



UNBOUNDED

Drawing & Collage

by Etty Yaniv

Both collage and drawing can be seen as inherently two of the most adaptable, and by far, most accessible art methods available to artists. Both forms enable artists to expand and shift their process of image-making in order to reflect our fluid times.

On the surface, drawing and collage can be seen as two dichotomous artistic pursuits. Nearly as old as humankind, drawing is the most basic and immediate mark making, while collage as an art form is associated with the beginning of modernism, as part of a methodical reexamination of the dialogue between painting and sculpture. Yet, despite the seemingly separate sensibilities that drawing and collage embody, some contemporary artists from diverse backgrounds and cultures share a proclivity to use these two disciplines as inter-related key elements in their work. From Braque and Picasso's glued patches on canvas to Isa Genzken's "horizontal cloud of information," as MOMA curator Laura Hoptman coined, collage has been a go-to medium for artists who are seeking possibilities for playful juxtapositions of current cultural signifiers, and those that are typically drawn to emphasizing process over end product, at times with a strong narrative.

The diverse interrelations between collage and drawing as manifested in the artworks of Ethan Murrow, Simonette Quamina, Simona Prives, Maria de Los Angeles, and Hugo Crosthwaite reflect the rich possibilities that the combination of these two mediums enable. Throughout his meticulous large scale graphite renderings and murals, the Boston-based artist Ethan Murrow utilizes drawing and collage, along with photography as additional major tool in his arsenal. Formally, Murrow's figurative work closely ties to the camera lens and frame, while his associative thought process and preparatory methods intimately relate to collage. Thematically, he deals with ideas of duplication and fakery. His protagonists typically inhabit an absurd universe, where they project their hyperbolic aspirations on reality; interior and exterior realities juxtapose to create a sense of satire, or even farce on human delusional state of existence.

Overall, Murrow's work can be regarded in art historical context as a fresh take on Surrealism. Although he is conscious of his position in relationship to historical and contemporary drawing and collage, he

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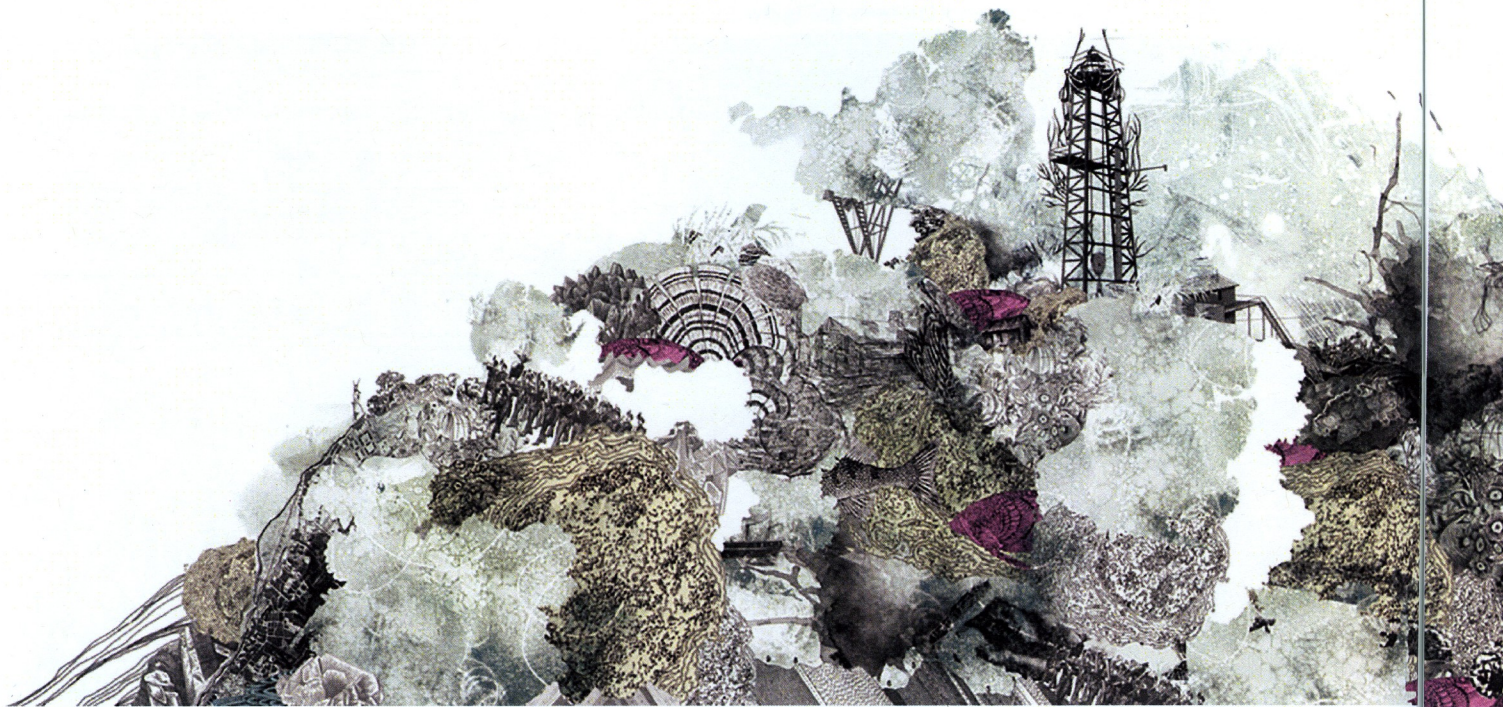
spends more time weighing connections to literature, historical photography, and film. Drawing, as one of the most economic and common methods of exchanging ideas, allows Murrow to find direct ways to own and corrupt bits and pieces of the source material which he mines and appropriates from photographic cultural and historical records.

