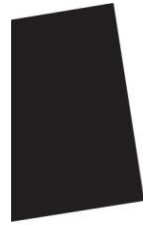


Collage

27 March- 8 May 2004



Bloomberg
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Opening times

Mon - Sat, 11:00 - 18:00

Bloomberg SPACE

50 Finsbury Square
London, EC2A 1HD

gallery@bloomberg.net

Collage carries the possibility of making something out of something that is already there, of not knowing, necessarily, what might arrive. By taking reference, choosing, framing, automatically breaking up existing relationships; by covering, hiding, heightening, filling in and illuminating, collage reflects many real procedures and events. Collage is a bridge between construction and recognition.

Subject matter can be eroded, shifted, negated and made for new. References, which so clearly arrive out of collective taste, understanding and a fixed context, can be liberated, brought into play and placed elsewhere.

This exhibition, which includes work by over 100 artists, does not attempt to be a survey or provide an over view. In fact the very process of selection, of putting this together, has been dictated by individual works and individual artists, rather than any recognisable list of expectation or historical line.

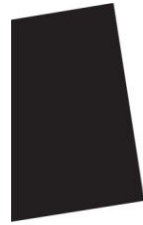
Perhaps the closest rule applied or followed throughout the selection is that the combination of elements should produce something else rather than more of the same.

Instead of working from the past in a chronological line our attention and decision has moved between approaches, periods and tendencies but always with the contemporary in mind.

Coalescing and then retreating, the whole relation between the formal quality of collage and the infinite range of possibility that it presents plays a complex game.

Of course collage is never just a matter of addition, it can be one of subtraction, of negating a vision, of breaking the complete overall pursuit of illusion. Also, it can be a reinvestigation of the materiality of elements, the opportunity to take, cut, cover, suffocate, obstruct and alter the psychological and physiological skin. An element can be framed, selected and brought out of the rest of existence.

SACHA CRADDOCK



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Essentially, the medium of collage is about both rupture and connectivity. Artists have consistently used collage for its directness, and the way that it automatically alters the world around us. The idea of an automatic medium is very important: when something is torn away or cut out the action already stands for

something; when it is put next to something else it has a similarly immediate power. Collage is a medium that has at its heart the idea of alteration: of doing, thinking and making new meaning.

Collage is completely linked to the age of mass media, where images are available to all and on a huge scale, where nothing is precious and can therefore be used again and again, cheaply and with alacrity.

This realisation opens up a rich and powerful political, poetic and aesthetic dimension, one that can be both deeply subversive and very immediate.

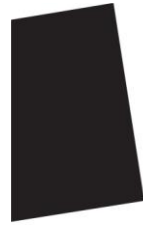
We can see the language and process of collage before our eyes. We can see that it is made up of things, or pieces of things, and that these things once belonged somewhere else. They have been taken out of their surroundings and made to do a different job than the one initially prescribed. It is as if the images are being persuaded that they are not what they thought they were. That this is all so visible in collage that origins are never entirely relinquished and new relationships never entirely resolved – this is the basis of its mechanism and power.

GRAHAM GUSSIN

Much computing terminology is taken from the physical act of collage: cut and paste, for instance. Collage reframes snippets of mass-produced imagery which could, in turn, be mass-produced itself; but the implication of scissors and glue, pre-photocopier, is the total relocation or redirection of the original. An image that is used to sell a product or lifestyle might be subverted as an element of an erotic, political or surreal image that rarely ends up close to its original purpose.

That anything to hand can, like water, be rerouted according to necessity or whim is empowering - as 'low' matter (newspapers, advertisements and general cultural detritus) allows anyone access. Collage is non-elitist; it circumvents expensive oil paints, canvas and bronze yet still has the ability to express anger, explore aesthetics and question the stability of meaning.

Although still respected as a fine-art process, collage has also been absorbed into the canon of craft. Church, school and community centre appreciate collage for its accessibility, immediacy and its potency as message-bearer. Whereas John Heartfield fought Nazi atrocities, school children approximate fireworks with foil. Collage's openness transcends stylistic and ideological boundaries, dilating to accommodate the grandiose and universal or shrinking to fit the personal and intimate.



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Collage is more like drawing now – another way of making that has entered the vocabulary of facture. Artists are collectors of stuff. Imagine how much fun it must be to rummage through and instead of thinking what to draw, just see what you fancy including; instead of painstakingly recreating another reality, just slot in the reality itself.

A cut cannot be undone. You either accept the serendipity or discard the mistakes – which engenders a mood of contingency, a lack of total control and a respectful regard for the adhoc. Perhaps this is why collage is aligned with radicalism: it shuns institutional control and subverts expectations – even the artists'. The sum of its parts might not even be in the same ballpark as its whole. The outcome of adding, say, an iron to the neck of a naked body, can never really be anticipated before being tried.

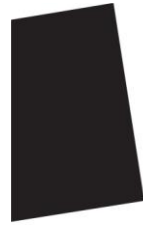
Collage is the medium of action.

DAVID RISLEY

Collage includes over 100 artists and examines the way collage has been used to explore different ideas from formal exercises in colour, material and form to the creation of surreal spaces and the expression of political ideals. Looking back from the perspective of today the exhibition includes examples of key artists and movements, and the role that the juxtaposition of images and material have played in the development of artistic practice. Expanding ideas of traditional cut and paste techniques, the exhibition opens up the definition of collage to show a range of approaches including examples of sculptural assemblage, film montage and work created with digital technology.

Collage is one of the central creative activities within art of the twentieth century. Initially seen as a way to challenge the conventions of art itself, as found elements were brought into play with paint in a formal collision of visually tactile materials creating new and exciting dialogues. The growth of the printed form and other mediums of communication made available material to be used that allowed artists to embrace and speak of the world outside the studio in new ways. Through manipulating found materials they discovered that they could invent forms that had never been seen or imagined before. Some chose not to let their work stray from the logical or probable, others enjoyed creating new and fantastical worlds, or took the opportunity to refine and improve the world as they saw it. The rise of collage led to development of assemblage within sculpture, importantly leading to the challenging of the traditional conventions of carving, modelling, and casting.

As the focus and thrust of art production changed throughout the last century so the role of collage has evolved. Artists were motivated by the political content of material choosing to deploy it within society as a means for social change, while others chose instead to celebrate the richness and diversity that the world offered in a less critical way. The emergence of film, and then video, provided the opportunity to incorporate the properties of time within work. Animation extended



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the surrealist aspects of collage, while montage, stripped of the need for narrative became a creative playground in the medium of light, colour and sound. As the use of photography and then digital technology has grown artists have embraced their possibilities. Some artists choose to erase the joins and overlays necessitated by the previous materiality of collage while others see it as an important aesthetic and conceptual quality. But as technology moves forth the symbols for cut (scissors) and paste (a brush dripping with glue) remain unchanged and constant on the control panels of all our computers.

STEPHEN HEPWORTH