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MADE IN THE HAMPTONS



A Cut Above

To Denise Fiedler, a home is a colorful collage



In the early 1990s, Denise Fiedler attended an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art featuring Henri Matisse's famed cut-out collages. Fiedler, who was running a tabletop and women's fashion accessories business at the time, became transfixed. "I hadn't seen much collage work before," recalls the longtime San Franciscan. "I was taken with the texture of the overlapping layers and its effect on the overall image."

Fast-forward nearly two decades, when inspiration struck Fiedler after she came across a box of children's math flashcards and vintage books. "The pages were so visually interesting that they motivated me to give collage a try," says Fiedler, who cut them up to create a portrait and became hooked while doing it. At the time, she had also been pondering a career move, and by 2009 her paper-goods and greeting-cards company, Paste, was born.

Since then, she has been commissioned to design everything from animals to flora to houses, all constructed with pages from secondhand books and an arsenal of tools including paint, scissors, and glue sticks. While many of her pieces are whimsical and imaginative, Fiedler makes home portraits that are as realistic as possible, down to architectural details and landscaping. "If you don't have the proportions of a house correct, the resemblance won't be there," explains the artist,

DOUG YOUNG



"I'm taken with how the layers affect the overall image"

Glued To Her Craft

After painting a watercolor background on a four-ply board, Fiedler creates her collages by layering pieces of pages cut from secondhand books. See *Resources*.



who often visits the Hamptons and has taught collage courses at Shelter Island's Sylvester Manor Educational Farm.

Fiedler begins each home collage with an ink sketch that she draws on tracing paper from a client-provided photograph. She uses this sketch as a guide while she builds the collage, beginning with a background—sky, trees, bodies of water—that she paints with watercolor onto a four-ply board (typically 11" x 14" or 16" x 20"). Next, having applied gouache to the pages of secondhand books (and leaving some of the words visible), she cuts out each element of the structure and its surroundings. She glues and layers these pieces onto the watercolor backdrop, and adds any fine remaining details with colored pencil as a finishing touch. "Everyone's home has a personality and evokes emotion within us," says Fiedler. "That's the feeling that I'm trying to capture in my portraits." —*Kelly Velocci*