The Ends of Collage



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Abstract

The Ends of Collage is an attempt to reflect on the physical place where collage fulfils its calling and distinguishes itself from other forms of artistic making. The ends, or edges of a collage mark the sites of interaction where one piece of paper – picture, surface or text – is juxtaposed with another. Yet the notion of 'ends' in this context also implies a historical paradigm, one that considers collage as part of a particular period in time which I argue to have emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century and came to a close in the late 1970s with the emergence of a new material, technological and ideological reality that constituted the dawn of the digital age as well as the Postmodern moment. These abovementioned formal and historical paradigms are joined in this thesis in order to serve as the principal prism through which I examine the work of four artists who adopted collage into their practice as a fundamental question to guide their artistic pursuits.

Following an introductory chapter itself titled 'The Ends of Collage', the first of five main chapters surveys the many definitions that have mapped the activity of collage so far. The second concerns a group of works from 1919-23 by the German artist Max Ernst known as 'seamless collages', so-called due to the absence of physical evidence that testifies to their making. Chapter three explores a group of works from 1927-30 by the Belgian artist René Magritte that transpose collage directly into the medium of painting, with paradoxical effect. Chapter four is concerned with the early work of the American artist Sherrie Levine from 1973-80, particularly her engagement with pre-modern practices associated primarily with women and still regarded as detached from art history *per se*. Chapter five addresses the work of the British artist John Stezaker from the years 1970-78, and his development of the term 'photo-collage' to distinguish his work from that of Dada and Surrealist predecessors.

Those chapters in their turn are bounded by two edited conversations, titled 'Ends I' and 'Ends II' respectively, between myself and artists Richard Prince, Linder Sterling, John Stezaker and theorist David Campany, conducted in the course of several curatorial projects undertaken in parallel with this research. Further Appendices are provided.

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Ends I: Getting Rid of Collage

A Conversation with Richard Prince[1]

[1] The following interview is an excerpt of two conversations that the author held with Richard Prince in 2017. The first discussion took place on 10 April at the artist's New York City studio, and the second one on the 13th of that same month at Luxembourg & Dayan, New York, on the occasion of the exhibition *The Ends of Collage* which I curated and in which Prince exhibited a number of works.



Fig. 1, Richard Prince, *Untitled (Four women looking in the same direction)*, 1977, Set of four Ektacolour prints, 50.8 x 61 cm.

Richard Prince: Is this going into your thesis?

Yuval Etgar: *Depends.*

RP: On what?

YE: *I am not sure I know how the thesis is going to look like just yet. I want to write a study about the ends of collage.*

RP: Do you mean edges?

YE: *That's one part of it – to try and think about collage through its physical manifestation on the ends or edges of pieces of paper. But the other proposition I would like to make is that the adoption of collage by the European avant-garde in the 1910s marked the beginning of a period that ended sometime in the late 1970s with the emergence of a new kind of technological and ideological sensibility that replaced the mechanical modes of image reproduction and hence also transformed the meaning, function and role of collage as it was understood throughout most of the twentieth century.*

RP: I think I see what you mean, and if I do then I also begin to understand why you wanted to talk to me of all people about collage. Where do you want to start then?

Yuval Etgar: *My initial interest in your work in relation to the history of collage goes back to this historical moment that I just mentioned in the late 1970s. I would like to suggest that you, and a whole group of other artists started challenging the conventional method of collage-making at this point in time by exploring new technical procedures that will enable you to do what collages were doing until that point – to disrupt the way we*

look at images, to interrupt their flow. But I am running ahead of myself. You started your career in the early-mid 1970s as a painter and collage artist, particularly engaged with the combination of image with text.

Richard Prince: I guess you could say that. This was sometime around 1974 or 1975.

YE: *But around 1977 you suddenly stopped using collage as a technique all of the sudden and abstained from combining images or images with text in this way for more than two decades thereafter. What led you to that decision?*

Richard Prince: Well, it didn't exactly happen overnight. As a young artist I started noticing a new direction emerging, a new sensibility as you say that emerged from artists such as Dan Graham and a few others, like John Baldessari and the Gibson Gallery bunch, Peter Hutchinson, James Collins and others, many of which are not very well known today. These artists attracted me because they began using photographs in a different way, not like "a real" photographer, or let's say a regular photographer, would use them. It was almost like the camera was something they didn't know how to use. So I picked up on that, although at first, still working within the tradition of collage, mixing and juxtaposing images and texts, which was what a young artist was expected to do.

YE: *So you made photographic collages?*

RP: Yes, but very soon I realised that what really needed to be done was to get rid of collage. At least personally, I felt that our generation grew up with this feeling of not being told the truth. That there was something so constructed and artificial in everything we saw in the media that we need to confront. You see, my deal was very simple because I started by

tearing images out of magazines. This was my day job, I worked at the 'tear sheet' department of the Time Inc. and my task was to cut and paste texts and images that were left over from the morning press – many of my friends did that kind of work. But it's one thing to tear out a picture, put on some scotch tape and then hang it up on the wall. My idea was to photograph that torn piece and make *a real* photograph out of it. I think that that was confusing for the audience at the time when I started exhibiting, because I called these works 'rephotographs', and of course nobody knew what that meant at the time. And also, the images that I was rephotographing were advertising images and I wouldn't leave any indication of the edges, or the tear – there was no more 'collage' about it. And I think that this is what caused a problem initially, because people were trying to understand whether it was a real photograph or not. And I was very happy to occupy this problematic place. In fact, I remember that even before I started showing with Metro there was a show at Castelli Graphics where these rephotographs were first shown, sometime in the summer of 1979. Marvin Heiferman [the gallery's director between 1975-82] organised the show, and he invited Sherrie Levine, Laurie Simmons, Thomas Lawson, and me.[2] And I remember saying to people at the opening "this is my photograph" and they just wouldn't get it. People would look at it and say, "well there is something just not right about it". Because also it was presented in a way which most photographs were presented in galleries –with a mat and a frame and a label next to it.

YE: *How did you choose which images you wanted to rephotograph?*

RP: I chose odd things that didn't quite look like art: living rooms, pens, watches. I mean like a pen. A photograph of a pen.

[2] *Pictures: Photographs*, exhibition curated by Marvin Heiferman at Castelli Graphics, June 1979.

YE: *Did you collect these advertising photographs before you knew what you were going to do with them?*

RP: No, I started collecting them in order to photograph them. But it took a while. Again, it didn't happen overnight. I kept looking at them through the camera lens and gradually I got closer and closer to the point where I went into the picture, until one day I realised that I was giving myself permission.

YE: *Permission?*

RP: Basically, I wrote this text called 'Practicing Without a License'. I had to write about what I was doing in order to understand what I was doing, because I didn't really know what it was at first. But all I knew was that I wanted to make an image that looked like it was supposed to look, like it originally looked before it was in the magazine.

YE: *And what was your motivation for that?*

RP: I wanted to point to it. I wanted to make a non-fiction image. I wanted to tell the truth, that's all. At least I could say "that's real", that is a photograph. And it was in fact a photograph. That was the confusing thing, that it actually was a photograph. Its formal identity to the original source enabled me to point to the only difference between the two, namely that this one was *my* photograph. But in order to state my claim I realised that rephotography was not enough, I also needed to make more than one example of each work. Take the pens for example. I made the work into a series of four pens, so if you don't believe I

took the picture of this one pen, maybe you would believe me if there were four of them. That was the reason for the seriality in my work. It was always very simple.

YE: *And photography of still-life or people or nature was not enough for you? It had to be based on replication of found photographic materials?*

RP: Yes. I think that many of us were struggling with this issue, and in a similar way it was also the question that preoccupied many musicians at the time who were creating new work using existing materials. The relationship with music is very important here. There was a term called 'pirating' that was used in the Hip-Hop scene. For me, playing with the camera was like scratching the turntables, and I liked the term 'pirating'. I didn't say I was stealing images, I said that I was pirating them. Then the word 'sampling' also came into circulation around '78–'79. It felt like photography had that natural ability to 'pirate', 'sample', or steal if you want to use this term. I will never forget the first time I went to give a lecture at UCLA and there was a sign there in the hallway saying "Richard Prince: Rephotography" and it had an arrow on it. I looked at it – that was very early – and I remember thinking that this is so strange because I didn't even really know what that meant myself.

YE: *But how did rephotography then link to collage? Or was it something completely different?*

RP: The act of getting rid of collage – which is how I interpreted the innovation of rephotography in some way – meant getting rid of the seam that was so essential to the way a collage was meant to look like. I didn't want to show any effort, any construction. Let's go back for a minute and think about what Braque or Picasso did when they made their first collages in the 1910s. The idea of sticking a piece of newspaper into your painting – that

particular moment, or that act – might seem very simplistic and innocent in hindsight. In fact, it doesn't really take that much to paste a piece of paper or a sample of fake wallpaper onto a painting. But the reason that this gesture was so revolutionary, and then almost overnight it became ubiquitous, was that Picasso and Braque were the first to recognise the potential of replacing one gesture with another. What they did – to answer your earlier question – is to give themselves *permission* to do that. And I know that it seems pretty easy in hindsight, but it wasn't easy, I promise you that. It is hard when you do something and you don't know what it is.

YE: *You say that you were getting rid of the seam, which I assume is what we can otherwise call the cut, or the tear. But wouldn't you say that the seam persisted even in your rephotography works? That even though it was no longer visible it was still present. I mean, not only collages, but also appropriated images or rephotographs are always "torn" so-to-speak from someplace and appropriated to another context, they exist as fragments of something. I guess my question is whether you feel that you actually succeeded in getting rid of collage? Or did you introduce a new stage in the history of collage?*

RP: Well, I leave this question to you – that's what you said your thesis is about, no? I can certainly say that the seam is visible again in my work today. I make a lot of collage works and my interest in this technique has resurfaced for very different reasons. But if we keep our focus on the rephotography works, I think that by getting rid of the seam at the time I was mainly trying to gain a sense of control as I mentioned earlier. At least it seems as if I am in control when I can put out four pens or four women looking in the same direction in the way that I did [fig. 1, p.13]. You can put a ruler through their eyes. And it seemed that I had made that, and that was exactly what I wanted the audience to believe. That there was no question. That there was no subjectivity. You don't need an umpire or a critic or a judge. It is

four women looking in the same direction. It is a photograph. It is my photograph. It is all about eliminating all the other questions.

YE: *You speak of gaining control, getting rid of collage, even stealing. Did you ever consider rephotography to be a violent act in any way? Much like many collage artists often feel towards the original image that they appropriate, crop, or some might say violate.*

RP: Not at all. Rephotography was never about taking, it was about making it again. For the collage artist in this so-called age of mechanical reproduction the imperative was "make it new", and that's Ezra Pound.[3] I came up with this idea of making it again. And that was the way I saw to explain what I was doing in simple terms, because that is essentially all I was doing.

YE: *You mentioned earlier that you are now working with collage again. Do you feel that you're grappling with different questions to the ones that occupied you when you started working in the 1970s? Are you facing new technical challenges?*

RP: It is really the simplest, and sometimes the dumbest, stupidest things that turn out to be the most interesting. I think that there is always the technological challenge of a new device coming into existence. I remember when colour negative film became available and affordable in the 1970s, which is what I then always used to rephotograph. And then I remember when they got rid of it, and the last place you could send it to was a durgstore in Kansas. And then that was it. They ended it. But then the iPhone came, and I will never forget the moment... I know that it sounds dumb, but I was sitting in my studio and my niece

[3] Ezra Pound's maxim "Make It New" became one of the most celebrated slogans of modernism. It is also the title of his collection of essays from 1934 (first published by Yale University Press, New Haven).

was there and she showed me how to take a screen-shot on the iPhone. And that happened about three or four years ago, and while it might not seem like much, that was huge for me. Just her showing me this. Because now the phone is like a giant magazine for me; I have a new magazine. I think that you just take advantage of where you are. I definitely took advantage of where I was in the late 1970s, working for Time-Life. I was there for like eight hours a day, and I just took advantage of the situation. I certainly did not want to waste my time doing what they wanted me to do, and then, I suppose I got lucky. You know, luck is a crucial element if you want to write about collage.

The Ends of Collage

Introduction



Fig. 2, Pablo Picasso, *Le Rêve*, 1908, Ink and gouache on cardboard with pasted label, 10 x 20 cm.

On a brownish, ten-by-twenty centimetre piece of cardboard, a landscape with two nude figures – one reclining, one standing – is drawn. The two personages are not positioned in the centre of the composition. Rather, they and the trees behind them frame another smaller picture of a fishing scene depicted on a pasted white label bearing the upside-down inscription "Au Louvre, Paris". The larger drawing extends onto the label, with the hand of the reclining figure slightly overlapping the inscription. This overlap, however, does not conceal the rupture of the image surface marked by the label. On the contrary, the whiteness of the label is accentuated with light gouache colours and drawn shading around its edges further make it appear like a window into a different reality. The work in question is Pablo Picasso's (1881-1973) *Le Rêve* (The Dream) from 1908 [fig.2, p.22]. While technically most art historians chose to exclude this work from the history of collage – Picasso did not paste this label onto the cardboard himself – it nevertheless marked a decisive step towards a technique that would revolutionise the course of art history at the beginning of the twentieth century. The critical detail in this respect is the small yet significant meeting of the brown cardboard and the white label, where the edges or ends of the two materials come together.

The premise of my thesis is that collage is a form of obsession with the notion of ends. To speak about "the ends of collage" is therefore first and foremost an attempt to account for the physical place where this technical procedure fulfils its calling and in so doing marks a distinction between itself and other forms of artistic making. The ends, or edges of a collage mark the sites of interaction where one piece of material – a picture, part of it, or a colourful surface – is juxtaposed with another, as in the case of Picasso's *Le Rêve*. Yet the notion of 'ends' in this context also implies a historical paradigm, one that considers collage as part of a particular period in time, which I will argue came to a close in the late 1970s with the emergence of a new material, technological and ideological reality that has come to constitute

the dawn of the digital age as well as the Postmodern moment. Thus, in his essay 'Fragments' from 1977, the British collage artist John Stezaker (b. 1947) claimed that "Collage can only exist in what [Walter] Benjamin called the age of mechanical reproduction."[4] That is, in the material culture of mass production that preceded digital communication. Today, forty years later, at a time when the expression 'cut and paste' (or 'copy-paste') refers more commonly to digital operations rather than to the use of scissors and glue, Stezaker's claim remains as difficult to contradict as it is to acknowledge. On the surface of things, collage is everywhere around us, fuelling all areas of life more than ever before. It does so not only in the visual realm, but in all other forms of communication and knowledge production. Why, then, in such a reality, should we speak about "the ends of collage"? Is our understanding of this term today so wide or abstract that it has lost all meaning? Was the shift from mechanical to digital modes of production and reproduction so significant that it no longer makes sense to employ the same terminology? And if so, might it be worth, as the art historian Brandon Taylor suggests, to speak about "collage after collage"?[5]

So far, much scholarly attention has been devoted to the birth of collage: when did it start, who started it, and what were the reasons for its adoption by so many artists at the beginning of the twentieth century? We normally identify this historical turning point with the first Cubist collage experiments of Pablo Picasso and George Braque (1882-1963) around the years 1911–12 [figs.3 and 4, pp.39-40]. The immediate impact that these two pioneers had on the way art was made soon came to be recognised as a revolution no less in the history of art. Yet from the very beginning different artists interpreted the meaning and potential of collage in various ways, Cubism being only one of these. Max Ernst (1891-1976), for

[4] John Stezaker, 'Fragments', in *Fragments*, (London: The Photographers Gallery, 1978), 50.

[5] Brandon Taylor, 'Collage After Collage', in *Collage: The Making of Modern Art*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), pp. 195 – 213.

example, began to cut and paste illustrations from nineteenth-century novels and reorganise them anew, producing surreal scenes that meshed bourgeois society life with fantasy and fairy tales in a seamless manner that left no trace of the production process [fig.5, p.41]. Hans Arp (1886-1966) was invested in more abstract, 'concrete' compositions, as he would later call them, in which cut as well as torn pieces of coloured paper would be laid on a surface, at times dropped from a distance to assume their position 'according to the laws of chance' [fig.6, p.42].[6] Other artists adopted the logic of collage in their paintings, such as Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) and later also René Magritte (1898-1967) among others, who depicted seemingly illogical combinations of places, times and objects that normally do not appear side by side [figs.7-8, pp.43-44]. Their surreal compositions, albeit not technically collages, would become among the most important influences on later generations of collage artists.

It would be limiting, therefore, to consider the so-called invention of collage as a technical achievement considering its impact on a whole range of practices and a new attitude towards art making that emphasised the power of the artist to make imaginative choices, unmoored from traditional artistic skill. This transition from an economy of craft to one of choice is a well-rehearsed narrative, and it positions collage in direct correlation to the processes of modernisation, considering it a reaction to the material excesses born by the relatively recent developments in mechanical modes of production since – more or less – the 1840s. True as this paradigm may be, it also confines the discussion about collage to the conditions of its emergence at the beginning of the twentieth century. And while studies devoted to the origins of this practice continue to provide us with good grounds for thinking about the development

[6] Arp himself discusses the emergence of his collages, their development and his understanding of the terms 'concrete' and 'laws of chance' on various occasions. See, for example, *Arp. Collages*, (Paris: Bergruen & Cie, 1955), 3-4, or *On My Way: Poetry and Essays*, (New York: Wittenborn Schultz, Inc, 1948), 70-75. For a contemporary discussion of the term, see Eric Robertson's commentary in his book *Arp: painter, poet, sculptor*, where Robertson compares Arp's use of the term with scientific geological definitions. See, Eric Robertson, 'Concretion' inside the chapter 'Architect of Dreams: Arp's Sculpture', *Arp: Painter, Poet, Sculptor*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006) 108-112.

of a wide range of modernist tendencies in art, they do not engage with many of the questions that only surfaced in hindsight with the emergence of a new media culture from the mid-1970s onwards. As the pixelated visual language of computers and television emerged, it became possible to cut and paste images and messages seamlessly with little effort, hereby introducing a new material logic that resembled a mosaic more than a pasted-paper collage. And while on the surface of things digital collages made with the click of a mouse might be interpreted as a descendent of handmade collages executed with scissors and glue, this is only a superficial similarity. Indeed, the transition from mechanical modes of reproduction to digital ones requires a thorough revision of collage's very definition, and the task ahead of us is to understand what it is that this procedure actually does and not necessarily how it appears aesthetically speaking; what are the effects that it generates; where does this form of pictorial disruption takes place; and under what conditions?

I have opened this introductory chapter by suggesting that we can think of collage by looking at its ends from two perspectives. First, through an investigation of the margins of pictures, papers, texts or other forms of messages, and second, through a historical prism. However, these two propositions – the formal and the historical – join together to establish a third paradigm where the term 'ends' stands for the act of striving towards a goal, advancing with purpose. In fact, since its early beginnings collage attracted many artists who were invested in ideological projects, criticising social and political conventions or promoting politically revolutionary ideas. By its very nature collage represents a form of practice where fixed values can be put to the test by comparing what is otherwise incomparable by law or custom – high culture can be placed side by side with low culture, gender distinctions can be easily reversed, political paradoxes created, and ideologies overturned. Moreover, the reliance on paper has made collage into a technical procedure that benefits from cheap production costs, but also

often easily reproduceable and disseminated. But these same aspects of collage that made it into a successful political tool were also attractive to advertisers who saw great potential in the principles of collage and in its on-screen equivalent, montage. By the 1960s collage was strongly identified with popular notions of consumerism, fuelled by the radical expansion of televisual culture based on image juxtapositions. By 1976 more than 69 million US homes owned at least one television set, while the Commodore PET, Apple II and TRS-80 personal computers were introduced to the public the following year.[7] Gross television advertising revenues reached a record high of $7.5 billion in the United States alone that year, and the American Association of Advertising Agencies calculated that the average American consumer was exposed (consciously or not) to 1,600 adverts per day during those years, hereby confirming that the subversive principle of juxtaposing pictures in a collage-like manner had now become an omnipresent part of everyday life.[8] As a result, the distinction between popular culture and high art was becoming less clear than ever before, and artists found themselves seeking new tactics to achieve the subversive goals previously accomplished through the practice of collage-making.

One such tactic was developed by the American artists Richard Prince (b. 1949) and Sherrie Levine (b. 1947) in the second half of the 1970s, and soon became known as 'rephotography'.[9] In Prince's instance, the story begins in 1973, when the twenty-four-year-old artist moved to New York City and got a job in the tear sheet department of the publishing and mass media giant Time Inc. As implied by the department's name, the job entailed cutting or tearing pages from printed publications, archiving them, and making them

[7] Data provided by BARB (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board). Accessed 19 August 2019, http://www.barb.co.uk/resources/tv-facts/tv-ownership?_s=4

[8] Data provided by AdAge encyclopedia of Advertising. Accessed 19 August 2019, https://adage.com/article/adage-encyclopedia/history-1970s/98703

[9] Prince's opening commentary at the start of this thesis concerns this technical procedure. Levine's work and her transition from using conventional pasted-paper collage methods to 'rephotography' form the main subject of Chapter Four.

available to editors or journalists upon request. After a couple of years endlessly sorting articles and separating them from adverts of luxury products in pristine interior settings, in clichéd landscapes or on the bodies of well-groomed models, Prince came up with an idea. At the end of each working day he would choose certain advertisements that attracted his attention and would then photograph a section of the ad using his own camera in such a way that excluded any text or symbolic referent which might indicate what the original advertisement was about. Prince's decision to call this new technique 'rephotography' emphasised the simple fact that he was taking photographs of photographs [figs.9 and 10, pp.45-46]. At the same time, Sherrie Levine – who was also working in New York City and among the same circle of artists – adopted a similar practice, only that in Levine's case, instead of rephotographing magazine adverts, she focused on highly valued photographs by early twentieth-century artists such as Edward Weston (1886-1958) and Walker Evans (1903-1975) [compare, for example, Levine's rephotography of Evans' *Alabama Cotton Tenant Farmer's Wife* in fig.11, p.47, with Evans' own work in fig. 12, p.48]. Her work also differed from Prince's in that she stuck meticulously to the original format of the pictures she rephotographed, thus concealing any visual trace of her artistry. In this respect her authorship over the resulting work can be understood as a provocative conceptual gesture as much as a technical experiment.

Along with Prince and Levine, other artists were starting to investigate the nature of authorship and the use of found photographic materials in the second half of the 1970s. Louise Lawler (b. 1947), for example, not only rephotographed specific works but entire arrangements of pictures by other artists.[10] Lawler would either hang these works in the

[10] Lawler coined the term 'arrangement of pictures' at her first one person exhibition at Metro Pictures, New York, in 1982 where she exhibited a group of works by other artists from the gallery's stockroom, arranging them as one unified composition on the wall and offering the lot on sale as a single work titled *Arranged by Louise Lawler*. Alongside this large

gallery space as part of her own exhibitions or photograph them as they were installed in the homes of private collectors or in public galleries. In doing so she shifted focus away from the original content of these artworks towards the conditions of their presentation: the label next to a Jasper Johns painting in a museum or an auction house [fig.13, p.49], the soup tureen in a wealthy collector's home placed under a Jackson Pollock painting [fig.135, p.337], or the dialogue between a photocopier and a Roy Lichtenstein painting in a high-end New York office [fig.14, p.50]. Most tellingly, her photographs bring the margins, or physical context in which an artwork resides, into the centre of the photograph.

While neither Lawler, Prince nor Levine considered themselves collage artists (nor did they literally cut and paste images), they were all operating according to collage's fundamental principles: taking found images out of their original context and reintroducing them into a different one in order to generate new meanings that were previously latent, concealed or non-existent. They juxtaposed different sources against each other, pointing to the seam between them, and insisted on the crucial role of context in the production of meaning. Finally, they also drew attention to a complex set of conditions that emerged at that time, whereby acts of homage, forms of quotation and copyright infringement were becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish. These and a whole range of other procedures – some conceptual, others technical – began to emerge during the late 1970s, channelling collage's legacy as a mode of engagement with found images in a new direction. In the United States many artists working in this vein became known as the Pictures artists, the name originating from an essay and an exhibition organised by theorist and curator Douglas Crimp at Artists Space, New York, in 1977. According to Crimp, the Pictures artists were motivated by the

installation, Lawler also exhibited her own photographs in which additional arrangements of other artists works were documented. The term continues to form part of her ongoing practice to this day.

realisation that "we now only experience reality through the pictures we make of it."[11] His exhibition included works by Troy Brauntuch (b.1954) , Jack Goldstein (b. 1945), Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo (b. 1953) and Philip Smith, but the group soon came to include Richard Prince and Louise Lawler as well as artists James Welling (b. 1951), David Salle (b. 1952), Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), Laurie Simmons (b. 1949) and others.[12] In hindsight, however, the designation Pictures generation appears limited in that it fails to include a wider circle of relevant artists, some of whom operated outside the United States but remained equally invested in appropriating the language of popular visual communication at the time into their artistic practices. In Britain, for example, artists such as Linder Sterling (b. 1954, known as Linder) and Gee Vaucher (b. 1945) emerged from the anti-institutional punk movement of the mid-1970s and saw themselves equally as musicians, writers, political activists and visual artists [figs.15-16, pp.51-52]. For them, collage was the most natural form of art making with which to build their multidisciplinary work. Their collages helped empower new feminist voices that appropriated pornographic imagery, gory war scenes, advertisements and other visual vocabularies associated with masculine and often misogynist discourse. They included confusing and even contradictory messages in their works in order to challenge the authoritarianism of powerful politicians and advertisers. Moreover, these anti-institutional collages and photomontages were distributed most commonly as flyers, magazines, posters or album covers at concerts and other punk gatherings, deliberately bypassing conventional structures of the art world.

[11] Douglas Crimp, *Pictures*, (New York: Artists Space, 1977), 3.

[12] The most comprehensive exhibition and publication surveying the spectrum of artists included under the category of Pictures was organised in 2009 by Douglas Eklund at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, defining the period of activity and its loosely-knit group of artists as well as their theorist counterparts in the decade between 1974-1984. See Douglas Eklund, *Pictures Generation: 1974-1984*, (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art: 2009).

At the same time, a different attitude towards collage and its reinterpretation around the late 1970s can be found in the practice of the British artist John Stezaker. Stezaker developed another approach to collage-making by limiting his source materials to one or two film-still photographs that he would juxtapose against each other, or against a postcard, in order to form a surreal composition [fig.17, p.53]. Already by the end of the 1960s, while Stezaker was still a student at the Slade School of Art in London, he noticed that the traditional Saturday night ritual of going to the cinema (or "pictures" as people would often say) was going out of fashion. A regular cinema-goer himself, he reacted by starting to collect the film-still photographs that once decorated the entrance hall of theatres and that were now being replaced by televised trailers and cheap posters. Film-stills had turned almost overnight from precious promotional materials to archival detritus devoid of function. At first Stezaker purchased specific single photographs, incorporating them into a particular collage, but soon he realised that the power of these pictures lay in their mass production and anonymity, so he began to purchase boxes of film-stills, sometimes even whole archives, which allowed him to piece together endless possible combinations of disparate or compatible images. Stezaker's fascination with still photographs of moving pictures went hand in hand with his love of postcards. He recognised that these three media – film, photography and the postcard – shared some of the most interesting paradoxes of image-making technologies in the so-called age of mechanical reproduction: they could be read as personalised and subjective messages but had the potential to be mass-produced and shared by millions; they were static but often represented movement; and finally they played with scale, making monumental objects and sites into miniature and vice versa. For Stezaker, postcards and film-stills were the archetypal mass-produced images of the twentieth century, marking the end of a material culture that was to be replaced first by analogue and later digital forms of visual communication. In this respect, his work encouraged the viewer to turn their gaze backwards towards the past,

thereby marking the closure of an historical period that opened with Picasso and ended with the dawn of the digital age – a period which still today requires thorough examination of its relationship to the wider aesthetic of our time.

The above examples, from Picasso to Stezaker, represent a selection of manifestations already indicative of the essential role of 'ends' to the history of collage, whether interpreted in topographic, historical or ideological terms. However, these examples are limited to a particular portion of the history of collage; one that does not provide, for example, ample attention to the use of cut-and-pasted papers in the service of abstraction, where colourful sheets of paper or other materials are employed for their texture, form or colours. Indeed, the group of studies that form this thesis is largely invested in the history of found imagery and its uses within the context of collage history. They indicate a set of questions raised over the last century with regards to the relationship between collage in the twentieth century and the material and visual culture of mechanical and later digital modes of reproduction. Text, in turn, plays a significant role in these studies, although only insofar as it relates to the relevant artists whose work is analysed in this thesis. This focus on collage history through the prism of found imagery is nevertheless linked to language and linguistics in a significant way, regardless of the inclusion of text in certain works and its exclusion by others. By its very essence collage lends itself to syntactic structures that resemble those of applied language (perhaps more than any other artistic form of production). In the simplest terms, in order to make a collage one has to remove readymade semantic units from their habitual contextual framework – be they images, abstract forms, colours or words – and to rearrange them in relation to one another in a manner that changes or disrupts the way these refence or signify, just as one would do with words when arranging a proposition, creating a metaphor or

forming an allegory. This formal relationship between collage and linguistic syntax serves as a valuable parameter for the group of studies that populate this thesis.

The thesis is divided into five main chapters: Chapter One is a brief historical survey of relevant terms and techniques that outline the importance of the notion of 'ends' or 'edges' to the history of collage and marks the historical boundaries that underline this thesis. In this chapter I also begin to exemplify the importance of language and linguistic structures to this history. I introduce some of the complexities that emerge from the division of collage into subcategories such as 'photomontage', 'photo-collage', '*décollage*', and other terms, and I point to difficulties that arise from an inevitable desire to map an artistic technique in unified, consistent terms.

Chapters Two through Five then provide a selection of case studies that focus on particular technical procedures employed by artists whose practice aimed at challenging the definition of collage and undermining certain historical or formal attributes that are commonly associated with this technique.

Chapter Two is thus dedicated to a particular body of work that was produced by the German artist Max Ernst (1891-1976) between the years 1919-21, commonly known as his 'seamless collages'.[13] This large and varied group of works, produced by means of combinations of found images from picture-novels, encyclopaedias, textbooks or photographs, cut by hand and meticulously organised to form a new ensemble, has become celebrated for the absence of physical evidence of the production process in the finished work. By reprinting or photographing his collages, Ernst's 'seamless' compositions contested the fragmented

[13] Werner Spies, 'Collages as Maquettes. The Working Process Concealed', in *Max Ernst Collages*, (New York and London: Thames & Hudson, 1991 [1988]), 68-9.

appearance that is commonly expected from collage. In this chapter I review the gradual development of Ernst's 'seamless collages' during the three year period between 1919 and 1921 and I indicate the relevance of these works to the development of Dada and later Surrealist thought in the late 1910s and early 1920s. I also indicate the important link between this body of work and much later developments that emerged from and against collage in the 1970s in an attempt to develop new technical procedures where images can be appropriated or manipulated without a visible trace, such as rephotography.

Following on from Ernst's 'seamless' or 'flattened' collages, Chapter Three explores the possibility of transposing collage into the dialect of painting.[14] In this chapter I focus on a particular group of paintings by the Belgian artist René Magritte from his so-called 'Paris years' between 1927-30. This body of work has come to be known as Magritte's 'hand-painted collages'.[15] Indeed, Magritte's painterly practice from this period has been widely acknowledged to manifest the influence of collage on his pictorial language. However, in this chapter I argue that his inquiry into the nature of this technique has gone much further than merely appropriating its appearance or adapting a certain collage-like approach. Magritte's 'hand-painted collages' explore the very essential materials, mechanisms, and effects that characterise this procedure. Paper cut-outs, postcards, wallpapers, and a range of different cutting effects rendered in paint are some of the most noteworthy examples of this aspect in Magritte's work, and they form the main subject of analysis in this chapter.

While Ernst and Magritte represent artists who tested the limits of collage by concealing or flattening its fragmented appearance and even transposing its principles into conventional

[14] The term 'flat' is borrowed here from Lisa Florman's article on the subject of Max Ernst's collage, 'The Flattening of Collage', October 102, Fall 2002, 59-86.

[15] David Sylvester, 'Handpainted Collage', *Magritte*, (New York and London, Thames & Hudson; Houston, Menil Foundation, 1992), 110-19.

painting techniques already in the 1920s, chapters Four and Five review the work of two artists who re-evaluated the role of edges and the importance of the fractured surface to collage in the 1970s in light of various alternative technological developments and new ideological paradigms that emerged under the umbrella category of Postmodernism. Chapter Four is thus dedicated to the early work of American artist Sherrie Levine between the years 1973 and 1978, her adoption of collage as an artistic strategy, and her transition to image appropriation and rephotography as procedures that bypass the fragmented and manually laboured appearance so characteristic of collage. The particular relevance of Levine's early work to this thesis is due to the fact that it both faced forward towards the exploration of new technical procedures that could replace pasted-paper collage techniques while at the same time engaging in a critical review of collage history, as well as other histories of parallel or derivative technical procedures adopted by the European and North American avant-garde prior to the adoption of this medium by the European avant-garde, drawing on folk artists, craftspeople and laypersons. As this chapter reveals, Levine's practice during the years 1973-'78 was highly invested in a systematic exploration of collage's roots as a procedure that belonged to the category of domestic crafts and employed by women of the middle and upper class in Europe and North America during the nineteenth century. Levine's use of collage during these years raises questions about the exclusion of this portion of collage history from the Western canon, and the limitations suffered by these women and their art at the time.

Chapter Five is dedicated to the early work of the British artist John Stezaker between the years 1970 and 1978 and his particular use of the term 'photo-collage' in relation to his artistic strategy and as a method to revaluate the conditions that define this technique. In this chapter, I consider Stezaker's photo-collages as a theoretical enterprise engaged in the question of exploring the inherent relationship between collage and mechanical forms of

reproduction. I also set out to compare Stezaker's interpretation of collage in syntactical terms with that of his contemporary, the American artist Louise Lawler (mentioned previously) as a particular example of a broader debate on the future of this medium around the late 1970s, particularly in Britain and the United States.

I opened this introduction by suggesting that collage is a form of obsession with 'ends', or otherwise edges, margins and peripheries. I further elaborated that these might be interpreted as physical, historical or ideological 'ends'. I conclude this introduction by suggesting a hypothesis: a preoccupation with 'ends' implies that borders are constantly being revalued, analysed and possibly pushed further. The three parameters of 'the ends of collage' are thus bound to be redefined with the execution or analysis of each individual collage, whether in technical, historical or ideological terms. Defining collage, its materiality, appearance, periodisation and aims is always a particular task aimed at a particular object. My intention in this thesis is thus not to outline a new history of collage but rather to lay down the groundwork for a revitalised analysis of the practice of collage and its legacies in a manner that is free of the conventional formal or aesthetic prejudice as to how collages are meant to look. It is for this reason that I chose four case studies that represent practices that challenge conventional technical definitions of collage, namely, the concealment of the cutting and pasting process with Ernst; the transference of this process into the medium of painting with Magritte; the exploration of practices deemed peripheral to the history of this practice and the gradual reduction of this process into works produced with a single fragment with Levine; and the proposition that collage could have only existed within a particular historical period with Stezaker. These four case studies thus occupy places on the margins of traditional collage history. My investigation is therefore invested in replacing the question what is a collage? With the question what can collages do? or otherwise put, how do they operate? I borrow this

question from Donald Davidson's important essay on metaphor from 1978 titled 'What Metaphors Mean?', in which he argues (in response to a previous commentary made by the linguist Max Black on the subject of metaphor) that metaphoric expressions mean exactly what the words that constitute them mean and nothing more. However, Davidson suggests that the semantic complexity of metaphor is by no means diminished because of this fact. Instead, it is metaphor's juxtaposition to other words in a proposition as well as to the word it comes to replace that imbues the proposition with semantic density and complexity.[16] Indeed, thinking of collage through the prism of metaphor is not an altogether new proposition, but the scope of this comparison remains unexhausted and only partially accounted for.

[16] Donald Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn, 1978), 31-47.

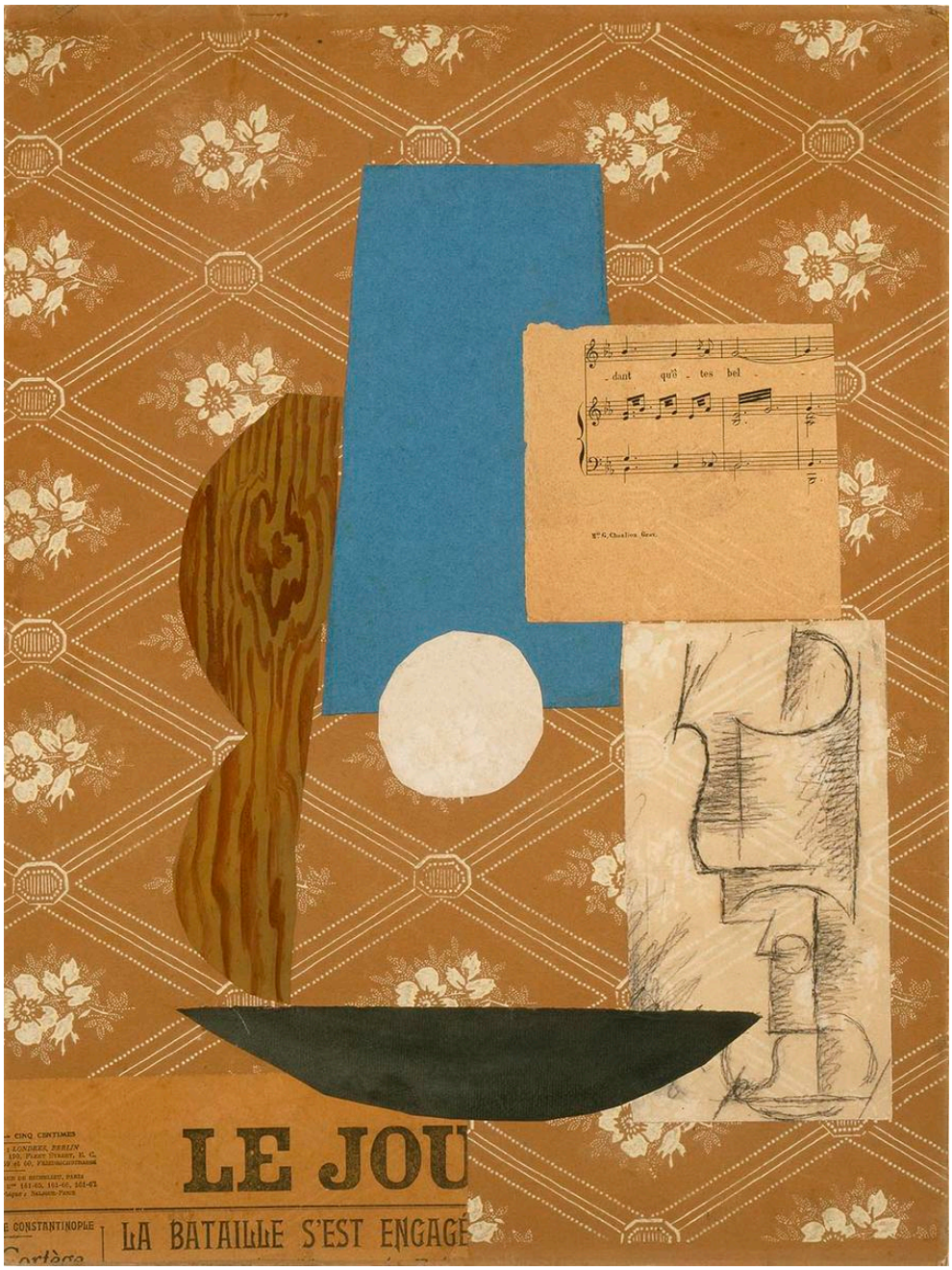


Fig. 3, Pablo Picasso, *Guitare, Partitions et Verre à vin*, 1912, Newspaper, wallpaper, music sheet, coloured papers and charcoal on board, 47.9 x 37.5 cm.

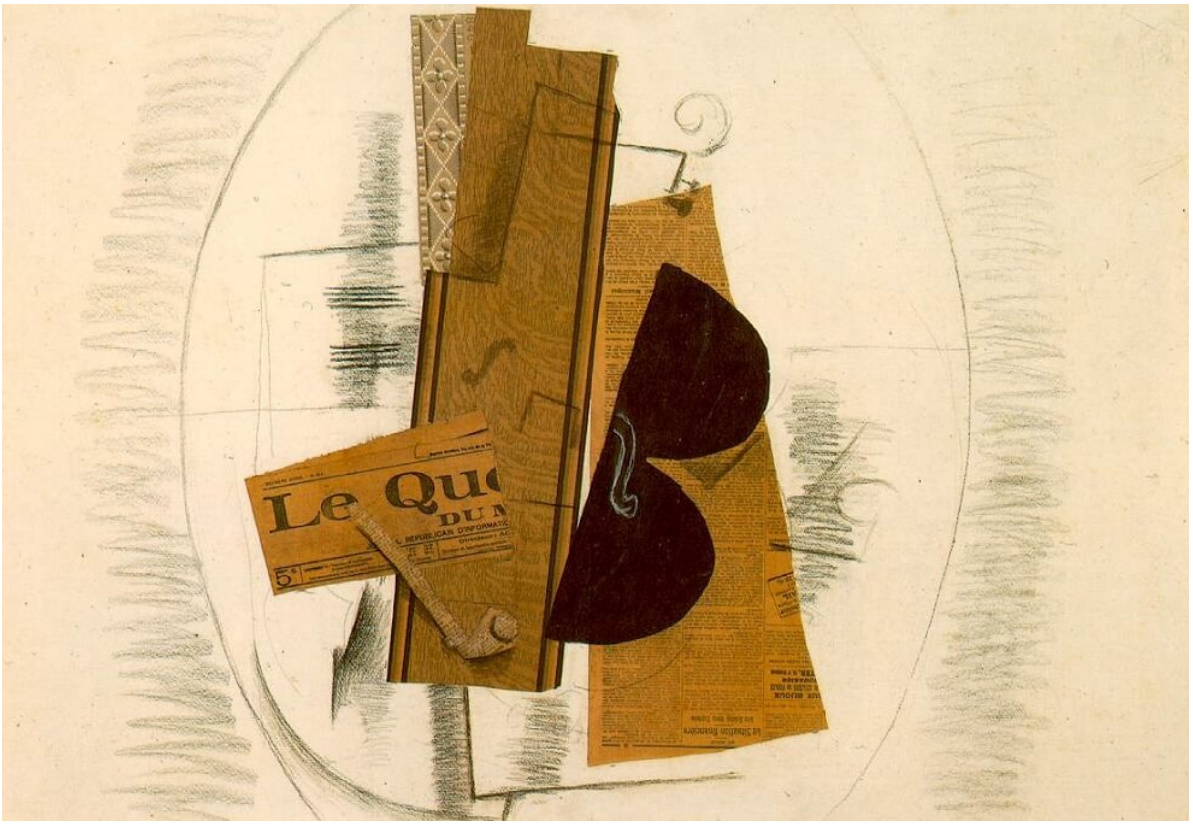


Fig. 4, Georges Braque, *Violin et Pipe*, 1913, Newspapers, wallpaper and fake-wood wallpaper, coloured papers and charcoal on board, 74 x106 cm.



Fig. 5, Max Ernst, *L'eau* 4, Maquette for the book *Une Semaine de Bonté: Ou Le Sept Éléments Capitaux, Premier Cahier: Dimanche, Élément: La Boue, Exemple: Le Lion de Belfort*, published in 1934.



Fig. 6, Hans (Jean) Arp, *Papiers Déchirés*, 1932, Torn papers glued onto a paper surface, 14 x 14 cm.



Fig. 7, Giorgio de Chirico, *Canzone d'Amore*, 1914, Oil on canvas, 73 x 59.1 cm.

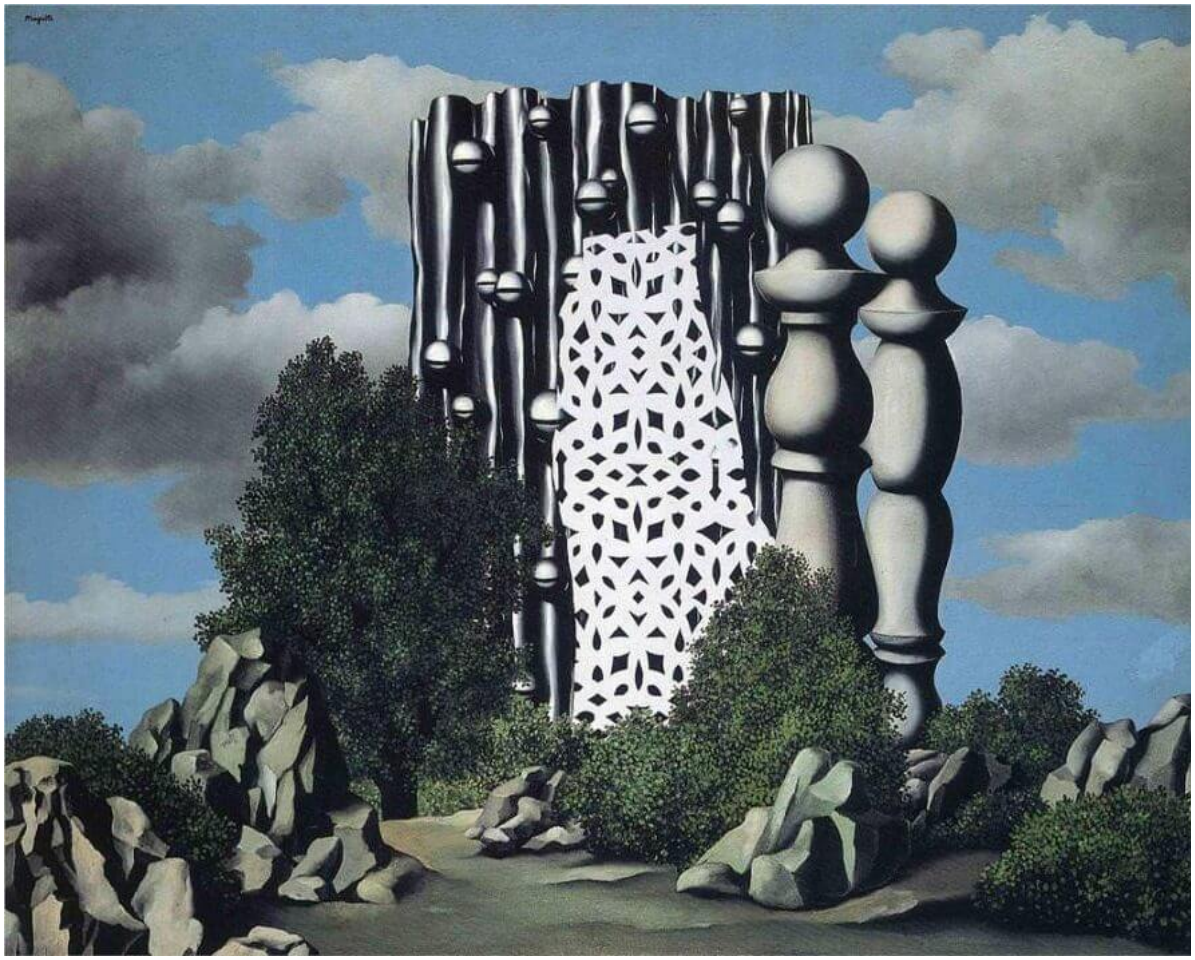


Fig. 8, René Magritte, *L'Annonciation*, 1930, Oil on canvas, 113.7 x 145.9 cm.



Fig. 9, Richard Prince, *Untitled (Living Rooms)*, 1978, Four Ektacolor photographs, Each: 50.8 x 61 cm.



Fig. 10, One of the original tear sheets used by Richard Prince as source material for *Untitled (living rooms)* (1977).

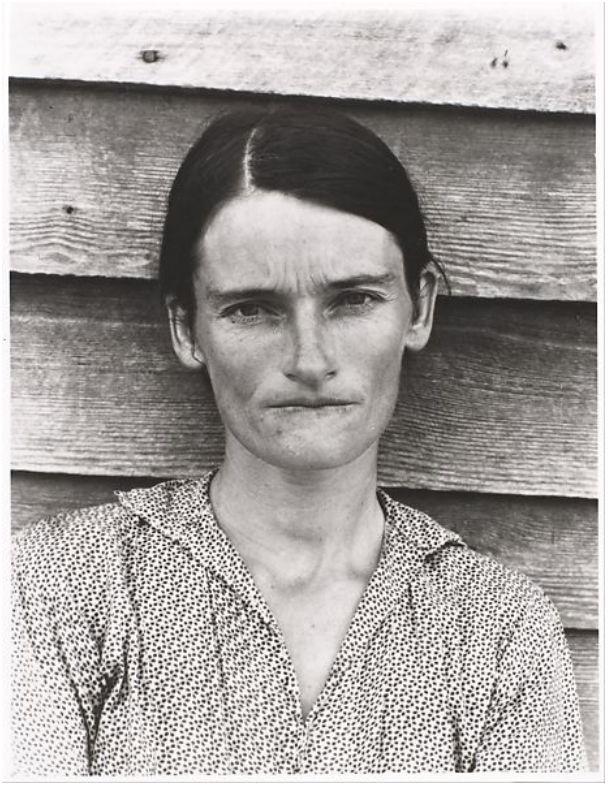


Fig. 11, Sherrie Levine, *After Walker Evans*, 1981, Silver gelatine print, 12.8 x 9.8 cm.

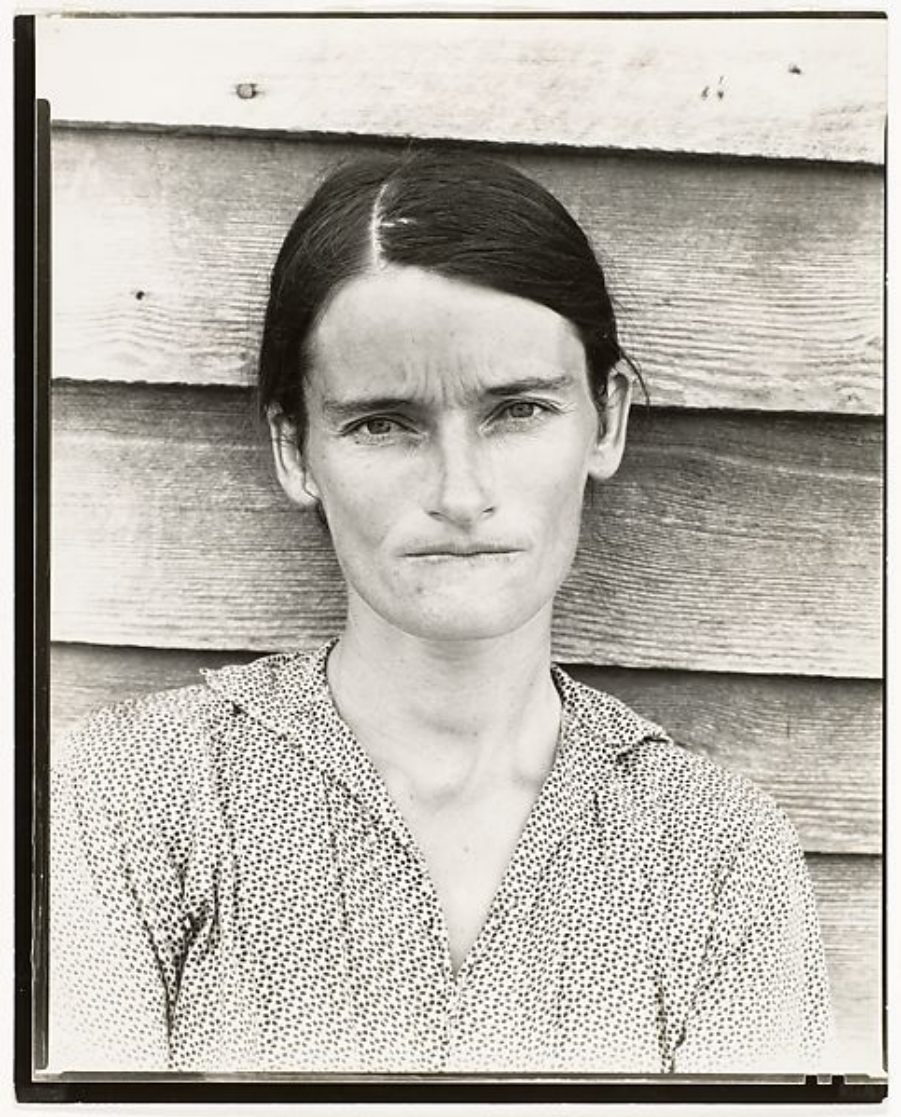


Fig. 12, Walker Evans, *Alabama Cotton Tenant Farmer's Wife*, 1936, Silver gelatine print, 24.1 x 19 cm.

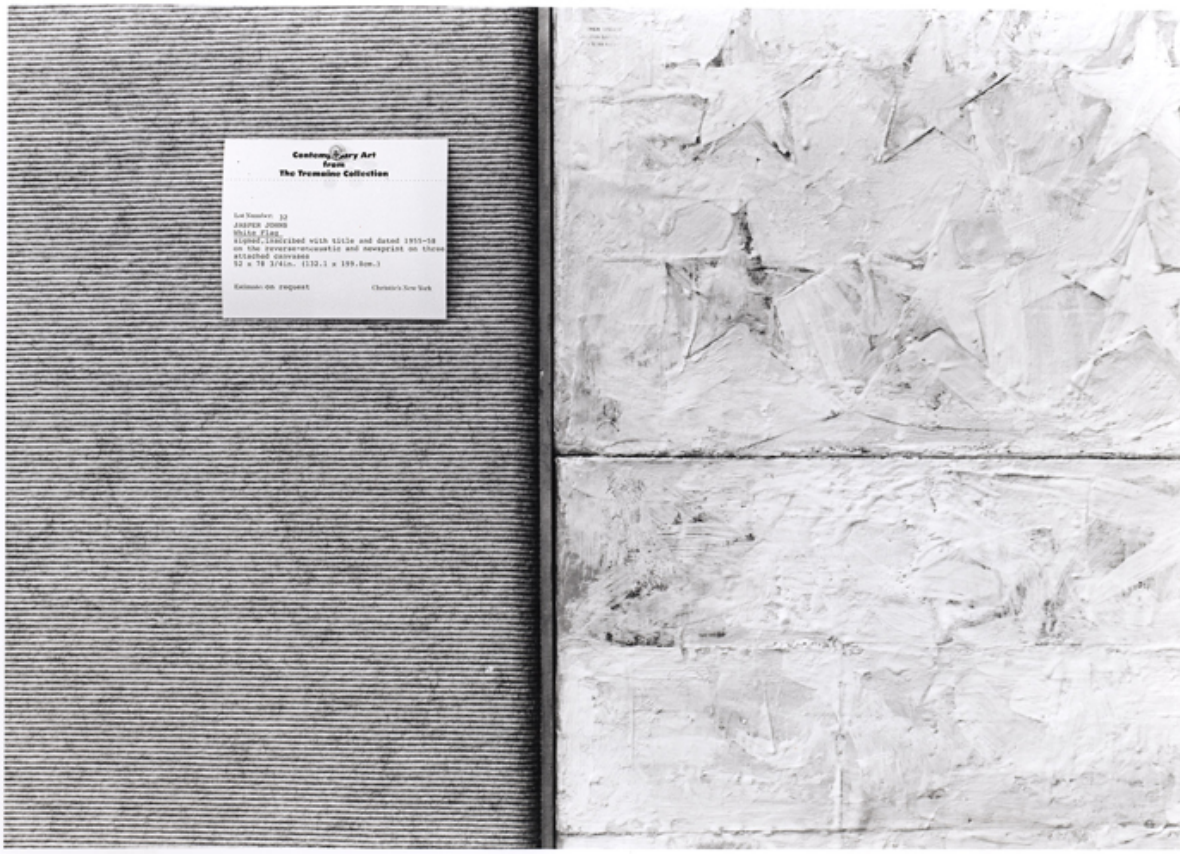


Fig. 13, Louise Lawler, *Board of Directors*, 1989, Silver gelatine print, 37 x 56 cm.



Fig. 14, Louise Lawler, *Arranged by Donald Marron, Susan Brundage, Cheryl Bishop at Paine Webber, Inc., NYC*, 1982, Silver gelatine print, 49.5 x 55.3 cm.



Fig. 15, Linder Sterling, *Untitled*, 1977, Pasted photographs on paper support, 27 x 22 cm.



Fig. 16, Gee Vaucher, *Domestic Violence*, 1979, Pasted magazine photographs and illustrations on paper support, 27 x 25 cm.



Fig. 17, John Stezaker, from the series *Vanishing Point / Vantage Point*, 1979, Colour gravure film-still photograph and postcard, 18.4 x 24.1 cm.

Tactics and Terminology

Si ce sont les plumes qui font le plumage, ce n'est pas la colle qui fait le collage.[17]

Max Ernst

[17] This famous dictum by Max Ernst is also a phonetic pun, although somewhat lost in the English translation: "Though feathers make a plumage, it is not glue that makes a gluing [alt. collage]."

Collage: An Object of Maximal Openness

In 1978 a collaborative of Belgian semioticians named Groupe μ was commissioned by the French journal *Revue d'esthétique* to edit an issue on a subject of its choosing. The group, deeply invested in the study of signs and symbols that challenge our conventional understanding of language, titled their issue *Collages*.[18] Their aim was to reveal how similar the activity of cutting, assembling and pasting papers, pictures and other materials is to the way in which we construct sentences: choosing pre-existing elements – words – and arranging them in various ways that generate different meanings. Collage, they argued, is more than a "precise artistic activity". It is an "object that tends to maximal openness, overflowing with any attempt at classification, reduction, or closure". It can be constructed from images, words, objects or even thoughts. However, they warned, the expansiveness of this term bears the risk of "extreme generalisation whereby one might consider 'everything as collage'", thus rendering the term superfluous. Groupe μ concluded their editorial essay by suggesting that "the only possible definition of collage must itself be a collage", emphasising the particular nature of this medium as one that must necessarily be redefined with every specific instance of its kind.[19]

Groupe μ's proposition implies that collage should not be seen as a medium limited to specific material conditions, as most commonly assumed, but as a tactic that may inhabit different sites and inform various modes of operation dependent on its historical, technological, economic and geopolitical context. Their attempt to provide a wide definition of the term sets the tone for the present inquiry – an inquiry that delves into selected episodes in the history of

[18] Groupe μ, *Collages*, special issue of the *Revue d'esthétique*, no.3–4, 1978.

[19] Groupe μ, 'Twelve fragments to take-off (in 40,000 signs)', in *The Ends of Collage*, London and New York: Luxembourg & Dayan, 2017, 171. Originally published in French as "Douze bribes pour décoller (en 40,000 signes)", in Groupe μ, 1978, 11-12.

collage and raises the question: what are the unifying attributes that bind such a wide range of activities and tactics under a single name? As we shall see, collage terminology is a complicated subject that is characterised by contradicting definitions and numerous competing terms that serve different ends.

Indeed, the difficulty in defining collage is reflected in the wide range of studies dedicated to this practice, most of which remain cautious when it comes to providing a succinct definition of the term. Nevertheless, they maintain a consensus concerning the temporal, geographical and technical conditions of collage activity within the context of modern art history and theory. Firstly, collage is commonly understood as disconnected from its pre-twentieth-century origins in folk art, crafts and amateur pastime activities, and regarded as a form of resistance that emerged "in defiance" of the traditional media of painting and sculpture within the framework of the European and later North American avant-garde.[20] In addition, it is often characterised as marking a new tendency in the process of art making that appeared in the so-called 'age of mechanical reproduction' whereby printed or photographic material entered the realm of culture, inevitably lending itself to dislocation and/or assembly of elements in order to form a picture from various material sources and hereby interrupting linear narrative. As such, collage is arguably a unique feature of modern art from the 1910s until the mid-1970s, where most of the existing historical accounts end – partly due to lack of historical distance, and partly because it has become harder and harder to define the practice of collage-making since the advent of digital technology, postmodernist theories and neo-liberal politics, all of which manifest the principles of collage in various different ways.

[20] 'In defiance of painting', also translated as 'The challenge to painting', is the title of Louis Aragon's seminal essay on the early evolution of collage and its potentials. It was first published in French as *La Peinture au Défi*, Galerie Goemans, Paris, March 1930, to accompany an exhibition of collages by the same name. See Louis Aragon, 'The Challenge to Painting' [1930], Michael Palmer and Nora Cole (trans.), *Surrealists Look at Art*, Pontus Hulten (ed.), Venice, California, 1990, 47-74.

The cannon of art history considers collage as a technical procedure based on cutting, arranging and pasting papers, pictures and other materials onto a surface. The etymology of the term relies on two origins: first, the French verb *coller* – to glue, to paste – and second, the suffix '-age', possibly adopted in response to the growing popularity of the term *bricolage*, which transformed from its traditional usage in language since the fifteenth century – "acting in a devious or clever way" – to describe an activity of making minor repairs, either domestically or in a workshop (in English, tinkering).[21] The implication was that collage, like *bricolage* had to do with the same kind of resourcefulness, handicraft and application of menial, quotidian tasks in an unspecialised manner that modern life in the city introduced. In a similar way to *bricolage* it also resisted a specific definition and instead implied a general kind of activity that harbours various technical procedures under its wings. It is perhaps in order to separate and clarify these procedures that one can distinguish dozens of subcategories describing more specific activities or technical operations, and as we shall see, also political agendas and geographical distinctions. *Papier collé* (pasted paper), assemblage, photomontage, photo-collage, *papier déchiré* and *décollage* are the best-known distinctions in a long list of terms that exemplify the complex nature of this activity before 1950. Other terms, such as copy-paste, photoshopping and screenshots, represent new ways of thinking about collage today. Between these two poles are a host of additional terms that reflect the evolution of art strategies in the last century.

[21] Patrick Elliott, writing about 'Collage Over the Centuries' in the exhibition catalogue of *Cut and Paste: 400 Years of Collage*, further elaborates on the etymology of the term. He indicates the following: "The word [collage] features in nineteenth and early twentieth-century French and French-English dictionaries, but not as an art term; instead definitions focus on the general matter of sticking, and in particular on the sizing and hanging of wallpaper and sometimes bill-posting, and on a technical issue to do with the clarification of wine. By the 1930s collage had acquired another definition which may have appealed to the surrealists: 'co-habitation' and 'living in sin'." See Patrick Elliott, 'Collage Over the Centuries', *Cut and Paste: 400 Years of Collage*, (Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 2019), 10.