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If, in Murrow's process, digital collaging is a sort of preparatory mode which results in large scale graphite drawings, collage in Simonette Quamina's work serves a reciprocal function. She starts with graphite drawings, then incorporates printmaking elements, resulting in intimate scale collages. Quamina mentions that her choice to work with drawing and collage derives from a need to be resourceful in her childhood years, mainly due to lack of readily available materials. She sees collage as an art medium with an inherent sense of modesty, grittiness, and resourcefulness, utilizing the waste within our visual culture. Indeed, in her studio practice she adheres to these notions by limiting her material to paper, graphite and ink, nothing ever goes to waste. Even her printing matrices are collaged from materials in her studio—tape, paper, archival board rolled with relief inks, then printed. Growing up in Kitchener, Ontario, to parents from Guyana and St. Vincent, Quamina relocated several times, until her family settled in Brooklyn during the early Nineties. The experience of constantly adjusting to new social and cultural norms continues to influence her narratives.

Quamina starts drawing with a clear image of the narrative she wants to tell. Her story typically relates intimately to her life, almost in an autobiographical or diaristic sense. In a series of sketches she is depicting the pictorial space, tonal changes, and patterns, then ordering each layer, considering paper choices, mixing inks, and figuring out which printmaking technique would be most effective in enhancing the final image. Since she uses various forms of graphite to mix inks, draw, and print all the collaged elements of the work, she typically performs



