

COLLAGE AS
AN ARTISTIC AND
ARCHITECTURAL
PARADIGM

INTRODUCTION TO COLLAGE

Collage, an archetypally modern artistic technique, emerged as a groundbreaking approach in modern art during the early 20th century.

The word - from the French verb *coller*, meaning "to stick" - was first used to describe the cubist innovations of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who began to stick newspaper cuttings and other materials onto their artists' canvases in 1912.

Over the course of the past century, collage has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from its origins as a radical art form to become a significant influence in the realms of art and culture, architecture, sculpture, and other three-dimensional applications.

ARTISTIC ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COLLAGE

The emergence of collage art is characterized by a departure from conventional artistic methods. The early 20th century artists challenged traditional art norms by introducing mixed media into their canvas works. This new style, distinguished by its unique aesthetic and the integration of various materials such as paper, cloth, and found objects, marked the birth of collage art.

Collage art, with its diverse techniques like photomontage, decoupage, assemblage, and papiers collés, each brought a unique character based on the materials and methods employed. These styles offered artists a canvas to blend and juxtapose different elements, creating compositions that transcended traditional art boundaries.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION OF COLLAGE

The techniques associated with collage art were first used in China around 200 BC when paper was invented. The initial style of collage began to slowly come into fashion within 10th century Japan when calligraphers started to utilize glued paper and texts on surfaces when writing poetry. During the 15th and 16th centuries within Europe, collage techniques were used in gothic cathedrals when applying gold leaf panels, as well as gemstones and other valuable metals that were applied to religious imagery and icons.

The techniques of collage, which took inspiration from the cubism movement, became a principal element within both the dada and surrealist periods of art. In addition to these areas of art, collage was later represented in the neo-dada and pop art movement, as different collage techniques were used to explore various subject matters.

NOTABLE ARTISTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO COLLAGE ART

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973): Along with Georges Braque, pioneered cubism and collage art. He experimented with adding different materials such as sand, newspaper cuttings, parts of musical instruments, music score, tobacco boxes, fabrics, and metal to his paintings. This integration of varied materials was a breakthrough to the third dimension and allowed Picasso great freedom of creativity.

Georges Braque (1882-1963): Initially a Fauvist, Braque developed a Cubist style after meeting Picasso. He sought balance and harmony in his compositions, especially through papier collés. Braque took collage further by incorporating advertisements into his canvases and used techniques like stenciling letters and blending pigments with sand.


Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948): Influenced by the post-WWI era and the Dada movement, Schwitters began creating collages using garbage collected from streets. His works were known for their harmonious arrangements and incorporation of printed media. He also explored experiential art through his large Merzbau creations, which evolved over time with the addition of new elements.

Hannah Höch (1889-1978): A German artist, Höch was known for her political photomontage and collage artwork, focusing specifically on gender issues. Her work often critiqued the Weimar German government and addressed the portrayal of beauty ideals in Western advertising. Höch's piece "Das schöne Mädchen" (The Beautiful Girl) from 1920 is one of her more recognized works.

Max Ernst (1891-1976): A pioneer of the dada movement in Cologne, Ernst began using collage to bring together disparate imagery, creating what he described as "visions of half-sleep." He later created the first collage book, "La Femme 100 têtes," consisting of collage prints accompanied by absurd captions, contributing to the surreal and dream-like quality of the work.

Eileen Agar (1899-1991): Born in Argentina and later based in London, Agar was instrumental in bringing Surrealism to Britain from Paris in the 1930s. She worked in collage and painting, sculpture, and photography. Agar explored natural and organic forms with an adventurous imagination.

Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008): Known for his "combine" paintings, where he incorporated objects like Coca-Cola bottles, traffic barricades, and stuffed birds. He experimented with newspaper and magazine photographs, using solvent to transfer images onto canvas. Rauschenberg also borrowed silk-screen stencil techniques from Andy Warhol, applying photographic images to canvas and unifying them with abstract expressionist brushwork.



Jasper Johns (1930-) is a significant figure in American contemporary art, known for his use of iconic imagery in his paintings, such as flags, maps, targets, letters, and numbers. John's work paved the way for movements like pop art and minimalism. He often incorporated three-dimensional objects into his paintings, challenging conventional notions of painting as a purely two-dimensional form. His innovative techniques and use of familiar imagery have influenced generations of artists and the course of contemporary art.

