

Collage, montage and assemblage have had a significant cultural impact on imagemaking.

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Many art critics have proposed that Collage, Montage and Assemblage have had a significant cultural impact on image-making. This essay will investigate if this statement is correct or not. While similar, these techniques are very different. The Tate (2019) notes that the term Collage is sticking several pictures or fabric on one surface. "A photomontage is a collage constructed from photographs." (TATE,2019) is what is best described for photomontage. Assemblage is the act of getting together everyday objects to create a piece of art as noted by Esaak (2019). These types of techniques link to the significant cultural impact on image-making. This essay will look in detail at an artist or artists from each of these techniques. The artists chosen are Eric Carle and Peter Blake for collage pieces, Hannah Hoch for her artwork using photomontage and Man Ray for his use of assemblage technique in producing works of art.

Techniques like these have been used in many art movements, such as the Dada movement. Assemblage was one such technique that was used a lot. Man Ray who was famous for lots of artworks, did Assemblage with everyday objects and even used it for his photography, and organising normal objects to create something new and artistic, which is told by the MetMuseum (2005). Man Ray's assemblage pieces were often three-dimensional pieces. For example he created a pyramid of thirty-two coat hangers called *Obstruction* (Ray 1920) and a Metronome with an eye stuck to the pendulum called *Indestructible Object* (Ray 1923). Coming from the Dada movement, his Assemblage would have been examined by other Dada artists. *Obstruction* (Ray 1920) was considered a sculpture even if it was an Assemblage. "The Dadaists would take everyday objects and present them as if they were finished works of art." (PBS, 2005). This is exactly what describes Dada and what Man Ray wanted from his works. Themes of Surrealism and Dadaism were common in most of his works (Gagosian, 2020). It is not just everyday objects that could be used. *Indestructible Object* (Ray, 1923) was one such Assemblage piece. While made in 1923, it was remade again in 1933 due to smashing the first one. The second one had had the eye of his lover, Lee Miller attached to the Pendulum as told by the MoMa (2006). It was lost in 1940 during the German invasion and a replica was made. The piece itself had been exhibited in the Tate and the MoMa. Even after the replica, Man Ray created many more like it and even with changes such as the eye blinking. There have been many versions of this one piece of work, making it incredibly well known. "It is perhaps best viewed as a transitional work." (Umland

and Sudhalter, 2008 p. 231) is what really describes the piece, making it more culturally impacting in the world as an Assemblage piece.

Assemblage was used even before Man Ray. Jean Dubuffet had created a piece of artwork, and while it was a Collage, it had the title of Assemblage as Watson (2003) tell us. This was during the 1950's but even before then had other artists had worked with objects in their art works. It would be then that Assemblage was used by other artists, such as Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso. Most of these pieces consisted of objects being stuck to painted canvases.

Subsequently, the use of ready-mades, ordinary objects that are mass produced, and found objects, which can include natural objects such as feathers, butterfly wings, or bits of wood, became an integral part of Assemblage.

(Seiferle, 2020)

Marcel's Duchamp Ready-mades were very important in Assemblage. It helped many artists expand what they could do with Assemblage. *Obstruction* (Ray, 1920) would be considered a Readymade, as it was created by found objects as Cohen (2020) tells us.



Man Ray (1920) *Obstruction*



Man Ray (1923) *Indestructible Object*

Hannah Hoch was a German artist who was the founder of Photomontage. It is the idea of cutting photos and sticking them down on other photos to create a new image. Her works cut out photos from media, such as fashion or advertising to create her pieces. Her photomontages show themes of gender roles, women, and government (Maloney, 2013). She became more famous with links to the Dada movement and the group. Experimenting with Photomontage became common after seeing her works, even other Dada artists began to use Photomontage. "The only female member of the Berlin Dada group, Hoch helped to pioneer photomontage as an avant-garde medium." (Bettley, 1994, p.258)

Photomontage also became highly significant in photography. Even more so as it spread to other countries and became popular with Surrealism. *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany* (Hoch, 1919) became her most important piece of Photomontage. It involved imagery of women, important figures, mechanical instruments, and text from newspapers. It became well known in the 1920's for the piece's themes of the German Government, women in society and how Photomontage could create art pieces:

The deliberate jumble of unrelated images pulled apparently at random from the popular culture of a Germany in turmoil are not fitted together but are pasted down

without consideration to making a new singular images from a collection of borrowed parts.

