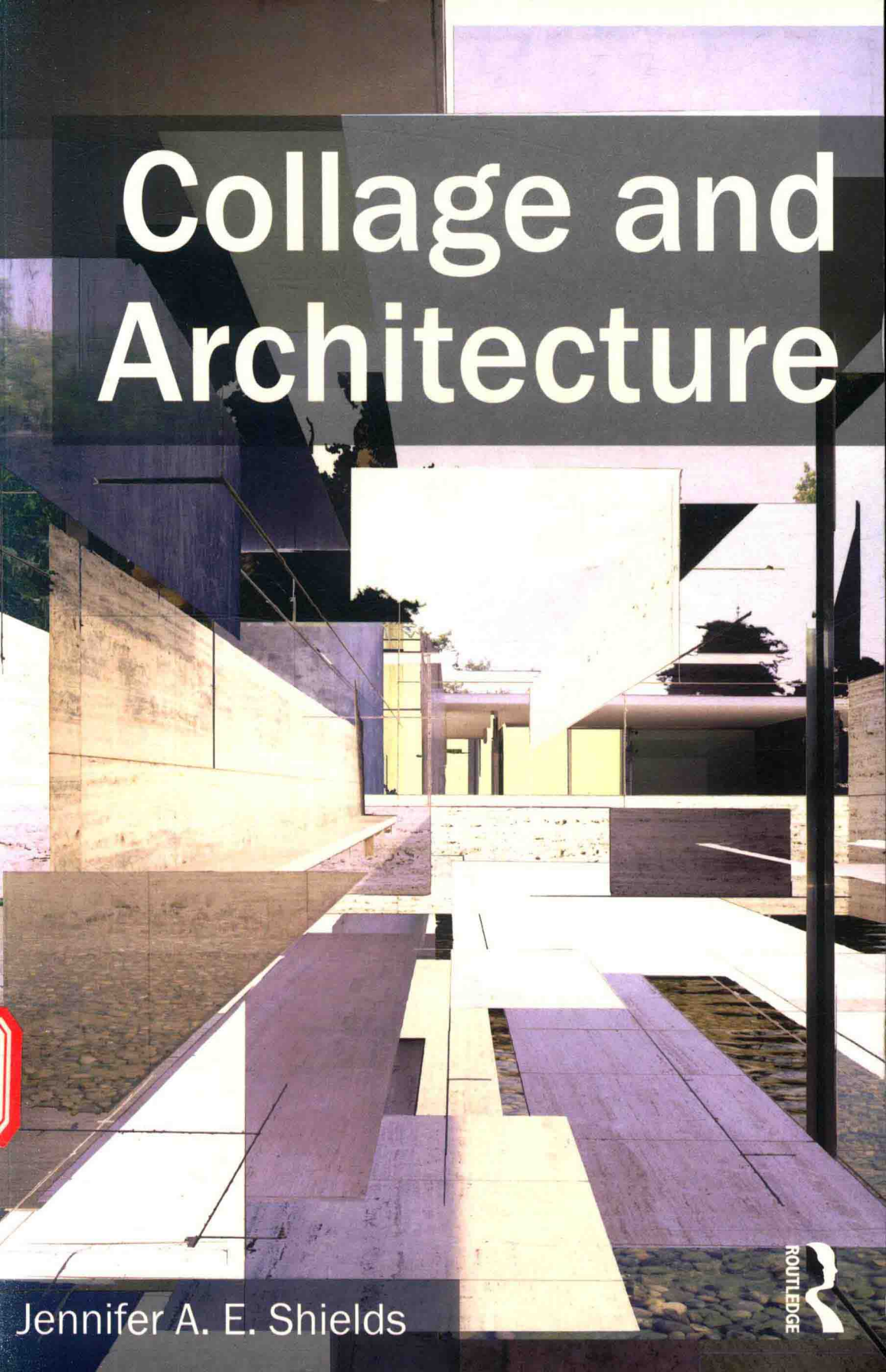
Collage and Architecture
Jennifer A. E. Shields
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Collage and Architecture

For Bryan

Foreword

Juhani Pallasmaa, Architect, Professor

The World is a Collage

Collage and montage are quintessential techniques in modern and contemporary art and filmmaking. Collage combines pictorial motifs and fragments from disconnected origins into a new synthetic entity which casts new roles and meanings to the parts. It suggests new narratives, dialogues, juxtapositions and temporal durations. Its elements lead double-lives; the collaged ingredients are suspended between their originary essences and the new roles assigned to them by the poetic ensemble.

