

# *Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Collage Art in Graphic Design from the Perspective of Deconstructionism*

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**Abstract:** Collage art was first proposed by Western Cubist artists in the early 20th century through the display of artistic techniques, which broke and innovated traditional aesthetic concepts and had a profound impact on the artistic expression forms and concepts of the 20th century. Among them, the core element of postmodern theory, deconstructionism, has gradually emerged in the development process of collage art. In the evolution of collage art, artists continue to deconstruct individuals into fragments and reconstruct and shape new elements. With the innovation and progress of modern technology, collage art has been applied to various fields. In graphic design, collage art also radiates its indispensable influence and charm. The deconstruction and reconstruction techniques of collage art provide new sources of inspiration and ideas for graphic design, breaking the traditional old model and promoting the continuous evolution and development of graphic design that combines tradition and innovation. Starting from deconstructionism, this article explores and analyzes the performance of collage art in the historical process, as well as the innovative application and methods of deconstruction and reconstruction in collage art in graphic design. Finally, it thinks about and explores the needs and contributions of collage art aesthetics to the future field of graphic design.

## 1. Introduction

Collage was integrated into modern art in 1912. Although Cubism was mainly based on painting, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso were both involved in collage. The integration of collage with Cubism and other schools enriched artistic techniques and occupied an important position in the art world, showing its unique artistic charm and far-reaching influence. Cubist artists broke the conventional painting style and tried to disassemble and reconstruct the beauty of the picture from multiple dimensions and angles to express their ideas and convey different understandings of beauty. Wang Shuai and Qian Xiaonong's "Western Leather" mentioned: "Picasso is the leading master of Cubism. Cubism denied three-dimensional space in its creation and completely abandoned the

principle of perspective. It compressed three-dimensional space into two-dimensional space, boldly changed the perspective, and carried out deconstruction and patchwork<sup>[1]</sup>. The techniques, materials, and concepts of collage further demonstrated the innovation of Cubist aesthetics, making it more complete. Cubism also made the development of Western collage art gain more and more favor and use from artists.

In the 1960s, German philosopher Jacques Derrida first proposed the theory of deconstructionism, which quickly influenced many fields. In art and design, deconstructionism emphasizes breaking through tradition and innovating through the reorganization of elements. In the field of graphic design, collage art, as its representative practice, breaks the convention with the combination of materials, images, and text. With the development of digital technology, graphic design has ushered in new opportunities. Although relevant research is extensive, the innovative application of deconstructionism in graphic design still needs to be explored in depth to expand more possibilities.

## **2. Definition and Explanation**

### **2.1. Collage Art**

#### **2.1.1. The development of collage art**

Collage art originated from primitive society. In the early days, it was for practical needs, such as the production of clothing and production tools. The word originated from the French word "coller", which means pasting and later developed into the English word "collage", which means creating on a two-dimensional plane. Artists such as Picasso and Braque introduced it into painting and led the trend. After historical evolution, collage art has become an important form of expression in modern art. In artistic creation, especially Dadaism, Surrealism, and Pop Art, artists have conducted in-depth exploration and enrichment of collage techniques. They eclectically select various materials, such as text, damaged images, advertising prints, and even pages of newspapers and magazines, which have become elements for constructing their unique collage works<sup>[7]</sup>. They use collage as an important artistic means to express criticism of society and culture, as well as to reshape and construct their inner world.

#### **2.1.2. Characteristics of collage art**

Collage art is distinctive and creative. It breaks the boundaries of traditional art, integrating materials from different materials and sources to form a new visual language. This cross-border integration not only demonstrates the artist's innovative thinking but also enriches the expression of art. In addition, collage art has a strong narrative. Through the combination and arrangement of different elements, artists can convey complex and profound emotions and stories, triggering resonance and thinking among the audience. Collage art also has a strong visual impact and artistry. This visual design works with strong visual impact and can meet people's current aesthetic needs and give people a more direct and real emotional experience<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2.2. Graphic Design**

### **2.2.1. Graphic design development history**

Graphic design, as an art form of visual communication, focuses on the combination and layout of visual elements in two-dimensional space. It covers multiple aspects such as text typesetting, graphic design, color matching, and image editing, and aims to convey information, promote

products, or shape brand image through carefully arranged visual elements. As a product of the Second Industrial Revolution, modernist design reflects the politics, economy, and culture of the times, and also reflects the rich thoughts of people at that time and their thinking on philosophy and aesthetics <sup>[3]</sup>. For example, El Letsky, a representative artist with significant achievements in graphic design, usually uses drawing instruments and splicing methods to complete graphic design, highlighting the simplicity of geometric structure. For example, his book cover work "Das Entfesselte Theater", as shown in Figure 1, clearly shows his structuralist expression.

