

## WHAT GOT ME STARTED MAKING COLLAGES

When I was a small kid in the '60s living with my grandma in Atlanta I didn't have the fancy paper doll books where you punched out perfectly formed, well-dressed white characters.



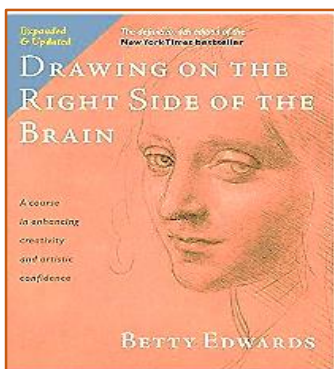
What I had were the thick free Sears Roebuck catalogues -- which had everything, being before the internet it was the mail order Amazon of its day. I loved cutting out the over-and-under-sized nurses in uniforms and men in suits, along with whole families sitting around dining room tables, as well as telephones, mailboxes, boys on bikes and girls in

hats! I'd compose scenes and direct my mix-match characters in their mix-match environments in little stories. Then I got old enough to be told I had to become a little mother to my two younger sisters, and I stopped making my silly stories.



In my 20s after college, when I was a passionate, outraged and dismayed women's crisis counselor in Oakland, California (i.e. rape

crisis center and a shelter for battered women), I decided to take up drawing to relax and release.

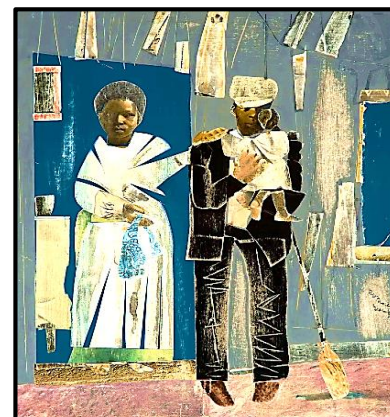


I was reading (really skimming) the now classic book 'How To Draw On The Right Side Of The Brain', by Betty Edwards. She talks about how drawing is intertwined with the act of seeing --- but different than everyday seeing. You go into a different part of the brain -- non-verbal -- to process visuals and spatial reality. She said the drawing state is one of high alertness, engagement, and extremely focused attention --- so much so that you won't notice time passing. Drawing as a Zen moment?! Take me there!

Through drawing could I forget sad, frustrating moments while developing my creative, intuitive powers ?!!

**NOPE! I COULD NOT.** Drawing for me remained painfully slow and boring. Then I was introduced to the collages of [Romare Bearden](#) -- and I remembered my scissors!

*'The Family' (1969) – Romare Bearden*



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**It was still the age of magazines and before personal computers became common and affordable.**

I already had folders of torn out pictures of people I admired and samples of interior design and landscapes. As I started doing an occasional collage to relax into the cutting and pasting --- it dawned on me now to add textures and strange twists to my visions of normal reality.

**THEN THERE WAS AN  EARTHQUAKE IN MY LIFE !**

I abandoned my scissors and glue – and most possessions in my life – to travel light across country to a new unknown city to study the unknown – acting – while learning to survive in an unknown profession (waiter). It took years and years (and moving from Manhattan to Brooklyn) for it to feel like home and years and years to evolve into a teacher of low/no budget short scriptwriting and filmmaking.



**It wasn't until what seemed a couple of lifetimes later in 2020, during the Covid lockdown, that it occurred to me to make collages again.**

While we were isolating I came up with the concept for creating StoryTelling Lessons Workbooks for Adult Beginners that would teach the basics of storytelling while introducing the basics of scriptwriting. I was aiming for working-class adults who are not quick to take on the challenge of new learning. I wanted to create something that they would take into their homes and keep and share. I knew the Lessons had to be visually fun and attention-getting. Something people would hang on to, even if they didn't immediately go through the Lessons.

Many people no longer buy hard copy books, but if they like comics they'll buy and collect them. I decided I wanted to create my own mythology with StoryTeller crusaders and each of the Workbook volumes I was planning would have comic-book like covers with small colorful artwork on each of the pages.

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**But my drawing  
was still limited and slow.  
How could I draw bodies in action ?**

# MAKE COLLAGES !

I looked up old comic covers online, grabbed an action figure and cut and paste and drew all over it's body frame --- until it was no longer recognizable for what it had been and became uniquely mine. I now could create my own characters !

After the years of teaching scriptwriting and making low/no budget short films – I had grown fond of finding ways to build visual layers of story in one shot, one frame. I now wanted to make collages that had a story within-in-a-story visuals. I wanted people to be looking for the subtle and fun clues to the story I was telling.



**Then I moved to Charlotte,  
North Carolina and  
discovered the VAPA Center,  
a huge yet incredibly intimate  
and friendly place that is  
like a little village with  
hundreds of artists  
from *all* disciplines  
(including tattoo artists!).**



I shared my collage work and have been accepted and respected as a fellow artist. I've gone from a lonely child cutting out Sears Roebuck because we couldn't afford bought, to believing I can make collages worthy of submitting to artist showcases and even selling as prints and postcards. Collage making is now an integral part of my life, future, and joy ! – Trayce

**If One Black Woman Can Stumble Into  
Her Own As A Creative -- YOU CAN TOO !**