The techniques of collage and assemblage are conventionally related to visual arts and cinema, but Joseph Brodsky, the poet, makes the remark: "[I]t was poetry that invented the technique of montage, not Eisenstein".[1] However, every artistic work, be it literary, musical or visual, is bound to be a juxtaposition of images, emotions and ambiences in order to construct an articulated and engaging spatio-temporal experience. Whether the work qualifies as a collage depends on the degree of the apparent "givenness" of its ingredients. We tend to think that our awareness is a coherent and continuous mental state. In fact, human consciousness keeps shifting from one percept and thought to the next, from actuality to dream, association to deduction, and from recollection to imagination. Our very consciousness is an ever-changing collage of mental fragments held together by one's sense of self.

In its inherent permanence and penetrating, preconceived order, the art form of architecture is conventionally not associated with the notion of collage. Yet, the very role of architecture as frames and settings for human activities turns it into a varying and variously completed entity, an ever-changing collage of activities, furnishings and objects. Because of their longevity, buildings tend to change their functions and be altered as material entities. Most of our historical buildings are assemblies of alterations, materials, textures and colours layered through decades or centuries of use. Often it is this very temporal layering that gives a building its unique atmosphere and charm; the geometric spatial and material configuration of architecture is embraced

and enhanced by use, erosion and time; architecture turns from a spatial abstraction into a lived situation, ambience and metaphor.

The idea of collage has also been a conscious and deliberate artistic method in architecture from Giulio Romano's Palazzo Te in Mantua to Le Corbusier's and Alvar Aalto's fusions of modernist and vernacular images in their architectural assemblages, all the way to Jean Nouvel's collaged walls of the Belfort Theatre and David Chipperfield's renovation of Neues Museum in Berlin. Also many of Frank Gehry's works are collages although even the parts are deliberately designed by the architect; nevertheless, his buildings appear as assemblages of pre-existing units suggestive of differing origins.

Contemporary buildings, such as art museums, often appear strained and severe in their relentless formal logic, whereas the same activities located in recycled buildings – frequently of former industrial use – project a more relaxed and welcoming atmosphere due to their more complex logic, conflicting architectural themes and richer materiality; indeed, their collage-character. Peter Brook, the radical theatre director, deliberately demolished his avant-garde theatre building Bouffes du Nord in Paris in order to create an associative and emotionally responsive space for theatrical performances. "A good space can't be neutral, for an impersonal sterility gives no food to the imagination. The Bouffes has the magic and poetry of a ruin, and anyone who allowed themselves to be invaded by the atmosphere of a ruin knows strongly how the imagination is let loose", Brook argues.[2]

All collages tend to have a similar capacity to stimulate our imagination, as if the various fragments, torn from their initial settings, would beg the viewer to give them back their lost identity. The superbly executed collages by the Czech poet and artist Jiří Kolář are suspended between a literary and visual expression, and one can almost hear words being whispered by the visual imagery. Leonardo advised artists to stare at a crumbling wall in order to enter the mental state of inspiration,[3] and the collage takes similar advantage of the intricacies of our perceptual, imaginative and empathetic processes.

Notes

1 Joseph Brodsky, "Wooing the Inanimate", *On Grief and Reason*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1995, 343.

2 Andrew Todd and Jean-Guy Lecat, *The Open Circle: Peter Brook's Theatre Environments*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2003, 25.

3 "When you look at a wall spotted with stains, or with a mixture of stones, if you have to devise some scene you may discover a resemblance to various landscapes . . . or, again, you may see battles and figures in action, or strange faces and costumes, or an endless variety of objects, which you could reduce to complete and well-drawn forms. And these appear on such walls promiscuously, like the sound of bells in whose jangle you may find any name or word you choose to imagine."
As quoted in Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New – Art and the Century of Change*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1980, 225.

