The Study on History of Photomontage and the Efficiency of Art Schools on it

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Abstract

Photomontage is a combination of several shots joined together for artistic effect or to show more of the subject than can be shown in a single artwork. Images were composed by cutting, gluing, arranging and overlapping two or more photos or reproductions of photos together, sometimes in combination with other non-photographic material such as text or other abstract shapes. The process of creating a collage photo can be traced back to the first darkroom printing attempts, when photographers experimented with direct contact printing of objects placed on photographic plates, or techniques such as double exposure and masking. Manipulation has a long history exactly as long as history of photography. With invention of photography, photomontage played an important role. It is interesting to say that also many years has passes that time, it is important as much as before. The question in this article is searching on the importance of photomontage and the important effect of other art schools on it. It is tired to conclude that with the invention of photography, photomontage was emerged and it was depended on photography. Moreover, the emergence of other art schools as Dadaism has had a positive effect on photomontage as well. This article is about the history of photomontage and the efficiency of other art schools like Dadaism on it.

Keywords: Photomontage, Photography, Dadaism.

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Introduction

The initial samples of photomontage were first the result of an accident. But the human proclivity for achieving a pristine technique to portray dreams and imagination contributed to the spread of the technique among the public. The current article seeks to present a brief introduction of photomontage in form of an art associated with photography and its evolution from the initiation of the technique to the emergence of new media. In addition, in the same area, the article present a very short introduction on the noteworthy artists influential in this field including Talbot, Reglender, Thomson, Heartfield, Max Ernst, Man Ray, etc. Among the influential movements that were popular at that historical literary era, a more detailed description of Dadaism movement and the followers' broad application (especially Dadaists based in Berlin) of photomontage technique is discussed as well.

Other effective movements that have significantly contributed to photomontage are discussed in the paper include Surrealism, structuralism, the practices taken by Bauhaus and Pop Art School. Finally, a brief introduction is presented also to Barbara Kruger as one of the artists who used this technique in her works.

The question that the paper seeks to find an answer to it is the significance of photomontage history and the impact of other artistic schools on it. The main objective is to introduce the history of photomontage in the form of an art dependent upon photography and its evolution and relevant influential artists and styles. The significance of the present article is to investigate the schools and artists that have played influential parts on photomontage as one relatively overlooked expressive instrument in visual arts.

What is Photomontage?

Photography is the process of making pictures by, literally, 'drawing with light' or recording the visually meaningful changes in the light leaving a scene. This goal was established for film photography about 150 years ago (Computational Photography, 2006).

The term 'montage' from the French verb 'monter' (i.e. assemble), was applied to explain a wide range of creative measures developed in the early twentieth century. In the area of photography, montage is to separate negatives and photos driven from various sources (new or old) and to re-assemble them in situations that they are not either relevant to their initial application (Murray, 2014).

In Penguin English Dictionary, photomontage is meant to be "a composite image obtained from a series of photos or artwork and relevant stages". In this field of art, artists present an

image of something that does not exist in real life. They perceive and register things as a metaphor for the dialectic between nature and technology (Biro, 2012).

The term has been recently used in connection with photography processes with darkroom techniques such as two or more different negatives on paper (composite printing dating back to the nineteenth century), and it is less referred to as a method to cut and re-paste photos observed in Dadaists' main photomontages.

It is essential to remember that a photomontage must not necessarily be a montage of photos, and the works even can be a composition of photograph and writing, photo and color, or photograph and design (Moghim Nejad, 2011).

According to Elger (2010), "In composition with other printing elements such as newspaper cuts and news titles, photomontage can convey a type of dynamism, immediacy, and reality, which such function was not possible to be accomplished through other artistic expressions". One of the most important aspects of photography is its physical image. Although in today's digital era it seems like the printing process is valuable to ''fine art'' only, photographers have been experimenting with the medium's physicality since the 19th century in many creative ways. One such way is photomontage, revolutionary in its own right as it provided artists with an opportunity to go beyond the medium's daring quest to represent reality exactly as it is.

