

## **COLLAGE**

*Layering in Time, Material and Knowledge*

**Exhibition at Semjon Contemporary vom February 8<sup>th</sup> – March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

with works by Colin Ardley, Edward Buchanan, Experimental Setup (Kata Hinterlechner and Bosko Gastager), Dave Großmann, Olaf Hajek, Renate Hampke, Vanessa Henn, Nataly Hocke, Ib Jorn, Katja Kollowa, Michael Kutschbach, Nanne Meyer, Jan Muche, Henrik U. Müller, D.M. Nagu, Christoph Niemann, Marcel Odenbach, Susanne Pomrehn, Thomas Prochnow, Katja Pudor, Ursula Sax, Sophia Schama, Li Silberberg, Marc von der Hocht, Bettina Weiß and Majla Zeneli.

Today, we are living in a virtual collage, since our reality is no longer uniform but rather composed of various parallel realities.

The digital age has formed and rapidly changed our perception, or rather still is, which is reflected in our image-based, digital world. Text, and therewith language, has become rudimentary and is in itself a collaged desideratum of the many worlds colliding. With regard to images the origin of creation can only vaguely be traced, if not completely impossible to define. And the pace of perception and reception goes hand in hand with a loss of depth and the traditional concept of quality. However, new qualities emerge, and the construct of a picture as an allover layering of multiform timeframes, levels of meaning and materials represents a new characteristic.

And this development is not that old yet. Only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the principle of the collage has emerged in the visual arts as an expression of simultaneity of materials, time and knowledge and reflection of new realities, as for example with the advent of electricity, which has allowed modern man to enter the world's stage.

Speed, light spaces independent of natural light, the rapid spread of communication through the media (books and the radio), everyday suitability of cameras (and therewith the manifold discoveries and capturing of the still alien wide world) have accelerated the development of the individual (and the masses), a phenomenon that has, within the last somewhat more than 100 years, literally drawn the individual into the digital and virtual era.

Currently, George Braques (1911) and Pablo Picasso (1912), followed by Juan Gris (1913), are still considered the forefathers of the collage. However, their canonized throne has been shaken by the new speed of reception and exponential acquisition of knowledge, as a result of which even the hidden can be discovered per mouse click. Adolf Hölzel, and that is not known by many, has also created his first collages in 1914/15, and who knows, maybe collage works by other (female) artists will come to light in the future which were created years before the collages of the female pioneer Hannah Höch appeared around 1920.

The collage (from French: papier collé, glued paper) has quickly asserted itself as an artform, which is not astonishing, since this genre is well-suited for creating new pictures, narrative contexts or just performing exciting compositional experiments in a relatively short period of time through layering of printed paper of diverse origin (newspapers, magazines, photographs, registration sheets, administrative forms, etc.).

The instantaneousness of operating with various materials, mostly collected in advance, working with small formats, make this genre spontaneous and intimate at the same time – like in drawing – so that the artist might equally create his/her works in the studio as well as at home on the kitchen table. The collage is characterized by the principle of random. By moving pictorial and textual fragments back and forth on a sheet of paper or another picture carrier manifold formal solutions can be created, providing space for absurd creations. It was not without reason that it was the preferred genre of Dadaism in the 1920ies.

Several types of collage can be distinguished that are in line with the objective and idea of the artist, although there are large intersections between these groups: collage as *l'art pour l'art*, collage as carrier of messages (political or social), collage as sketch/compositional draft/tool of visualization to be used in a different genre (for example painting), or for an installation project.

Exclusively displayed in the exhibition *collAGE* are works by contemporary artists, which are, apart from a few exceptions, restricted to collaging printed paper and photographs. Only some of the artists use the collage as an additional medium in their work, combining it with the genres of drawing or painting.

Semjon H. N. Semjon, January 2020