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Introduction

> Collage and assemblage are favoured techniques of artistic representation in our time; these media enable an archaeological density and a non-linear narrative through the juxtaposition of fragmented images deriving from irreconcilable origins. Collage invigorates the experience of tactility and time.[1]
>
> Juhani Pallasmaa, "Hapticity and Time: Notes on Fragile Architecture"

One century ago, collage entered the lexicon of the contemporary art world. Pablo Picasso, in May of 1912, first appropriated a found material into a work of art. In his

Pablo Picasso, *Still Life With Chair Caning* (1912)

Still Life with Chair Caning, Picasso affixed a piece of oil cloth printed with the design of chair-caning to an oil painting. This was the "first deliberately executed collage – the first work of fine art . . . in which material appropriated from everyday life, relatively untransformed by the artist, intruded upon the traditionally privileged domain of painting," according to Christine Poggi in her book *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage*.[2] The founders of Cubism – Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Juan Gris – valued collage as a hybridization of painting and sculpture existing at the threshold of two and three dimensions. As a means of investigating the potentialities of three-dimensional space in a two-dimensional medium, collage facilitated a new conception of space. These first acts of collage-making in the Modernist canon, in their conceptual, material, and technical originality, have profoundly influenced numerous artists and architects throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

Collage, as an art form unique to the modern era, emphasizes process over product. A collage as a work of art consists of the assembly of various fragments of materials, combined in such a way that the composition has a new meaning, not inherent in any of the individual fragments. According to Diane Waldman in *Collage, Assemblage, and the Found Object*, a collage has several levels of meaning: "the original identity of the fragment or object and all of the history it brings with it; the new meaning it gains in association with other objects or elements; and the meaning it acquires as the result of its metamorphosis into a new entity."[3] Simultaneity of spatial, material, and intellectual content is inherent in collage through a synthesis of unrelated fragments, as the process of construction remains evident in the resulting work.

We might understand architectural experience in a similar way. In *Questions of Perception,* Steven Holl illuminates the nature of our perception of the built environment, saying:

> A city is never seen as a totality, but as an aggregate of experiences, animated by use, by overlapping perspectives, changing light, sounds, and smells. Similarly, a single work of architecture is rarely experienced in its totality (except in graphic or model form) but as a series of partial views and synthesized experiences. Questions of meaning and understanding lie between the generating ideas, forms, and the nature and quality of perception.[4]

Holl proposes that we perceive human artifacts as an amalgam of sensory phenomena understood through personal experience and memory, rather than completely and objectively through a formal analysis. Like a collage, revealing evidence of time and its methods of construction, a work of architecture contains accumulated history as it is lived and engaged rather than observed. Just as a work of architecture is only fully created and comprehended through bodily, sensory engagement, collage can serve as a representational analogue, providing the medium to interrogate spatial and material possibilities. The practice of collage has the capacity to capture spatial and material characteristics of the built environment, acting as an analytical and interpretive

Bernhard Hoesli, *Plastik-Mond* (1967–76)

