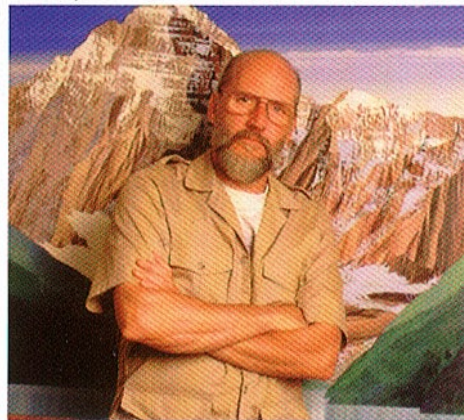




# COLLAGES

**BY KEN PRESCOTT**

Using a variety of papers, tools, and acrylic paints, I let my collage paintings evolve until their richly textured surfaces suggest both the physical and emotional feeling of my subjects. Here's a step-by-step demonstration of that process.



Left: *High Country*, 1994, acrylic, 40 x 48. Collection the artist.

**DEMONSTRATION: High Country, by Ken Prescott**



I first made a number of preliminary sketches to determine how I would develop the work.



Although I leave myself open to changes as a painting develops, I still like to make color sketches with acrylic paints. Here I'm painting swatches of the colors I expect to use.



Since I knew this painting was going to be rather large and would require a smooth surface, I decided to use 1/4" Masonite.



I applied three coats of acrylic gesso to the Masonite, sanding each layer after it had dried. I used an opaque projector to transfer the sketch onto the Masonite. I painted the bands of sky and water, using some paint pads held against a straightedge.



Here's how I created the striated rock formations: I crinkled a sheet of 16-pound Strathmore bond paper. Then I flattened it out and sprayed it with Mars black and burnt umber, using an air compressor held at a low angle.



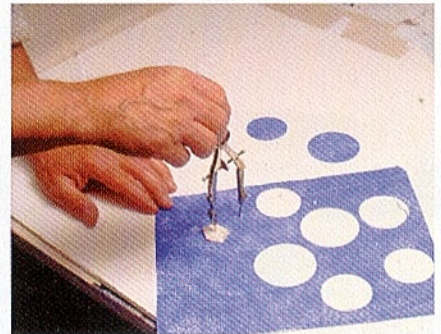
To create the appearance of snow on those striated rocks, I pulled white acrylic paint across the crinkled paper with a plastic paint spreader. (I often apply paint with nontraditional tools so I can get more spontaneous results.)



I painted the blue sky color on another sheet of bond paper and blotted the wet paint with paper towels to create the texture of clouds.



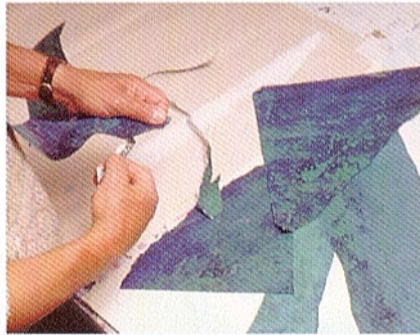
Using a sponge, I dabbed titanium white over a swatch of dark blue sky pigment to create the appearance of a cratered moon.



I cut different-size moons out of this paper, finally choosing the appropriate size for the composition.



I then painted small scraps of bond paper with a brayer. I rolled on colors that I had picked up off a crumpled sheet of painted paper. Offsetting paint from one surface to another frequently yields interesting results.



For the mountain slopes at the left and right of the painting, I textured and tinted several sheets of paper, establishing three different values. I tore out the shapes of the slopes and placed them on the Masonite. I carefully marked their positions on the Masonite so that I would be able to paint their reflections in the water. Then I set these shapes aside.



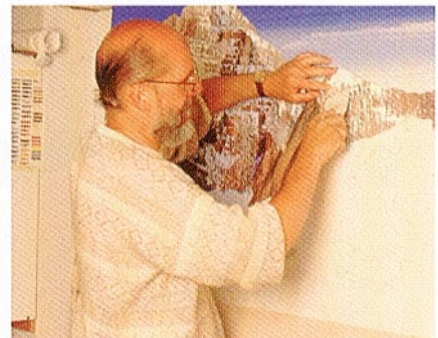
Using a T square and a paint pad, I painted the light and dark reflections in the water.



Instead of cutting many small pieces of prepared paper to collage a certain area of the mountain, I traced a larger section of the mountain (about eight to ten inches square) on a transparent sheet of 90-gram vellum paper. I placed this tracing over some prepared paper until I found the shading and texture I wanted. I clamped the vellum to the collage paper and cut out the desired area, following the tracing. I later added smaller pieces to tighten the composition.



I used acrylic gloss medium to affix the pieces of the collage to the Masonite. Next, I touched up the snow-covered ledges, using a small brush held against a ruler.



I continued attaching the collage elements with acrylic medium. I used a plastic brayer to eliminate air pockets and excess medium.



