

## **SoulCollage®:**

### **Why We Use Collage to Create Our Own Decks of Cards**

**by Seena Frost**

In recent months many people have visited the SoulCollage® website because they entered the word COLLAGE into a web search. Some were artists already working with collage. Now several of these artists are trained facilitators and are sharing the process of SoulCollage® with others in various parts of the country. In this column, I thought I would speak to why, many years ago, I chose collage as the primary media for this creative form of soul exploration.

As in all attempts to speak about Soul and Spirit, explanations will range from practical to symbolic, or, in other words, from our 'local stories' to the 'Larger Story.' I'll start with the first. Picasso seems to have coined the word collage. Certainly the etymological basis is the French word coller meaning to paste or to glue, and that is exactly what collage is: the creative act of cutting out and pasting down pieces, usually of paper. What is cut out and pasted is, quite often, an image. This image is cut out of its original context and imaginatively placed in a new context, one that the artist's imagination devises. Collage is a simple, accessible sort of media; anyone can do it without years of training or expensive tools. Nonetheless it can still provide a surprisingly effective outlet for our creative drive. This easy accessibility is one practical reason I chose it.

A second reason is this: collage is easily done in a group setting as well as alone, and working in a group can be helpful and healing. Besides, many of us won't stick with a process that takes a length of time, unless we have a community of like-minded people to share with, and unless we also have regular times that we agree to meet. Thus gathering to both create cards and to work with them is a good way to keep SoulCollage going in one's life.

In SoulCollage work we emphasize that our cards are made for personal use only, and are not created to be sold, or even traded. This principle underlines that this is a deeply personal deck of cards, created for one's own use, for self-understanding, for healing and for just plain enjoyment. Hence you can cut out and use any image that is particularly numinous for you. You can use just one image on a new background, or put several pieces on one card. Whatever is right for you. You can, of course, show your cards,

explain them, and “read” them with other people. You can enlarge cards to hang on your wall, or even exhibit them as a collection of SoulCollage cards, illustrative of the process. You can submit them to the SoulCollage website gallery where others can enjoy them. They just are not for sale.

Now let’s think briefly about collage in a more symbolic sense. Notice how often in a day we collect pieces that exist in one context and arrange them in a new way. It is a fundamental, creative process we, as humans, constantly use. We do it with ingredients in our recipes, with furniture in our rooms, with words in our writing and speaking. The imaginative part in us does this selecting and piecing together with a special eye, or ear, or feel. We want the pieces to fit together in some sort of unity, a new pattern, perhaps beautiful, perhaps tasty, and perhaps meaningful. This creative imagining is so basic in our living that it may seem strange to lift it up as significant, and yet, if we do it consciously, it is a surprising and elegant activity that nourishes the soul. C.G. Jung, who spent much time with alchemy, noted that it was only by first taking a thing a part, getting to know these parts intimately, and then letting the parts come back together that transformation occurs. It is then that a new and more precious element is created.

In like manner, our many pieces of soul can be consciously and imaginatively collaged into a new and more vital oneness of spirit. This is basically what we are about in the process called SoulCollage. We select (or are selected by) images that are numinous to us personally, ones that are often mysterious. And we collage them on to a card. Aesthetics are fine, but not our first priority, nor is being original. Even knowing what the image means to our life isn’t the first priority. This process is closely related to dream images. We collage a card like we might record a powerful and memorable dream, using imagination prior to analysis. Later we can work mindfully with the images just as we would analyze a dream. This is a powerful way of letting what is hidden within our depths bubble up, sometimes from our personal unconscious, and sometimes from that deeper layer in us that Jung called the collective unconscious. The numinous images on our cards can help us recognize and retain in a form vital parts of ourselves that we may not have known were there. Perhaps we will be challenged by them, surprised by them, and even horrified by them. But now we can understand them, accept them, and integrate them into our whole psyche.

This is what Jung called the individuation process. We are a collection of opposites, shadow and light. Next to dreaming itself, using collage with numinous, found images is the best media I know of to do this work.

Seena Frost, July, 2005