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Artist Of The Week: Megan Coyle, Creating Beautiful Collage Paintings "Just" With Magazine Strips

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Megan Coyle's beautiful artworks appear as if they are created with brush strokes. But actually they are collages using handpicked magazine strips that looks like paintings. The most amazing part of her creations is choosing the right colored pieces of paper and placing them accurately; giving them a look of a real painting. And trust me, it's hard to distinguish!

Megan is a Washington, D.C. based collage artist and designer. She picks up scrapped magazines and turns them into something really worthwhile. She creates portrait, animal, landscape, and still life collages. We have Megan with us to talk about her artistic journey. Let's get candid with her:

Megan, please introduce yourself to E-junkies.

I'm a collage artist and illustrator from the Washington, DC area. I take everyday magazines and turn them into works of art. I call my technique "painting with paper" since I recreate the look and feel of a painting through the manipulation of magazine strips.

My work has appeared in publications around the world, including the Washington Post, Somerset Studio Magazine, and Papirmasse. I have exhibited my work around the U.S. in venues that include the Smithsonian Ripley Center, Art League Gallery, and Jasper Arts Center. Recently I completed writing and illustrating my first children's book called Duck & Fish.



Duck and Fish (an illustration children's book Duck & Fish)

What influences the artist within you?

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I have been making artwork for as long as I can remember. As a child, I was constantly painting at an easel or drawing at my desk. So I suppose you could say the artist within me is influenced by instinct. I feel like I need to create things. I just can't imagine what life would be like without sketching, painting, or collaging. I feel like something is missing from my life when I haven't worked on a work of art in a while.



A Potomac River Afternoon



Chow Time

Enlighten us with your wonderful artwork.

I started off as a painter and was very much influenced by impressionist and post-impressionist painters. I was drawn to the distinct brushstrokes they used. When I decided to focus entirely on collage in 2008, I found that my impressionist influence translated over to my collage work. When I cut out shapes of paper for each collage, I like to make the paper mimic the distinct brushstrokes in a painting.

Each work of art is inspired by ordinary people, places, and happenings. I like to create narrative scenes that viewers can relate to and remind them of their own experiences and memories. I also like to find a little color in ordinary moments.



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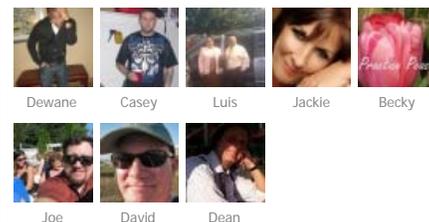
Sunset in the City

Would you like to describe your creative work process?

Sure! My process consists of several steps - first I go off and gather inspiration. If I have a project in mind, I'll travel around a city and take lots of pictures. Once I get back home, I sift through all my photos and select images I'd like to use as references for my collage. I'll usually choose several different photos to use for a single composition.

Next I sketch the layout of the collage. Then I turn to my stacks of fashion magazines and flip through magazine pages, looking for specific colors and textures. When I find a color I like, I cut it into a shape that matches a shadow or highlight in the composition, and glue it on top of my sketch. I use a glue stick as I work since the glue isn't very permanent and I can easily move the pieces of paper around. I continue to cut and glue magazine strips until I've covered the entire page with layers of paper.

Once I decide that a work of art is complete, I varnish it with a UV-protective varnish. This helps protect the paper from light and also seals all the pieces so they won't fall off the page.



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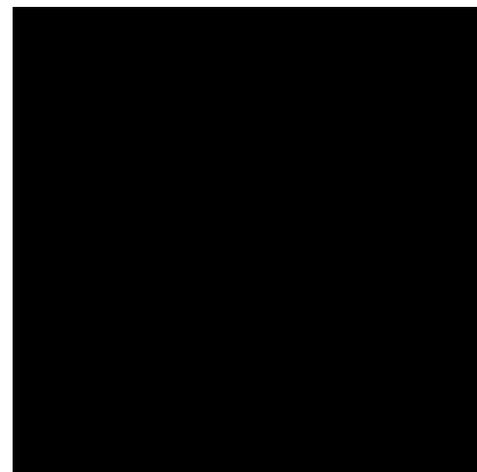
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On an average, how many hours does it take you to complete one creation?

I actually have no idea. When I work on a collage, I get into the zone and don't really keep track of time. I know that the smallest size I work in, 5"x7", takes the least amount of time to complete - usually about a day or two. The largest size I work in at the moment is 18"x24", which can take several weeks to complete. It takes more time to finish a more detailed collage or when I'm struggling with the subject.



Hide and Seek on the Subway

I read about the central idea behind your artwork. Please elaborate it.

My art encourages viewers to question the materials I use. My collages are put together in such a way that they look like they're made from one medium, when they're actually made from an entirely different one. When viewers question how my artwork is made, it makes the art more interactive - people step closer to get a better look. And by creating collages that mimic the brushstrokes in a painting, my work blurs the line between two familiar art forms. As a result, it challenges our traditional ideas of what makes a work of art a painting or collage.

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In the Woods

Now, this is going to be difficult. Which creation by you is your favorite?

My favorite piece is the "Benjamin" portrait that I made for my senior thesis exhibition at Elon University. The exhibition consisted of six collage portraits, and was my first cohesive body of collage work. "Benjamin" is a piece that I'm still proud of today, simply because the pieces came together unexpectedly, and I was happy with the result. Too often I think my completed collages could use more work, but you have to reach a point as an artist to say "enough is enough" - to stop calling a piece a "work in progress" and just say it's complete.



Benjamin

Share the best compliment you've ever received for your work.

The best compliment I can receive for my work is when teachers decide to teach collage units based on my technique. Every once in a while I'll hear from students and teachers, and even receive photos of Megan Coyle-style collages that students completed in class. It's wonderful to hear that my work can inspire students and teachers in classrooms across the country.



Meet the Bostons - Ivy and Molly



Old Town Townhouses

What has been the breakthrough point in your artistic journey or is it yet to come?

I believe it is yet to come. My professional art career was born in 2008, and so I am just getting started. I'm taking things one step at a time and I am grateful for every opportunity I get.

Do you have any dream project?

My dream project would be to work on a full-length animation. I'm always looking for different ways to share my work, and I'm really intrigued by the possibilities of turning my 2d collage creations into 2d or even 3d animations.

I've begun dabbling in animation with a collaborative project I'm working on with my brother who's a 3d animator.

Here's an example of what we've done so far with the project:



[\(Link\)](#)

I've also done a bit of experimenting with 2d animation on my own:



[\(Link\)](#)

What are the other things that interests you? What do you like to do in your free time?

I'm a design and techie junkie - so often times I like to pour myself a cup of coffee, kick back, and surf the net looking at the latest designs. I'm also in love with the arts - so when I'm not making my own artwork, I'm off wandering through art museums and stopping by art openings. I also watch lots of films and stop by the theater as often as possible. I'm always amazed at the different ways people can express themselves. There's nothing more satisfying than seeing a wonderful work of art.

A final word for our readers....?

When I was younger, I often said I wanted to become an artist someday. People would try to discourage me and say things like, "being an artist is really difficult." Now I find myself thinking, "well, it's really difficult to be anything." So when it comes down to it, all you can really do is find that one thing in life that you enjoy, and try to do that for a living. Then when times get tough, it won't seem so bad since you're doing something that you love. And so I've chosen the creative life.

Megan, thank you for talking to us. I really enjoyed our conversation and totally in love with your art work. I wish you all the best for your dream project! I am sure you've a long way to go. :)

Check out Megan's full work portfolio on her [website](#).
For all the updates, follow Megan on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).