History of Photomontage

The history of photomontage is nearly as old as the history of photography itself. Photomontage has been practiced at least since the mid-nineteenth century, when artists like Oscar Rejlander (1857) and Henry Peach Robinson (1869) began combining multiple photographs to express greater detail. Much more recently, artists like Scott Mutter (1992) and Jerry Uelsmann (1992) have used a similar process for a very different purpose: to achieve a surrealistic effect. Whether for realism or surrealism, these artists all face the same challenges of merging multiple images effectively (Interactive Digital Photomontage, University of Washington, Microsoft Research, 294).

Manipulation in the process of photograph creation has a longevity same as photography. "The designs created by Fox Talbot that depict flowers and plants, birds, various fabrics and other objects in a photogram-like manner under the title of photogenic plans are recognized as a basis for the inauguration of photomontage" (Rahimi, 2014).

In general, the main factor underlying the emergence of photomontage can be considered

accidence. "For example, when the page containing Claudine was not transparently clarified, the former image did appear on the photo so dimly (Taleie Bafghi, 2012).

After sometime, during the completion of the procedure, it was used consciously, and was recognized as spirit or ghost photography in which "the photos were generated in the form of double exposure and possibly by gluing the photos together" (Rahimi, 2014).

Official use of multiple mages to create an image, approximately ten years after the invention of photography, has been attributed to Dr. Thomas Case in in Edinburgh in roughly 1848. He created several collotype photos on a negative paper (Tale'ei Bafghi, 2013).

Composite Image

A composite photo is the result of two or more negatives at aggrandizer in magnification stage, where the images are printed on the paper consecutively. At the final stage, after creating a positive image, the photographer usually works on additional parts using brush and special material on additional parts to make the image more seamless and coherent (Tausk, 1999).

Precursors

Le Gray

The idea of composite photograph was originated from the problem of sky recording in scenic photos. In the 1850s, Gustav Le Gray presented composite images of marine scenes. He presented some modifications in Collotype method such as waxing the paper of negative (Rahimi, 2014).

Reglender and Robinson

Two other prominent artists in the area of composite photos include Reglender and Robinson. They used multiple cut negatives and masking. One of the most important works created by Reglender is "Life Style" released in 1857.

Henry Peach Robinson, Fading Away, 1858

John Morrissey

He applied a simpler method for making composite images. In this method, prepared images (photos) were once again shot. For instance, in the photos that were created by him in 1896, he utilized printed and published photos in American photography, such that he created a new photograph by re-cutting and pasting the photos and putting them on a different background (Moghim Nejad, 2011).

Popularity of Composite Photos

The popularity of imaginative tales like Alice in Wonderland or the literature created by Edgar Allan Poe in the middle of the nineteenth century led to the emergence of photo mainstreams relevant to such stories. Proper composite photo techniques did emerge at the same time. "Thus, some devices such as cutting the photos and re-pasting some parts of them was utilized in the area of popular photographic entertainments like humorous greeting cards, movies' photo albums and videos, and military memorabilia (Moghim Nejad, 2011).

Dadaism

Due to hatred of rationalism, nationalism and bourgeois life that caused the World War, Dadaism tended to absurd, random, spontaneous, and meaningless issues (Bakula, 2007).

In Berlin and with the artistic works created by some artists including Budder, Grosz, Haussmann, Hartfield and Holsenbeck, the movement followed an entirely political stance (2009).

Invention of photomontage

The term photomontage did emerge by Berlin Dadaists for their technique in image creation.

Photomontage as collages generated by cutting and pasting together photo pieces and often print letters was considered most innovative and controversial artistic evolution fabricated by Berlin Dadaists. Mainly published in Dadaist publications, such photomontages were so seamless and coherent that as though they had been published in darkrooms. However, they were the result of attaching various photos including the photos relevant to events, posters, book covers, a variety of themes and anything that creates wonder and amazement.

Of course, such technique was somehow influenced by Kubism pathing with the difference that the theme was a more important element in Dadaist narration. Even photomontage was orginated from Futurist collages. During time, photomontage practically became an artistic form desired by Dadaists and then Surrealists and extended to the climax of imaginary.

Hannah Höch, *Cut* with the Dada Kitchen *Knife* through the Last Weimar, 1919.

