



First person

My life in pictures

Sally's finished work says something about her

Recalling the childhood joys of collage-making, Sally Morgan discovers a London workshop in which she snips, pastes and assembles her way to some revealing insights

The last time I cut out pictures and glued them on to pieces of card, I was probably at primary school – either my own or my daughter's, helping her to make something weird and wonderful for her latest project. The midnight blue angel with pink tissue-paper wings is still a favourite...

It's true – the creative process of making a collage from fragments of paper is entirely pleasurable. Choosing the shapes, colours and images, trimming round them with scissors, slathering on the glue, then pressing them down feels therapeutic and, yes, slightly indulgent. So, to be granted the luxury of time to participate in a SoulCollage workshop, a unique event just starting to take off in the UK, feels like a real treat.

An air of calm sweeps over me as I saunter into a cosy room in a holistic workshop centre in north-west London. Candles flickering on the window ledge

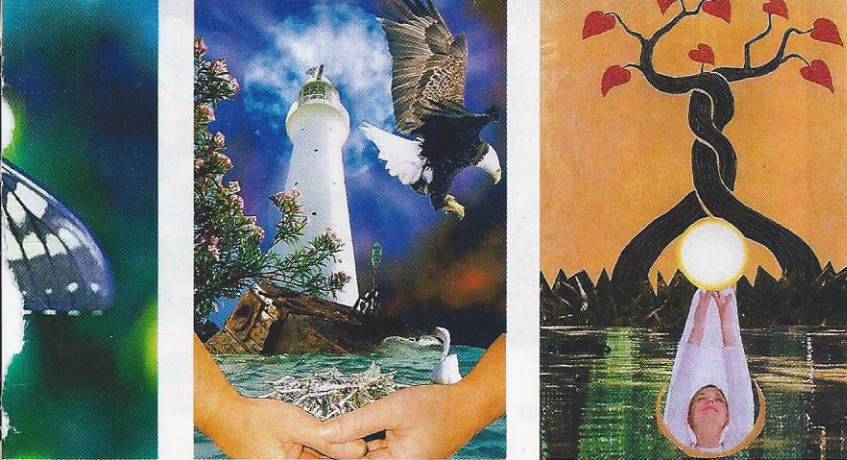
and the heady scent from a vase of hyacinths enhance this feeling of tranquillity.

My seven fellow collagers are already here, sipping herbal tea and taking their places around the huge square table. There's a mixture of ages and backgrounds, from a 24-year-old musician to a mum and daughter, and someone who's been bought a place on this workshop as a gift.

Nobody is quite sure what to expect, as SoulCollage has only recently landed on our shores from the States. Our 'facilitator', as workshop leaders are called, is Linda Woolfson, who tells us that American psychotherapist Seena Frost founded SoulCollage in the late 1980s.

Inspired by a course on Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, and his thinking about the importance of myths, stories, dreams and archetypes in our lives, Seena started to make collages, linking her own experiences with Jung's ideas. The workshop





evolved through the women in Seena's psychotherapy groups making powerful, personal cards, sharing them and learning how the images could help them engage with the big questions in their lives.

In SoulCollage, each card has its own unique presence and meaning. Linda, a Cambridge PhD graduate in French literature, who trained with Seena in California in 2010, explains that SoulCollage is an intuitive process. The main aim of an introductory workshop is to start us off by making and connecting with our first cards. Linda has us browse through an array of images, sorted out into categories such as all animals, people and pictures of nature, to make it easy to home in on the ones that call to us.

'Let your mind drift a little, be a bit dreamy and choose your images spontaneously. You'll find out more about them later,' says Linda.

The first one that speaks to me is a painting of a woman in a long white dress, leaning against a white mantelpiece. There's a soulful expression on her face, and she's gazing in front of a mirror. What attracts me to this image is the contrast in colours: the pink camellias against her gown, the blue Chinese vase on the mantle, and the oriental fan in her hand.

On top of this main image, I paste a snippet of white moon daisies, a feisty-looking Grecian lady in a flowing white robe, and an attractive George Clooney lookalike standing on the deck of a yacht. Each image is from a different period in time, but the juxtaposition of them together works in an eccentric way.

Once everyone has completed their first card, Linda asks us, in turn, to hold it up and speak about it, starting with the phrase, 'I am one who...'

This is the moment when you reveal to yourself - and others - your intuitive connection with

the image you have created.

It's my turn first. I blurt out the first thing that comes into my head - which is, of course, probably the whole point of my spontaneous connection with what these images mean to me.

