

SAN FRANCISCO









utting and pasting paper may seem like child's play, but in the hands of Denise Fiedler, it is elevated to an art form. "Collage has so many possibilities," says the San Francisco artist. "I love that there is no technique to master. It's purely creative. You

can go in so many different directions."

Fiedler's work showcases the varied paths of the medium. It can depict everything from animals fashioned from slivers of paper layered to look like fur, to brilliantly colored botanicals with sinuous vines. Some custom pieces are crafted from personal mementos, like a tree made from a couple's favorite books and maps of their travels. Other commissions have been for household names like Pottery Barn, Benetton and the U.S. Postal Service. "I thrive on variety," notes the artist.

Trained as an interior designer, Fiedler first experimented with collage in the mid-1990s when she was working in the textile industry and the department store Marshall Field & Company commissioned her to make store displays. She started working in felt, but made the transition to paper when she opened a box of items she'd collected at flea markets—vintage books, maps, math flashcards—and thought, "What am I going to do with these?"

Fiedler's early collages consist mostly of those faded pages, giving pieces a sepia-tinted look, but now her work is filled with vibrant colors that she paints on paper before cutting. "Sometimes I'll set aside a whole day just to mix colors," she says. "It's like being in a lab." Her floral collages, a series inspired by her daily walks, illustrate her knack for color. Working from her Russian Hill studio, she cuts each piece of paper freehand using a trusty pair of Japanese scissors that she keeps in four different sizes. "Like chefs have certain knives they like to use, I can't part with these scissors," she says. She intuitively cuts the deep purple dahlias, scarlet geraniums, pink roses, chartreuse leaves and blue forget-me-nots, then arranges them "like a puzzle" on the page until "it feels right," she says.

It's fitting artwork for Fiedler's new studio and gallery, which was once a floral design shop. The Dutch door is often open, inviting the public to browse her work and that of other artists, but metaphorical portals have swung wide as well. "The space has become a part of my work," she explains. "It fosters creativity and has become a tremendous inspiration—it's literally opened the door for bigger things."



In Denise Fiedler's gallery and studio, art, tools and vintage finds fill the shelves (below and previous page, left). Seen here at a worktable, the artist says her space is a source of creativity (previous page, right). Boards carry images selected to inspire (opposite), and collage art depicting geraniums decorates another part of the studio (bottom). Fiedler's most prized tools are her sharp scissors (left).





