

# Say it with a Picture

## The Origins of Collage

Collage has a long and distinguished history. No matter what you may do in collage, chances are it has been done before, but certainly not like *you* will do it.

As with Agile, the question is not:

is it Right? Is it Good?

But:

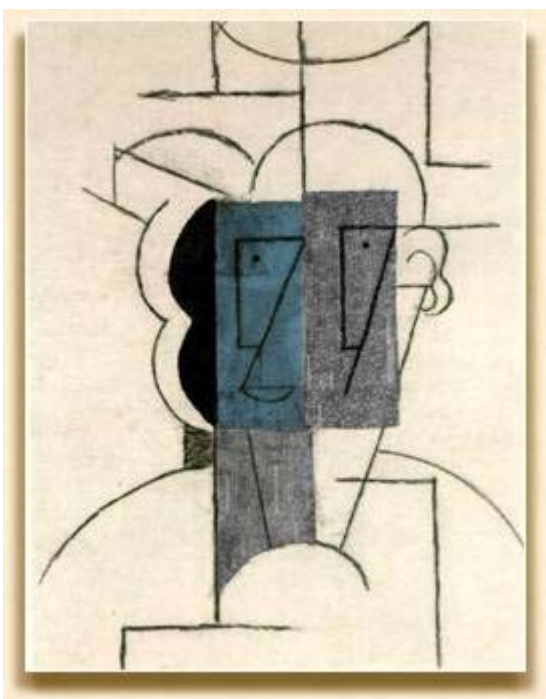
Does it accomplish the goal?

**IS IT GOOD *ENOUGH*?**

The story of collage begins with the invention of paper in China around 200 B.C., but the earliest examples of paper collage are the work of twelfth-century Japanese calligraphers, who prepared surfaces for their poems by gluing bits of paper and fabric to create a background for brushstrokes. Later, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Near East, craftsmen cut and pasted intricate designs and used marbled papers as part of the art of bookbinding. Artists in medieval times, beginning in the thirteenth century, often enhanced religious images with gemstones, elegant fibers, relics and precious metals. Later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nuns made bookmarks trimmed with cut and colored papers, which they carried in their prayer books. Frequently, the materials used were selected for their symbolism, a practice that continues in contemporary collage.

## Collage as a Modern Art

At the beginning of the twentieth century two famous artists, Picasso and Braque, working in close cooperation, developed in their own style, an interesting art form. Desiring to add another dimension to their geometrical composition, they started to add "papier collé" to their canvas. From "collé" (glued on) came the new term "collage" (the technique of gluing any kind of paper or other flat material to a painting surface). Instead of creating an illusion of reality, they invented a new kind of reality, using textured and printed papers and simulated wood patterns on their drawings and paintings. Imagine the storm of controversy that followed these experiments. The use of foreign materials in paintings inflamed critics, adding more fuel to the creative fires of experimental artists.



One writer has stated that "Collage may be seen as a quintessential twentieth-century art form with multiple layers and signposts pointing to the possibility or suggestion of countless new realities."

The new science of the mind, psychology, led surrealists to see collage as a revelation of unconscious thoughts brought to the surface through the random selection and placement of materials.

Still, some Agilists insist that collage is simply another way to avoid pairing.



Matt Bryans, *Untitled*, 2004, erased newspaper, dimensions variable.



DARK HILLS-- PAPER LANDSCAPE, Contemporary collage painting, mixed media, 10X10