'I am one who comes from the past,' I stammer. 'I prefer to think in solitude and be surrounded by tranquillity.'

Intuitively, I feel this card

'The first image that speaks to me is a woman in a long white dress with a soulful expression on her face'

represents different aspects of my personality - the quiet, reflective side, but also the strong, sparky edge, hence the presence of the steely Grecian. As for the George Clooney clone, well, perhaps he was just a bit of wishful thinking.

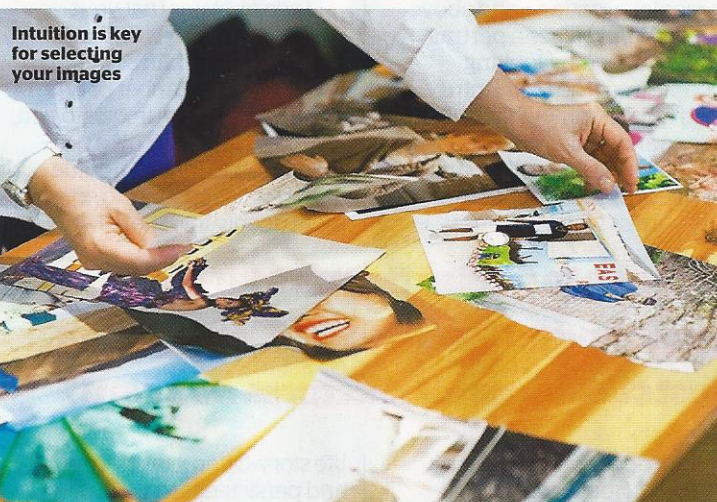
When the others hold up their cards, the diversity is striking. There are pictures ranging from a collage of wild animals to exotic landscapes, groups of people gathered together drinking wine, and a cute squirrel eating a nut.

By now, we've all caught the collage bug and are keen to create another card. Linda

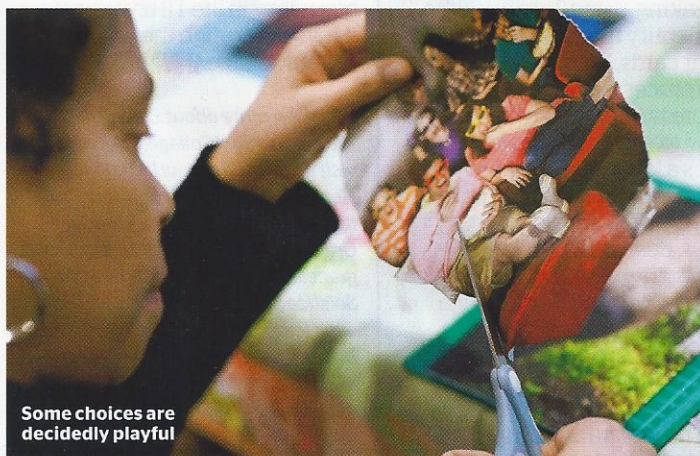
lets us loose on more images. Again she instructs us to let go of any preconceived rules or ideas - like looking for sky to put at the top of our collage - and just instinctively be drawn to images.

This time, I'm gathering an aquatic-based theme that includes an azure-blue ocean bathed in sunshine, a perky-looking dolphin swimming in the brine, a small fishing boat setting sail, and a woman in a yogic pose on a beach.

For me, this scene is my idea of paradise, my ultimate feelgood place of relaxation. It's where I go inside my head when I need to touch base



Intuition is key for selecting your images



Some choices are decidedly playful



Getting a spot of advice - and reassurance



Linda Woolfson, our workshop facilitator

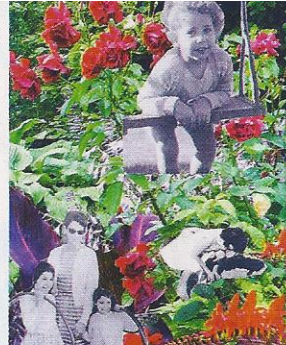
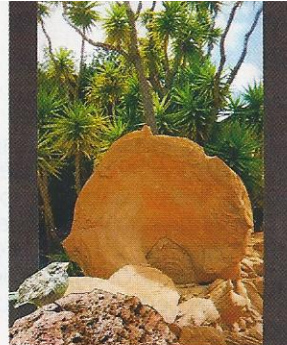


Pictures are categorised for easy picking



Everyone is soon immersed in the creative task

Tried and tested



with nature. Now, here it is, in picture form in front of me.

By the time we move on to making our third card, we're all deep in thought, working in a silent reverie.