Not a Question of Primacy: The First Collages

Despite a widespread use of cut-and-paste techniques in various commercial and private contexts, the first collages produced by professional artists were the outcome of a long process of experimentation, most notably by two artists – Georges Braque (1882–1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). Companions and competitors since 1907, the two colleagues shared an ambition to extend the limits of their artistic expression by seeking technical as well as stylistic innovation. Probably in 1911, Braque produced a series of three-dimensional paper constructions, in the style of Analytic Cubism [fig.18, p.83]. These sculptural compositions, however, remained the product of a short period of trial and error, and Braque soon abandoned the idea and destroyed the works. (Picasso would produce his own three-dimensional constructions a few years later with greater enthusiasm, see for example fig.19, p.84). In the autumn of 1912 Braque produced the first *papier collé* (pasted paper) that he deemed successful. During a visit to the town of Avignon, he purchased a roll of wood-graining wallpaper, which he then incorporated into a charcoal drawing of a still life with fruit dish and glass, having the effect of suggesting that the surface of the supporting table, or possibly the back wall, or both (the ambiguity seems intentional), are made of actual wood [fig.20, p.85]. "After having made the [first] *papier collé*," Braque recounted years later, "I felt a great shock, and it was an even greater shock to Picasso when I showed it to him."[22] *Compotier et verre (*commonly titled in English *Fruit Dish and Glass*) suggested to Braque that objects in a painting no longer have to be represented by painted image. Instead they could now be incorporated more directly by a sample of some similar-looking material. The drawing in this work ignored the distinction between pasted wallpaper and supporting surface and drew freely across the two, at times emphasising the readymade edges of the pasted

[22] William Rubin, *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1989, p.40.

elements, at times blurring them. With collage – as Braque soon came to understand – the distinction between fact and fiction, presentation and representation, that was so crucial to painting, was becoming obsolete.

For Picasso, however, enthusiasm about the new discovery seemed to have had different origins altogether. By the end of 1912 he began to recognise that the application of pasted papers made the distinction between flat surfaces and volume surfaces no longer absolute. The pasted elements had the ability to function as both form and surface at once, thus diverting the viewer's attention towards the various ways in which a picture can be read – as a reference to a represented subject or as a presentation of the very conditions of its visibility as a picture. For him, the effect of pasted papers was to interrupt, rather than generate narrative in the conventional sense. In works of the period Picasso would entice the viewer by hinting at actual three-dimensional constructions and then frustrate their cognitive expectations by inserting an unexpected element [fig.21, p.86].[23] At times he would use pins rather than glue to construct his compositions, thus accentuating the gaps and hidden air-pockets in the work. These compositions would also emphasise the possibility of mobilising elements elsewhere – or using them again in the future – endowing them as well as the construction with a sense of lightness and uncertainty [fig.22, p.87]. Picasso's pinned papers recall the working process of seamstresses and tailors – marking the surface with white pencil or chalk and pinning roughly cut colourful elements and patterns. These collages pertain to the subcategory of *papier épinglé* (pinned paper) and they are of particular importance in the present context as they emphasise the tension between the manner in which elements are cut or edged and the way in which

[23] Clement Greenberg's seminal essay 'Collage' of 1959 is particularly invested in the tendency of Cubist collages to simultaneously generate a sense of illusion and frustrate it, as well as visual jokes and ambiguities. See, Clement Greenberg 'Collage' [1959], *Art amd Culture: Critical Essays*, (Beacon Press: Boston, 1992), 70-83.

they are then put together – emphasising the ability of collage to be precarious, mobile, layered, sculptural and pictorial all at once.

Spreading the word

Soon enough, other contemporaries adopted similar technical procedures that supported their own pictorial experiments and investigations, various in kind and substance. Some artists executed their collages on paper, others on canvas; some comprising text and others included patterns and coloured surfaces. The appropriation of letters and words in particular suggested a range of different possibilities that were already evolving with Analytic Cubism. Such attached papers and other surfaces included newsprints, photographic prints, coloured or patterned paper, letters, as well as painted words and numbers. These could function as shape or as sign; they could blur the distinction between the realms of poetry and of the plastic arts or function as means to harness the visual arts for the sake of political propaganda. Considering the growing variety of interpretations that followed from Braque and Picasso's early experiments, it was not long before the term 'collage' categorically replaced the initial terms *papier peint* and *papier collé*, offering greater leeway for a wide range of materials and activities that occupied and positioned different artists and groups in remove from one another. Juan Gris (1887–1927), for example, started making collages almost instantly after Picasso in the autumn of 1912. His *Le Lavabo* (The Washstand) from the same year, incorporated a piece of glass mirror into an oil painting. The work represented what Louis Aragon (1897–1982), the surrealist writer and critic, would later call "enrichment of the

palette".[24] Gris's collages allowed him to juxtapose colours and surfaces in a manner that was sharper, more evocative and had greater textural variety than painting had enabled him to achieve beforehand [fig.23, p.88]. Indeed, the inclusion of the glass mirror section was an exciting discovery, introducing movement and illusion into the painted surface that previous newspaper snippets and wallpaper samples did not achieve.

Led by Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916) and Gino Severini (1883–1966), who were soon followed by Giacomo Balla (1871–1958) and Carlo Carrà (1881–1966), the Futurists too were quick to adopt the principle of collage. Some saw in the new practice an aesthetic guideline and others (such as Carrà and Balla) adopted the very technical procedure as a way to represent their ideological standpoint, seeking to express technological acceleration and political progress [fig.24, p.89]. Collage was fast, rhythmic, noisy and disruptive when composed of train tickets, words and newspaper snippets in dynamic relation to each other. For Filippo Marinetti (1876-1944), the Futurist poet and theoretician, another way of thinking about collage was transposing it into poetry, thus the terms *parole in libertà* or *tavole parolibere* (free-word poetry) emerged in their midst, joining their Cubist contemporaries in cancelling the distinction between literary and plastic forms of expression.

Another, altogether different approach to collage emerged amongst artists who would soon become affiliated with the term Dada (initially developed in Zurich in 1916), most notably Hans (or Jean) Arp (1886–1966), and soon also Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948) who would arrive at Dada two years later in 1918 through his activities in Berlin and Hanover [figs.25-26, pp. 90-91]. Collage, they suggested, can be defined through negation: not painting, not

[24] See Aragon, 'The Challenge to Painting', 54. As for *The Washstand*, the work is considered to be the first modern collage to be displayed in a public exhibition and reviewed by the printed press. The collage was included in the *Salon de la Section d'Or* in October 1912 at the Galerie de l'Art Contemporain, rue Tronchet, Paris.

sculpture, not text. They also believed that collage lent itself to the idea of anonymous creation, expressing the potential of being the product of unplanned actions determined by chance and authored by no one, anyone or everyone [fig.27, p.92]. Making this the premise for a new group of works beginning in 1914, Arp launched his series of collages 'arranged', 'disposed of', or 'placed according to the laws of chance' [fig.28, p.93]. In this remarkable cycle, Arp would drop pieces of paper onto a surface from a distance without any previous planning or clear intent (or claimed to do so). Wherever these landed, he would fix them. In a few of his chance collages Arp employed a method of *papier déchiré* (torn paper), where the pieces of paper were no longer cut with scissors or scalpel but instead torn by hand in order to increase the appearance of uncertainty in the result. The torn elements also afforded the composition an extended sense of time. Tearing, Arp noticed, operates as a mark of a durational gesture, a trace of a prolonged action, unlike the quick gesture of a straight-line cut by blade or scissor-edge that characterised the collages of the Cubists and Futurists.

Whether in the service of speed or as a marker of time passing, as an illusionary device or a means to bridge the gap between fact and fiction, by 1914 collage made its way across countries and art movements, travelling from Paris to Zurich, Milan, Berlin, Prague and Moscow. In fact, the Russian avant-garde of the 1910s developed counterpart terms to describe their activities, deeply invested in the idea of a trans-rational practice. These included terms such as *sdvig* (shift) or *za-um* (beyond sense) – both of which emerged among figures who operated on the seam between visual and literary art, including Aleksei Kruchenykh (1886-1968), Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930), David Burliuk (1882–1967) and Velimir Khlebnikov (1885–1922), who employed new writing methods and experimented with the crossover between writing, poetry, music and visual art.[25] Other

[25] One of the most notable examples of such collaborative, interdisciplinary crossover is the opera *Victory Over the Sun*, whose libretto was written in za-um form by Aleksei Kruchenykh, with music by Mikhail Matyushin, prologue by Velimir

artists, such as Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) and Liubov Popova (1889-1924) began to develop what would later become known as Constructivism: an approach to art making where abstraction, three-dimensionality, reverence to technological advancement and socialist ideology would function as its main anchors [fig.29, p.94]. The many connections between writers and visual artists in Russia as well as in France, Italy and soon after also in Germany, gave birth to a new generation of artists and graphic designers who despite many differences were joined by their liberty to juxtapose word and image and to resist the conventional order of language as well as popular modes of visual communication, all under the new conditions of a term that emerged alongside collage: photomontage.

Photomontage: Precursors and Dada

I mentioned earlier that some of the terms that emerged from or alongside collage exemplify specific differences in their technical production process, their material components, their geopolitical context and ideological position. The term photomontage is perhaps the most complex and charged among these. To begin with, the word itself represents two different categories of work: the first referring to a practice of photographic manipulation that emerged in mid-nineteenth century England and soon after also in the United States; the second, coming from Germany around 1915. In its initial form, photomontage was the product of placing photographic film negatives besides or one on top of the other in order to produce a unified print. The origin of the term is the French verb *monter*, meaning "to go up" or "to place something on top of something else". The earliest photomontage of this kind was

Khlebnikov, and stage design by Kazimir Malevich. The performance was organised by the artistic group *Soyuz Molodyozhi*. The opera has become famous as the event where Malevich made his first *Black Square* painting (in 1915).

produced in 1857 by a Swedish (turned English) photographer named Oscar Gustave Rejlander (1813–1875), who titled his experimental piece *The Two Ways of Life*. Rejlander's composition unfolds an elaborate allegorical scene composed of more than thirty negatives laid alongside one another [fig.30, p.95]. The constructed picture shows two young men as they are faced with the choice between a world of sin and one of sincere faith. The latter is represented by imagery of people going about their honest labour and reaching out to help those poorer or weaker than themselves. The world of sin, on the other hand, is depicted as a seductive feast for the eyes and senses, abundant in naked flesh and the temptations of alcohol. Rejlander's composition was followed a year later by a project developed by an American named Henry Peach Robinson (1830–1901). Robinson's photomontage, *Fading Away* of 1858 depicts a young woman lying on her deathbed surrounded by three figures (her nurse, mother and husband), a composition less complex than Rejlander's using no more than five separate negatives [fig.31, p.96].

What is curious about Rejlander and Robinson's composed photographic scenes is that they include few, if any fantastical elements in them that would be impossible to reproduce with the help of actors and set design. The question then arises, why did they nevertheless need to employ photomontage instead of straightforward photography in order to represent their respective scenes? It is possible that both Rejlander and Robinson were entirely focused on applying their technical innovation, neglecting the creative potentials it entailed. But it is also possible that both *The Two Ways of Life* and *Fading Away* represented scenarios that posed obstacles of a social nature rather than a technical one, being deemed either too vulgar, in Rejlander's case, or too morbid, in Robinson's, to be enacted by a cohort of actors. Based on this latter explanation, both photomontages can be analysed as attempts to overcome social constraints by technical means of manipulation – an attribute not without relevance to the

future development of collage and photomontage as platforms for political propaganda, social critique and even advertising. In addition, it is interesting to consider just how much Rejlander and Robinson anticipated something of the sensibility offered today by image manipulation programmes such as Photoshop, where elements from various sources are combined seamlessly to form scenarios without leaving any trace of cutting, edging or hard borders. However, the seamless effect of these first photomontages could have been easily interpreted as ordinary photographs by viewers at the time. This natural appearance so-to-speak of the early photomontages can explain perhaps why such laborious fusions of negatives had so little success in the decades that followed, making photomontage in its initial form an esoteric activity produced and collected only by a small circle of enthusiasts.

Photomontage as we know it today, however, is a different activity altogether, representing a branch in the history of collage or possibly the technique's counterpart. In its twentieth-century variation the term emerged within German Dada in the mid-1910s, probably oblivious of Rejlander's work and inspired instead by the developments of advertising, the printed press and cinematic montage (the latter term was only to mature in the mid 1920s among Soviet filmmakers and particularly in the work and theoretical accounts of Sergei Eisenstein). As Dawn Ades explains in her history of photomontage, the term lent itself to contemporary ideas about "fitting" or "assembly lines" as forms of production and encouraged a new perspective on the role of artists as mechanics or engineers of the image rather than as craftspeople.[26] The term suited members of the German Dada group who wished to decline their traditional status as artists and associate themselves instead with the new industrial culture of mass production. As the famous *photomonteur* Raoul Hausmann (1886–1971) recalled:

[26] Dawn Ades, 'Introduction', *Photomotnage* [1976], (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 12.

> Seized with an innovatory zeal, I also needed a name for this technique, and in agreement with [my colleagues] George Grosz, John Heartfield, Johannes Baader, and Hannah Höch, we decided to call these works photomontages. The term translates our aversion at playing the artist, and, thinking of ourselves as engineers [...] we meant to construct, to assemble [*montieren*] our work.[27]

Social and political activists and agitators, the Dada *photomonteurs*, as they called themselves, were not only interested in technological advancements but sought to infiltrate the heated political debates in Germany that preceded and accompanied the First World War especially to expose the demagogic devices as employed by politicians and newspapers in support of nationalist ideals [fig.32, p.97]. In order to formulate their critique, the German Dada artists adopted photomontage as a rhetorical device that could appropriate existing symbols and personages with a great measure of irony, hoping to reveal the absurdity of the remnants of the old Wilhelmine order and lead to its eventual implosion.

The new *photomonteurs* differed from their Futurist and Constructivist counterparts. Hausmann and his associates did not only incorporate photographic elements in their photomontages but transformed the photographic elements into an essential part of their work. Photomontage in the hands of German Dada was a technique with roots in documentation, photojournalism and political activism. Further still, it offered itself as the by-product of every household's magazine and newspaper pile, thus turning – in the hands of artists such as Hannah Höch –

[27] Raoul Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*, (Paris: Le Terrin Vague, 1958), 42. Translated in Ades, 1986, 12.

into a channel for protest against the application of contrived national politics in the domestic realm.

Höch, among a minority of women associated with Dada, took advantage of the link between photomontage, collage and a range of other activities whose pre-twentieth-century roots were associated with women's pastime activities and depended on materials found in the private home and produced for it. For her, collage was not invented in the twentieth century, it simply re-emerged under new terms, much like embroidery, ceramics and other crafts that were finding their way out of their marginal status as domestic activities and into the realm of modern art practices available also to women to a growing extent [see, for example, Höch's *Rohrfeder Collage* (Reed Pen collage) of 1922, where embroidery templates are used as foundation for a pasted-paper composition, fig.33, p.98] . Höch saw this adoption of older craft activities as an opportunity to transform women's chores into a choice. Writing in 1918 about the importance of embroidery to women's emancipation, for example, Höch exclaimed: "You, craftswomen, modern women, who feel that your spirit is in your work, who are determined to lay claim to your rights (economic and moral), who believe your feet are firmly planted in reality, at least Y-O-U should know that your embroidery work is a documentation of your own era."[28] Höch's passion for crafts deployed her revolutionary instincts to transform the shackles of her generation into a symbol of its potential independence. Yet unlike embroidery and other skilful crafts (some of which she herself practised), photomontage not only offered an inversion of the domestic into the political, but also its opposite: it launched an inquiry into the manifestation of political discourse within the domestic sphere of the home. How does one read the daily newspaper? And the monthly magazine? And whom does each of these platforms address? How do these reflect the wider

[28] Hannah Höch, 'On Embroidery', *Hannah Höch*, (London: The Whitechapel Gallery and Prestel Verlag; Munich, London, New York, 2014), 72. Originally published as "Vom Sticken" in *Stickerei- und Spitzenrundschau*, vol. 18, 1917/1918, 219.

political order within the smaller family unit, and vice versa? Finally, what other potential readings can be extracted from these materials? Höch thus titled her photomontage from 1919 *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* (Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany) [fig.34, p.99]. Using her "kitchen knife" – a potent metaphor for her domestic and political status – she was able to 'chop' and reorganise the slogans, photographs and articles that made their way into her home through the channels of mass media and bring them back into circulation under altogether new terms.

Considering the radical political tone of Dada photomontages, it is not difficult to see why many historians and theoreticians address the ideological nature of this project but neglect its material or technical aspects. It is nevertheless important to note (in the footsteps of Brandon Taylor's reflections on the subject in his 'The Cutting Edge') that Dada promoted new cutting techniques that were revolutionary in their effect.[29] Examination of early collages promoted by Cubists, Futurists and Constructivists shows clearly that they were largely characterised by straight-line cuts, made in order to represent speed, direct sightlines and technological progress. On the other hand, Dada's dependence on small photographic elements, figures, portraits of politicians, celebrities, etc., forced the German *monteurs* to cut their works with greater attention to detail. As such, Dada photomontage marked new formal conditions whereby photographs and text bites were considered as readymade subjects and not just material substances or patterns. This transition would nurture a new formal approach to collage that would influence the development of Surrealism in the 1920s.

[29] Brandon Taylor, 'The Cutting Edge', EXIT 35, *Cut and Paste*, August 2009, 24.

If Dada photomontage was characterised by the satirisation of the publicly political, Surrealist collage was heavily invested in the inversion of this model. Surrealist artists explored the depths of the individual subconscious, looking for forms of creativity in the process of relinquishing control over artistic creation. The Surrealists thus introduced new forms of production, such as that championed by André Breton (1896–1966) and Paul Eluard (1895–1952) under the name of automatic writing – an attempt to relinquish control over the writing process of texts in order to reveal hidden or latent desires, impulses and ideas. As Breton wrote in his First Surrealist Manifesto of 1924: "Put yourself in the most passive, or receptive, state you can. Forget about your genius, your talents, and those of others. Tell yourself repeatedly that literature is one of the saddest roads leading to everything. Write swiftly with no preconceived subject, swiftly enough that you cannot retain it, and are not tempted to re-read. The first sentence will arise spontaneously…".[30] The subconscious, for them, could be exposed by means of writing, drawing and speaking, but also by appropriating and mixing together pre-existing images.[31] In this respect, pasted paper compositions offered a certain loosening of control for the artist that the use of other media was incapable of. The mixing of readymade pictorial and textual elements could surprise the viewer (as well as the artist) and reveal possibilities, more or less meaningful, that had gone unnoticed in the production or consumption of the individual images themselves and take on the function of metaphor, metonym and allegory.

[30] André Breton, 'First Surrealist Manifesto' (1924), *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Herbert Read (ed.), (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press: 1972) 29-30.

[31] While the Surrealists remain notable for their efforts to produce texts by means of automatic writing in collaboration with one another, many members of the group also engaged regularly in the production of collages and drawings in a similar way based on a popular salon game from Victorian times, known as *Cadavre exquis* (Exquisite Corpse). André Breton and Paul Eluard retrospectively described this activity in their 1938 *Abridged Dictionary of Surrealism* as a "game of folded paper that consists in having a sentence or a drawing composed of several persons, each ignorant of the preceding collaboration". See André Breton and Paul Eluard, 'Cadavre Exquis', *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, Paris, 1938.

Louis Aragon was the one who put into words in a comprehensive manner this new technical innovation and linked it to the logic of Surrealism. In Surrealist collage, he wrote, "the expressed triumphs over the manner of expression", and "the object depicted plays the role of a word", hinting at the link between collage and trans-rational meaning at the same time as approximating to the syntactical structure of metaphorical or metonymic statement.[32] Aragon's argument links Surrealist collage to poetry based on the idea that readymade semantic units juxtaposed to others generate unexpected meanings. The primary goal of collage, according to him, is to reveal "the marvellous" aspects hidden in the most ordinary building blocks of experience. Collage, according to this principle, had very little to do with the use of scissors, papers and glue, but more with a way of considering the infinite potential combinations of ordinary objects and ideas in order to form fantastic, unconventional associations. Based on these principles, Aragon's accounts of collage (among the first comprehensive ones in existence) did not point to Picasso and Braque, nor to the Futurist, Constructivist or Dada *photomonteurs*, but to his Surrealist contemporaries, and particularly to one artist whose activities in the name of Dada were to represent the very transition from Dada into Surrealism. "Where and when did collage appear?" Aragon wrote in 1930, "despite the attempts of several of the very first Dadaists, I think we must pay homage to Max Ernst."[33]

Aragon's admiration of Ernst's work stems from the artist's approach to collage as an attitude rather than as a technical procedure. Ernst's collages – to be discussed in detail in Chapter Two – were often printed and produced either as individual wood-cut engravings or as books, and therefore had no loose paper edges or traces of glue in them. Moreover, the principle of

[32] Aragon, 1990 [1930], 54.

[33] Ibid., 63.

collage soon infiltrated Ernst's practice in broader terms, changing his writing, painting, and drawing style, but also leading him to combine these and other media such as photography, print-making, and relief-assemblages into his work [consider, for example, Ernst's *Always the best man wins; sodaliten schneeberger drückethäler rosinen und mandeln schlagen die eingeborenen mitteleuropas zu meerschaum und eilen nach stattgehebter denudation den ereignissen in bester absicht voraus* of 1920, where Ernst applies drawing, painting, writing, cutting and pasting photographic reproductions as well as overpainting these, all in a single work, fig.35, p.100]. Reflecting on this aspect of his practice, and responding to Aragon's claims, Ernst wrote in a later essay aptly titled 'Beyond Painting':

> One day in the summer of 1929 a painter I knew asked me: "What are you doing these days? Are you working?" I replied: "Yes, I'm making collages (gluings). I'm preparing a book that will be called *La Femme 100 Têtes* [The woman with 100 heads]."[34] Then he whispered in my ear: "And what sort of glue do you use?" With that modest air that my contemporaries admire in me I was obliged to confess to him that in most of my collages there wasn't any glue at all.[35]

This humorous and provocative anecdote, whether true or fictional, exemplifies Ernst's approach to collage as a form of constructed composition that is not necessarily bound to a set of material conditions. As such, his collages remain among the most versatile manifestations of this medium, including a wide range of technical methods of production and material sources, which I will address in the following chapter. For Ernst, the term

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[34] The French title of Ernst's book presents an ambiguity that escapes the English translation. If read out loud, the title of the book can be interpreted both as 'the woman *with a hundred* heads' or 'the woman *without* heads'.

[35] Max Ernst, 'Beyond Painting' [1935], Dorothea Tanning and Ralph Mannheim (trans.), *Beyond Painting: Max Ernst and Others*, Robert Motherwell (ed.), (Washington DC: Solar Books, 2009), 23-4.

'collage' offered an entry point to the way in which we can perceive as well as produce artefacts in every realm of life. "What is the most noble conquest of collage?" he asked towards the conclusion of "Beyond Painting": "The magistral eruption of the irrational in all domains of art, of poetry, of science, in the private life of individuals, in the public life of peoples. He who speaks of collage speaks of the irrational."[36]

But Ernst was far from being the only Surrealist to experiment with the idea of collage as analogue to a frame of mind rather than as a distinguished and well-defined technical procedure. Another was the Belgian Surrealist René Magritte (1898–1967, to whom Chapter Three is dedicated), who was among the first of his generation to 'think collage' by means of pure painting, as Ernst too acknowledged.[37] Most notably, between 1927 and 1930 – a three-year period that he spent in Paris – Magritte experimented with the combinations of text, images and abstract forms in compositions that had the appearance of a collage but were achieved by way of traditional painting. His provocative compositions raise in a different form the very importance of the material aspects of collage as a technical procedure. Many of Magritte's oil paintings from his Paris years include depictions of elements such as paper cut-outs, postcards, text, and fake wallpapers produced with oil paint on canvas. Works such as *Le musée d'une nuit* (The one-night museum) of 1927 tease the viewer by mimicking such material referents in a collage. They consider whether a painting can operate in the same manner, and possibly even go further than its equivalent in a pasted-paper composition by, for example, generating a sense that certain parts of the painting conceal others, that the elements in the composition are mobile, or that such materials as postcards or photographs are examined for

[36] Ibid., 29.

[37] Ernst wrote: "Do not forget this other conquest of collage: *surrealist painting*, in at least one of its multiple aspects, that which, between 1921 and 1924, I was the only one to develop and in which, later, while I advanced alone, feeling my way, into the yet unexplored forests of *frottage*, others continued their researches (Magritte, for example, whose pictures are collages entirely painted by hand, and Dalí)": see Ernst, 2009 [1935], 30.

their material qualities [fig.36, p.101]. Thus, in a short illustrated text that Magritte published in 1929 in the Surrealist journal *La Révolution Surréaliste*, he wrote: "In a painting, words and images are made of the same substance."[38] His proposition, bearing far-reaching implications about the role of painting at large, had its direct effect also on the evolving practice of collage-making. It suggested that cut-and-paste compositions teach us that we can combine any different materials, objects and ideas in a manner that we never dared to employ before the mass production of printed paper. But if one is to apply this principle back onto painting, the material union of disparate worlds can be made not only by circumstance, but also by suggesting equal material grounds for comparison. This approach to collage, like Ernst's own, points towards an interest in exploring the relevance of edges and finely marked borders. Flattened and smoothed collages produced by way of reproduction or painting appear throughout the 1920s in the work of many other Surrealist artists, for whom the distinction between the composing elements are absorbed into the surface of the picture plane in a sleek and coherent seam that nevertheless marks the joining of disparate entities, at times also morphing images into text and vice versa. The reader can think here of Salvador Dalí (1904-1989), Joan Miró (1893-1983), and the younger Yves Tanguy (1900-1955), among others, as well as the work of Max Bucaille (1906-1996), whose technique was almost identical to Ernst's [see, figs.37-40, pp.102-105].

[38] René Magritte, 'Les mots et les images', Louis Aragon and André Breton (eds.), *La Révolution Surréaliste*, no.12, (December 1929): 32.

The history of collage terminology and techniques does not end with the expansive activities that characterised Surrealism, nor with the tendency towards concealing collage's characteristic edges. Far from it. Collage continued to invent itself under new terms throughout the decades that followed the 1930s with growing intensity and under varying conditions. New technologies and modes of communication that characterised the Post-Second World War cities of Europe brought with them tactics such as those that we now identify under the term *décollage* or *affiches lacérées* (pulled off or lacerated posters).[39] Living in large European cities such as Paris or Rome, various groups of artists found the economical and moral effects of the war to have transformed the cityscape into a hybrid of dense cultural activity and overwhelming damage or neglect. Artists such as Raymond Hains (1926–2005) and Jacques Villeglé (b.1926) in Paris, or the Italian Domenico 'Mimmo' Rotella (1918–2006) in Rome, began to appropriate parts of or entire advertising billboards that had become an integral part of the modern cityscape [consider, for example, Rotella's early experiments with décollage such as *Naturalistico* (Naturalistic) from 1953, which is still composed by way of cutting and pasting segments from lacerated billboard posters, and compare these with Raymond Hains' *Sans titre* (*Paix en Algérie*) (Untitled [Peace in Algeria]) from 1956 where lacerated billboard posters are presented as a single, readymade unit, figs. 41-42, pp.106-107]. The *décollagists* of the 1950s and 1960s set out to peel and tear layers of adverts and public announcements to reveal a material history of events and traces of consumption patterns that the city had accumulated over the years, hereby reversing the additive process of

[39] The term *décollage* has two possible nuanced translations into English, perhaps best pronounced in the distinction between the notion of "lift off" and "take off". The first refers solely to the act of removing something from its place, while the second can be also understood in the sense of leaving the ground [as commonly applied in aviation terminology]. Thus, Naomi Vogt, in order to maintain the ambiguity, translates Groupe μ's essay 'Douze bribes pour décoller (en 40,000 signes)' in *The Ends of Collage* as 'Twelve fragments to take-off (in 40,000 signs)': see Groupe μ, 2017, 171.

collage and employing instead a subtractive gesture, a kind of archaeology of pasted papers. As the art historian Benjamin Buchloh argues in his short study of *décollage*, 'From Detail to Fragment: Décollage Affichiste', the texture of the post-war city offered artists an "unlimited field of poetic achievements", but also a way to engage in "anonymous participation" that transcended the Surrealist tradition of automatism in scale, context and impact.[40] Here, we come to see the nature of tearing as a form of production. It might be said that for the post-war *Décollagists*, tearing papers was an inevitable means of engaging in creative activity after the destructions of the Second World War. But it also offered an alternative to a certain formal sensibility that characterised Pre-Second-World-War Modernist practices that were becoming more and more invested in abstraction and becoming detached from the messy everyday life of the city that previously occupied Cubism, Dada, and Futurism. By contrast, the new tendency towards *affichisme* was engaging once more with concrete public life and its representation, a tendency often compared with the emergence of Abstract Expressionism that established itself already some years earlier in the North American context.

Décollage shortly predates a wide range of other technical procedures that came into being in the 1950s and 1960s. Often, these point towards a radical expansion of techniques and sites of production. Such activities include, among many others, the work of *Nouveaux Réalistes* like César (1921–1998), Arman (1928–2005) and Niki de Saint-Phalle (1930–2002), who, in the same spirit as their *décollagiste* colleagues, engaged in new ways of assembling and composing elements collected from the junk yards of their cities [figs.43-45, pp.108-110]. From the second half of the 1950s collage histories often lose track of the terminological development concerning collage-like practices since these become far more individualised and loosely defined. To this period belong some of the best-known examples such as the 'combines' of

[40] Buchloh, 1991, 98-101.

Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) [fig.46, p.111], the 'furniture assemblages' of Louise Nevelson (1899–1988) [fig.47, p.112], the 'exhibits' of Richard Hamilton (1922–2011) [fig.48, p.113] and the 'personages' of Enrico Baj (1924–2003) [fig.49, p.113], but hopefully also, in a wider geopolitical context, of activities that include the *rollages* and *froissages* of the Czech artist Jiří Kolář (1914–2002) [figs.50-51, pp.115-116],[41] and the jazz collages of African-American artist Romare Bearden (1911–1988) [fig.52, p.117], to name but one example of an artist who sought to exemplify as well as promote cultural integration through his work. But while this broadening of activities seems to have increased the variety of instances included under the term 'collage' and its derivatives, it also meant that eventually the disruptive effect that pasted-paper collage proposed during the first decades of the twentieth century was beginning to weaken, gradually becoming the principle of all mainstream visual culture and advertising in particular. In effect, by 1970 collage witnessed both a hiatus and a crisis. Supported by a range of theoretical and ideological notions such as deconstruction, Postmodernism and interdisciplinarity, and technological inventions such as real-time video, computer graphics and digitalisation, collage was embraced as a general and widespread metaphor for Postmodern thinking. This inflation of terms and techniques marks one possible 'end' to the history of collage, at least as a form of obstruction of narrative fluency and real-time critique of mechanical modes of visual production. Yet we shall consider whether this historical moment also marks the rise of a new range of artistic practices (as I briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis) that emerged from and against collage in a similar manner to that in which collage itself came into being in the first decades of the twentieth century.

[41] Kolář published a dictionary of technical terms in 1986 that he claimed to have invented or promoted through his practice. These include, among many others, the terms *froissage* (the crumpling of papers) and *rollage* (the marrying of two or more pictures through their slicing in regular intervals), that became retrospectively identified with his work.

Collage After Collage[42]

The situation of collage from the end of the 1970s onwards is no longer bound to a single cannon or clearly distinguished narratives of artists' groups or techniques. A number of noteworthy branches of activity whose relationships to this practice continue to contribute to an understanding of its legacy and to an identification of new sites of disruption in the picture plane however, can be inferred from a commentary provided by the artist John Stezaker, whose practice I have already mentioned [fig.53, p.118]. On the one hand, Stezaker distinguished his personal interpretation of the term 'collage' in the late 1970s from that of artists who associated their practice with the notion of 'image appropriation':

> My collages directed me to a different route than the generation of Sherrie Levine who took a more conceptual Duchampian turn. Their work engaged with appropriation, and I felt that I did not want to have control over the image and use it in a particular way or move it from one context to another. I wanted to follow it and I wanted it to lead me somewhere. The process of collecting imagery was a way of finding out which way my own intuitions were taking me within the image. Using the image as a guide really. And then I began to realize that this was not what the Americans were doing at all, even Jack [Goldstein] and Richard [Prince]. And that's when I began to look more at the European tradition, and mainly at Surrealism, which was not easy at first and almost taboo at the time.[43]

[42] 'Collage after Collage' is the title of Brandon Taylor's final chapter in his book *Collage: The Making of Modern Art*: Taylor 2004, pp.195–212. In this chapter Taylor sets out to identify new modes of collage-making from the mid-1970s onwards.

[43] John Stezaker. Interview by Yuval Etar, Unpublished, 08 April 2015.

Yet on the other hand, Stezaker also sought to distinguish his own practice of collage-making from photomontage as practiced by artists such as Martha Rosler (b.1943), Linder, Gee Vaucher, and Peter Kennard (b. 1949):

> I consider photomontage as a mainstream intercutting of images that sets out to create a seamless continuum of some kind; intercutting images in a way that reduces them to narrative legibility. This tradition goes back to Hollywood as much as it does to the films of Sergei Eisenstein who pioneered montage. By contrast collage, or photo-collage if you will, is about opening up the space between images, liberating them from their instrumental use. [...] It is a way of trying to reveal something of the abyss or the hidden void within this continuum of image culture or the montage of everyday life. I see photo-collage therefore as a way of encountering the image as empty.[44]

In fact, Stezaker's proposal to think of collage as an encounter with the image as "empty" might capture something that binds, rather than distinguishes, the wide range of practices and tactics reviewed thus far, which he mapped into three different strands. Granted, the essential sites of collage's activity lie not in the narrative portrayed by the images used, but in the way these are disrupted when they are cut, placed side by side or piled one on top of another. Collage, in other words, is a preoccupation with margins, edges or gaps that stop us from interpreting the picture as a carrier of information and enable us to see it with fresh eyes.

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[44] John Stezaker, Interview by Yuval Etgar, *Aesthetic Investingations*, Vol.2, No.1, December 2017. https://aestheticinvestigations.eu/index.php/journal/issue/view/6

Thus, the history of collage is implicated in the evolution of the way in which artists employed edges as a potential site of disruptive activity that can criticise, support or accentuate certain aspects of the images bound by them. The accumulation of terms and techniques presented in this survey suggests something about the wider phenomenon in question, whereby collage terminology has become a principle of potentially infinite expansion. Thus, the difficulty of identifying the specific activities that remain effectively disruptive, and separating these from less effective procedures, is aptly expressed in Groupe μ's editorial comments. The risk of "extreme generalisation whereby one might consider 'everything as collage'" is both essential and destructive to the evolution of this technique.[45] This is a pragmatic problem to which tactics and terminology are key – and it should be understood as such. If we continue to consider collage as an embodiment of the avant-garde intuition at the turn of the twentieth century, we should also continue to seek how it comes into play by identifying new sites of disruption, voids, gaps or moments where narrative no longer runs fluently but instead offers an opportunity for something unexpected, or that was not meant to appear.

[45] Groupe μ, 2017 [1978], 171.



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Fig. 18, Photograph documenting a paper and cardboard construction installed in Georges Braque's studio (now destroyed), c. 1911.

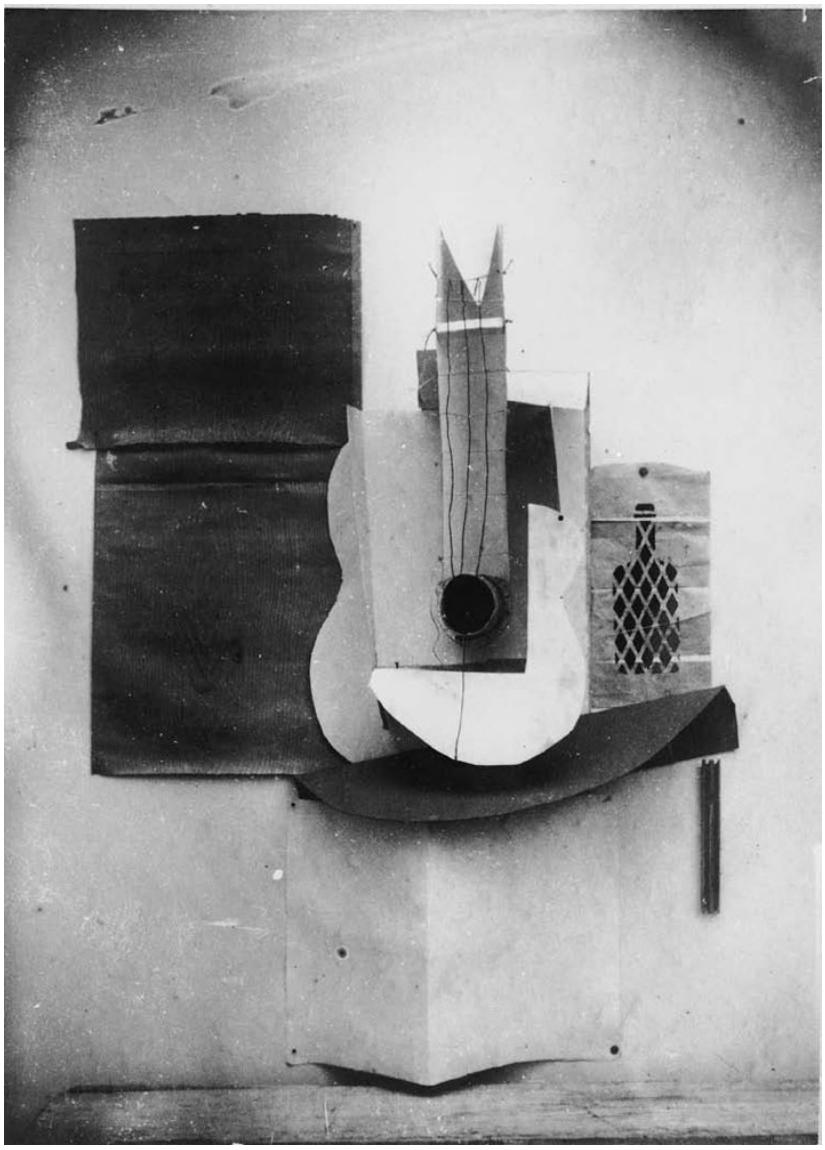


Fig.19, Pablo Picasso, Guitar construction, Jan-Feb 1914, Ferrous sheet metal and wire, 77.5 x 35 x 19.3 cm.

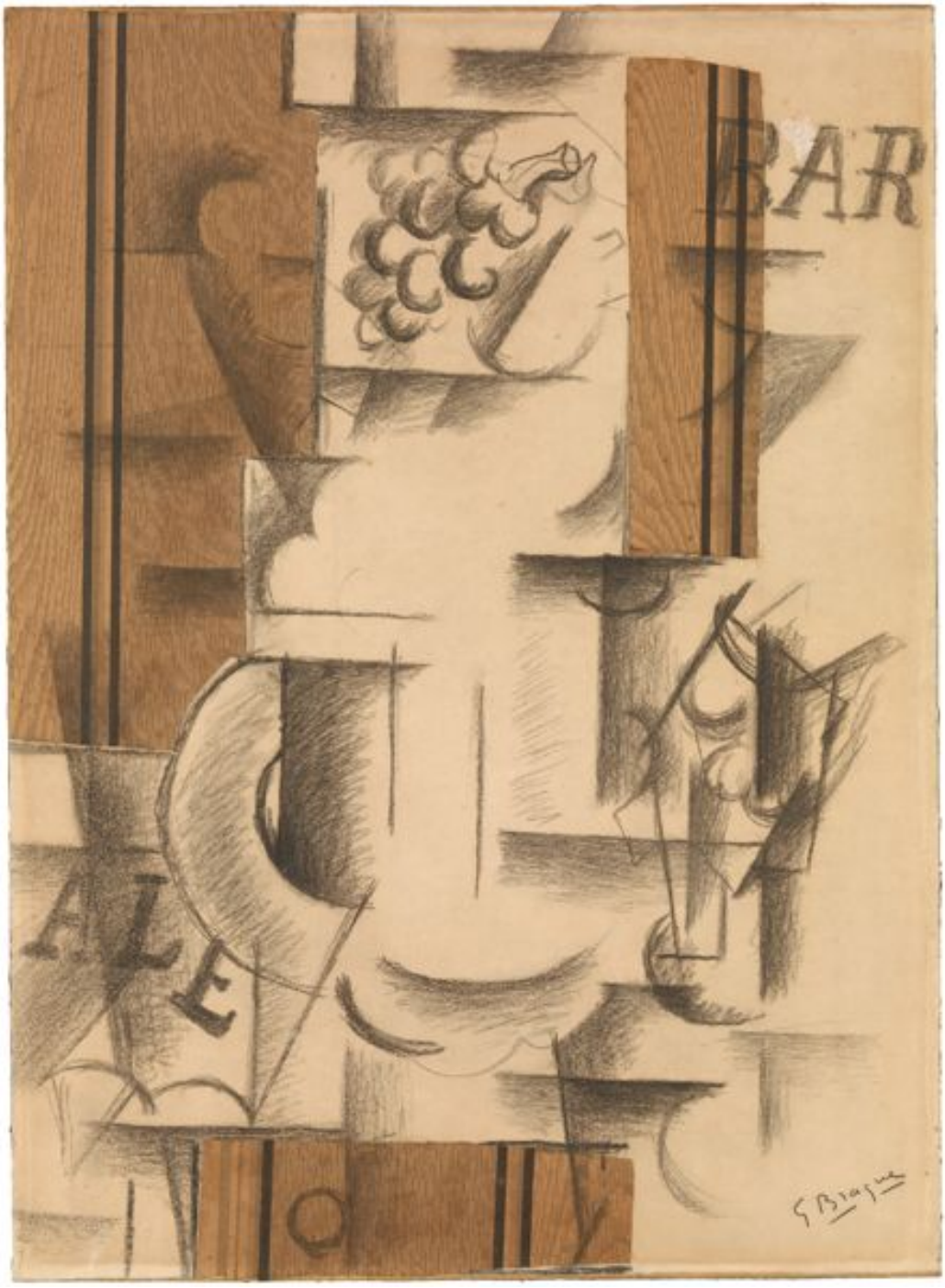


Fig. 20, Georges Braque, *Compotier et* verre, 1912, Charcoal and fake wood wallpaper on paper support, 62.9 × 45.7 cm.

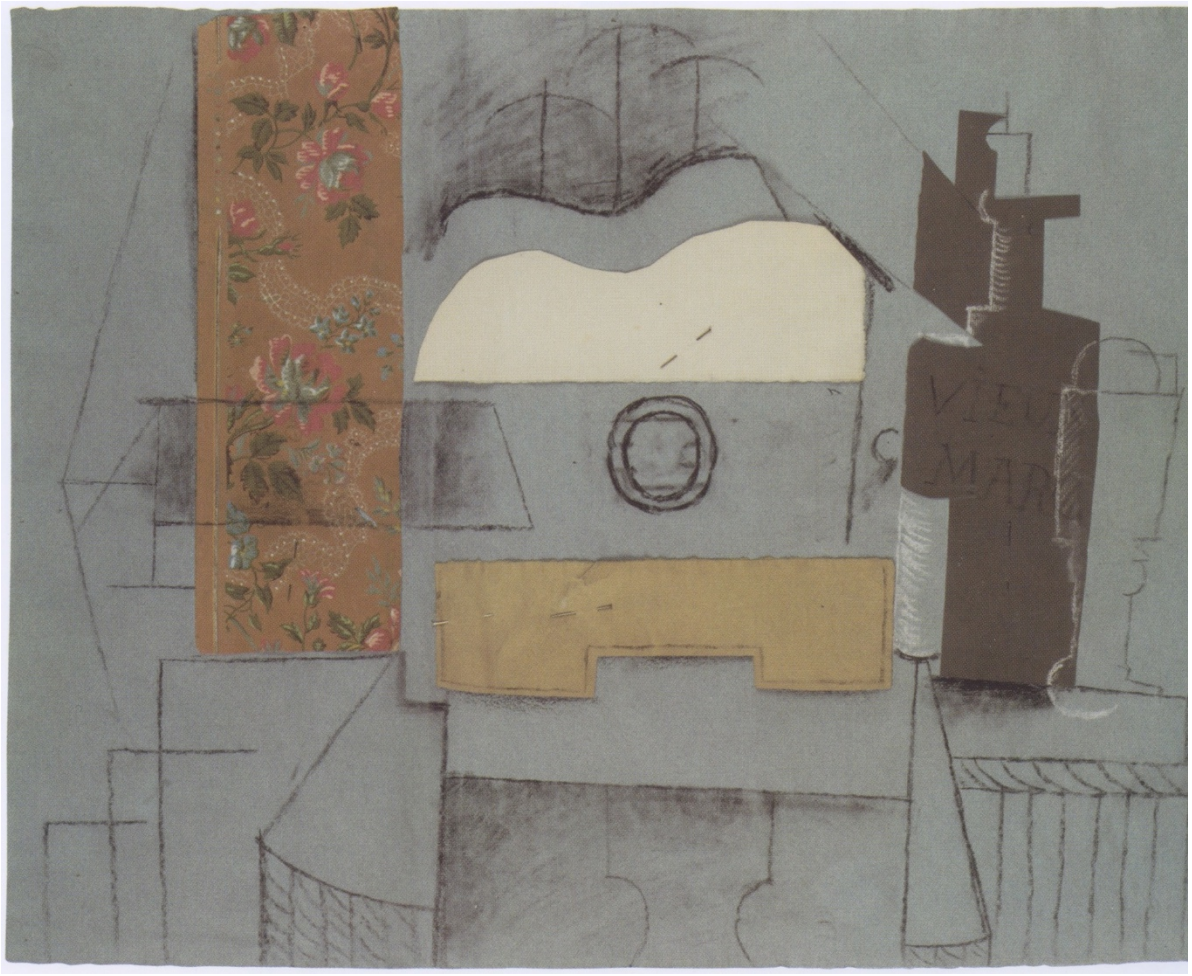


Fig. 21, Pablo Picasso, *Guitare, verre, bouteille de vieux marc*, 1913, Pasted and pinned papers with charcoal on paper support, 47.2 x 61.8 cm.



Fig. 22, Pablo Picasso, *Guitare sur un gueridon*, 1913, Cut-and-pinned wallpaper and coloured papers on paper support, 61.9 x 39.1 cm.

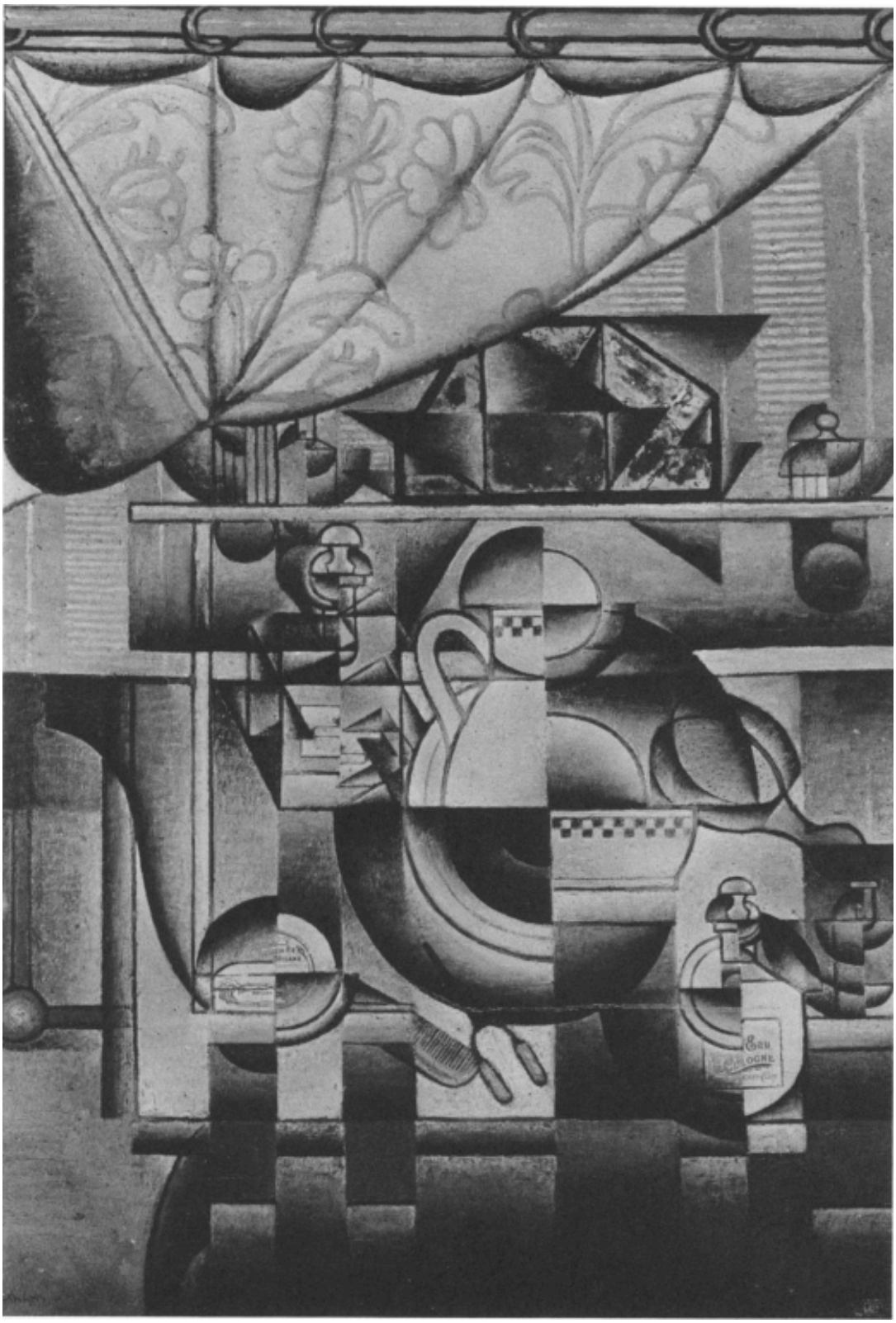


Fig. 23, Juan Gris, *Le Lavabo*, 1912, Oil on canvas with paper and mirror collage, 89 x 130 cm (black and white reproduction).



Fig. 24, Carlo Carrà, *Manifestazione interventista* (*Festa patriottica-dipinto parolibero*), 1914, Tempera, pen, mica powder and paper on cardboard support, 38.5 x 30 cm.



Fig.25, Hans (Jean) Arp, *Avant ma naissance*, 1914, Painted pasted papers on paper support, 11 x 9 cm.



Fig.26, Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichnung A2: Hansi*, 1918, Cut-and-pasted coloured and printed papers on printed paper with cardstock border, 36.8 x 29.5 cm.



Fig.27, Hans (Jean) Arp, *Poupée Portant Schwitters*, 1959, Pasted papers and gouache on kraft paper with a fragment of an unknown collage by Kurt Schwitters, 66.5 x 22.9 cm.

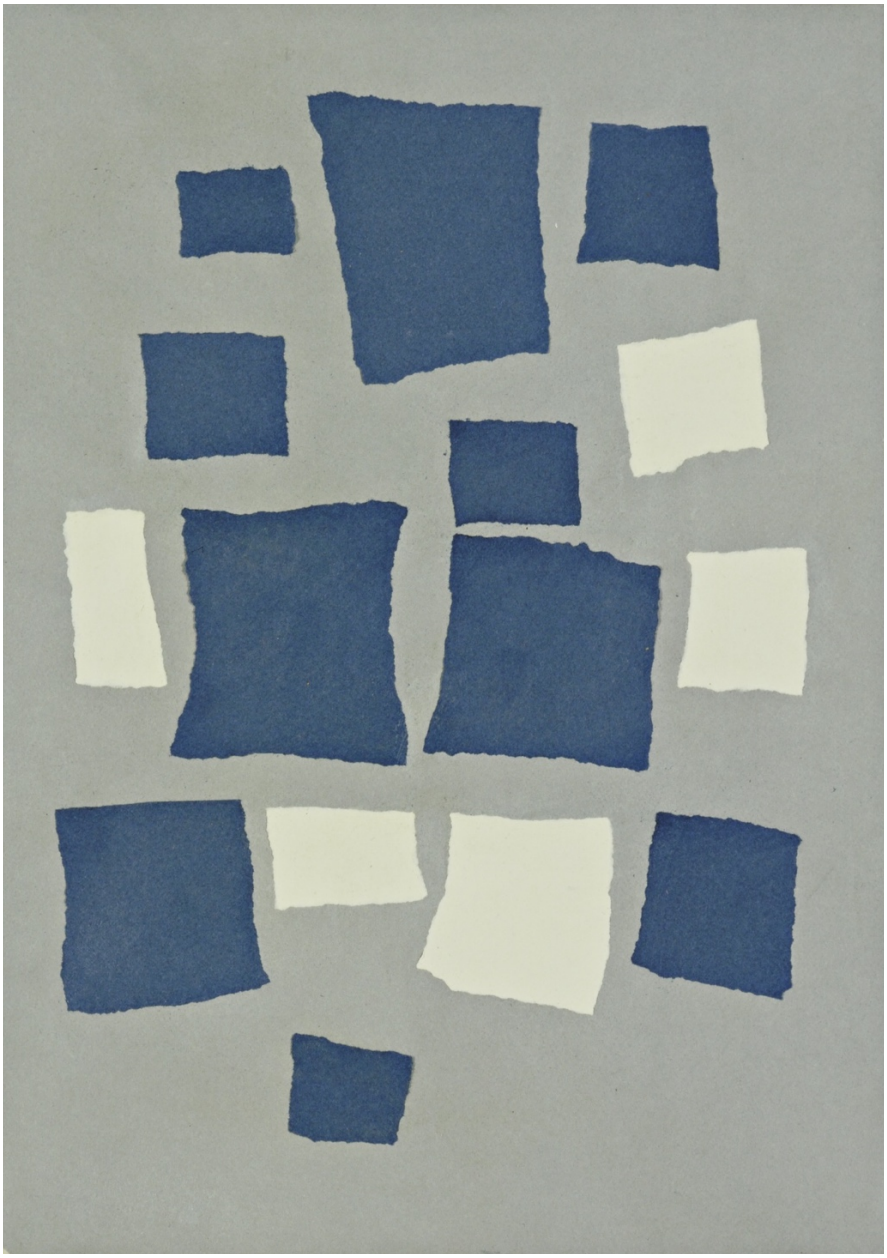


Fig. 28, Hans (Jean) Arp, *Sans titre (Collage arrangé selon les lois du hasard)*, 1916-17, Torn and coloured pasted papers on paper support, 48.5 x 34.6 cm.



Fig. 29, Alexander Rodchenko, *Untitled,* 1919-20, photographic reproduction and other printed papers, dimensions unknown.



Fig. 30, Oscar Gustav Rejlander, *Two Ways of Life*, 1857, Carbon print (composed of over thirty negatives), 39 x 74 cm.



Fig. 31, Henry Peach Robinson, *Fading Away*, 1858, Albumen silver print from glass negatives, 23.8 x 37.2 cm.



Fig. 32, Raoul Hausmann, *ABCD*, Silver gelatine Print after a photomontage that is now lost, 1920s, 15.1 x 10.1 cm.

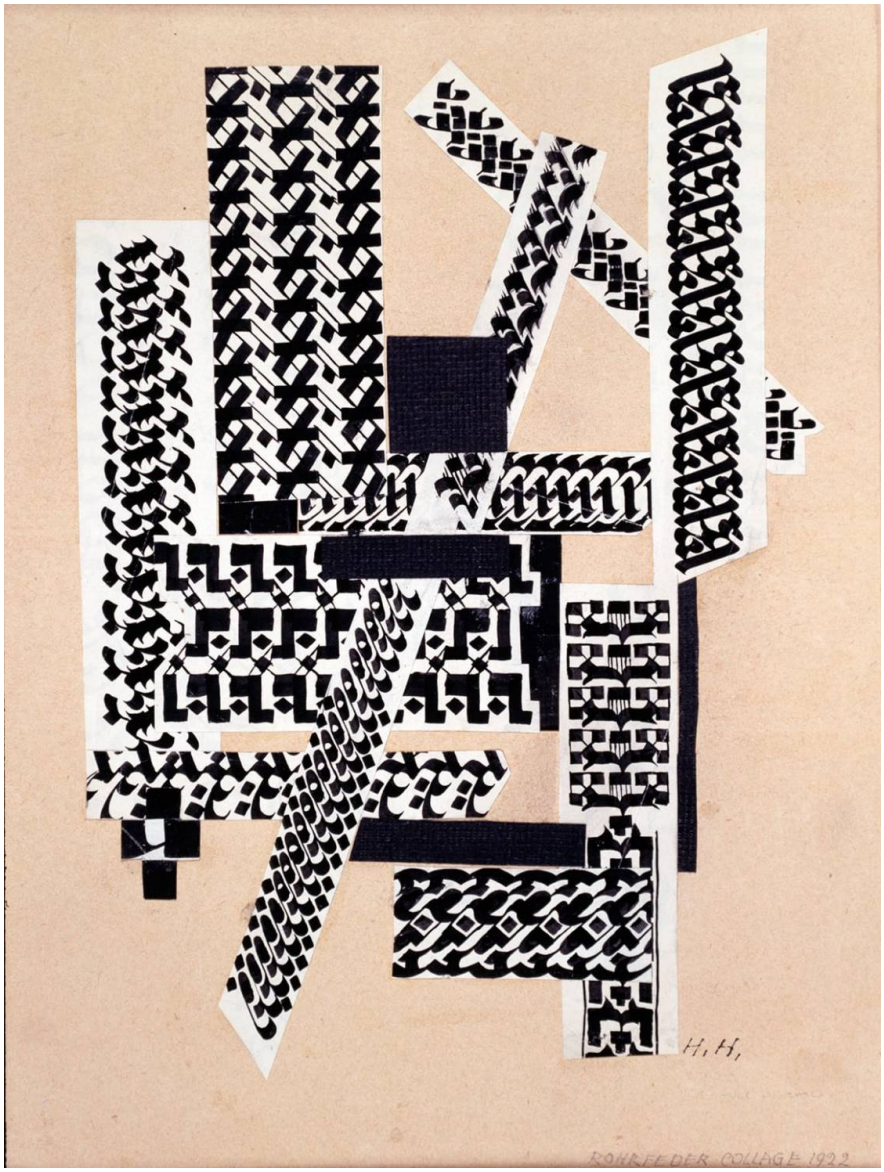


Fig. 33, Hannah Höch, *Rohrfeder Collage*, 1922, pasted papers with knitting patterns on paper support, 28.5 x 22 cm.



Fig. 34, Hannah Höch, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands*, c. 1919, Newspaper clippings magazine images and coloured papers pasted on paper support, 114 x 90 cm.



Fig. 35, Max Ernst, *Always the best man wins; sodaliten schneeberger drückethäler rosinen und mandeln schlagen die eingeborenen mitteleuropas zu meerschaum und eilen nach stattgehebter denudation den ereignissen in bester absicht voraus.*, 1921, Gouache, India ink, and pencil on paper, overpainting of a print, 15 x 22 cm.



Fig. 36, René Magritte, *The one-night museum*, 1927, Oil paint on canvas, 50 x 65 cm.



Fig. 37, Salvador Dalí, *Vertigo or the Tower of Pleasure*, 1930, Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm.

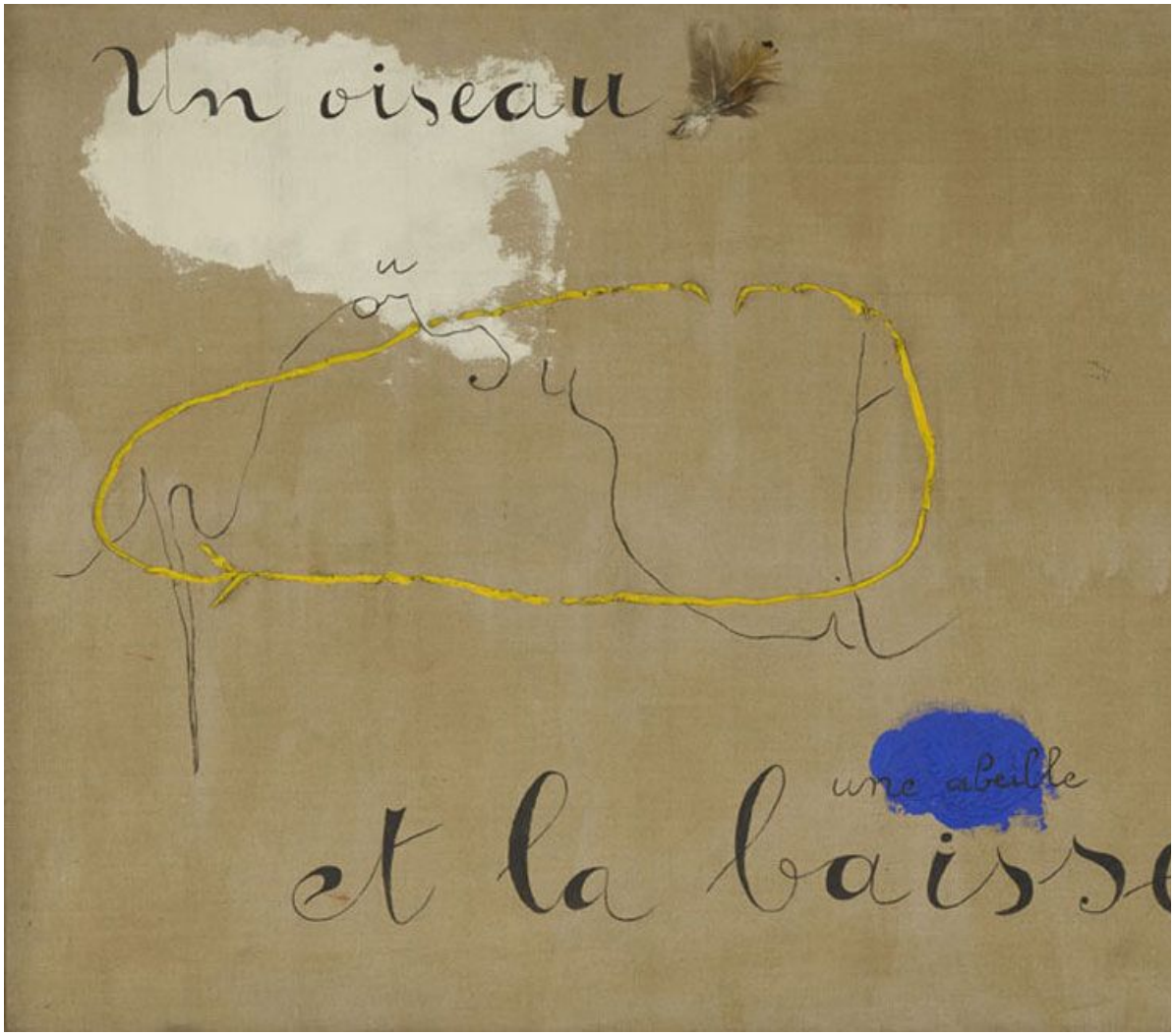


Fig. 38, Joan Mirò, *Un Oiseau poursuit une abeille et la baisse*, 1927, Oil, aqueous medium and feathers on glue-sized canvas, 83.5 x 102.2 cm.



Fig. 39, Yves Tanguy, *Dehors*, 1929, Oil on canvas, 116.5 x 89.5 cm.