(Willette, 2011)

Her second piece of work, *The Beautiful Girl* (Hoch, 1920) was also a well-known Photomontage. It was a picture of a woman with car parts and other mechanical pieces that made her body. It was made to symbolise women's issues and the freedom they had during this time as noted in the Womens art blog (2017). Photomontage has had a significant cultural impact since then. Now it has been brought into the digital era; Photomontage is now used in computers:

With image editing programs like Adobe Photoshop and immeasurable for imagery available, artists are no longer limited to printed photographs.

(Gersh-Nesic, 2018)

Digital editing programmes show that while photos were not cut out and stuck down, there were other ways to recreate photomontage. That technology boosted art techniques. After Hannah Hoch, the technique spread, and more artist began to use it. It became especially important in Surrealism, as it evolved to add in brushworks and texts and objects of all sorts. Experimenting with Photomontage became more common in the later years. The technique spread from Europe to America and even Japan. Photomontage was also used to promote themes through its images, just like Hannah Hoch's works. The Russians used it in their works for the Government and promotion of what they stood for and what society they wanted, as Seiferle (2020) tells us. Themes such as social issues, gender, politics, Government, and culture became especially prevalent in Photomontage. Finally the technique spread to advertising with consumer items such as album covers, posters, magazine covers, postcards, and billboards using photomontage images. "The processes of collage and montage accurately reflected their times, those of "the chaos of war and revolution." (Davenport, p.169). The popular use of photomontage in wide cultural settings really shows where Photomontage started from and what it grew up to become in the modern era. Especially with the influence of technology.



Hannah Hoch (1920) *The Beautiful Girl*



Hannah Hoch (1919) *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*

Modern artists also use techniques like Collage in their works, showing that the practise has not died out. Collage has become very popular as a means of illustrating children's books and in this way, has made a significant cultural impact on image making. Eric Carle is one

such artist who used collage in his work. A children's book illustrator, he uses mixed media collage. "The first thing that draws children to this book is Carle's deceptively simple illustrating technique." (Calvert, 2020) Eric Carle uses bright colours, using painting on tissue paper, and the simplistic shapes and interactive pages make it very appealing to children. The books themselves have been sold around the world, in hundreds of languages. His most famous book being *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1969) which shows the journey of the caterpillar turn into a butterfly (DW, 2019). Many children's books also use a similar art technique in their work. Mainly because the use of shapes and bright colours is more appealing. This shows that collage has made a significant cultural impact on image-making as it is now accepted as a serious art form, not just a childish hobby.

Peter Blake is another artist who used collage in his works. He created the rather famous record sleeve *Stg. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Blake, 1967). He also created a record sleeve for Band Aid and the poster for Live Aid. While he started off painting, Peter Blake often incorporated his bright colours and logo ideas from paintings to his collage work. The album cover for the Beatles was a collage involving people and objects arranged like an audience watching the Beatles at a park. Many of these people involving famous figures and even the Beatles themselves They were tinted in colour and glued onto a hand board. Then later he did a record sleeve for the album *Stop the Clocks* (Blake, 2006) by Oasis. His works are very colourful and known for the graphic design style to them as Artnet (2020). Even his work became a big inspiration in British Pop Art as told by Seiferle (2020), due to the bright colours of his work:

A pioneer of Pop Art, and the co-creator of The Beatles' *Stg. Pepper* album cover (with his first wife, Jann Haworth), he's forever associated with the 1960s.

