



Image Transfer Follies

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Precious family photos, letters, ticket stubs from a favorite day, the prize you or your children won in the second grade spelling bee, prized snapshots and that fabulous bit of ephemera that you found on the cobblestone streets of the West Bank—we all have boxes of memories tucked away in our homes.



My love affair with image transfer arose out of my obsession with collecting such treasures. I adore the muted colors of an old matchbook, the softly worn edges of my first school tablets and the delicious sepia of old photographs. I'm drawn to bits and pieces of the mail that arrives each day—colorful, seemingly useless junk mail and magazines that cry for a second chance. And indeed I'm all too happy to scoop them up and take the challenge of making them into ART!

Image transfer has something for everyone because whatever your preferred medium, whatever images catch your eye—image transfer is the ultimate mixed media playground! Over the years, I've made everything from holiday cards to “hoity toity” art from these techniques, and I'm still trying on new ideas and methods. Delicious! So let me take this opportunity to share a favorite technique with you in each issue of e-Artella!

EXPERIMENT and find out what methods wet your appetite! And always feel free to write with your ideas and projects!

Technique 1: The Soak 'n Rub!

This is my all time favorite technique for collages! You will create a gorgeous, professional-looking two-dimensional finished piece without all the layers and cut edges of a traditional collage. (It's especially successful with vintage photos and collages from magazine papers.) And if that was not enough to get you to try this out, you will get a thin area around each cut out collage image where your backing paper will peak through and bring the piece together magically! Think spectacular cards, cherished family heirloom collages, special adornments for journals and albums, or modern and mysterious elements for fine art collage. The possibilities truly are endless!

(Image Transfer Follies, cont.)

Images: This project begins with photocopied images (toner, not laser inks) or magazine/newspaper images. Note that heavy, glossy magazine papers, such as National Geographic, can be very difficult to remove because they don't soften as easily when soaked in water. If you have some favorite magazine images, you should consider photocopying them so that you can use them again and again in your projects! I have binders of favorite stock images in 8x11 sheets that I can pull out and copy for my projects.

Experiment with black and white and colored copies. (Color copies of old photos that have faded or become discolored are especially dazzling! Try them with a metallic backing paper or a very faded sheet of music!)

The water lily piece shown here (right) is the simplest of options. A simple photo containing white is printed on acetate and backed with a metallic white paper.

For collages, lightly tack together images from behind with a glue stick. Just don't get any glue on the front of the images, or they won't transfer!



Water Lily, 5³/₄" x 4¹/₂"



Birthday Hairdo, 6" x 5"



Greenstein Heirloom Collage, 10" x 8³/₄"

(Image Transfer Follies, cont.)

Medium Options:

- * Adhesive treated acetate (by [Judikins](#)-available at art and craft stores)
- * Packing tape
- * OLD clear contact paper

Instructions:

1. Adhere your collage or photocopied image to the medium you have chosen and burnish the surface thoroughly with a credit type card to insure adhesion. Make sure to go around all the edges in your collage! Do be careful not to scratch or mar the acetate. (Usually when inks do not transfer well the problem is that the piece was not properly burnished.)

2. Cut around the image or collage removing any excess acetate or packing tape.

3. Soak in warm water for 10-15 minutes.

4. Rub off all the paper from photocopy. I recommend holding the image in one hand and rolling your fingers across the back to remove the paper. Hold the piece up to a light source to see any remaining paper. Repeat soaking and rubbing until all paper is removed leaving the inks transferred to the clear acetate or tape. (Any areas of white will be clear.) Note that to remove those last filmy bits you will have to rub a bit harder!

5. Allow the piece to dry glossy side down on a piece of paper towel. (Beware! The back will still be a little sticky! If you accidentally put the wrong side on the paper towel, just soak and rub it off. I often use freezer paper instead of paper towels, even though it takes a bit longer to dry.)

6. Once dry, you can paint directly on the back (non glossy side) or use a Xyron, spray adhesive, clear adhesive tape, etc. to adhere the image to your choice of a backing. Try leafing, foils, metallic and sparkly papers (a personal favorite), washi, tissue paper, textured papers, or whatever suits your project.

7. (Optional) For a less glossy surface apply a layer of matte medium over the front glossy surface.



Bath Time, 6½" x 5"

(Image Transfer Follies, cont.)

A Wise and Weary Tip!

One of my first big projects with image transfer was making a plethora of holiday cards for friends and family. After two days of non-stop soaking and rubbing this got a bit tiresome! Before running off to the drug store to gather whatever boxed saviors they might still have on the shelf I decided to try something different. So here is my favorite tip for the wise and weary artiste!

Use acetate/transparencies prepared for your computer printer and eliminate all that nasty water work! (These are now commonly available through most office supply stores; just make sure that you buy the right kind for your printer!) Once again the white areas of your image will be clear and you are ready to add your special backing paper to make your collage sparkle!

Simply scan your image or collage and print it on the inkjet ready transparency! I usually make a few collage pieces via the soak and rub method so that I get the wonderful ghosting around the images (where the backing shows through). I adhere them to another sheet of clear acetate (so they aren't sticky) instead of a backing paper. Then I scan them into my computer and print out as many transfers as I need! I recently made four dozen cards from start to finish in a single evening.



Mom's Visit to Santa, 6½" x 5"

Melissa Chapin is a NYC based mixed media artist, jewelry designer and arts instructor. She is currently working on a new series of Polaroid manipulations and is an Artist in Residence for the [Creative Center: Arts for People with Cancer](#). Her inspired jewelry designs are available at heydayhandbags.com and a more extensive artisan line will soon be featured in the Artella gift shop!