



Clockwise from top: One-of-a-kind decoupage vessels fill the Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France, studio of artisan Jill Barnes-Dacey (inset). A plate mixes motifs both figurative and abstract. A tall vessel bears images of Italian marble.



CUT AND PASTE

Jill Barnes-Dacey revives the age-old art of decoupage in vibrant vessels with singular appeal

Decoupage master Jill Barnes-Dacey is hardly precious about the printed page. To create her kaleidoscopic, one-of-a-kind glass vessels, she might rip a picture from a vintage auction catalogue, anatomy book, or volume of botanical drawings. “Don’t tell anyone,” she jokes, acknowledging that her instinctive, often spontaneous approach might shock bibliophiles. At her studio in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France, up the coast from Nice, you’ll often find her surrounded by mountains of paper shreds. In decoupage, Barnes-Dacey notes, she has found a productive outlet for her impulsive side. “I drive like a lunatic, but my cutting is extraordinary.”

The Connecticut-born talent has been making collages since her boarding-school days in England. But after a decade as an art dealer and two more as a full-time fine artist, she devised her own ingenious take on decoupage. She begins by carefully pasting image upon image to the outside of a vessel, placing the pictures so that they’re visible through the

glass. Next comes a layer of gold or silver leaf—or perhaps simply colored paper—followed by more cut images, this time facing out. Once the gluing is done, she coats the exposed paper with 24 layers of varnish, applying one a day. The resulting high-gloss finish is so thick that the underlying collage appears to be sandwiched between two sheets of glass.

The motifs themselves tend toward the surreal. “I like using images that I’ve never seen before,” Barnes-Dacey says. “You might spot a Japanese knife from the 1820s or a fragment of French architecture from the 1790s.” On a footed vase, blue and red coral tangles with shimmering silver filigree. A bowl, meanwhile, incorporates arabesque tilework and a striped astrological chart. Recently she translated eight designs into a collection of mass-produced tableware for Porcel, the Portuguese porcelain manufacturer.

“What you see isn’t clearly one thing or another,” she says. “It makes you ask, What am I looking at? And I hope that can be startling.” jillbarnesdacey.com
—HANNAH MARTIN



VASE AND PLATE: COURTESY OF JILL BARNES-DACEY