I choose images that depict beautiful country gardens, with wild borders of lavender and climbing roses.

Dominating this collage is a medieval cottage, and above it, I randomly place a portrait of an aristocratic-looking couple from the 17th century. It's a quirky, somewhat idyllic scene and, I must confess, I have no idea what it means to me, only that I feel a sense of oneness with the house,

the chakras, or energy points on your body. This suit is all about the powerful, bodily dimensions of your life, usually symbolised by animals.

The Council Suit consists of the spirit guides who lead you, while the three Transpersonal Cards remind us of the awe-inspiring vastness of the universe, and our place within it.

Linda explains that your SoulCollage deck is different from a tarot deck. In SoulCollage, there is no set number or type of card. Your deck is unique to you, and purely for your own use.

SoulCollage cards provide a way for the creators to go more deeply into their own

thoughts and desires, or as part of other therapies to help with problems like alcohol and drug addictions, eating disorders, bereavement and anger management, and can even help the terminally ill enhance their wellbeing.

I begin to realise there's a far more profound purpose and meaning to SoulCollage than just sticking pretty pictures on a card.

Linda is the only one who isn't surprised by our group's range of creativity. As she reminds us, having no rules in this workshop sets us free from the critic within. If you can let your imagination run riot, be spontaneous and give in to your creativity, you may also connect with your intuition, and let it guide you through life.

As I head home, reflecting on what I've learned, the streets seem brighter than before, and I feel as if I've unleashed a new creative side within me.

So the next time I have a quandary in life, I'll try to answer it myself through the wisdom of SoulCollage. **SPIRIT & DESTINY**

• To learn more about Linda Woolfson's SoulCollage workshops, visit www.collageyourlife.co.uk. Her next workshop in London takes place 16 June, 2pm-6pm, at Gracelands Yard, Kensal Green (www.gracelandseyard.com). The Summer Solstice SoulCollage costs £45, or £35 each for two friends coming together. Linda will be running other beginners' and advanced workshops later in the year; see her website for details.

I begin to realise there's a far more profound purpose to SoulCollage than just sticking pretty pictures on a card

the garden and the soothing shades of green within it.

Once we've each made at least one card and started to connect with it through making 'I am one who...' statements, Linda gives us a thumbnail sketch of the conceptual framework of SoulCollage.

After some years with her clients exploring and enjoying the power, beauty and eloquence of individual cards, Seena developed a structure to the SoulCollage deck - which can be any number of cards you create - to help people relate to their cards more easily. There are four suits to the deck, plus three Transpersonal Cards, which represent universal energy, or the greater divine forces outside ourselves.

The Committee Suit reflects your own internal voice and characteristics, such as the shy one, the teacher, the critic or the happy child.

The Community Suit honours beings in your life who support and inspire, such as your partner, friends, pets, a favourite author, artist or public figure.

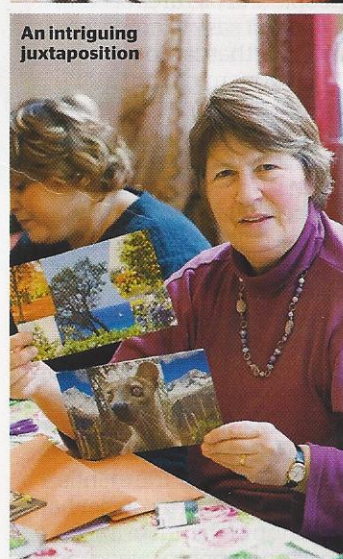
The Companion Suit has seven cards, one for each of

life story. Often it takes time and persistence in writing or speaking, using 'I am one who...' to identify the meanings within your cards. We're told that in the process, we might find we express ourselves with a poetic flow we never knew we had.

It's a lot to take on board, but Linda reassures us that this is just an introductory class, designed for fun and exploring our creativity. It is in more advanced SoulCollage workshops that you learn to ask your cards questions about issues, decisions and challenges in your life, and use the suits accordingly. Intriguingly, Linda confides that the answers they give can be energising and empowering.

The three-hour workshop seems to whizz by, and when it comes to an end, we all place our SoulCollage cards in a pattern on the table. The results are fascinating and, above all, very beautiful. One person who is surrounded by people all day at work has chosen to depict animal scenes, trees and landscapes on every card.

This creative practice can be used for tapping into your inner



Finding inner wisdom, one image at a time



It's all hands on table as we make our choices

Assembling the collage is ultimately revealing

An intriguing juxtaposition