



Mixed Media Art Combines Materials to Create Something New

KS3 Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

What Is Mixed Media Art?

Mixed media art is any artwork that uses more than one material or technique in the same piece. Instead of sticking to just paint or just pencil, a mixed media artist might combine **paint, collage, fabric, photographs, newspaper cuttings**, and even **3D objects** all on the same surface. The result is a layered, textured piece that you simply could not create with a single tool alone.

Artists have been experimenting with mixed media for over **100 years**. Early pioneers like **Pablo Picasso** and **Georges Braque** glued newspaper and wallpaper onto their paintings in the early **1900s** — a technique called **collage**. This was considered revolutionary at the time, because it blurred the line between a flat painting and the real three-dimensional world.

Think of it like making a playlist. Instead of listening to only one genre of music, you mix pop, jazz, and classical together to create something that feels entirely your own.

Why Do Artists Use Mixed Media?

Mixed media gives artists enormous creative freedom. Different materials carry different meanings and textures. Torn newspaper can suggest chaos or history. Smooth acrylic paint can add bold colour. **Ink** can create delicate detail. By layering these together, an artist can communicate complex ideas and emotions that a single medium might struggle to express.

It is also wonderfully experimental. There is no strict rulebook. If you want to glue a bus ticket onto a watercolour painting, you can. This freedom makes mixed media especially popular in **contemporary art, scrapbooking, zine-making**, and **art journaling**.

How Do You Create Mixed Media Art?

Getting started is easier than you might think. Here is a simple process to follow:

Step 1 — Choose a sturdy base. Mixed media layers can get heavy and wet, so use thick **card**, **canvas board**, or **watercolour paper** rather than ordinary printer paper.

Step 2 — Build your background. Start with a wash of **acrylic paint** or **watercolour** to set a mood or colour palette across your base.

Step 3 — Add collage layers. Tear or cut pieces of **magazine pages**, **tissue paper**, or **patterned paper** and glue them down with **PVA glue**. Overlapping pieces add depth.

Step 4 — Draw or paint on top. Use **pen**, **pencil**, or more paint to add detail, patterns, or figures over your collaged layers.

Step 5 — Add texture and finishing touches. Press in **string**, **buttons**, or **dried leaves**, or scratch into wet paint with a stick to create interesting surface effects.

Think of it like building a sandwich. You start with a base layer of bread, then pile on different fillings, and each layer adds a new flavour — the finished result is richer than any single ingredient on its own.

Key Things to Remember

The most important rule in mixed media is that there are no rules. Experiment, make mistakes, and see what happens when unusual materials meet. Some of the most exciting artworks in history came from an artist simply asking, *what if I tried this?* Mixed media is your invitation to do exactly that.