After I had positioned the moon shape (see the full painting on the previous spread), I adjusted some of the collage elements. I also painted some refinements and details to define the subject further and to bring all the pictorial elements together. Finally, I applied two coats of acrylic matte medium over the entire painting to seal the surface.



like the freedom and spontaneity of expression that collage offers. I prefer to build up richly textured materials than brush paint on a flat surface. Part of the challenge is finding the right materials for the subject I have in mind.

The demonstration of *High Country* gives you a good idea of how I prepare and assemble various collage elements. I don't limit my choices of materials and techniques to those used in the demonstration, however. One of the great pleasures in making collages is discovering new materials that add color and texture while suggesting some element of the real world. I find it exciting to use papers of every color, texture, and pattern. I also like manipulating the acrylic paints and mediums with knives, sprayers, trowels, kitchen utensils, combs, rollers, and brushes.

I'm open to using a wide variety of materials and techniques, but I do try to use products that are acid-free (or pH-neutral) and permanent so they will not fade or crumble. I often play with these materials just to see what kinds of real surfaces they might suggest. A piece of patterned paper, for instance, might resemble the fabric of a woman's blouse. Each new subject requires a different approach, whether it's the bark on a tree, flower petals, or a coral reef.

If you happened to walk into my studio while I was working on a collage, you would see painted sheets of paper and board spread across the floor, dozens of paint-spattered tools that more likely came from a hardware store than an art-supply shop, and numerous jars of acrylic paints and mediums. You'd also see stacks of Masonite, canvas, and four-ply rag board. I work on these surfaces, especially if the pictures are rather large, because of the accumulated weight of the collage materials.



Acrylic polymer paints and mediums are easy to use because they dry quickly and are water-soluble. Since manufacturers have recently expanded the range of textures and colors available, I can apply acrylic paint that is as thick and coarse as cement, as smooth and opaque as plaster, or as transparent and shimmering as colored glass. The products now available (manufactured by such

companies as Liquitex, Winsor & Newton, Golden, Chroma Acrylic, Grumbacher, and Guerra) have certainly contributed to the growth of interesting collages.

Over the last few years, I've been painting the landscapes and seascapes of western Canada, brilliantly colored tropical fish, intriguing people, and lush flowers. I've also been pursuing a series of landscape

**Above: *Sound of Autumn*,  
1994, acrylic, 40 x 32.  
Private collection.**

**Opposite page: *Market Day*,  
1989, acrylic, 30 x 22.  
Private collection.**



collages that I call "Odysseys," which are based on the places I have seen while traveling around the world. Those travels began when I was in my mid-20's and had the opportunity to travel in the Far East, Southeast Asia, Australia, and Europe. In 1970 and 1971, I went to Africa and the South Pacific; soon after that, I began working in collage. Some of those early pieces incorporated objects that I had collected while traveling.

In all my work, I try to use unusual and exciting materials so that people will discover a new way of looking at the world around them. ■

## RESOURCES

### Videotapes

#### *Collage and Assemblage.*

These two 40-minute VHS videotapes by Susan Pickering Rothamel show how the artist goes from concept to completed artwork. Recommended for both beginning and advanced artists.