Heartfield and Grosz began working together on a photomontage. Grosz attributed the invention of photomontage to 1916. They later debated with *Raoul Hausmann* another Dada photomontage artist on who had invented this style (Elger, 2011). Regarding photomontage, *Hausmann* writes: "The term expresses hatred of fulfillment of the role played by artists and to express oneself as an engineer. Thus, we required an overall performance. We sought to fabricate and also syntheize our main structure" (Aynsley, 2011).

Raoul Hausmann, Austrian painter and sculptor (1886-1971) was one of the founders of the Dada movement in Berlin. He and other Belin Dadaists used to apply photomontage (Pakbaz, 2011). In the article "The Definition of Photomontage", Haussmann expressed the effective potential of the technique in collecting contradictions and paradoxes: According to him, the ability to combine perspective in a single image with a flat and plain one, far perspective with a close one, hardness with softness, etc. and to achieve a complete balance can lead to the emergence of a strong tool that is same as the life.

Raoul Hausmann, artistic critic, 1918.
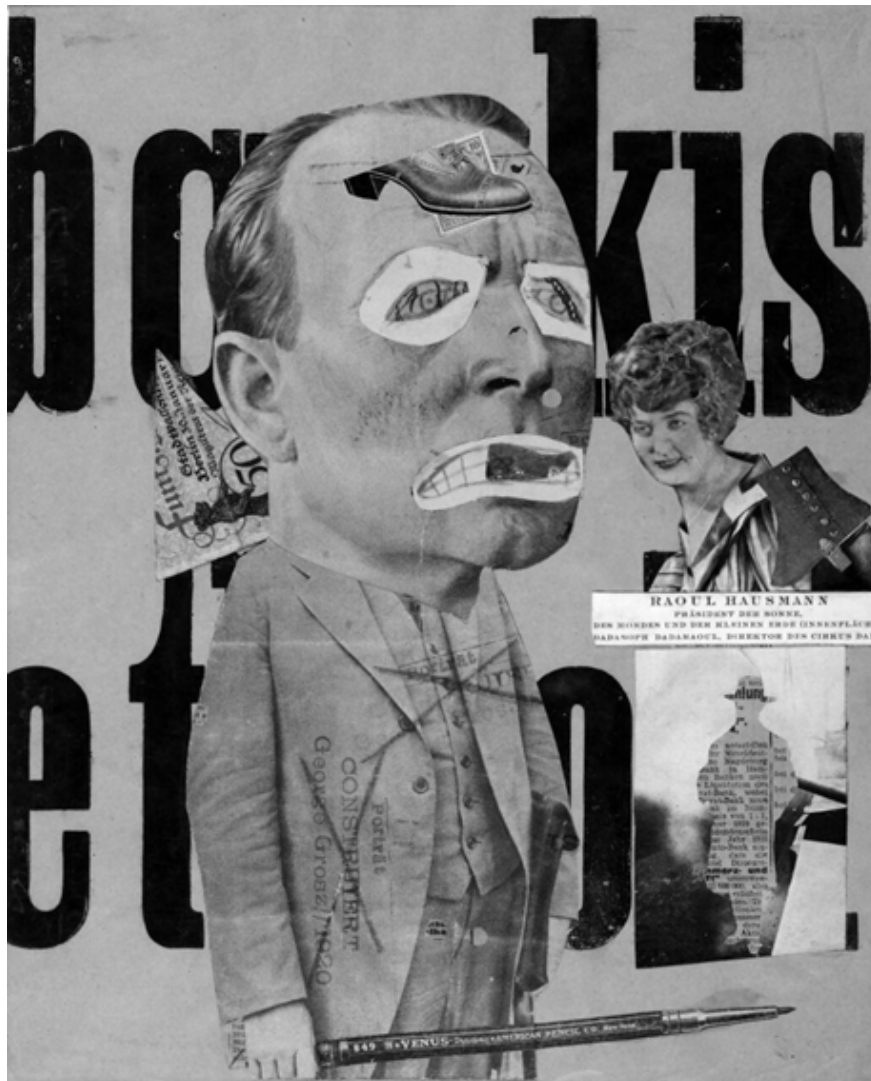
John Hartfield was born in 1891 in a city near Berlin in Germany (Elger, 2010). Since 1927 to 1937, he worked as a graphic advertiser for a German printing press, and due to the wisdom and effectiveness of his photomontage posters and caricatures, he soon achieved an international reputation (Berger, 2014).