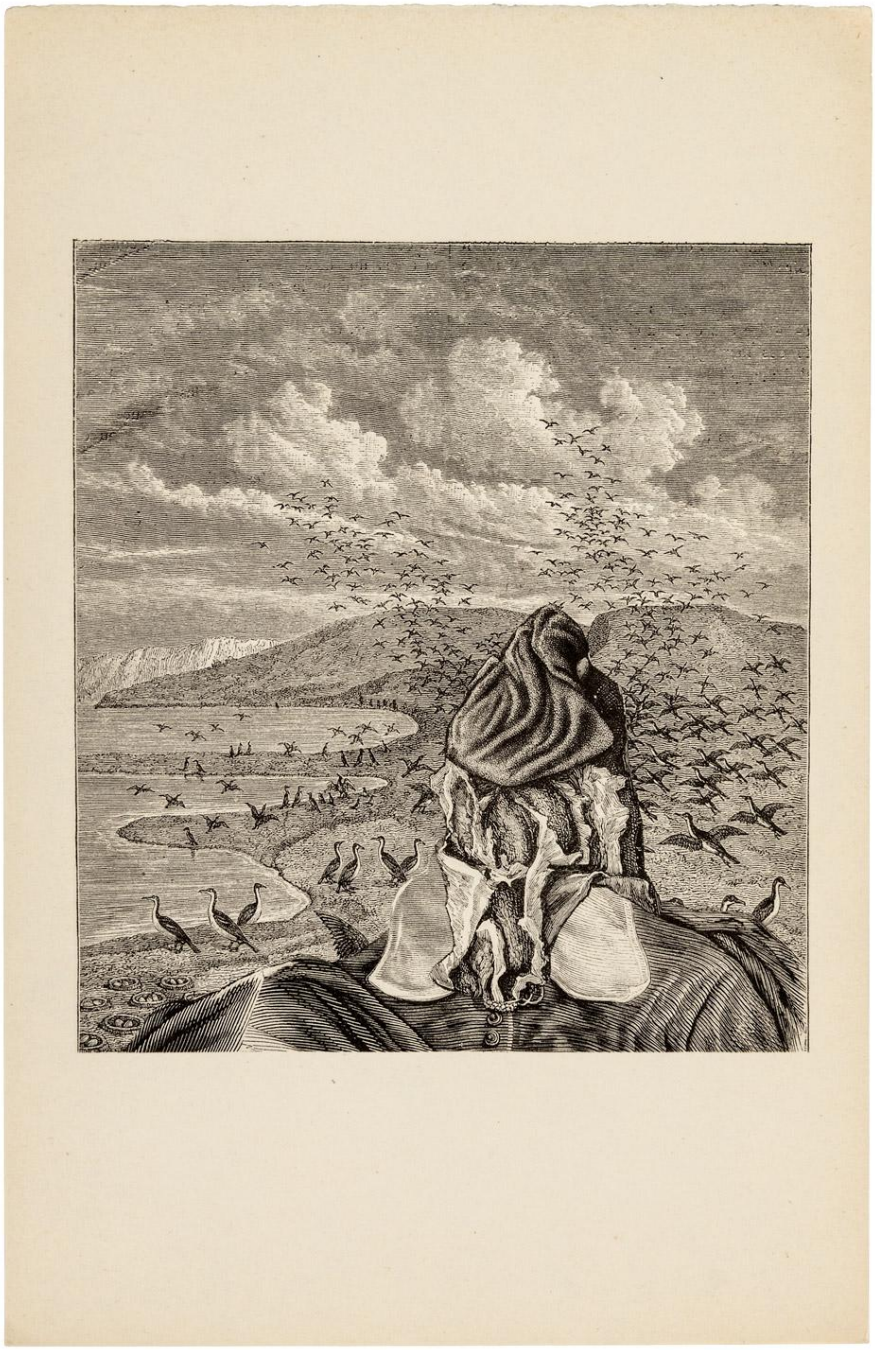


Fig. 40, Max bucaille, from the book *Les Cris de la Fée: Seize Collages*, 1939, Wood-cut engraving print, 25x16.5 cm.



Fig. 41, Domenico 'Mimmo' Rotella, *Naturalistico*, 1953, Cut sections of lacerated billboard posters and broken glass glued on linen canvas, 58.5 x 45.5 cm.



Fig. 42, Raymond Hains, *Sans titre* (*Paix en Algérie*), c. 1956, Lacerated billboard posters mounted on canvas, 78 x 70 cm.



Fig. 43, César, *Compression murale*, 1975, Compressed cardboard packaging, 138.5 x 120 x 20.5 cm.



Fig. 44, Arman, *Poubelle des Halles,* 1961, Magazine papers, cardboard, fabric, straw, a canister, dried mimosa, bulb base, pencil, plastic film and labels in a glass and wood box, 63,5 x 43 x 12,5 cm.



Fig. 45, Niki de Saint Phalle, *Shooting Painting American Embassy*, (20 June) 1961, Paint, plaster, wood, plastic bags, shoe, twine, metal seat, axe, metal can, toy gun, wire mesh, shot pellets, and wood scraps, 244.8 x 65.7 x 21.9 cm.





Figs. 46a, 46b, Robert Rauschenberg, *Short Circuit*, 1955, Oil and fabric and paper on wood supports and cabinet with two hinged doors containing a painting by Susan Weil and a reproduction of a Jasper Johns Flag painting by Elaine Sturtevant, 103.5 x 95.3 x 10.8 cm.

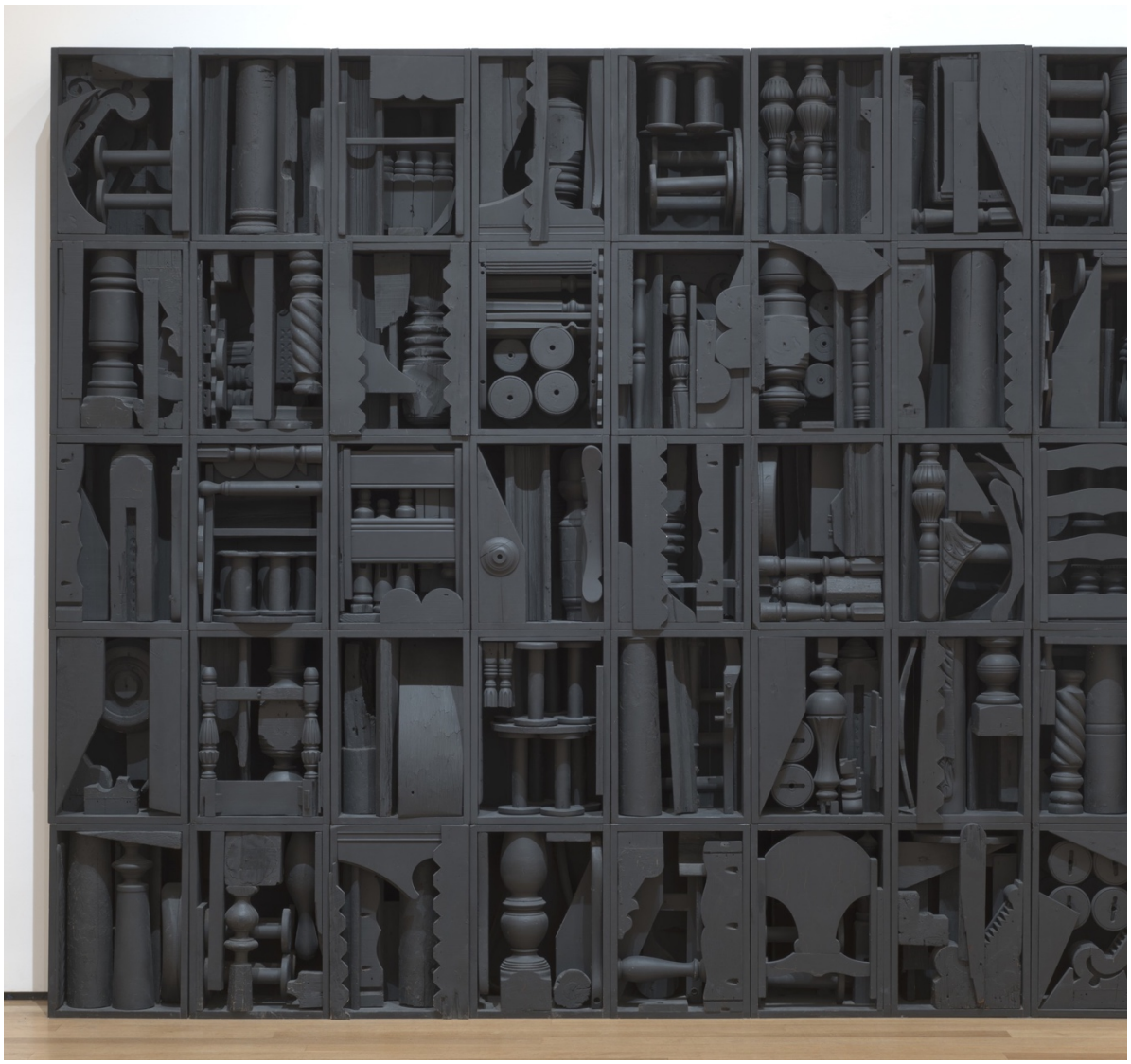


Fig. 47, Louise Nevelson, *Big Black*, 1963, Found furniture elements spray-painted black, 274.9 x 319.5 x 30.5 cm.



Fig. 48, Richard Hamilton, Installation view of *Man, Machine, Motion* (1955) as reconstructed at the ICA London in 2014, Steel structure mounted with 176 printed black and white photographs on 54 dibond panels, dimension variable.



Fig. 49, Enrico Baj, *General Schwarz*, 1961, Oil, Passementerie, and military decorations on wallpaper fabric, 146 x 114 cm.



Fig. 50, Jirí Kolár, *Ils marchent devant moi, ces yeux plein de lumières, qu'un ange très-savant a sans doute aimantés*, Cut photograph and cut lithograph on paper, 26.5 x 44.4 cm.

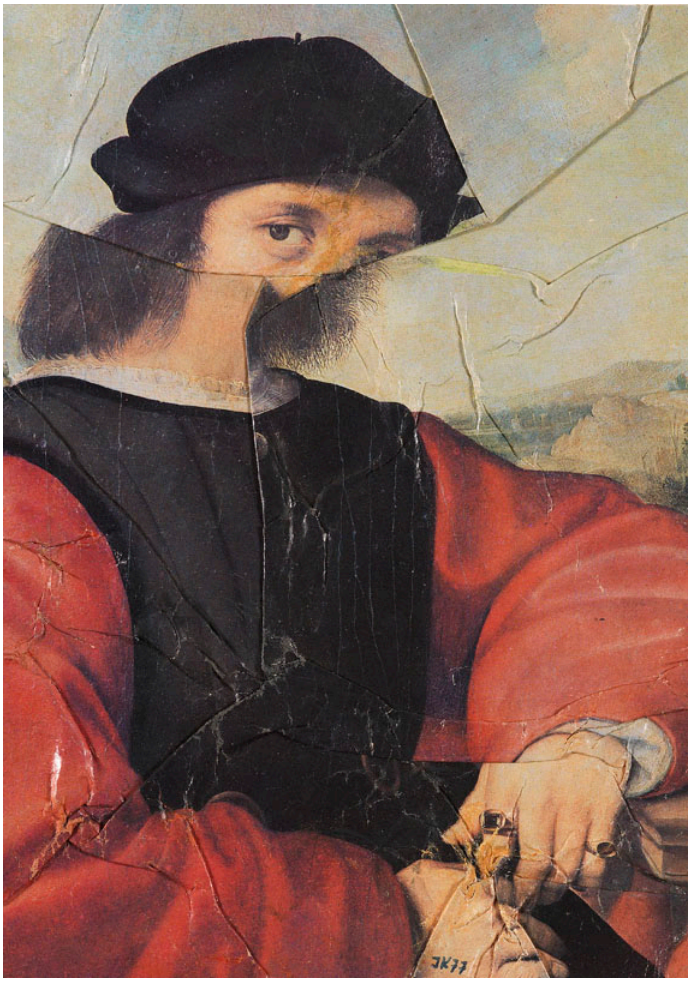


Fig. 51, Jirí Kolár, *Untitled*, 1977, Crumpled offset print with gouache, 23 x 16.5 cm.



Fig. 52, Romare Bearden, *Watching the Good Trains Go By*, 1964, Pasted papers and photographic reproductions on paper.



Fig. 53, John Stezaker, *The Trial*, 1978, Pasted postcard on film-still photograph, 19.5 x 24.7 cm.

Identity Papers: Max Ernst

Consider the following statement:

> If one is to believe the description of Max Ernst contained in his identity papers he would be only 45 years old at the moment of writing these lines. He would have an oval face, blue eyes and pale hair. His height would not be over average – or under, either. As for any particular marks the identity papers accord him none. Consequently he could, if pursued by the police, easily plunge into the crowd and disappear forever.[46]

This short description, written in 1936 by Max Ernst in third-person, captures in style as well as in theme a certain paradox that inhabits the term 'identity' as an attribute that is both particular and indistinguishable, unique and common. Indeed, our dictionaries confirm that 'identity' is a word with two definitions: it is "the fact of being who or what a person is", but also "a close similarity or affinity".[47] In other words, when we speak of identity we indicate a quality that separates something from all that it is not, but we also describe a relationship of similarity between different things. The question thus arises: does the identity of a person (or a thing for that matter) necessarily entail a certain inherent multitude at its foundation? Or, if considered inversely, does absolute similarity imply that two or more things can in fact be regarded as one?

Let us consider another statement, presented by Ernst just a few lines further on in the same text:

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[46] Max Ernst, 2009, 32.

[47] Oxford English Dictionary, 'Identity', 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

> What they find particularly disagreeable, even insupportable, is their almost total lack of success in discovering his IDENTITY in the flagrant contradictions (apparent) which exist between his spontaneous comportment and the dictates of his conscious thought. […] [T]his union is brought about in the same way as […] when one brings two distant realities together on an apparently antipathetic plane (that which in simple language is called "collage") …[48]

As Ernst continues his self-description (always in third person), a proposition emerges; a model for addressing the paradoxical nature of the term 'identity' by way of analogy with the *modus operandi* of collage. Fragmentation, disruption, difference (or indeed contradiction as Ernst himself writes), are attributes easily associated with the practice of cutting and pasting papers and images, but aren't these also the common traits of identity? After all, the sense of "flagrant contradictions", so characteristic of collage, is often the most adequate way to describe a person's behaviour or to outline their characteristics. This complex duality of something that appears as one but also as many, as a consistency but also contradiction, performs a crucial role in Max Ernst's work. It is, in fact, one of the reasons that Ernst remains a challenging artist to analyse and theorise today.

In the present chapter I take this pairing of terms – 'identity' and 'collage' – in order to propose a way into Max Ernst's *oeuvre*, but also, in order to understand the complicated nature of collage as a medium that is all too often theorised in simplified terms as the juxtaposition of contradictory and fragmented images or materials, overlooking its profound link to notions of

[48] Ibid, 32-3.

imitation, replication, reproduction and indeed identity. Using Ernst's suggestion of a link between the latter term and the technique of collage, I focus on a small group of early collages that Ernst executed between the years 1919-21. During these two formative years in his career, Ernst began cutting, replicating, and rearranging found images for the first time, associating himself with a tendency common among artists of the period. Only the difference is that Ernst, unlike most of his contemporaries and predecessors, insisted on reproducing his collages once they were completed in such a manner as to conceal the construction process. Going against popular tendencies among artists around him, he flattened his collages using printing or photography. But as Ernst himself indicated on a number of occasions later in life, the idea of these so-to-speak "seamless collages" – as these works have come to be identified – was attractive to him because it enabled a blurring of the distinction between what he thought to be individual, unique and creative in his work, and what was consumed, replicated, imitated and appropriated from common culture and common sense.[49]

Louis Aragon was the first to notice the distinction between Ernst's collages and those of his predecessors and colleagues, remarking in his famous essay *La Peinture au Défi* (The Challenge to Painting) from 1930, that Ernst's various methods of image construction are often characterised by the effort that the artist invested in concealing the complex production process that lies behind them. For example, Aragon writes that when making "an inventory of the procedures used by Max Ernst," one must include "photography, pure and simple," to exemplify the manner in which Ernst would reproduce his collages and render them "incomprehensible". In addition, Aragon noted how "with a bit of colour" and "some sketching, [Ernst] tries to acclimatise the spectator he had just hurled into an alien

[49] Werner Spies, Ernst's biographer, scholar and author of the artist's catalogue raisonné was the one to pioneer the term 'seamless collages'. See Werner Spies, 1991 [1988], 68-9.

landscape."[50] As we shall see, a great portion of Ernst's collages were indeed produced as highly meticulous constructions that are difficult to identify as collages from the start. Nevertheless, Ernst would almost categorically insist on photographing, printing, or otherwise overpainting these handmade constructions in order to make sure that the fractures between materials are eliminated from the work altogether.

Dada Has Nothing to do with the Society of Arts

Max Ernst's first experiments with the medium of collage, or more accurately, with the use and combination of found materials, objects, illustrated imagery and photography, can be traced back to 1919, a revolutionary year in the artist's career. Since the end of the First World War and his return from duty in service of the German army, Ernst struggled to find his place in the newly established artist community of his hometown Cologne. The most active artistic association in the city at the time was the newly established *Gesellschaft der Künste* (Society of Arts) which was characterised by a dominating nationalist agenda and pre-war expressionist approach to painting from which Ernst was now seeking escape. It did not take long before Ernst encountered new sources of inspiration that would encourage him to take an independent direction in his work. Returning from a summer holiday in the Bavarian Alps in August 1919 together with his wife Lou (Louise Ernst-Strauss), the couple decided to pass by Hans Goltz's gallery and bookshop in Munich in the hope to secure the loan of some drawings by Paul Klee for an exhibition planned on behalf of the *Gesellschaft* in the coming fall. At Goltz's gallery Ernst came across a number of new Dada publications that had just

[50] Louis Aragon, 1990 [1930], 64-5.

arrived from Zurich, presenting works by various artists including Hans Arp, whom he had already met once in Cologne before the war.[51] In addition to these Dada periodicals, and perhaps of greater immediate effect, was a copy of the Italian magazine *Valori Plastici*, which included reproductions of works by Italian artists such as Carlo Carrà and a small booklet of twelve reproductions of paintings by Giorgio de Chirico. The content of these publications resonated with the young and ambitious Ernst. As William Camfield noted in his study, *Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism*, "the timing of this exposure to Dada and de Chirico was propitious, catching Ernst at a moment of mounting dissatisfaction born with Expressionism and with his association with the *Gesellschaft der Künste*."[52] In the months that followed, Ernst completely transformed his practice, beginning to experiment with different media and exploring new stylistic directions that were foreign to the local art scene, most notably in two paintings titled *Das Jüngste Gericht* (The last judgement) and *Aquis submersus* where the influence of de Chirico's metaphysical painting style as well as his preference for desolate landscapes are clearly visible [figs. 54-55, pp. 163-164]. He also took upon himself the task of setting up a branch for Dada activities in Cologne together with his colleague and friend Johannes Theodor Baargeld, who would remain his accomplice until the winter of 1920-21.[53] Before the end of the year, Ernst already launched himself into correspondence with other Dada practioners from Zurich and Paris, above all Tristian Tzara and Hans Arp (his early encounters with the politicised branch of Berlin Dada, towards the end of the war, had left him sceptical of the group's activities and thus he avoided getting in touch with them at this

[51] Ernst met Arp on the occasion of the first *Deutscher Werkbund* exhibition (the German association of craftspeople) in the Rheinpark's glass pavilion, on May 1914.

[52] William A. Camfield, 'The First Dada Season in Cologne', *Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism*, (New York and London: Prestel, 1993), 57.

[53] Johanne Baargeld is the pseudonym of Alfred Emanuel Ferdinand Grünwald who was the son of a city banker. Little is known concerning the reasons that led Baargeld to abandon his artistic activities so abruptly towards the end of 1920, at which time he returned to university and completed his degree in Economics. Around mid-summer 1921, Ernst wrote to Tristan Tzara that "Baargeld did not have the time to do any work for Dada. He is now working day and night to become filthy rich." From that point onward, Baargeld's name almost completely disappears from Ernst's correspondence. See Camfield, 1993, 77.

stage. In parallel, Ernst tried to secure funding, exhibition spaces, and printing facilities for new projects that he was hoping to develop. His newly established Dada collegium, however, had little success at first and only two full-time members, himself and Baargeld. Hans Arp, in turn, would come to the city on occasion and to take part in their activities (Arp's father was a resident of Cologne), and a few additional part-time members included Angelika Fik and her husband Heinrich Hoerle, Anton Räderscheidt, and Franz Wilhelm Seiwert. In the following year (1920) the Cologne group yielded (not without a struggle) two exhibitions and two printed publications, and while these were small in scale and little attended, they prove in hindsight to have been crucial landmarks for the development of Dada as an international phenomenon, and particularly to Ernst's evolving arsenal of original technical inventions in his art.

The first Dada exhibition in Cologne was, one might say, accidental, emerging as the result of a falling-out between the duo Ernst-Baargeld and the leader of the *Gesellschaft Die Kunste*, Karl Nierendorf, who rejected the new direction their work was taking and asked that they would be removed from the Society's autumn exhibition in the Kölnischer Kunstverein in November 1919. In response to Nierendorf's actions, and thanks to the help of the Kunstverein's director Walter Klug, Ernst and his small group of followers were given a separate room in the building, where they held their first independent Dada exhibition. It later travelled to a second venue in Düsseldorf. For the occasion, Ernst prepared a poster and designed a publication that would lend its name to the show – *Bulletin D* [fig.56, p.165]. The publication included a list of works and a number of reproductions of sculptures and other pieces. A sign was placed at the entrance to the Kölnischer Kunstverein, declaring: "Dada has nothing to do with the Society of Arts. Dada is not interested in this group's hobbies."[54]

[54] Ibid, 58.

The notice was signed by Johannes Baargeld and Max Ernst and underlined with two arrows marking opposite directions to the two separate exhibitions. Dada Cologne was now officially formed.[55]

In hindsight, the production of the *Bulletin D* publication was even more important than the exhibition itself. This historical document forms a testimony to the versatile activities produced in the name of Dada in Cologne in 1919. As Lucy Lippard commented in her essay 'Dada into Surrealism: Max Ernst', "Cologne Dada, like all the most artistically fecund Dada groups, was very small; like Schwitters' Hanover, and Duchamp's and Picabia's New York, it was isolated from other avant-garde circles," and as such its printed legacy was essential.[56] The exhibition checklist, which forms the main subject of the publication, is particularly revealing in this regard, confirming Ernst's prominence in the group and his interest in exploring new technical procedures. These include, in addition to oil paintings, a number of new technical categories such as *relief-assemblages*, free-standing composite sculptures, a series of photographic reproductions of objects or sculptures accompanied by text and signed, and stereotype prints made after, or in combination with, pencil rubbings (these are in fact absent from the checklist, but were included in the exhibition's second show in Düsseldorf early in 1920).

[55] The first Cologne Dada exhibition was held at the *Gesellschaft der Künste* (Society of Arts) where Ernst was still a member and it later travelled to Düsseldorf. The second exhibition opened at the foyer of the city's Arts and Crafts Museum. However, following the museum administration's request to end the show in advance of their annual collective exhibition in the main galleries (presumably to dissociate the main event from the anti-institutional agendas of the Dada artists) Ernst and Baargeld rented a space in the nearby Winter Brewery and moved the exhibition there in protest.

[56] Lucy R. Lippard, 'Dada into Surrealism: Max Ernst', *Changing*, (New York: Dutton, 1971), 63.

The first of these categories represents a short-lived experiment for Ernst, of which very few examples survived. The most notable of his *relief-assemblages* are: *Relief 123, Architektur* (now lost) [fig.57, p.166], one untitled work, and *Fruit d'une longue expérience* (The fruit of a long experience) [fig.58, p.167]. Ernst's writings from the second half of 1919 indicate that this cycle of works had two diverging sources of inspiration: the first was Alexander Archipenko's series of figurative *Sculpto-Peintures*, which he only saw through photographic reproductions in a publicity poster for Archipenko's exhibition at Zurich's Kunsthaus earlier that year [fig.59, p.168]. The second influence was Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbilder* assemblages, whose name Ernst borrowed in order to describe his own work to critics over the coming months [fig.60, p.169].[57] However, by the beginning of 1920, Ernst would find himself taking an oppositional stand to both Rodchenko and Schwitters as part of a larger ideological split between two groups of artists that initially hoped to form an alliance in the name of Dada.[58] Nevertheless, a comparison of Ernst's *relief-assemblages* with the works of Schwitters and Archipenko reveals his interest in adapting Archipenko's figurative language and his preoccupation with the human figure and sexuality on the one hand with his admiration for Schwitters' constructive almost mechanic approach as a *bricoleur* to found materials, on the other. The critical reception that these *relief-assemblages* attracted is telling in this respect, as one reporter writes:

[57] A journalist for the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* who reviewed the *Bulltein D* exhibition on the occasion of its presentation in Düsseldorf wrote on 3 February 1920: "Ernst's […] paintings (which he calls *merz*paintings) consist of nailed-on pieces of wood, spools of thread, wire, tiny gears and the like…". See Spies, 1991 [1988], 279.

[58] Late in 1919, in an attempt to repeat the successful *Section d'Or* exhibition that took place in Paris in 1912 Albert Gleizes, Leopold Survage, and Archipenko proposed a second *Section d'Or*, in order to review what are the significant contemporary movements in art, literature, and music. Picabia joined them, and word came out to the various Dada centres (Berlin, Cologne, Zurich, and Paris). Soon however, Gleizes, Survage, and Archipenko started doubting the direction Dada was taking and cancelled the collaboration, causing a rift between two groups of artists.

> These reliefs […] attracted interpretative efforts, particularly of a sexual nature, given, for example, in *Fruit of a long experience*, the '+' and '–' connections in the lower right quadrant, the prominence of penetrating/penetrated forms, and the phallic-like cut into the board at the lower left, which is accompanied by undulating lines one author associated with semen.[59]

The ambiguous sexual and emotional scenario of *Fruit d'une longue expérience*, as well as the work's title, enjoys the clash of found materials and a diagrammatic composition on the one hand, and a provocative suggestion of sexual interaction on the other. It is uncertain however, whether, and to what extent, earlier precedents of the *relief-assemblage* genre – such as Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso's paper constructions from as early as 1911-12 – influenced Ernst's works of this kind. Such works were not included in the Cubist exhibition in Cologne in 1914, and are thus unlikely to have been visible to Ernst first-hand. Yet some knowledge of Cubism's experiments with *papiers collés* as well as *assemblages* cannot have been completely foreign to Ernst. In either case, the very few *relief-assemblages* that Ernst produced in 1919 provide a preliminary indication of his release from expressionist painting and his new technical, stylistic, and above all thematic interest in exploring the links between sexuality, bodily transformations, and representations of machinery and mechanical forms of production and illustration. In other words, Ernst was fascinated by the relationship between two sets of questions concerning the notion of identity, on the one hand as the expression of mechanical reproduction, identical, multiple, and uniform, and on the other as attributes of a unique subject, particularly the play of fantasy and desire. This aspect of Ernst's new work

[59] Unsigned review, 'Dada in Dusseldorf', *Rheinische Zeitung*, Essen, 3 February 1920. Translation in Spies, 1991 [1988], 279. Also referenced in William Camfield, 1993, 62.

will later make him an attractive candidate in the eyes of André Breton and Louis Aragon as leading the way from Dada "into" Surrealism.[60]

Photographic Reproductions of Objects or Sculptures

The second category of works that emerged from, or around the time of, the *Bulletin D* exhibition, is that of photographic reproductions of objects or sculptures, which by 1920 Ernst was already accompanying with lengthy handwritten captions, and more importantly, signing before sending them to his friends or including them in exhibitions. While one can elaborate on the relevance of Ernst's composite sculptures to his gradually evolving interest in collage by considering the use of found materials, or the combination of machines with clothing or otherwise domestic objects and human-like figures, the more important contribution of these works to Ernst's *oeuvre* is manifested in his decision to caption and sign his name on the photographic reproductions, hereby confirming their status as artworks in their own right. Ernst's first known photograph of this kind is *Armada v. Duldgedalzen* [fig.61, p.170]. It depicts a sculpture in which a flowerpot functions as pedestal for a mannequin's left hand with a cotton spool on its thumb. The photograph is accompanied by a lengthy, obscure inscription – *Armada v. Duldgedalzen/gen. die dadaistische Rosa Bonheur die rechte hand der zentrale Dada W/3* (Armada from Duldgedalzen/gen. the dadaist Rosa Bonheur the right hand of the central Dada W/3). Seemingly an incomprehensible title, the inscription is in fact an attempt to introduce the new identity of a Dada Cologne collegium. The phrase *Das Geigenmal der*

[60] In her essay 'Dada into Surrealism: Max Ernst', Lucy Lippard proposes to see Dada as a precursor to Surrealism rather than an eccentric, short-lived phenomenon. As she explains: "Dada's nihilism […] was instrumental rather than fundamental. All the seeds of Surrealism were present in pre-Parisian Dada." See Lucy Lippard, 1971, 61.

Armada von Duldgedalzen, namely, the violin tale of Armada from Duldgedalzen is burrowed from a text by Heinrich Heine, describing the fate of a young girl from a small village of Duldgedalzen in the Tyrol, whose failed love for a neighbouring farmer drove her away from the country to the big city where she became a wealthy businesswoman. The young Armada, however, never recovered from her broken heart, and later in life returns to her hometown, bringing her large company's headquarters to the province. Armada's return does not console her pain as she had hoped, and instead it confirms a destructive imbalance between the industrial company under her ownership and serene country life, her financial success in comparison with her lost lover's struggle to keep his farm running, and her unfulfilled hopes of overcoming her longing for the past. Ernst's Armada is perhaps a kind of mascot or symbol for Cologne Dada, and the hand emerging from the flowerpot is its monument. Armada is also, however, linked to Ernst's wife, Lou, who is in turn also consistently represented in titles and writings as a kind of mascot. Ernst further refers to Lou in this caption as "Rosa Bonheur" (after the most famous French woman painter of the nineteenth century, Marie-Rosalie Bonheur, 1822-1899) describing her as the right hand of the central Dada W/3 (although the mannequin hand used for the sculpture is indeed a left one). This latter abbreviation refers to the three protagonists of Cologne Dada, Baargeld, Arp and Ernst, to whom Ernst would refer as "Westupidia", perhaps an indication of Cologne's westerly position in relation to Dada in Berlin. The various references evoked by the caption – Heinrich Heine's Armada, Marie-Rosalie Bonheur, Lou Ernst-Strauss, and the three protagonists of Dada Cologne – are indicative of Ernst's humorous preoccupation with the constitution, evocation and confusion of real-life personages with fictive ones. In addition to this, Werner Spies notes that *Armada v. Duldgedalzen*, as well as other similar works by Ernst from 1919 represent some of the very first examples in which an artwork takes the form of another artwork's documentation – that is, for example, a photograph taken by an artist of

one of their own sculptures; a gesture that will become important to conceptual artists in the second half of the twentieth century and particularly to artists who engaged in site-specific or time specific activities and considered photographic representation of these activities essential to their display. Spies' argument falls short however, lacking explanation as to how one can compare the motivations of site-specific practices to the kind of photographic documentations that Ernst was producing at the time. Camfield on the other hand suggests that Ernst's decision to sign his photographs might be understood as an attempt to explore photography as an equally relevant category of artistic production as painting or sculpture (Ernst, Camfield tells us, took a course in photography during his studies at Bonn University). The autograph, according to Camfield, is then meant to assert Ernst's authorship over the photographic reproduction. True as this may be, it seems more likely that Ernst's decision to sign his photograph was not intended merely as confirmation of his authorship, nor only as a provocative claim that photographic reproduction of a sculpture can be considered as an artwork in its own right. Rather, for Ernst, caption, signature, and image are all used as devices that generate a sense of narration; namely, that one element of the picture might clarify the signification of others and justify their value or meaning.

Thus, a more compelling argument concerning *Armada v. Duldgedalzen* is that Ernst is endorsing a strategy, according to which an artist's relationship to his images and objects is essential to the way they generate meaning. His person, his acts, his commitment to the work, and the way that the artefact reflects back on these aspects becomes an intricate part of the practice. It is interesting in light of this perspective to consider Ernst's influence also on post-minimalist and conceptualist photographic documentation work, and to examine the influence of the relationship between text, autographs, and images already at this early stage. Indeed, this very precedent became relevant to an examination of personal agency in the

photographic experiments of Pictures artists in the late 1970s, where new concerns about the ability of authorship to become a sufficient condition for narrative also arise. I return to this question later in this chapter.

Dessins Mécano-Plastiques

If the first and second categories of works in the exhibition checklist of *Bulletin D* manifested Ernst's interest in stepping outside of the traditional medium of painting and exploring the relationship between sculpture, painting and photography, the third category (included in the exhibition's second iteration in Düsseldorf) took this confusion of media one step further. This group of works includes a series of stereotype prints (also known as *cliché*), pencil or graphite rubbings on paper, and combinations of these procedures in which the artist included gouache, watercolour, and ink additions done by hand. Part of an elaborate series of works that will continue to evolve during the next two years, this range of works seems to have been subsumed by Ernst under the category of 'drawings'. As Spies indicates in his detailed survey *Max Ernst Collages*:

> Ernst now began to apply […] typographic manipulations of given elements to a series of original works, his printer's plate 'drawings'. These he composed using line etchings made for technical publications and brochures – detailed renderings and cross-sections of industrial equipment such as engines showing pistons, gears,

> drivershafts, chains, and belts – plates of a type that had been used to illustrate countless manuals ever since the Industrial Revolution.[61]

The use of the term 'drawings' in this context is intentionally emphasised by Spies. Ernst himself used the term in his correspondences with Tristan Tzara and other colleagues, as well as in catalogue entries throughout 1920, and in 1921 he would begin referring to these as *Dessins mécano-plastiques* (Mechano-plastic drawings). Varied in theme as well as technique this new category of works was invested in a process of copying, printing, or tracing technical diagrams, engineering plans and letter print-stencils to form new chimeric creatures and machines. Common to all of Ernst's new 'drawings' was the use of existing templates as the premise of his fantastic creations. Most attractive to Ernst were the intaglio letter blocks which he found at his printer's shop, Druckerei Hertz, and the engineering diagrams that he would source from specialised bookshops.[62] In the first instance, Ernst would place the letter-blocks under a piece of paper and follow their contours or rub over them with a pencil which he would later colour-in with gouache. At times, he would combine letters with architectural or engineering plans, or with other kinds of diagrammatic sketches in order to obtain complex figures or objects. For example, in *Chilisalpeterlein* (Little chilesaltpetre) of 1920 an anthropomorphic colourful figure is formed on the basis of letter blocks, most notably the letters 'J' and 'U' [fig.62, p.171]. The figure faces a large machine (composed almost entirely without colour) and a lengthy caption in German at the bottom of the page reads: "Little Chile Saltpetre 0,3 sends a small hazelnut kernel into the wide water vessel every number wins". As the caption implies, the coloured figure seems to be playing a game of chance,

[61] Spies, 1991 [1988], 42.

[62] Intaglio printing is a printing technique in which the image is incised into a surface. The sunken area then holds the ink to be applied. It is the direct opposite of a relief print. The word *intalgio* originates from Latin, and later Italian (*Intagliare*: to engrave, or cut).

either placing a bet in a slot machine, playing a game of Craps, or a combination of both.[63] The title of the work in turn, most likely referring to the main colourful figure, is also the name of a chemical compound. Chile saltpetre is a type of nitrate salt that was historically mined in Chile and known to be particularly soluble in water, hence, perhaps the reference to a large water vessel in the caption. The relationship between text and image in this composition remains unexplained although it encourages the viewer to suggest different readings or assumptions concerning the relationship between these varied components. What is clear is that Ernst is fascinated by technical diagrams as well as terminology and the way in which certain categories of knowledge or terminology can be conflated. More and more, Ernst will give way to handwritten captions and lengthy titles as ambiguous ciphers to his works, often in the guise of scientific explanations as can be seen in *La Canalisation de gaz frigorifié* (Canalization of Refrigerated Gas) of 1919-20 [fig.63, p.172]. Here a mechanism formed of gears, bicycle wheels, roulette wheels and springs forms a complex three-dimensional diagram accompanied by extremely small drawings of a heart, arteries, and lungs. The lengthy captions in this instance not only points to the relationship between text and image, it also draws the viewer's attention to a fascinating attribute of the picture's surface. Here, as in a growing number of works from this period, Ernst cuts around the edges of his composition and pastes the newly shaped paper on top of a rectangular paper support. The reasons for this gesture remain unclear. One possible explanation supported by evidence in a number of cases, is that Ernst was removing other elements or text from the original sheet of paper by cutting out only a portion of the page.

Much like the earlier photographic reproductions of his sculptures, the *dessins mécano-plastiques* relied on technical procedures combining hand craft and mechanical reproduction; rejecting

[63] The upper part of the machine is composed of a diagram of a Craps table. Craps is a dice game in which players make wagers on the outcome of the roll, or a series of rolls, of a pair of dice.

the readymade on the one hand and relying on its imprint on the other. The intaglio letters and engineering plans were particularly befitting to this task as they lent themselves from the very beginning to the conditions of further reproduction, which Ernst accepted and applied but also modified by tracing their shapes manually using graphite pencil, ink or gouache paint. In order to examine but one strand of this rich grouping, let us consider *Von minimax dadamax selbst konstruiertes maschinchen* (Little Machine Constructed by Minimax dadamax Himself), executed sometime in the winter of 1919-20 [fig.64, p.173]. The drawing, largely made on the basis of readymade letter blocks, includes all the necessary letters to form the names 'Arp' as well as 'Max'. The autobiographical aspect of the work – mention of names or references to the author and his colleagues – by now was becoming habitual in Ernst's practice. Two central figures dominate the composition and can be interpreted as anthropomorphic, one of which is leaning towards the other. In addition to the letters and geometrical lines drawn to complete their figures where needed, a water tap emerges from the left figure and is likely to represent male genitalia, as this symbolism occurs repeatedly in Ernst's constructions of the period. Lucy Lippard was the first to imply the link between these constructions and the medium of collage, albeit with a measure of scepticism as to the relevance of this term to Ernst's constructions, indicating that "the 1919-1920 printer's plate 'collages,' actually altered relief prints or rubbings made from the plates of a technical textbook", had a similar appearance to Picabia's works from the same time [fig.65, p.174]. However, Lippard continues, these "delicate, ordered, very abstract in spirit" constructions, were "quite different from Picabia's careless, awkward […] tracings made in Zurich just a month or so before."[64]

[64] Lucy Lippard, 1971, 66.

Indeed, since Lippard's comments were made in the early 1970s, it has been suggested repeatedly that the use of found, readymade letter plates and textbook illustrations in Ernst's early drawings from 1919-1920 is linked to his later and better-known methods of collage-making which took shape by 1921 and continued to occupy Ernst throughout the 1920s and '30s. It is however important to understand that Lippard's mention of the term 'collage' is meaningful in this instance, even if she remains suspicious of its relevance, not simply because the printer's plate drawings combine elements from different sources, but because they were joined together in a manner entirely different from the mentioned imagery of Picabia, for whom image sources provided inspiration and encouraged free-line drawing. Ernst, on the other hand, copied the original sources of imagery as meticulously as possible by means of rubbing, tracing or printing, hence transferring an image from one place to the another while taking ownership over it by means of the process by maintaining its original form as much as possible. Once more, an echo of this approach would become visible in later practices of image-appropriation among the Pictures generation artists, most notably in Richard Prince's work, where the artist claimed authorship over found imagery that was previously foreign to the vocabulary of art. Indeed, Ernst's approach to collage in these early experiments, was one that emerged out of interest in the illusionary and deceitful character of the mechanically reproduced image: not readymade and not original drawing or painting either. In fact, it is the artist himself that begins to function like a machine, reproducing prescribed shapes, letters and diagrams. As such, it is interesting to position Ernst's drawings on the fine line between machine-mimicry as employed by Picabia and appropriation as practiced by Duchamp around the same time [figs.65-66, pp. 174-175]. While the latter was interested in the use of the original readymade in his work, and the former in projecting parodies of the machine, Ernst was enthusiastic about the possibilities afforded by reproduction processes as a way of finding the image itself. As Werner Spies noted:

> Max Ernst very soon ceased to include quotations of real objects, going back to picture-making, that is, to a two-dimensional, illusionistic medium. Unlike Duchamp, who for his readymades included real objects almost exclusively, Max Ernst worked with *representations of objects*. And while Duchamp rejected the notion of processing or reworking, since it was a stylistic concept, each readymade being self-defining, processing played a decisive role in Max Ernst's work.[65]

By the end of 1920, repetition and reproducibility had infiltrated Max Ernst's practice entirely. As the stereotype prints and imprints show, Ernst was beginning to develop a keen interest in the transference of identical elements or letters from one work to the next, forming numerous series that would diverge and dissolve, sharing themes, motifs, or colour scales, all the while ignoring the original semantic meaning of certain source materials and emphasising that of others. These diagrammatic compositions, in turn, were predominantly vertical, resembling in most cases, as we have already seen in *Von minimax dadamax selbst konstruiertes maschinchen*, as well as in *La Canalisation de gaz frigorifié*, one or more standing figures. Ernst's work around this period, thanks to the introduction of the *dessins mécano-plastiques*, ceases to be linear, as he begins to develop several technical procedures in parallel, with "true collages" – as Spies calls the works that include bits of pasted papers in the final outcome – still avoided at all cost. In fact, when collage elements did enter his work, Ernst would add ink, pencil or gouache to a composition in order to blur the traces of the constructed section, enjoying the

[65] Werner Spies, 1991 [1988], 42.

contradiction between the illogical nature of a composition and its seamless appearance as a single coherent unity.

Inverted Collages

The obsession that Ernst developed with technical drawings in the course of 1919 prompted consideration of a whole new range of source materials, initially represented by pages appropriated from sales catalogues, but soon also including illustrated dictionaries, encyclopaedias and other textbooks that included groupings of images based on one or another category of similarity. The new readymade source materials attracted Ernst above all because of the odd groupings of images or symbols whose relationship he could easily conceal. These proved far more elaborate and stranger than the intaglio letter blocks and the engineering diagrams that he was employing so far. As Ernst himself recounted in his fictive/biographical essay *Au dela de la peinture* in 1936:

> One rainy day in 1919, finding myself in a village on the Rhine, I was struck by the obsession which held under my eyes the pages of an illustrated catalogue showing objects for anthropologic, microscopic, psychologic, mineralogic, and paleontologic demonstration. There I found elements of figuration so remote that the sheer absurdity of that collection provoked a sudden intensification of the visionary faculties in me and brought forth an elusive succession of contradictory images, double, triple and multiple images, piling up on each other with the persistence and rapidity which are peculiar to love memories and visions of half-sleep. These visions called themselves new planes, because of their meeting in a new unknown (a plane of

> nonagreement). It was enough at the time to embellish these catalogue pages, in painting or drawing, and thereby in gently reproducing only that *which saw itself in me*, a colour, a pencil mark, a landscape foreign to the represented objects, the desert, a tempest, a geological cross-section, a floor, a single straight line signifying the horizon, … thus I obtained a faithful fixed image of my hallucination and transformed into revealing dramas my most secret desire – from what had been before only some banal pages of advertising.[66]

What emerged from these "banal pages of advertising" or "illustrated catalogues" of various scientific disciplines or consumerist interests, I suggest can be most aptly described as a series of inverted collages, where instead of pasting elements onto paper, Ernst concealed or removed parts of the page he deemed superfluous in order to reveal the page's already existing "elusive succession of contradictory images". The method can be seen in works such as *1 Kupferblech, 1 zinkblech, 1 gummituch, 2 tastzirkel, 1 obflußfernrohr, 1 röhrender mensch* (1 Copper plate, 1 Zinc plate, 1 Rubber cloth, 2 Calipers, 1 Drainpipe telescope, 1 Pipe man) which Ernst already executed in the winter of 1919 [fig.67, p.176]. Here, Ernst appropriated a textbook page where chemistry and biology lab apparatus was illustrated and arranged across the page to form an inventory [fig.68, p.177]. Transforming the inventory picture by overpainting certain parts and integrating others he created a fantastic vision of two odd, unearthly figures, facing the viewer as they hover in a strange, desolate, geometric landscape. Regarded technically, the outcome is a mix of found imagery, hand-drawn elements, and painted surfaces – some areas meticulously and systematically covered, while others are patchy and irregular. The title of the work, in a parody of technical specification, enumerates

[66] Max Ernst, 2009 [1930], 25.

the items that Ernst removed from the composition by painting over them rather than those he kept, adding a personal interpretation of one item, the so-called "pipe man". The list of missing items encourages the viewer to look for correlations between the text and the image only to discover that these are never quite right. Much like Ernst's stereotype prints, his pencil rubbings, and even the few photographic reproductions of sculptures, this work too continues to explore ways in which imagery is juxtaposed without the spatial setting itself being fragmented. Instead, a seemingly coherent image is formed where nonetheless the viewer senses that something in the image is not right. Yet Ernst has avoided straightforward collage-making, concealing the process of his interventions and tying a group of unrelated elements to one another without having to cut and paste a single piece of paper.

The inverted collages mark an important stylistic distinction between Ernst and his contemporaries. Again, Lucy Lippard identified this rift in relation to Dada, stating that most Dada collages were easily identified by their "disective and destructive approach to accepted meanings and pictorial references; they were compositionally simple, and founded on the harsh conjunction of opposing realities." In Ernst's collages however:

> Dissimilar objects began to be connected by association so that the result was no longer a single new image but a new situation or drama composed of recognisable images integrated into a novel context, closer to the now standard idea of dream pictures. The unity of this carefully constructed oneiric-realism, unmistakably narrative in intent, was assured by such smooth passage between images…[67]

[67] Lucy Lippard, 1971, 73-5.

Lippard's analysis aptly identified the way in which Ernst cherished the delicate, often tacit resemblance between these pre-selected groups of elements that he employed. Operating like a series of metonyms accumulated one next to each other, the foreign/related elements in Ernst's proto-Surreal compositions encourage the viewer to notice their similarity and look in vain for a cohesive narrative that would explain the dream-like scenario. By contrast, many Dada collages, particularly the famous Berlin photomontages from the same period, manifested the opposite sensibility, juxtaposing images without a common origin (material or thematic) in order to provoke a certain predetermined range of associations that might arise from their combination. Even if these associations were meant to represent 'chaos' or 'nihilism', as was often the case, they were nevertheless part of an intended and devised plan. Dada photomontage, by and large, adopted its formal principles from cinema, advertising, and political campaigns, and stood for a political (even if anti-politics) position. Ernst's inverted collages enjoyed a sense of metonymic sensibility, a fascination with taxonomy, or the arrangements of groupings. Thus, instead of creating links between seemingly unrelated images, he estranged otherwise simple and straightforward categories of resemblance.

"True Collages" and Photo-Collages

Werner Spies, who authored Max Ernst's *Catalogue Raisonné* and became his most reputable biographer, coined much of the terminology relating to the artist's practice. In the present context, two terms raise considerable difficulties and require attention. The first is the notion of 'seamless collages', which I will address later in the text. The second however, relates to Ernst's experimentation with collage in 1920. Shortly before the summer, while Ernst was still

fully immersed in work on his inverted collages, he finally decided to take a step forward into the universe of cutting and pasting, most likely because he wanted to enrich his "constructed oneiric-realism" beyond the means provided to him by readymade catalogue pages in some particular instance. *C'est le chapeau qui fait l'homme* (It's the hat that makes the man) is the first collage of this kind [fig.69, p.178].[68] Not yet ready to abandon the readymade arrangements of catalogues altogether, Ernst formed four anthropomorphic figures made of cut-and-pasted hats illustrated in a sales catalogue. The figures are bound to one another by colourful geometric "cylinders" that Ernst drew with ink and painted in gouache. Like most of Ernst's works, a hidden biographical element was attached to the piece, in this case a reference to time working for his father-in-law's hat manufacturing company which he left earlier that year. What is important in this collage, however, is that only three of the four figures in the picture were formed on the basis of the original readymade catalogue constellation, while the fourth figure on the left hand-side of the composition was artificially constructed using individually pasted elements. For this pasted hat pile Ernst has used seven hat cut-outs from the same catalogue and placed them one on top another, (with one of the hats pasted upside down). He cut and pasted each of these elements so meticulously that even when examined with a magnifying glass the seams are hardly noticeable. The three other figures are formed on the basis of the existing illustration on the original catalogue page, from which Ernst only cut the corners and edges where he wanted to exclude certain hats, concealing others by means of overpainting with white gouache – not very discreetly in some instances. Spies' decision to define this work, and a group of new collages that will emerge in its aftermath as "true collages" is meant to refer to the use of scissors (or scalpel knife) and glue in the production process. In point of fact, not only was Ernst's technique discreet to begin with and hard to recognise in these collages, Spies' notion of "truth" is particularly interesting here

[68] Werner Spies, 1991 [1988], 58.

since the pasted compositions in subject are above all imaginative and unrealistic. It is more pertinent to propose that Ernst's very idea of collage had little to do with the material conditions or parameters of papers and glue. As he himself indicated in a short text from 1929, "I am tempted to see in collage the exploitation of the chance meeting of two distant realities on an unfamiliar plain or, to use a shorter term, a culture of systematic displacement and its effects". Nowhere in his definition does Ernst speak of papers, images or glue, but rather of 'culture', a more general term that indicates a certain sensibility. This definition, as we begin to see, enabled Ernst to explore the limits of the technique by occupying the undefined territories in its periphery.

In fact, the reason that Ernst postponed his direct engagement with cutting and pasting of papers for so long may be the fear that it would undermine his method of merging images, rather than materials. Indeed, once he began experimenting with cutting and pasting images in his compositions of summer 1920, it became clear to him that "true" collage provided him with a broader and different spectrum of images than those he included in his work so far, and to provide a different approach to imagery than what he saw in the work of his contemporaries. Lippard, preoccupied with Ernst's deviation from Dada and his anticipation of Surrealism, explains:

> On Ernst's part the real breakthrough was the photocollage medium – not the heightened realism of the Cubist *papier collé* or the explosive vignettes of the Futurist *Paroles in liberta* or the combination of these two modes employed by the Berlin Dadas, but hallucinatory, fragmented images from reality deracinated and rearranged in a new context to form an entirely new image rather than a grotesque version

> of the original […]. By setting his hybrid forms in a photographic interior or landscape that is credible, if unheard-of, Ernst achieved a coherence alien to Dada and a consistently fantastic image alien to earlier movements.[69]

Yet Lippard's commentary about a "photographic interior or landscape that is credible, if unheard-of" requires some clarification. What she identifies as 'photo-collage' in Ernst is in fact a broad category of works in which photographic elements are employed not only as additions to a drawn or painted composition, but predominantly as the foundation of the work – most typically as both background and foreground. Works such as the *Die chinesische Nachtigall* (Chinese Nightingale) [fig.70, p.178], *Die Flamingos* (The Flamingos) [fig.71, p.180], and *Hier ist Noch Alles in der Schwebe* (Here everything is still floating) [fig.72, p.181], all from 1920, are but a handful of good examples where a textured background composed of a photograph – grass, a bird's-eye view of a harbour, or a sky with some scattered clouds – is made into the foundation of a fantastic scenario. The glued elements, in turn, are carefully positioned although their distant origins are no longer concealed. Thus, one can identify which parts were added even though hardly any traces attest to the production process. This process was further complicated in two ways: first, by using figurative elements in a manner that appears ambiguous, at times undecipherable. Consider, for example, the composite parts of the *Die chinesische Nachtigall* – a grassy patch, two hands, a fan, a bird's wing, an eye, and a bomb are made into a human figure that detaches itself from and dissolves into the background. Second, as Ernst was expanding the range of source materials he was using, he was also further complicating the semantic common denominator between the categories of objects that his collages presented. Indeed, his initial tendency towards metonymic

[69] Lucy Lippard, 1971, 70.

relationships among groups of elements from single source, such as a sales catalogue page, a picture novel or a history book, grew more versatile with time. *Hier ist Noch Alles in der Schwebe* offers a particularly good example, since the material distinction between the constructed and the readymade elements that pertain to the background picture is particularly difficult to ascertain. Consider the background photograph which Ernst borrowed from a book on German military aviation, (possibly the same source he used for the body in his *Die chinesische Nachtigall*). His seemingly political decision to use a photograph that depicts an aerial bomb in mid-fall is then contrasted by a pasted figure of a bisected beetle that conceals the most crucial part of the photograph, further diverting our attention by the inclusion above it of a cross section of a fish. *Hier ist Noch Alles in der Schwebe* thus sets a series of semantic, near-metonymic exchanges in action, between sky and sea, animals and warfare, clouds and smoke. The result is that one begins to encounter a new side of Ernst's collages, where the relationship between the various elements, which was already superseding mere binary or a provocative juxtaposition, (as well as an overt commentary on the political nature of the photograph in the background), also further solicits a complex narrational interpretation of the scene, a storyline. The narrative is anchored thanks to the full title of the work, provided as a handwritten caption within the composition, given to it by Hans Arp as part of a loose series of collaborations that Ernst initiated under the title of *Fatagaga* (short for *Fabrication des Tableaux Gasométriques Garantis*).[70] Arp's full title for the collage was indeed a story in its own right. Inscribed on the margins of the work itself, the title reads: "Here everything is still floating / it is not yet 2 o'clock / no one was still thinking about the two ferdinis with their

[70] Ernst's *Fatagaga* collaborations also included Theodore Baargeld, Luise Strauss-Ernst, and other colleagues from Cologne Dada. The level of agency these collaborators were given however in such works varied and Ernst's *Fatagaga* works often verged on mere appropriation of comments made by his colleagues. Similar forms of collaboration indeed continued to form an integral part of Ernst's work, as well as Arp's. See, for example, Eric Robertson's commentary on Arp's *Poupée portant Schwitters* (Doll carrying Schwitters) of 1959 [fig.27, p.91], in which the artist incorporated a section of an old collage by Schwitters into his own work. According to Robertson, such processes of "destruction in its most literal form – the undoing of a work of art – is a precursor, or even an integral part of the [artist's] creative act." Eric Robertson, 'Foregin Bodies: Arp with Miró and Schwitters', *Schwitters, Miró, Arp*, (Munich, London, New York: Hauser & Wirth Publishing, DelMonico and Prestel: 2016 97.

flying hams and hats (still in top form!) here the armada is definitely still defeated for the first time / the rainbow eater didn't know / the gut steamer and skeleton fish decided to take off."[71]

A growing complexity of text and formal construction characterises Max Ernst's photo-collages of the second half of 1920, several containing a larger number of pasted elements which the viewer was not always able to identify as such or interpret easily. Ernst's photo-collages included multiple sources of imagery and his *Fatagagas* also involved multiple authors (Ernst would construct the collage and one of his colleagues – Lou, Baargeld or Arp – would provide the title). He also decided that instead of concealing the construction of his collages by means of retouching, drawing and overpainting as he had done in the past, he would now extend his engagement to include a photographic reproduction in order to bring his compositions back to something like their original state as prints or photographs – a process one could easily call 'rephotography'. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Louis Aragon was the first theoretician to list this technical procedure as one of Ernst's primary collage techniques: "a photograph, pure and simple," he wrote, "in which the arrangement of objects is rendered unrecognisable."[72] Werner Spies further divided this category of works in two: first, photographs where Ernst would sign his name on the printed reproduction of his collage, specifying works such as *Sambesiland* [fig.73, p.182] and *Die Anatomie als Braut* (The Anatomy as a Bride) [fig.74, p. 183], both from 1921. And second, works in which he would add one or two collage elements after having printed the work, as in *Un Peu Malade le Cheval Patte Pelu* (A little Sick the Horse with the Plush Paw) of 1920 [fig.75, p.184], or hand draw certain lines or highlights with ink or tempera as in the

[71] Translation by John William Gabriel from the original title in German.

[72] Aragon, it should be noted, did not see any of Ernst's later wood engraving collages in the exhibition at *Au Sans Pareil* and therefore the last category to be discussed in this chapter is lacking from his analysis of Ernst's collages.

abovementioned *Die Flamingos*, also from 1920. In either case, the gesture of photographing the finished photo-collage in order to flatten its surface and conceal its construction might have seemed like a minor, almost imperceptible technical addition to Ernst's repertoire, but it marked, as we shall see, a crucial achievement both in his work and in his legacy in conceptual terms.

Ernst's reprinted (or rephotographed) collages eliminated most of the physical traces representing the laboured cutting and pasting process, marking a new distinction between handmade collages, which he now started calling "maquettes", and rephotographed collages. It is around this point that Ernst took a step back from his experiments with photography and set out for the first time in two years to review the arsenal of technical procedures that he so carefully developed during this period. Stereotype printing, diagrams, and catalogue illustration provided him with various ways to generate smooth transitions from one image-element to another, not just in texture but also as a unified picture whose composite elements cannot be deconstructed so easily.

One particular printing method that attracted Ernst now more than any other was that of wood-cut engravings. These represented a popular method of printing in the nineteenth century which enabled artists to produce illustrations directly onto a wooden surface that was subsequently reproduced in picture novels, dictionaries or other printed materials.[73] Wood-cut engraving illustrations, unlike photographic reproductions manifested to Ernst a latent potential. The production method of a wood-cut engraving was based on the principle of marking parallel lines, dots and breaks onto the surface of the plate. This method enabled

[73] The combination of the new wood engraving method with mechanised printing promoted rapid expansion of illustrations in the nineteenth century. Advances in stereotype printing methods also enabled wood-cut engravings to be reproduced onto metal, where they could be mass-produced for sale to printers.

artists to create illustrations of great detail, but it also maintained something of a crude manifestation or trace of a grid, or pattern, that Ernst thought emblematic of mechanical reproduction. In fact, wood-cut engravings represented a technical process that was already becoming outmoded by 1920, gradually being replaced by photography and new printing methods. Nevertheless, it still represented the most widespread form of printed illustration available in books and publications. Moreover, Ernst found that he was attracted to the slightly out-of-fashion format, and to its nineteenth century aesthetics – not so much out of nostalgia but rather because he saw potential in an image-type that was losing its currency. Secondly, Ernst realised that such images were easier to manipulate or recontextualise than current news images from contemporary media. His attraction to slightly outmoded nineteenth century materials distinguished Ernst's collages from those of his colleagues very clearly. As his writings attest, his seeming obsession with the outmoded had to do with his interest in recovering the fragmented memories of his childhood, or even something of the time that preceded his birth – as well as anticipating the technology of his time, if only implicitly.

A new series of collages based entirely on wood-cut engraving illustrations emerged from 1921 as a natural step that brought together the various conclusions he had reached through his different experiments with line, print and image over the last two years. It was a simple, but revolutionary transition: taking printed illustrations produced by means of wood-cut engraving, Ernst could cut-out and rearrange the images into new compositions with little distinction. Nevertheless, he would then submit his collages to another printing process in order to form a unity in colour as well as texture. From 1921 onwards, he focused almost exclusively on this new method of collage-making. In a letter to Tristan Tzara of November 1920, having sent him a few handmade collages which they agreed to print in Zurich, Ernst

inquired specifically whether he could "show the engraver how to hide the seams of the pasted pieces in the reproductions."[74] This comment is informative. While in the Cologne photo-collages Ernst had controlled and played with the level of concealment that his reproductions would have, now he was entrusting his compositions as *maquettes* to others, and demanding a specific kind of result. The new approach to collage-making also encouraged new modes of distribution of the finished artworks, including postcards, posters, photographic enlargements, and above all printed publications and periodicals, such as those produced in collaboration with Paul Eluard and published in 1922 – *Répétitions* [fig.76, pp. 185], and *Les Malheurs des Immortels*.

"Seamless Collages"

The first wood-cut engraving collage that Ernst made has since become something of an emblem to this cycle of works. The title itself – *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen* (The Preparation of Bone Glue) – is likely to have been intended as a ridicule of the more conventional technique of collage making [fig.77, p.186].[75] Or, it can also be read as a proposition that links Ernst's preoccupation with collage to the principle of identity – namely, as an expression of the analogy between collage and the constitution of personal identity, something that glues a person together but also conceals contradictions.[76] *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen* depicts a

[74] Postcard addressed to Tristan Tzara, undated but presumably from November 1920. See Spies, 1991, 68.

[75] *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen* is widely regarded as the first wood-cut engraving collage, although it is likely to have been preceded by an untitled work that Ernst sent together with a short letter to Paul Eluard on 25 August, 1921. In his letter, Ernst mentioned the work, suggesting that "this game here doesn't seem to me bad at all." [see, fig. 78, p.187].

[76] This analogy is also visible, and perhaps most famously so, in the exhibition poster Ernst prepared for his exhibition *Max Ernst: Dernieres oeuvres*, for Cahiers d'Art, Paris, May 17-31, 1935, where a photograph of the artist's face is broken into fragments as if it was made of glass, and interrupted by handwritten text the runs along the cracks [fig.87, p.196].

woman lying on a sofa in a pose reminiscent of the new psychotherapeutic methods of Freud. She is covered with bandages or patches that conceal parts of her legs, arms, body and even her eyes, and she is surrounded by a number of cups or liquid vessels whose function is unspecified (nor is it clear whether these subtract or provide liquids from or to the body). Part patient, part mummy, both a gladiator and a sleeping beauty, the anonymous figure functions as a model both for technical instructions and sexual messages. The descriptive title of the work, in turn, seems almost plausible for a moment. In reality however, the image Ernst used depicts a woman who is undergoing a medical treatment known as a diathermy process; a surgical procedure introduced in Germany around 1907 that entailed the application of electrically induced heat for the purpose of muscle relaxation. The most surprising aspect of this collage is the discovery of how little Ernst had intervened in the original illustration. Only three very minor pasted elements have been added to this picture according to Camfield's close examination of the work. These are "the screwdriver-like form in the upper left, the sphere immediately below it, and a second sphere under the woman's elbow."[77] None of the other elements – the patches, the odd table, or the three vessels – was added by the artist. Ernst was excited about the results and used this work in order to promote his new technique over the course of the next year: as postcards, printed editions for galleries and friends, a fragment within a larger collage which he prepared as a promotional poster for an exhibition [fig.79, p.188], as a lead image for a new publication, and lastly, as a large oil painting which he produced later that year with luminous colours, now lost [fig.80, p.189]. This last instance raises a broader question about the relationship of Ernst's collages to his painterly work from this period and over the following decade. It demonstrates still further that Ernst had no difficulty in shifting between media or in anchoring his work in photographic materials or found illustrations that can function as the basis of his paintings. The most famous instance of

[77] Camfield, 1993, 102.

such form of image appropriation in Ernst's work can be found in his painting *Der Elefant von Celebes* of 1921, where Ernst took a photograph of a very large earth-made corn-bin somewhere in Sudan, which he then used as the source of inspiration for an imaginary beast [figs.81-82, pp.190-191].