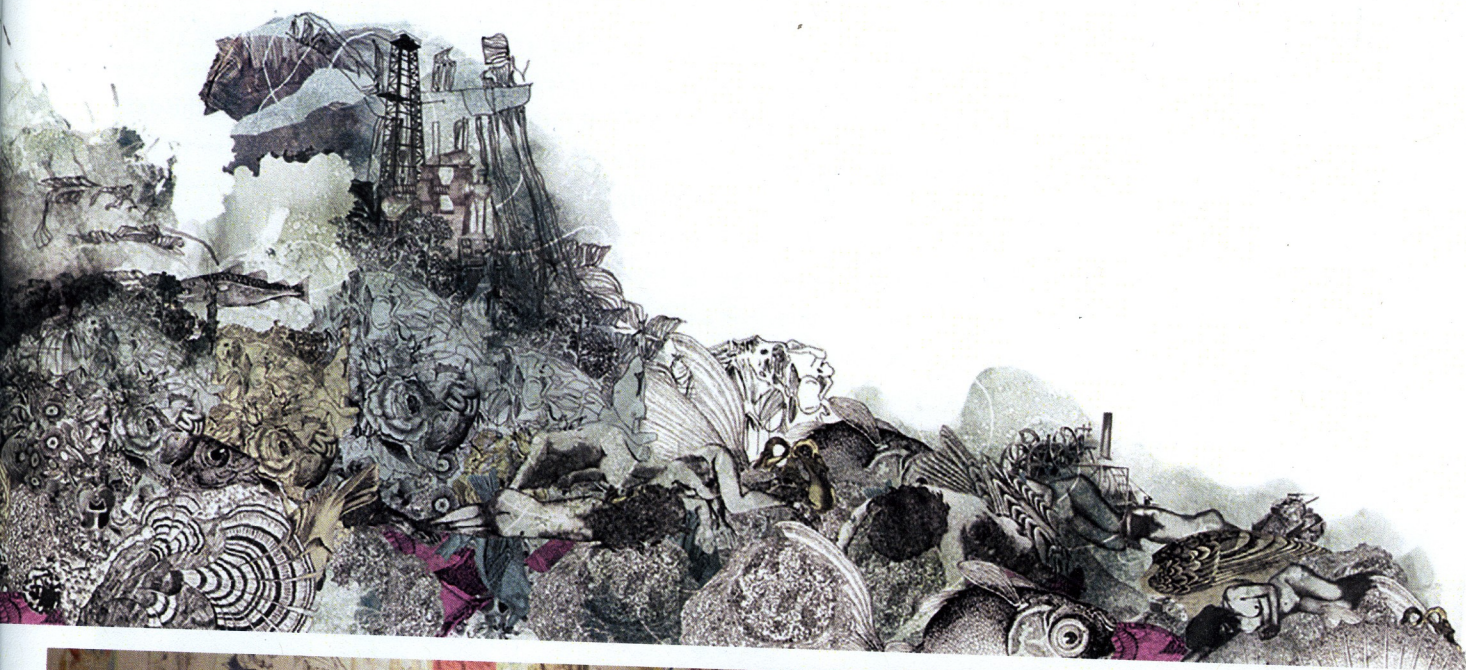


extensive testing before proceeding to work on her larger final version. This rigorous process results in monochromatic portraits or landscapes which resonate of a specific moment and place: dynamic and frozen simultaneously. Throughout all Quamina's work phases, drawing and collage are equally present; the edges of a cut or torn paper function the same as a drawn line.

The New York City-based artist Simona Prives also starts with a frenzy of drawing, then coalesces these drawings into collage. If it is a found image that gets her going, she begins by building upon it with her own drawings, inks, and transfers. Prives' process is unabashedly spontaneous, almost in the vein of automatic drawing. She starts by piecing two elements together, and goes where it takes her. Her renderings weave in and out, literally drawing themselves on and off, piecing together disjointed images in a relentless process of construction and deconstruction. Drawing ties her collage elements together. Akin to Murrow, Prives converses with Surrealism, Dada collage and photomontage. Yet, unlike Murrow's drawings which unfold as a dialogue with digital and photographic images, Prives' imagery leans towards semi abstractions executed with a delicate palate, depicting juxtaposing patterns found in culture and nature, geological, botanical, architectural, and topographic. Her

associative vignettes play off each other and coalesce into richly layered universes. Besides her large scale collages, Prives also makes animations which extend her drawing and collage practice into the realm of multi-disciplinary media which includes exploring multi-channel video and audio in immersive installations.

