

EVOLUTION OF COLLAGE AS A MEDIUM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MODERN ART

By

Victor Onibere

Dept. of Fine and Applied Arts,
Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria.
+234 8033460988
voonibere@delsu.edu.ng

Abstract

The emergence of collage as an artistic medium in the early 20th century brought about a significant shift in the way artists approached composition and representation. This research aims to explore the historical development of collage, from its origins in the work of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in the Cubist movement to its widespread adoption and experimentation by subsequent generations of artists. The research problem focuses on understanding the evolution of collage as a medium and its profound influence on the development of modern and contemporary art. To achieve this objective, a comprehensive analysis of historical context, artistic pioneers, expansion and experimentation, techniques and processes, and the impact on modern art were conducted. Through an examination of primary sources, art historical texts, and critical analyses, the research delved into the cultural and artistic climate that gave rise to collage as a medium, exploring the societal and artistic trends that influenced artists to explore new methods of artistic expression. The research findings shed light on the significant contributions of Picasso and Braque as the pioneers of collage, analyzing how their styles and techniques evolved over time and influenced other artists. Furthermore, the study explored how collage expanded beyond Cubism, influencing art movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, and Pop Art, and investigated the techniques and processes employed by artists to create collage artworks. By analyzing the lasting impact of collage on modern and contemporary art, the research uncovered how this medium continues to challenge traditional notions of representation, composition, and artistic materials. Overall, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of collage as a medium and its profound influence on the development of modern and contemporary art, serving as a valuable resource for art historians, scholars, and artists interested in exploring the dynamic relationship between artistic techniques, mediums, and the broader art historical context.

Keywords: Collage; Medium; Modern Art; Cubism; Artistic Techniques.

INTRODUCTION

Collage, as an artistic medium, has played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of modern art. The juxtaposition of disparate elements and the

fragmentation of visual forms found in collage artworks have challenged traditional notions of representation and composition, giving rise to innovative artistic expressions. According to Jones (2018), collage emerged in the early 20th century, particularly within the context of the Cubist movement, revolutionizing artistic practices. However, an in-depth exploration of the historical development and influence of collage remains a critical research area in art history.

The purpose of this paper was to examine the evolution of collage as a medium and its profound influence on modern and contemporary art. By analyzing the works of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963), who are widely regarded as the pioneers of collage within the Cubist movement. It also aimed to bring understanding to the transformative nature of their artistic techniques and how they influenced subsequent generations of artists (Smith, 2015). Moreover, this research investigated the expansion of collage beyond Cubism, by exploring its impact on art movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, and Pop Art, and the diverse techniques and processes employed by artists in the creation of collage artworks (Brown, 2019; Johnson, 2020).

Understanding the historical context in which collage emerged is vital to comprehending its significance. The early 20th century was a period of artistic experimentation and societal change, marked by the breakdown of traditional artistic conventions and a desire for new forms of expression (Davis, 2013). Collage provided artists with a means to deconstruct and reconstruct visual elements, reflecting the fragmented nature of modern life and challenging established artistic norms (Thomas, 2017). By delving into this historical context, one can gain insights into the motivations behind the adoption of collage as a medium.

This research paper also contributes to the existing body of knowledge on collage by examining its evolution as a medium and its impact on modern art. By analyzing the works of key artists and exploring diverse artistic movements, the transformative nature of collage and its lasting influence on artistic practices were uncovered. Through this exploration, a comprehensive understanding of collage's historical significance and its continuing relevance in contemporary art are provided.

Historical Context

The emergence of collage as a medium can be understood within the broader historical and artistic context of the early 20th century. This period witnessed a significant shift in artistic practices, marked by the dissolution of traditional artistic boundaries and the exploration of new forms of expression (Davis, 2013). The cultural and societal changes that accompanied the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the time influenced artists to seek innovative approaches to represent the fragmented nature of modern life (Thomas, 2017).

The early 20th century was characterized by a sense of urgency for new artistic languages that could reflect the complexities of the changing world. As Davis (2013) suggests, artists were driven to question the limitations of representational art and traditional notions of composition. The advent of photography and the rise of mass media further challenged the primacy of painting and sculpture as the dominant forms of artistic representation (Davis, 2013). Within this context, collage emerged as a response to the fragmentation and dislocation experienced in modern society. Artists sought to create visual compositions that reflected the multiple perspectives and simultaneous experiences of the modern world (Jones, 2018). Collage, with its assemblage of various materials, fragments, and found objects, became a powerful means to capture this fragmented reality (Thomas, 2017). By incorporating everyday materials such as newspaper clippings, photographs, and fabric into their artworks, artists could directly engage with the contemporary cultural and political milieu (Davis, 2013).

