimore Prize Exhibition when it toured to Brisbane in 2013.





Dappled Drowse, 52 x 64cm

A pale grey piece of Canson Mi-Teintes was mono-printed with gesso and black ink, and the drawing placed in charcoal and graphite, and white pastel. This work won "Best in Show" in the Mortimore Prize 2012.



Emergence, 54 x 69cm

A full sheet of mid-grey Canson Mi-Teintes was mono-printed with gesso and black ink, and the drawing was placed in charcoal and white pastel. It is important to monitor all edges, so that the focus remains on the subject – the viewer is easily distracted by areas where full black is situated right next to full white. Try to reserve this alignment only for the subject. This work was a finalist in the Mortimore Prize 2011.

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The Sitting, 52 x 64cm

A pale grey piece of Canson Mi-Teintes was layered with white tissue paper and gesso. This drawing was done from life at a restaurant over three hours, in charcoal, conte, and white pastel. The beautiful sitter is now my daughter-in-law. It won 1st Place for Works on Paper at the Emerald Art Gallery 2012.



Hippie Lines, 54 x 38cm

Hammered and powdered charcoal was applied with methylated spirits on to a piece of Blue Haze Art Spectrum Colourfix. The drawing was placed with charcoal and white pastel, both sticks and pencils.

Dawn, 61 x 61cm

The cartridge paper with this study of Michaelangelo's sculpture (begun in Florence) was applied to a white gessoed board, after having first been sprayed with Mat Spray. A layer of Payne's Grey acrylic wash finished the work.



Out By Cassilis, 76 x 61cm

The canvas was prepared with collaged papers, stencilled geometric forms, and Phthalo Turquoise acrylic paint. Over this, a clear pastel primer was applied, then the drawings of the trees were placed in charcoal. Drawings on canvas are easily varnished by using fine art spray varnish. However, any dirty areas must be cleaned up with white gesso before spraying.

my art in the making Jabiru 2



What the artist used

Materials

- Canvas 118 x 106cm
- Thin and thick papers for collaging
- Binder medium with an old bristle brush
- Modelling compound
- Art Spectrum Clear Pastel Primer
- Soft pastels and charcoal
- Atelier Free Flow Acrylic
- Spray varnish

Acrylic Paints

- Phthalo Turquoise
- Cerulean Blue
- Cobalt Turquoise Light

STAGE 1

A strong foundational design

Begin with placement with binder medium of the thicker papers, in a strong basic design which will hold the work together and underpin the construction through all the several layers. Adding the thin paper layer, continue the initial design.



STAGE 2

Moving a wash around

Place the first wash of acrylic paint, working with paper towels to move the paint around and to create interesting marks in lighter areas.

STAGE 3

Adding interest to the design

Splatter and stencil in some areas (detail photo).



Detail

STAGE 4

Adding texture to add another dimension

Place texture details with modelling compound.



Detail

STAGE 5

Adding another layer of interest

Apply more acrylic paint only thicker, dry brushing over texture to enhance the effect (detail photo).



STAGE 6
Completed painting, Jabiru 2,
mixed media on canvas, 118 x 106cm
 Art Spectrum clear pastel primer is applied where the drawing is to be, and the drawing is placed in soft pastels and charcoal. Atelier Free Flow acrylic in black and white is used with a liner brush, for details and highlights.

Bush Dreaming, 61 x 91cm (Bottom Left)