The exact temporality of Ernst's source materials deserves emphasising. The medical illustration employed for *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen*, must have been a recent one, considering the invention of this procedure took place in 1907 – even though it remained far removed from anything employed by Ernst's Dada contemporaries, such as found materials from their domestic environment, samples from the waste of big city life, daily newspapers or political propaganda combined with advertising slogans and imagery. In fact, one of the reasons Ernst is so often regarded as a precursor of Surrealism's sensitivity to images and text is because he intentionally distanced himself from contemporary as well as mainstream imagery in his collages from a very early stage. Instead, he immersed himself more and more in recent, yet obsolete images sourced from nineteenth century picture novels that were produced, as already mentioned, shortly before his time, as well as encyclopaedias and dictionaries of the same period. These would soon become the source material for three of Ernst's best-known publications, his collage-novels, *La femme 100 têtes* (1929), *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel* (1930), and *Une Semaine de Bonté* (1934). Each one of these novels was produced over a short intensive period of time, often during a trip abroad, and represents an ambitious project where the surreal, hallucinatory scenarios and their seductive, yet unattainable narratives are expanded from individual images to sequences. Repetition in these novels occurs not only in the manner that the images are appropriated from their original contexts but also within the novel itself. Characters, scenes, and motifs reappear time

and time again, suggesting to the viewer that the novel is arranged according to a narrative that one might be able to decipher, even if such attempts are doomed to failure.

Indeed, the first two collage-novels mentioned above were still very much characterised by juxtaposition of image and text on each page. The collages in *Une semaine de bonté* however, were purely image based, and text was only introduced in the chapter titles that divided the novel into seven main sections according to the days of the week. Let us consider one spread from the pages of the third notebook, dedicated to 'Tuesday' [figs.83-84, pp.192-193]. The two collages on each side of this spread provide no, or very little, indication of their constructed identity. The furnishings, carpet and wallpaper in both scenes imply a similar (if not identical) domestic environment. Both scenes display an opulent background, a nineteenth century wallpaper and carpet, and consistent period furniture with upholstered padding patterns. The collage on the left-hand side of the spread depicts two ladies sitting on a sofa facing each other and holding hands as if they are engaged in an intimate conversation. A scaled animal (presumably a pangolin) draws our attention as it climbs on one of the two seated women, although she, as well as her interlocutor, show no reaction at all. The awry situation shifts our attention to the exceptional resemblance between the pangolin's scales and the padding of the sofa on which the women are sitting, as well as to a wider sense of consistency that binds the dresses, wallpapers, carpet, and furniture to be part of a strangely organic – almost living – setting. Two unusual paintings hang above the women: the first displaying two faces gazing into each other's eyes while their noses touch one another; the second, just below, depicts a close-up of a person's chin. The scale in both paintings – is unusually large in proportion to the frame – implying that someone may have interfered with the original composition. Placed across from this surreal domestic scene is the second collage. Here too, a similar composition displays two (different) figures in a domestic scene. A painting

is hung on the wall, this time, presenting a person's ear – perhaps in continuation of the chin presented in the previous page. At the centre of the scene is a well-dressed man holding a cane stick and a woman dressed in undergarments. Both figures are drawing their arms back as if in preparation to strike the armchair in front of them. The uncanny resemblance of the chair's padding to the scaled pangolin in the previous collage suggests to the viewer that the two scenes may have gotten confused: perhaps the two ladies were meant to be alarmed and ready to strike the pangolin, while the man and the woman in undergarments were supposed to hold hands in intimacy.

On a technical level, as Spies insightfully noted, the wood engraving collages, whether in individual works or in the later collage novels, lent themselves to manipulation and illusion more easily than the photographic collages. "Photography," Spies writes, "could not supply the type of pattern Max Ernst wanted. […] The photographic process tends to blur forms, creating painterly effects and halftones that, in Max Ernst's eyes, must have limited its usefulness. The few photographic patterns that do appear in his work have textures inherent to the subject matter rather than to the medium per se," (the grass in *Die Chinesische Nachtigall*, the sand and rocks in *Sambesiland*, and the sky in *Hier ist Noch Alles in der Schwebe*). However, Spies continues, "Illustrations printed from wood engravings have a different character altogether, because the subject is entirely translated into a system of lines and dots. These engraved patterns helped Max Ernst to create more homogenous collages, but they also introduced a new type of ambiguity."[78] Namely, a difficulty to decipher which parts of the composition were tempered with and which were simply appropriated from the original. The wood engraving pattern of lines, dots, breaks and empty spaces, was indeed an important factor for Ernst, who could exploit the merging of images with one another seamlessly. But it

[78] Werner Spies, 1991 [1988], 77.

also provided a certain tactility to his collages; one that attested to the nature of these images as the product of a mechanical procedure that was not entirely automatic but rather still relied heavily on manual craftsmanship. Wood-cut engravings, in common with pasted-paper collages provided a medium that enjoys a liminal state between manual craft and mechanical reproduction.

As we have come to see, for Ernst the exploration of technical procedures was a vital factor in his work, not for their own sake but only insofar as suited his conceptual motivations. Ernst's attraction to out-of-fashion imagery available to him in the form of wood-cut engravings opened the door to a kind of pictorial practice that could function as a form of critique aimed at a certain part of society through its manifestation in visual culture. Indeed, from its inception, the mass-produced image had followed the fast pace of technological development, large scale of production, and the quick circulation of materials, but it came into use in different ways among different groups of consumers. The picture-novel, encyclopaedia and dictionaries of the nineteenth century were largely aimed at middle- and upper-class consumers and preoccupied with their material and visual world. As André Breton remarked in 1928, distinguishing Ernst's sensibility from that of Picasso, Braque and the Cubists: "The *papier collé*" was "once the talk of Paris," but had been replaced by Ernst's new sensibility to found imagery. "It is almost over with the pipe, the newspaper that wasn't even tomorrow's, and the guitar". What distinguished Max Ernst's collages from such Cubist constructions in Breton's view was the type of images that he was engaging with in his work; images that seemed referential to a world gradually being forgotten, and in which what used to appear as ordinary has now entered the domain of the extra-ordinary. "You know what he started with?" Breton wrote, as if confiding Ernst's artistic development to the reader: "With Rimbaud's famous weakness for paintings hung above doors, stupid song refrains, moral

revolutions… Max Ernst seems to have inherited this taste for off-beat culture."[79] Breton was thrilled to link Ernst's work with that of Rimbaud, his own hero and the man he deemed to be the proto-Surrealist poet. While Breton does not complete his list of Rimbaud's oddities – perhaps because he assumed it to be common knowledge among his readers at the time – the poet's words deserve full disclosure in this context:

> I loved idiotic paintings, overdoors, décors, pictures of acrobats, shop signs, popular illustrations; old fashioned literature, church Latin, erotic books with bad spelling, our grandmothers' novels, fairy tales, the little books from childhood, old operas, simple refrains, naïve rhythms.[80]

Such everyday things, nostalgic, outmoded, often neglected or forgotten for years in the less attended corners of the home, captured Ernst's attention just as they did Rimbaud's, who died in the year of Ernst's birth, 1891. But again, while the range of these sources was on the one hand broad and indiscriminate, it related to the lifestyle of a particular social stratum, namely an educated middle-class.

Surprisingly, a close examination of Ernst's wood-cut engraving collages tells us that their production method predominantly consisted of making minor, often barely noticeable adjustments to or interventions in the readymade image itself. As Ernst noted in his autobiographical description in *Beyond Painting* and referenced at the beginning of this chapter: "They readily compare him [Max Ernst] to a very light earthquake which gently

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[79] André Breton, 'Surrealism et la peinture', *La Révolution Surréaliste*, (Paris, October 1, 1927, no.9-10, 38.

[80] Arthur Rimbaud, *Oeuvres Complètes*, (Paris: Gallimard 1972), 106.

displaces the furniture yet is in no hurry to change the position of things."[81] Here, Ernst hints at his way of working as an artist, using simple, often minimal gestures that nevertheless cause confusion in our reading of the image; a slight intervention here, an addition of a single item on the margins there, a new title, or the obliteration of an original context to illuminate while preserving a composition that is attractive and confusing to begin with. Such a strategy seems compatible with the kind of work we see in almost all his 'seamless collages', encouraging the viewer to imagine that the collage before them was produced in a delicate and complicated process where numerous elements were placed against matching backgrounds to form a complex and entirely artificial scenario. In fact, however, much of what seems extra-ordinary in our minds as viewers was there all along; a strange domestic scene from a picture novel or an instructive illustration from a 'how-to' book. Consider for example the odd pictures of a chin and an ear in the two collages from *Une Semaine de Bonté* analysed above, both of which were not added to the image by Ernst, but in fact were part of the original page Ernst appropriated. Another example of this kind of sensitivity, produced around the end of the period discussed in this chapter, is *Studenten in Heidelberg* (Students from Heidelberg) of 1921 [fig.85, p.194]. This small collage, measuring no more than 7 x 9 cm, is based on a wood-cut engraving illustration that Ernst appropriated from an article discussing alternative techniques for whistling using one's fingers [fig.86, p.195]. The illustration depicts three young individuals, each demonstrating a different method of whistling using one's fingers. To this small instructive picture Ernst has added two illustrations of handheld stamping press devices, which he positioned carefully at the very bottom of the work. The impact of the additions is minimal, and their role is unexplained, yet the result suggests that the handles resemble blow horns and relate on some level to the act of whistling performed by the figures – even though this connotation is entirely subjective. The title of the work, meanwhile, alters

[81] Max Ernst, 1936 [2009], 32.

the image from being an instructive diagram to a caricature or humoristic portrait of young student stereotypes.

Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen and *Studenten in Heidelberg*, alongside other wood-cut engraving collages from 1921 represent the hiatus of an intense two-year experimentation period that had taken Ernst through a broad range of technical procedures: from metaphysical painting, through *relief-assemblages* and sculptures made from found materials and objects, to various methods of printing, copying and tracing of templates, letter intaglio blocks, appropriation of catalogue pages, overpainting, experimental titles and captions, photo-collages, photography, and indeed one form of rephotography, eventually leading to the collages of wood-cut engravings that would later form Ernst's celebrated collage-novels in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

It remains to ask whether despite the homogenous appearance of these wood-engraving collages, the notion of 'seamless collages' might be a misleading title for this group. On the one hand, the choice of wood-engraving illustrations as the basis for collages was partly due to this medium's ability to supply images from different sources without distinction. The cuts and edges of the final collages are consistently concealed by the printing process, as well as any colour differences between different papers in the original or in their condition. However, it is difficult to ignore the fact that Spies' terminology – that is, his identification of these works as "seamless collages" – was only developed in hindsight and has little support in Ernst's own terminology. Throughout the 1920s and '30s – Ernst's most prolific years of making and writing – the artist insisted on broadening the categories of traditional media rather than specifying and dividing them into subcategories. At first, as we saw at the opening of this chapter, he identified new methods of printing, tracing, rubbing and overpainting in

the name of 'drawing'. Then, he explored the notion of collage as a "culture of systematic displacement and its effects", not primarily as a technique. The title of his most important essay on collage, in turn, is a proposition to view collage through the prism of painting. *Beyond painting* might undermine what painting had been so far, but it does not abandon the term, rather expands it. Finally, Ernst's method of writing seems to explore the potential of thinking by way of collage – juxtaposing new and old writings, infusing his own texts with excerpts from others (sometimes altering citations, sometimes leaving them untouched), and formulating his writing in the third person, posing questions and answering them as in a dialogue. For example, asking himself "What is the mechanism of collage?", Ernst replies in the following manner:

> A ready-made reality, whose naïve destination has the air of having been fixed, once and for all (a canoe), finding itself in the presence of another and hardly less absurd reality (a vacuum cleaner), in a place where both of them must feel displaced (a forest), will, by this very fact, escape to its naïve destination and to its identity; it will pass from its false absolute, through a series of relative values, into a new absolute value, true and poetic: canoe and vacuum cleaner will make love. The mechanism of collage, it seems to me, is revealed by this very simple example.[82]

It might be argued that the "displacement" described here by Ernst can hardly be accommodated by the notion of a 'seamless collage'. The term 'identity', however – also used in this short paragraph – presents a more complex alternative. For indeed, as the detailed

[82] Ibid, 22-3.

itinerary of these two years of experimentation in Ernst's work shows, a complex interpretation of the term 'identity' unfolds inside it; both as a way of cancelling the distinction between an author and their creation – as "flagrant contradictions" in a single object or person – and as a method for redeeming images from their conventional reading imposed on them by external circumstances or convention. If one is to place a canoe and a vacuum cleaner side by side in the middle of a forest – that is, not as a clash of impossible worlds but as a genuine proposal for an alternative reality – an opportunity arises to revaluate each one of these three elements (canoe, vacuum cleaner and forest) with fresh eyes; an opportunity to reconsider their meaning, their measure or scale, to appropriate their function, examine their shape, even give them another name. Such an opportunity will also offer a way to explore how the notion of identity can be understood not as a static principle but as a generative and flexible mechanism.

I have tried to show throughout this chapter that Ernst's fascination with collage was fundamentally reliant on removing objects from one context and reintroducing them into another as naturally and nonchalantly as he possibly could. The success of this gesture, he believed, relied entirely on the fact that at no point would it reveal itself as a makeshift or forced construction. Instead, he sought to give way to a certain transparency, a way to explore the notion of 'identity' "in the flagrant contradictions (apparent) which exist between his spontaneous comportment and the dictates of his conscious thought."[83] Aragon tried to explain this tactic by suggesting that Ernst's constructions behave much more like poems than pasted paper compositions, since in these, images "play the role of a word" rather than the expression of a physical material conjunction.[84] In poetry, the ultimate domain of metaphor

[83] Ibid, 32.

[84] Louis Aragon, 1990 [1930], 54.

and other figurative tropes, unexpected words from distant semantic orders are placed side by side without any introduction or warning, nor are they distinguished by any material differentiation (all words being made of the same substance). And such combination of seemingly unrelated worlds is indeed at its most powerful when unexpected and unaccounted for (this is perhaps the most crucial distinction between metaphor and simile – metaphor links unrelated semantic units abruptly, while simile introduces a relationship with caution and premonition, 'x' *is like* 'y'). The surprising, yet ordinary appearance of poetic expressions is thus made possible above all because verbal and written languages, for the most part, are based on the composition and arrangement of pre-existing words as building blocks. And this where Aragon's analogy falls short, since images do not behave in the same way as written words. They are, as we shall see in the following chapter, formed of a different substance that lends itself to different linguistic conditions, impossible to reduce into a limited system or a finite number of vocabulary combinations.

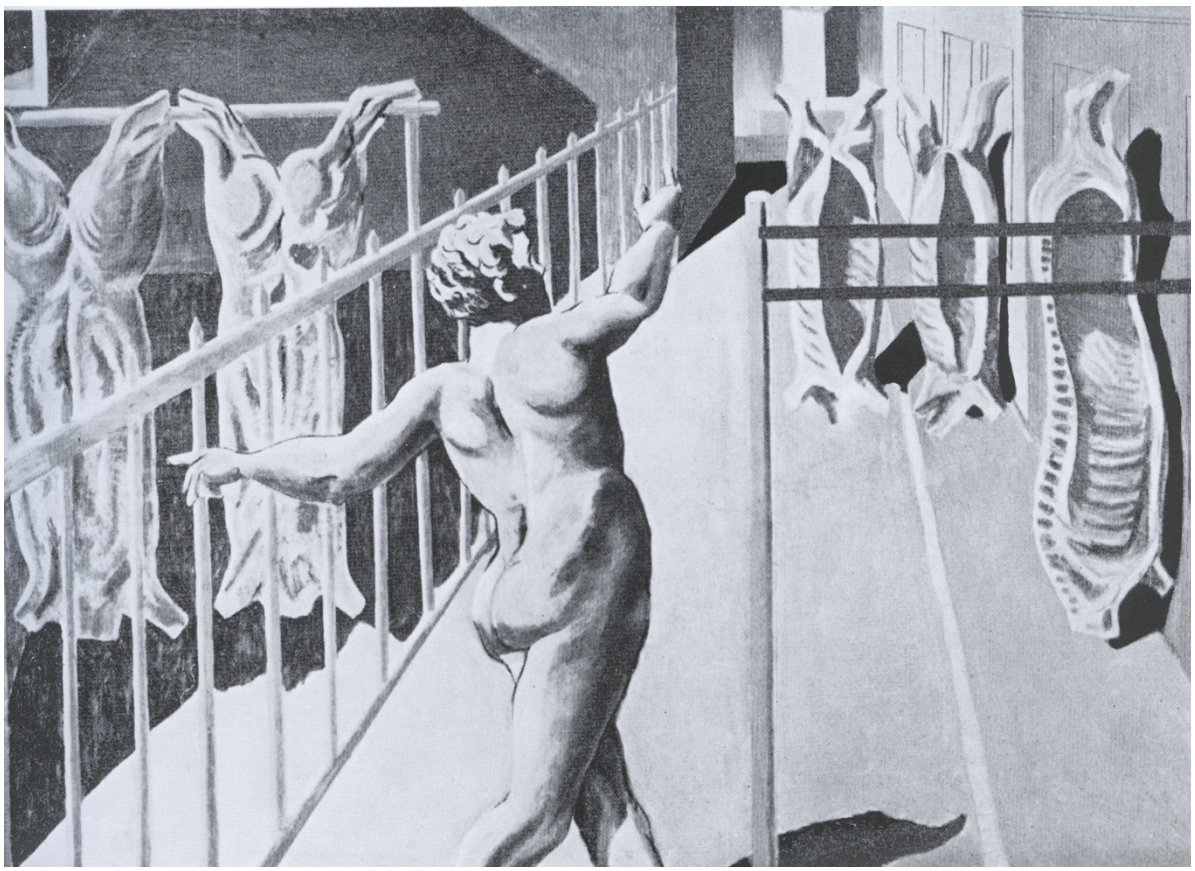


Fig. 54, Max Ernst, *Das Jüngste Gericht,* 1919, Oil on canvas, 120 x 167 cm, (Black and white reproduction).



Fig. 55, Max Ernst, *Aquis submersus*, 1919, Oil on canvas, 54.0 x 43.8 cm.

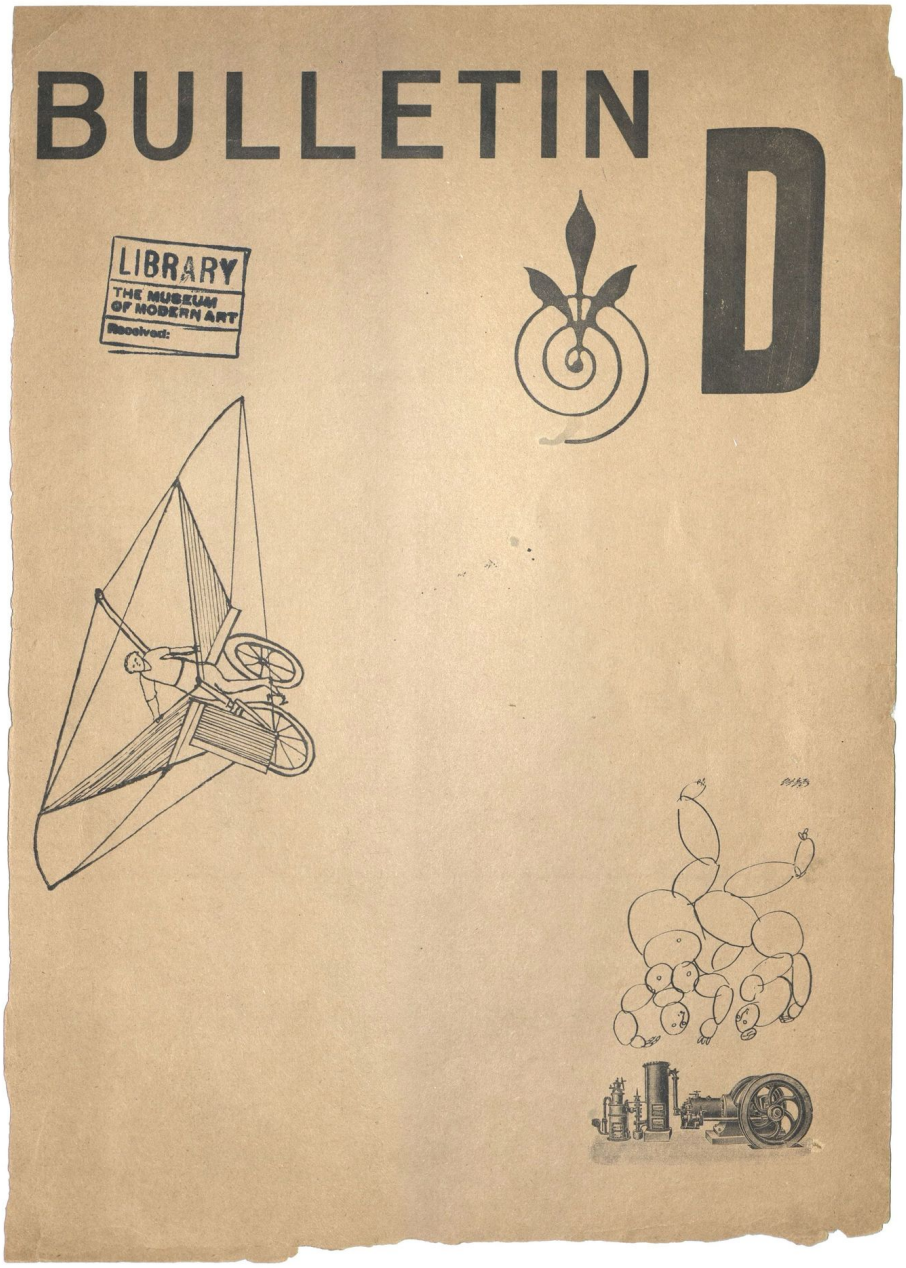


Fig. 56, Max Ernst and Hans (Jean) Arp's Front cover artwork for Max Ernst, Johannes Theodor Baargeld and Alfred Emanuel Ferdinand Gruenwald's *Bulletin D* publication, 1919, Letterpress and line block, 31 × 22.1 cm. [the present reproduction also bears a stamp of the library of the Museum of Modern Art, New York].

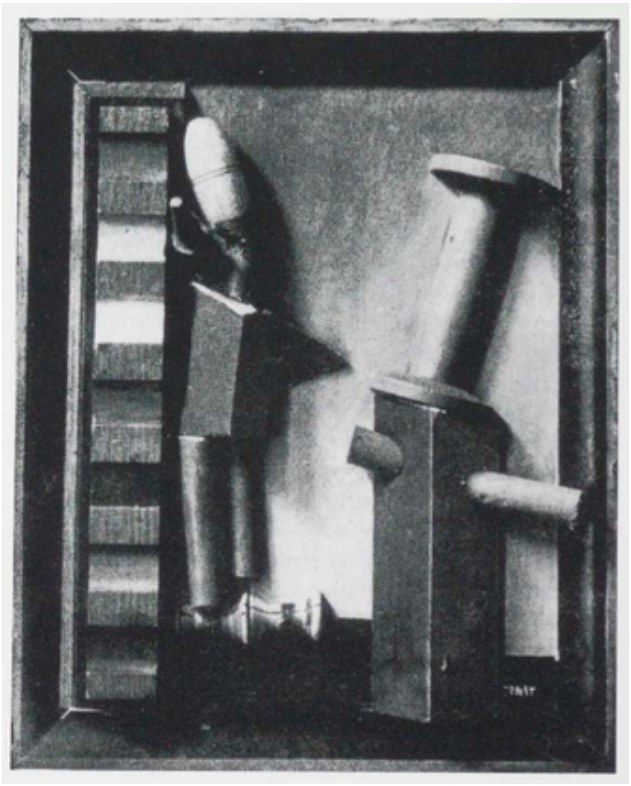


Fig. 57, Max Ernst, *Architektur*, 1919, wooden construction, dimension unknown, (now lost, Black and white reproduction).



Fig. 58, Max Ernst, *Le Fruit d'Une Longue Expérience,* 1919, Construction of scrap wood elements (some painted), iron rod, metal and wire, 45,7 x 38 cm.



Fig. 59, Alexander Archipenko, *Sculpto-peinture,* c. 1919, Wood construction, Dimensions unknown, (now lost, Black and white reproduction).



Fig. 60, Kurt Schwitters, *Das Arbeiterbild*, 1919, paper, wood and metal pasted on panel, 125 x 91 cm.

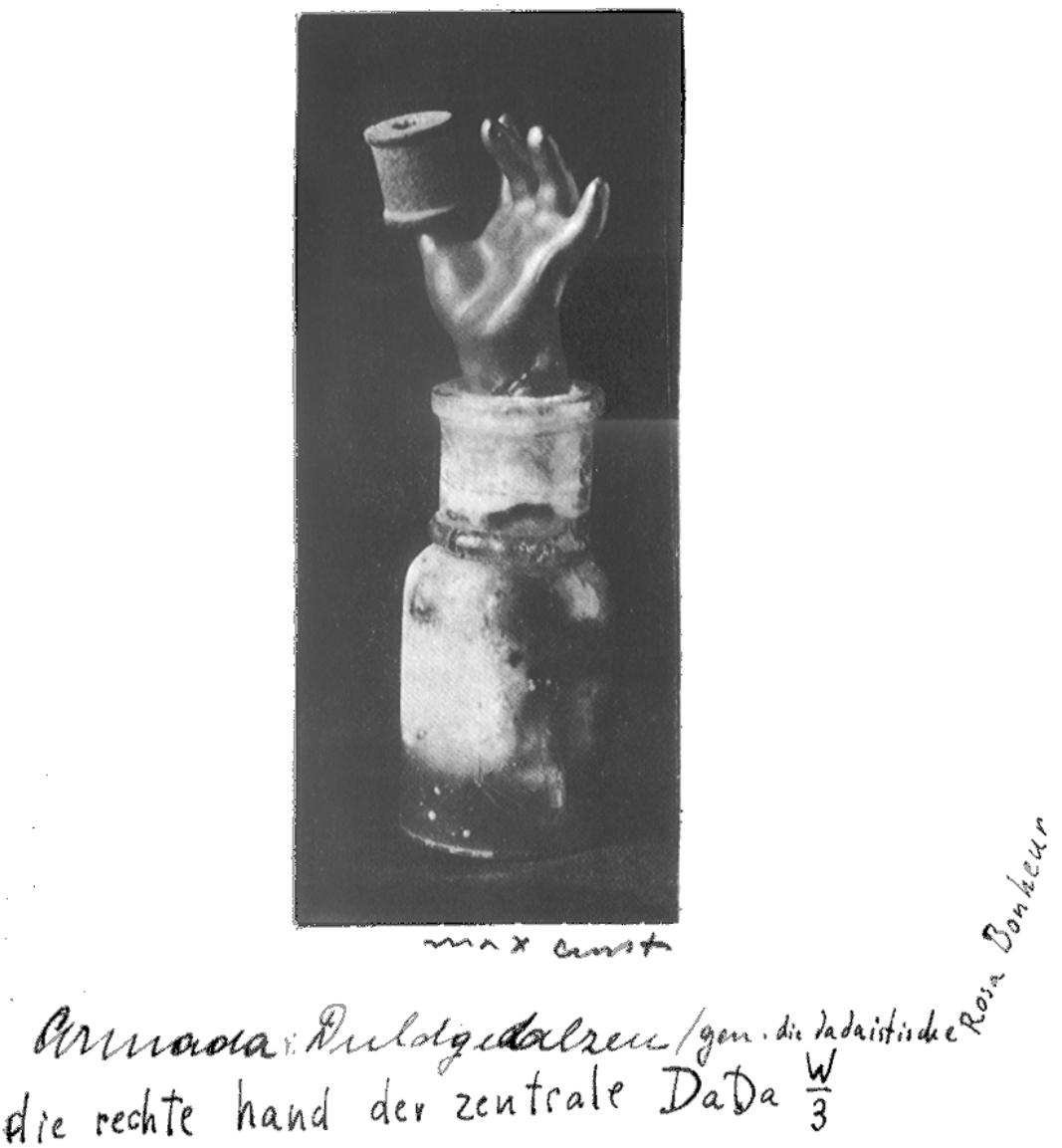


Fig. 61, Max Ernst, *Armada v. Duldgedalzen*, 1919, Photograph of a sculpture by Max Ernst made of a wooden mannequin's hand and a wooden spool, accompanied by a handwritten text, 16.7 x 11.8 cm.

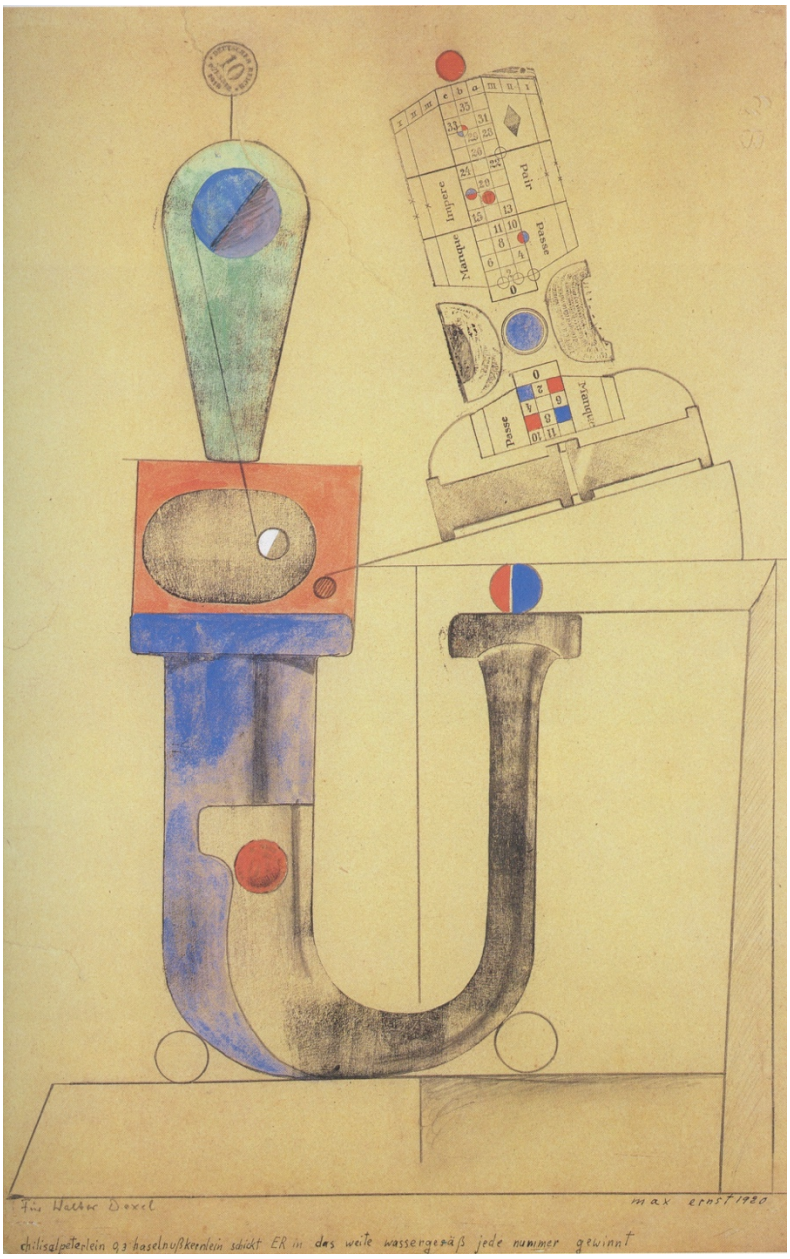


Fig. 62, Max Ernst, *Chilisalpeterlein*, 1920, Stereotype print and pencil rubbing from printing blocks and coins with pencil, pen, India ink, watercolour and gouache, 49 x 32.5 cm.

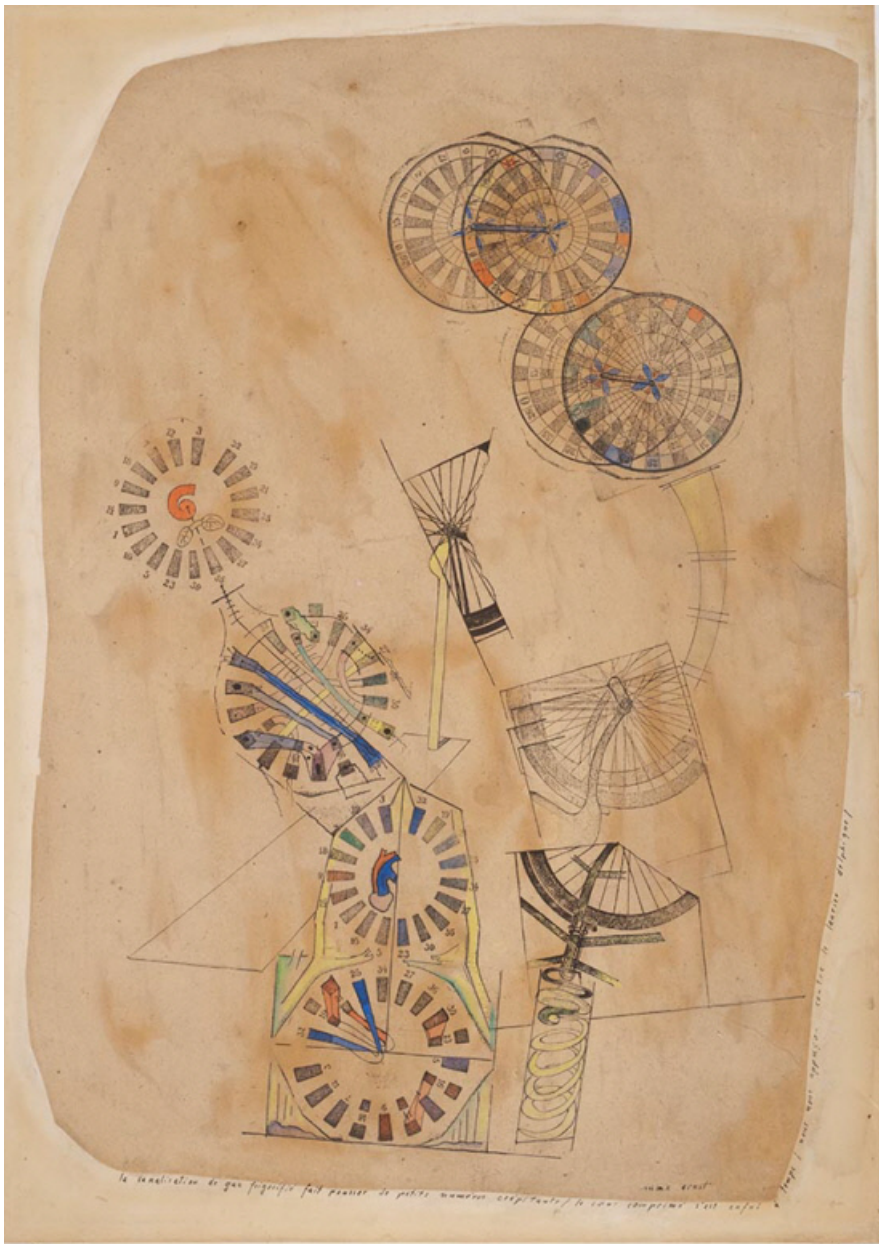


Fig. 63, Max Ernst, *La Canalisation de gaz frigorifié,* 1919-20, Stereotype print, ink, watercolour and gouache on paper mounted on additional paper support, 54 x 38 cm.

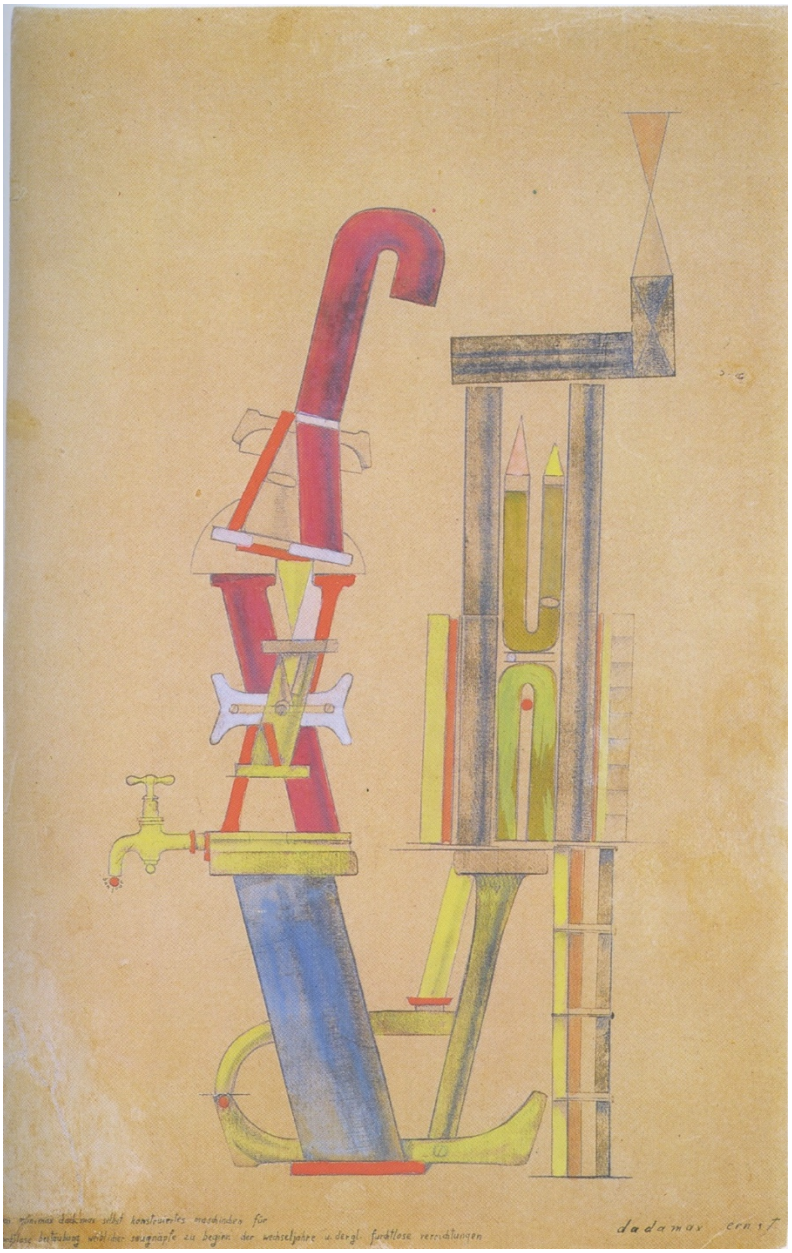


Fig. 64, Max Ernst, *Von minimax dadamax selbst konstruiertes maschinchen…*, c. 1919-20, Pencil rubbing from printing blocks with pen, India ink, watercolour, gouache on paper, 46.7 x 30.8 cm.

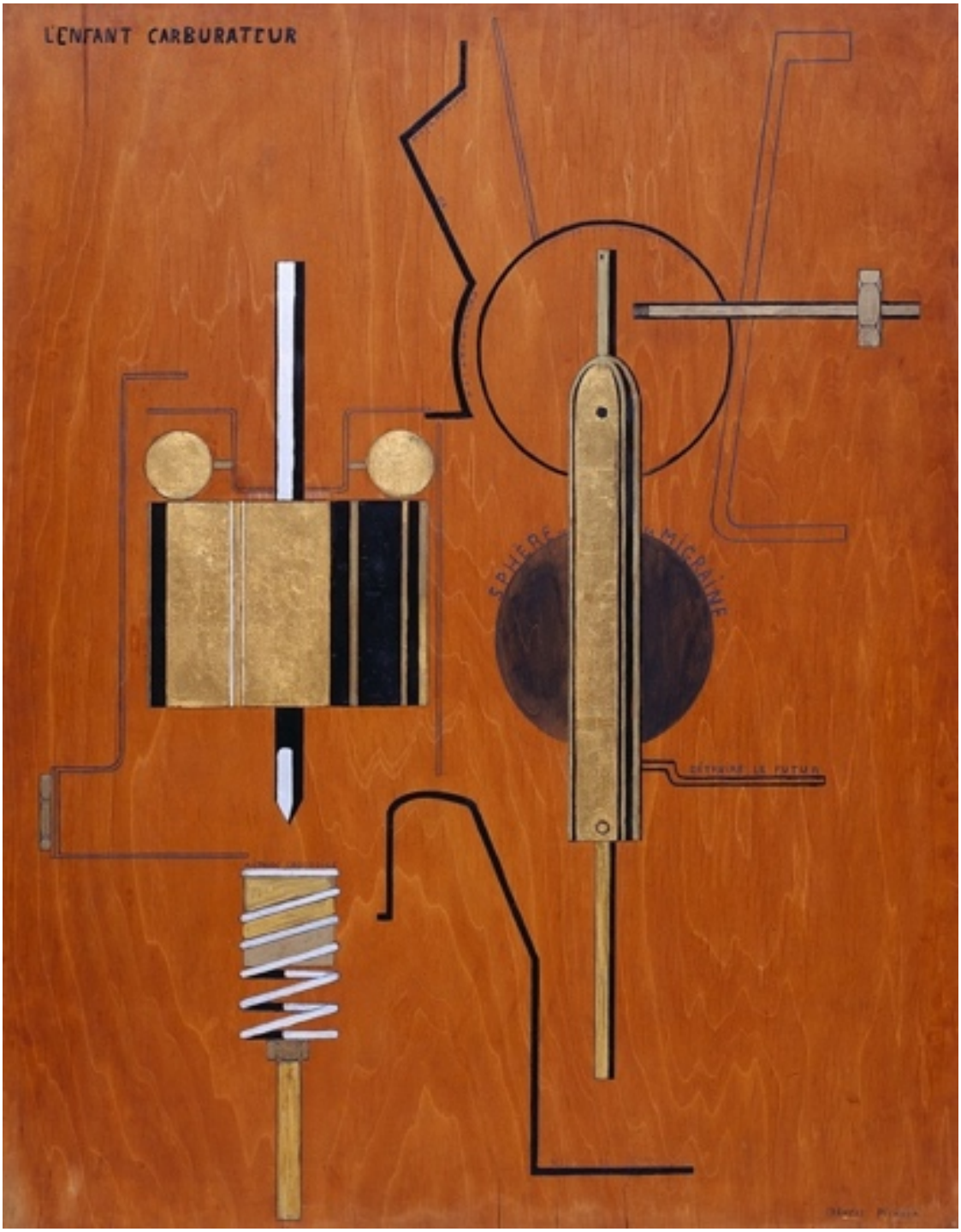


Fig. 65, Francis Picabia, *L'Enfant carburateur*, 1919, Oil, enamel, metallic paint, gold leaf, graphite, and crayon on plywood, 126.3 x 101.3 cm.



Fig. 66, Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle wheel*, 1913, Bicycle wheel and stool, (this original version is now lost, two additional versions were made later on by Duchamp).



Fig. 67, Max Ernst, *1 Kupferblech, 1 zinkblech, 1 gummituch, 2 tastzirkel, 1 obflußfernrohr, 1 röhrender mensch,* 1919, Gouache, India ink, pencil and painting over a print, 25.4 x 18.5 cm.



Fig. 68, Page 964 of the *Bibliotheca Paedagogica*, 1914, showing utensils and apparatuses for work in chemistry and biology.

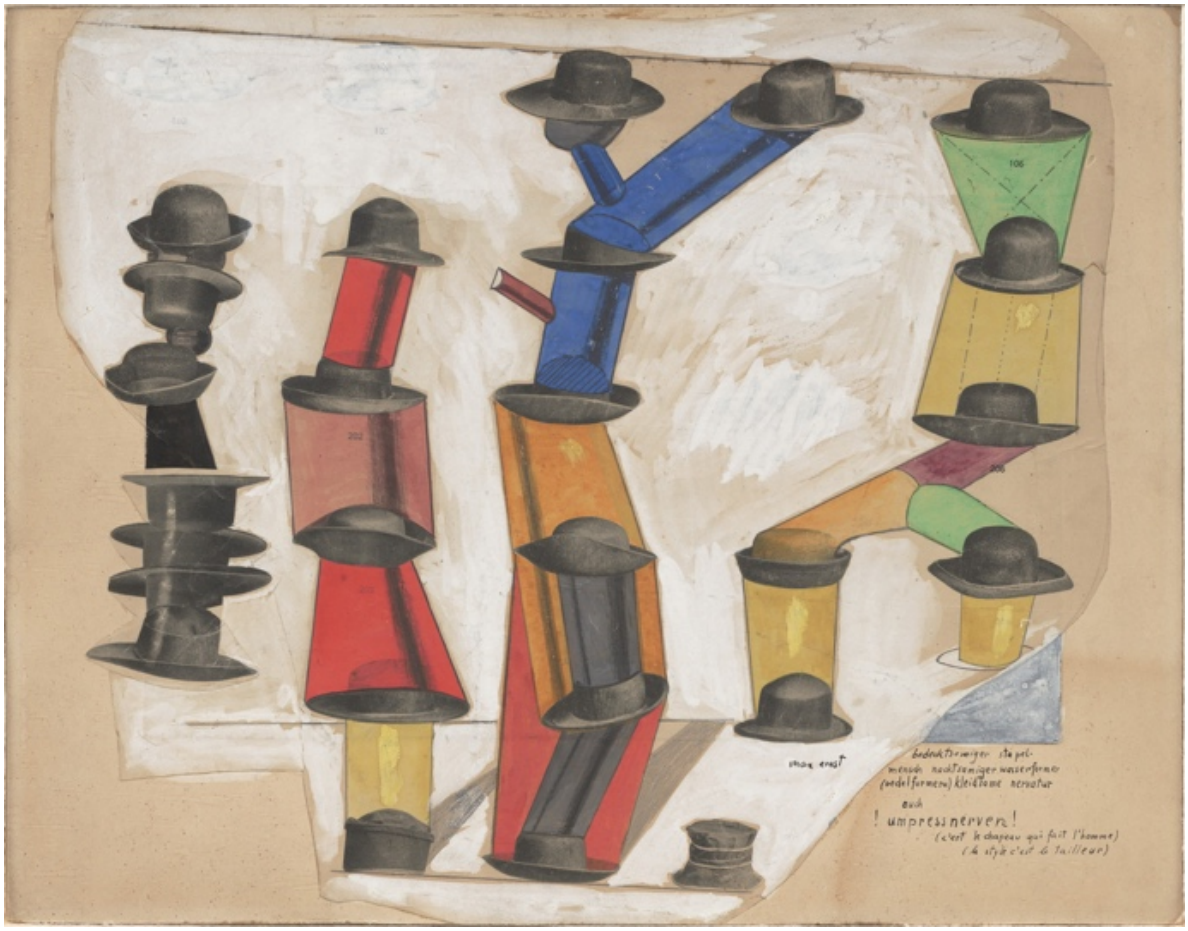


Fig. 69, Max Ernst, *C'est le Chapeau qui fait l'Homme*, 1920, Gouache, India ink and pencil, painting on print and pasted papers mounted on cardboard support, 35.6 x 45.7 cm.



Fig. 70, Max Ernst, *Die Chinesische Nachtigall*, 1920, Cut-and-pasted printed paper, gouache, and ink on photograph, 12.2 x 8.7 cm.

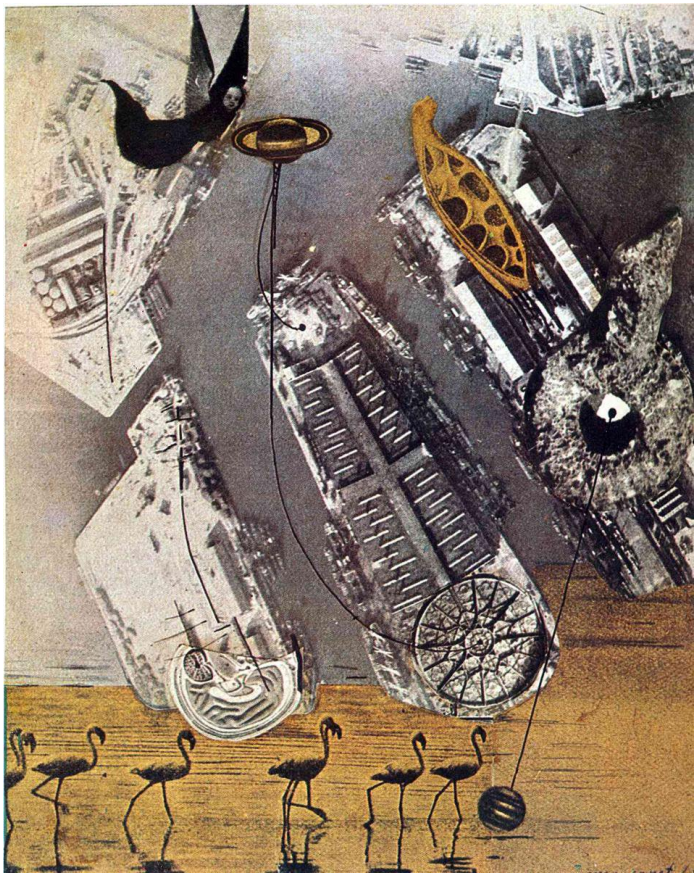


Fig. 71, Max Ernst, *Die Flamingos*, 1920, Cut-and-pasted printed papers, gouache, ink and pencil on photographic reproduction, 15.5 x 13 cm.

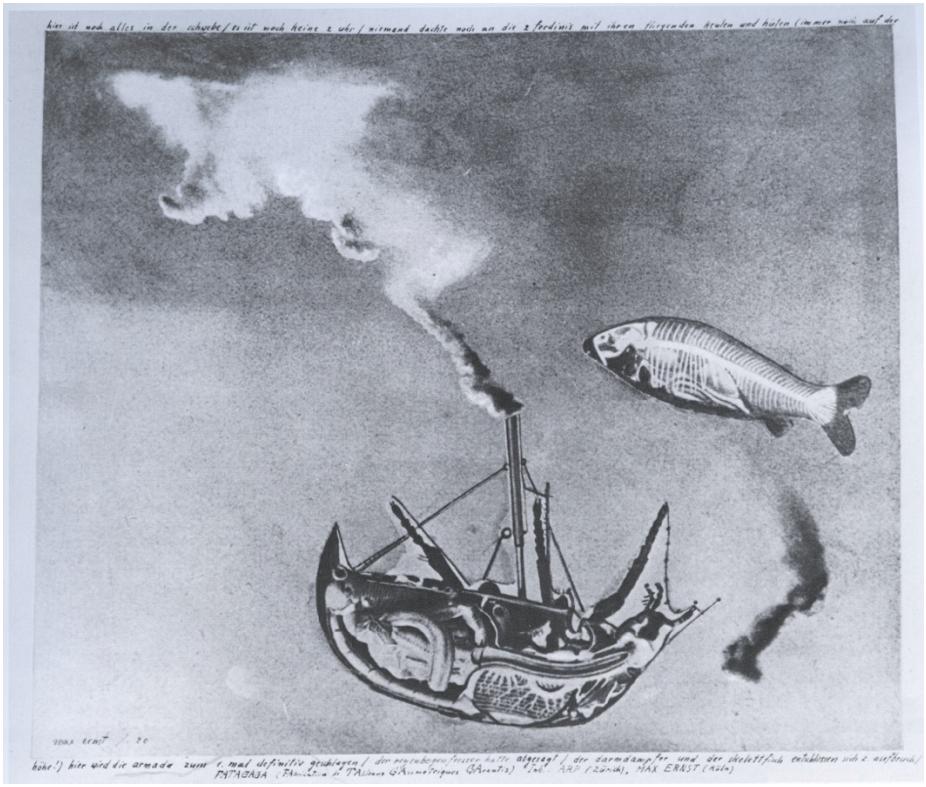


Fig. 72, Max Ernst, *Hier ist Noch Alles in der Schwebe*, 1920, Cut-and-pasted printed paper and pencil on photographic reproduction on cardboard support, 16.5 x 21 cm., (Black and white reproduction).



Fig. 73, Max Ernst, *Sambesiland,* 1921, Photographic enlargement of a photomontage with ink mounted on cardboard, 26 x 35.8 cm.



Fig. 74, Max Ernst, *Die anatomy als braut*, 1921, Cut and pasted photographic reproductions, 10.8 x 7.9 cm.

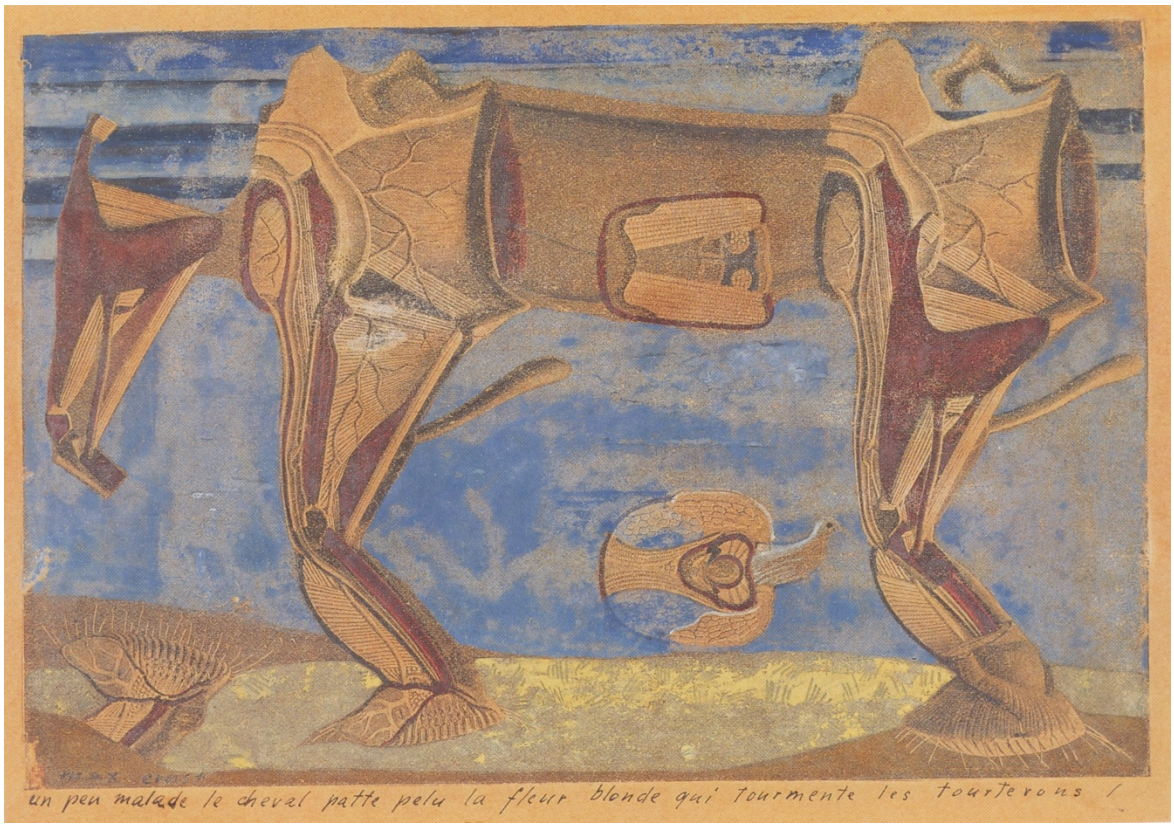
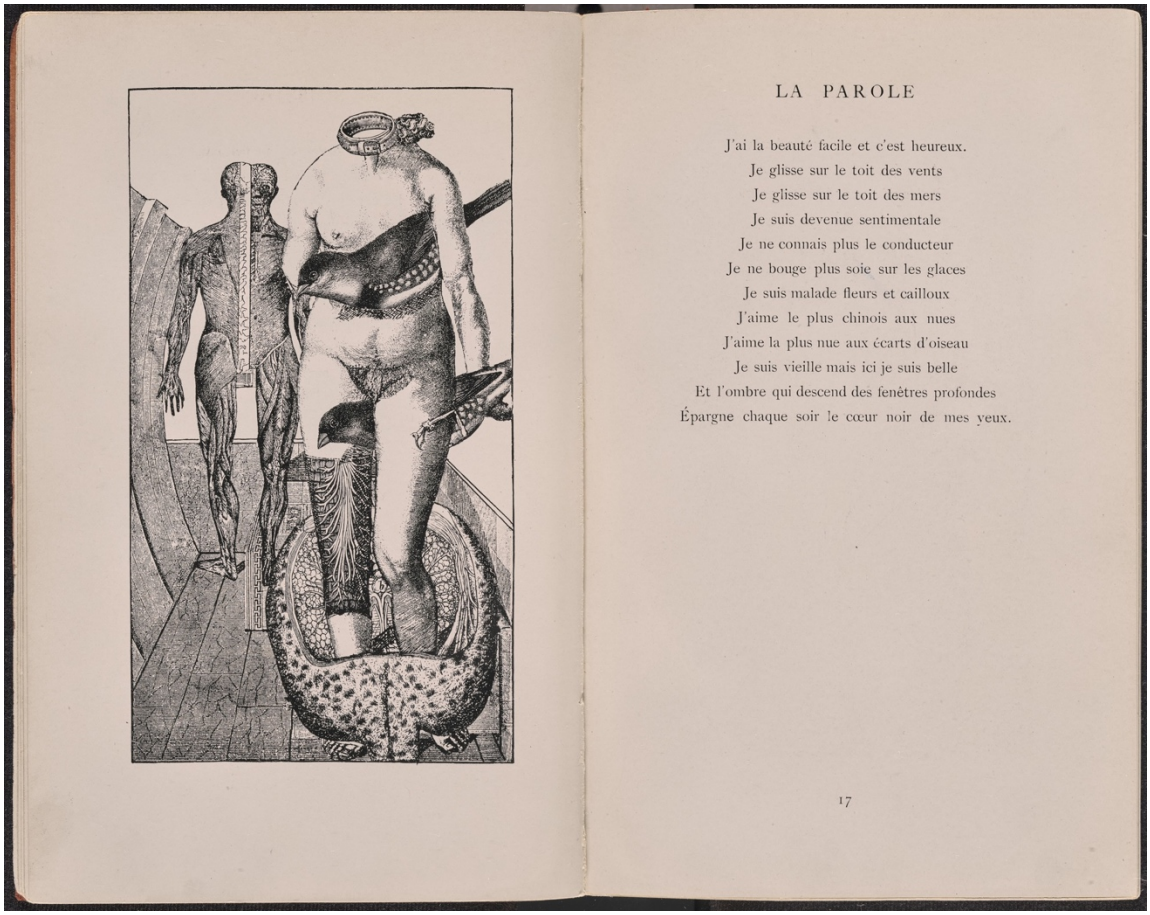


Fig. 75, Max Ernst, *Un peu malade le cheval,* 1920, Gouache and ink on printed reproduction mounted on paperboard, 14.7 x 21.5 cm



LA PAROLE

J'ai la beauté facile et c'est heureux.
Je glisse sur le toit des vents
Je glisse sur le toit des mers
Je suis devenue sentimentale
Je ne connais plus le conducteur
Je ne bouge plus soie sur les glaces
Je suis malade fleurs et cailloux
J'aime le plus chinois aux nues
J'aime la plus nue aux écarts d'oiseau
Je suis vieille mais ici je suis belle
Et l'ombre qui descend des fenêtres profondes
Épargne chaque soir le cœur noir de mes yeux.

17

Fig. 76, Spread from Paul Eluard and Max Ernst, *Répétitions*, 1922, Illustrated book of poems with 1 halftone relief and 11 line block prints after collages, 21.7 × 13.7 cm.

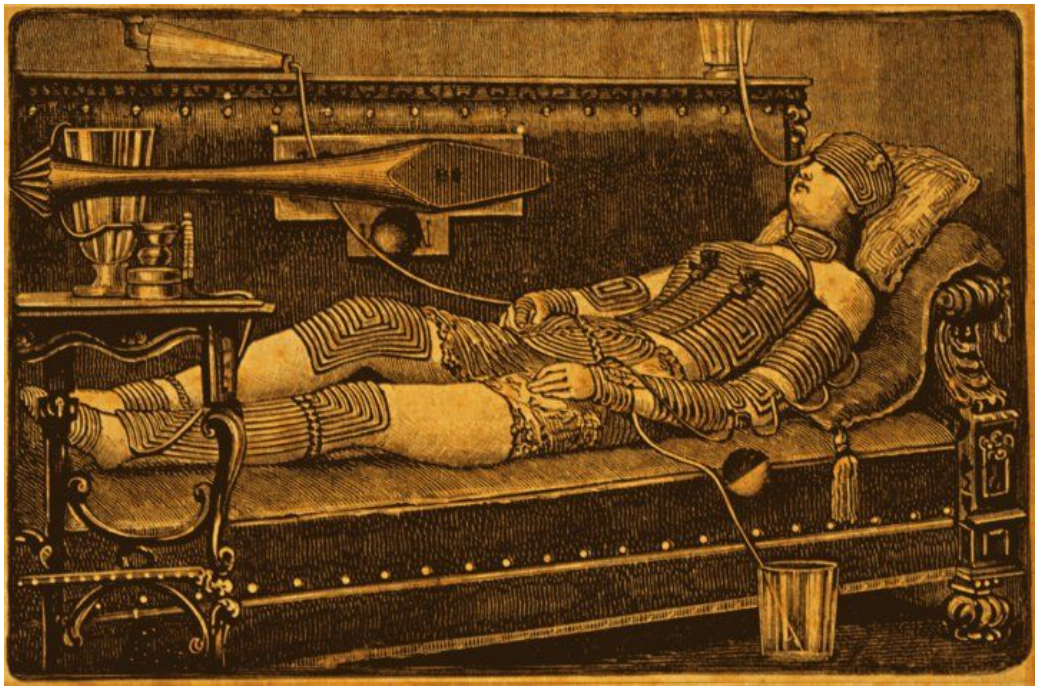


Fig. 77, Max Ernst, *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen*, 1921, Wood-cut engraving based on cut and pasted printed papers, 7 x 11.1 cm.



Fig. 78, Max Ernst, *Untitled*, 1921, Wood-cut engraving based on cut and pasted printed papers, dimensions unknown.



Fig. 79, Max Ernst, Poster for a one person exhibition (unidentified), in which *The Making of Bone Glue* is incorporated among other motifs from the artist's collages alongside handwritten text.



Fig. 80, Johanna (Mutter) Ey and friends in her gallery, Neue Kunst Frau Ey, Dusseldorf 1921, with Max Ernst's *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen*, 1921, Oil on canvas, Whereabouts unknown.



Fig. 81, Max Ernst, *Der Elefant von Celebes*, 1921, Oil on canvas, 139.7 x 121 x 10 cm.



Fig. 82, Photograph of earth-made corn bin from Sudan, used as inspiration for Max Ernst's *Celebes*, 1921 (previous page).