Frank Stella (1936-): Stella's work is noted for its use of collage, etching, computer rendering, and metalwork. He created highly detailed, layered pieces, often based on famous stories. His "Dictionary of Imaginary Places" series involved creating collages from various sources, including printed proofs, computer renderings, and found images. These prints utilized nearly every reproductive process known to Western art history.

Keith Haring (1958-1990): A prominent 20th century artist who aimed to break down the barriers between high and low art, using public sites not typically dedicated to art to share artistic and political messages with diverse audiences. His work gave street art credibility and legitimacy, bridging the gap between street and gallery, and inspiring a new generation of artists who transitioned from public spaces to formal art venues. Haring's simple yet impactful imagery and text offered poignant cultural commentary on topics like AIDS, drug addiction, illicit love, and apartheid. His work combined fun, lively expressions with serious themes, communicated through cartoon-like images and vivid colors.

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988): He was a groundbreaking artist known for his vibrant, raw energy and bold journey into art. He emerged as a fearless rule-breaker who transformed an era of art, challenging norms and sparking cultural conversations that are still relevant today. Basquiat started as a street artist under the pseudonym "SAMO" in New York City, where he critiqued the established gallery scene and the commercial world. His technique was characterized by experimentation, not just limited to painting but also incorporating assemblage art and collage.

COLLAGE IN ARCHITECTURE AND OTHER THREE - DIMENSIONAL FORMS

Collage principles have also extended into architecture, sculpture and installation art, where artists layer materials and textures to create complex, multidimensional works. In land art, collage ideologies merge man-made and natural elements, using the environment as a canvas for artistic expression.

Pioneers of modern architecture used techniques that were closely related to collage, however the theoretical concept of collage only became widely discussed after architects Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter published "Collage City" in 1978. While they were not advocating for collage in the graphic sense, Rowe and Koetter attempted to challenge the uniformity of Modernism through using the non-linear and disorganized ideals of collage.

COLLAGE IN
OTHER
MEDIUMS:
GRAPHIC DESIGN,
MAGAZINES,
MUSIC AND FILM

Collage techniques have significantly influenced various domains, including graphic design, music, subculture magazines, zines, and music videos. These techniques, characterized by layering and juxtaposition of diverse elements, have been pivotal in shaping the aesthetic and thematic expressions in these fields.

Graphic design: Collage has been used to create dynamic, visually arresting compositions. Designers like David Carson, known for his innovative magazine designs, heavily incorporated collage techniques. His work on Raygun magazine, for example, stands as a testament to how collage can blend text, image, and spatial play to disrupt traditional layouts and create a unique visual language.

Magazines and zines: In the realm of subculture magazines and zines, especially during the 80's and 90's, collage was a favored medium. It allowed for the creative amalgamation of various cultural symbols, texts, and images, reflecting the eclectic and often rebellious spirit of the subcultures they represented. Collage in these publications wasn't just an aesthetic choice but a means of conveying complex cultural narratives, often with limited resources.

Music: The style of collage has made its way into the production of music. Advancements in recording technology has enabled innovative artists to experiment with cutting and pasting techniques, integrating the style of collage into musical development. The most popular music styles utilizing a form of collage are rap, hip-hop, and electronic music. Also, particularly in genres like punk, hip-hop, and alternative rock, collage techniques were used in album art, posters, and music videos to create an edgy, non-conformist aesthetic. Collage in music videos allowed for a playful and often surreal juxtaposition of imagery, enhancing the storytelling and thematic depth of the songs. Music videos were widespread and largely popularized in the 80's and 90's by MTV (Music Television) and similar cable television channels.

Film: Collage within film is best demonstrated when fictional scenes are interspersed with footage that has been sourced from a variety of locales, such as newsreels. The combination of different types of footage into a film carried various degrees of significance, which were dependent on the approach that the director took when filming. Collage within film can also encompass the physical collaging of materials onto the film strips.

In essence, the use of collage across these domains represents a blend of visual experimentation and cultural commentary. It provided artists and designers with a versatile tool to challenge conventional aesthetics and express complex social and cultural ideas in a visually compelling manner.

CONTEMPORARY IMPACT AND LEGACY OF COLLAGE

Today, collage continues to be a tool for social commentary in the art world. Contemporary artists use collage to address social and political issues, incorporating familiar imagery to make powerful statements. In the digital age, collage has transformed into a method for creating layered, multimedia experiences, influencing fields ranging from graphic design to virtual reality.