The historical context of the early 20th century provides crucial insights into the motivations behind the development of collage as a medium. The desire to break away from traditional artistic conventions, the influence of technological advancements, and the need to represent the complexities of modernity all converged to create fertile ground for the emergence of collage as a significant artistic practice (Brown, 2019).

Pioneers of Collage: Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque

Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were two revolutionary artists who played pivotal roles in the development of Cubism, one of the most influential art movements of the 20th century (Danto, 1981). Their innovative approaches to art shattered traditional notions of perspective and representation, ushering in a new era of artistic exploration.

Pablo Picasso, a Spanish painter, sculptor, and one of the most celebrated artists of all time, is known for his diverse body of work that spans various artistic movements (Richardson, 2007). He co-founded Cubism alongside Georges Braque, and together, they embarked on a journey to deconstruct and reinterpret reality through geometric shapes and fragmented forms (McCully, 1998). Picasso's prolific career encompassed not only painting but also sculpture, ceramics, and other forms of visual expression (Elderfield, 1992).

Georges Braque, a French painter and a close collaborator of Picasso, shared a profound artistic partnership during the early 20th century (Lanchner, 1989). Together, they developed Analytical Cubism, characterized by the deconstruction of objects and the representation of multiple viewpoints simultaneously (Flam, 1995). Braque's work often featured muted color palettes and intricate compositions, reflecting his dedication to pushing the boundaries of artistic representation (Ware, 2016).

Both Picasso and Braque's contributions to Cubism

had a profound and lasting impact on the art world, paving the way for new artistic movements and forever altering the course of modern art (Barr, 1986). They introduced collage as a significant artistic technique within the Cubist movement (Smith, 2015). Their collaborative exploration of fragmented forms and multiple perspectives laid the foundation for the development of collage as a distinct medium in modern art.

In their early experiments, Picasso and Braque sought to challenge traditional notions of representation and perspective by incorporating diverse materials and elements into their compositions. They broke away from the traditional practice of representing three-dimensional forms on a two-dimensional plane and instead began to explore the possibilities of fragmented imagery and multiple viewpoints (Smith, 2015). This innovative approach gave birth to what would later be known as Cubist collage.

Picasso's groundbreaking work, such as "Still Life with Chair Caning" (1912) (Fig. 1), exemplifies his pioneering use of collage elements (Jones, 2018). By incorporating printed oilcloth and rope into the painting, he blurred the boundaries between painting and sculpture, challenging the traditional separation of mediums (Jones, 2018). Braque, in his work "Fruit Dish and Glass" (1912) (Fig. 2), utilized fragments of wallpaper and wood-grain patterns to create a visually rich and textured surface (Smith, 2015). These early explorations by Picasso and Braque not only expanded the possibilities of artistic representation but also introduced new materials and techniques into the artistic lexicon.



Figure 1
Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair-Caning*, 1912, Collage, 10 5/8 x 13 3/4 in. (27 x 35 cm.), Musée Picasso, Paris



Figure 2
Georges Braque, *Fruit Dish and Glass*, 1912, Collage, 24 3/4 x 18 in. (62.9 x 45.7 cm.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA

Over time, Picasso and Braque further refined their collage techniques. They incorporated found objects, such as newspaper clippings and sheet music, as well as simulated textures through the use of stencils and imitation wood grain (Smith, 2015). Their collaborative spirit and shared experimentation played a crucial role in the development and refinement of collage as a medium.

The works of Picasso and Braque not only had significant impact within the context of Cubism but also influenced subsequent generations of artists. Their innovative use of collage elements inspired artists to explore new ways of combining and juxtaposing materials, expanding the possibilities of artistic expression (Smith, 2015). The legacy of Picasso and Braque's pioneering work can be seen in the continued exploration and experimentation with collage techniques by artists across different artistic movements and periods.

Expansion and Experimentation

While collage originated within the context of Cubism, its influence extended far beyond this movement, permeating other artistic movements such as Dada, Surrealism, and Pop Art. This section explores the expansion and experimentation of collage as a medium across different artistic contexts.