Akin to Prives' scope of work, the Mexican-born Maria de Los Angeles also creates large installations based on a seamless process of drawing and collage. If Murrow's and Prives' sensibilities lean to varied degrees towards the surreal with predominantly monochromatic palettes, De Los Angeles' aesthetic is influenced overtly by Punk, and more indirectly by printmaking techniques such as chine-collé, or somewhat by Picasso's collages, on the whole dominated by vibrant colours. She combines dense layers of playful drawings; collages, and most notably, bold wearable collages, into colourful environments. Altogether her fragments compete with each other, verging on cacophony, which makes perfect visual sense in our zeitgeist. Timely reflections on identity from shifting points are at the core of her installations and that is most likely why collage as a flexible form is her medium of choice. De Los Angeles, who comes from a fashion background, essentially uses collage like found graphics or discarded objects with cultural meaning.



While she uses drawing to add layers of colour and texture, the two disciplines fuse into inseparable entity in her work.

Unlike de Los Angeles, who utilizes actual collage in her work, the Mexican artist Hugo Crosthwaite does not identify his work as collage per se. He rather sees himself as a poet who expresses himself through narrative drawing. But as the definition of collage needs to be adapted to 21st century art, it makes sense to view Crosthwaite's performative drawing and its shift to digital form, as a full cycle, which can read on the whole as a new form of collage. Since 2009, when he first initiated his performative drawing, *IN MEMORIAM*, Crosthwaite continues to improvise a mural in public places, a gallery, or an art space, for two weeks. Along the lines of his un-preparatory drawing process, Crosthwaite never prepares for his drawing performance either, and uses only basic tools, a jar of carbon black paint, brushes, a ladder. Standing in front of a white wall, Crosthwaite starts a narrative in the presence of visitors, who are prompted to engage in conversation with him; an exchange of ideas which at times enters organically into the narrative of the mural.

But no matter how the drawing unfolds, it is always done with the intention to create a story, a moment, or a feeling about Tijuana, where he grew up. Like Quamina and Murrow to some extent, his self-inflicted rules are strict throughout his whole process: at the end of two weeks as the narrative is completed, a rigorous deconstruction process starts by painting white squares which pixelate the mural out of existence. The entire process is documented as a short, stop-motion animation shared on YouTube, thus digitizing and capturing the memory of creation.

It can be argued that what mostly characterizes contemporary art is its fluidity of form. Disciplines like collage and drawing that have been traditionally regarded as separate, merge to express new vocabularies across diverse artistic sensibilities and cultural backgrounds, as reflected in the work of these five artists. In context of international multi-disciplinary contemporary art, a strong tie between collage and drawing can be readily found in the works of a luminary like the South African artist William Kentridge, whose celebrated multi-media installations brilliantly coalesce performance, dance and music with drawing and collage. Another artist who shares Kentridge's voracious appetite for *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total artwork, is of younger generation: the Canadian-born, New York City-based artist Marcel Dzama, whom you could find boogying around David Zwirner's New York gallery in preparation for his Dadaist disco show in 2016. In a collage-like associative process, Dzama typically incorporates drawing, dance, and video into superbly imaginative multi-disciplinary performative projects. In the broadest sense, both collage and drawing can be seen as inherently two of the most adaptable, and by far, most accessible art methods available to artists. Both forms enable artists to expand and shift their process of image-making in order to reflect our fluid times.

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Ce que je vois est-il vrai
by Ethan Murrow
56"x40"; graphite on paper; 2017
Courtesy of the artist

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Sing a Song, My Little Kiskadee
by Simonetta Quamina
48"x63"; graphite, multiple relief,
print, collaged on paper; 2018
Courtesy of the artist

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Hereafter
by Simona Prives
11"x50"; screenprint, monotype and
archival inkjet collage with ink and
graphite. Courtesy of the artist

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Works by Maria de los Angeles
Installation view of "Be Back in 5
Minutes" (artist residency show)
at El Museo del Barrio, New York
(left) untitled dress (rice paper)
(centre) *Blue Dress* (modeled by
the artist) (paper and acrylic)
(right) *Family Dress* (recycled linen
and acrylic paint). Courtesy of the
artist

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Tijuana Baroque (detail)
by Hugo Crosthwaite
118"x94.5"; drawing pencil on
mat board; 2015. Photo: Hugo
Crosthwaite. Courtesy of the artist