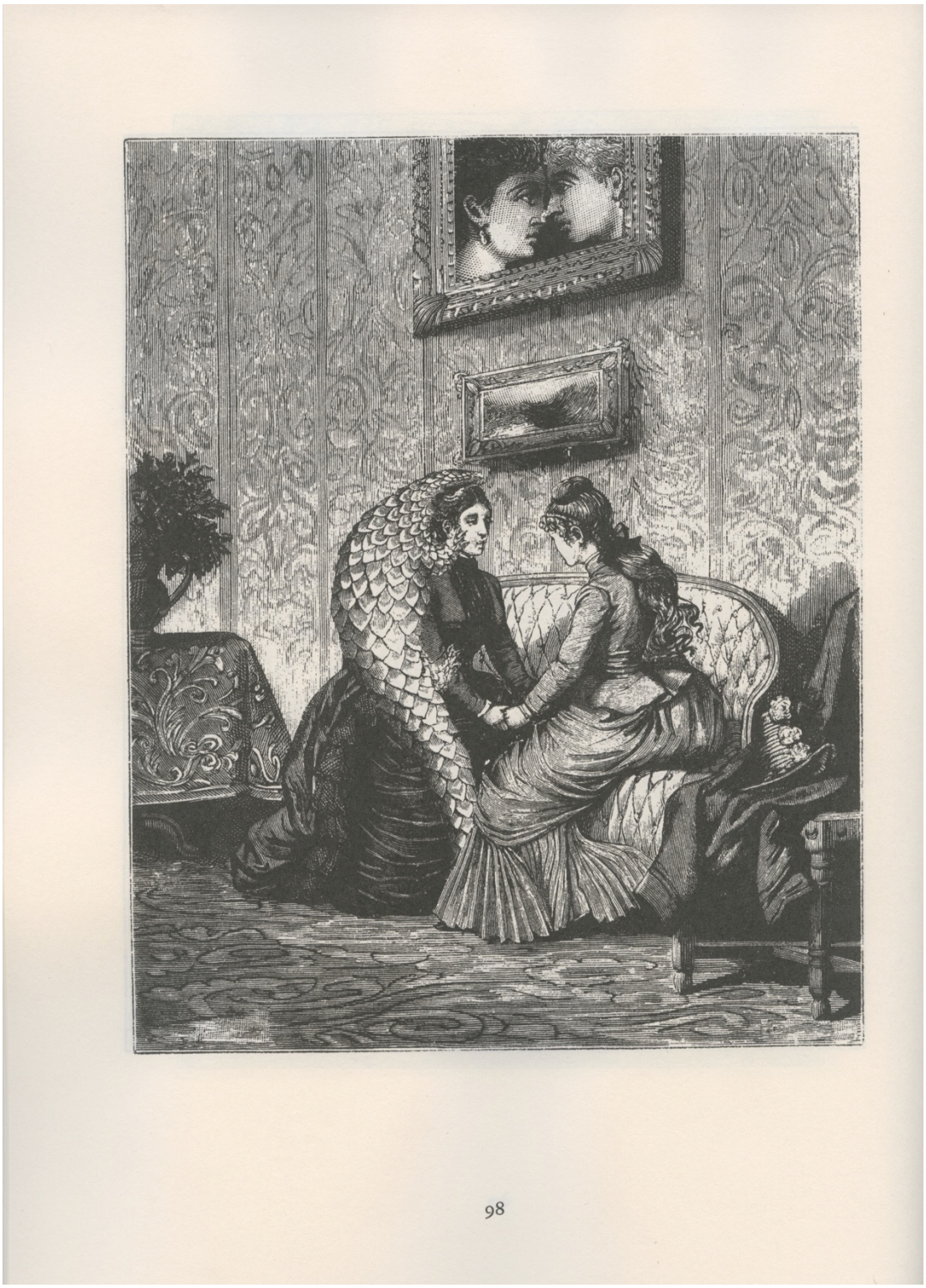


Fig. 83, Max Ernst, From the collage-novel *Une Semaine de Bonté*, 1934.

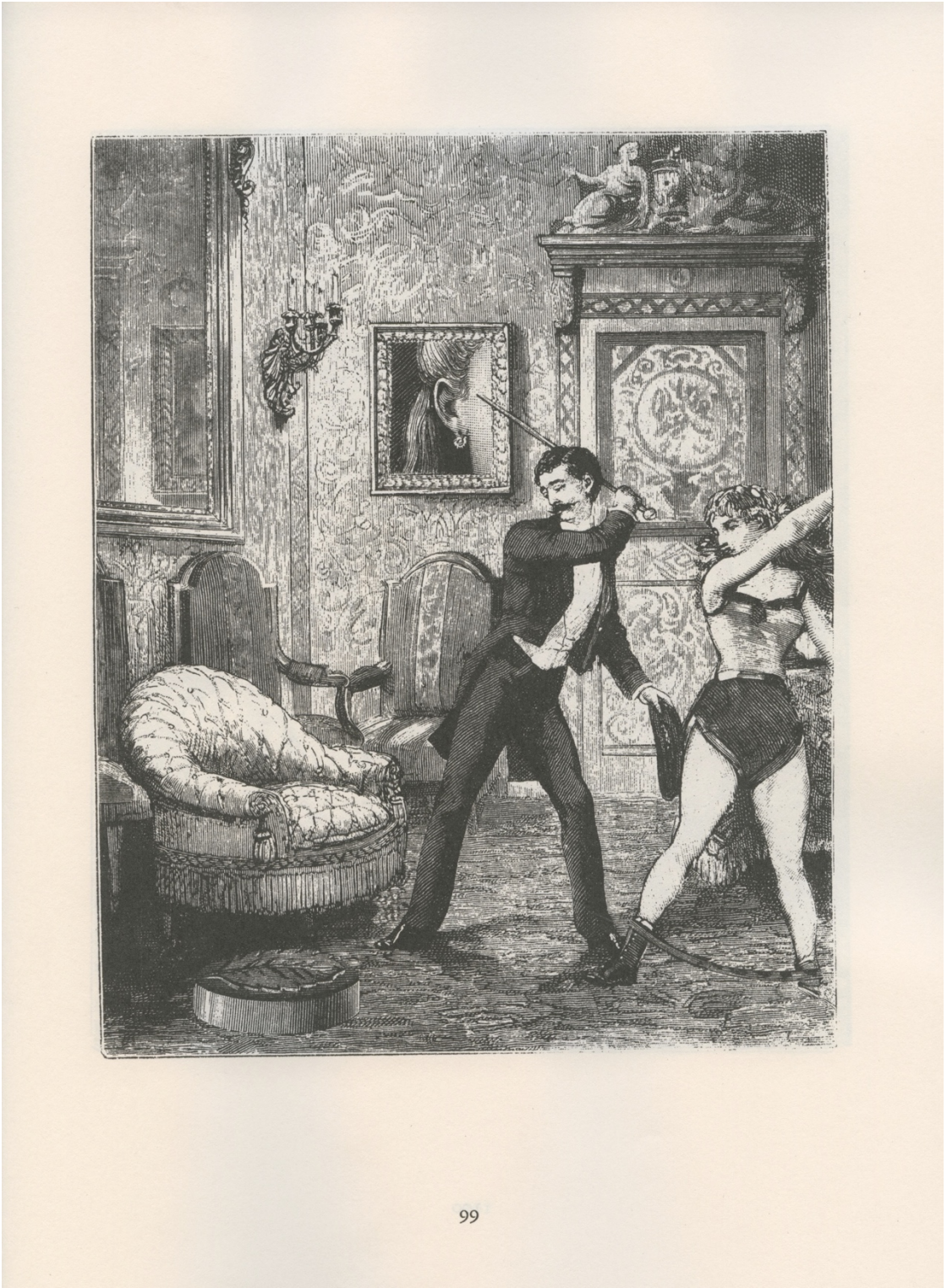


Fig. 84, Max Ernst, From the collage-novel *Une Semaine de Bonté*, 1934.

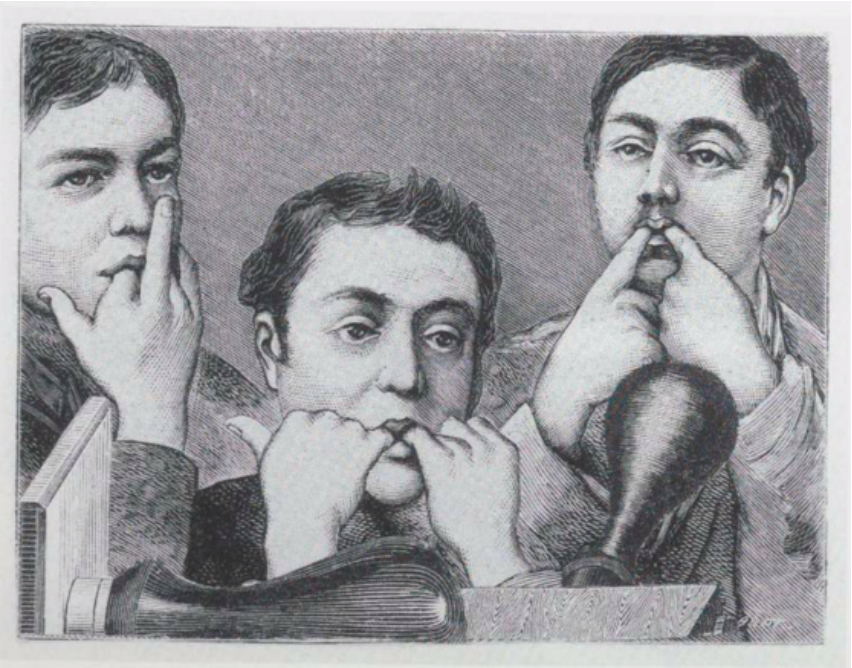


Fig. 85, Max Ernst, *Studenten in Heidelberg*, 1921, Wood-cut engraving collage, 11.4 x 14.6 cm.



Fig. 1, 2 et 3. — Différentes manières de siffler avec les doigts.

Fig. 4, 5 et 6. — Autres manières de siffler avec les doigts.

Fig. 86, Newspaper clipping used as inspiration for Max Ernst's *Students from Heidelberg*, 1921.

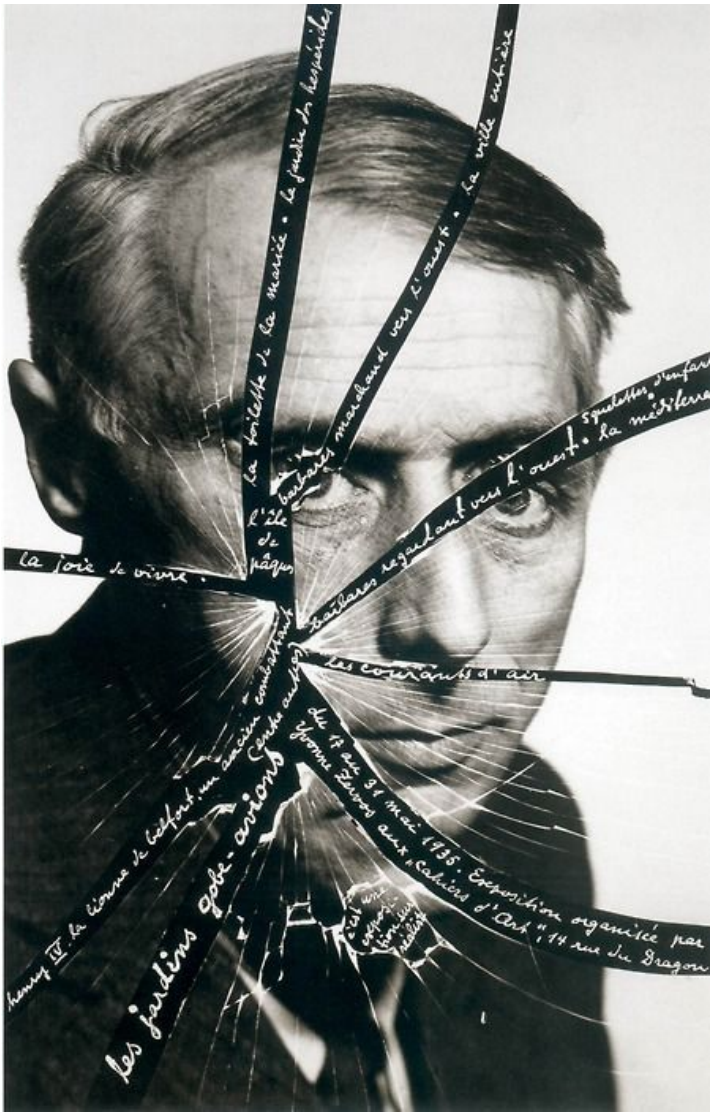


Fig. 87, Max Ernst, Exhibition poster for *Max Ernst: Derniere Oewres*, Cahiers d'Art, Paris, 17-31 May, 1935.

René Magritte (Or: The Rule of Metaphor)[85]

[85] The present chapter revolves around a small group of works that I had the opportunity to examine closely and over a long period of time. This selection stems predominantly from an exhibition project that I co-curated in 2017 titled René Magritte (Or: The Rule of Metaphor), dedicated to works from the Magritte's three-year tenure in Paris from 1927 to 1930. During this period Magritte developed the idiosyncratic pictorial vocabulary for which he has become most known today.

We tend to think of collage as a development of painting; "the pasted paper revolution" that altered the way images are made and that cancelled the clear distinction between different media – painting, sculpture, photography.[86] We rarely consider, however, whether and how painting altered the medium of collage in return. Very little has been said on this subject, and more specifically, on the link between artists whose work transposed certain attributes of collage into the medium of painting as early as the 1910s and 1920s in order to explore the rapport, potentials and limitations of the two media. Terms such as Cubism, Dada and Surrealism are occasionally used to bridge, or defer, any discussion concerning collage's influences on painting. Hans Arp, Joan Miró, Yves Tanguy and Salvador Dalí, to name but a few, all serve as examples of artists who endorsed a collage-like attitude towards their painterly practice, juxtaposing seemingly unrelated figurative and abstract elements to form provocative compositions. However, one name stands out in particular, that of the Belgian artist René Magritte (1898-1967), whose paintings have even been regarded as "collages, entirely painted by hand."[87] Indeed, like many of his Surrealist colleagues Magritte combined contrasting or seemingly unrelated elements in his pictures – words with images, ordinary objects with abstract forms, human images and material substances. Moreover Magritte deployed collage in his painting by means of exploring the very essential materials, mechanisms, appearance, and effects that characterise this medium. Paper cut-outs, postcards, wallpapers, and a range of different cutting effects rendered in paint are some of the most noteworthy effects deployed in Magritte's work, and they form the main subject of analysis in this chapter. Like all of the studies in this thesis, here too my purpose is to identify an example of an artist's practice that challenges the definition of collage as pasted paper and in so doing generating a broader discussion about the term both as a form of rhetoric as well as in its legacy to later artistic

[86] 'The Pasted-Paper Revolution' is the title of Clement Greenberg's most comprehensive discussion on the practice of collage-making. It was first published in Art News L.VII, (September 1958), 46-49. However, it is noteworthy that the original title of the piece was 'Collage' and it was Greenberg´s editor that changed it.

[87] Max Ernst, 2009 [1936], 31.

practices. It also contributes to my inquiry of edges as potentially the principal attribute of this rhetoric. Since Magritte's paintings do not contain physical edges but only simulated ones, his case is of particular interest here.

Magritte produced conventional collages from pasted papers intermittently throughout his career, starting as early as the mid 1920s, but from the beginning had an ambivalent relationship towards these. On the one hand, paper collages were clearly part of his practice, and something that he initially admired in the works of his colleagues. Magritte himself produced some thirty pasted paper collages with gouache or watercolour between the years 1925 and 1928, some of these were produced in two versions, one as an oil-painting and the other as a collage. Such are, for example *Le goût de l'invisible* (The taste of the invisible) and *Le ciel meurtrier* (The murderous sky), both from 1927 [figs.88-89, pp. 231-232].[88] One of these collages, now lost, [fig.90, p.233] represented Magritte at the famous exhibition *Le Peinture au Défi*, at the Gallerie Goemans, 1930.[89] As he specified on one occasion: "The scissors, the glue, the images and the genius [of collage] have replaced, in effect, the brush, the colours, the models, the style, the sensibility and the sacred breath of artists."[90] Yet considering his own practice, and as can be deduced from the gradual shift in his choice of works to be included in exhibitions and catalogues over the years, it seems that he felt that conventional paper collages occupied a peripheral, or preparatory role in his work after all. This position continues to reflect the manner in which his practice is regarded today. As a result, I have

[88] The reader will notice that the titles of Magritte's works are not capitalised (except for the first word). This decision reflects the artist's choice as well as the format employed in his Catalogue Raisonné. The latter, also forms the foundation for all the title translations in this chapter.

[89] Louis Aragon curated the exhibition and wrote an essay for it under the same name. In both the exhibition and his text Aragon attempted to map the advance in the field of collage since its adoption by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in 1912. The show included works by Picasso, Braque as well as Juan Gris from 1912 and onwards, a group of Dada collages and other experimental works by Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Man Ray, and a larger group of surrealist collages and paintings by Max Ernst, Hans Arp, Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, Yves Tanguy and René Magritte (who was only represented by paintings, not by collages). See Aragon, 1990, 47-74.

[90] Elza Adamowicz, 'Beyond Painting', *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image: Dissecting the exquisite corpse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 11.

decided to set Magritte's paper collages aside for the most part in the following analysis and to give full attention to the exploration of his paintings' relationship with the term 'collage' in its own right.

Existing Commentary on the Relation Between Magritte's Paintings and Collage

The proposition that there is a link between Magritte's paintings and the technique of collage is not new. The idea was initially evoked by the surrealist poet and critic Louis Aragon in an essay dedicated to the abovementioned exhibition of collages from 1930, *La Peinture au Défi*. In a short footnote towards the end of his text, Aragon wrote: "Is there a connection between collage and the use of writing in painting as practiced by Magritte? I see no way to deny it."[91] His comment – although brief and somewhat obscure – represents the principal claim that Aragon was trying to promote in his essay at large, namely, collage is not merely a technical procedure that relies on the use of paper, scissors and glue, but rather a term that represents an attitude, a way of looking and a way of making. When making a collage an artist takes familiar semantic units (be they words, pictures, music scores, etc.) and arranges them in unpredictable, inconsistent, and surprising ways such as to suggest that they appear as fantasies, or "marvels" in his words. Collage, Aragon concluded, is relevant to poetry, painting, critical thinking, or any other form of artistic expression insofar as these involve the juxtaposition of semantic units in an innovative manner. Aragon's focus upon Magritte's use of writing (or painted text) as the ground of his analogy is puzzling, however, since it ignores a range of Magritte's other attributes that would seem more obviously linked to collage, such as

[91] Ibid., 68.

his simulations of hard-edged incisions or paper cut-outs by means of paint. Aragon's observation, however, raises the question as to what characterises the use of words and text in Magritte's paintings?

Aragon's expanded definition of collage was welcomed by most Surrealists and suited the group's experimental agenda. In fact, his reference to Magritte soon found echoes among fellow artists and critics, most notably in the writings of his colleague and collaborator Max Ernst, who, in 1936 published a response to *La peinture au défi* in the pages of the journal *Cahiers d'Art* under the title *Au delà de la peinture*. Although writing predominantly about his own work, Ernst developed some of Aragon's general ideas about collage and reiterated the importance of understanding this medium beyond its conventional technical parameters. "Do not forget this other conquest of collage, surrealist painting," he exclaimed to his readers, "Magritte, for example, whose pictures are collages entirely painted by hand, and Dalí."[92] Much like Aragon, Ernst mentioned Magritte's work only in passing, leaving his position open to a range of interpretations. His statement did not focus on the relationship between text and collage, but rather implied something about the nature of contemporary painting, namely that it could function as a site for collage's development, setting in motion a number of questions that are still being discussed today. If collage does in fact mark the departure of modern art from its division into traditional media, can it be defined within a set of clear technical parameters? And consequentially, can the term collage then apply to a poem, a text, or, as Ernst and Aragon explicitly suggest, a painting, without depriving the term of its meaning altogether?

[92] Max Ernst, 'Beyond Painting', 30.

Some reflection on these questions was offered in David Sylvester's monographic book about Magritte of 1992, as well as by Elza Adamowicz in her study *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image*, published in 1998. Sylvester, on his part, coined the term 'notional collages' to describe certain cycles of paintings by Magritte, particularly from the late 1920s, in which the viewer gets the "feeling that something has been cut out of somewhere else and stuck into an unexpected place."[93] In his view, what makes these works relevant to the medium of collage, more than any other surrealist painter's work, is the "placing of objects in unexpected juxtapositions or locations" in a manner that "goes together with dryness of handling" – that is, generating surprising, often provocative combinations of images using inexpressive brush strokes that seem almost disengaged from the events depicted in the picture.[94] Adamowicz too considers many of Magritte's paintings under similar terms, labelling them as *pseudo-collages*: "limit-examples of collages", "where the cutting and pasting process is simulated." Nevertheless, she stresses, these paintings "engage clashing iconographic, discursive or semantic elements to create the illusion of collage".[95] In practice however, Sylvester and Adamowicz's accounts do not engage with the material concerns that emerge from their claims. Focused on solely conceptual implications, both commentators ignore questions such as what happens to attributes of collage when they are represented in painting rather than physically cut and pasted? What happens when the edges that lie between a piece of pasted paper and another surface are no longer there? Or when one element in the composition pretends to conceal another, but no longer does so in actuality? Does such a material translation from paper to paint cancel the illusionary or disruptive effects for which collage had become known since the early 1910s? Does it amplify these? Modify them? Or perhaps it

[93] David Sylvester, 'Handpainted Collages', *Magritte*, London and New York: Thames & Hudson; Houston: The Menil Foundation, 1992), 110-112.

[94] Ibid., 112.

[95] Elza Adamowicz, 'Towards a defintion of surrealist collage', 1998, 16. See also Adamowicz' further analysis of Magritte's hand-painted collages later on in the book, 59-63.

generates a reflective distance for theoretical contemplation on the medium at large and these effects in particular?

Comparison, Concealment and Interaction Between Words and Images

In the autumn of 1927 René Magritte arrived in Paris together with his wife Georgette and the two settled in an apartment on the fifth floor of a residential building in Perreux-sur-Marne, an eastern suburb of the city.[96] Aged 29, Magritte was determined to get involved with the Parisian circle of Surrealist artists and abandon a stable career as a graphic and stage-set designer (which left him very little time to develop an independent artistic practice). Trying to establish a network of contacts in Paris, he sought the help of his newly appointed dealer, the Belgian Camille Goemans, who had arrived in the city only two years earlier but had already come to represent a number of Surrealist artists such as Joan Miró and Salvador Dalí, both of whom were also foreigners in France. Magritte believed that he had identified a new approach towards painting as a form of philosophical inquiry that would further advance the importance and relevance of Surrealism, and which he hoped would bring him some recognition and financial success. Employing a meticulous figurative painting technique, his work soon became recognisable by his colleagues for its idiosyncratic and somewhat melancholic style. He also formed an unusual vocabulary of subjects and forms that included everyday objects such as leaves, apples, wood planks, and paper cut-out figures, alongside

[96] As art historian Sarah Whitfield explained to me, Magritte never had a proper studio. Initially, this may have been because he lacked the resources to pay an additional rent, but he also continued working from his home (mostly the kitchen or the sitting room) later on in his life. This, in part, may have contributed to his marginal status in the Surrealist group during the three years he spent in Paris. Miró, Ernst, Arp, and Taeuber-Arp, for example, all had their studios at the time on rue Tourlaque in Montmartre where they engaged in daily conversations and built close friendships.

anonymous personages whose male version often resembles that of the artist himself, and a limited number of abstract shapes. But above all, his work seemed to have demonstrated an unusual interest in painted representations of other artistic media and forms of signification or annotation: sculpture, photography, still-life painting, cabinets of curiosities, postcards, music scores, and most notably, written words.

La clef des songes (The key of dreams, also known as The interpretation of dreams) is one of the first paintings Magritte executed after his arrival to Paris late in the autumn of 1927 [fig.91, p.234]. It marked his initial attempt to include written words in a painting.[97] Occupying a modest sized canvas, the composition is divided into four compartments by means of a carefully painted frame in a *trompe l'œil* style. Each compartment frames a single object accompanied by a word written (or better yet, painted) underneath it in white against a black background. As most accounts of the painting tell us, the work resembles a children's reading primer, where letters are paired with images that function as visual aids for memorising the alphabet. However, in Magritte's case, the pairings of words and images are of an unusual nature. One compartment displays a painted suitcase labelled with the word *Le ciel* (the sky), another displays a penknife labelled *L'oiseau* (the bird), and yet a third presents a leaf accompanied by the word *La table* (the table). Finally, in the bottom righthand compartment, a biomorphic shape, most likely depicting a sponge, is labelled *L'éponge* (the sponge). The different objects and their confusing titles encourage the viewer to play a game of similarities and differences, associations and dissociations. The painting *La clef des songes* (the key of dreams) was inspired by the same Greek text that influenced Freud's famous treatise of the same name published in 1899. The *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus from the 2nd Century A.D.

[97] Two more works will be given the same title – *la clef des songes*. One dates from 1930 and another from 1933. Overall, Magritte would produce more than forty word-pictures between the years 1927-1930. This accounts for approximately 20 or 25 percent of his total production during this period and for the great majority of his word-pictures altogether.

was among the first theoretical texts to engage with dream interpretation based on the belief that dreams are subjective and individual, and as such should be read as personalised metaphors. The painting too, in turn, suggests that deciphering the relationships between the displayed images and their correlating words relies on subjective interpretation, depending on each person's memories, ideas, and the circumstances of their engagement with the work. It also suggests an active involvement in the production of meaning on behalf of the viewer (or reader) of the painting. And indeed, the pairings suitcase and sky as well as leaf and table invite a wide range of interpretations as to their possible correlation to each other. The picture of a penknife, however, offers a more perceptible formal correlation to its pairing with the word bird thanks to its shape and the possible flapping of its wings, or beak. In the context of such confusion, the pairing of a sponge with its correlating word sponge, paradoxically becomes the most enigmatic comparison of all four. On the one hand, it could be read as a variation on the apocryphal quotation of Sigmund Freud's commentary on non-symbolic symbols – sometimes, a sponge is just a sponge.[98] However, it seems that rather than being self-explanatory, the sponge in Magritte's *La clef des songes* defies the very possibility of assuming a single common principle in the painting that would explain the nature of the relationship between words and images. Further to this, the conjunction of a painted representation of a sponge and a written one seems to suggest that there exists a semantic difference even when a word is compared with an image of its actual referent.

While *La clef des songes* was Magritte's first attempt to include text alongside figurative elements by means of painting, it did not introduce a novel premise to his Parisian contemporaries at the time. The inclusion of words in paintings had already been common practice in the

[98] Freud is quoted as having said to Gustav Jung in reply to the latter's comment about his habit of smoking cigars as a possible symptom of an oral fixation that "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." The earliest source of this quotation is in a footnote in the medical journal "Psychiatry" published in 1950, in an article titled "The Place of Action in Personality Change" by Allen Wheelis. However, there is little proof that Freud actually said this.

avant-garde for nearly twenty years at the time, notable among the Cubist and Futurist artists and later on in Dada and Surrealism. Before Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso pasted their first wallpaper samples, chair canning, and newspaper cuttings in 1912, they experimented with the inclusion of text, or letters, in their oils. These paved the way for all the other so-called 'foreign elements' to follow suit. As Christine Poggi notes in her study of the emergence of collage as a new form of syntax around the years 1912-1919: "In the spring of 1912, shortly after Picasso executed the *Nature Morte à la Chaise Cannée* (Still Life with Chair Canning), [the Futurist poet Filippo] Marinetti proclaimed the invention of a dramatically new poetic form – *parole in libertà*. This invention, designed to liberate words from the shackles of traditional prosody and syntax, produced a revolution in poetry comparable in many ways to that inaugurated in painting by the invention of collage."[99] In effect, this "revolution", supported by the likes of Aragon, soon expanded its reach, joined by artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst and Joan Miró, who each began incorporating text into their work in an entirely different manner, whether by experimenting with the formulation of playful or contentious titles to their works, or by incorporating words into their paintings and collages in various ways.[100]

Magritte's use of text in his paintings in 1927, however, was proving to be different from that of his contemporaries and predecessors on a number of accounts. For one, Magritte did not strive to use letters or words in order to add additional layers of meaning to his paintings, or to decorate the composition. Unlike many Cubists, Futurists or Constructivists, the textual elements in his paintings do not express audible sounds, they do not generate a sense of speed,

[99] Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 195.

[100] Consider, for example, Max Ernst's full title for his fatagaga collage *Here Everything is Still Floating* as described in Chapter Two, p. 71 [fig.72, p.175], Marcel Duchamp's fictive character *Rrose Selavy*, 1920, or Joan Miró's *Un Oiseau Poursuit une Abeille et la Baisse*, 1927 [fig.38, p.100].

nor do they fragment or interpret an otherwise coherent pictorial view. Equally, Magritte's painted words do not refer to concrete historical or political events or people as was the common practice among the Dada artists. They also rarely appeared as lengthy and complicated sentences, as in many Surrealist compositions, but rather as individual words identifying or naming elements in the same composition. As we can see already in his first word-picture *La clef des songes*, Magritte used words as elements that demanded to be analysed in opposition to, or in comparison with images or abstract forms, and not as their support. Magritte focused on words as names, or referents, and questioned the very notion of coherence and consistency in the production and communication of meaning through the juxtaposition of text and image and their mutual interaction. As such, a comparison of text and image was not an instrumental aid in his practice but an end in its own right – an aspect which makes Magritte a precursor of the post-Second World War Conceptualist sensitivity to the relationship between images, text, and other forms of signification. This principle is clearly demonstrated in *La clef des songes*, but also, and perhaps more broadly, in a list of eighteen aphorisms that he drafted soon after his arrival in Paris and published two years later in September 1929 under the title 'Les mots et les images' (The words and the images) in the twelfth and last issue of the journal *La Revolution Surréaliste* [fig.92, p.235].

'Les mots et les images' can be used as a comprehensive manual for anyone who wishes to map the strategic devices employed by Magritte in his word-pictures. Or, it can equally be read as a humorous exercise that parodies the very possibility of such a manual in the first place. The tension between these two interpretations is itself emblematic of Magritte's methods in general. Ordered and methodological, but also mysterious and whimsical, 'Les mots et les images' illustrates with the help of aphorisms various strategies of combining words and images in a painting – from simple comparative methods such as the one

presented in *La clef des songes*, where words and objects are placed alongside each other, to more complex inquiries where the relationship between words, figurative elements and abstract forms is obscured or complicated infinitely. Such, for example, is Magritte's claim that "an object never produces the same effect as its name, or its image".[101] The first aphorism however on Magritte's list is nearly synonymous to the line of inquiry that takes place in *La clef des songes*, reading: "An object is not so wedded to its name that one cannot find a name that suits it better".[102] The statement is accompanied by a drawn illustration of a leaf (exactly like the one in *La clef des songes*) underlined by the word '*Le canon*' (The canon). Although formulated as a simple proposition, the idea behind this aphorism is not easy to grasp. Can an object change its name? And a word its referent? More importantly, what makes one word "better" than another in denoting a referent? Considering the historical and geographical context, one might be inclined to associate this line of inquiry with the writings of Freud once more, or with those of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, both of whose writings Magritte very well may have read. Saussure's theory is of particular interest in this context, calling attention to the fact that in modern languages signs are attributed to signifiers in an arbitrary manner (the word 'leaf', for example, has no intrinsic relationship to an actual leaf). The formulation of language, Saussure tells us, is always contingent, circumstantial, and historically conditioned. At the heart of his theory lies the importance of the term 'difference', as a form of distinction within the limits of language that has to be reckoned with as a condition for signification to take place. This element plays a pivotal role in works such as *La clef des songes*. Magritte's paintings, however, do more than name an object in the conventional

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[101] René Magritte, 'Les mots et les images', *La Révolution Surréaliste*, no.12, 1929. According to David Sylvester, these can be divided into three main categories: The first, paintings in which nouns function as labels to representational (figurative) elements, and where the foundation of the correlation between word and image is of an arbitrary nature (the painting *La clef des songes* is a perfect illustration of this category). The second, paintings that include the combination of words with both abstract and semi-abstract elements. Finally, paintings that include the combination of words with representational (figurative) elements. David Sylvester, 'Words as Images', *Magritte*, London and New York: Thames & Hudson; Houston: The Menil Foundation, 1992), 168-169.

[102] René Magritte, 'Les mots et les images', *La Révolution Surréaliste*, no.12, 1929.

sense that Saussure considered in his study. They experiment with the alternation and replacement of names that already have referents in place and vice versa. In this respect, Magritte's proposal does not only acknowledge the arbitrary nature of language, it also admits the possibility of interaction between different terms as beneficial to the evolution of language; one that improves it, or in Magritte's words, makes it "better." Magritte's line of argument is supported by the critical writings of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault – who analysed Magritte's work towards the end of the artist's life, and whose philosophy was widely influenced by the thesis of the circumstantial condition of language proposed by Saussure. For Foucault, however, language is assumed to rely on the notion of 'resemblance' between words and their referents, rather than difference. By 'resemblance' Foucault does not mean an intrinsic link between object and signifier, but rather a type of relationship that forms over time through habit and the establishment of discourse. Magritte's strategy, however, involves deploying familiar image-word conventions and subverting them, rendering them questionable by "impossible, or senseless conjunctions."[103] Here, we might finally begin to see how Magritte's pictorial engagement with text links to a certain notion of collage that surpasses superficial aesthetics. The appropriation of words and images in unexpected manners seems to generate a sense of 'difference', as Saussure would have it, deconstructing what is an otherwise stable structure, as further proposed by Foucault.

This notion of 'difference' as a productive principle is perhaps best pronounced in a series of six paintings that Magritte titled *L'usage de la parole* (The use of speech) where the equation of text versus image is complicated further to include intricate relationships between different pairings of words and images, simulating the complex nature of verbal and visual conversation or exchange. The effect is best demonstrated in the last painting of this series –

[103] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, Trans. and Ed. by James Harkness, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Originally published as *Ceci n'est pas Une Pipe*, (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1973).

L'usage de la parole VI – in which an abstract form labelled *corps de femme* (a female body), is positioned alongside another, near identical form, labelled *mirroir* (mirror) [fig.93, p.236]. The two correlating red-brownish spheres are floating above or away from a dark background, casting their shadows on a pattern of horizontal brush strokes in two shades of grey, annotated with several strokes of white paint resembling clouds. While the floating form described as 'female body' forms one thoroughly painted sphere, its opposite, almost identical counterpart is labelled 'mirror'. On the one hand, the pairing indeed imitates the effect of a mirror, with the two shapes appearing almost identical to one another. One the other hand, the pair can equally be regarded as two signifiers concealed from the viewer or replaced by unidentified forms. The exceptional number of pictorial devices that Magritte employs in this painting in order to explore the ambiguous nature of representation is overwhelming. These include the relationship between an object and its shadow, the reflection of one element in another, the denotation of images or forms by means of text, and the concealment of an image or a word in return.

What is Invisible and What is Hidden: Illusions and Their Frustration

Not all of Magritte's word-pictures, however, are founded on the principle of difference between word and image on the basis of a comparative model. I began by looking at *La clef des songes*, seeing how the painting is based on a play of seemingly incompatible word-labels and images of objects. I then briefly hinted just how far this exploration expanded itself in works such as *L'usage de la parole*. Very soon however, Magritte began to expand his linguistic and pictorial investigations in a number of different directions, venturing beyond the

previously mentioned comparative paradigm and positioning, for instance, words on top of abstract forms, using larger fonts and a decorative handwriting style which blurs the distinction between word and image both in treatment and appearance. In some cases, he shaped or positioned elements on the canvas in a manner that would suggest a resemblance to the pictorial depiction of a word – an elongated form to represent a rifle, or a floating form in the sky to represent a cloud. In other cases, the correlation between words and images drifted further and further apart and links could no longer be made on the basis of reasonable similarity.

La preuve mystérieuse (The mysterious proof) of 1928 offers a good case in point that exemplifies this branch of development in Magritte's work [fig.94, p.237]. The painting depicts three abstract shapes floating in a dark background, each marked by a written label: *homme à demi tourné à droite* (man, half-turning towards the right), *vase de crystal* (crystal vase), and *montagne* (mountain). The task of completing the picture in one's mind or solving the puzzle of this strange combination of terms, is left for the viewer's imagination. And while seemingly the floating elements offer an unbridgeable semantic gap between their shapes and the written labels, the requirement from the viewer in this instance is different from before. This is largely because there is not one stylistic genre that characterises the work and enables a comparison of terms to take place, nor a coherent spatial construction. *La preuve mystérieuse* shifts between figuration, abstraction, symbolic representation and textual signification, at times operating on all of these levels within a single composite element. As viewers we are asked, in effect, to activate an imaginary 'collage' not yet fully in existence. For the painting holds the potential of multiple images latent in its composition – written, formal, or spatial ones. One can imagine, for instance, that the blue background is not a dark sky but a table cloth; that the crystal vase (otherwise in an impossible position) is actually marking its position with a round

circle; that the whole orientation of the painting is that of a map or plan or imprint, rather than a landscape. The shadow of the man might be a blurred outline of a waiter or a passer-by reflected in a knife on the table, the mountain may similarly be an image placed on the table, perhaps the cover of a book. Such a reading would be somewhat subjective, but its premise is possible because of the arbitrary nature of the signs involved in the painting's composition. The clash of pictorial genres in *La preuve mystérieuse* also generates an important play, in this case between depth of field and flatness, making it difficult to determine whether, and which, elements in the painting function as referents and which are meant to conceal content that is hidden from the eye of the viewer. Unlike *La clef des songes*, for example, *La preuve mystérieuse* conceals an awful lot from us as viewers. It changes the nature of the relationship between words and images from one of comparison – where a figurative image is placed next to a word and measured against it – to one where different registers of communication are placed one on top of the other or within one another as in a form of substitution, or interaction: a word is placed within the parameters of an abstract form, which in turn seems to be positioned within a spatial composition.[104] Indeed, the principle of incommensurability remains the same as before: the shape, the word, and the image produced in the viewer/reader's mind do not correlate, hereby presenting us with a cognitive exercise that challenges our blind faith in a language-truth correlation.

La preuve mystérieuse complies with the first aphorism in Magritte's list concerning the potential of appropriating words to new referents, but even more so to a later statement, in which Magritte extends his claim to include the merger of text and image under the particular

[104] The distinction between these three types of relationships – comparison, substitution, and interaction, refers to Max Black's theory of metaphor. Black outlines three models (or "views") for metaphoric activity: substitution, comparison, and interaction. The first suggests that a metaphor replaces one term for another, the second suggests that a metaphor offers a point of comparison to the substituted word that emphasises some aspect of the original word. Finally, the interaction view of metaphor suggests that the two words – the literal term that is being replaced and the metaphoric expression that is put in its stead – engage in a continuous process of meaning exchange. The principal mechanism of collage, I will suggest later in this paper, has much to do with Black's model of metaphor.

conditions of painting: "In a picture [or painting], words are made of the same substance as images". According to this latter aphorism, the pictorial surface of painting offers common grounds where one might be able to treat different registers of communication not in comparison to one another as expressions of different orders altogether, but under equal terms. Or, to return to Foucault's analysis once more, instead of emphasising differences or resemblances between signifiers in a picture, Magritte suggests that we consider their combination as an expression of 'similitude'. Resemblance, explains Foucault, is a relationship that assumes a primary reference to which copies can share a mimetic relation as a fixed 'anchor'. As such, resemblance serves, and is dominated by, a representational relationship. With similitude on the other hand, "the reference 'anchor' is gone. Things are cast adrift, relating to one another without any of them being able to claim the privileged status of 'model' for the rest."[105] Similitude, therefore, becomes an endless series of repetitions, a simulacrum (if one wishes to use the term) of variations set free from their theme. Magritte's inquiry into this relationship in painting enables words and images to be read under equal formal and material terms, cancelling the distinctions that tend to separate them based on their representational value. In *La prevue mystérieuse* this comes into expression, for example, by enabling the word *montagne* (mountain) to be read in comparison with an image (or form) as its mask, or as a calligram that inhabits its image. The various textual, pictorial and formal signifiers in the painting continuously exchange places and roles.

I mentioned earlier that the inclusion of text in painting had played an important role in the development of collage for nearly two decades by the time that Magritte began to experiment with this trope. However, we now begin to see how the manner in which Magritte employed text in works such as *La clef des songes* and *La preuve mystérieuse* can be distinguished from most of

[105] James Harkness, 'Translator Introduction', Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, Trans. and Ed. by James Harkness, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 10.

his colleagues' work. The word-pictures – as these are commonly referred to – are an exercise that sets out to question the ability of the canvas to absorb different registers of communication under equal material terms and to merge, compare, or juxtapose them despite, or precisely because of the fact that they are not pasted together in the literal sense of the word. Otherwise put, much of what is interesting in Magritte's word-pictures is that they are not "real" collages, but rather experiments that explore how the molecular, malleable, and consistent substance of paint absorbs collage technique into its midst under different terms altogether, while maintaining many of its effects.

Indeed, not all of Magritte's Paris-years paintings included text as part of their composition. In fact, the word-pictures account for only a quarter of Magritte's overall production from this period. In most cases, Magritte focused on an inquiry that involved figurative and abstract pictorial elements. Such are, for example, the first paintings that he finished after his arrival in Paris in 1927, *Les muscles célestes* (The muscles of the sky) [fig.95, p.238], *La parure de l'orage* (The finery of the storm) [fig.96, p.239] from the same year, and *Les fenêtres de l'aube* (The windows of dawn) [fig.97, p.240] from 1928. In these works – identified by David Sylvester as prime examples of Magritte's 'hand-painted collages', or alternatively as 'notional collages' – meticulous depiction of cut-out paper elements, painted representations of postcards, photographs, fake wood elements, and wall paper patterns are included in the compositions.[106] In some cases, the elements are bound together or separated from one another by sharp, clean-cut breaks, while in others they conceal each other or merge into one another. For Sylvester however, there is an important distinction to be made between the genre of fantastic painting, to which Aragon aligned his extended notion of painted collages, and the premise of 'notional collages' practiced by Magritte:

[106] David Sylvester, 1992, 110-119.

> [T]he feeling that something has been cut out of somewhere else and stuck into an unexpected place creates that climate in Magritte's world that we are not being presented with actual marvels but are being asked to speculate on, say: why not have a rock floating in the sky? […] Magritte's paintings tend to be notional collages […] because their placing of objects in unexpected juxtapositions or locations goes together with dryness of handling.[107]

Sylvester's proposition that what characterises Magritte's 'notional collages' is their "dryness of handling" attributes a speculative and distanced mode of inquiry to Magritte's project by emphasising the paintings' stylistic characteristics. According to him, one is not carried away by the fantastical nature of Magritte's so-called "hand-painted collages" but rather invited to observe them with a hypothetical eye, as experiments. This comes into expression above all in the ostensibly sterile method that characterises Magritte's painting technique, offering deadpan views where no particular perspective is assumed. Paint is applied consistently and thinly, and people are treated as objects, replicated from one picture to another as if they were empty shells (at times, Magritte goes to lengths to show that they are indeed empty shells, as is the case in *Le double secret* [the double secret] of 1927, fig.98, p.241). Sylvester's choice of words in this context is not without reference either: "we are not being presented with actual marvels" he writes, clearly refering to Aragon's preoccupation with the notion of the 'marvellous' in his *Le peinture au dèfi.* For the marvellous represents the principal goal of collage in Aragon's view; its biggest achievement, the ability to gather simple, poor materials and objects from everyday life and to see the world through them in a fantastic or illusionary

[107] Ibid, 112.

manner. Aragon indeed saw collage as he saw poetry as means to form a secular alternative to religious experience of a miracle.

> Turning water into wine undoubtedly will always meet with greater success than its opposite. Yet how impoverished is all that poetry which employs a chalice as its reed pipe and empty thunder from heaven as its refrain. As soon as human imagination turns elsewhere, how much greater everything is, more monstrous, closer to the miracle.[108]

Both Sylvester and Aragon consider Magritte's painting to have absorbed something from the essence of collage into its midst, yet their analyses diverge. One considers "dryness of handling" as key to understanding Magritte's relation to collage, while the other praises his ability to transubstantiate simple words into fantastic painted elements. One focuses on paintings with images and abstract forms, the other on the use of text. Both commentaries, however, stop short of discussing the reasons that may have motivated Magritte to adhere to painting by all means available instead of employing conventional collage techniques.

Les fenêtres de l'aube of 1928 serves as a good case study for this question [fig.97, p.240]. On its surface, the painting alludes to collage as much as it does to the genre of *trompe l'oeil* paintings, to abstract art, and to the genre of experimental moving images that was becoming popular among the Surrealists. Taken at face value its composition presents a strange array of pictorial elements in (or over) a dark surface: a handkerchief and a pillow painted with extreme verisimilitude and a rectangular view of an ordinary looking natural landscape,

[108] Louis Aragon, 1990 [1930], 51.

possibly a postcard image or a view painted from a window. The latter interpretation corresponds to the painting's title, although Magritte insisted on numerous occasions that his titles are not to be read as explanations of his work. A peculiar tension thus emerges between the depth of the scenic view, the delicate textures of the cloth, and the extreme flatness of the background — lending the work a measured air of mystery. Are these elements floating in a void? Laid on a surface? The tension between illusion and its frustration in this painting cannot but anticipate a later attempt to define the medium of collage in the context of a debate on medium specificity, that of the Modernist theorist Clement Greenberg. In two different essays on the subject – 'The Pasted-Paper Revolution' of 1958 (revised and published as 'Collage' in 1959) and 'The New Sculpture' from 1949 (revisited in 1958) – Greenberg promoted the idea that pasted-paper collage achieved "sculptural results by strictly nonsculptural means", forming a link between sculpture and painting without ever jeopardising the distinction of these media from each other.[109] Collage, Greenberg argued, was never about the absorption of "real" materials into the pictorial plane. Both painterly and sculptural at once, pasted-paper collage could generate visual illusions and frustrate their effects simultaneously. When a collage is successful, according to Greenberg, depth of field and flatness contradict one another and "the abiding effect is in constant shuttling between surface and depth." "Rather than being deceived, the eye is puzzled."[110] And although Magritte's pictorial work would seem aesthetically opposed to what Greenberg had suggested, both materially and stylistically the comparison is illuminating. Depth and flatness were both important means of generating a sense of puzzlement in Magritte's paintings, but the interpretation of these terms within his painterly practice bears different conceptual implications to those offered by pasted-paper collages. It is puzzlement rather than deceit in

[109] Clement Greenberg, 1992 [1961], 71.

[110] Clement Greenberg, 1992 [1961], 71.

Magritte's paintings that is generated by means of an interplay between depth of field and flatness, or by implying that something in the painting is concealed from viewers without indicating what it might be. "In the invisible", Magritte tried to explain to an interviewer once:

> We must first of all distinguish what is invisible from what is hidden. What is visible can be hidden – a letter in an envelope, for example, is something visible but hidden, it isn't something invisible. An unknown person at the bottom of the sea is not something invisible, it's something visible but hidden.[111]

Magritte's explanation reflects the kind of sensibility that he presents in paintings like *Les fenêtres de l'aube,* asking us to judge whether something within the painting is withheld from us viewers or whether there is really nothing more to see? In this respect, one cannot ignore the careful construction of this and other compositions. The staging of various disjointed pictorial elements within a painting, one assumes, must be intended to appear as part of a narrative, or at least in a manner that one would could call meaning-making. Seeing various such disjointed elements within one painting encourages us to try to 'read' it, to decipher it. How could one otherwise approach a small, unconvincing, and disrupted view of a natural landscape such as the one presented in *Les fenêtres de l'aube*? Here, all the elements of Magritte's disjointed composition encourage us to try and determine why a mediocre *paysage* should be at once so detailed and so disjointed, and the possibility that the proposition has no logical explanation hardly comes to mind. Only when we fail time and time again to make sense of

[111] David Sylvester, 1992, 28.

this oddity do we dare to suggest to ourselves that pleasure itself arises from the possibility that there is no solution to the riddle.

Here, once more, the term collage turns out to be useful in this context because it offers a way to look at Magritte's paintings. In pasted-paper collages we know that one pasted surface conceals another, even if merely an 'empty' background. In painting however, we assume that there is nothing behind what we see. The effect, or sense of concealment in Magritte's paintings, is nevertheless undiminished, and at times even becomes more powerful, more imaginative. Magritte himself noted in one of his later aphorisms of *Les mots et les images* that "an object implies that there are others behind it." The emphasis here being on the word "implies". He accompanied this statement with an illustration of a free-standing brick wall – an adequate analogy with no further hints as to what lies behind the wall, if anything. *Les fenêtres de l'aube,* like much of Magritte's pictorial work, is a play between different registers, facades, and perspectives. It suggests the idea that something is either hidden from us, invisible to us, or simply not there (one immediately thinks of the famous man in the bowler hat whose face is concealed with an apple, or the kissing lovers whose faces are covered with white cloths), but further still it emphasises a more provocative claim than the one that can be inferred from Magritte's statement in *Les mots et les images*: not only do objects inevitably conceal something behind them, images do too. This claim has far greater implications when considered retrospectively from a contemporary point of view. For the impact that Magritte would come to have on artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, and later on also John Stezaker and Richard Prince among others, did not in fact rely on his way of juxtaposing words and images, as it did for Joseph Kosuth or the Art & Language group. Instead, it was Magritte's ability to direct our attention to the manners in which

images produce or withhold meaning independently of text, narrative, or conceptual frameworks.

In his 'The Pit and the Pendulum', Edgar Allan Poe writes: "It was not that I feared to look upon things horrible, but that I grew aghast lest there should be nothing to see."[112] Magritte's explorations of the enigmatic, the latent, the hidden potential of images comes into play in a painting such as *Le genre nocturne* (The nocturnal kind), which echoes Poe's dread of a mask that conceals nothing behind it [fig.99, p.242]. The painting was executed in 1928 soon after Magritte began to assimilate with the Parisian Surrealist group, finding himself engaged in discussions on the role played by the subconscious as a site of creative exploration and artistic production. In this painting Magritte does not use words at all, although it seems the painted elements behave almost like written labels: 'a frontal female nude' occupies the left half of the canvas, concealing, with her bare hands, 'a face that isn't there'. The missing countenance is potentially alluded to by the naked regard of her body, navel and breasts, facing directly at the viewer, or otherwise by an odd, floating, 'rock formation in the shape of a face' that occupies the righthand side of the painting. Unlike the more humoristic tone that characterises the word-pictures we have reviewed thus far, here Magritte's joke (if we can call it that) seems to have a much more violent and sexual message, expressed by the combination of a naked body and a severed (or missing) head. Nevertheless, his inquiry is not characterised by strong expressions of emotional investment, say by means of expressive brush strokes or specific details that would identify the woman with a particular person. *Le genre nocturne* seems to relate more immediately to Magritte's linguistic concerns about concealment, masking, and the way that such actions can produce meaning by initially seeming to withhold it. And yet the sexual suggestiveness of the painting may have arisen in response to a series of gatherings

[112] Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Pit and the Pendulum' [1842], *The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, (Hertfordshire: Woordsworth Editions, 2004). 192.

and debates organised by his contemporaries and dedicated to the notion of sex and its relevance to Surrealism. The so-called *Recherches sur la sexualité* were a series of twelve meetings under the leadership of André Breton, who transcribed their conclusions for print between the years 1928-1932.[113] Magritte, absent from the meetings themselves, however, criticised most of these writings as "facile, violent reactions [...] well-established and familiar," and proposed that "the discoveries we may make in the future will be on a plane we have yet to discover."[114] Critical of these debates, Magritte nevertheless may well have found them suggestive to his work. In two of the later paintings in this cycle exploring implicit and explicit sexual aggressions he interrogates the very sensation of terror by painting a dreadful scene of a woman being molested by a sexual aggressor. Produced in two near-identical oil paintings (and a small drawing, published in Paul Nougé's journal *Distances* in Brussels), the work is titled *Les jours gigantesques* (The titanic days) [figs. 100-101, p.243-244]. Both of the oil paintings were completed in the second half of 1928, although nearly four months passed between the production of the first version and Magritte's execution of the second.[115] *Les jours gigantesques* offers a provocative depiction of a nude female figure in the act of fighting off a man who is trying to grab hold of her. However, the central event of the painting is captured in highly unusual manner. By 'cutting' or delineating both the female and male figures based on the contours of the woman's body, Magritte disregards the man's outline, joining the two figures into one and contrasting them with an anonymous background or stage. The violent gesture invites a range of symbolical readings. Is this outline meant to suggest that terror is self-inflicted and not imposed by an external force? Does it imply that the violent act is

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[113] The 11th issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste* from March 1928 includes the transcriptions and conclusions from the first two sessions. The Parisian publisher Édition Gallimard, published the entire collection of accumulated writings and transcriptions in 1990. See André Breton et al, *Recherches sur la sexualité. Janvier 1928 - Août 1932*, Ed. José Pierre, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1990).

[114] René Magritte, Untitled text, dated 2 April 1928, quoted in David Sylvester and Sarah Whitfield., *René Magritte, Catalogue raisonné, vol. I, Oil Paintings, 1916-1930*, Edited by David Sylvester, (London and New York: Thames & Hudson; Houston: The Menil Foundation, 1992), 90.

[115] Alongside the two oil paintings of this name, Magritte also produced a drawing, which he sent to Paul Nougé to be included in his publication *Distances* in the same year.

described from the point of view of the one who is affected by it rather than by that of the aggressor? The unusual manner in which Magritte cropped his figures resembles a crucial pictorial device from the grammar of pasted-paper collage – the hard cut, and inconsiderate edge. In a letter to his close friend and colleague the Belgian Surrealist writer Marcel Lecomte, he explained that *Les jours gigantesques* is an attempt to explore ways in which power relations and the implementation of terror can be represented as gestures of concealment of much as in visibility. Attaching a small illustration of the scene, he wrote the following:

> The drawing, as you will see, represents an attempted rape; the woman is visibly in a state of terror. I have treated this subject, this terror that grips the woman, by means of a subterfuge, a reversal of the laws of space, which serves to produce an effect quite different from what the subject usually affords. It's roughly like this: the man seizes the woman; he is in the foreground; necessarily therefore the man conceals part of the woman, the part where he is in front of her, between her and our vision. But the discovery lies in the fact that the man does not overlap the outline of the woman.[116]

Les jours gigantesques explores how visibility and concealment are interlinked with the notions of power and terror. Magritte's approach to cuts (or borders) clearly conditions the symbolical readings of his work and its effect. Magritte is both soliciting a sense of depth and undermining it at the same time by cutting one figure's outline carefully and ignoring that of the other, abruptly breaking the original distinction between the two bodies and letting the entire profile of the woman's body remain visible to the painting's viewer.

[116] David Sylvester and Sarah Whitfield, 1992, 277.

In fact, Magritte's unusual interest in the effects of cuts that delineate a figure or object's outline by means of painting was already expressed in the first painting he produced after his arrival in the French capital late 1927. *Les muscles célestes* (The muscles of the sky) [fig.95, p.238] is divided into two dislocated sections: the first, depicting a desolate wooden stage in the bottom half of the canvas, and the second, a stormy sky in its upper half. A wiggly, erratic, separating line runs horizontally through the picture, dividing the two segments and dipping on two occasions into the stage to form two anthropomorphic shapes, which Magritte identified as "the legs of the sky."[117] The composition generates a confusing illusion of depth, making it impossible for the viewer to determine whether the sky lies before or behind the stage, or somehow in a combination of the two. The work belongs to a series of paintings (and a single paper collage) in which representations of cut-out forms, and soon also cut-out papers, are positioned within a theatrical setting in a manner that alludes to human presence but also marks its absence. The constant play between perspectival illusion and its frustration, the placement of cut-out elements as free-standing figures in space and the hard-cut line that breaks the composition into two, all make *Le muscles célestes* a satisfying case for any discussion of Magritte's painting in relation to the techniques of collage, at least on a formal level. As such, the painting joins *Le goût de l'invisible* (A taste for the invisible) [fig.89, p.226], *Le secret du cortège* (the secret of the procession), *Les figures de nuit* (Figures of night), *L'ombre céleste* (The celestial shade), and *La parure de l'orage* (The finery of the storm) [fig.96, p.239], all produced in a span of four or five weeks towards the end of 1927. Each of these compositions includes flat anthropomorphic forms positioned in a theatrical setting, casting dark shadows behind them. Sculpture, painting, pasted-paper collage, theatre, and possibly film, all seem to be

[117] Undated letter from René Magritte to Paul Nougé, c. October 1927. Quoted in David Sylvester and Sarah Whitfield, 1992, 235.

represented by this enigmatic circle of works, whose final painting – *Le musée d'une nuit* (The one-night museum) [fig.36, p.100] – ties this group to the word-picture cycle that I analysed earlier in this chapter, and to the painting *La clef des songes* in particular.

It is hard to say whether Magritte was preoccupied with the effects of actual cutting techniques in relation to collage and the effects of their translation into painting, or whether he considered these breaks in his paintings simply as aids in a philosophical exercise (a method for juxtaposing disparate subjects for the purpose of contemplation). At least in part, it seems likely that his versatile ways of separating and combining foreign elements was a by-product of the linguistic nature of his investigation, helping to examine what forms a semantic unit, how is it isolated and connected to another, how can one break or disrupt this relationship, and how do different units affect one another? Notwithstanding, Magritte had a keen eye to the potential effects of different kinds of cuts or abruptions that form a pictorial composition. And while this comes into play, as we have already seen, in works such as *Les Fenêtres de l'aube*, *Les jours gigantesques*, and *Les muscles célestes*, it becomes manifest to an even greater degree in his numerous paintings where representations of decorative paper cut-outs form the main subject of the painting.

Magritte's first painted paper cut-out appears in a work, now lost, titled *Le ciel passe dans l'air* (The sky flies through the air) [fig.102, p.245]. Preceded by a series of actual paper cut-outs that Magritte prepared before his arrival to Paris, as if in preparation for his move to the capital, this painting is followed almost instantly by two experiments of a similar kind – the abovementioned *La parure de l'orage* and *Le musée d'une nuit.* Unlike in earlier experiments, however, where Magritte included flat figures or elements that appear as if they were cut out of somewhere else (e.g. *Les figures de nuit*, and *Les muscles célèstes*, both from 1927), the new

painted cut-outs simulated a particular form of decoration of the kind that is executed by folding a piece of paper and cutting into its sides to create a symmetric pattern of emptied shapes.

The painted paper cut-outs join the artist's repertoire of children's games or amateur pastime activities appropriated into his work, a tendency that began in 1925 with an obscure object that resembles a ball-and-cup game that made its way into a number of paintings (e.g. *Cinéma bleu*). It was followed with references to children's reading primers, moulded pieces of lead which used to be an amusement for Magritte as a child, and pawn-like figures. Considered as games or playful forms of craft, rather than expressions of high art, each of these elements would serve a different, provocative function in Magritte's paintings. The painted paper cut-outs, in particular, seemed to have had a number of roles to fulfil depending on their context and execution. For example, in the first two paintings mentioned above – *Le ciel passe dans l'air* and *La parure de l'orage* – Magritte chose to simulate cut-out paper figures in order to populate a stage, much like silhouettes in a shadow theatre that take the place of an absent figure or object whose identity is only partly implied and otherwise described merely by its outline or shadow. In *Le musée d'une nuit* however he chose to paint a piece of cut-out paper in a very different way. Here, four display compartments are presented to the viewer in the manner of a cabinet of curiosities. Three visible compartments, each containing an object – a piece of moulded lead, a prostate hand, and an apple – while the fourth compartment is covered by a rectangular surface that is a piece of cut-out paper.[118] The pattern of pierced shapes, in turn, seems to contain smiling clown faces or masks, and the title of the work implies that there might be a particular occasion, a certain night, on which what is hidden from display is made

[118] The moulded piece of lead at the centre of the painting is likely to refer to a childhood memory from his birth town of Chatêlet in Belgium, where Magritte recalled witnessing playful experiments with heated lead metal dropped into cold water to form amorphic shapes.

visible. *Le musée d'une nuit* thus operates like an architectural *mashrabiya*, creating an aura of mystery that suggests, but does not promise, that something might reside behind it.[119] In a slightly later work, *L'esprit comique* (The spirit of comedy) from 1928, Magritte developed his use of pasted-paper cut-outs even further [fig.103, p.246]. Here, a large cut-out figure is seen marching in a desolate natural landscape. The relationship between the figure and its background, however, undermines any sense of scale in the picture. Is the figure threatening or benign? Are we looking at a giant trampling over mountain ridges? An average size person stepping on a small mound? Or a small paper cut-out figurine? The removal of a human figure and its replacement with a mysterious paper cut-out figure functions here as placeholder, an outline to be filled by our imagination.

Closer examination of *L'esprit comique* however, tells us something about the manner in which Magritte produced his painted cut-out effects. Even more clearly than in his earlier examples from 1927, *L'esprit comique* testifies to a careful and accurate process whereby the distribution of the hollowed patterns within the figure relied on an actual paper cut-out as a model, possibly even as a mould which Magritte could lay on the canvas and trace with a pencil before applying paint. The silhouette of the figure in turn imitates the outline of a man wearing a broad-shouldered coat in a fashion that is counter-intuitive but correct, again indicating the likelihood that the outline was based on a photograph found in a journal or newspaper. In effect, this kind of laboured production process where cut papers become both the model and the subject of a painting is worthy of attention. In the first place, it brings up the dependency of Magritte's painted paper cut-outs on actual paper models. It also implies the possibility that by 1927 the cutting of papers was becoming a form of representation whose relevance to visual forms of communication had been appropriated by other media

[119] A *mashrabiya* is an architectural element which is characteristic of Arabic residences where the façade of a building or part of it is formed of carved wood latticework, stone or brickwork in order to allow for air flow as well as shade.

and put to use as a rhetorical tool in its own right. Not text, not speech, not painting, photograph, or film, the cutting of papers had made its way from the realm of amateur pastime, folk art, theatre and craft into the realm of avant-garde art. Struck by the success of this pictorial device in the medium of painting, Magritte's close friend and collaborator, the Belgian Surrealist poet Paul Nougé, commented on the subject in a letter sometime towards the end of 1927: "What impresses me particularly is the function you assign to your paper cut-outs, inexplicable object which serves to hide, but in fact to suggest more powerfully than through the image everything that it conceals, for one cannot suppose that it conceals nothing."[120]

Keeping Up Appearances: Magritte's Legacy to the Rhetoric of Collage

We now have a better sense of the different tactics that Magritte employed in his paintings and how they relate to pasted-paper collage. But to what ends did Magritte exploit this relationship? As far as the so-called 'word-pictures' are concerned, Magritte's use of writing in his paintings can be interpreted either as a form of a comparative exercise between words and images, as a way of substituting one of these linguistic orders for another, or as proposing interaction and exchange between the two. The result of these interactions is that as viewers we are asked to hold in our minds two different images (not just an image and a word), as we are provoked to imagine how two unrelated semantic units might relate to one another, transform one another, or reveal certain aspects of each other. The implications of these relationships indicate something about the way words and images can behave when placed

[120] Undated letter from René Magritte to Paul Nougé, c. October-November 1927. Quoted in David Sylvester and Sarah Whitfield, 1992, 237.

outside of their conventional contextual framework or in new relationships with one another. Of course, the effect of such combinations can hardly be regulated or anticipated in advance. Words in Magritte's paintings are hardly ever synonymous with images. They surprise the viewer, hide certain things from them and make others visible, but they also offer the viewer a greater sense of agency in their reading/viewing of the work. Thus, Magritte's claim that "in a picture, words and images are made of the same substance" attests to his interest in painting as a mediating platform that can absorb various visual orders of symbolic representation and explore how different or similar media operate in relation to one another. His interest however, once more, was not in defining the technical conditions of various artistic media. On the contrary, these concerns seemed ultimately unimportant to Magritte. As he wrote late in his life to his friend and colleague the poet André Bosman:

> Thinking about the question of 'collage', it seems to me that collage cannot but remain an indifferent term – just like an oil painting is – in the sense that the glue (and the oil in the case of the painting) does not play any role in the appreciation of the work. […] In fact, the silly importance that is given to these 'genres': oil, gouache, crayons, marmalade, wax, marble, sand, 'collage', etc., prevents, in my view, that we consider them in a catalogue or a conversation. (If not simply in order to denounce their absurdity).[121]

Refusing to identify collage as a medium that has or needs to have its own boundaries and terminology does not mean that Magritte's work was not preoccupied with the qualities and effects that make the technique so important to explore. It is a claim that brings us to the

[121] René Magritte, letter to André Bosmans from 10 July 1963. See René Magritte, *Écrits Complets*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 566.

second group of works (or category) reviewed in this chapter, so-called 'hand-painted collages', in which certain elements simulate the liminal status of collage as not-exactly-painting and not-exactly-sculpture, not-object and not-image. These works conform to the tradition of classic painterly illusion but also break from it by depicting motifs such as painted paper cut-outs, postcards, sculptures and monuments, etc. While Magritte tended to associate these elements with children's games more than with the techniques of collage, these paintings provide both a conceptual exercise concerning the nature of representation and signification and a material exercise concerning the conditions and effects of cut paper in art and its relation to painting in particular. Based on the simulative nature of these works, one might assume that his use of painted paper cut-outs would evacuate such elements of their most essential material attributes, namely that their production should not require the same kind of expertise as those required by painting or sculpture; that they should be able to conceal something other than themselves (even if that something is only an empty ground); that the gaps, edges, and borders of these elements are physical and textured, and that they undermine the coherence of the traditional picture plane. Yet as the examples presented here reveal, these effects do not simply disappear owing to their simulated nature in painting. That Magritte's painted cut-outs imply concealment is after all only a matter of appearances. Indeed, concealment in his paintings is generated by a sense of curiosity and not by confirming that something actually lies behind the image.

