

Some thoughts on Collage, Montage and Assemblage...

Henri T. de Hahn
12.17.2017

By Robert Slutzky
Introducing collage, montage, assemblage
Urphaenomene d'Architektur: Felder
Dokumentation Seminarwoche SS 76
Lehrstuhl professor Franz Oswald
Architekturearbeitsteilung ETH-Zürich



Bernard Hoesli, "XLVII", detail

Italicized words are suggestion for additional research to understand the below arguments.

Collage:

"Collage as you know was formed at the beginning of the 20th century, by way of certain art movements and what is also known as cubism. Picasso, Braque and Gris used collage as the means of expressing a spatial concept. And that spatial concept, if you read *Transparency I*, an article that *Colin Rowe* and I wrote, the spatial concept of cubism implied among other things the flattening, the compression, the bounding of the picture plane making the picture hermetic; where by other fields, projected to the eye would release certain dual conceptions. In the process the painters reduced the use of color to a minimum, remember the early Braque, Picasso "collages" black, gray, white, brown, a bit of blue, that is it. Because the cubist wanted to discover a new formal conception, they began first to eliminate the wide variety, that one possibly can be using all color, for the sake of manipulating just a few colors in a more positive way. So in the early cubist collages we have the reduction of color, we have the importance of bold shapes and arrangements juxtaposed in a way which said something about the use of space..."

Montage:

"...Montage is opposed to collage. Because montage implies another kind of formulation of visual criteria. It is more closely aligned to the pictorial images of things outside the canvas, it tends to the photographer, it tends to the cinema, it tends to slicing and rearranging certain elements outside the picture plane. But its particular stress lies in the use of non-orthodox usages of imagery. It has charm and it tends towards composition, but with less of a consciousness of composition, and towards editorializing with making a statement about whatever..."

Assemblage:

"...Assemblage can mediate between collage which is two-dimensional and montage which is also two dimensional. Assemblage is the bringing together of three-dimensional objects, juxtaposed in a way which might tend towards montage or might tend towards collage. But it is essentially using three-dimensional material in a two-dimensional way, always conscious again of the perception of it..."

Discussion with students in Lucca, Italy

"Collage deals with found materials, selective materials. Material that you chose to examine phenomenally is put into a context or composition, which has very definite bounded or restricted edges: a

Some thoughts about Collage, Montage and Assemblage

Henri T. de Hahn

12.17.2017

pictorial field. "Field" is simply a two-dimensional world, bounded, restricted and in a sense instructing the user as to what is properly what. Before we put stuff onto the two-dimensional field it already has certain qualities. Collage must have intention. It is not about the tear of paper and the use of paste, and the putting of things down in an unconscious, accidental, purely arbitrary way, even through this obviously is the only way of getting into the problem. But something else must have surged to your mind where we might tape the stuff that we collect, and it could only happen if the eye is allowed to sense the conceptual essentials. And so what we are really talking about is a pictorial thesis to exist on a level of memento, from where it came, that is to say it is no longer representative of its former use, because now it is part into a totally new context and includes the identity of where it came from.

That is why we are having a lot of difficulties because the material that we are using is still giving us something that is outside collage. And in fact in many cases the message outside the collage is coming through the collage stronger than the structure of collage, and so we are having problems. What we would have to do, is to subordinate that reference to push it down, to keep those meanings repressed for other kinds of meanings that are waiting to be passed on, so we talk about the ability of taking something which is refuse, garbage, which is stuff that has already lost its purpose for existence because of age, because of whatever. And taking that stuff, putting it in some kind of relationship with other stuff that says something about life, about conceptual organizational, compositional life, ...receive color, shape, texture, rhythm, scale, the essential quality and conception.

The role of collage is to sensitize us for the immediate control of two dimensions: that is to organize and put together structures that have essential qualities for making the material that we use transcend or go beyond what they were outside the collage. Now in that cosmos, the principle is for every piece of material to transmit energy, of itself, for what it is, and its neighboring pieces of material through itself. So on one hand one can speak of the ideal collage condition, we talk about the shape of that material, speaking to the eye for what it is as a shape, as a quality of shape. But it also speaks to the adjacent or neighboring conditions: it transmits energy this way as well as the other. And this piece here in the collage and this piece there in the collage all of a sudden have a conversation, which is called a structural conversation. The eye likes to travel like the feet. Collage is a trip through a critical, man-made landscape. It is like really a fantastic piece of a planned garden, where we are aware of every step and every step gives us a new sense of space. There is always something unfolding as we walk.

What are the major elements, which we use, which we manipulated in making a collage.

- Fields; grounds.
- Texture; surface quality of the material.
- Geometry; shapes, lines, sizes.
- Light; color.
- Destroying of forms; an operation.
- Contrast; scale.
- Relationships; with relationships we establish qualities.
- Structure; the structure of material, how material is built up, how it is made.
- Conceptual time; the pulse.
- Densities; light densities, textural densities, structural densities.
- Distortions; an operation again.
- Edge
- Sparseness; which is the twin sister of density.
- Voids; positives.
- Figures; on the ground, in a field, outside a field.

Some thoughts about Collage, Montage and Assemblage

Henri T. de Hahn
12.17.2017

Selected examples of other Collage:

Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948)
Opened by Customs 1937-8



Robert Slutzky (1929-2005)
Casacubu 1974, acrylic on canvas



Richard Meier (1934-)
26 May 1993, mixed media



Dieter Kienast (1945-1998)
Design for Kronsberg in Hanover
detail



David Hockney (1937-)
Pearsblossom Highway (April 1986)



What are your references?