The Dada movement, known for its rejection of traditional artistic conventions, embraced collage as a powerful means of critiquing and subverting societal norms (Brown, 2019). Artists like Hannah Höch (1889-1978) and Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971) employed collage techniques to create provocative and politically charged artworks. Höch's photomontages, such as "Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany" (1919-1920) (Fig. 3), incorporate diverse visual elements to comment on gender, politics, and mass media (Brown, 2019). The Dadaists' experimentation with collage opened new avenues for artistic expression and challenged established ideas of artistic composition. In the Surrealist movement, collage became a tool for exploring the realms of the subconscious and the irrational (Johnson, 2020). Artists like Max Ernst (1891-1976) pushed the boundaries of collage by employing frottage and grattage techniques, which involved rubbing or scraping surfaces to create textured effects (Johnson, 2020). Ernst's collage works, such as "The Forest" (1927) (Fig. 4), fused disparate elements to create dreamlike and fantastical landscapes. Surrealist collage aimed to disrupt conventional

reality and evoke the mysterious and subconscious realms of the mind.



Figure 3
Hannah Höch, Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada
Through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch
of Germany, 1919 - 1920, Collage, 114 × 90 cm,
Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museenzu Berlin



Figure 4
Max Ernst, The Forest, 1927, Oil on canvas,
100 cm × 82 cm (39.4 in × 32.3 in),
Tate Gallery, London

In the mid-20th century, Pop Art embraced collage as a means to reflect the consumerist and media-saturated culture of the time (Smith, 2015). Artists like Richard Hamilton (1922-2011) utilized collage to juxtapose images from popular culture, advertisements, and mass media (Smith, 2015). Hamilton's iconic work, "Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?" (1956) (Fig. 5), combined various imagery to critique the superficiality of consumer society. Pop Art's use of collage brought the everyday into the realm of fine art and further expanded the possibilities of artistic expression.



Figure 5
Richard Hamilton, Just what is it that makes today's homes so different,
so appealing?, 1956, 26 cm × 24.8 cm (10.25 in × 9.75 in),
Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen

The expansion and experimentation of collage across these artistic movements demonstrate the medium's versatility and adaptability. Collage continues to be a significant mode of artistic expression in contemporary art, with artists exploring digital collage, mixed-media approaches, and new materials (Johnson, 2020). The ongoing exploration of collage techniques and their integration into various artistic practices attest to their enduring influence in the art world.

Techniques and Processes

The diverse techniques and processes employed in creating collage artworks have contributed to the rich and varied landscape of the medium. This section explores the different approaches artists have taken to create collage and their impact on the aesthetic and meaning of the artwork. One common technique in collage is cut-and-paste, where artists physically cut out images or materials and arrange them on a surface. This approach allows for precise control over composition and the juxtaposition of visual elements. The cut-and-paste technique is exemplified in the works of artists like Hannah Höch and Richard Hamilton, who meticulously composed their collages using scissors, adhesive, and found imagery (Brown, 2019; Smith, 2015).

Another technique is photomontage, which involves the combination of photographic images to create a new composition. Photomontage allows artists to manipulate reality and construct narratives by juxtaposing disparate elements. The Surrealists, particularly Max Ernst, experimented with photomontage to create dreamlike and fantastical imagery (Johnson, 2020). Ernst's frottage and grattage techniques, where he rubbed or scraped surfaces to create textured effects, further expanded the possibilities of collage (Johnson, 2020).

Assemblage is another approach in collage, involving the incorporation of three-dimensional objects and materials into the artwork. Artists like Joseph Cornell (1903-1972) and Louise Nevelson (1899-1988) used assemblage techniques to create intricate and evocative compositions. Cornell's boxed assemblages, such as "Untitled (Soap Bubble Set)" (1940s) (Fig. 6), combined found objects, photographs, and personal memorabilia to create poetic and enigmatic narratives (Smith, 2015). Nevelson, known for her large-scale wooden assemblages, constructed intricate sculptures using salvaged materials (Brown, 2019).



Figure 6
Joseph Cornell, Soap Bubble Set, 1949-1950, Box construction,
14 3/4 x 18 3/4 x 4 1/4 in. (37.5 x 47.6 x 10.7 cm.),
Smithsonian American Art Museum

In the digital age, artists have embraced digital collage, where images and materials are manipulated and combined using digital software. Digital collage allows for greater flexibility, enabling artists to experiment with layering, transparency, and the seamless integration of diverse elements. Artists like David Hockney (b. 1937) and Martha Rosler (b. 1943) have utilized digital collage techniques to explore contemporary themes and engage with the possibilities of the digital medium.