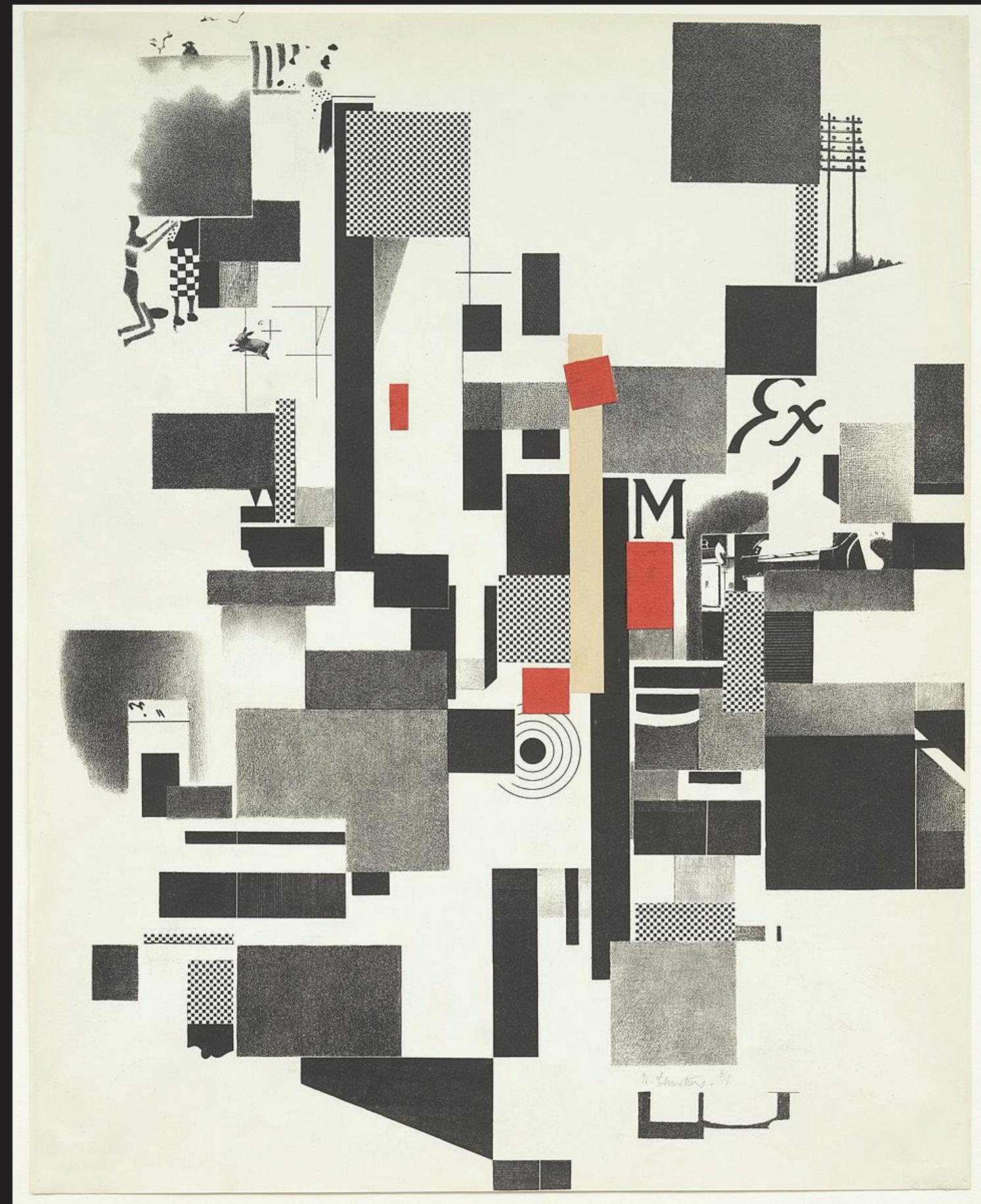
The enduring impact of collage art is evident among the numerous young artists who persist in this medium. Collage art uniquely narrates the story of each artistic generation through its expressive commentary. In the contemporary sphere, collage is often seen as the foundation of the digital experience, owing to its extensive experimentation with layering and the integration of various mediums into a single work.

CONCLUSION: THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF COLLAGE

Collage, as both an artistic and architectural concept, has demonstrated remarkable adaptability and influence. Its legacy is defined by its versatility, capacity for social commentary, and its role in challenging and redefining traditional boundaries in various fields. For aspiring architects and artists, collage remains a valuable and inexhaustible source of inspiration and innovation.



