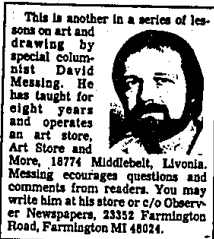


Mixed media, like food, is a matter of taste



By David P. Messing
special writer

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for eight years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 18774 Middlebelt, Livonia. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington MI 48024.

Mixing media is fun and I really encourage it. Especially if it will save a picture. It is all a matter of taste. That leads me to my favorite subject, FOOD! So let's use food as an example. Many times people will mix certain foods, which seems all right to them and is legal, but not appealing to you. When I was dating, a particular girl had me over for dinner. After dinner she and her mother left to do the dishes leaving myself and her father alone at the table. Out of all the questions he could have asked me, he surprised me when he said, "Did you ever try mustard on peanut butter?" Then while the "of" "no" was still coming out of my lips, I went a peanut butter cracker with a yellow curl of mustard. Choking, and swallowing I said, "Yes sir that certainly is full of flavor."

Either that was a polite, under stress test, or he really eats those things. But the value of "good" does not require universal approval. This is especially true when it comes to artwork. Many people adore pieces I don't care for. This is the way it should be. The problem here is many people base their opinions on the premise that they themselves are right. If you agree with them then you, too, are right. If you disagree with them, then you are either undereducated or simply have no taste. Personal opinions should be the lens through which you view pieces of artwork. If the piece is appreciated, the lens translates it and increases the beauty of it. If you dislike it, the lens probes all of the poorer qualities of the work. But that lens should not judge other people and the way their particular lens, views works of art.

YOU TALK about mixed media? Well, the Detroit Jazz poster is the last word in mixed media. It is a collection of stuff you might find in the bottom of a household "junk" drawer and all of it is glued to a black mat board. Plus you have your pastel scribble, your ink stroke, your felt tip pen, your charcoal, why there's even a yellow feather tucked in there. Although, it didn't appeal to me, it was a very popular poster. We framed quite a few for customers. As a matter of fact, I framed one and in my final check before taking it out to the customer, I noticed a wicker from my beard had fallen between the glass and the poster. I was upset because of the time it would require to replace this piece. Then I looked at the poster and thought "what's one more item going to hurt on this collection of

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sundries!" So I left it, in there. I told the customer, "There is one of my wiskers in there somewhere, if you can find it and if it bothers you bring it back."

Now here are some pleasing media that you can mix. Pen and ink on colored board is very popular and usually very successful. Especially if you use colored pencils to add in subtle high lights. But with pen and ink, I notice many students are hesitant to get as dark as they should. So the dark areas just don't look as dark as they should. The drawing just doesn't seem to have that shaded depth the student desires. So I give them a vine charcoal and ask them to shade with that. What happens is that the charcoal rubs into the colored mat board or colored paper. The colored shading is so soft that it disappears behind the blackness of the pen and ink lines. Yet the flat two-dimensional drawing is brought back to three dimensional realism. So you can spray that you see how much better your drawing can be, erase the charcoal with a kneaded eraser and re-ink those dark areas.

Many times a watercolor has gone down the tubes because of an area in the painting just didn't work. Well you can fix many errors with pastel. Simply put in the appropriate color then rub it into the tooth of the paper with

many mixtures. Very few combinations could be worse than peanut butter and mustard! Right?

I have noticed the older students (any one older than me) have some trouble mixing media. I will say "now rub in a pastel color for this area" and they might say, "But can I do that? This is supposed to be a watercolor painting." My feelings are that, it is best to use whatever media are needed to achieve the effect you are striving for.

For example, you are doing a Cape Cod scene in pen and ink. Now you are pleased with the boats and the docks done in lines and crosshatching, but you are wondering how best to achieve a foggy overcast look into the picture. Then simply put a gray wash with watercolor over the pen and ink. Don't be afraid to try something new. It reminds me of my wife when we go out to eat. Recently we went to a Chinese restaurant. My three boys know that they had better order off the children's affordable menu. (I wish they could; they now eat more than their father.) So, I usually order something new like the Hung-Chow special fillet of crab, sweet and sour something and a side order of marinated mumble. But my wife orders the Hung-Chow cheese burger with Hung-Chow fries and a Hung-Chow cola. She knows that whatever and wherever we go, no matter how it's spelled you can't miss with a burger, fries and cola. I can afford to be brave because if my dinner is a dud then I'll eat half of my wife's. But in artwork it

helps to take a chance on ruining a picture just to try something new or different. So take a chance.

Now let me take a little time to explain our contest again. We have had a few calls for the details because the paper got thrown away by accident. Hide this one or tear out the instructions, so you have something to go by. The contest again is designing a logo and symbol for a fictitious company that manufactures jeans called Cricket's. The artwork must be on a 9-by-12 illustration board. The artwork has to be camera ready, black ink with gray done in ink wash, halftone screens or ink lines shading. Design a stylish logo and symbol for this fictitious company using your imagination and don't forget to include the design of stitching which is so popular on the back pocket. This should resemble an ad that you might see in a newspaper. I will judge this by how you design and position the logo, symbol and pocket design in the 9-by-12 area.

Creativity and cleanliness of presentation are very important. All entries must be submitted by Saturday, Oct. 29, to the Art Store & More. Remember the logo means the name and how you write or print it. The symbol is what you choose to represent the name. The first-prize winner will receive a \$25 gift certificate, an art store T-shirt and their art work will be printed in the paper. You will also be interviewed, (a little publicity might help you get on your way).

'Homearama' is Oct. 1-16

When Sears Interior design decorators presented their home decorating display at the Builders Show last March, Irv Yackness invited them to do the March of Dimes Home for 'Homearama '84' this October.

Yackness, general counsel of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan, recognized another potential first for the first Homearama in Michigan that would be beneficial to both Sears and the model home event.

Sears home fashion/lifestyle decor division is decorating the March of Dimes home as well as three others at the same site. This will be a first for Sears in the metro area and, therefore, of great interest to builders as well as consumers.

While the national retail chain has been in the custom design business for

years, and has done spectacularly nationally, it was at the early spring Builders Show that Sears put on a brand new face by displaying its expertise and taste in the design/decor field.

"We approached the March of Dimes home with great enthusiasm," said Peter Cousino, group manager home fashions, Sears headquarters in Troy. "We assigned the project to 32 decorators, broke them up into teams and began building. The first team began by considering the kind of life a family might live in this particular home, then started with walls, floors and windows.

"The second team came in after that with step two. And so it went until the design for everything from carpeting and appliances... to

accessories to linens was complete. Only then did the teams meet and put it all together. It was mind-blowingly sensational."

So sensational, indeed, that "Family Circle" magazine will be at the Troy building site next Wednesday, and Thursday to "shoot" the interior of the March of Dimes home for their March issue.

Sears also is handling complete interior decoration of three other model homes — decorators Gerald Hillert (for Delco Construction), Sharon Shalalin (for Professional Home Builders Group), Rhonda Cope (for Sylvan Construction).

Homearama opens Saturday, Oct. 1 and runs through Oct. 16, Fox Hills Subdivision, West of Crooks, north of Square Lake, Troy.



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