This is, one comes to learn, also Magritte's greatest legacy to art practitioners who began to explore questions of visibility and representation in painting, and more importantly, to defy the limits of painting by means that employ the lessons of collage but do not adhere to it as a formulaic alternative. From the Post-Second World War period onwards, this becomes visible in the work of artists from Andy Warhol, through Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, James

Rosenquist, and Joseph Kosuth all the way to Linder, John Stezaker and Art & Language. Two visitors to Magritte's now iconic exhibition at Sidney Janis' gallery in 1954, 'Word vs. Image' – Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg – would later acknowledge the artist's influence on the formation of their practices. Johns even credited Magritte's word-pictures with having led him to produce his very first *Flag* paintings. Within that context, Magritte's main contribution to the history of collage was considerable. His so-called 'notional', 'pseudo' or 'hand-painted collages' had laid down a foundation for a dialectic between painting and collage where one medium always counters, develops and challenges the conditions of the other, and where medium distinctions are not restrictive, rather they are instrumental.



Fig. 88, René Magritte, *Le gout de l'invisible,* 1927, Cut and pasted music sheets and painted papers with gouache on paper support, 48.5 x 63.3 cm.



Fig. 89, René Magritte, *Le gout de l'invisible*, 1927, Oil on canvas, 73 x 100 cm.



Fig. 90, René Magritte, *Untitled*, 1930, Pasted corrugated cardboards, papers, and oil painting on cardboard support, dimensions unknown, (now lost).



Fig. 91, René Magritte, *La clef des songes*, 1927, Oil on canvas, 38 x 55 cm.

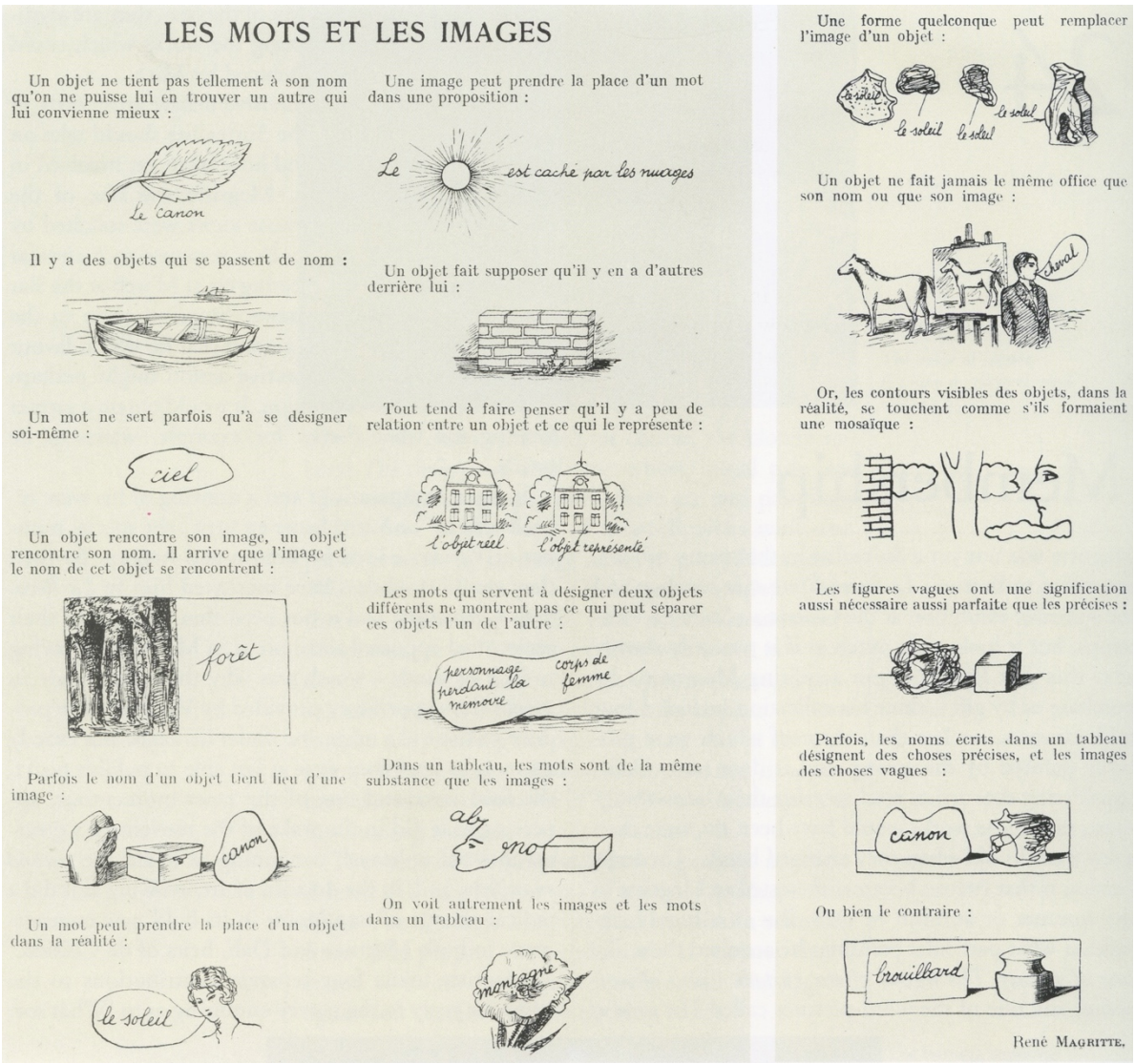


Fig. 92, René Magritte, *Les mots et les images*, 'La Revolution Surrealiste', Issue 12, September 1929.



Fig. 93, *L'usage de la parole*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 54 x 73 cm.



Fig. 94, René Magritte, *La preuve mystérieuse*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm.



Fig. 95, René Magritte, *Les muscles célestes*, 1927, Oil on canvas, 54 x 73 cm.

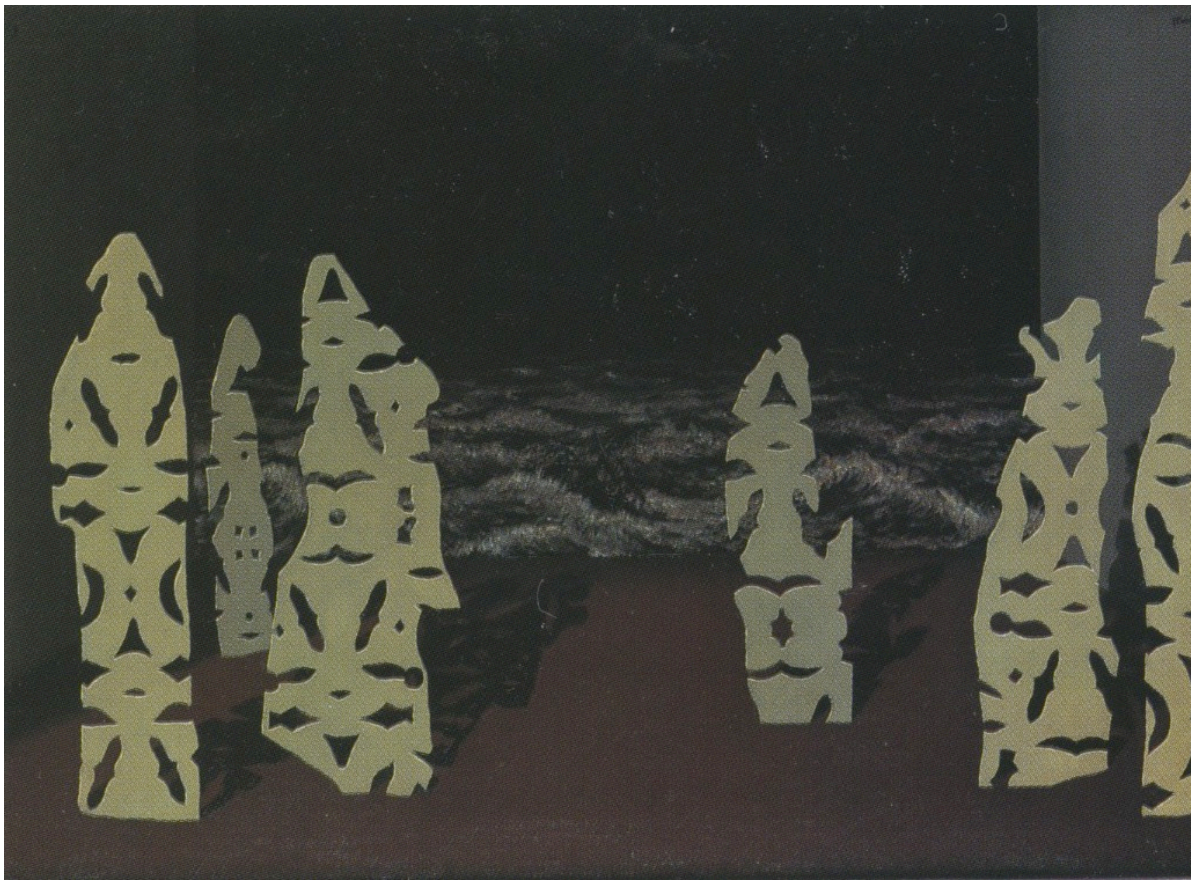


Fig. 96, René Magritte, *La parure de l'orage*, 1927, Oil on canvas, 81 x 116 cm.



Fig. 97, *Les fenêtres de l'aube*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cm.



Fig. 98, René Magritte, *Le double secret*, 1927, Oil on canvas, 114 x 162 cm.



Fig. 99, *Le genre nocturne*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 81 x 116 cm.



Fig. 100, *Les jours gigantesques*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 72.4 x 54 cm.



Fig. 101, *Les jours gigantesques*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 116 x 80.8 cm.

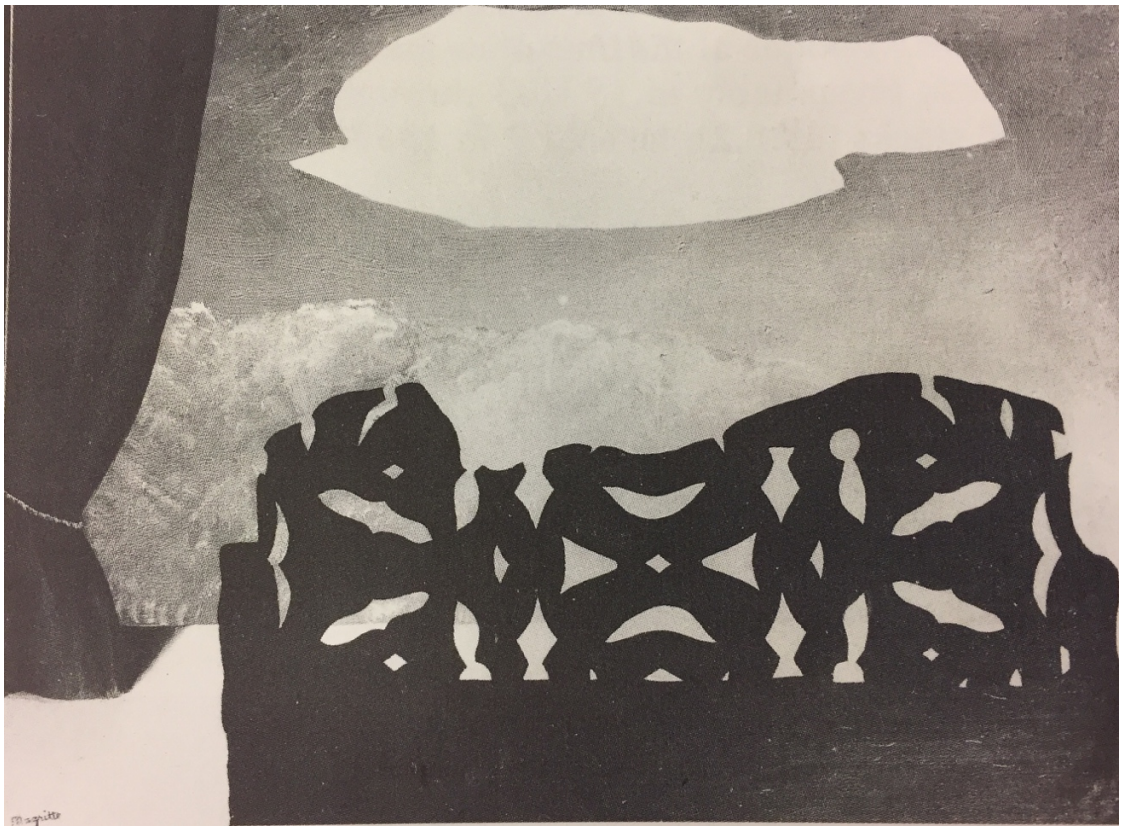


Fig. 102, *Le ciel passe dans l'air*, 1927, Oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm (Black and white reproduction).



Fig. 103, *L'esprit comique*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 75 x 60 cm.

Making Do: Sherrie Levine

In the previous chapter I explored certain aspects of the relationship between collage and the medium of painting through the work of René Magritte. The present chapter is dedicated to a different kind of inquiry and a different temporality altogether. It is focused on collage's historical origins through its relationship to traditional forms of craft that are commonly considered foreign to the realm of fine art and implicated in the history of gender politics. By looking into the early works of American artist Sherrie Levine (b.1947), executed between the years 1973-1980, I explore a range of artistic techniques that fall outside the conventional history and territory of collage: first, in Levine's own practice and the way in which she challenged, and eventually abandoned pasted-paper collage, and second, in the practice of pre-twentieth century craftspeople and particularly women who operated in Europe and North America in the nineteenth century and whose work had influenced Levine's practice and aesthetics.

Sherrie Levine's interest in methods of image production and appropriation represents a broader tendency among members of her generation who began practicing art professionally around the mid-1970s. Levine's work is associated with a conscious and consistent effort to undermine established gender hierarchies and the cultural and artistic histories to which these relate. Her work from the years 1973 to 1980 is particularly invested in an exploration of historical practices commonly identified under a set of competing terms, such as "domestic craftwork", "domestic arts", "women's work", "accomplishments" or "the polite and useful arts".[122] Nowadays, Levine has become widely recognised for her engagement with and critique of the dominating patriarchal narratives of modern art, as well as the conditions of its commodification throughout this period. However, and partly because of the overwhelming impact of her work, Levine's practice is rarely analysed with respect to the historical genres that informed it. Curator Douglas Eklund provided one of the very few direct comments on the subject in 2009 in his essay for the *Pictures Generation* survey exhibition that he organised at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, indicating that Levine was "historically

[122] For broader discussions on these terms see Beth Fowkes Tobin and Maureen Daly Goggin's 'Introduction: Materialising Women' in *Women and Things: 1750-1950. Gendered Material Strategies*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 1-16. See also Ann Bermingham's discussion in 'The Frenzy of Accomplishments', *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 185-196.

and critically astute in her use of a medium [i.e. collage] known in Victorian times as quintessential 'women's work'."[123] Indeed, this link between the contemporary uses of collage as a technical procedure and the medium's relevance to eighteenth and nineteenth century "women's work" has far reaching implications for the reading of Levine's work from the 1970s, as well as her later and better known work from the 1980s onwards. This link also bears on the understanding of collage rhetoric – defining the medium's historical boundaries, technical limitations, motivations and aims – by excluding some elements of this history and including others.

In this chapter, I focus on Levine's early work between the years 1973 and 1980, from the time she graduated until her first experiments with rephotography. During this period Levine gradually and methodically developed a keen interest in the exploration of the domestic unit and its history as an ideological symbol, reiterating the importance of specific artistic genres that emerged from and were dedicated to domestic life and largely associated with women. These included silhouette- and collage making as well as a rich tradition of figurative drawing exercises that represent an important aspect of women's engagement with art making prior to the twentieth century. This portion of Levine's work is fundamental to her interest in gender and domestic politics – the latter term understood here both as private domesticity as well as national identity – and extends well beyond the deconstructive agenda that is commonly attributed to her work. Some inroads into this subject have already been made by writers such as Howard Singerman, Levine's most devoted critic over the past thirty-odd years, as well as by Douglas Crimp, Benjamin Buchloh, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Valentin Tatransky, and more recently also by Douglas Eklund. Different from each other in tone as well as in perspective, these critics' writings raise crucial questions about Levine's wider *oeuvre* and its relationship to the medium of collage and its history; yet by and large the study of Levine's work remains largely oblivious of its ties to collage rhetoric, as well as to the historical roots of what I shall refer in this chapter as 'the domestic arts', a term that requires some historical contextualisation and theoretical clarification first.

[123] Douglas Eklund, '"His Gesture Moved Us to Tears": Pictures Art in Reinvigorated Market', *The Pictures Generation: 1974-1984*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 202.

The category of domestic arts gained substantial currency in Europe, and to some extent also in North America, as a category of popular pastime activities that paralleled the emergence of distinct middle and upper classes in the seventeenth century. It continued to develop well into the twentieth century, accumulating practices into its midst including drawing, quilting, knitting, crocheting (fancywork), filigree, gilding, japanning, shell-work, feather-work, the making of silhouettes, the preparation of scrapbooks, and most importantly in the context of the present thesis, the cutting and pasting of colourful papers or silks. This wide range of practices came to be largely identified with women (although not exclusively) by the beginning of the eighteenth century and was known under the umbrella category of "accomplishments"; a set of creative practices that represented the moral and religious virtues of women and the households placed under their custody. A range of creative and decorative crafts – or arts as I shall refer to these practices here – was thus developed, mastered and theorised to mirror society's changing identity throughout the long nineteenth century.[124] In hindsight, it is clear that these activities corresponded to and were influenced by the processes of technological modernisation and industrialisation, as well as by the new material wealth of the European nations. 'Accomplishments' were thus directly linked to the reorganisation of a modern economy, and to a transformative process of the home from a site that embodied both work- and family life divided into two separate spheres: a public, professionalised arena, dedicated to work and politics, governed and populated by men, and a segregated domestic realm, equally governed by men but managed and populated predominantly by women. Notwithstanding, contemporary social historians such as Beth Fowkes Tobin and Maureen Daly Goggin now confirm that while "the production of goods moved into public spaces and women's productivity ostensibly moved out of the public sphere into the home, the ideology of domesticity concealed the fact that production continued not only in cottage industries

[124] I use the term 'arts' in plural here in order to distinguish the above practices from the notion of 'craft' with its utilitarian connotations, and on the other hand from a singular notion of 'art' as a referent to practices acknowledged and informed by the disciplinary discourse of fine art at the time.

and by women who crossed spheres to secure a living but also in bourgeois sitting rooms and parlours."[125]

Indeed, a wide range of surviving works as well as numerous letters and writings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries testifies to the fact that domestic arts played an important role in the lives of most middle- and upper-class men and women. And while letters, diary entries, and books on the subject portray the domestic arts as part of an important religious and educational enterprise, they remain almost categorically excluded from the more prestigious sphere of fine art. The moralist Maria Edgeworth, for example, dedicated an entire chapter in her book *Practical Education*, which was published in 1798, to emphasise the importance of accomplishments in the education of the young women of society:

> Women should […] be encouraged, by all means to cultivate those tastes which can attach them to their home and which can preserve them from the miseries of dissipation. Every sedentary occupation must be valuable to those who are to lead sedentary lives; and every art, however trifling in itself, which tends to enliven and embellish domestic life, must be advantageous, not only to the female sex, but to society in general. As far as accomplishments can contribute to all or any of these excellent purposes, they must be just objects of attention in early education.[126]

To Edgeworth, the repetitive and at times laborious nature of accomplishments, and their confinement to the domestic environment, was what made these practices an essential part of any respectable woman's upbringing. This, Edgeworth and others maintained, came in opposition, for example, to women's role as the household shoppers – a responsibility that came to be regarded with much criticism as a questionable activity associated with profligacy. Craftwork, on the other hand,

[125] Beth Fowkes Tobin and Maureen Daly Goggin, 2016, 4.

[126] Maria Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1798), vol 2, 523.

reflected patience, talent, flare for the beautiful, thriftiness, and a mastery of the household's chores. And even if the lady of the house did not tend to the mending or fixing of things in the home herself, she was nevertheless responsible for the execution of these tasks and needed to be familiar with them. As pointed out by Edgeworth, the domestic arts also proved to be an efficient strategy for keeping women indoors for long hours of the day (again, in opposition to shopping). It is in this context that the term 'domesticity' had resurfaced into common use in the seventeenth century – first of all in France and later in other countries – as a way of emphasising the separate economies of the home and those of the workplace or political realm. The word itself was appropriated from its original Latin uses as *dem* (household), *domus* (house), and *domesticus* (belonging to the household, whether referring to servants, livestock, or objects).

In opposition to Edgeworth's conservative view, other members of middle- and upper-class society were nevertheless suspicious of the moral code to which the domestic crafts were coming to belong. The poet Caroline Anne Southey, for one, wrote to her husband Robert Southey in 1826 about the general excitement concerning a wide range of creative practices among the upper echelons of society in England that she saw around her:

> Heaven have mercy on us! All womankind is whirling around in a vortex of religious dissipation… One lady's drawing room is full of little charity boxes, placed here and there amongst the ornamental litter; another keeps a stall of trumpery knick-knacks – 'ladies' work' – to lay her visitors under contribution; another asks you to work for her (audacious!) and then a whole bevy of damsels sit congregated together, pasting and painting, sewing and gilding and what not...[127]

[127] Letter from Caroline Anne Bowles Southey to Robert Southey, 18 April 1826, *The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles*, ed. Edward Dowden (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co, 1881), 104.

Southey's remarks regard the accumulative and menial aspects of craftwork and their effects on sociability among groups of women at the time with a negative, not to say ridiculing tone, but her comments also suggest the commercial potential represented by some of the women practitioners whose work became famous or enabled them to express or exchange critical views publicly. As social historian Ariane Fennetaux writes in her essay 'Female Crafts: Women and Bricolage in Late Georgian Britain, 1750-1820', "far from being expressions of women's mute acceptance of the gender role which these practices seemed to ascribe to them, crafts could be subverted and used by women to their own ends."[128] And in fact, "Ladies' work", as Southey refers to it in her letter, often exceeded its concern with the material upkeep and beautification of the home. Some of the more ambitious craftswomen intentionally produced far more artefacts than their homes could ever accommodate (large even though they were). Their production thus offered them a way out of the confined domestic environment, granting them well-earned places within various economies of trade, public display and critical discourse – whether as producers of gifts to be exchanged on social occasions, or within a competitive professional market, either in religious fairs, or in some instances within the markets for both art and decorative crafts.

One such example, in line with the present context of the history of collage, is that of the German silhouettist Luise Duttenhofer (1776-1829), now considered one of the most important protagonists of cut-paper techniques in the nineteenth century. As the making of silhouettes gained popularity among amateurs and professionals alike (in Germany, Britian, and France, above all, but also in Holland and elsewhere), Duttenhofer became aware of the potential market for selling and buying her creations, which grew above all thanks to her skill in cutting her recognisable black papers with exceptional precision and complexity using free-hand, without making any preparatory sketches or marking the figures' outlines in advance. Given her skill, Duttenhoffer is today compared with the most famous male silhouette artist of her time, Philipp Otto Runge (1777-1810). Yet Duttenhofer's silhouettes, much like other 'Ladies' work', were not only produced in the home and for the home, their themes

[128] Ariane Fennetaux, 'Female Crafts: Women and Bricolage in Late Georgian Britain, 1750-1820', *Women and Things: 1750-1950. Gendered Material Strategies*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 92.

were by and large dedicated to representation of domestic life [fig.104, p.277]. As art historian Julia Sedda suggests, one of the reasons for the popularity of silhouettes among women at the time was their adequacy of genre to theme. "A part of the upper middle class of Stuttgart," Sedda writes, Duttenhofer "based her silhouettes on the everyday life of the bourgeoisie. Her scenes of the home communicate in a fascinating way the life of the nineteenth century woman". They appealed to those women as mirrors reflecting their lifestyle, as propagators of their ideals, and as symbols of their agency.[129]

Indeed, Duttenhofer is but one example for the potentially social and economic liberation hidden in the 'domestic arts'. Other practitioners exploited their craft practices in order to divert their intellectual horizons towards fields of knowledge limited to the scope initially allowed to them by society: botany, science, geography and chemistry are only a handful of the disciplines explored through the means of the domestic arts in the nineteenth century. One of the best-known examples, again within the context of collage history, is Mrs. Mary Delany (1700-1788) and her so-called "paper mosaics" produced towards the end of her life. Known among a broad circle of family members, friends and acquaintances, including King George III and his wife Charlotte, for many years as a practicing artist, craftswoman and letter-writer, Delany painted, drew and produced needlework of exceptional skill throughout most of her life. In hindsight however, it was her paper mosaics, or *flora Delanica* as she humorously baptised her collection of paper collages imitating botanical species, which came to be her greatest achievement. As recounted by Lady Llanover, a close friend of the artist, Mrs. Delany first came up with the idea of her "new art form" at the age of seventy-three. One day in 1771 when "noticing the similarity of colour between a geranium and a piece of bright scarlet paper she had on her table, she took her scissors and cut the shapes of the flower out of the red paper; she used a green paper for the leaves and stalk, and created a picture of a geranium. When [her friend] the duchess [of Portland] entered the room she mistook the paper petals for real ones and exclaimed, 'What are you doing with the geranium?' The duchess was so enthusiastic and supportive that Mrs.

[129] Julia Sedda, ' Reading Circles, Crafts, and Flower Arranging: Everyday Items in the Silhouettes of Luise Duttenhofer (1776-1829)', *Women and Things: 1750-1950. Gendered Material Strategies*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 110.

Delany was encouraged to continue with her *new art*", which she did.[130] In the coming decade, Delany would produce 985 *paper mosaics*, some of which were composed of more than two hundred paper petals and all of which depicted specific species of flowers and plants in the utmost accuracy [fig.105, p.278]. She also encouraged a number of relatives and friends to take up similar practices, including one Booth Grey, whose work remains an important reference to domestic craftwork undertaken by men.[131] Besides the astounding level of accuracy and detail in Delany's work, she also gained fame in the field of botany. Her accurate compositions were hailed as scientific aids of the finest quality among naturalists such as her contemporary Joseph Banks, and undoubtedly, she herself mastered a knowledge in flowers, plants, and their organisms through her practice.

While Delany's mosaics were great contributions to botany, and Duttenhoffer's silhouettes reflected as well as contested common social values, perhaps a third category of practitioners whose work enabled a departure from the protected environment of the home were those who secured a place within the critical discourse surrounding professional fine arts circles by displaying their work in public or private art galleries and institutions. A certain Mrs. Dards, for example, whose existence is known to us only through a surviving catalogue of her work, exhibited her elaborate shellwork sculptures in two occasions in art galleries in London (in 1800 and 1802). For each exhibition admission was required (one shilling), catalogues were published and sold, and reviews appeared in local newspapers [figs.106a-106b, p.279-280]. Her work can be interestingly compared with a growing body of literature dedicated to new artistic techniques that became popular at the turn of the nineteenth century in the form of "how to" books, or dictionaries and surveys of technical procedures and artists. In fact, knowledge of Mrs. Dards' practice exists today only thanks to the literature that was dedicated to her work at the time, given that the whereabouts of her creations is no longer known.

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[130] Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London: 2009), 224.

[131] Mary Delany's *Flora Delanica* can be viewed today at the British Museum in London. The Hon. Grey Booth's collection of paper mosaics resides in the Centre for British Art in Yale University, New Haven.

By and large however, and despite exceptional instances, the domestic arts of the long nineteenth century (commonly regarded as the period between 1780-1918) remained, in the majority of cases, excluded and distinguished from the public sphere, its trade economies, and from the critical discourse that surrounded the discipline of fine art. This distinction was largely supported by the fact that many of the domestic techniques and practices, such as pasted papers, shellwork, and fancywork, kept closer links with the disciplines of design and craft and were largely ignorant of the intellectual and stylistic debates that characterised the art academies at the time. This distinction is of course due first and foremost to the long-lasting objection to women obtaining formal education in the arts.[132] It also related to the fact that oil painting and sculpture required large studios and expensive materials that were seldom afforded to women by their husbands. The domestic arts, on the other hand, were produced within the economic means of women themselves, implied nothing more than simple decorative ambitions, and the very materials that were either available at the home or purchased at designated shops that began to appear in the eighteenth century – once more, linking these practices to the role of women as shoppers.[133] In these and other similar shops (distinct from those devoted to "professional" art) women could buy inks, varnishes, gum, and brushes for their various creations but also more costly materials such as feathers or shells imported from foreign and exotic places. The emergence of such repositories also meant that a certain know-how, not to say professionalised knowledge, was beginning to form among women practitioners.

[132] While two of the Royal Academy of Art founding members in Britain were women (1768), the Academy accepted its first female student only in 1860 by mistake. Laure Herford sent a drawing in the post for her admission examination, signed only with her initials. The work was accepted and none of the examiners imagined that the applicant might be a woman. Herford was followed by other female students, but they were barred from life classes and much of the Academy's activities until the 1890s. Their admission, in turn, was carefully controlled to ensure that they didn't outnumber the men. In France, women were barred from the Acadmie des Beaux Arts altogether until the 1890s. And despite the existence of alternative art schools dedicated to women since the 1870s, it is only in 1900 that admission was made possible to this prestigious academy thanks to the opening of a separate studio dedicated to the formation of women in the arts, where once more, women were barred from attending life model classes in the men's studios.

[133] Such as, for example, the two London shops, The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain that opened in London in 1779, and Rudolph Ackermann's famous Repository of the Arts that was located on 101 Strand.

Bricolage: A Manly Alternative

Despite the growing significance and impact of the domestic arts on countless middle- and upper-class women (as well as men) in Europe, and despite attempts to unify the fields of fine art and craft throughout the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries by groups such as the Arts and Crafts movement in England or certain members among the Bauhaus in Germany (formed in 1919), the domestic arts remains severed from the narratives of nineteenth and twentieth century art and its fascination with a range of technical procedures such as collage, assemblage, sewing, weaving and embroidery.[134] According to the cannon, the role played by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in the history of collage however, provided the foundation to a different historical narrative, pointing if anything, towards the inspiration that they found in a phenomenon that paralleled the endorsement and institutionalisation of the domestic arts among working and lower middle classes in the nineteenth century. *Bricolage*, as we have come to understand this term today, is the practice of mending, tinkering, or fixing objects in one's home in a creative and improvised manner.[135] This older form of tacit knowledge and the set of activities that relate to it, also gained currency during the nineteenth century, again in reaction to modern conditions of suburban living – technological as well as social. *Bricolage* however was predominantly a masculine practice, and its main emphasis was on practical, not to say essential needs of the household's daily functions. It never had formative, decorative or moral aspirations, and as such, '*bricoleurs'* did not seek financial gains, public recognition, or moral and intellectual acknowledgement. Nevertheless, it would seem that the creative impetus ascribed to *bricolage*, as well as its conflation of necessity with leisure for a class who did not

[134] The work of Freya Gowerly at University of Derby is noteworthy in this particular context. Gowerly's research focuses on the relationship between identity and visual and material culture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain and North America, exploring this connection through three key sites: the home, the collaged object, and the body. Patrick Elliott's exhibition and book project *Cut and Paste: 400 Years of Collage* at the National Galleries of Scotland is another attempt to explore this historical paradigm.

[135] The word *bricolage* is derived from the term *Brigole* (which later became *bricole*) appearing in Latin and French in the middle ages. At the time, the word referred to a subverted or manipulated action (and in some contexts also to a catapult). By the eighteenth-century *bricolage* was part of the vocabulary applied in sports and recreational activities, most notably billiards, horse riding, and hunting, in order to describe a situation where an animal or player would circumvent the direct course expected of them in order to avoid an obstacle. *Bricolage* as a form of DIY activity only emerged in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

have much leisure at its disposal – and not the other way around as was the case with the domestic arts of the upper classes – had its appeal to the European avant-garde artists of the 1910s and 1920s, predominantly among the Cubists and members of the various Dada groups. The former, attracted by the idea of the artist as a resourceful and innovative individual, and that latter attracted by the idea of the artist as an engineer. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss later supported this position in his meditation on the term, noting how the *bricoleur* in his or her work is always closer to the creative end than the functional one:

> The *bricoleur* is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his games are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project…[136]

It is perhaps this latter characteristic of *bricolage* that Strauss mentions as a practice that requires one to "make do with whatever is at hand" that eventually lent itself more than all other aspects to the language and ideology of twentieth century collage, providing a way to resist the restrictions of traditional media such as painting and monolithic sculpture. And indeed, Picasso was the first to articulate the idea that his work was linked to the myth of a *bricoleur* – a worker, a man, crafty, resourceful, but above all indifferent to the rules of the game.[137] As art historian Brandon Taylor writes in his history of collage, "Picasso's powers of invention" were partly rooted in "his skill with

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[136] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Science of the Concrete', *The Savage Mind*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholoson, 1966), 17. First published in French as *La Pensée Sauvage* (Paris: Librarie Pelon, 1962).

[137] The Berlin Dada artists in particular, were the exception in this respect, identifying their artistic persona, at least formally, with the figure of the 'engineer' which from Strauss' perspective is juxtaposed to that of the bricoleur. See Raoul Hausmann quoted in Dawn Ades, *Photomontage*, (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 12.

bricolage, or the expedient use of the 'wrong' materials' […]. In the spring of 1912 we find him using house-decorators' paints called Ripolin [... and later on] we find him applying a wide swathe of alien material and a rope border in *Still Life with Chair Canning*: the first literally collaged work in modern Western art…"[138]

The history that follows is densely furnished with examples that link collage to the resourceful approach of *bricoleurs* to found resources: Schwitters, Ernst, Höch, Nevelson, Baj, are only a handful of relevant names in this lineage. Yet it seems that a significant exploration of collage's relationship specifically to domesticity (and its implicit representation of a contemporary social and political order) comes into play in the late 1960s and continued to intensify up until the mid 1980s. During this period, pasted-paper collage, as well as embroidery, quilting, and other forms of what one might link to the historical category of domestic arts re-emerged as an impactful and extended platform for political and social scrutiny, and perhaps above all as a tool in the hands of second wave feminist artists. Indeed, collage is but one expression of a wide range of new concerns that were becoming more and more central to feminist discourse, which now shifted its emphasis from the public arena – women's right to vote, work, and become recognised as political members of their societies – towards questions of sexuality, family life, the workplace, and indeed the home. Here too, examples here can be found in abundance, but it suffices to mention a few names, most notably that of Martha Rosler, whose series of photomontages *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1969-1972) [fig.107, p.281], as well as *Body Beautiful or Beauty Knows No Pain* (1965-1972), confronted multiple political and social concerns, specific or generic, by means of pasted-paper collage: the Vietnam war, poverty, gender inequality, the normalisation of pornography in mass media, and the misrepresentation of ethnic minorities or foreign national groups. In both projects Rosler chose luxurious domestic environments – kitchens, living rooms, or bathrooms, of the kind one would find in life-style magazines – transforming these into display cases for gory war scenes or pornographic imagery, cut and pasted from the daily press and inserted into the surfaces of windows or pictures that decorated these

[138] Brandon Taylor, 'Inventing Collage', *Collage: The Making of Modern Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2004, 14-15.

interiors. In some cases, she even populated the empty interiors with soldiers, with wounded or dead victims of war, or with pornographic actresses, placing them carefully in her pasted compositions as if they were the most natural residents of these homes.

Rosler's critique rested squarely upon the contemporary mechanisms of the mass media and the issues they addressed, and as such differed from that of artists such as Miriam Schapiro, for example, who chose to resist contemporary media and return to historical craft methods of production. Schapiro, in turn, gradually established a new category of works in the 1960s at a tangent to pasted-paper collage, and which she named '*Femmage*'. The term '*Femmage*', according to her writings, was applicable to any artwork created by women and manufactured by process of assembling objects or materials that relate to women and their shared history [fig.108, p.282]. Schapiro saw in the term '*femmage*' a way to affirm in a new context the marginalised history of women's art:

> Femmage is many things. It is work by women of history who sewed, pieced, hooked, cut, appliquéd, quilted, tatted, wrote, painted, and combined materials using traditional women's techniques to achieve their art activities (also engaged by men but assigned in history to women). Femmage is also practiced by contemporary women who, like their ancestors, are clear about their womanly life and how it shapes their view of the world.[139]

In her attempt to reaffirm this history of women's artistic practices, Schapiro also set out to produce a series of "collaborations" with women artists of the past by means of collage – namely, appropriating their work and adding new components to it. Both her *femmages* and her collaborations were invested in marginalised histories and techniques such as quilting, the preparation of large hand-held fans, or citing paintings that remained outside of the art historical canon of the twentieth century.[140] But while

[139] *Collage: Critical Views*. Edited by Katherine Hoffman, 1989, 269.

[140] Other artists who practiced during these two decades (1960s-1980s) offer a wide range of variations and entry points to the subject of domestic and gender politics and the reaffirmation of practices previously ignored by art history. These include: Penny Slinger, Betye Saar, Harmony Hammond, Judy Chicago, Richard Hamilton, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger,

the tension between historical traditions of women's craft and the new dialects of mass media seems to distinguish the works of Rosler and Schapiro, as well as many of their contemporaries and successors over the two defining decades of the 1970s and 80s, it was in the early works of Sherrie Levine, who began practicing as an artist in the early 1970s, that one could find a new kind of sensibility towards the appropriation of found imagery that engaged simultaneously with the contemporary conditions of visual culture as well as the historical traditions of domestic craft.

Melodrama: A New Perspective on Domesticity

Sherrie Levine began her artistic career after completing five years of study at Wisconsin University, Madison, in 1973. Having obtained her MFA from the Fine Art department, Levine moved to Berkeley, California, in order to develop her career in a more vibrant and heterogenous environment. She soon took on a number of local teaching posts as well as odd jobs at cinema centres around the Bay Area. Twenty-six years' old and with very few connections in the art world, Levine was soon faced with the difficulty of making work outside of the protected environment of the university studio, but also coming to a realisation that her painterly and drawing practice – highly invested in the minimal and conceptualist preoccupations of her teachers in Madison – also resembled the work of several of her senior contemporaries, not least the artist Brice Marden, whose work she came to know around this time.[141] In effect, this initial crossroad offered Levine an opportunity to set her painterly practice aside and explore an ongoing interest she had in film-making since childhood, and particularly in what Douglas Eklund aptly describes as the "then-debased genre of melodrama, or

Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, David Salle, Linder Sterling, Gee Vaucher, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Annette Messager, and many others, although their interest in these subjects has different motivations and different expressions.

[141] Marden was gaining international recognition in the early 1970s. He was invited to participate in *Documenta 5* in 1972 and later, in 1975 he had his first retrospective exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, in New York. While Levine did not know his work during her time in Madison, she soon came to realise that some of her grid drawings and paintings seemed derivative of his work.

'weepie', as those kind of films, aimed at women, were derogatorily called."[142] In particular, Levine was a big fan of star melodrama filmmakers Douglas Sirk and Nicholas Ray. She knew their films by heart and during her five years as an art student in Wisconsin had begun to see them in the context of other newly discovered heroes, a parallel group of German directors whose films were making their way to the United States, such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, and Wim Wenders. Once in Berkeley, among her part-time jobs Levine also worked for the Pacific Film Archive, which gave her an opportunity to hear Nicholas Ray talking about his work in person on the occasion of his visit to the centre. This opportunity helped her to start thinking about how she might be able to employ the cold language of conceptualism, which was the currency of her education and craft, in order to explore the kind of themes that characterised his work. Sentimentality, above all, Levine thought, was an overlooked affect in contemporary art practice, in part because of the masculine voices that dominated the field. Melodramatic plot lines offered Levine a genre that admitted a certain exaggerated vulnerability into the language of the image. Saccharine romanticism, in turn, exposed conservative gender politics and prejudice that was inherent to this genre in its popular formats, films, tv programmes and photo-roman books. Her first attempt at applying these ideas in her own work took the form of a short film, now destroyed without a trace, showing a crying cowgirl candle melting gradually while country music is playing in the background.[143] The cowgirl, at once symbol of North American identity and a controversial token of femininity, embodied for Levine a kind of ritualistic gesture of personal loss and commemoration. In keeping with the same agenda Levine produced another work inspired by melodramatic plotlines, conjugating the verb 'betray' on a series of paper sheets, which she then arranged in a storyboard manner at the de Saisset Art Gallery and Museum in Santa Carla, California, in 1974.

After these initial attempts to make a kind of work that imbued her student days' explorations of grid and pattern with subjects such as intimacy, family life and moral values, Levine, in 1975 felt that a change of place would enable her to advance her work. She moved to New York City, taking with her

[142] Douglas Eklund, 2009, 107.

[143] Ibid, 107.

the few belongings that she had and one box full of identical, child-size dress shoes that she purchased in a flea market near one of her teaching jobs in San José. She was determined to make a new piece based on these miniature objects, which she thought expressed a sense of sentimental longing that relates to family life and its idealisation from a distance, whether in time, place or scale. The work finally came together in April 1977 as a re-enactment of Levine's own experience of purchasing the shoes [fig.109, p.283]. She secured a storefront space on 3 Mercer Street owned by artist Stefan Eins for the duration of a week (16-23 April), during which she exhibited and sold her shoes for the price of two dollars a pair, thinking to herself how the project might mimic almost identically Ernst Hemingway's shortest story – "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." The writings of literary critic Susan Stewart, on the notion of longing and exaggeration as effective modes of narration, seem to capture something of the project's allegorical ambition. Miniature objects are "linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history," Stewart suggests, they "present a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination."[144] And indeed, Levine was selling a "version of experience" as an open narrative ready to facilitate all kinds of stories.

Levine's crying cowgirl video, her 'betray' storyboard, and the improvised Lilliputian shoe sale, all indicated that she was making progress in her attempts at emptying out visual narrative and transforming it into a vessel for potential alternative individual memories. But they also delineated the territory that she was now exploring: domestic and inter-personal relationships, family life, personal identity and romance. Her work encouraged emotional responses from its viewers/participants but while lacking (or withholding) a specific referent with which to anchor those experiences. The distance between intimacy and its representation through culture was now a subject that Levine found she had in common with more and more of her contemporaries after moving to New York. As a result of her Mercer Street exhibition, and a newly established friendship with fellow artist David Salle, Levine met Douglas Crimp, then young assistant curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and a PhD

[144] Susan Stewart, 'Miniature Time', *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, The Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 69.

student at Columbia University. Crimp invited her to participate in a small group exhibition that he was organising in the vibrant, public funded gallery, Artists Space in downtown Manhattan under the title *Pictures* [fig.110, p.284].

For Crimp's show Levine made her first attempt at anchoring her work in concrete historical narratives and symbols. She chose to exhibit an on-going project of hers, titled *Sons and Lovers*, comprising a series of thirty-five paintings in fluorescent tempera on graph paper [fig.111, p.285] Each drawing presented one possible configuration between six silhouette portraits, including the readily identifiable profiles of former presidents Washington, Lincoln and Kennedy, two anonymous youths, presumably male and female, positioned back to back, a dog and a woman. Laid out horizontally, each drawing juxtaposes two different silhouettes as they either face one another, opposite directions, or look in the same direction. Their sizes, in turn, are equal in most cases, but not in all of them, with a few exceptions where a figure is reduced to miniature size. Using a stencil, Levine outlined the figures before colouring each one with the help of the graph paper's grid as a template for pixel-like sequences in three colours that run across diagonal lines.[145] At first glance, the pedantic, almost obsessive result, seems to suggest that Levine was retreating back to conceptual, not to say minimalist concerns with grid, pattern, and associative combinations of a limited number of visual symbols. Yet simple, and almost reductive in appearance, the seemingly empty silhouettes harbour a fascinating network of references and generate vital critique worth exploring in depth. The most notable reference emerges from the curious character of the six emptied profiles that Levine chose to employ in the work. The first three are easily recognisable: George Washington (1732-1799), the first president of the United Stated of America and one of its founding fathers; Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), who led the country through its Civil War and was assassinated after the battles were concluded; and John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), perhaps the most revered president of the United Stated in the twentieth century, who was also, like Lincoln, assassinated during the peak of his presidency. At the same time, the three

[145] Levine also divided the colour combinations into six variants: yellow-pink-blue; yellow-red-blue; yellow-blue-red; blue-pink-black; black-dark grey-light grey; black-light grey-empty squares. As for the graph paper, Levine chose to present the sheets unframed, with their margins exposed, keeping the paper's brand and kind (HI-ART LI-NUP Bristol) as part of the work.

presidents' profiles had become embedded into American culture because of their distinguished facial features, long since familiar to the American public from coins. To this day Washington's profile is embossed on 1 cent coins, Lincoln on 5, and Kennedy on 50. In Levine's work, however, alongside the three famous father figures, and perhaps in opposition to them, one finds the profiles of "a bland couple" and "an other woman", as Douglas Crimp described these figures in his exhibition essay.[146] In turn both of these anonymous profiles were taken from wig advertisements randomly unknown to us as well as to Levine. Finally, the odd portrait of a dog's face, as Eklund explains, was taken from a photograph of Levine's family dog. Eklund elaborates that:

> Melodrama is also present in the *Sons and Lovers* paintings, which are like rondos of unbreakable familial ties, the one silhouette always of a pairing tethered to its mate like the pair of children's shoes Levine showed earlier. The seemingly oddball inclusion of the family dog in the mix signifies all the misdirected affection and inchoate longing that pets take on in the family unit.[147]

Eklund's suggestion that the family dog stands for some kind of "misdirected affection" is more relevant to the understanding of the piece than his analysis gives away. In fact, the title of Levine's work, *Sons and Lovers*, is lifted from D.H. Lawrence's celebrated novel of 1913 of the same name, which itself is entirely constructed as an exploration of unfulfilled love transferred from one subject to another. As Levine's later work confirms in hindsight, such historical references, quotations and innuendos are not merely supporting aids to be consulted or ignored at will, they are the essence of her practice. The storyline of Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is therefore one worth revisiting here.

The novel begins with a passionate marriage between Gertrud, a middle-class woman, and Walter, a poor miner, and their successful union despite class distinctions. Soon after the two marry, however,

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[146] Douglas Crimp, 1977, 16.

[147] Douglas Eklund, 2009, 108.

Gertrude discovers the hardship of living on a miner's salary and the pair begin to drift apart. Walter retreats to the background, spending his evenings at the pub and avoiding his wife, while Gertrude seeks a new subject for her love, redirecting her affections to her sons, first towards William, her eldest, who becomes obsessed with his mother and fails to find a substitute subject for his love as he grows older. William marries out of duty and dies at a young age, leaving Gertrude broken hearted for the second time. As Gertrude's second son, Paul, falls ill, she rediscovers her love to him but finds herself confronted with Paul's ambivalent relationship to her, one that embodies both attraction and resentfulness. Like his older brother, Paul's relationships with other women cannot compete with his intense feelings towards his mother. Gradually, Paul emerges as the protagonist of the book, rejecting his lovers one after the other, only to end his life alone after his mother's death. The absence of a father figure is noticeable both in the title and the storyline of *Sons and Lovers*, an absence filled by emphasis upon the roles of women in family life, once as mothers, another time as lovers, forming an image of the family unit as incomplete, dystopian, and ultimately barren. Levine's *Sons and Lovers*, much like Lawrence's novel, is nevertheless an attempt to reconfigure the family unit despite the absent father figure by means of the inclusion of an anonymous pair of lovers, thus giving in to a network of relationships. It is with this context in mind – surprisingly absent from the critical literature of her work – that Levine's choice of representing her protagonists in the form of silhouettes becomes meaningful. The iconic fathers (assassinated in two out of three cases) are enmeshed with other silhouettes of anonymous stereotypes of women, children, lovers, and indeed a family dog to complete a template for a family portrait whose foundation is a web of possible and impossible relationships.[148]

While Levine's *Sons and Lovers* is perhaps among *Pictures* best remembered works, the show itself had relatively minimal impact. Attendance numbers were limited to the local art community, and only a handful of reviews appeared in specialised journals.[149] However, Crimp's project gained its reputation

[148] What becomes more difficult to assert is Levine's choice to form her silhouettes not as monochrome paper cut-outs but as constructions of hand painted grids. Levine's *Sons and Lovers* proffers a constant sense of reduction in scale, this time, from the large-scale ambitious constructions of Minimalism, to the colour coordinated patterns of the graph paper, resembling a televised image, a silkscreen print, or the kind of mechanical illustrations produced by youths in school notebooks.

[149] Gerrit Henry, 'Reviews and Previews' in *Art News*, (January 1978).

gradually and most notably as a result of his reworked exhibition essay, which he published in a revised and expanded version published in the journal *October* in 1979.[150] With the growing understanding of Crimp's Pictures paradigm however, also came a wider claim for a generational tendency among artists – no longer a group or a movement but a loose-knit association among contemporaries in the United States. Putting aside the exclusive conditions within which the term 'Pictures Generation' emerged as a strictly North American phenomenon (while in fact a much broader intercontinental network was being developed), Levine's work has specifically suffered from the formation of this group's identity, primarily because her practice was reduced to a set of qualities that suited the dominate narrative of the moment. While discussion of her work remained focused on formal or epistemological questions concerning representation and consumption of images, it ignored the specific political and social issues that informed her work. The reading of Levine's work thus developed a partial, even predictable tone, reducing her practice into mere commentary on the social and economic conditions that determine the value of artworks within the economy of the artworld. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau wrote in her article 'Living with Contradictions: Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics' in 1989 (which further developed an argument Levine herself presented in an *Art News* interview in 1986):

> Levine explained her need to distance herself from the kind of critical partisanship that not only had helped establish her reputation, but more importantly had, to a great degree, developed its position and analysis in relation to her work. Levine's professed discomfort with a body of critical writing that positioned her as a critical, indeed an adversarial, presence hinged on two factors. In championing Levine's work as either a post-structuralist exemplum, or a demolition derby on the property relations that subtend the integrity of the art object.

[150] Douglas Crimp, 'Pictures', *October*, Vol. 8, (Spring 1979): 75-88.

And Godeau concluded:

> The (mostly male) critics who had written about her had overlooked, or repressed, the distinctly feminist import of her work.[151]

Godeau further insisted that Levine's work genuinely engaged with questions that revolved around sexuality, domestic politics, and everyday social interactions, which however had been simplified and generalised by the Pictures' critics. A failure to recognise this aspect of Levine's work, however, is in certain respects not surprising. The difficulty is expressed clearly if one considers other works that Levine produced around the time of Pictures. For instance, in 1977, Levine also published *Untitled (rooms of the house and members of the family)*, a portfolio consisting of two sets of pages inserted into the facing pockets of a single book jacket [fig.112, p.286]. On one set were printed names of rooms in a house – 'LIVINGROOM', 'KITCHEN', 'DEN', 'DININGROOM', 'BATHROOM', 'BEDROOM' – while on the other were printed the names of family members – 'FATHER', 'MOTHER', 'BROTHER', 'SISTER', 'BOY', 'GIRL'. Levine went on to type her name, and the year and place of production (New York, 1977) at the bottom of every page. The set of sheets, each representing a place or a person in the domestic unit, invited viewers to assume agency and complete the family story or structure as they see fit, operating both in complete abstraction towards the provided tropes as self-referential signifiers and in scrutinising intimacy that can only become effective by enacting a subjective projection of the reader/viewer onto the work.

Soon after *Untitled (rooms of the house and members of the family)*, Levine took her first step towards what would come to be identified as her rephotography work – a technical procedure whereby an artist comments on an existing image by taking a photograph of it and claiming it as her own. She found a series of infants' faces drawings in a how-to-draw book and decided to reproduce these using a photocopier in identical scale and (as far as possible) quality [fig.113, p.287]. With this almost invisible

[151] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Living with Contradictions: Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics', *Social Text, No. 21, Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, Duke University Press, 1989), 199.

gesture Levine's work had crossed a boundary, narrowing down the critical distance that characterised her silhouette templates in *Sons and Lovers* into an exercise in almost imperceptible difference between a source image and its reproduction. Indeed, the kind of instructional drawings that Levine chose as source-material were designed to offer readers readymade illustrations for the purpose of practice and improving one's drawing technique. However, users of such books were meant to copy the illustrations by hand, to make their own mistakes and gradually develop their own style by adopting parts of the original and abandoning others. Instead, Levine's decision to replicate the image by mechanical means (photocopying) and with the intention of assuming authorship over it (applying her autograph), meant exploring the possibility, or at least an ambition, of administering the currency of the image – whether in moral, critical, social or commercial terms. As Levine herself testified in hindsight: "I wanted to put one picture on top of another so that there were times when both pictures disappear and other times when they were both manifest."[152] Her testimony is consistent with the reading that art critic Valentin Tatransky offered in the very first review of Levine's work, published in 1979. In his article, 'Collage and the Problem of Representation: Sherrie Levine's New Work', Tatransky tried to reconcile the nature of her sentimental choice of imagery (baby portraits) with the sterile technique she assumed for reproducing it (photocopying). "[Levine] is not embarrassed by the emotional load of her images," Tatransky wrote, "one could say that there is an apparently contradictory combination of desires in [her] work; the desire to express significant emotion and the reluctance […] to create with the hand."[153]

The so-called "reluctance to create with the hand" brings our discussion to one of the central questions that preoccupied Levine's ongoing practice at the time. On the one hand, it links her work to the tradition of collage-making by way of an interest in domesticity and family relations – a sensibility reminiscent of nineteenth century domestic arts and their legacy to amateur craft. But at the same time

[152] This quote has been reproduced on numerous occasions, with minor variations. The earliest example is in Jeanne Siegel, 'After Sherrie Levine', *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 59, no. 10 (June, 1985).

[153] Valentine Tatransky, 'Collage and the Problem of Representation: Sherrie Levine's new work', *Real Life Magazine: Selected Projects and Writings 1979-1994*, (New York: Primary Information, 2013), 25. Originally published in Real Life Magazine, Issue 1, (New York: March, 1979), n.p.

it also confirms her recognition of the effects of mass media and image reproduction in the late 1970s. Levine's use of silhouettes or images from how-to-draw books as found imagery for her so-called collages suggests that she was interested in and conscious of, as Eklund already remarked, the legacy that these historical practices carried with them. This interest becomes more explicit in 1979 when Levine decided to transform her hand drawn presidential silhouettes from *Sons and Lovers* into a new series titled *President Collages*; directly engaging with the relationship between women's place within art history and the present day [figs.114-115, pp.288-289]. The *President Collages* were based on the existing templates that Levine prepared for *Sons and Lovers* a few years earlier. This time, however, she carefully cut out her presidents as well as anonymous profiles by hand, as if they were the leftover excess of a nineteenth century Dutenhoffer silhouette, then she inserted into the emptied layout a range of carefully selected pictures of women from magazine advertisements. Perhaps the first work in this new series of cut-out silhouettes was a collage that Levine contributed to the cover of *Real Life Magazine*'s first issue in March 1979 (in which Tatransky's review also appeared) [fig.116, p.290].[154] For this work, Levine used a photograph of a beautiful model playing the role of an artist standing in front of a bronze bust of a child – an emblem of an accomplished woman, effortlessly inhabiting the roles of both mother and artist. Her clothes are fashionable and immaculate as is her hair, makeup and smile. In this instance, Levine did not outline the photograph by a president silhouette, but rather the one of her "other woman" from the Pictures show installation. Two other silhouettes appeared almost simultaneously to the one on the magazine cover, on the occasion of Levine's one-person exhibition at the Kitchen (in downtown New York). Here, Levine planned to exhibit the collages in three different media: once as an invitation card, once as a poster, and a third time as a projection on the wall in large scale [fig.117, p.289]. The poster version was never produced, but the projection and the mass-produced card emphasised Levine's "reluctance to create with the hand", which Tatransky so aptly identified.

[154] Real Life Magazine was published between 1979 and 1994. It was initially funded by Artists Space and published by the artist Thomas Lawson and the writer Susan Morgan. The magazine's aim was to provide a platform for both critical essays and visual materials invested in questions about mass media and its relationship to art.

The *President Collages* clarified to Levine's growing audience the direction that her practice was beginning to take: a critical reading of the transformation of historical knowledge or imagery through the lens of contemporary media. Douglas Crimp soon commented on this series in his revised version of the *Pictures* essay published in *October* later that same year. While his commentary remains characteristic of the distant and generalising tone that Godeau would come to criticise, he nevertheless acknowledged the cultural association between women as consumers of or currency in life-style magazines, and to compare it with the association between men and portraiture as an authoritarian gesture that one might find on the faces of currency, medals, or plaques. Crimp writes:

> In a recent tripartite series, for example, Levine cropped three photographs of a mother and child according to the emblematic silhouettes of Presidents Washington, Lincoln, and Kennedy. The currency of the myths with which Levine deals is exemplified by those profiles, taken as they are from the faces of coins; the photographs are cut out of a fashion magazine. The confrontation of the two images is structured in such a way that they must be read through each other: the profile of Kennedy delineates the picture of mother and child which in turn fills in the Kennedy emblem. These pictures have no autonomous power of signification (pictures do not signify what they picture); they are provided with signification by the manner in which they are presented (on the faces of coins, in the pages of fashion magazines). Levine steals them away from their usual place in our culture and subverts their mythologies.[155]

Crimp had emphasised Levine's preoccupation with representation in broad terms; yet it remains difficult to describe Levine's practice from this period with the terminology of any one medium or technical procedure. Each project required a different set of technical devices, including, in some cases,

[155] Douglas Crimp, 1979, 85.

only a very minor intervention on behalf of the artist. This is why Tatransky's further decision to review Levine's practice through the lens of collage is particularly interesting. We have seen that Levine's silhouettes as well as her how-to-draw works have very little collage in them in technical terms. And yet, Tatransky found himself expanding the definition of collage in order to speak of 'interventions' in the context or placement of existing imagery or their juxtaposition, (interestingly, Tatransky also refers to filmic montage in his essay as the on-screen parallel of collage). This becomes most evident when he attempts to elaborate the "problem" that at that moment faced collage:

> The central problem of collage is its formal simplicity. The juxtaposition of images can be emotionally very accurate […] but the very power of such juxtapositions declare their creative impotence, because the images simply lie parallel to each other. Thus devoid of the body's intervention, they fail to create a new ideal. No one has described this problem as well as Eisenstein, who, in an essay in *Film Form*, discusses the difference between his own use of montage and Griffith's use of it and criticises Griffith for simply making 'a drama of comparisons, rather than a unified, powerful, generalised image.'[156]

Tatransky's commentary can be read as theoretical groundwork for the new terminology that will come to replace certain expressions of collage with procedures such as appropriation or rephotography, neither of which terms was in use just yet. Briefly put, for Tatransky collage is an effective procedure but it had become limited by the fact that the mere juxtaposition of images already determines the range of possible readings, emotional or representational. On the other hand, the laying bare of an empty image on top of another in Levine's work meant both narrowing and extending this range of readings infinitely. He concluded his essay by suggesting that it is with Levine's "newest and more sophisticated collage-based work" – that is, her photocopier reproductions of how-

[156] Valentine Tatransky, 2013 [1979], 25.

to-draw exercises – that she no longer treats images as representations of something else, but presents them for what they really are, images.[157]

Single-element collages

Soon after Tatransky's and Crimp's reviews in 1979 and 1980 Levine gradually started to reduce her manual intervention in the images she employed to the very minimum possible. In a new series titled *Fashion Collages*, she cut out magazine images of fashion models walking on the runway without interfering with any aspect of the composition whatsoever [fig.118-119, p.292-293]. She then pasted these images on a broad white paper background, insisting on calling these single-fragment works "collages" nevertheless. After this initial experiment, she also attempted, for the first time, to cut and paste entire reproductions of artworks on plain paper supports as single-element collages. She started this experiment with a series of landscape and nature photographs by the renowned photographer Andreas Feininger [fig.120, p.294], followed by Edward Weston's nude photographs of his son Neil, and Walker Evans' portraits of the American rural south.

By 1982, having seen the new single-element collages, the critic Craig Owens had joined the conversation about Levine's work, further exploring her interest in marginalised narratives. Owens too, however, like Crimp and Tatransky, intepreted Levine's work only insofar as it represented a token of a wider, categorical questioning of the nature of pictorial, gender, or other forms of representation; the premise being that images can and should not be understood as signifiers that represent something other than themselves. In a review that Owens wrote on the occasion of another one-person exhibition of Levine's, this time at A&M Artworks in New York City, he thus attempted to explain Levine's practice as an investigation of the very premise of a term he referred to as

[157] Ibid., 25.