Pablo Picasso: Still Life with Compote and Glass, 1914-1915



Kurt Schwitters: Merz 3, 1923



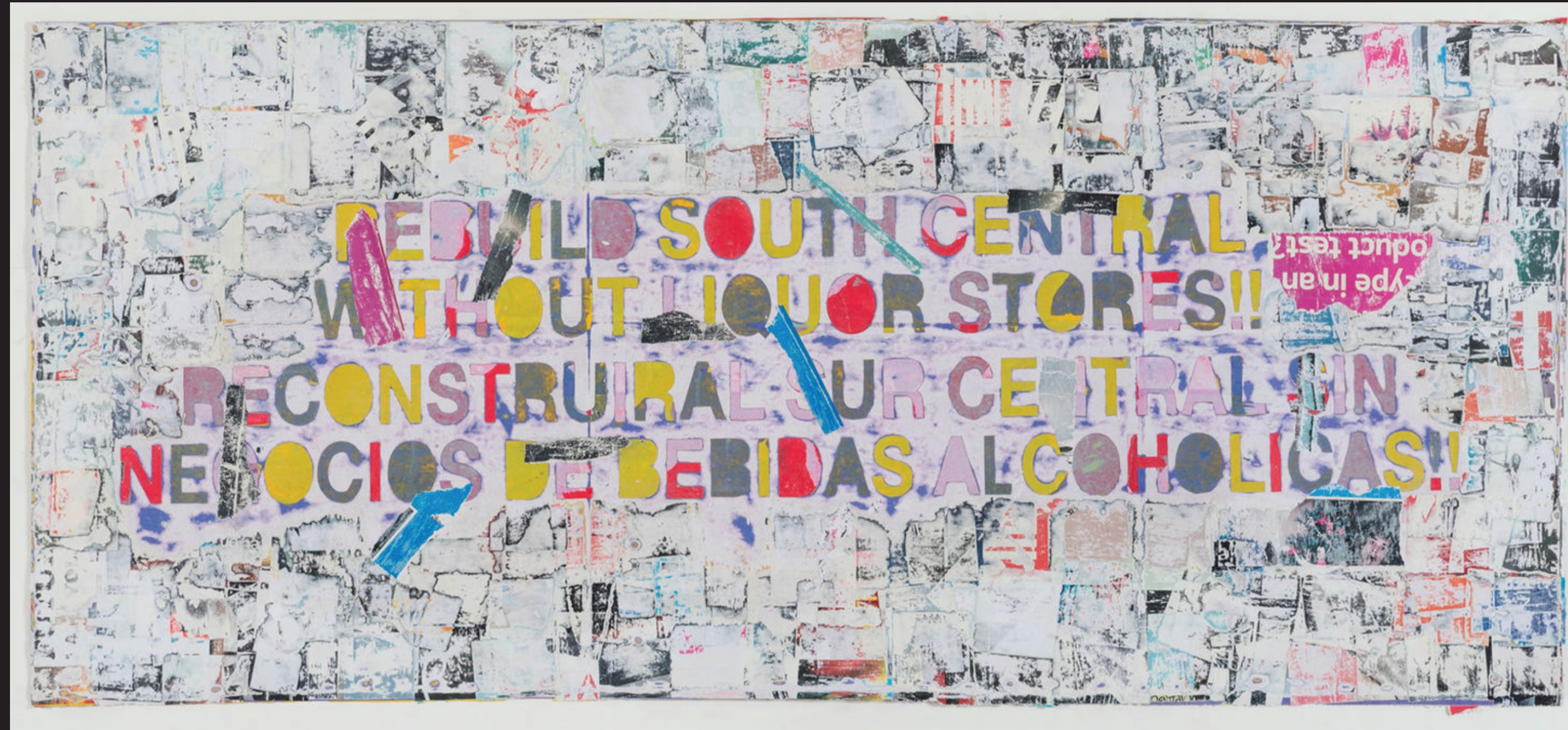
Eileen Agar: Erotic Landscape, 1942



Hannah Höch: Indian Dancer, 1930



Jean-Michel Basquiat: 40th Ed. Book Cover, 2018



Mark Bradford: Rebuild South Central, 2015



Keith Haring, Andy Warhol: New York Post (Madonna), 1985



Michel Tabanou: Avec Joseph Beuys à la Montagne - Souvenir, 2018