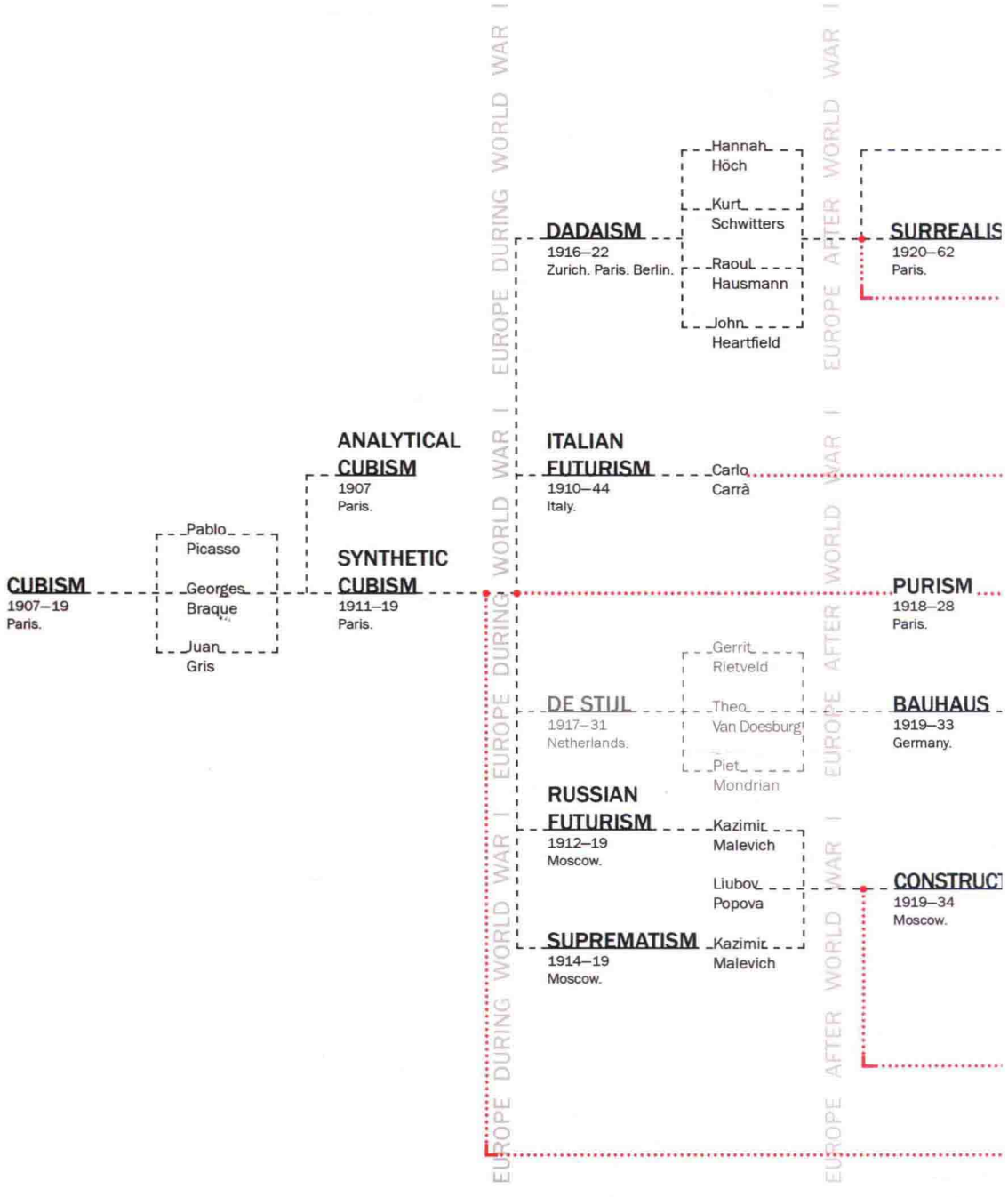
mechanism. Through this understanding, we can build a conscious and intentional response to the multivalence extant in sites and cities.