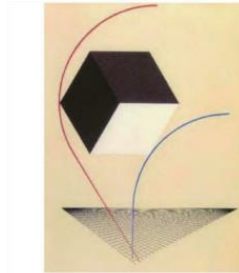


Figure 1. *Das Entfesselte Theater* (El Letsky, 1925)

### 2.2.2. Innovative development of graphic design in the digital age

Traditional graphic design focuses on the presentation of visual effects and the pursuit of formal beauty, and hand-painting and printing are common techniques. However, with the advent of the digital age, graphic design has ushered in opportunities for innovation. Digital technology has not only broadened the creative space but also enriched the expression methods. It enables graphic design to use visual elements such as dynamic images and interactive design more flexibly to create more vivid and interesting works, injecting new vitality into graphic design and making it glow with new brilliance. In terms of characteristics, graphic design in the digital age pays more attention to innovation and personalization. Designers are no longer limited to traditional visual forms of expression but are brave enough to try new creativity and ideas and express their thoughts and emotions through unique design works. At the same time, graphic design in the digital age also pays more attention to interaction and communication with the audience and establishes a closer connection with the audience through design works.

## 2.3. Deconstructionism: An important part of postmodernism

### 2.3.1. The emergence of deconstruction

Deconstructionism as a design style emerged in the 1980s, but in the 1960s, German philosopher Jacques Derrida used it as a viewpoint against the structuralism in linguistics proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure. The structuralism proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure emphasized that "language, as a whole structure, has a decisive logical priority over speech and its meaning <sup>[5]</sup>. However, Derrida believed that there is disorder behind language, no specific meaning, and thus no essential structure. Deconstructionism also more specifically expounds Derrida's rebellious ideas. In the aesthetic field of art and fashion, deconstruction is not harmony, but the expression of disharmony. This is an unsettling aesthetic concept that makes us reflect on the disunity of existence, the cracks in society, and why our lives are full of paradoxes and contradictions <sup>[8]</sup>. At the same time, deconstruction is also an effective strategy to approach and manipulate themes, forms, and aesthetic frameworks, thereby exposing certain weaknesses of certain styles, especially the role of these styles and images in maintaining power and domination.

### 2.3.2. Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a broad generalization that encompasses the thoughts and practices of many fields and disciplines and has specific conceptual models in literature, philosophy, art, architecture, politics, etc. Postmodernism originates from modernism but is also an awakening and correction of modernism<sup>[9]</sup>. Postmodernism questions the unity and rationality of modernism and advocates disorder, ambiguity, and diversity. It deconstructs traditional norms, rejects fixed truths, and pursues dialectical relationships between cultures and the expression of multiple thoughts. By emphasizing the diversity and complexity of reality, postmodernism challenges traditional life meanings and moral concepts, focuses on individual experiences and feelings, and encourages people to reconstruct their cognition and form a more comprehensive self-understanding.

### 2.3.3. The Relationship between Deconstructionism and Postmodernism

By chance, Jacques Derrida became one of the thinkers related to postmodernism. Everything about disunity, difference, and fluidity in deconstructionism is opposed to the homogenization principle of high modernism and is consistent with the ideological orientation of postmodernism against the neat and orderly thinking of modernism. Both try to deconstruct and reconstruct the mainstream thinking values. Deconstructionism and postmodernism in the field of literature complement each other. They both encourage the re-evaluation and reflection of traditional literature and values. In the field of art, postmodernism emphasizes dehumanization, collage, and other expression techniques, breaking the boundaries and norms of traditional art and aesthetics, pursuing the diversity and innovation of art, and making contemporary art more rich and diverse.

## 3. Techniques of Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Collage Art in Graphic Design

### 3.1. Use of text

In the vast field of visual communication, the design and application of text play a vital role, especially in collage art, where the aesthetic laws and design techniques it follows are indispensable. Good text design and text editing bring viewers a sense of pleasure, which can attract people's attention and further improve the efficiency of information exchange<sup>[4]</sup>. However, over-emphasizing the readability and plasticity of text can easily lead to monotonous design forms and lack of innovation, affecting the effect of information transmission and causing visual fatigue in the audience. In order to break through this limitation, text design needs to be innovated. Deconstruction, as the starting point of innovation, requires us to break the shackles of traditional aesthetics, split the text structure, and integrate it with the overall design. When reconstructing, we can cleverly combine different fonts, font sizes, and font spacing to create a unique visual effect. This move can maintain readability while improving the artistry and innovation of the design, injecting new vitality into graphic design.