"otherness". Denying the possibility that her works engaged with individual expression or instances of "women, the poor, or landscapes", Owens argued instead, that her subject matter was formed by the general categories Woman, Poverty, Nature.[158] Owens' claim was effective in its identification of Levine's ability to shift focus from the content of an image to the mechanisms and conditions of its visibility; yet it inevitably also implied a limited view of her practice by preventing the possibility of reading her works as expressions of focused, localised criticisms that are directed at the materials, techniques, and subjects from which she built each piece. This is also true with regards to the intricate referential mechanisms that Levine applies in her work, whether in her choice of titles (*Sons and Lovers*), techniques (collage, silhouette making, or how-to-draw books), as well as the imagery that she appropriates, or better yet, as Howard Singerman insists, has "expropriated" since 1979 from a long list of important nineteenth and twentieth century male artists.[159]

It is tempting to consider Sherrie Levine's later rephotographs as disembodied actions that assert their presence and establish difference merely with gestures external to the image itself – the work's title, it's author, frame, or the reproduction quality. As Howard Singerman wrote in one of his first reviews of Levine's work in *Artforum*'s issue of September 1983, "Perhaps the reason Levine's work is not reviewed is because it seems to have no body. She provides no material impregnated by intention or by its own self-conscious materiality; there is no image that is Levine's for the critic to decipher." While Levine's work has been extensively reviewed since Singerman's text was published in 1983, the problem he mentions does indeed persist. The creation of difference between an original work and its appropriated version as employed in Levine's rephotography works raises the question what are the sufficient conditions required in order for an artistic authorship to be constituted? It also marks the point where Levine's work departs from the domain of pasted-paper collage into that of image-appropriation; a category whose relevance to collage is significant although very difficult to define. In

[158] Craig Owens, 'Sherie Levine at A&M Artworks', in *Sherrie Levine. October Files 23*, (Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2018), 36. First published in *Art in America*, 70, (Summer, 1982): 148. See also Howard Singerman's discussion of Owens' remarks in 'Seeing Sherrie Levine', *October*, Vol. 67, (Winter, 1994): 93-5.

[159] Howard Singerman, 1994, 96.

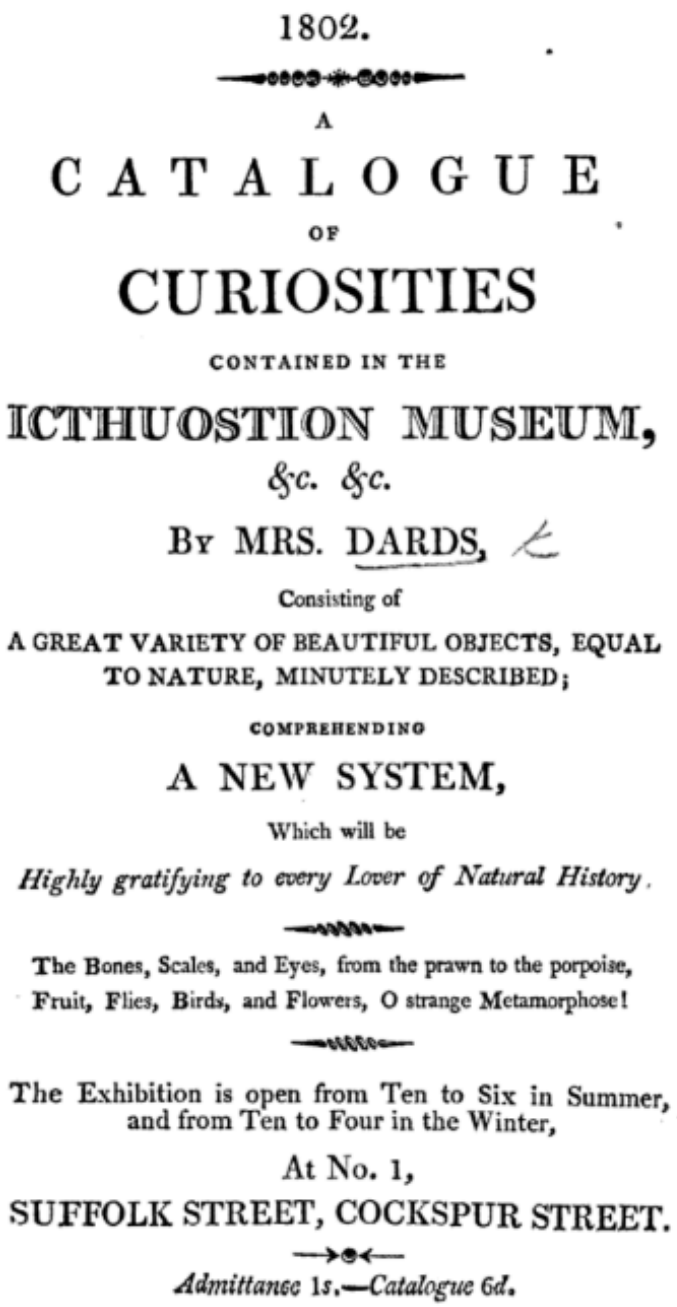
the following chapter, I explore this difference by looking at the work of British collage artist John Stezaker, a contemporary of Levine whose interest in the physical, manually applied cut, as well as the juxtaposition of images by means of pasted-paper collage-making, presents an opposing tactic to that of Levine and her Pictures colleagues.



Fig. 104, Luise Duttenhofer, *Angelika Kauffmann in her studio in Rome*, black paper cut-out on yellow background, c. 1804/1805.



Fig. 105, Mary Delany, *Rosa Galicia*, 1782, from album Vol. X, no. 56; The Red Rose, Cut and pasted coloured papers with bodycolour and watercolour with black ink background on cardboard support, 32.1 x 23 cm.


1802.

A

CATALOGUE

OF

CURIOSITIES

CONTAINED IN THE

ICTHUOSTION MUSEUM,

&c. &c.

BY MRS. DARDS,

Consisting of

A GREAT VARIETY OF BEAUTIFUL OBJECTS, EQUAL TO NATURE, MINUTELY DESCRIBED;

COMPREHENDING

A NEW SYSTEM,

Which will be

Highly gratifying to every Lover of Natural History.

The Bones, Scales, and Eyes, from the prawn to the porpoise,
Fruit, Flies, Birds, and Flowers, O strange Metamorphose!

The Exhibition is open from Ten to Six in Summer, and from Ten to Four in the Winter,

At No. 1,

SUFFOLK STREET, COCKSPUR STREET.

Admittance 1*s.*—*Catalogue* 6*d.*

Fig. 106a, Catalogue cover for Mrs Dards' exhibition at the Icthuostion Museum, London, 1802.

A

CATALOGUE, &c.

FIRST ROOM.

No. I.

THREE frames of Butterflies, like life, encircled with wreaths of flowers. One ditto of small Insects. These are of bones, scales, and shells.

No. II.

A pair of Rocks, formed with various branches of corals and corallines of different

Fig. 106b, First page of Mrs Dards' exhibition catalogue at the Icthuostion Museum, London, 1802.



Fig. 107, Martha Rosler, *Cleaning the Drapes* from the series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, Pigmented inkjet print of pasted printed papers, c. 1967-72.



Fig. 108, Miriam Schapiro, *Tapestry of Paradise*, 1980, Acrylic, fabrics and glitter on canvas, 152.4 x 127 cm.



Fig. 109, *2 Shoes for 2 Dollars*, Installation view of Sherrie Levine's exhibition at 3 Mercer Street Gallery, New York, 16-23 April 1977.



Fig. 110, *Pictures*, Installation view of the exhibition at Artists Space, New York, 1977. From left to right: Sherrie Levine (*Sons and Lovers*, 1976-7), Robert Longo (*Seven Seals for Missouri Breaks*, 1977), Philip Smith (*Bring*, 1977).

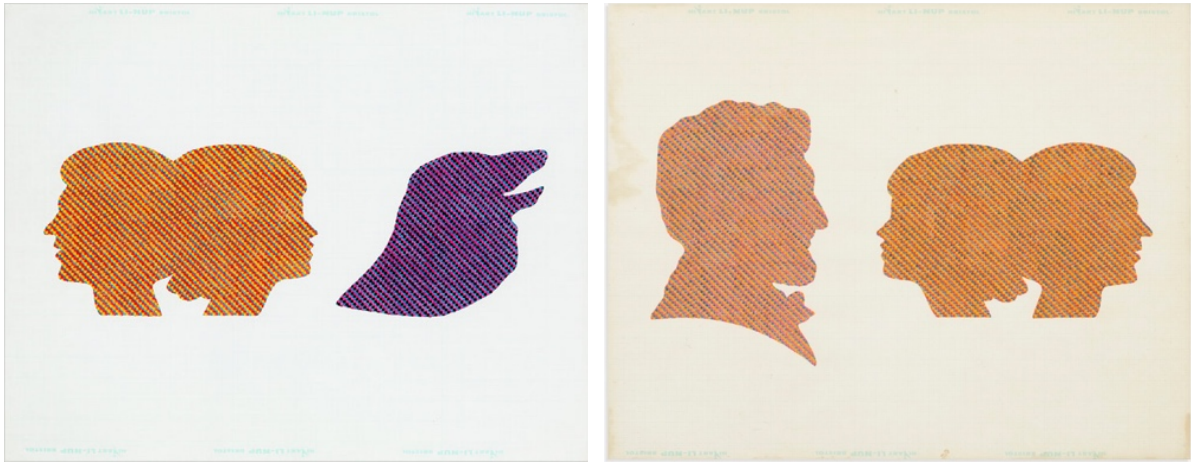


Fig. 111, Detail: Two of the thirty-five tempera paintings that form Sherrie Levine's *Sons and Lovers*, each 55 x 70.5 cm, 1976-7.

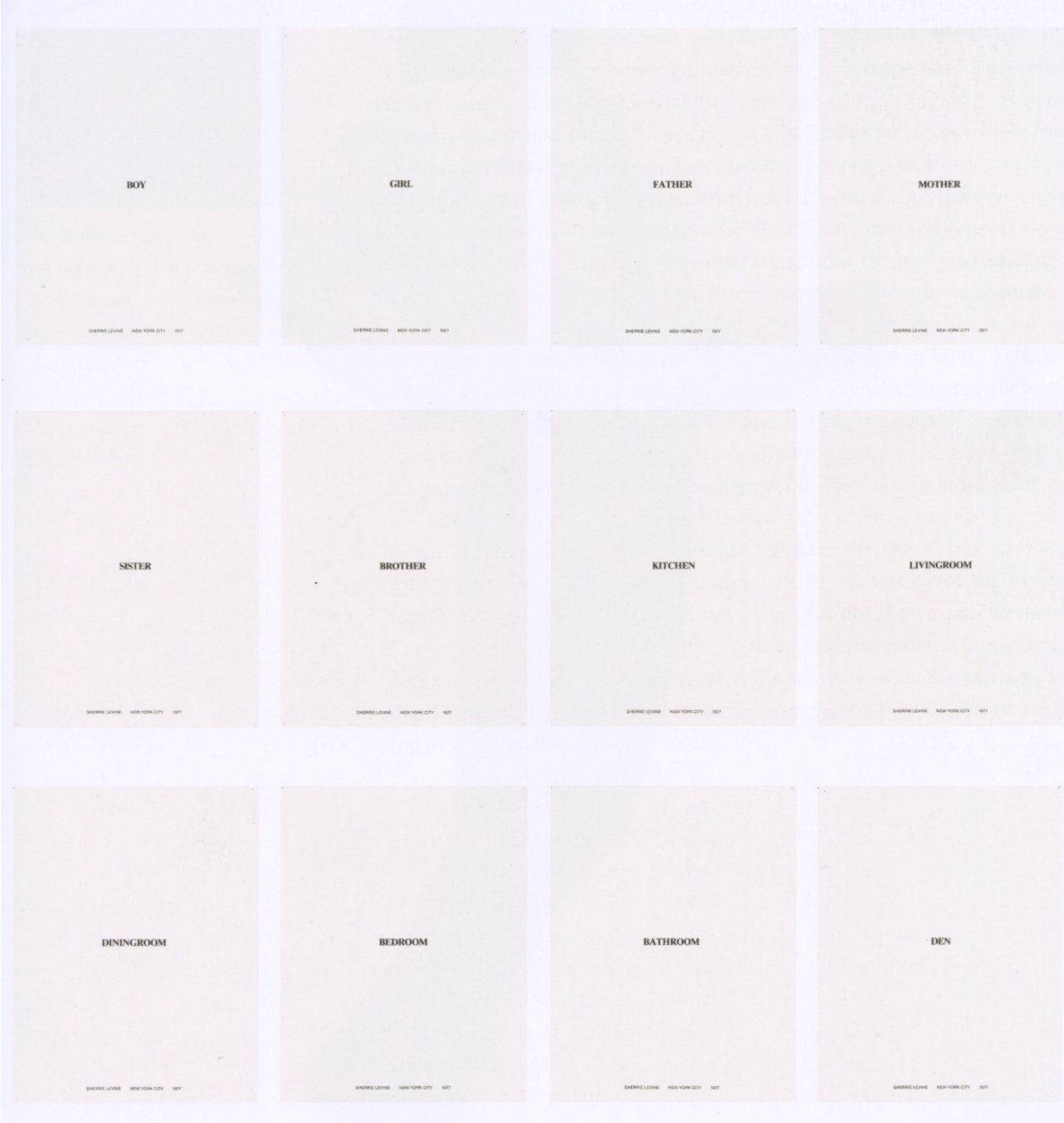


Fig. 112, Sherrie Levine's *Untitled (Rooms of the house and members of the family),* 1978, Offset lithograph, no dimensions.



Fig. 113, Detail from Sherrie Levine, *Untitled*, 1978, Offset lithograph, no dimensions.



Fig.114, Sherrie Levine, *President Collage 1*, 1979, Cut paper pasted on printed magazine paper, 61 x 45.7 cm.



Fig.115, Sherrie Levine, *President Collage 5*, 1979, Cut paper pasted on printed magazine paper, 61 x 45.7 cm.



Fig. 116, Cover of 'Real Life Magazine, Issue no. 1, March 1979.



Fig. 117, Sherrie Levine, *Presidential Profile*, 1978, Slide projection, Dimensions variable.

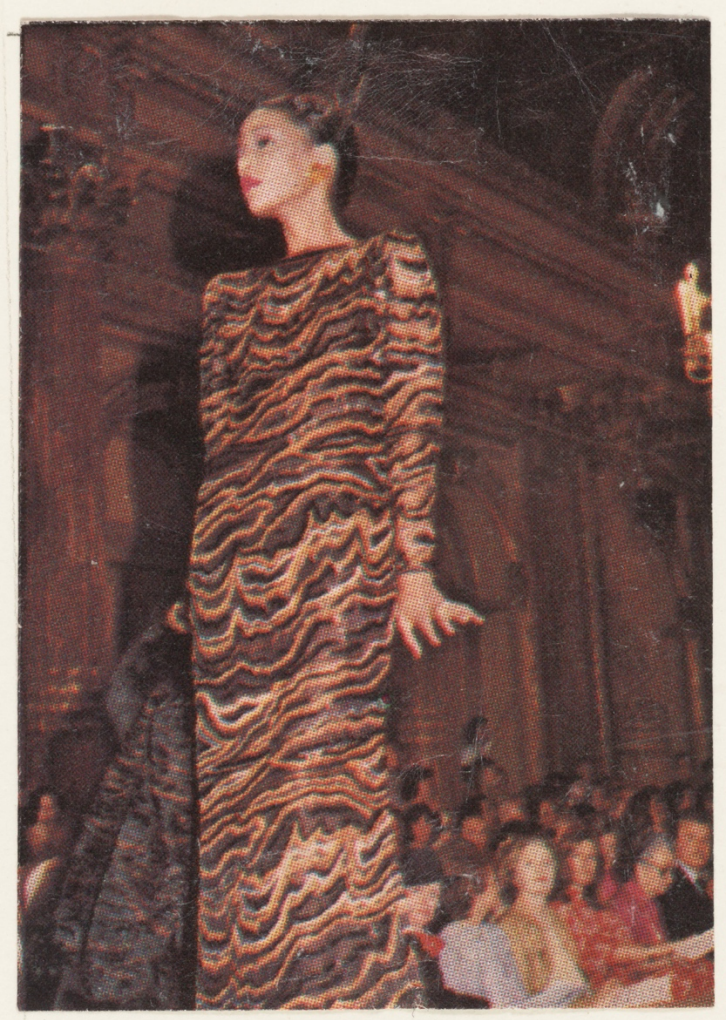


Fig. 118, Sherrie Levine, *Fashion collage no. 5*, 1979, Cut-and-pasted photographic reproduction on paper support, 72.4 x 57.2 cm.



Fig. 119, Sherrie Levine, *Fashion collage no. 5*, 1979 Cut-and-pasted photographic reproduction on paper support, 72.4 x 57.2 cm.



Fig. 120, Sherrie Levine, *After Andreas Feininger*, 1979, Cut-and-pasted photographic reproduction on paper support, 61 x 45.7 cm.

John Stezaker: At the Edge of Pictures

The role occupied by language in the history of collage exceeds mere analysis of textual elements and their relationship to images. Collage as a technique relies upon syntax, that is, on the arrangement of pre-existing semantic units in order to generate new meanings or to disrupt existing ones. Indeed collage theory has benefited for many years now from the application of linguistic and literary theory. Thus, terms such as metaphor, metonym and allegory have occupied an important role in the theoretical discourse that surrounded pictorial collage and other forms of image appropriation practice throughout the past century. This tendency reflects a broader interest in the application of linguistic and language theories to pictorial ones, and vice versa, from the late nineteenth century onwards in a range of disciplines including philosophy and literature. Yet in no other artistic technique does the analogy translate so easily and so literally as in the case of collage. This is perhaps why both Max Ernst and René Magritte sought to define collage as a form of 'rhetoric' rather than as a limited technical procedure. But while their experiments around the 1920s were intended to explore a young and evolving medium, the following chapter is dedicated to one of the most notable collage artists in recent times to have taken upon himself the task of analysing the nature of of pictorial collage as a historical project, and revisiting the enormous effect Surrealism has had on his practice in the process.

Born in Worcester, England, in 1949, John Stezaker's position within the history of collage, as well as his practice and theoretical writings from the 1970s onwards, offer important insights concerning collage rhetoric. Stezaker's work has been concerned with identifying the historical and theoretical parameters that delineate collage as an artistic technique, tying these to the notion of mechanical reproduction.[160] Like many of the protagonists in this thesis, however – artists, theoreticians, and even terms – Stezaker is something of a misfit. Despite his participation in a generational interest in the changing economy of 'found' photographic materials that characterised artistic activity in Britain and

[160] Although Stezaker is predominantly known as an artist, teaching was a big part of his career, first at Central Saint Martins, and then at the Royal College of Art in London until 2008 when renewed interest in his work enabled him to stop teaching. Stezaker also contributed in writing to a wide range of publications and journals over the years, in which he has reflected on his work in an essayistic manner or in the form of interviews with theoreticians, fellow practicing artists, or film-makers.

the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, Stezaker remained an outsider to the communities that formed the dominant art historical narrative of this moment. In his immediate surroundings, he rejected the British tendency towards agitprop photomontage, which was promoted by anti-institutional punk and anarchist groups as well as second wave feminist artists, and which remained largely informed by the legacy of the Dada movement. He also positioned himself – not without consideration – in remove from the American Pictures group with whom he had a brief, yet meaningful exchange in the second half of the 1970s. On the one hand, the Pictures artists were deeply invested in revisiting and modifying the Duchampian idea of appropriation as a strategy for reflecting on the effects of consumerist culture. Their British counterparts, however, were seeking to disrupt the cultural and political order in which they were operating through rejection of the traditional institutions that frame their practices. Stezaker, by contrast, was consumed by a different inquiry altogether; one that, at least on the surface, appeared to be removed from contemporary political issues and consumerist culture, and instead invested in a phenomenological investigation of the mechanically reproduced image as a visual currency that was becoming outmoded, finding its way out of circulation, and gradually making room for new technologies and other forms of image distribution to replace it.

Conceptual Beginnings

An artist's early beginnings often represent the questions that will come to underline their mature practice, but also, the broad range of alternatives that faced their practice before it became recognised. In the 1960s, to a much greater extent than today, art schools behaved like tribes. By stating your affiliation, you could also confirm your allegiance: as Minimalist, Conceptual, Pop, abstract, or old-fashioned figurative artist. So, in 1969, when John Stezaker decided to apply to one of London's art schools, he was fully aware that his choice would have considerable implications for his later development as an artist. At the time, Saint Martins School of Art was considered, according to

Stezaker, to have been under the influence of Minimalist sculptor and faculty member Anthony Caro, while The Royal College of Art (albeit a graduate school and hence not an option for Stezaker at this stage) was associated with Pop Art, thanks to a list of recent graduates that included Peter Blake, David Hockney and R. B. Kitaj. The Slade School of Art however, which forms part of University College, London was Stezaker's choice. The school responded to his interest in drawing and painting, enjoying a roster of teachers such as Tess Jaray, Rita Donagh, and John Hoyland, who approached this discipline from different angles. In addition, the proximity to other departments of the university, such as the Bartlett School of Architecture, and more importantly for Stezaker, the Department of Philosophy, was another important consideration. In the three years that followed, 1970-1973, Stezaker enjoyed the interdisciplinary learning culture of University College, crossing the main quad back and forth between the lectures of Richard Wollheim, the Chair of Philosophy, and his own studio in the Pearson building. His aspirations to draw and paint were strong to begin with, but soon abandoned under the encouragement of his tutors who found his approach to pictorial questions using conceptual and theoretical means convincing. Stezaker did not object to this development and began to spend more and more time in Wollheim's classes where the subject of visual arts was discussed as a prism for analysing cognition and emotion. A fervent reader and a confident writer, interested in philosophy, psychology, and linguistics, as well as the history of art, Stezaker soon discovered that he could explore his theoretical interests as part of his studio practice. In fact, the initial portfolio of works that he submitted to the Slade in 1969 – fluctuating between drawing and polaroid photography – shifted radically during his years as an undergraduate student towards a conceptual practice that bordered on the writing of philosophical theory; an attribute that has continued to characterise his work throughout his entire career, although increasingly expressed by strictly pictorial means. By the end of his first year at the Slade Stezaker was already recognised as a young 'conceptual' artist in London, and his works were displayed at two galleries, Sigi Krauss and Nigel Greenwood, who were both affiliated with the Slade and its teachers. In his second year, he was invited to participate in an exhibition organised by the Arts Council at the Hayward Gallery under the title *The New Art* (1972). Stezaker was the youngest artist in the show, and he got to exhibit alongside other young artists

including Keith Arnatt, Art-Language, Victor Burgin, Michael Craig-Martin, Gilbert and George, John Hilliard, and Richard Long.

For *The New Art* Stezaker presented two works, both untitled from 1970 [fig.121, p.323]. Their reproduction in the exhibition catalogue exemplifies the kind of practice that Stezaker was developing at the time.[161] The first piece (illustrated) resembles a logical diagram, exploring the semantic differences implied by three propositions: "the work of art" "a work of art" and "this work of art". The second piece is a triptych consisting of three black squares, each bearing an inscription: "the relationship of one to three", "one", "the three". No interpretive text is offered to the reader in the catalogue, nor any mention of their medium or their scale. The catalogue does however include an interview with the artist, conducted by Anne Seymour, the curator of the show. Seymour's opening question to the conversation is somewhat surprising, as she addresses the idea of writing as a new development in Stezaker's practice, as if to imply that the twenty-three-year-old practitioner had a lengthy career behind him that should be familiar to the reader. In response, Stezaker explains how conceptual, and even mathematical ways of thinking provide him with a more complex method for his investigations of "the ontological status of the art entity" than images would ever be capable of.[162] His point of view, regarded in hindsight, indicates a drastic *volte face*.

Yet despite of these declarations, shortly after Stezaker's graduation from the Slade, first signs of withdrawal from his purely conceptual and theoretical practice began to appear. This process came in parallel to a new teaching position that he obtained at Saint Martins School of Art, which enabled him to continue reflecting on theoretical aspects of his work, only this time through conversations with art students and colleagues rather than philosophers. It was around this time that Stezaker was also first contacted by Sherrie Levine from New York, and she expressed interest in his work following a photograph that he infiltrated into the advertising section of the magazine *Studio International*, depicting a romantic sunset over water without mention of the destination or the context. In her letter, Levine

[161] Ann Seymour, *The New Art*, (London: The Hayward Gallery and Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972): 110-114.
[162] Ibid, 111.

mentioned a group of colleagues, including Richard Prince, Barbara Kruger and Louise Lawler, who were meeting regularly to discuss the relationship between art and popular culture. She invited Stezaker to join them if he was ever in New York.[163] Stezaker was excited by the prospect and fascinated by the group's interests in redefining the role of popular culture in art using different strategies than those employed by Pop or 'conceptualist' art. Nevertheless, his meeting with the "Pictures bunch", as he calls them today, was not to happen until a few years later. In the meantime, Stezaker began experimenting independently with a range of photographic materials that he had at his disposal. These included a large collection of postcards that he had accumulated since his teen years as well as a few photographic slides that were in his parents' possession. Initially, Stezaker began copying their content or projecting their images onto the walls of his studio and painting over their imprint. The results, however, left no trace of the qualities that attracted him in the postcards and slides in the first place, and he soon abandoned the experiment.

Dream Allegories

It was in 1973, during a trip to Italy, that Stezaker came across a new source of imagery that would change his work dramatically. During a visit to a second-hand shop in Florence, he stumbled upon a pile of old fashioned, cheaply produced, photographic picture-novels, the kind that Italy was famous for since the post-war years, known as *fotoromanzo*, or as Stezaker would refer to these in English, 'photo-romans'. When he saw these, he immediately thought of Max Ernst and his fascination with wood-cut engraving prints and Victorian picture-novels that represented methods of image production and distribution from before Ernst's own time. The outmoded and unfashionable nature of these picture-novels, he recalled, was precisely what enabled Ernst to see new potential in the

[163] According to Stezaker, Sherrie Levine first got in touch with him in 1975. The meetings to which Levine mentioned in her letter, most likely refer to the gatherings that took place at Janelle Reiring's studio in downtown Manhattan, and which eventually led, in 1980, to the opening of Metro Pictures gallery, where Levine and some of her colleagues' careers officially took-off.

images he was appropriating. Stezaker in turn, found himself absorbed in the aesthetics of the more recent 'erotic' books, which represented a kind of halfway technology between comic-strips and film, romantic novels and Playboy magazine. He began to reconstruct fictive scenes or sequences from these books by means of collage. As he recalled in a recent interview, the series emerged as an experiment with narrative construction:

> The origins of the idea itself date back to 1973 on a trip I made to Italy. I suddenly saw early Italian Renaissance art in a new light, Fra Angelico in particular. On the same trip I also became aware of Giorgio de Chirico's work. He was the one who showed me a different way of looking at these early renaissance paintings by subtracting their narratives, so-to-speak. It was then that I started working on a series called *Dream Allegories*. I was using Italian photo-romans that I collected at the time as my source of imagery. I took away most of the texts, and used the empty spaces created by the absent thought and speech bubbles as holes to introduce other pictorial elements.[164]

The *Dream Allegories* were the first major step that Stezaker took into the universe of collage. The series have since been lost, but other collages from the years 1976-79 remain as testimony to the kind of inquiry that characterised the photo-roman series [figs.122-125, pp.324-327]. Yet, despite the series' promising title, these small, black and white collages were not invested in fantastic, Surrealist constructions of dream-like scenarios. Instead, they were focused on ordinary domestic scenes, in which unmemorable actors were performing melodramatic actions: kissing, arguing, looking at each other intensely, putting on make-up in front of the mirror, or making love. The sexual content in the *Dream Allegories* varies from one to the other, but mostly the images seem awkward and almost painfully out of date, not least thanks to the grainy quality of the images and the out-of-fashion hair styles and

[164] John Stezaker, Interview by Yuval Etgar, London, 08 April 2015, n.p.

clothes. Little, if any action or drama is communicated in these collages, yet the scenes are never static. Stezaker makes sure to activate a sightline in every work – a 'look' passing between people, objects, or a combination thereof. He also uses repetition as a way of generating a sense of rhythm and progression: an arm, leg, or entire figure can reappear two, three or even four times in one work. The images are cut with a knife, free-hand, or torn by hand. Some have bits of leftover text, additions of colourful paper snippets, a fragment from a cartoon illustration, or simply empty sections left for the imagination to complete.

At first impression, the photo-roman collages might seem like a way of marrying the two dominant tendencies of the London art world in the late 1960s – Pop art and 'conceptual' art. Indeed, the black and white, almost documentary "feel" they possess is reminiscent of many conceptual collage works where photographic documentation is pasted onto a background often accompanied by bits of text, but at the same time they are almost entirely devoid of such textual components and seem to resist the kind of inquiry into the relationship between image and text that was so characteristic of this tendency. On the other hand, the photo-romans focus on images from popular culture, just like pop artworks would, but they remain resistant to their role within this culture. For the first time, Stezaker was satisfied with the results his experiments yielded, and as the series evolved he gained enough confidence to abandon the use of text in his work altogether. His task, as he now began to understand it, was to redeem images from the narrational baggage assigned to them by their textual and contextual framework. As a result, a particular range of source materials was gradually asserting itself as the basis of Stezaker's new work: not only postcards, projector slides, and photo-romans, but also film still photographs of the kind that used to decorate cinema theatre lobbies introducing both the main features as well as the B movies that came to accompany them for the price of a single ticket. All of these photographic materials, he has come to see, represented an odd category of images that falls somewhere between advertising, documentation, entertainment and art. These were by-products of popular pastime activities such as film, tourism, and literature for whom narrative was essential, but also loose enough to be manipulated (unlike the assertive message of advertisements or the consecrated message ascribed to a work of art). Stezaker's new archive of unfashionable media was

paradoxically compiled of mass-produced images but of the kind that was intended to communicate a sense of personalised, or intimate experience. Postcards, for example, provide a readymade image, identical to thousands just like it, alongside an empty space especially designated for a hand-written message to be added at will. They represent a particular experience of a place or an object, albeit one that is shared by many. Photographic projection slides, in turn, were also something that people commonly used in order to document a special site visit, a trip abroad or a family occasion, but once more, they took part in the same economy of tourist memorabilia where familiar monuments and landmarks were captured time and time again from the same angle by all those who would visit them.

As I mentioned in the opening of this chapter, Stezaker's interest in the potential use value of popular imagery reflected a wider generational sentiment that saw the conceptualist efforts of the 1960s and early '70s reaching a dead end. A growing circle of artists, students, and critics that would meet regularly in the flat that he shared with his wife at the time, the art critic Rosetta Brooks, was evidence of this. Their main subject of conversation revolved around alternative forms of visual communication and interpretation of popular culture imagery, although Stezaker often found himself isolated in his views. His teaching was meanwhile steeped in theoretical efforts to clarify these questions by drawing on the lessons of Surrealism and its followers. He explored the work of writers such as Georges Bataille, Guy Debord and Elias Canetti, at the same time as keeping his own writings mostly to himself in an effort to shift a sense of theoretical accountability to his visual practice. Stezaker's interest in Surrealism was met with little resonance in the London art scene at the time, and he was finding himself more and more isolated in his endeavours. One conversation that did however inform his developing work was with an artist from the other side of the Atlantic.

A Clean Slate

Stezaker first met Jack Goldstein in 1972, before the photo-romans series was even conceived. The meeting took place on the occasion of Goldstein's first one-person exhibition at the Nigel Greenwood gallery in London and it was followed by a number of Goldstein's subsequent visits to the city, exchange of letters and even exchange of works between the two artists. "You mentioned the Pictures Generation", Stezaker told me in an interview that I held with him in April 2015:

> I first learned about them through Jack [Goldstein], who was showing at Nigel Greenwood's gallery. The conversations with Jack were intellectually the basis for what happened in the next five years for me. We both saw it as a potential modern blasphemy that we can combine image – the essence of media culture – with some kind of modernist interest, such as the formalist interest in the image. Jack found this kind of marriage in the combination between cinema and Jackson Pollock. I was very much into Barnett Newman at the time. I wanted to combine Barnett Newman and cinema. The power of the image and the power of abstraction.[165]

The idea of combining Barnett Newman's "modernist interest" and "power of abstraction" with cinema turned out to be crucial to Stezaker's working method, and he soon set out to question what "formal abstraction" might mean within the lexicon of found film-still photographs that are heavy with narrative figuration. Stezaker's premise was that seeking abstraction within figurative compositions would provide a way to release these images from their assumed obligation to deliver information; that by means of collage he might be able to expose specific details, or fragments of the composition, and give them importance in relation to the picture even if they were marginal to the story it was telling. This became clear to him initially through the experiments he conducted with his photo-romans, but also in a small sequence of two works from 1975 titled *The End*, in which Stezaker arranged a series of identical postcards depicting Westminster parliament building under pink skies

[165] Ibid., n.p.

one above the other to appear like a film-strip [fig.126, p.328]. Using a particularly large format of postcards Stezaker was able to cut the majority of the original images and keep only the upper corners where a few recognisable minarets (including Big Ben) unequivocally indicate the location of the scene. A sky saturated with colour thus resembles the final scene of a movie whose content remains unknown to us, and yet the lack of progression between the scenes that are depicted in each one of the postcards frustrates while promising a linear reading of a story. By 1977 however, Stezaker began to abandon his photo-roman collages in favour of the growing collection of film-still photographs that he by now had in his possession and that proved to offer a broader and more complex range of images. He also became stricter in his approach to collage, defining each series of works as a rigorous experiment with a set of predetermined conditions that dictated the kind of cuts he was going to perform and the nature of the images he was going to use. One particularly good example from this time is the series of *Tabula Rasa* collages which also took the form of silkscreen prints on canvas [fig.127, p.329]. In these collages, Stezaker would cut out a substantial portion of a film-still photograph in a rectangular or trapezoid shape, leaving an empty space in the original image that nevertheless could resemble a floating screen. The new formal element hinted by the title of the series *tabula rasa* (namely, a clean slate) had a confusing effect on the viewer as it can be interpreted once as a figurative element imitating a cinematic screen that resides within the picture, and a second time as an actual cut or omission from the image; a form of resistance to the referential expectations we have from any picture. Indeed, as Stezaker's analogy suggested, these works referred to cinema although the rectangular emptied (or monochrome) surfaces could also be read as references to painting and suggested both a process of masking the original image by concealing it and opening a window that traversed straight through it. Consider *Tabula Rasa I*, from 1978-9. The collage, sourced from an old film-still photograph of an unknown 1940s picture, depicts a leafy promenade seen from above and from a certain distance where a handful of passers-by are visible. A large white trapezoid shape is situated at the centre of the composition, suggesting a rectangle hovering at an angle. Among the figures, two men, walking side-by-side seem to be heading under the white surface. Are they participants? Or completely oblivious of its existence? The background scene, which is in fact meant to represent a cinematic frieze, now behaves both as inside and outside, film and theatre.

Redefining Collage Syntax

In 1977, on the occasion of a one-person exhibition at the Photographers' Gallery in London, Stezaker decided to use the platform provided to him in the catalogue to publish a comprehensive analysis of his working methods. "Collage", he declared in a lengthy essay titled *Fragments*, "can only exist in what Walter Benjamin called the age of mechanical reproduction".[166] The provocative nature of this declaration stemmed from the fact that it attributed to collage a defined historical context and specific material conditions, suggesting that collage is a coherent entity, and that there is a dependency between this form of practice and the mechanical means of image production. The argument complies with the well-established historical claim that collage had transitioned from a certain category of craft-making, or popular pastime activities, identified by terms such as 'silhouettes' 'pasted-papers', etc. into the realm of modern art with the emergence of a new technological era, in which our relationship to images became essentially different from the one that preceded it in the first part of the nineteenth century. Yet Stezaker's comment is far more interesting if regarded in hindsight and in relation to the time of its pronouncement. Indeed, the question that Stezaker's work seems to have been raising above all, was whether by 1977 collage remained a relevant and effective artistic procedure, and if so, whether it should comply with the same set of technical conditions assigned to it nearly seventy years earlier despite the fact that a whole range of new media had since emerged from and around it. Indeed, to a large extent this question refers to the implications of new modes of image editing, manipulating and reproduction that were being introduced to art as well as to other forms of visual communication in the 1970s – forms and media that no longer juxtaposed images and text as separate units or fragments, but rather rendered them in a molecular 'seamless' manner. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, while digital images were still far from being incorporated into the popular language of visual culture, collage was standing trial for its ability to remain an effective, relevant, and

[166] John Stezaker, *Fragments,* (London: The Photographers' Gallery, 1977): 50.

meaningful medium that corresponded to the issues of the hour. Thus, while the principles of cut-and-paste were flourishing in other industries – from advertising through the DIY culture of VHS and cassette tape recordings in every home, and all the way to new tendencies in theoretical writing styles that adopted the term postmodernism – it was the ideological and theoretical backbone of collage technique that was gradually becoming a remnant of the past in the practice of artists such as those affiliated with the Pictures group in the United States as well as in the eyes of their academic counterparts, the critics, curators and art historians affiliated with a then newly established journal *October.*[167]

Stezaker however, was eager to exploit the challenges facing collage technique rather than bypass them. For this reason, he restricted himself to a limited range of photographic materials that expressed the particular quality of mechanical reproduction and constricted himself to these alone in his new collages. His limited arsenal of image sources included three categories: first of all were photographic postcards, only that now, these were carefully selected according to their production date, focusing on the first decades of the 20th century, and including primarily those in colour. The second category was black and white film-still photographs, but here too, he became specific about the dates and the context. Stezaker focused almost entirely on anonymous film-stills that were produced for foreign language B movies, predominantly from Germany and always from the 1940s. Finally, he started incorporating another category of photographs – black and white portraits of well-known as well as lesser-known actors also from the 1940s and '50s used for similar promotional purposes as the film-stills. For a while, these portraits were too costly for Stezaker to purchase in bulk, but their prices were on the descent. This specific and narrow range of materials represented a token of the wider category of mechanically reproduced images, which Stezaker now characterises as mass produced, serial, generic, and inherently involved with mobility, whether through time (the film as a moving image) or space (the postcard as an image that travels from place to place) in a way that did not exist before the

[167] The journal *October* was established in 1976 in New York by Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, both of whom were part of the editorial team of *Artforum* until then. The new journal was aimed at generating a more politically engaged writing and heavily invested in post-structural theory.

mid-nineteenth century. One can add to these attributes of the mechanically produced image that it is also profoundly invested in the notion of scale. As postcards tend to miniaturise the monumental, so films tend to make the insignificant and the mundane gigantic.

But how do Stezaker's collages of this period work? In addition to the strict adherence to predetermined categories, the manner in which these materials were employed in Stezaker's work also became subject to a set of rules or guidelines around the same period, according to which he submitted one or more of the pictures to a simple technical procedure that interfered with their original appearance. Such gestures, whether the introduction of a particular type of cut or the combination of certain kinds of photographs, have been at the origin of Stezaker's numerous cycles of works and they emphasise the serial nature that is inherent to postcards and film-stills alike. A photo-collage by Stezaker can take the form of a diagonal cut that runs across the composition in order to marry two photographs, as in his more recent cycle of *Marriage* collages (2006-present), where male and female actor portraits are combined in a disturbing manner [fig.128, p.330] Or, it can be the act of placing a postcard on top of a film-still photograph, as in his *Inserts* or *Mask* series [1978-present, and 1982-present], where one image functions equally as a façade and as a window of another image [figs.129-130, pp.331-332]. Further still, the gesture could be as simple as the turning of a picture upside down, as in *Unassisted Readymades*, where a simple change of orientation results in complete disorientation of the composition [fig.131, p.333]. Whatever the gesture is, it is meant to draw attention to features that the viewer is otherwise likely to deem unimportant; to illuminate certain similarities or differences between two fragments that compose a collage; to examine the generic characteristics of a picture; above all, to disturb the coherent narrative one expects from a pictorial work by its substitution with another. In order to do so, Stezaker had avoided familiar films, actors, or postcards of famous monumental sites to draw instead on film-still photographs from German B movies or postcards that depict peripheral natural sites like caves and waterfalls in rural sites. These photographic materials have tended to adopt a familiar generic appearance, yet very few observers actually recognise their real contents. The resemblance to famous Hollywood actors or great monumental destinations has served as bait to lure the viewer closer to the picture, perhaps in order to

identify the original subject or to explain the connection between the two unrelated pictures that compose a collage. However, the impossibility of solving either one of these two riddles is to confront the very condition of the picture's visibility.

Inserts and Masks: Collage as Metaphor

These sets of rules or preconceived conditions, that Stezaker has posed to himself for over forty years as the premise of his work, has also informed the choice of content in the images to which the materials and procedures apply, as well as the choice of theoretical terms that Stezaker has employed to delineate his practice. Thus, Stezaker's strategy applies to the nature of the photographic materials that he employs, their subjects, the consistent relationship between the composing elements, and the commitment to a particular terminology throughout different series of works. It is tempting to suggest on the basis of these rules that one could replicate the recipe or prescription for the production of a Stezaker collage – in a manner that does not necessarily reduce his work to a formula but can rather reflect something of his approach to collage as an activity that is inherently tied to the logic of seriality and reproduction, and whose creative aspect comes to expression precisely thanks to the particular conditions of each composition.[168]

Let us consider an example in closer detail. *Mask X* from 1982 [fig.132, p.334] is the first work that Stezaker deemed successful in a large, ongoing series of the same name, in which an actor's headshot portrait is interrupted by a postcard serving as a kind of mask. In this particular instance, Stezaker choses to hide the face of a young actress by placing a landscape postcard over her face, while leaving her shoulders and chest visible to the viewer. The woman is standing behind a rope ladder in a

[168] In a panel discussion that I held with John Stezaker, David Campany, and Linder, at Luxembourg & Dayan Gallery in London, on 14 March 2017, Campany confessed to have identified the actress in one of Stezaker's early collages from 1977 titled *Voeyeur*. He recounted how he then found the film from which the still-frame was taken, and eventually replicated the piece.

manner that suggests that she is an acrobat or performer. A slightly more creative reading of the composition might suggest that the ladder resembles the frames of a film strip, in which the woman is trapped, although the lack of movement imposed by the photographic medium also indicate a certain resistance to the fluency and speed that the moving image requires in order to come to life. The postcard that conceals the actress' face can be read both literally and metaphorically: a double-arched stone bridge crossing a river resembles a set of eyes; a pile of rocks can be interpreted as a nose and a mouth; and a small canoe that approaches towards the viewer from a distance marks the exact position where a pupil of the actress' eye might be. At the bottom of the postcard itself a text completes the touristic/cinematic reference: "Shooting the Rapids, Killarny". Although Stezaker tends to emphasise the metaphorical aspect of his works, *Mask X* seems to be operating also metonymically, completing the actress' facial traits with a continuum of forms that traces her very features – or almost so. At once highly calculated and accurate but also disturbingly misplaced, the mask is at the same time grotesque, confusing, but also full of humour. Its symbolism belongs to the metaphoric order of Surrealist collage, where body organs are replaced by other inanimate objects, even if the straight-lined edges that separate the postcard from the photograph belong to the metonymic order that characterised early Cubist collages. A clash of pictorial and linguistic traditions is thus brought to the fore.

The *Mask* series is one expression of Stezaker's earlier cycle of postcard and film-still collages which he called *Inserts*; namely, works which include the placement of a postcard on top of a larger film-still photograph.[169] For Stezaker, however, inserts imply a more complicated spatial intervention where a postcard is not simply placed on top of a larger photograph in order to conceal part of it, nor is it placed by its side as a comparison to it. Instead, the insert invades the photograph with which it interacts, confusing the relationship of the two images in a number of ways: formally, it implies how might the outline of what its conceals have looked conceptually, by encouraging the viewer to relate

[169] Stezaker came up with the term 'insert' following a conversation with an Austrian designer and friend of his sometime in the second half of the 1970s. According to his story, the friend was referring to Stezaker's use of images inside images as 'insets', borrowing a technical term from the jargon of graphic design. However, because of his way of pronouncing the word, Stezaker misheard 'insert' instead, and decided this term was more accurate.

the two images to each other in an associative manner; chronologically, by placing colour postcards that are nevertheless older than the black and white film-stills on which they lay; and finally, it confuses the relationship between the postcard and the film-still in spatial terms by functioning as both a window to a reality that lies behind the covered image and as a mask that conceals it.

According to Stezaker, the *Inserts* originated from an exploration that began during his studies with Richard Wollheim, concerning the possibility of creating a visual version that would align with his readings of the linguist Max Black's theory of metaphor in language.[170] According to Black, there are three common ways of interpreting the work of metaphor: the first is based on what he identifies as "the substitution view of metaphor", which suggests that metaphor simply replaces one term with another, much like a synonym, or, in more extreme cases, it fills a gap in language where a term seems to be missing – an operation that is more accurately described as catachresis. A good example for such a catachrestic operation can be traced back to the origins of the word 'orange' in the English language and its expansion from a referent of the citrus fruit of the species *Citrus aurantium* to one that also applies to its colour sometime in the first decades of the seventeenth century (the most common previous referent to the colour was the Old English term *geoluhread,* a combination of the colours 'yellow' and 'red'). Initially used in poetry and literature, this metaphor compensated for a gap in language and eventually became part of it. Black's second view of metaphor is labelled "the comparison view", whereby the borrowed term is put side by side with the proper term in an analogical relationship. For example, the proposition "cherry lips" highlights certain similarities between the colour and tactility of the referents of the two words, 'cherry' and 'lips'. However, Black suggests a third mode of interpreting metaphor which seems most compatible with Stezaker's collage *Inserts*. "The interaction view of metaphor" considers the borrowed term as if it conducts a process of continuous exchange between the original (now concealed) term, the borrowed term, and the entire contextual framework. If we return to the metaphoric proposition "cherry lips", according to Black such a proposition will gain potency only if we further understand the relationship between the two

[170] Max Black, 'Metaphor', *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Metaphor*, Cornell University Press, (Ithaca; New York, 1962), 25-47.

words 'cherry' and 'lips' based on a broader range of associations that relate to both terms but would not necessarily be considered unless they are juxtaposed to one another. Or as Black explains this relationship:

> Suppose I look at the night sky through a piece of heavily smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear. Then I shall see only the stars that can be made to lie on the lines previously prepared upon the screen, and the stars I do see will be seen as organised by the screen's structure. We can think of a metaphor as such a screen, and the system of "associated commonplaces" of the focal word as the network of lines upon the screen. We can say that the principal subject is "seen through" the metaphorical expression – or, if we prefer, that the principal subject is "projected upon" the field of the subsidiary subject.[171]

Moreover, Black refers to the replaced term in a metaphorical statement (that is, the appropriated word from a foreign context) as the "focus", while the contextual background in which this word appears is called the "frame". Black alludes to the writings of the British writer I. A. Richards, suggesting that "in the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction."[172]

Stezaker's approach to collage as a metaphoric operation is particularly interesting if considered as a way of distinguishing his practice from the two other forms of engagement with found photographic materials that I mentioned in the opening of this chapter and which were becoming popular among his contemporaries at the end of the 1970s. The first, photographic appropriation in the Duchampian tradition of the readymade where a single object or image comprises the entirety of the work as

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[171] Ibid., 41.

[172] I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, (New York, 1965; 1st ed. 1936), p. 93.

practiced by many of the so-called Pictures generation artists. The second, was renewed interest in photomontage, where numerous fragments are joined together to form a complex narrative within a single composition, as practiced by many artists-activists of the time. The insistence on two-elements' collages, according to Stezaker, is what enables him to replicate the syntactical structure of metaphor based on "focus" and "frame" (or that of two metonymic elements) in pictorial means.[173] *Mask X*, as well as the vast majority of Stezaker's collages from the end of the 1970s, demonstrates his insistence on producing collages using only two photographic elements, hereby focusing on the essential attributes that constitute a collage – a cut (or edge) and the meeting of two images.[174] Most importantly, it also emphasises his preoccupation with the cut, or seam, as the main gesture that characterises collage, making it into the central event in his works. For Stezaker, metaphor and collage represent the *modus operandi* of the mechanically reproduced image and its way of circulating and communicating. In a panel discussion that I held in 2017 with Stezaker and his American counterpart Richard Prince on this topic, Prince explained: "In my work of the late 1970s I wanted to get rid of the cut, or seam if you want, that was so representative of collage. I therefore adopted this idea of rephotography because the results it gave appeared seamless." Stezaker then replied, "I on the other hand, wanted to bring the seam back into the centre of the work. I wanted to show what was essential to collage and why collage was essential."[175] In effect, this disagreement represents the generational split previously mentioned around the late 1970s, concerning the role of found imagery as the foundation for new practices that were nevertheless historically bound to the realm of pictorial collage and image appropriation practices from the 1910s onwards. One strategic position set out to replace collage with new procedures that would be as provocative and critical towards the found image that they employ, as collage was in its early days. Such were, for example, Richard Prince and Sherie Levine's experiments with rephotography (the act of taking pictures of already existing pictures),

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[173] See Max Black, 1962, 28.

[174] This model does have exceptions in Stezaker's work. Whether in his *Unassisted readymades* which are produced using a single appropriated image, his early photo-roman collages that include numerous fragments and other early collages from the 1970s. Most recently however Stezaker set out to produce a series of portrait collages using three photographic elements in reference to Picasso's work. For more on these, read Stezaker's comments on pp. 372-373.

[175] Richard Prince and John Stezaker, interview by Yuval Etgar on the occasion of the exhibition *The Ends of Collage* at Luxembourg & Dayan Gallery, New York, 13 April 2017.

Louise Lawler's development of her *arrangements of pictures* (the assembly of other artists' works by means of installation or photography), or Jack Goldstein's filmic fragments (short, looped films that showed incomplete actions using film projections). Stezaker on the other hand represented a different strategy, insisting that collage should be reviewed from within, that much of the technique's potential still lay ahead of it as a way of redeeming the accumulated archives of photographic imagery that had lost their currency, even assisting their escape from the fate of oblivion.

Photo-Collage, Photomontage, Appropriation

In order to argue for the urgency of collage in the aftermath of the historical age of mechanical reproduction – what the art historian Brandon Taylor had called the period of "collage after collage" – Stezaker has refined the very definition of the term, hoping to show that the relevance of his photo-collages becomes clear from the very conditions of its emergence.[176]

> I consider montage as a mainstream intercutting of images that sets out to create a seamless continuum of some kind; intercutting images in a way that reduces them to narrative legibility. This tradition goes back to Hollywood as much as it does to the films of Sergei Eisenstein who pioneered montage. By contrast collage, or photo-collage if you will, is about opening up the space between images, liberating them from their instrumental use. […] It is a way of trying to reveal something of the abyss or the hidden void within this continuum of image culture, or the montage

[176] 'Collage after Collage' is the title of Taylor's final chapter in his book *Collage: The Making of Modern Art* (Thames & Hudson; London, 2004). The chapter focuses primarily on Stezaker's work and other artists active from the late 1970s onwards.

> of everyday life. I see photo-collage therefore as a way of encountering the image as empty.[177]

In this short passage Stezaker distinguishes two kinds of activity that employ found photographic materials. Montage (or photomontage, as he clarifies later in the same conversation), is a calculated juxtaposition of images that strives to form a coherent narrative or story. The images of a photomontage may seem disconnected, but their conjunction delivers a clear message. In his view this category was common to the works of some of his British contemporaries such as Linder Sterling [fig.133, p.335], Gee Vaucher [fig.16, p.51], and Peter Kennard [fig.134, p.336], and Americans such as Martha Rosler and Barbara Kruger. Stezaker goes on to attribute the historical origins of this kind of activity to Eisenstein's theory of montage as much as to the filmic debuts of Hollywood. It is important to be reminded here that photomontage had and still today has a strong link to political messaging and propaganda. Whether in the hands of ideology or in those of entertainment, montage as described by Stezaker is an effective tool that condenses and empowers narrative. It can encourage consumption, describe or promote political views, or narrate information. Photo-collage, by contrast, refers in Stezaker's view to a process of interruption or resistance to the fluency of narrative, and occurs paradoxically by the author's relinquishing their control over the materials employed. The kind of image juxtaposition that characterises photo-collage is one that does not serve as a vehicle for some preconceived or external message. Photo-collage means revealing the arrest, gap, or abyss, as Stezaker refers to it, that does not enable us to explain the nature of the relationship between different pictures or fragments of pictures, but explores them as an entry point to the very conditions of visibility that they presuppose.

The distinction between photo-collage and photomontage, however, is not categorical, and any attempt to apply it to specific artistic practices seem to generate exceptions as well as examples of the rule. In addition, the description of photo-collage as a self-reflective practice that purports to be a

[177] John Stezkaer, 'Imagine That!', Interview by Yuval Etgar, *Aesthetic Investigations Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (Amsterdam, 2017). https://aestheticinvestigations.eu/index.php/journal/article/view/116

theory of collage (reminiscent of Groupe μ's claim that "the only true definition of collage, should itself be a collage") seems like a variation of Greenberg's imperative of medium specificity and purity. This is a particularly tempting reading considering that the late 1970s were largely characterised by a growing tension between attempts to deconstruct the rigorous definitions of so-called Greenbergian modernist terminology, and counter-attempts to reorganise some of these categories anew – such as that promoted by Michael Fried in his 1967 essay 'Art and Objecthood'.[178] Yet Stezaker admits that his terminology is problematic if applied categorically to any artistic practice, and he tends to suggest that it is applicable only insofar as it describes and positions his own practice and enables him to review archetypal modes of engagement with found imagery and to point towards them. This is a difficult position as it contradicts Stezaker's claim that 'photo-collage' is a historicaly bound practice. However, such archetypal mapping of the field in which Stezaker was operating is revealing of his and other artists' profound investment in pictorial rhetoric as a way to analyse the manner in which visual messages are delivered as well as their impact and relevance.

Allegory vs. Metaphor

Thus we return to the question of narrative fluency, which Stezaker presents as the principle of photomontage, and to which he also added the category of appropriation under the same terms. "Appropriated imagery is appropriated for a reason," he explained to me in our first conversation at his London home and studio. "It forms a coherent statement about something, whether it is a comment about consumerism, a political message, or any other story for that matter."[179] Stezaker's position seems to equate appropriation and photomontage with one another in a number of ways. This position was not unusual within the critical climate of the late 1970s, however Stezaker's

[178] Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood' [1967], in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-172.

[179] John Steaker, interview by Yuval Etgar, Unpublished, London, 31 March 2016.

interpretation of these methods as such that remain subordinated to narrative fluency reflect more contested grounds. The group of writers mentioned earlier in this essay, commonly associated with the journal *October*, such as Benjamin Buchloh, Stephen Melville, and Craig Owens in particular, also related montage and appropriation to one another.[180] However, their writings show that they did not see these procedures as vehicles of narrative fluency. Quite the contrary. The *October* writers thought that both photomontage and image appropriation represented some of the most disruptive and provocative tools available to contemporary artists. They also proposed to analyse the effects of these provocative procedures using a different rhetorical prism, that of allegory instead of metaphor. In their view, the operations of allegory were more complex than those of metaphor, representing a post-modern instinct while metaphor was regarded as a trace of modernism. The different choice of terminology (allegory vs. metaphor, appropriation and photomontage vs. photo-collage, and Postmodernism vs. Modernism) might seem like a semantic issue, but it reflected a real tactical and the ideological distinction between Stezaker and his American contemporaries, both writers as well as artists.[181] For Stezaker, metaphor meant the borrowing of a semantic unit – be it word or image – from its habitual context and its inclusion in a new context in order to replace a conventional word or image. This transition could illuminate a certain aspect of the replaced unit, but more importantly it was capable of expanding the diapason of associations and dissociations generated by the sentence or picture in which it occurs. His position seems to comply with the writings of the philosopher Donald Davidson, whose contribution to the debate on the nature of metaphors, developed befittingly in the second half of the 1970s, is particularly relevant to our context. "Metaphors" Davidson argued, "mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more."[182] In other words, the power of metaphor lies in its evidently awkward, misplaced, and constructed nature, in its

[180] See, for example, Benjamin Buchloh, 'Allegorical procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum*, (September, 1982), 43-46.

[181] It is most likely that Owens and Melville were not aware of Stezaker's practice, and even if they were, they were certainly not familiar with it to a degree that their writings would take it into account. Buchloh on the other hand was in fact familiar with Stezaker's work, and he even invited him to participate in a residence programme at the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design around 1979, where he was a faculty member. According to Stezaker, his arrival to NSCAD however did not eventually incite any meaningful conversation between the two. On the other hand, it was on the occasion of this residency that Stezaker finally met in person some of the Pictures artists for the first time, including Sherrie Levine who wrote to him some months earlier, Jenny Holzer, and Barbara Kruger.

[182] Donald Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn, 1978), pp. 31-47.

apparent disjunction between a conventional sentence and one containing a word that does not normally belong to it. This tension is what solicits the reader, or viewer when concerning images, to generate links between two seemingly unrelated semantic realms. The conception of allegory on the other hand, adopted by Owens, Buchloh and Mellvile, was largely adopted from the literary critic Angus Fletcher's famous book on the subject. Unlike metaphor, Fletcher claimed, allegory hides the tension that it generates between two meanings. "It is a way of saying one thing and meaning another." Allegory "destroys the normal expectation we have about language, that our words 'mean what they say'".[183] The distinction enables us to see what the nature of the controversy between the metaphoric and allegorical models of pictorial collage, between image appropriation and photomontage, really was. While metaphor reveals itself as a construct, allegory conceals itself, simultaneously denying and alluding to its referent.

The first to publish his thoughts on allegory was Craig Owens. "Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery" he wrote in an essay titled 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', in 1980. "The allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter."[184] He then continued by linking allegory to photomontage as well, quoting from Walter Benjamin's thesis on *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* from 1925 in support of his argument. "We should […] also be prepared to encounter an allegorical motive in photomontage, for it is the 'common practice' of allegory 'to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal.'"[185] Owens regarded allegory as a continuous sequence of metaphors chained to one another in manner that has an arbitrary grounding in the original text from which it is drawn. In other words, the allegorical model not only intervenes in the text that it sets out to colonise, it completely replaces and supplants it. So, while allegorical imagery can be both critical (appropriation) and open ended (photomontage) at once, its identity as allegory is based on the contingent and arbitrary links it maintains with the original image. Allegorical images "proffer and defer a promise of meaning; they

[183] Angus Fletcher, *Allegory. The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 2.

[184] Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', *October*, Vol. 12 (Cambridge, MIT Press, Spring 1980): 69.

[185] Ibid, 72.

both solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be directly transparent to its signification. As a result, they appear strangely incomplete – fragments or ruins which must be *deciphered*" but which remain inevitably insufficient to complete an imagined whole.[186] Owens' writings on allegorical imagery were followed by additional texts that Buchloh and Melville published in 1981 and 1982 respectively, in which the term "allegorical procedures" was coined, and soon adopted by artists and theoreticians alike.[187] For the *October* writers, and for many of the artists who were active in New York during those years, the notion of allegory described a new form of resistance to narrative, whose appearance was deceiving.

The distinction between metaphor and allegory is most evident in the conversation mentioned earlier between Prince and Stezaker, where the two artists present their opposed strategies for the use of found photographic materials. While Stezaker chose to bring the cut into the centre of his works, Prince concealed the traces of the appropriating act altogether. For Stezaker the cut offered a way to fix the mechanically reproduced image in place. It served as a '*punctum*' of sorts that drew the viewer closer to the image, offering them details that inform the composition and expose the skeleton of the pictorial medium it relies on. The cut-as-*'punctum'* served to establish the dreamlike character that is so typical of many of Stezaker's collages, combining as it does both informed agency and unconscious automatism. But most importantly, the cut enabled Stezaker to hold on to the tension between manual craft (the trace left by the scalpel or scissors) and the automatic production process (of the photograph itself over which both artist and viewer have very little control); a tension that marks the historical, and ideological junction that collage represents between art as craft and art as idea.

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[186] Ibid, 70

[187] Stephen Melville, 'Notes on the Reemergence of Allegory, the Forgetting of Modernism, the Necessity of Rhetoric, and the Conditions of Publicity in Art and Criticism', *October*, Vol. 19 (Cabridge: MIT Press, Winter 1981): 55-92. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum*, (New York: September 1982): 43-56.

In and Out of Place

A good comparison with Stezaker's preoccupation with the collage cut can be found in the work of Louise Lawler, whose installations of other artists' artworks as well as her *Arrangements* photographs (ongoing since 1978) from the same period also tend to divide the composition in a binary manner in order to focus on images' social contextualisation. By including the works of other artists within her own work (whether by means of photographic reproduction or by displaying original works grouped together under her guidance), Lawler's practice shifts our focus from the works that she chooses to display to the effects of the contextualising conditions that simultaneously confirm and withhold both visibility and her authorship. In Lawler's photograph *Pollock and Tureen* that forms part of a wider series titled *Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut*, from 1984, Lawler shows the bottom part of a Jackson Pollock painting hanging above an eighteenth-century porcelain soup tureen decorated with flowery patterns of a similar colour palette to that of the painting [fig.135, p.337]. Lawler makes sure to reveal enough of Pollock's painting that the viewer can recognise it, along with its thin, typical, modernist wooden frame. The whole painting meanwhile – alluded in the title as well as in the image – is withheld from the viewer. Indeed, the photograph largely conceals Pollock's painting and thus prevents it from communicating any message, formal or other. Instead it foregrounds the effects of owning and presenting artistic activities as signifiers of values external to the works themselves. Her photographs become a commentary concerning the relationship between art of a certain kind and patronage, taste, the distinction between decorative and fine arts, the lives of art's wealthy patrons, and at the same time also a portrait of its owners. Yet the photograph seems to avoid asserting itself as any one of these narratives exclusively. In fact, the picture's role within the economy of art, as well as its relationship to the canonical history of fine, applied, and decorative arts, is what makes it relevant to Owens' imperative that contemporary works "both solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be directly transparent to its signification." Furthermore, as Andrea Fraser noted in an essay titled 'In and out of place', from 1985: "Because Lawler's work isn't reducible to a single theme, mode of

production, or place of functioning, it often seems anonymous, or at least difficult to identify without a caption."[188]

Lawler's *Pollock and Tureen* thus offers a good illustration of the complexities of the allegorical position presented by Owens and his colleagues. But further, it clarifies something about the Janus-faced nature of the distinction between Stezaker's metaphorical cut and Pictures' allegorical simulacrum. Lawler's *Pollock and Tureen* asserts itself as contingent and fragmentary, confirming what the *October* writers termed as the disruptive and incomplete character of "allegorical procedures" and forms a counter-example to the claim that appropriation practices are vehicles for narrative fluency while metaphor is a propagator of its arrest. However, if we return to the effects of Stezaker's physical incision within his collages and compare these with the supposedly seamless combination of the Jackson Pollock painting and the porcelain tureen situated at the centre of Lawler's composition, we have before us two cases where two seemingly unrelated elements function as the main event of the picture. Stezaker's rupture emphasises the relationship of manual and automated image production, the joining and disjoining of two fictions, the relationship of mechanically reproduced images to movement and mobility, and their ability to generate associations and dissociations. Lawler's photograph on the other hand pretends to be indifferent to the disrupted narrative that it presents. *Pollock and Tureen* both confirms and ignores the divergence between the two signifiers that occupy its composition, and in this directs attention to their contextualising mechanisms of display as well as to their equivalence of monetary and social capital. Yet the so-called seamless transition between Pollock's painting and the soup tureen ends up being as jarring as the trace of a physical cut. Lawler's photograph relies on undermining the expected distribution of signs and differences. As Fraser writes later on in 'In and Out of Place', Lawler's "position is double: that of a producer of images, and that of one who actively organises not simply their presentation, but perhaps a new chain, a counter discourse in which they are only elements."[189] It should be added that this is also where Lawler's

[188] Andrea Fraser, 'In and out of place' [1895], *Louise Lawler, October files*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 10.
[189] Ibid., 10.

position like that of many other Pictures artists, risks becoming associated with the very social mechanisms that she initially set out to criticise.