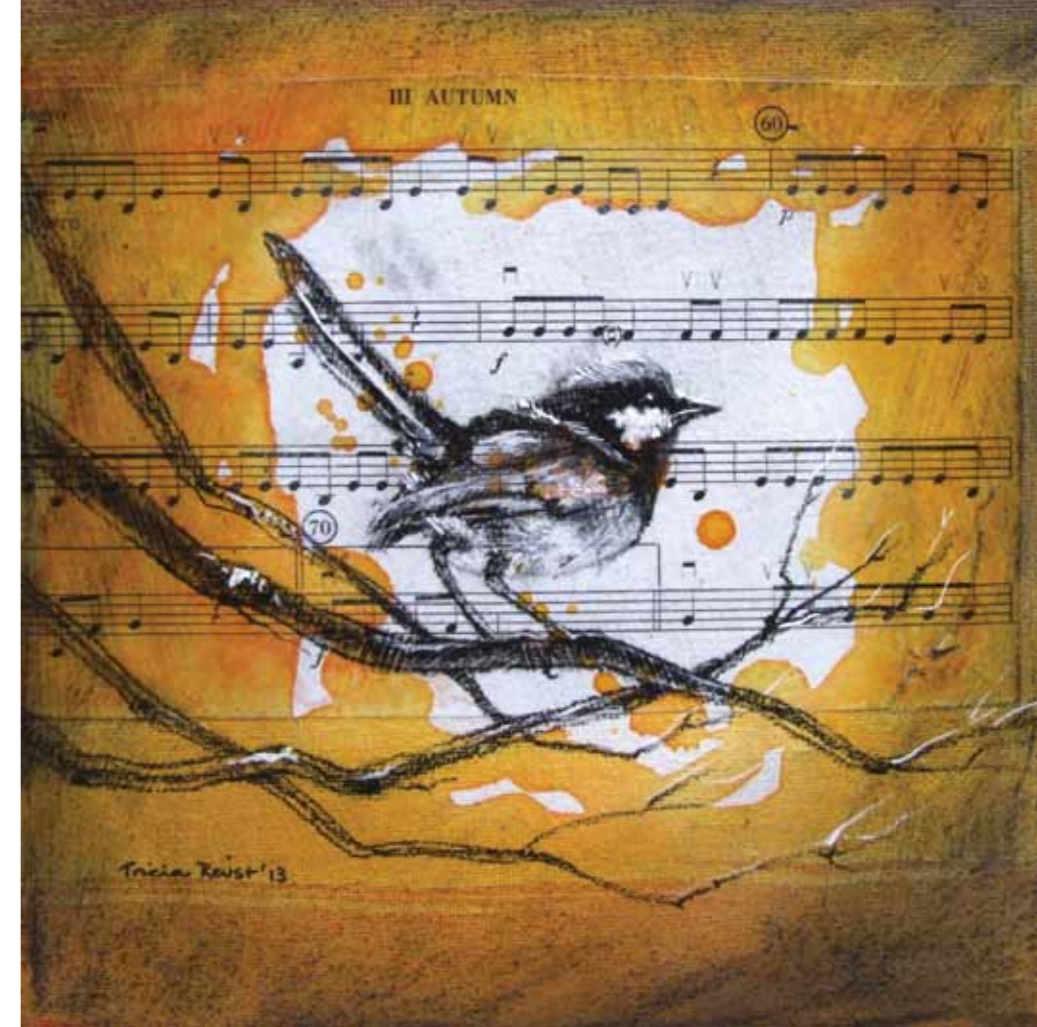


Music Maker, 39 x 46cm

This magpie was drawn in charcoal over a mixed media work on 300gsm watercolour paper. The underpainting includes pieces of fabric jute, real leaves, and is mostly completed in coloured pencil.

Bush Notes 3 and 4, 15 x 15cm

These small works (on 6 by 6 inch canvas) are a great way to try out drawing on canvas, if you are interested in giving it a go. Apply collaged paper that is appropriate to your theme, with binder medium. Select a colour, and wash this acrylic paint in. Cover the surface with clear pastel primer, and draw! Seal with spray varnish.



about the artist

Tricia Reust is a visual artist working in most media. She exhibits regularly, teaches, and judges competitions. Tricia is a member of many art societies and has won the National Mortimore Prize in 2012; was a finalist in the arcYinnar National Drawing Prize 2012; has had work accepted eight times in the Bald Archy National Touring Exhibition; among many other awards. She has recorded an episode on "Colour in Your Life" and has a mixed media teaching video available.

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