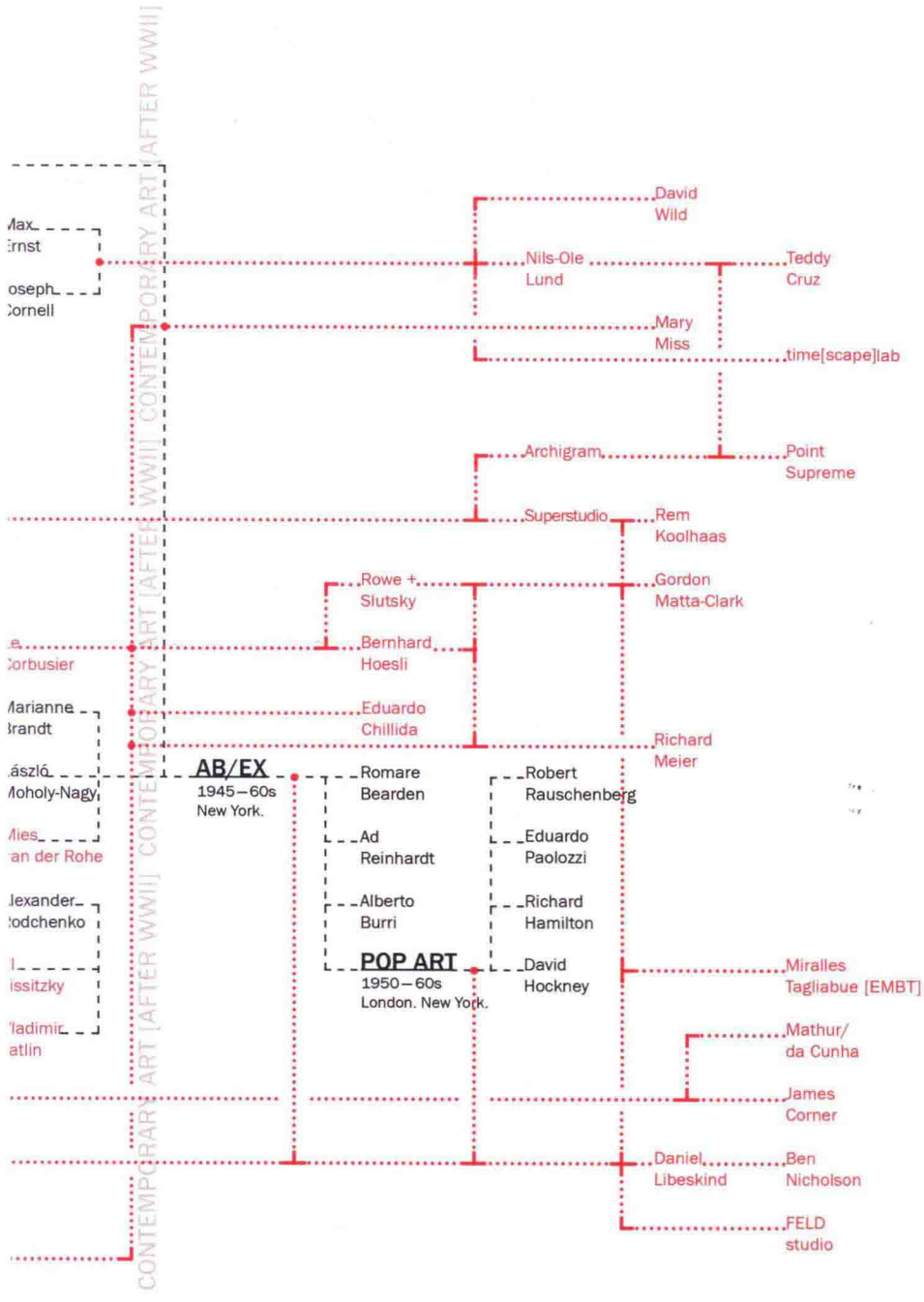
We consider collage in the following ways throughout this book:

1. collage as artifact
2. collage as a tool for analysis and design
3. architecture as collage.

This framework will offer a survey of collage methodologies in art and architecture beginning in 1912 and spanning a century of collage-making. This introduction offers a brief overview of collage as artifact through a chronological history of its artistic evolution – fragments of this history are revealed throughout the book. *Part 1: Collage Methodologies in Architectural Analysis + Design* investigates collage as an analytical and generative tool in the practice of architecture, organized by collage method. In *Part 2: Architecture as Collage*, specific works of architecture are analyzed through the lens of collage, as case studies representative of a collage mentality in architecture.