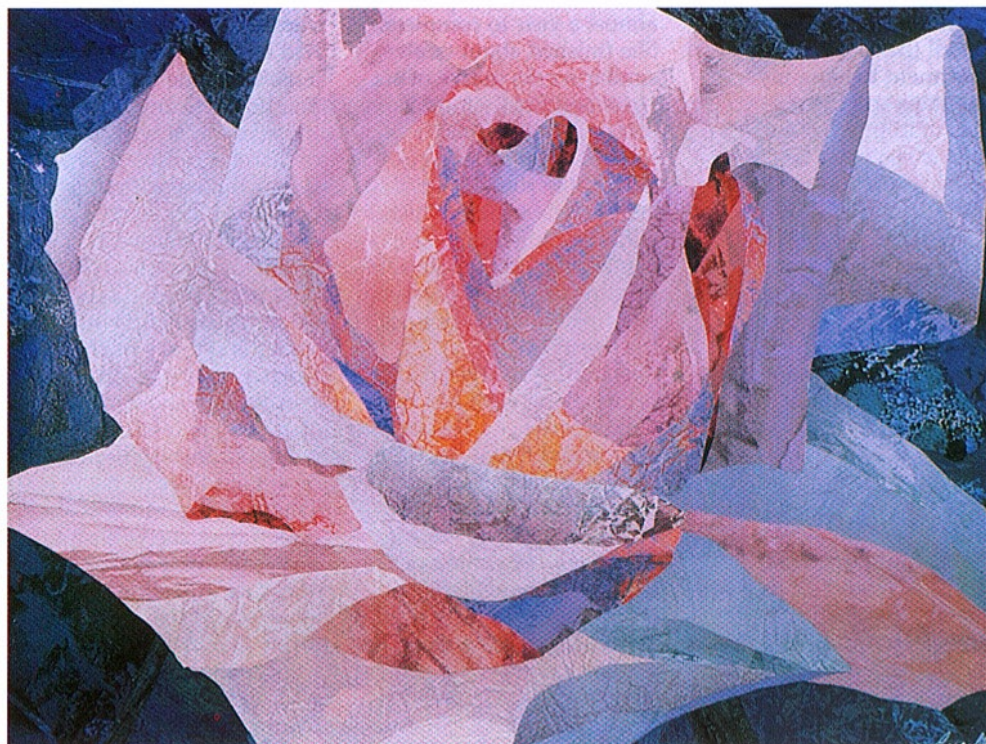
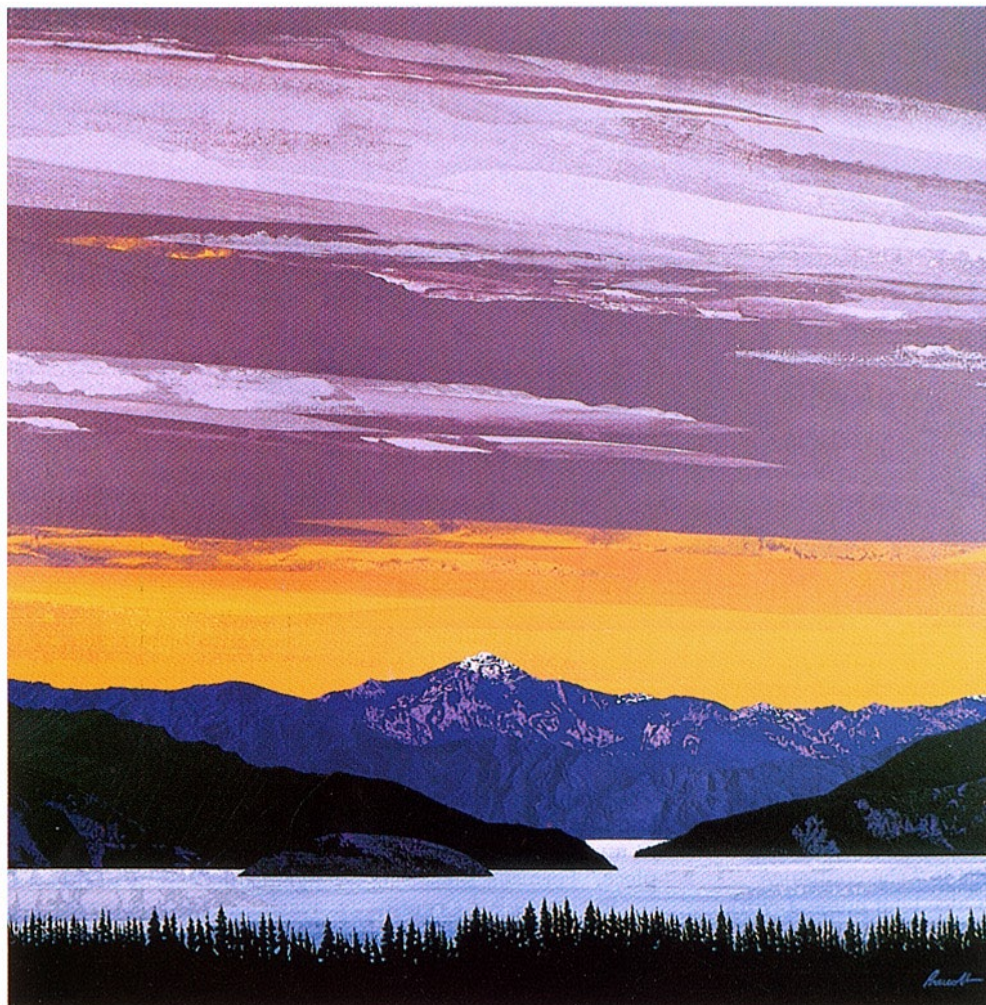
Price: \$39 per tape, plus shipping and handling (credit cards accepted). Write:

Artquest, Inc.,  
Department WC,  
P.O. Box 88,  
Chelsea, MI 48118;  
or call: (800) 200-RT4U.

### Books

*Collage Techniques: A Guide for Artists and Illustrators,*  
by Gerald F. Brommer,  
Watson-Guption Publications,  
1515 Broadway,  
New York, NY 10036.

*Creative Collage Techniques,*  
by Nita Leland and  
Virginia Lee Williams,  
North Light Books,  
1507 Dana Avenue,  
Cincinnati, OH 45207.



Opposite page: *Edge of the Deep*, 1992, acrylic, 30 x 22. Collection the artist.

Top: *Sundown*, 1991, acrylic, 48 x 48. Private collection.

Above: *Study of a Rose*, 1993, acrylic, 32 x 40. Collection the artist.