He alleges that "by adding an unimportant colored speck, a photo can be turned into photomontage and a special work of art". This definition seems more facile than other ones presented on photomontage. However, it does not mean that Hartfield regarded photomontage as a simple method to create images. Rather, his definition indicates that the significance of photomontage lies mainly in the message that can convey. Thus, whatever the method used, its significance depends on the message received from the total composition. Accordingly, recognize most proper elements for the relevant message is a complex process (Goudarzi & Abdi Farzanehpour, 2008).

ADOLF, DER ÜBERMENSCH: Schluckt Gold und redet Blech

John Heartfield, Adolf, the Superman: swallows gold and spouts junk, 1924

"It seems that unique qualities in Hartfield's works, originates from his initiatives and talent in the use of photomontage. Technique in the hands of Hartfield turns into an elegant and clear instrument in political teachings, and more accurately, Marxist teachings.

Using a scissor, he separates events and objects from their main scene. Then, to create a political perspective, he composes them in a new non-continuous and unexpected scene. For example, Parliament is placed into a wooden coffin. But this goal may be achieved by design or even a verbal slogan. Exotic advantage of photomontage lies in the fact that everything that is cut and separated from the main scene can keep its photographic and familiar appearance. In this case, first, the objects are seen and then symbols and signs can be realized.

But because moved things and their commonplace natural continuity are disrupted and also because they are arranged to convey an unexpected message in a instant, we become cognizant of the contractual nature of normal and fluent message in them. If ideological cover or alteration in the form of their data would be applied properly in such a way that alteration in formal appearance remain unrecognizable, then the objective underpinning their formation could be fathomed. The appearance itself shows unexpectedly that how can they deceive us (Berger, 2014).

Photomontage influence on the surrealist movement

"Mainly originating from literature, Surrealism is a movement, art theory and ideology fabricated by the French writer, Andre Breton. Breton presents his ideas and theories in the 1920s, and then publicizes them in the first Surrealism Manifesto in 1924 (Bakola, 2014).

"The principles of the movement that mainly revolved around the application of dreams and unconscious for poet and artists, were extracted from the ideas proposed by the psycho-analysis of Sigmund Freud" (Rahimi, 2014). "The surrealists sought to discover a surreal than the real beyond the reality and also to make a distinction between semi-conscious and conscious reality to a new and absolute reality, and consequently reinstatement of the man in the area of psychology instead of analysis" (Gardner, 1986).

Surrealism reflected an era of passivity and despair felt by the Western man in a period of social crisis, and also it was an poetic extensive experience that made man more attached to its inner universe (Pakbaz, 2012)

The movement in painting is of two types: the first type, which Dali called "pained dream objects", and traditional methods such as realism are used for the portrayal of a dream-like, eerie and turbulent world.

In the second type, which is built upon technical innovation, colorful lines and shapes are composed influenced by inner motivations in such a way that can associate subjective images.

The Surrealist artists that took advantage of such technique utilize some procedures in their works including patching, reversion stamps, rubbing, stamping, etc. (Ibid).

The second method was effective on photomontage photography performed by Surrealists and Dadaists. The facilities provided by photomontage for visual display of fanciful ideas were welcomed by such group of artists, and they were impressed by Surrealism, this is because they were able to create imaginary pictures by this method, and were not either forced to rely exclusively on the origin of recognizable object. Thus, Max Ernest and Paul Eluard applied some collage-form photomontages in their works. Carl Tig created a variety of Surrealist montages including the images of the women who were wandering surrounding the city, natural forms and mineral matters (Tusk, 2006).

Max Ernst

Under the influence of paintings by *Giorgio de Chirico* and his imaginative background, Max Ernst founded the major branch of Surrealism, which utilized magic realism. Using some objects with definite and transformed objects, Ernst presented them in a realistic manner to be able to expose their imaginative dimensions.