### 3.2. Graphics Application

Graphics in graphic design have the characteristic of quickly attracting attention. Graphic collage art achieves high coordination and layering of the picture by disassembling and reconstructing graphics. For designers, recombining pictures from different places is a very interesting technique, that is, combining two unrelated parts with a unique method and finally presenting them to the audience<sup>[4]</sup>. Designers can draw inspiration from diverse cultures and cleverly combine graphic elements to form a rich and dynamic design. For example, Paul Rand's work "design36" poster (Figure 2) uses deconstructionism to simplify and reconstruct graphics, showing unique

expressiveness and appeal.

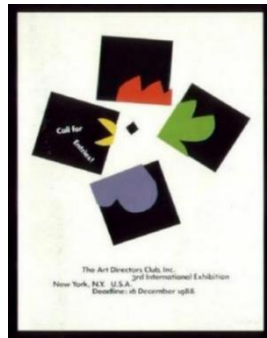


Figure 2. Poster for the Art Directors Club of New York design36 (Paul Rand, 1963)

### 3.3. Material Application

In graphic design, the use of materials is often overlooked, but collage art emphasizes its importance. Designers enrich the texture and level of the design by choosing a variety of materials, such as paper, cloth, metal, plastic, etc. Combining traditional and modern materials can create unique visual effects. By using material properties, such as the softness and foldability of paper and the gloss and heaviness of metal, designers can show their creativity and create a unique atmosphere. This kind of material innovation and use not only enhances the design expression but also expands the design ideas and possibilities, injecting new vitality into graphic design.

## 4. The Role of Collage Art in Enhancing the Aesthetic Ability of Graphic Design Works

### 4.1. The diversity of collage art materials adds layers and richness to graphic design works

In collage works, the creators carefully select materials such as metal, paper, and cloth to form a sharp contrast in color, texture, and shape, and show a rich sense of layering and three-dimensionality through clever layout. This technique not only breaks through the traditional printing aesthetics but also gives the graphic design a three-dimensional touch, bringing a new experience to the audience. Modern bookbinding design also draws on this method, such as using a variety of materials to innovate "small mechanisms" to enhance reading fun and interactivity and inspire readers to have rich associations with books. In the process of exploring and using various materials, creators have deeply discovered the beauty of materials and also extended the application of materials in artistic creation. As an important component of collage art, materials can break traditional design rules and boundaries, create eye-catching visual effects, and provide creators with unlimited room for creativity.

### 4.2. Collage art creates a new concept of defamiliarization in daily life

Collage art is an integrated art that seeks aesthetic connections between objects. Every time you make a collage, you are decomposing and reconstructing this society, showing some ideas that are impossible in reality in a two-dimensional plane. The collage technique combines images of different times and styles, pursues contingency, and shows heterogeneous visual impacts. It has the characteristics of novelty, diversity, and infinite creativity. Collage artists prefer to break traditional concepts and create novel and peculiar works by recombining non-traditional elements. This process not only opens up a new aesthetic of graphic design but also reflects the creator's unique insights into the world.

## 5. The inspiration of new media technology to collage art in the future field of graphic design

With the rapid development of electronic technology, new media technology has injected new impetus into graphic design, pushing it from two-dimensional to three-dimensional. These technologies not only simplify the material selection process but also break the limitations of physical creation, allowing creators to freely decompose and reconstruct images and break the traditional framework. With the help of image design software Photoshop, Illustrator, post-production software After Effects and mobile application stickers APP, short video apps, creators can easily transform their creativity into three-dimensional design and show the unique aesthetics of collage art. At the same time, the application of dynamic graphic design is becoming more and more extensive, adding more fun and vitality to the design through animation effects and interactivity, such as dynamic posters, interactive design, and three-dimensional effects. With these creative tools, their imagination is no longer limited by technology. Designers use their design language to bring their works to the public, which also gives collage art a new development path in graphic design<sup>[6]</sup>. In addition, as an innovative form of graphic design, photographic collage shows unique artistic effects by integrating photographic works and collage materials. Artist Jorg Karg uses digital technology to integrate creative elements to awaken people's forgotten shapes, colors, and concepts (Figure 3). It is expected that in the future, designers and artists will further combine collage technology and digital art to expand the expressiveness of graphic design and the depth of collage aesthetics.



Figure 3. *Dancing Fearless* (Jorg Karg, 2020)

## 6. Conclusion

Collage art has been widely favored by artists since the 20th century. Its deconstruction and reconstruction techniques demonstrate the artistic charm of diversity and inclusiveness and show unique innovation in graphic design. However, the challenges of material collection and integration, as well as the balance between design readability and communication, are limitations to the development of collage art. In the future, with the advancement of science and technology, collage art will be combined with cutting-edge technologies such as VR and AR to open up new avenues for the design field. At the same time, its cross-cultural and cross-regional inclusiveness will promote global cultural exchanges and promote the diversification of the design industry.

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