The techniques and processes employed in collage contribute to the overall aesthetic and meaning of the artwork. The choice of technique influences the composition, texture, and visual impact of the collage, while the process of gathering and assembling materials adds layers of context and conceptual depth to the artwork.

Impact of Collage on Modern Art

The impact of collage as a medium extends beyond its origins in Cubism, influencing the trajectory of modern and contemporary art. This section explores how collage has challenged traditional notions of representation, composition, and artistic materials, leaving a lasting imprint on the art world.

Collage disrupted conventional modes of representation by embracing fragmentation and juxtaposition. The Cubist collage experiments of Picasso and Braque shattered the illusion of a single fixed viewpoint, opening up new possibilities for depicting the complexities of the visual world (Smith, 2015). This innovative approach challenged the traditional hierarchy of artistic materials, incorporating everyday objects and materials into the realm of fine art.

The legacy of collage continued to unfold in subsequent movements. The Dadaists, with their politically charged and unconventional use of collage, challenged established norms and expanded the possibilities of artistic expression (Brown, 2019). The Surrealists employed collage to delve into the realm of the subconscious, blurring the boundaries between reality and fantasy (Johnson, 2020). The Pop Art movement, with its incorporation of mass media and consumer culture, embraced collage as a means to reflect the contemporary cultural landscape (Smith, 2015).

Collage's influence on modern art is not limited to specific movements. Its techniques and principles have permeated artistic practices across a wide range of media and styles. Contemporary artists continue to experiment with collage, both in traditional and digital forms, blurring the boundaries between disciplines and exploring new ways of constructing meaning (Johnson, 2020).

Collage has also challenged traditional notions of composition and materiality. The use of found objects and diverse materials has democratized artistic practice, expanding the range of materials available to artists and challenging established hierarchies within the art world. Collage has become a means of

engaging with contemporary culture, as artists incorporate fragments of media and popular imagery to critique and reinterpret societal narratives (Smith, 2015).

In summary, collage's impact on modern art is multifaceted. It has challenged traditional modes of representation, composition, and materials, paving the way for new artistic possibilities. Collage continues to inspire and influence contemporary artists, allowing them to engage with the complexities of the modern world and redefine the boundaries of artistic expression.

Conclusion

The evolution of collage as a medium has had a profound impact on the development of modern and contemporary art. Collage emerged in the early 20th century as a response to the fragmented nature of modern life and the desire for new artistic languages. Pioneering artists like Picasso and Braque introduced collage within the Cubist movement, challenging traditional notions of representation and composition. Their experimentation with fragmented forms and multiple perspectives laid the foundation for the development of collage as a distinct medium.

The influence of collage expanded beyond Cubism, infiltrating other art movements such as Dada, Surrealism, and Pop Art. Artists like Hannah Höch, Max Ernst, and Richard Hamilton further pushed the boundaries of collage, by incorporating diverse materials and exploring new conceptual approaches. Collage became a tool for critiquing societal norms, delving into the realms of the subconscious, and reflecting the consumerist culture of the time. The techniques and processes employed in collage, such as cut-and-paste, photomontage, assemblage, and digital collage, have contributed to the rich and varied landscape of the medium. These approaches have allowed artists to manipulate materials, challenge traditional composition, and explore the limitless possibilities of visual expression.

Collage's impact on modern art extends beyond specific movements and styles. Its legacy can be seen in the ongoing exploration and experimentation with collage techniques by contemporary artists. Collage continues to challenge traditional notions of representation, composition, and artistic materials. It has democratized artistic practice, incorporating everyday objects and found materials into the realm of fine art. The significance of collage lies in its ability to capture the complexities of the modern world and provide a platform for critical engagement with contemporary culture. Artists have used collage to disrupt established narratives, reinterpret societal norms, and construct new meanings. By blurring the boundaries between disciplines and embracing diverse materials and techniques, collage has expanded the possibilities of artistic expression.

In summary, the evolution of collage as a medium has left an indelible mark on the art world. Its innovative

approaches, diverse techniques, and ability to challenge conventions have transformed artistic practices. The continued relevance and exploration of collage in contemporary art demonstrate its enduring influence and its capacity to engage with the ever-changing dynamics of our modern society.

By studying the historical development, pioneers, expansion, techniques, and impact of collage, one gains comprehensive understanding of its profound significance in the trajectory of modern and contemporary art. Further research and exploration in this field would continue to shed light on the dynamic relationship between artistic techniques, mediums, and the broader art historical context.

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