The terms of distinction between metaphoric and allegorical models, then, much like the supposed split between 'Modernism' and 'Postmodernism', seem to offer distinct strategies of operation, but in practice they cross-contaminate each other too often in order to employ either term beyond the theoretical threshold. Each model reflects something of the relationship between the original imagery and its new iteration, yet each fails to provide a comprehensive account of that relationship. The metaphoric strategy demands that the viewer *carry over* (i.e. metaphorise) associations from one picture to the other by means of an explicit conjunction of contexts. The allegorical strategy follows an opposite mechanism: the extension of distance between the image and its original context and the blurring of their relationship, perhaps even at the risk of losing sight of the original source. When I visited John Stezaker's studio for the first time he spoke at length about one of the first film-still photographs that he ever purchased and that seems to represent the paradoxical relationship of metaphor and allegory, collage and appropriation. "I got it sometime in 1973, and it stood on top of the fireplace throughout the entire transitional period of the next four years, until one day, I simply turned it on its head, and that was it. The piece was finished." In its original orientation the photograph depicts a clichéd scenario where a man is seated at a piano and a woman is leaning against its top [fig. 136, p.338], both of them staring melancholically at the keyboard. In Stezaker's orientation however, the woman's reflection in the piano makes it appear as if she is looking directly into the eyes of the man. In fact, the work promotes a sense of loss and recovery, and it can be turned upside down time and time again until it loses all sense of gravity.

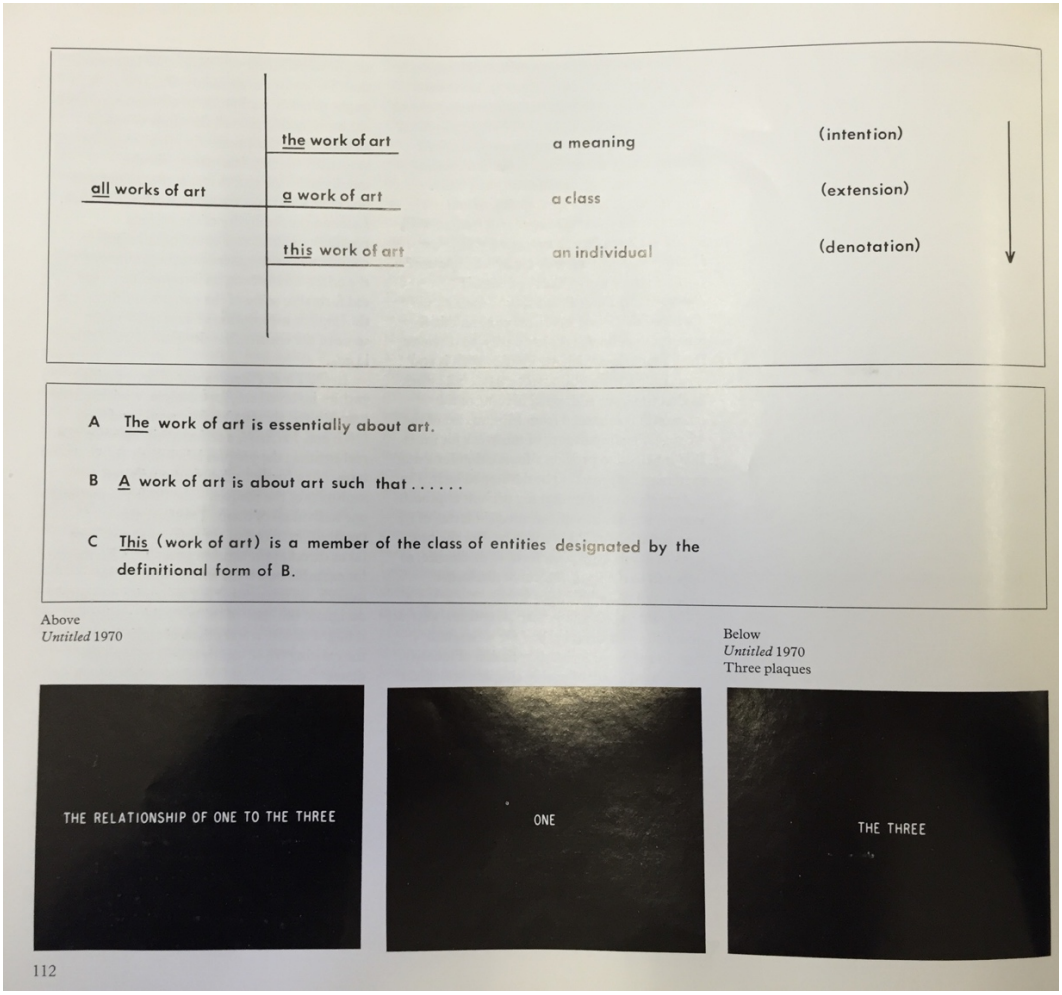


Fig. 121, John Stezaker, *Untitled*, 1970 and *Untitled*, 1970 (three plaques) reproduced inside the exhibition catalogue of *The New Art,* (Arts Council, Hayward Gallery; London, 1972), p. 112.



Fig. 122, John Stezaker, *Untitled (Photoroman)*, 1977-8, cut and pasted printed papers, 8.6 x 11 cm.



Fig. 123, John Stezaker, *Untitled*, 1976, cut and pasted printed papers, 21 x 24.5 cm.



Fig. 124, John Stezaker, *Untitled (Photoroman)*, 1977, Cut and pasted printed papers, 18.8 x 17.8 cm.



Fig. 125, John Stezaker, *Kiss VIII (Photoroman)*, 1977, Cut and pasted printed papers, 14.6 x 21.2 cm.



Fig. 126, John Stezaker, *The End*, 1975, Three cut postcards on black cardboard support, 36.7 x 26.5 cm.

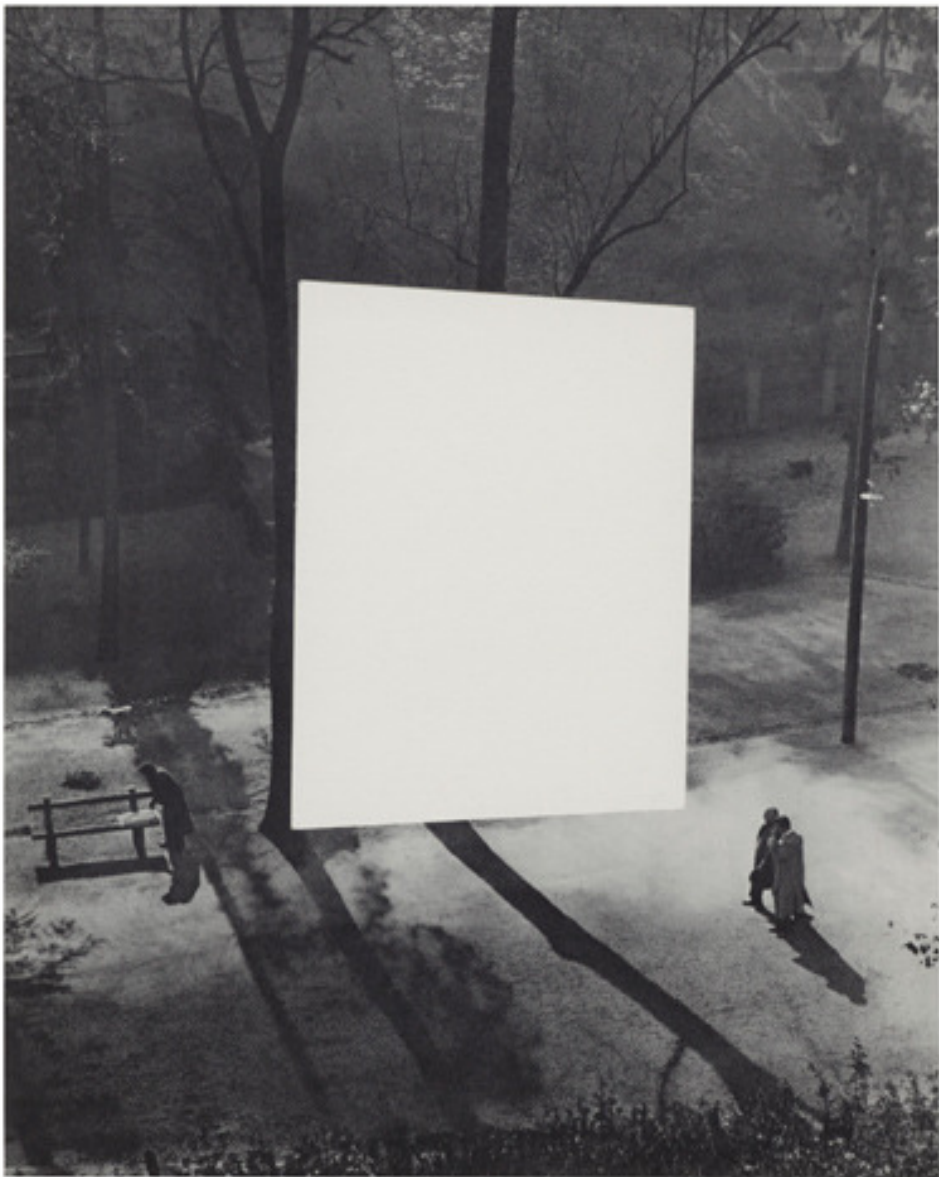


Fig. 127, John Stezaker, *Tabula Rasa I*, 1978-79, Cut film-still photograph pasted on white cardboard support, 27 x 21.5 cm.



Fig. 128, Marriage (Film Portrait Collage) LXI, 2010, Two cut and pasted film-still photographs, 28.5 x 21.5 cm.

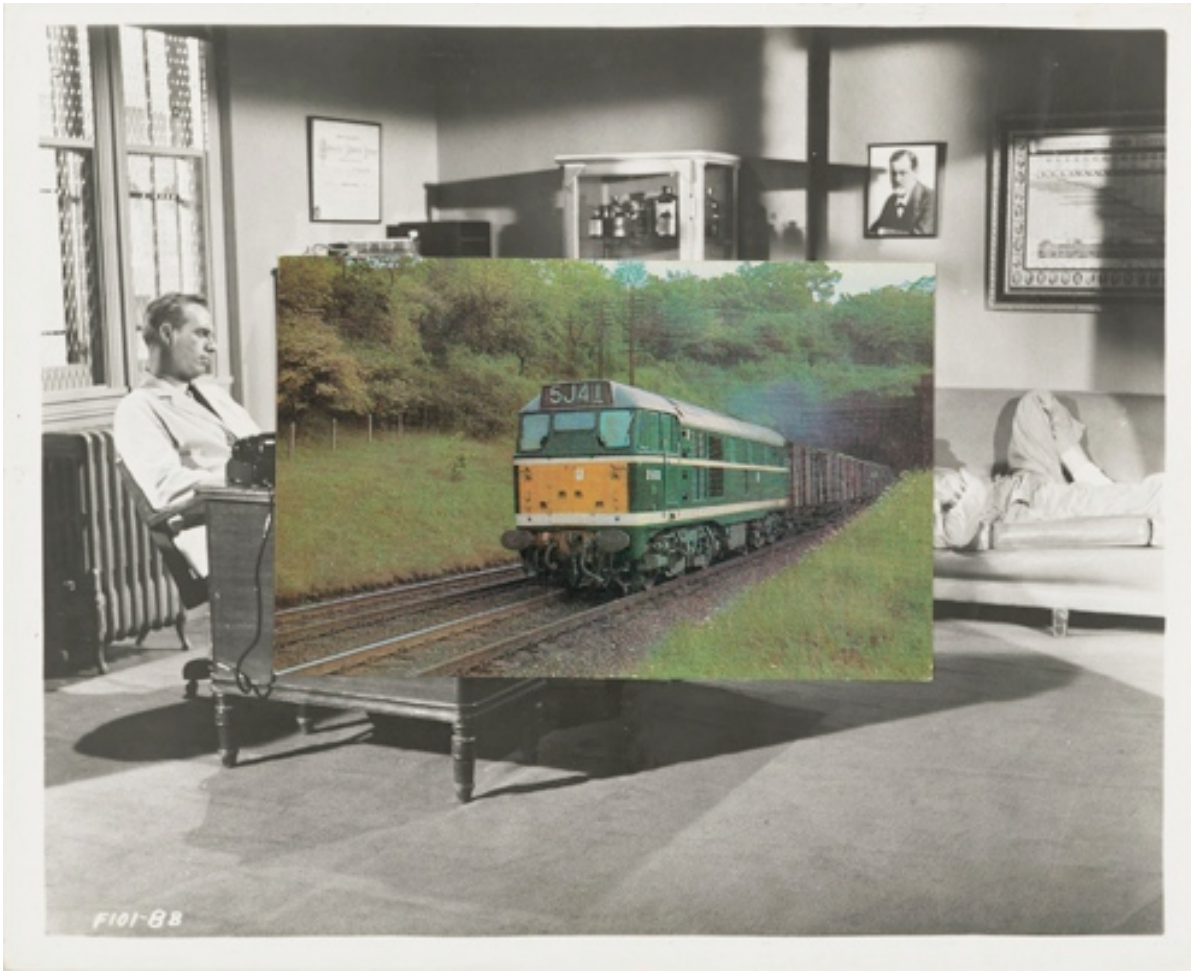


Fig. 129, John Stezaker, *Negotiable Space I*, 1977, Postcard pasted on film-still photograph, 20.6 x 25.3 cm.



Fig. 130, John Stezaker, *Mask*, 1982, Postcard pasted on film-still photograph, 19 x 24 cm.



Fig. 131, John Stezaker, *Bridge V*, 1998, Found photograph, 15 x 19.5 cm.



Fig. 132, John Stezaker, *Mask X*, 1982, postcard pasted on Film-still, 24.6 x 18 cm.



Fig. 133, Linder Sterling, *The Secret Public*, 1979, Cut and pasted printed papers.



Fig. 134, Peter Kennard, *Maggie Regina*, 1983, Gelatin silver print on paper, 66 x 50 cm.



Fig. 135, Louise Lawler, *Pollock and Tureen, Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut*, 1984, Silver dye bleach print, 71.1 x 99.1 cm.

Fig. 136, John Stezaker ,*Untitled,* 1973/77, Film-still photograph.

Ends II: Have Your Way with Images

Afterthoughts Followed by a Conversation with David Campany, Linder Sterling and John Stezaker

On 14 March 2017 I organised a panel discussion with David Campany, Linder Sterling, and John Stezaker on the occasion of an exhibition at Luxembourg & Dayan, London, bearing the same title as this thesis. My plan was to ask the participating guests how they define collage considering the broad range of works produced over the past century in the name of this practice and how far can we push this term still. The conversation took a different direction however, raising questions about the currency of 'found images', their place within the culture of collage-making, but also within other artistic practices today. Can we even speak about 'found images' as if these refer to a single, unified category of material resources? The discussion focused on terms such as 'quantity', 'impact', 'speed', and 'fluency' and how these are applied within the major channels of popular media today. How does one cope with the overwhelming abundance of visual materials that characterises our time? Are there really more images today than in the 1920s? What does it mean to speak about collage in an age where the gesture of cut-and-paste has been replaced by an alternative action that we now call 'copy-paste'? ("if this is even the right equivalent" I insisted on saying). Towards the end of the conversation, Campany remarked, "let's say for a moment that there are too many images […]. Well…. If you don't have your way with them, they will have their way with you." His words sparked a lively debate in the room as soon as we opened the floor to questions. The audience and participants alike were split between those who felt that authorship is entirely in the hands of makers and those who felt that images are independent entities out of our control. The difference between digital, analogue and handmade imagery soon became part of the discussion. Some suggested that manual craft traditions are now lost and have been replaced by new technological developments that empower images and weaken their authors. Others claimed that the digital realm is just as material and tactile as anything that came before it and thus the role of authors had not changed at all. "Working on Photoshop," one member of the audience declared, "is not less tactile than painting with a

brush or cutting with scissors, and those who do not understand this are out of touch with the material conditions of our time."

Three years have passed since the panel discussion took place at Luxembourg & Dayan and it seems that my inquiry into the history of collage had followed the tracks of that evening's debate to a great extent. We used to say – or at least I certainly did – that the more comfortable we are with taking pictures, manipulating and exchanging them, the less careful and thoughtful we become towards them; that the faster we produce and consume images and the more available they are to us, the less effectual they become. Indeed, we are all familiar with this perspective, accusing contemporary visual culture of having disarmed images of their power altogether. But maybe quantity does not necessarily imply a numbing of the senses, at least not in simple terms of more-means-less, or as a form of natural erosion caused by an accumulative process. After all, it can also be argued that never before were people so literate, capable, interested and invested in visual culture as we are today.

This form of literacy underlines the proposal I made at the opening of this thesis to conflate the three 'ends' of collage – the historic, topographic and ideological one – and to consider collage as a flexible term that denotes a strategy, a rhetoric, and a sensibility towards found images and texts that continuously challenges their roles and potentials. Collage, I have suggested, is a way of exploring the link between production and consumption of images, between making pictures and looking at them. Instead of asking ourselves whether a certain work is or isn't a collage, we should perhaps employ the term as an inquisitive tool, as a way of interrogating the relationship between different components in a work of art or between a work and its context (physical or other). Thus, the history of collage, cannot be reduced to the mere history of cut-and-pasted papers, although it is very strongly linked to it. The history of

collage entails a broad range of practices that focus on the transition from or juxtaposition of elements to one another in order to generate or withhold meaning, to draw attention to certain motifs that remained thus far concealed, dormant, or simply did not exist in their former contextual frameworks. If we therefore return to Groupe μ's definition of collage in their special issue of the *Revue d'ésethétique* in 1978, I would argue that they justifiably stipulate that collage cannot be defined as a "precise artistic activity", that it should be seen as "object that tends to maximal openness, overflowing with any attempt at classification, reduction, or closure", but that at the same time one has to be careful not to abuse the expansiveness of this term, as it bears the risk of "extreme generalisation whereby one might consider 'everything as collage'".[1] The subject of this thesis is precisely this risk area, and the four case-studies presented above examine particular instances where one can re-evaluate this history by challenging the technical parameters assumed to characterise this practice. I thus conclude by returning to the discussion that sparked these questions.

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Yuval Etgar (YE): *David, when we first met in 2015, I told you that I was trying to write about the effects of increased image production and consumption and their effects on the medium of collage in two distinct historical moments: first, the 1910s, which is commonly considered as the decade in which collage emerged as a recognised artistic practice, and second, the 1970s as a decade that represents the introduction of digitial technology into all spheres of communication and culture. At the time, I mentioned to you that I think that a clear quantitative surge in images circulating among people during these moments can be witnessed and that while the first surge is likely to be linked with the emergence of collage, the second is certainly at fault for its demise, as we developed a certain level of immunity – not to say apathy – towards this medium and towards*

[1] Groupe μ, 2017, 171.

image manipulation in general. You did not agree with me at all. Could you elaborate a bit about your position on this subject?

David Campany (DC): Well, it's a cliché isn't it, that we are bombarded or saturated with images. For a start, I do not know what a correct number of images would be. If you were to have a cull, and bring it back from 'too many' to 'an appropriate number', I don't know what that would be. The complaint about there being too many images goes back at least to the 1920s and that first flourishing of what we now call the mass media. Plenty of writers at the time were saying "stop! stop!, put the brake on!" And all of those metaphors about "flooding" and "bombarding" were put in play there and then already, nearly a hundred years ago. But I never thought it was the quantity that was the issue. I think that any one image is too much. Not in the sense that we should not have images, I am not suggesting that. What I am saying is that images are wild things and they are ambiguous things and they are uncontrollable, and that is part of the appeal that lured the collage artist to begin with, and perhaps made them change their ways later on. And that, if you ask me, would be true even if there was only one image in the world. So, I suppose I never felt that there were too many images. This thought just never crosses my mind.

YE: *Would you say then that perhaps we consume images differently (rather than excessively) today than in the past? That there is a change in the kind of sensibility that we now have towards what we call 'found images' that surround us everywhere, on our phones, computers, televisions and billboards?*

DC: I do. But I think that we could have said this at any point in the history of images. Marshall McLuhan was wise enough to suggest that new technologies, or in our case image technologies, do not replace old ones. Everything keeps accumulating. Perhaps the newer

ones redefine our relationships to the old ones or even reinvent the old ones. And I suppose that you could say that the interest in a thesis (and exhibition for that matter) like your *The Ends of Collage* has something to do with the fact that certain kind of dematerialisation of the image has alerted people anew to its material manifestations.

YE: *John, your practice as an artist is largely invested in the use of found images and their historical relationship to collage. In a way, your practice offers one possible history of collage. Did you ever feel that there are too many images circulating in the world?*

John Stezaker (JS): I tend to agree with David. Although from my point of view, the problem with images is that over the last century they have gradually departed into the world of information, so they are now completely linked to language. My job as an artist who produces collages from found photographic materials is to rescue the image from that space, from this profusion that is linked to a linear consumption of images. And this, in my view, is what collage is all about.

YE: *Could you say a bit more about that? What is a "linear consumption of images"? And how do your collages resist that?*

JS: What I consider under the term 'collage' is a way of generating friction, or going against what I would otherwise call the 'montage of everyday life' that we experience through the media. It is a resistance to the movement away from images, their disappearance, which becomes inevitable because images are now consumed with such speed. I suppose then that instead of profusion, I would suggest speed as the cause for this feeling of numbness that we have developed towards images.

YE: *Linder, your work on the other hand seems to encourage a kind of overflow of images, doesn't it?*

Linder Sterling (LS): I suppose that there is something about that. Excess very much reflects my way of working. You know, over the decades of making what I call 'photomontages', the amount of materials that I collected became unmanageable in its own right. Just the physicality of the thing is more than one can handle – so many copies of Playboy, so many copies of decorating books. But then, the only way to diminish those facts is to get in there, to open those books, and start going back in time through them. So to me, 'time' is perhaps another quantity to be considered here in addition to David's idea of 'accumulation' and John's notion of 'speed'. When I work, it is almost as much working with time as it is working with photography. I savour reading the letters in old playboy magazines, I linger on questions like why did cakes used to look like spaceships in cake-design magazines from the 1960s, or like zodiacs. All those things fascinate me.

YE: *John, like Linder, the sources of the images that you collect is something that you take very seriously in your work. You focus almost exclusively on film-still photographs from B-movies of the 1940s and '50s, as well as earlier postcards from the pre-war years, predominantly such that depict peripheral sites of touristic interest. It seems like a very particular choice to make. What's behind it?*

JS: I am not sure if it was initially an ideological position that led me to these materials, nor was it a specialised interest. I can definitely say that there was a pragmatic reason for my choice. First, my need to do something with my collection of postcards, which I had been nurturing since adolescence. In the 70s though, right after I left college, a lot of the mainstream cinemas were closing down, so a lot of those archives of film-stills and film

memorabilia began filtering into junk shops and I was fascinated by these materials. Then, there was a moment one day in 1976 or 1977 when I thought of combining these two kinds of images, inserting the postcards into the film-stills like masks or windows in the middle of the filmic scene or portrait. I suppose that the realisation was that they were both images that have to do with movement, or mobility if you will. Postcards move through the world and tell us about other places, and film-stills are records of movement. Together they merge the notion of movement in both spatial and temporal terms. And the fact that the postcards predate the film-stills simply added to the temporal play. They become a space that is potentially both behind as well as in front of the image that surrounds them.

YE: *Linder, you also employ old imagery in your work, but not exclusively. How do these materials come together?*

LS: Well, as you say, I use contemporary imagery in my work as well as older materials that go as far back as the 1920s. My use of contemporary imagery is a bit like a palette refresher. I would regularly enter a W.H. Smiths or wherever, and start taking biopsies of today's imagery from materials that surround us.

Often, younger women ask me, what has changed over time? And I always feel that in some ways not an awful lot. If you look at pornography twenty years ago for instance, there are some very laboured stories that explain why a woman would suddenly be naked in a forest. And I am quite fascinated about these effortful narratives. But now, of course, contemporary pornography has no narrative, there are no costumes, no room sets, it really is just "point and shoot" in every possible meaning. So my recent works, from the last months, are taking images from every decade and just slamming them all together. They are based on one found

page as surface, and while I used to work in one-to-one scale, now I am enjoying enlarging my materials. I use a large variety of image sources, including, for instance, Dalí paintings as backgrounds. I am having a fantastic time combining images from the last six or seven decades in one work and that is really odd because all of these particular inquiries into period consciousnesses that you mentioned get confused and mixed in each other this way. Patterns are shifting, focal points are changing, etc. I must admit that I am enjoying very much not to deliberate so much about the sources of images that I am using anymore. These allow me to work and generate a super high tempo, very much accelerated from my work of the 1970s.

YE: *I noticed that Linder, you refer to your work as photomontage, and John, you speak of photo-collage.*

LS: It's true. You asked me earlier if I saw my work as part of a lineage. Well, in 1976 when I made my first cut-and-paste works, Dawn Ades' book *Photomontage* just came out with Thames and Hudson. That was a really big moment for me. It enabled me to see such a lineage and aspire to take my place within it one day. And the timing of it could have not been more perfect. It helped me define what I was doing. Then in 2014 I met Dawn for the first time and we spoke a lot about terminology. I learned from her that in her experience over the last decade or so, there has been a certain level of reluctance among many institutions to use the term 'photomontage' as a way to describe artists' practices.

DC: Well, given that Dawn Ades' book came out in the second half of the 1970s, if you think of the heated politics of the art world around that time, it seems kind of obvious to me that she called it 'photomontage', and not 'collage', because at the time I get the feeling that collage was associated with something more decorative or whimsical.

JS: I would disagree. I always saw collage as something that came out of Picasso, Braque, and more broadly speaking it came out of painting as Yuval mentioned earlier. In the late 1970s I wrote an essay about the problem of terminology and I guess I broadly still hold to my position. We increasingly live in a communication culture which is one that I would call 'photomontage', that is, a seamless transition between images, a kind of media construction of events. This is without a doubt the world that we inhabit today, and our children to an even greater extent. But if you go back to 'montage' as an idea, you return to the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, who created the foundation for a universal terminology of montage. In a way, Eisenstein created Hollywood. He created that kind of linear way of reading the image. It is a part of a grammar that strives to reduce the image to a conduit of something to something else. 'Collage' to me, on the other hand, is a resistance to that. Instead of seamlessness it exposes the fissures between images, and exposes the abyss behind the world of images. Collage is interruptive, it stops that speedy consumption by which images disappear. So to me, collage is increasingly signifying a kind of resistance or friction. And I don't know if this distinction has an impact on the terminology that is out there, but I think that this is at least what collage should be.

YE: *John, when you make your collages, how do you contemplate the found imagery for your work?*

JS: I find my practice to be very fast and incredibly slow at the same time. So I get an idea for a combination of images and give it a go. Then I almost always feel that it is not quite what I want it to be, so I leave it aside, and there usually has to be a period between. And then it might be that during the process of dismantling something as a failure that something is happening. And then these intervals between each edit might take a good year or more in between them. Some pieces have been going on for years.

YE: *Linder?*

LS: It is quite interesting to me that John, you would take such long intervals between the cutting and pasting stages. Today, I would probably work for about two hours on a collage, then I would walk away before I apply glue, but I don't think that I could hold the tension more than a day. If that was the case, I would probably have to secretly put 'Pritt stick' [type of glue stick] in the corners.

JS: Oh, I abandoned Pritt stick ages ago. It is terrible. Do you use Pritt stick?!

LS: Actually, I am embarrassed to say that I use an even cheaper brand, but it is acid free and so very silky. What do you use?

JS: I am not telling you.

LS: Well, glue is the stuff that we never talk about, isn't it? We talk about images but we don't talk about glue. The sticky, messy, uncontrollable stuff that holds it all together.

DC: That's an interesting point. In fact, I wanted to say something about "the messy stuff" that you mention. There seems to be something about collage that remains slightly illicit, naughty, slightly cheating? I am convinced that it has something to do with the fact that collage and photomontage are things that one does in private. That it has to do, on some level, with the feeling that it is something that you are not supposed to be doing, that you are getting away with it.

JS: I agree. There is a sense of violation, and as such of violence, when one makes a collage. And in the end I always feel that collage needs to offer reparation for that violence in some way. It has to redeem that act of violence, but it is strange that you have to create that act of violence in the first place in order to enable a relationship with the image on its own terms.

YE: *In recent years you started producing films based on compilations of stills from your collection, projecting them in the conventional cinematic rate of twenty-four frames per second. Is that another act of reparation?*

JS: The films started as a hypothesis that I developed over the years. I thought, what if you actually project twenty-four different frames per second? What if I bring this huge collection of film-stills that I possess and that I have built over the years back into that kind of purgatory which is the media? If I really do that, what would be the result? And I didn't know how it would turn out, so I called my first film *Blind*, knowing only that in such high speed of image succession, you are unable to take it all in, your brain cannot receive so many images in such speed so it edits the input. But what emerged was a complete surprise to me, which was that everyone that looked at the film saw different films, and I too see different films every time I watch it. It is some kind of a magical cinema of discontinuity in a way. The films were an attempt to do the opposite of what my works were doing, that is instead of redeeming the images I wanted to make them disappear again. But it didn't, they flourished. It is still a mystery to me.

YE: *It seems to me that there is a real power struggle taking place between us and the images, a hopeless attempt to regain ownership over something that we never really managed to control. Is this just my imagination?*

DC: There is a really good line in Collin McCabe's biography of Jean-Luc Goddard that seems to answer your question. In the 1980s, VHS became available to private consumers, and as a result also a big part of the history of cinema. As a result, Goddard decided to made his famous, six-hour-long collage-film *Histoire du Cinéma*. An autobiographical, philosophical history of cinema made entirely of fragments from existing films. McCabe says something very interesting about this film, and I can repeat it almost verbatim because it is so beautiful. He says, in a world in which we are entertained from the cradle to grave whether we like it or not, the ability to rework image and dialogue is a matter of psychic and political health. In other words, let's say for a moment that there are too many images like you suggested at the beginning. If you don't have your way with them… well… they will have their way with you.



Fig. 137, Panel discussion at Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 14 March 2017.

Appendices

I.

After Word, vs. Image
A Conversation with Joseph Kosuth and Sarah Whitfield

The following excerpt originates from a panel discussion that I held with artist Joseph Kosuth and art historian Sarah Whitfield, who is also the co-author of Magritte's catalogue raisonné. The discussion took place on 24 May 2018 at Luxembourg & Dayan, London, on the occasion of the exhibition *René Magritte (Or: The Rule of Metaphor)*. The show, much like the preceding chapter, was dedicated to the three years that Magritte spent in Paris between 1927-1930, during which he developed his ground-breaking cycle of paintings that we now recognise as the word-pictures cycle. When we discussed the role of this period within the wider oeuvre of Magritte, Kosuth and Whitfield felt that it was precisely during these years that Magritte made his most important legacy to conceptual art, and they tried to reconcile his dedication to traditional painting with the conceptual inquiry that motivated his practice around this time. Whitfield quoted Magritte's famous dictum that "in a picture, image and text are made of the same substance", suggesting that the distinction between idea and material, in her view, was therefore cancelled by their unification in painting. It was largely thanks to this conversation that I saw Magritte's pictorial language as a precursor of the digital sensibility towards images – molecular, malleable, and indifferent to the distinction between image and text. Yet Kosuth insisted that Magritte's paintings from the Paris-years are not about the author's ability to manipulate images in order to endow them with meaning planned in advance, but about the creation of gaps and disruptions in meaning that enable an image to have its own agency and to carry a potential for new interpretations that can emerge in different times and places.

Yuval Etgar (YE): *The so-called 'word-pictures' cycle, which René Magritte developed during his three-year tenure in Paris between 1927-1930, is one of the most complex bodies of work that the artist ever produced, combining words with images in a way that undermines how we use pictorial as well as literal language. Sarah, was Magritte conducting a linguistic investigation in these works? Or was it a pictorial one?*

Sarah Whitfield (SW): Well, in order to answer this question it might be worth setting up the scene first. Magritte arrived in Paris in 1927, aged twenty nine, only a couple of years after he began experimenting with Surrealist painting. And while he was desperate to be accepted among the French Surrealists, he was not—at least not immediately. He remained an outsider to the group for a long while, partly because he was Belgian, but mostly because unlike his colleagues he held the view that art has nothing to do with aesthetics. One of the effects of this unusual position was that Magritte never really became friends with other artists, but rather he became friends mostly with writers and thinkers. He was only interested in what people wrote, in poetry, and above all in philosophy. And so, upon his arrival in Paris, instead of going to see shows, he spent most of his time reading or corresponding with his great mentor from Brussels, Paul Nougé, who was the initiator of Belgian Surrealism and the brains behind it. But what is important to understand is that the 'word-pictures' are the very first expression of this interest in philosophy and in text.

YE: *Around this time Magritte wrote the following statement in an attempt to explain his fascination with the role of words in painting: "in a picture, words and images are made of the same substance." Joseph, in your view, what is Magritte's claim?*

Joseph Kosuth (JK): What Magritte is telling us here is that within the context of a picture's frame – which is, let's say, the artist's area of play – all elements are equal. Whether they are words or images or abstract forms, they become part of the same semantic order. And if one manages (as

Magritte did) to let go of modernist presumptions about the autonomy of the work of art and the specificity of the medium, it's easier to do that, I think.

YE: *It's interesting that you say this, since unlike so many of his colleagues who experimented with new media such as collage, performance, or the readymade, Magritte remained loyal to the traditional medium of painting. What does that tell us about him?*

JK: I think that there was a really good technical reason for Magritte's insistence on making paintings. But when I say technical I mean something else than what you would normally expect from this term. I think that the medium of painting gave Magritte the kind of resistance that he needed in order to go beyond these supposedly "radical" new media that his colleagues were adopting. I think that his move of bringing all these media into painting was the real radical gesture. I have a good analogy that might clarify what I mean. Take, for example, a photograph by someone like Robert Mapplethorpe. Part of the outrage that people had when they first saw his work in the 1960s was the tension between the conservative format and the ostentatious content of the images. And there was another reason why Magritte made an 'outrageous' use of 'conservative' painting style, and that is that he *needed* painting for his work. Painting was not his work, it was his instrument – his brush if you will. At the end of the day an artist does what he or she needs to do. It's simple.

YE: *Sarah, would you agree?*

SW: Yes, but I would like to add another reason for Magritte's insistence on painting. This may sound very reductive, but I would like to suggest that Magritte chose painting because this was the only thing that he knew how to do. I often hear people who suggest that Magritte is not a good

painter. But Magritte is actually an extremely good painter. One that cared a great deal about painting and who loved precision above all else. In fact, it was not just in painting; everything about his life was precise. For instance, if he entered a bar and the bottles were not organised in a way that he found acceptable, he would not have a drink until the bartender had organised them. It was almost, one might say, a neurosis.

YE: *You both seem to suggest that in the 'word-pictures' the use of painting was instrumental—a tool in the service of meaning production. This makes me think of your work, Joseph, and most notably about the famous piece* One and Three Chairs (1965). *Your practice seems to offer viewers adequate dictionary definitions next to images of objects and the objects themselves. In Magritte's word-pictures however, a similar mechanism is at play, only that the word labels are not compatible.*

JK: I suppose that my work extends Magritte's inquiry into the limits of language in a way. While Magritte pointed towards the creative potential of language using unexpected combinations of words and images, I realised that even if you apply a dictionary definition, which is intended to be the most adequate 'word-label' (as you call it) to the thing itself, it still fails to make up for the gap between the different semantic orders (the word, the picture, and the object). When a dictionary tries to tell you what the colour red is, for example, it testifies above all to the inability of language to account for our sensual experience.

YE: *So like Magritte, your definitions also had the appearance of a 'return to order' but in fact their adequacy is what made them radical, generating the resistance you speak of.*

JK: I guess you could say that.

YE: *Sarah, what do you think inspired Magritte to start playing these word games in his paintings?*

SW: The one overriding idea that I think motivated Magritte in his work here as well as elsewhere is the aspiration to get rid of certainty. So much art, he felt, was about certainty, and what Magritte does in these word-pictures completely disrupts the conventional 'order of things.' I mean, look at any painting you want by Magritte, nobody can be certain about his use of meaning. I think that is something he introduces into art, and it is incredibly important.
On a secondary level, I would also like to propose that Magritte is motivated by the strong effect that cinema had on him. Magritte grew up at the same time as cinema emerged, and his entire visual language, I would argue, came from his experience of cinema. If you think about the word-pictures, and try to imagine the films that Magritte was seeing as a child, adorned with white subtitles on black backgrounds, you start seeing a different picture.

YE: *Today, we look in hindsight on Magritte's motivation for exploring the nature of pictorial as well as textual representation and it seems to make a lot of sense, but how were these paintings received in the late 1920s? What was their impact on the Parisian art world?*

SW: The truth is that they had relatively little effect on the Parisian circle of Surrealists. To some extent they were discussed among his colleagues and a number of loyal collectors, but it took a long time before the 'word-pictures' had their real impact. I mean, it is extraordinary when you think about the fact that these paintings were done in 1927 and yet the first exhibition that was exclusively dedicated to them opened almost thirty years later, in 1954. And that was not even in Paris or Brussels, it was in New York, thanks to the gallerist Sidney Janis and Magritte's long-time friend,

patron, and collector, E.L.T. Mesens. They called that show *Word vs. Image* and it had a fantastic list of works that came almost entirely from Mesens' private collection.

YE: *And did this show finally bring Magritte some recognition? Was it a commercial success?*

SW: Actually, the show was a complete commercial failure. Sidney Janis bought one painting from the exhibition himself, but nothing else was sold. It did however make a profound impression, as we now know, on a number of young, ambitious artists who would carry Magritte's legacy forward in different ways. Most notably, Jasper Johns acknowledged years later that his famous *Flag* paintings were inspired in part from his visit to *Word vs. Image*. And in fact, in the years to come Johns and Rauschenberg bought word-pictures by Magritte, as did Warhol, Rosenquist, and others. So you see, it was artists who were the first to realise what an important achievement Magritte made with his word-pictures, not wealthy collectors or big museum curators.

YE: *Joseph, in your view, is the preoccupation with the gap between image and word to which Magritte dedicated so many of his paintings from this period still relevant to contemporary art practices today?*

JK: It's funny that you mention that. A new show just opened at the Getty titled *Plato in L.A.* in which my work was included. Simultaneously, at Spruth-Magers, my gallery in L.A., they installed a group of my works in the viewing room including a couple of works from an old series called *Double Reading,* in which I reproduced popular cartoons strips and match them with philosophical quotes by Hegel, Kierkegaard, Kant, and others. Now, of course my work lies in the very act of matching the cartoon and the philosopher in order to get the right play between them. We call it appropriation nowadays, but there was no word to make it polite back when I made this work in the early '90s.

Anyway, I arrived at the opening of the show and I am immediately approached by three of my collectors, who are Hollywood lawyers, and they're asking me, all alarmed, if I got permission to use these cartoons. And I said no. I didn't. I didn't get permission from Hegel or Kierkegaard either. But more importantly, I said and pointed to the cartoon, that's not my work. And then I pointed to the text and said, that's not my work either. My work is the surplus meaning in the gap between the two of them. Those cartoons and these quotes are just props to get me that gap. I'm not in the doughnut business, I'm in the doughnut-hole business. Not a business really, and certainly it wasn't back then when I made the *Double Reading* series. But anyway that was the spirit of it, and I think that it echoes how prevailing these questions continue to be.

YE: *What you describe – this gap, or surplus of meaning – isn't it a bit like the kind of disruption that figurative language generates? That is, a certain semantic distance between two words, or, in Magirtte's case also between a word and an image. For me, Magritte's word-pictures often behave like visual-textual metaphors. Sarah, did Magritte ever spoke of metaphor in respect to his work?*

SW: Well, the truth is that Magritte was opposed to the very idea of thinking about his work through the prism of metaphor. In his view, a metaphor is something that behaved 'as if' it was something else. And he said, if I paint the sky in blood-red, I don't mean it metaphorically speaking. Having said that, it does not mean that his work does not have a strong link with metaphors despite his claim. I mean, he wouldn't be the first artist to deny what he was doing. I think that his opposition to the term metaphor originated from the fact that he hated when people applied symbolic meanings to his work, or tried to interpret it as a sort of Freudian riddle.

YE: *I can see where the objection comes from, yet it seems difficult to deny that Magritte's pictorial syntax has much in common with the way we employ metaphorical statements. In fact, it seems to echo Nietzsche's writings on metaphor, which Magritte himself quoted in his personal writings on a number of occasions. For Nietzsche, the application of a word onto an object in the world is always an arbitrary gesture, new words are by definition metaphors. And it is only later on, as we accustom ourselves to these words, that they stagnate and become literal. I think that Magritte's legacy to the generations of artists that followed him is to a large extent reliant on this failure to relate a word to an image but also a failure to reject their relationship.*

SW: Well it is the liberation of language, isn't it? That is very much something that Poul Nougé said, to go back to the little-known but widely important Belgian theorist. In the few writings that he left, and have since been published, you see that time and again he refers to the tyranny of language. All his efforts were invested in an attempt to escape this tyranny. I mean this is something that ties Magritte with the whole Surrealist movement. And if you think about Magritte's very first 'word-picture', *The interpretation of dreams*, from 1927, you can see that it is based on children's reading primers, an educational instrument that signifies the authority of language.





Figs. 138-139, Installation views of *René Magritte (Or: The Rule of Metaphor)*, Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 27 February – 26 May, 2018.





Figs. 140-141, Installation views of *René Magritte (Or: The Rule of Metaphor)*, Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 27 February – 26 May, 2018.

II.

On the Question of Photo-Collage
A Conversation with John Stezaker

The following excerpt originates from an interview I conducted with John Stezaker. The discussion took place on the 1st of April 2016 at the artist's home and studio in Kentish Town, London. The text was commissioned by Edward Winters, guest editor for the 'Art and Artists' section of the journal of the Dutch Society of Aesthetics, *Aesthetic Investigations*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (December, 2017). Although this was not the first interview I conducted with Stezaker, the context of the conversation led us to discuss the terminology of his work. Stezaker explained to me that he had come to develop a set of terms that enabled him to position his own practice in relation to broad range of cut-and-paste activities in film and visual art.

—

YE: *Stezaker is an unusual family name, isn't it? Is there a story behind it?*

JS: Yes, Stezaker is actually a combination of a Norse name 'Sterz' (misspelt in the 19th Century as 'Stez') and the Old English word for area of land or acre: 'aker'. The Sterzes were Vikings who, on trying to reach Ireland, were shipwrecked off the coast of Lancashire and ended up settling 30 miles inland. Many of the place names around there still bear the family name in a variety of spellings.

YE: *For me the name Stezaker is somewhat of a synonym of the word photo-collage. If I am not mistaken you employ this term in order to locate your practice and distinguish it from photomontage, appropriation, and collage, Is that correct?*

JS: Well, photo-collage is a significant part of my practice but it doesn't describe my entire practice. At any rate, I should start by saying that Dawn Ades, who is somewhat of an expert on this subject, claims that my distinction between the terms photo-collage and photomontage has no basis outside

of my own use of the terms. And indeed there is no clear historical division of these categories. But the way I see it, the term photo-collage enables me to distinguish my work from a kind of deluge of works that we see today that is making use of found images. It goes by the name of collage but to me it is photomontage. I'll explain. I consider montage as a mainstream intercutting of images that sets out to create a seamless continuum of some kind; intercutting images in a way that reduces them to narrative legibility. This tradition goes back to Hollywood as much as it does to the films of Sergei Eisenstein who pioneered montage. By contrast, collage for me is about opening up the space between images, liberating them from their instrumental use. This is a gesture that I trace back to Dziga Vertov more than to Eisenstein. It is a way of trying to reveal something of the abyss or the hidden void within this continuum of image culture or the montage of everyday life. I see collage as a way of encountering the image as empty. I am not expressing this very well but you see, collage is a way of opening things up and revealing this emptiness, this void that lies behind the "box of representation" as Didi-Huberman refers to it.[191] It is a kind of resistance to mainstream culture. A lot of so-called collages that I see these days, even though they have the appearance of fracture, they are simply mobilising images for another social function, taking images from one task to another and creating a seamless and digestible image. But now, what seems to have blurred the difference between these two approaches to the image more than anything has been the digital era. I feel this keenly in my work. The sense and the space of the image as opacity rather than transparent legibility seems more than ever endangered.

[191] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image : questions posées aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*, (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1990). In this book Didi-Huberman suggests that all visual representation has an "underside" in which seemingly intelligible forms lose their clarity and defy rational understanding. Art historians, he claims, tend to disregard this aspect by which images produce contradictions, because their discipline relies on the assumption that visual representation is made up of legible signs and lends itself to rational scholarly deciphering. As a way to access images and so to speak "smash the box of representation", Didi-Huberman proposes Freud's concept of the "dreamwork," not as a code of interpretation, but rather as a way to begin thinking about representation as a mobile process that often involves substitution and contradiction.

YE: *I see what you mean, we are living in a time where the terms 'cut' and 'paste' have completely lost their referents since they are now signifiers of a digital operation. This however, in my view, fits perfectly with the period in which you began making photo-collages in the late 1970s at the dawn of the digital age, where the overwhelming abundance of images began to unfold this new kind of reality; one where the manual gesture of the artist is distanced infinitely further from the artefact itself.*

JS: That's right. You could say that what I am doing is trying to find a way of regaining an intimacy with the image, trying to manipulate it at that infinite distance. The more we are enmeshed in this kind of image culture, the image strangely becomes something we cannot see at all. My son for example cannot live without two or three screens in operation at all times. Everything he sees is reduced to readability and I can't imagine him encountering the image as a kind of mystery, the way I did. He has become used to living between a multiplicity of narratives. Perhaps in time this will create new mysteries of the image, but I find it difficult to imagine how this generation will ever find a position beyond the mesh of narratives that in many ways has become their primary reality.

YE: *This mystery to me is exactly what your photo-collages set out to explore by placing two pictures in an impossible relationship. Especially the series of works that you call Inserts and its later development into the series of* Masks. *In both of these cases you place an entire postcard – usually one that depicts a landscape or another kind of space – on top of a film still photograph of an eventful scene or a portrait of a film star.*

JS: Well, I see the *Inserts* as windows, as apertures looking through the image. Predominantly, in this series, I use postcards that were produced a generation earlier than their surrounding image. The film stills tend to be from the 1940s and the postcards tend to be anywhere between 1910 and the 1930s. This distinction makes the postcards into some kind of a window that allows me to look

backwards. As soon as I did the first *Insert* photo-collage I became aware that my real inclination was to set in motion a kind of regression.

YE: *And how did the Inserts come about? Is there a story behind their genealogy too?*

JS: Actually, there is. The origin of the term insert came from a friend of mine, an Austrian designer who in the mid 70's was referring to my use of images inside images. It took me a while to realise that he was referring to the word 'inset', but because of his pronunciation I heard 'insert' and decided that I preferred it.

But the origins of the idea itself date back to 1973 on a trip I made to Italy. I suddenly saw early Italian Renaissance art in a new light, Fra Angelico in particular. And on the same trip I also became aware of Giorgio de Chirico's work. He showed me a different way of looking at these early narrative paintings by somehow subtracting the narrative. It was then that I started working on a series of *Dream Allegories* [now lost]. I was using Italian photoromans that I collected at the time as my source of imagery. I took away most of the texts, and used the empty spaces created by the absent thought and speech bubbles as holes to introduce other pictorial elements behind. It started by looking at the image on the next page of the photoroman, but what seems to have persisted was a juxtaposition which created colour images in the thought and speech bubbles of a black and white photoroman page. That's the origin of the colour postcard insert into a black and white film still. It was with this series that I realised that I was more interested in the black and white legacy of photographed images than with that of colour. Since contemporary photoromans were in colour by the mid 70's, I felt an obligation to use the colour ones, but my fascination drew me towards black and white. I remember feeling that I had partially reconciled myself to the dilemma by looking

outside the mainstream of Italian photoroman production into the marginal photoroman cultures of Spain, Portugal and Belgium that still employed black and white reproduction. The heroes also had more sensible haircuts. I have always found it difficult to use 70's haircuts and sideburns. Later, I became braver in confronting the regressive aspect of my fascination for images. I was reading Walter Benjamin's ideas on obsolescence, and later Blanchot, which gave me the insight into what I was pursuing – the hidden underside of the image.[192]

YE: *And what led you to move on from the photo-romans and start using old film still photographs and film star portraits?*

JS: Availability. These images were suddenly everywhere. I found my way to film still photographs in the mid '70s, when the big cinema chains were closing down as TV impacted on cinema consumption and the weekly ritual of Saturday night movie was gradually disappearing. So many of these film stills and portraits of movie stars ended up in junk shops and at first people did not quite know what to do with them or how to evaluate them. Initially, strangely, just because they were bromide prints of famous film stars the portraits were given ridiculous value, but film stills you could buy for next to nothing. So I was working with the film stills first and I only had one or two portraits. At first, I hadn't even thought of combining the portraits with the postcards. To me, the postcards in combination with the film stills meant dealing with a kind of a space behind somehow,

[192] Benjamin's concern with the notion of "obsolescence" (more commonly translated to English as "the outmoded"), has a strong link to John Stezaker's work and to the history of collage at large. In his writings on Surrealism Benjamin suggests that the outmoded is one outcome resulting from the acceleration of temporal experience; objects that were only recently in fashion, or naturally a part of our culture, and seem archaic. The outmoded, Benjamin writes, is found in "the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the objects that have begun to be extinct, grand pianos, the dresses of five years ago, fashionable restaurants when the vogue has begun to ebb from them". See Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, (London: Shocken Press, 1995), 181.

As for Blanchot, in an earlier interview with Michael Bracewell for Frieze magazine, John Stezaker remarked: "I'm very much a follower of Maurice Blanchot's ideas when it comes to image and fascination; he sees it as a necessary series of deaths that the image has to go through in order to become visible and disconnected from its ordinary referent. I don't know whether that's an ideal, but I suppose it could be a guiding principle." See John Stezaker, 'Demand and the Impossible', interview by Michael Bracewell. https://frieze.com/article/demand-impossible

I felt that it was an alternative to the cuts I was making, the removals. They offered a kind of absence, which I thought of as a metaphorical absence, rather than a metonymic absence. An absolute absence. And this was much more interesting because it started engaging with multiple realities and the idea of one being behind the other in time as well as space, and creating scenes of interiors punctuated by exteriors. Bachelard was a big influence on me then: *The Poetics of Space* and his idea of a 'dialectics of inside and outside'.[193] I saw myself reversing the outside and the inside, bringing the outside into the inside. I still consider the postcard insert as being a sort of spatial insert rather than having anything to do with the face itself. To me it had to do with interiors, exteriors, and that sort of dialogue that was going on between presence and looking back. Sort of a rear-view window feeling about it. Thinking both forward and backwards simultaneously. The *Masks* came a couple of years later when their price dropped as the scale of their mass production was realised. But this shifted the dialectic of inside and outside from the landscape to the portrait and from place to psyche.

YE: *Is there a particular film still or portrait that you remember triggering your interest?*

JS: There were a few, but there is one image in particular that really set this whole thing off; a film still photograph of a man and a woman by a piano that was standing on my mantlepiece since 1972 and this was the one that challenged me the most, that made me ask myself how to confront obsolescence. In fact, I couldn't find a way to deal with it for a long while and it remained standing on the mantel piece. It seemed to belong to a different era, the 1930's, and so I associated it with Surrealism. My interest in the portraits coincided with my awakening to the literature of Surrealism

[193] According to Bachelard, the notions of 'inside and outside' form a dialectics of division. Yet, despite their mutual resistance, Bachelard argues that both inside and outside depend on each other for the sake of preserving their identities. Furthermore, aesthetic experience or playful use of the imagination can undermine the boundaries that distinguish these two dimensions.

and to Benjamin and to the whole tradition that recognises that the image only comes alive when it sheds the instrumental connections it has with the world, with language and with meaning. A lot of things then started fitting into place for me, among others were the writings of Susan Sontag. That was 1976-77. A crucial year. Prior to 1976, I was still looking for some kind of a Blakeian marriage of image and text, but afterwards, I first got the confidence to let go of language altogether and show what had previously been considered as purely experimental photo-collages.

YE: *And instead of juxtaposing image and text you started combining image and image, and most often film stills and postcards?*

JS: Yes, I had been doing it for a while, but it took me some time to see it as anything more than preparatory work. I also felt more comfortable with the earlier, purely subtractive collages, which did not raise the spectre of Surrealism as much. The moment you begin to use juxtaposition and contraposition, Surrealism becomes an issue and at the height of Conceptual Art this was somewhat taboo territory. But in the end, I gave up caring about such things and allowed my image fascination full reign. But anyway, this image combination is in fact only one small portion of my work. It seems to be the one that people remember the most. It's interesting that you mention this at a moment where I am just revisiting exactly this kind of combination after a very long time without doing so and I can't tell you the pleasure it gives me. There is something about the postcard and the film still that they seem destined to be married in this way. First, one is exactly a quarter of the size of the other, they have the same proportions approximately, and it goes back to a particular format of photography which relates to what they call "end prints" and "10 x 8" so they have this kind of geometrical relationship to begin with which is very satisfying. And then secondarily, they are images that relate to mobility in different ways. So obviously the film stills relate to the temporality

of cinema, and the portraits of movie stars to the fluidity of the face and to the momentary nature of the portrait. And the postcards feel like the opposite because they depict spaces and they seem like they anchor the mobile scene of the film still. But at the same time they are of course mobile images too, images that are sent around the world and they bear the imprint of that, you know, on the edges that have been worn away; they have been eroded through movement.

YE: *To me, alongside this mobility, there is another aspect that comes up from the juxtaposition of these two media, namely the play of size. Postcards have an amazing ability to compress gigantic or monumental sites into a miniature compact format that can be transported from one place in the world to another, and then on the other hand films can enlarge the smallest of details or the most mundane thing in life and give them huge and fantastic presence. Is that contrast part of what binds these two media together?*

JS: Oh yes, of course. You are absolutely right. In fact, I haven't thought about it in exactly those terms but you are right. I mean, I love postcards, it is a pictorial culture that I was interested in from a very early age, and my postcard collection goes back to my teen years and the Big Ben postcard that I used in my work *The End* from 1975. Compression is right. Bachelard used the phrase 'intimate immensity', which was something like what I felt about that Big Ben image fragment. I have always been fascinated by their miniaturisation of the world. The idea of putting these inside a film image really excited me because it was a kind of inversion where instead of an event taking place inside a space I was reversing it so that the space was inside the happening. I thought of it a bit in terms of a caravan being pulled along by the narrative, it had a weirdness about that idea of covering the events that were in fact the centre of the attention in the film stills and replacing them with an image of a space which anchored it. But also, as I mentioned earlier, the postcards tended to come from an earlier period than the film stills historically so it was kind of a reversal of time, a regression. But I think you have put your finger on something important about their combination.

Postcards are as you say compressed, miniaturised images whose function is to expand, whereas film stills are enlargements, whose function is to compress a narrative into a single image. Also, thinking about the temporal dimension, postcards are carriers of space, images designed to travel, whereas film stills are representations of time, images designed to be still.

YE: *And the binary of two images, two media, two points of view. Did this start as a conscious decision? A kind of rule for the game? A way to resist the flow of a narrative?*

JS: It's interesting that you mention this. I just recently had the opportunity to question and to rethink this twofold principle in my work. You see, I was invited to participate in an exhibition at the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg, Germany. The show focused on modern and contemporary artists whose work is in dialogue with Picasso [without showing a single work of Picasso himself].[194] I was asked to send some of my early eighties pieces from a series that I call *Marriage*, each of them is made from two or three photographic portraits of film stars joined together. The *Marriage* pieces are very much influenced by Picasso's 1940s portraits of women, which in turn were influenced by his frequent visits to the cinema during the time of the war. The colour in these portraits is exactly like Technicolor. So, Dirk Luckow, the curator of the Picasso show and his team recognised the dialogue and asked me if I would exhibit some of these in the show, but I said that the interesting difference is that Picasso's portraits would always include three points of view: front, side, and three quarters view, always three. Just like Francis Bacon did after him. Both Picasso and Bacon enjoyed having this dialectic going on, but always with a synthesis intervening. Bacon loved triptychs. He enjoyed the triple. He found in Picasso a way to unify three views of the face into one thing, into a kind of blurring of these three facets. So for the show in Hamburg I proposed that I would try to

[194] The exhibition, *Picasso in Contemporary Art*, took place at Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, 1 April – 12 July, 2015.

make collages based on this principle of three facets, which is exactly how I had started this series in the eighties but had only very few successful examples to show, and… well… it failed. I tried, and tried, and I managed to make two, but I mean, I destroyed hundreds of photographs. I realised that my work is fundamentally about pairing. But the interesting thing is that the two successful works that came out of this project have a quality which is very interesting to me, and I can't help but feel enticed by them. They also taught me another thing which is that Picasso would never combine male and female together – the hermaphrodite figure was an anathema to him. He was too macho. He found it easier to do his kind of deconstruction of the portrait with a female figure.

YE: *But Picasso's portraits from the '40s were not collages right? They were paintings.*

JS: I always maintained that Picasso remained a collage artist his entire life but he just did it through painting. The forties pieces are just so much like collage. The cuts simply become virtual, the edges less defined.

YE: *But your interest in the 1940s goes beyond Picasso. Is this a conceptual decision? An aesthetic one?*

JS: I think that we are all fascinated by the world as it was immediately before we were born – the world without us. It is not nostalgic attachment for a lost home, but in a way the opposite, an attachment to the space of no home. But also, cinema reached a height and power in the 1940s that I think a lot of people recognised as its apotheosis. It was the only time in his life that Picasso was enticed away from his work by it. I first came in contact with 1940s film stills on the outside of cinemas as a teenager, when I saw advertisements for films that I couldn't go and see because I was too young, X-rated films that were of course very tempting for teenagers. This evoked a world of

eroticism but also an underworld that really fascinated me. When I turned fifteen or sixteen I was finally able to go see these movies, which in those days were still called the 'B-features'. You had the main feature in colour and then a film from a slightly earlier period in black and white. I discovered that I lost interest in colour very quickly and I started frequenting the cinema just for the B movies. But I found that they were never quite as exciting as the film stills outside the theatre. These would seem stranger and more other-worldly than the film itself, and in fact they weren't exactly still frames from the movie itself. You know I would go back after seeing the film and look at the stills thinking "where did that happen?" or "I never saw that!". But of course these were taken by another photographer and from another angle. And that is when it first dawned on me that there is a distinction between my fascination with film still images and my fascination with film. It was just a bit after that period that I started my studies at the Slade School of Art and my hall of residence happened to be within a few minutes of the main film production area in London at the time on Newman Street. I used to go down there on a Friday night and collect films just from the dustbins and try making collage movies from them. One time I remember going to the Edgware Road Odeon which was one of the last large single screen conventional cinemas. I remember sitting there on an afternoon thinking that it can't go on like this any longer, there's only me inside this gigantic cinema watching these movies. But then I turned around and saw that right behind me were Gilbert and George sitting there. Another pair of city flâneurs. Imagine that…





Figs. 142-143, Installation views of *The Ends of Collage*, Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 10 March – 13 May, 2017.



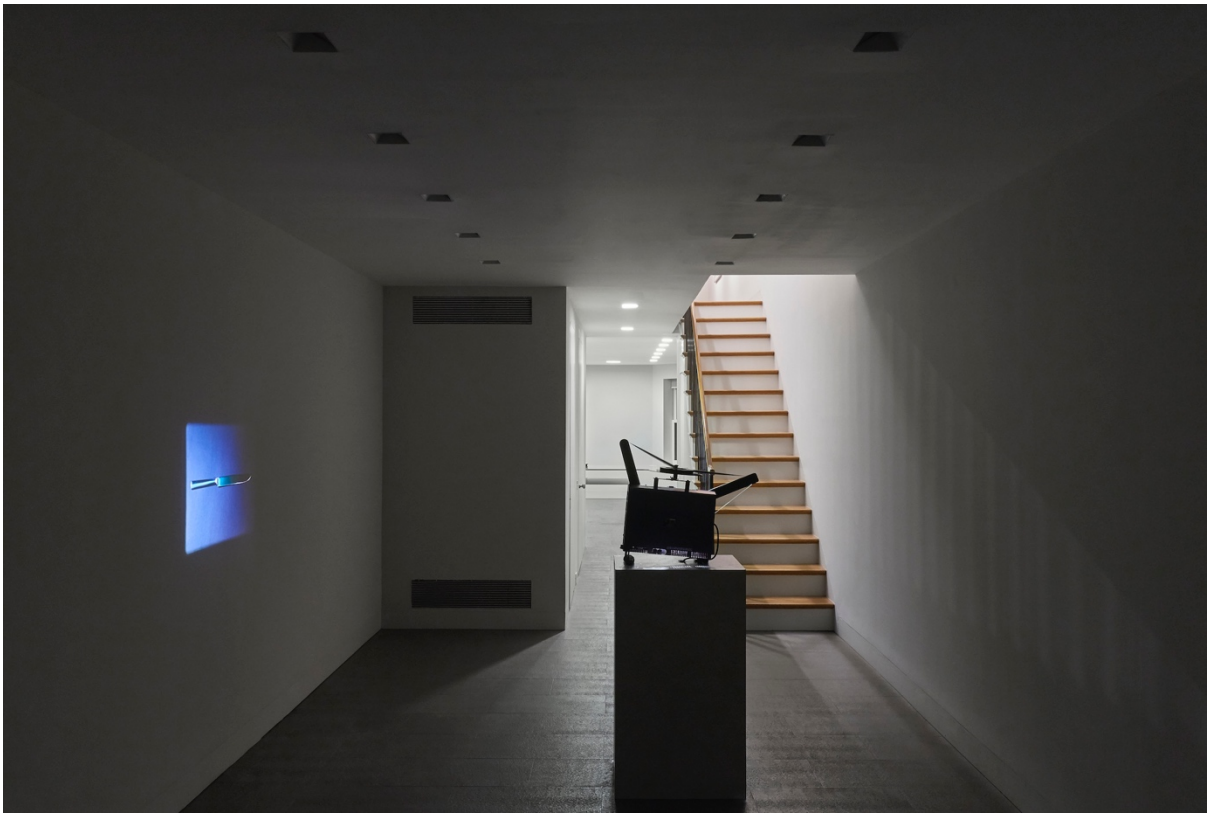


Figs. 144-145, Installation views of *The Ends of Collage*, Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 10 March – 13 May, 2017.





Figs. 146-147, Installation views of *The Ends of Collage*, Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 10 March – 13 May, 2017.





Figs. 148-149, Installation views of *The Ends of Collage*, Luxembourg & Dayan, New York, 27 February – 6 May, 2017.



Figs. 150-151, Installation views of *The Ends of Collage*, Luxembourg & Dayan, New York, 27 February – 6 May, 2017





Figs. 152-153, Installation views of *The Ends of Collage*, Luxembourg & Dayan, New York, 27 February – 6 May, 2017

III.

THE ENDS OF COLLAGE

EDITED BY YUVAL ETGAR

LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN

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