(BBC, 2017)

Historically, Collage was just as important during the Dada Movement just as it is now. "Collage was a major turning point in the evolution of Cubism, and therefore a major turning point in the whole evolution of modernist art in this century." (Greenberg, 1958) This statement is correct as the history of Collage gave lots of inspiration. Even before the

term was created, people had used Collage for all sorts of things. Paper was created in China and spread throughout Asia and then the rest of the world. Cutting and sticking of paper to paper was common in books and pamphlets, usually as entertainment and more so as a hobby. When Picasso and Braque used Collage, it became more of an art technique. The technique was used in Cubism to break down perspective and show a flat canvas, as the Tate (2020) tells us. Of course, it influenced Dadaism, Surrealism, Constructivism and even cut outs that Matisse created as Wolfe (2019) states to us. Collage was also mixed with Assemblage and Photomontage. Jean Dubuffet created a piece that was a Collage but called an Assemblage. Even Photomontage artists sometimes stuck things to their work, making these mixed media pieces useful in experimentation and exploring new, significant ideas.



Peter Blake (1967) *Stg. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band*



Peter Blake, (2006) *Stop the Clocks*

It could also be said that these image-making techniques had little significant cultural impact at all. Quite a few of the artists mentioned were not all famous for Collage, Assemblage or Photomontage. Man Ray used several mediums such as photography, silk screens and even paintings which he is much more well known for:

At the time, Ray taught himself the new art of photography, to reproduce images of his own paintings, but he soon became one of the greatest photographers of history.

(Art Encyclopaedia 2020)

Collage itself, while used throughout history, was not truly mainstream until the Dada movement. Even then these art forms were not used as much compared to painting or sketching, which was preferred by many famous artists. Even before Collage was coined by the two artists, Pablo Picasso and George Braque, the art technique was more of a hobby of sorts and not seen as a serious art form. It was used to pass the time or for decorations of simple things by ordinary people doing craft. The impact it had before the early 20th Century is considered minimal. Even in the 20th century, critics often do not recognise Collage as an art form:

Collage doesn't seem to get a whole lot of respect in the art world. Collectors and curators look skeptically at the medium, concerned about its archival qualities. Critics often dismiss the medium, because the use of found images violates some weird notions of authenticity.

(Kadour. K. R, 2012)

This gives us many reasons why Collage is also looked down as an art form. Taking images from others to create a piece of work means that Collage is sometimes not even considered a real piece of artwork. This view is still taken by modern people and artists today, showing that Collage has not been well respected even from its creation. Even when used by famous artists, it still has little or no influence as an art technique in other people's views. While Surrealism used Collage for a while, it was used not much in other Art movements. Even as Collage branched off into Assemblage and Photomontage, it can be argued they have little cultural impact. "Subsequently, graphic techniques swung away from photography and photomontage." (Becker, p.13) which is correct. Since the computerised digitalisation of art, Photomontage, Collage and Assemblage are falling out of favour. Using more digitally advanced ideas are taking over from more traditional art forms. Critics and artists generally prefer painting and sketching to these art techniques. This is especially true regarding Photomontage, where the digitalisation of photography has made it very uncommon to actually cut out and stick down photograph prints. Compared to the impact of newer techniques and ideas in the modern era, it could be said that Collage, Photomontage, and Assemblage have not had, and will not have, as much cultural impact as the world may have thought it did. It would be interesting to speculate whether, with the ongoing digitalisation of art, these art techniques will eventually die out, as there will be fewer physical images to cut out.

To conclude, Collage and Photomontage and Assemblage are used by many artists. The artists such as Eric Carle continue to use Collage as well as Peter Blake. Even Hannah Hoch is well known for her Photomontage. The techniques that have been used have also branched off into newer forms of art, even being used in Digital art and having influence on art programs. Therefore, despite digitalisation, it can be concluded that these types of techniques have very much made a significant impact on image-making.

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