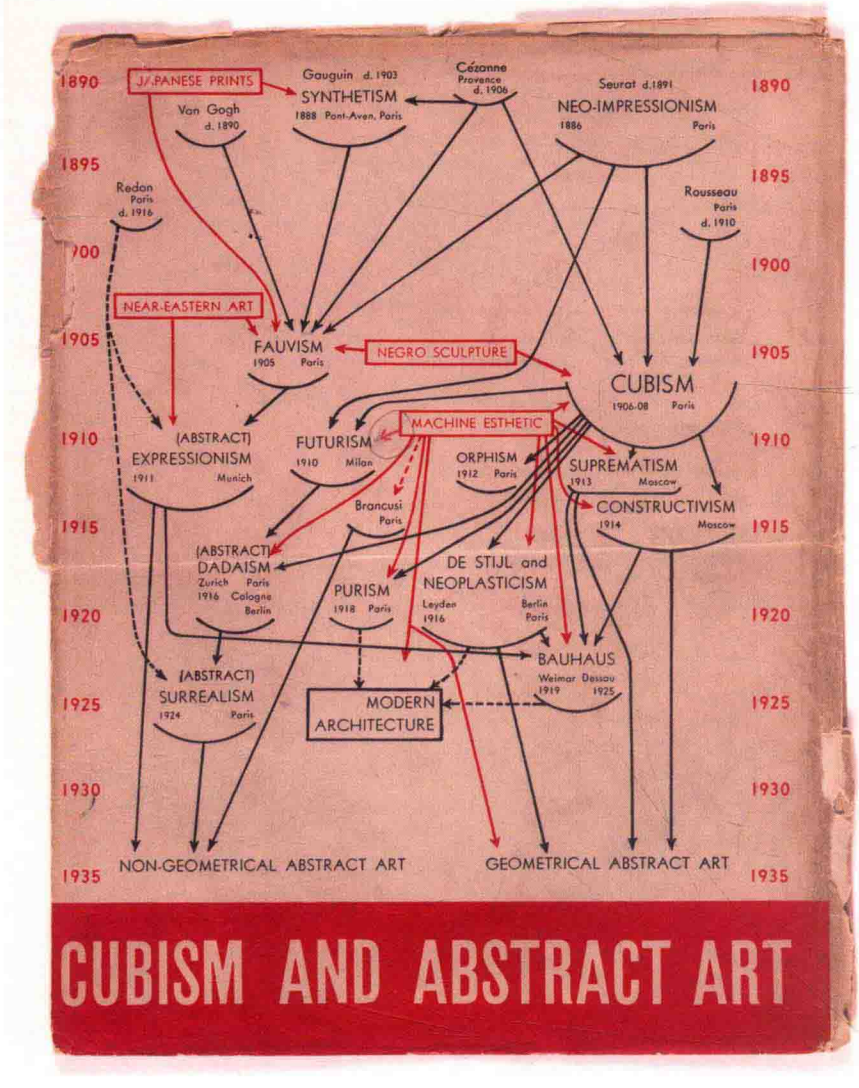
To provide a methodological framework for an understanding of collage, we begin a century ago with Cubism. For the first time in 450 years, the Renaissance


EUROPE DURING WORLD WAR I
EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR I
CUBISM
1907–19
Paris.
Pablo Picasso
Georges Braque
Juan Gris
ANALYTICAL CUBISM
1907
Paris.
SYNTHETIC CUBISM
1911–19
Paris.
DADAISM
1916–22
Zurich. Paris. Berlin.
Hannah Höch
Kurt Schwitters
Raoul Hausmann
John Heartfield
SURREALIS
1920–62
Paris.
ITALIAN FUTURISM
1910–44
Italy.
Carlo Carrà
PURISM
1918–28
Paris.
DE STIJL
1917–31
Netherlands.
Gerrit Rietveld
Theo Van Doesburg
Piet Mondrian
BAUHAUS
1919–33
Germany.
RUSSIAN FUTURISM
1912–19
Moscow.
Kazimir Malevich
Liubov Popova
SUPREMATISM
1914–19
Moscow.
Kazimir Malevich
CONSTRUCT
1919–34
Moscow.


CONTEMPORARY ART [AFTER WWII]
CONTEMPORARY ART [AFTER WWII]
CONTEMPORARY ART [AFTER WWII]
Max Ernst
Joseph Cornell
David Wild
Nils-Ole Lund
Teddy Cruz
Mary Miss
time[scape]lab
Archigram
Point Supreme
Superstudio
Rem Koolhaas
Rowe + Slutsky
Gordon Matta-Clark
Le Corbusier
Bernhard Hoesli
Marianne Brandt
Eduardo Chillida
Richard Meier
László Moholy-Nagy
AB/EX
1945–60s
New York.
Romare Bearden
Robert Rauschenberg
Mies van der Rohe
Ad Reinhardt
Eduardo Paolozzi
Alexander Rodchenko
Alberto Burri
Richard Hamilton
El Lissitzky
POP ART
1950–60s
London. New York.
David Hockney
Miralles Tagliabue [EMBT]
Vladimir Tatlin
Mathur/ da Cunha
James Corner
Daniel Libeskind
Ben Nicholson
FELD studio

approach to representation – privileging visual experience – was rejected. The Cubists instead represented aspects of daily life through abstraction, material juxtapositions, and fragmentation and synthesis of form, cataloguing spatial and material qualities of commonplace subjects. The genealogy of collage and the influences of Cubism on art and architecture as articulated in this book are illustrated in the *Collage Genealogy*, demonstrating the conceptual or technical affiliations between various artists and architects throughout the past century.

