

## Collage [Fr. *coller*: 'to stick, glue']

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Art form and technique, incorporating the use of pre-existing materials or objects attached as part of a two-dimensional surface. Despite occasional usage by earlier artists and wide informal use in popular art, collage is closely associated with 20th-century art, in which it has often served as a correlation with the pace and discontinuity of the modern world. In particular it often made use of the *Objet trouvé*, while the principle of collage was extended into sculpture in the form of the *Assemblage*. The first deliberate and innovative use of collage in fine art came in two works by Picasso in the spring of 1912. In *The Letter* (untraced, see Daix and Rosselet, cat. no. 275) he pasted a real Italian postage stamp on to a depicted letter, while *Still-life with Chair-caning* (Paris, Mus. Picasso) included printed oil-cloth simulating a chair-caning pattern, the oval canvas surrounded by a 'frame' made of a continuous loop of rope. Picasso followed this by affixing a piece of gingerbread (untraced) to the lower part of *Guitare: 'J'aime Eva'* (artist's estate, see Daix and Rosselet, cat. no. 282) from the summer of 1912. His Cubist colleagues were meanwhile experimenting with adapting the technique for their own purposes. Juan Gris added fragments of a mirror, for example, to the *Hand Basin* (priv. col., see Cooper, p. 47), which he sent to the *Salon de la Section d'Or* in October 1912, where the first Cubist collages were publicly exhibited. At about the same time Georges Braque purchased imitation wood-grain paper, generally used for interior decoration, at a shop in Avignon. By combining this *faux bois* paper, affixed to a white sheet, with drawing, Braque created the *papier collé* ('pasted paper'), a specific form of collage, closer to traditional drawing than to painting, consisting essentially of a collage of paper elements with a paper support (e.g. *Glass and Playing Cards*, 1912; Los Angeles, CA, Co. Mus. A.). Braque and then Picasso made many *papiers collés* in the last three months of 1912 and in early 1913, with Picasso often using cuttings from the newspaper *Le Journal* to introduce the possibility of allusion to everyday events in the very fabric of the work, whereas Braque tended to restrict himself to the more abstract wood-grain papers, carefully arranged for formal effect. Picasso also developed the idea of collage into three-dimensional work with the first *assemblages*, such as the cardboard *Guitar* (1912; New York, MOMA).



Kurt Schwitters: *Opened by Customs*, collage, 331×253 mm, 1937-8 (London, Tate); © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, photo credit: Tate, London/Art Resource, NY

In 1914 collages were produced with more complex materials by Picasso, Braque and especially Gris, who imitated the effects of painting in dense networks of dozens of cut and pasted papers. The technique was also adopted by such Italian artists as Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Gino Severini and Ardengo Soffici, and by Kazimir Malevich, who affixed new materials such as a thermometer, for example, in *Soldier of the First Division* (1914; New York, MOMA). Carrà, working with the Futurist poet Filippo Marinetti, developed the hybrid *dipinto parolibero* ('free-word painting') to describe their word-poems in collage. Much of this spirit of experimentation did not, however, survive the first year of World War I, and subsequently these artists rarely, if ever, used collage. The

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Dadaists, however, adapted it to their own ends. Hans Arp produced abstract collages such as *Untitled* (1915; Berne, Kstmus.), and Kurt Schwitters used the form extensively (see fig. for example that includes cut-out fashion illustrations [image not available online]), notably in his series of *Merzpictures* (*Merzbilder*), made from discarded materials found in the streets of Hannover; see *Opened by Customs*, 1937–8. Other artists associated with the Berlin Dada group used photographs and newspaper cuttings in a political, satirical and socially critical fashion (see also *Photomontage*). Max Ernst also began experimenting with collage and developed the ‘collage-novel’, pasting paper on old engravings of narrative scenes to create the visual, dream-like ‘text’ of *La Femme 100 Têtes* (1929), for example. Another important Surrealist collagist, especially in the late 1920s and 1930s, was Joan Miró (e.g. *Painting-Collage*, 1934; Philadelphia, PA, Mus. A.), while at the same time abstract collage was further developed by El Lissitzky and other Constructivists. More recently the possibilities of fantasy and disjunction on one hand (in the work of Joseph Cornell, for example) and a recurrent interest in material texture and shape on the other (in the work of Ann Ryan (1899–1954) and Jean Dubuffet) continued to attract the attention of 20th-century artists. In the USA Robert Motherwell used collage extensively in the 1940s and 1950s, while Lee Krasner produced important collages by cutting up and reusing her paintings and drawings. In Europe in the 1950s Raymond Hains and other artists associated with *Nouveau Réalisme*, such as François Dufrêne (b 1930) and Mimmo Rotella, experimented with *Décollage*, a process of stripping away layers of glued paper. In the 1960s Robert Rauschenberg and many artists associated with *Pop art* also used collage extensively to reflect the omnipresence of the printed word and image in modern society (see fig.), as well as Richard Hamilton, who continued to apply paper and *objets trouvés* in his works. In the decorative arts the influence of collage was reflected in embroidery. Although pure sticking techniques only replaced stitching briefly during the 1960s, embroiderers continued to produce combinations of fabric, paper and other materials.

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