

What is Mixed Media?

This is a question that is so often asked and so difficult to define.

More confusion is created when some use the term “multi-media”. Multi-media is an incorrect term for what we, as SoMMA members do. Multi-media refers to installations or art work that use “media” in a much broader term that includes every form of visual and audio arts such as music, dance, and film.

If you look up Mixed Media, you’ll get dozens and dozens of different answers. If you ask people, they will all disagree on the exact definition. Much of the disagreement stems from lack of clarity in what constitutes “media” and how they are “mixed”.

“Media” are the materials you use on your substrate to create your artwork (not to be confused with the use of “mediums” which can be normal additives used in traditional acrylic painting). The “mix” part doesn’t refer to actually stirring things together, the mix is in the types of differing media that are used in ways that aren’t traditional. Generally the way they are “mixed” is in a layered manner, not a homogenous manner.

For the purposes of clarity and cohesion, the SoMMA board has set forth a description of what SoMMA will consider Mixed Media. Artwork not adhering to these rules will not be accepted into SoMMA exhibitions.

‘WHAT IS MIXED MEDIA’ Guidelines as defined and set forth by the Society of Mixed Media Artists (SoMMA)

Mixed media is a visual art form in which two or more types of media (materials) are applied to a substrate (surface) to create an art piece. The substrate may be anything of your choosing but it will not be counted as a media, as it is the surface upon which one works.

- The applied media (materials) cannot be used in a manner that would be considered typical of a traditional art form such as; pen/ink with watercolor.

- Mediums and compounds such as fiber paste, tar gel, joint compound, paint additives etc., are considered separate elements and count as a second media provided they are not mixed together before application. Ex: adding floetrol or fiber paste into acrylic paint will be considered one medium. The texturizing mediums should be applied as a separate step.
- The application of additional media must be intentional to the integrity of the piece. A swipe of pastel in the corner, a tiny pasted-on scrap of paper or object will not suffice, it must be considered an integral part of the piece and comprise at least 10% of the whole. Anything completely hidden from view will not be considered a separate media.
- Anything used to adhere media to a substrate is not a separate media nor are any final coatings that are applied to the whole (varnish, glaze, resin etc.).

As we are unable to cover every instance concerning what constitutes mixed media, final decisions will be made at exhibition take-in by the Exhibitions chair. The chair will consult a committee of his/her choosing to assist in making that decision.

We are mixed media artists and the mission of this organization is to promote and educate artists about this discipline. We must define the parameters of SoMMA so that we can grow within it. It's very much an "(almost) anything goes" art discipline however, there are guidelines that must be met. We want members to stretch themselves to create artwork that isn't ambiguous, but clearly recognizable as Mixed Media.