The legacy of Cubism as demonstrated in this genealogy has its foundation in Alfred Barr, Jr.'s chart for *Cubism and Abstract Art*, the Museum of Modern Art exhibition in 1936, in which he illustrated the movements that influenced Cubism and the movements that were subsequently informed by Cubism. The bold



Alfred Barr, Jr. (1902–81). Cover of the exhibition catalogue "Cubism and Abstract Art," New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1936.

Offset, printed in color, 7¾ × 10¼". Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 3.C.4. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

geometric forms of the Cubist collage were quickly adopted by artists outside France, while political unrest in Europe leading up to World War I saw the appropriation of collage for political and cultural purposes. The Italian Futurists were the first group of artists to respond to the radical shift in representation initiated by the Cubists. They embraced modern technology, fascinated by the speed, industrialization, and dynamism of modern life. The work of the Russian Avant-Garde (beginning with Futurism and Suprematism and evolving into Constructivism) was also highly politicized, the goal being to direct art towards a social purpose and demonstrate the ideals of a new society. Formally, they emphasized materiality and the dynamic composition of line, surface, and volume. According to Waldman, "From Cubism the Russians evolved an art that emphasized the surface plane and the faceting and fragmentation of forms. From the Futurists the Russians adopted the notion of speed and intersecting lines of force."[5] Artists of the Russian Avant-Garde were often architects as well, using collage, a two-dimensional medium, as a means of generating concepts for three-dimensional architectural forms.

Dadaism was founded at the outbreak of World War I in Zürich in protest and considered itself 'anti-art.' Dadaists conceived of their work as a rejection of

Lyubov Popova, *Air+Man+Space* (1912)

existing cultural and aesthetic values through their adoption of collage. Like the Russian Avant-Garde, their art was highly politicized, protesting the war and the political and social structures that led to it. Most Dada artists eliminated painting and drawing in their collages, and instead used photos and catalogues almost exclusively. The use of photomontage stemmed from their desire to be seen as engineers or mechanics rather than artists. There is debate over the birth of photomontage, as both the Russian Constructivists and the Dadaist Raoul Hausmann claim to have invented it.[6] The social commentary of the Dadaists was represented formally through changing perspectives, sharp diagonals, and contrasting materials and images, using rich textures and representations of the human body.

Surrealism developed in the period of peace following World War I, an outgrowth of Dadaism in Paris that become more internally focused. The Surrealists opposed the formal and rational order of Cubism, advocating for automatic or intuitive drawings to channel the subconscious. They sought to unify the inner world of the imagination with the outer world of reality, a synthesis termed 'surreality' by Surrealism's founder, André Breton. This dreamlike quality was often achieved through photomontage and the juxtaposition of unrelated objects. The often fluid and indistinguishable boundaries between layers magnifies this effect. At the same time in Germany the Bauhaus design school was founded with the intent of integrating all of the design disciplines, greatly influenced by De Stijl and Constructivism. László Moholy-Nagy, a Bauhaus professor, was in dialogue with Dada and Constructivist artists at the time, and evidence of their influence is found in his use of photomontage.[7] Like the Russian Avant-Garde, the Bauhaus artists often used minimal collage elements, creating and exploiting the deep space of the canvas.

Contemporary art, referring to art movements after World War II, has witnessed the use of collage by numerous artists including the Abstract Expressionists originating in New York and Pop Artists in New York and London. Abstract Expressionism derived directly from Synthetic Cubism as well as Futurism, the Bauhaus, and Surrealism. This movement began in the 1930s in the US, drawing from Surrealism's concept of automatism, or the power of the subconscious. Artists were motivated by a desire to investigate the role of chance in the creation of a work of art. These artists intended to merge the real and the imaginary by combining the familiar with the unknown, the personal with the universal. The process of collage-making in the manual engagement with the media "reflected both process and product, the same way the Abstract Expressionist paintings simultaneously represented the creative act and the final image," according to Diane Waldman.[8]

Pop Art was born in the 1950s as a response to Abstract Expressionism, employing found objects ('ready-mades') and photographic images like the Dadaists, with a desire to capture the complexities of contemporary culture. A leading figure in the Pop Art movement, British collage artist Richard Hamilton specified Imagery (including cinema, advertising, television, photographic image, and multiple image) and Perception (including color, tactility, light, sound, and memory) as critical issues in the movement.[9] Reflecting on the genealogy of collage, the value and meaning of