Generally, superimposition of few negatives during magnification was replaced by simple practices of cutting and paste. Photomontage turned into a quick method by which photographers could fulfil dreamy scenes depicted in their minds. The composition of some negatives in the time of magnification and printing on the paper required more time. However, many photographers preferred this method, because they could release their imagination freely and control how to select and embed the parts of the new images (Tausk, 1996).

Max Ernest, Here everything is still floating, 1919-1920.

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Man Ray

Ray Ray's enthusiasm to discard artistic contracts and review all of the events that are happened in darkroom led to the invention of some of the most innovative photography techniques, such as Rayograf and solarization (Coe et al., 2014).

During the Dada movement, Schadograph was invented by Christian Schad. Schadographs were provided based on the random placement of different objects such as newspaper craps, the images printed on the paper, paper tickets, etc. on the sensitive surface of photography paper and radiation of light on it. What was recorded in its work was indeed the shadow of objects, and before that it convey a special subject, it was a study of form and shape, and had an exotic and mysterious state.

Influenced by Schadograph method, and by arbitrary placement of normal objects on the sensitive surface of photography and radiation of light on it, Man Ray was able to obtain tri-dimensional forms with different gray degrees on black background which were called Rayograph (Rahimi, 2009).

Some other Surrealist artists in the area of photomontage include Herbert Bayer and Herbert List.

Man Ray, Untitled, 1924.

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Other Relevant Movements

In addition to the Berlin Dadaists, some structuralism artists used to apply photomontage to deliver revolutionary messages to all classes and workers in industrial society, and some of the artists practicing in the area include Alexander Rodchenko, El Lissitzky and Gustav Klutsis (Rahimi, 2010).

Furthermore, in the late 1920s, Bauhaus school artists considered photomontage a widely used procedure to combine reality and imagination, and the technic was verbally used in the same manner form by visualization and geometry. Photomontage was formed in the new shapes to provide posters and images in illustrated publications that were reminiscent of the modern world, especially influenced by new advertising design devised by the Bauhaus artists such as Bayer Group, László Moholy-Nagy and Joost Schmidt as the major members (Murray, 2014).

László Moholy-Nagy found new possibilities in photomontage for creative works. He appreciated early Dadaist efforts in order to provoke, prove, and experiment visually using their montages. However, he followed his own procedure by composing some images that could generate a new work. He called the method as 'photoplastic'. According to him, the method was totally different from photomontage proposed by Dadaists, because the former had a centralized concept and visual core that could be clearly observed as a distinct entity. Though, photoplastic was often composed of different subjective and mental impositions as well (Tausk, 1996).

Photomontage Influence on Pop Art

"Although pop art is typically considered an American phenomenon, in reality it came into existence in the art of the mid-50s in England" (Arnason, 2010). "The term 'pop art' was coined by Lawrence Alloway, art critic, in London, and it quickly turned into a popular term in the United States as well" (Bokula, 2014).

This movement (public art) puts an emphasis on urban culture, and proposed a type of universal aesthetics in the area of art (indeed, the movement rejected the conventional intellectual aesthetic criteria). On this basis, films, commercial ads, pseudo-scientific tales, pop music, conventional letters and words, everyday objects and consumer commodities were the tools and subjects to such art.

Public art in America achieved more breadth and variety as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism and Dada approach to beliefs. The specific examples of the pop painting can

be found in the works created by American painters (Warhol, Lichtenstein) and English artists (David Hockney, Peter Phillips). They mainly did apply patching and silk screen printing method in their works (Pakbaz, 2012).

In this art, use of photos was of special significance. The artists associated with this movement that created some works in the field of photomontage works include Richard Hamilton, Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg.

Richard Hamilton, just what it is that makes today's homes so different, so appealing? One of the distinguished artists that has benefited from photomontage in recent times is Barbara Kruger. She initiated her activity in the area of fine arts in 1969, and continued its artistic style as a freelance designer. In the mid-seventies, she composed poetry. She finally abridged her texts to the extent of short phrases or a single word, and on the other hand, she tended to photography, thus mixed her photos with writing (Barrett, 2000).

Barbara Kruger, Money can buy you love, 1958
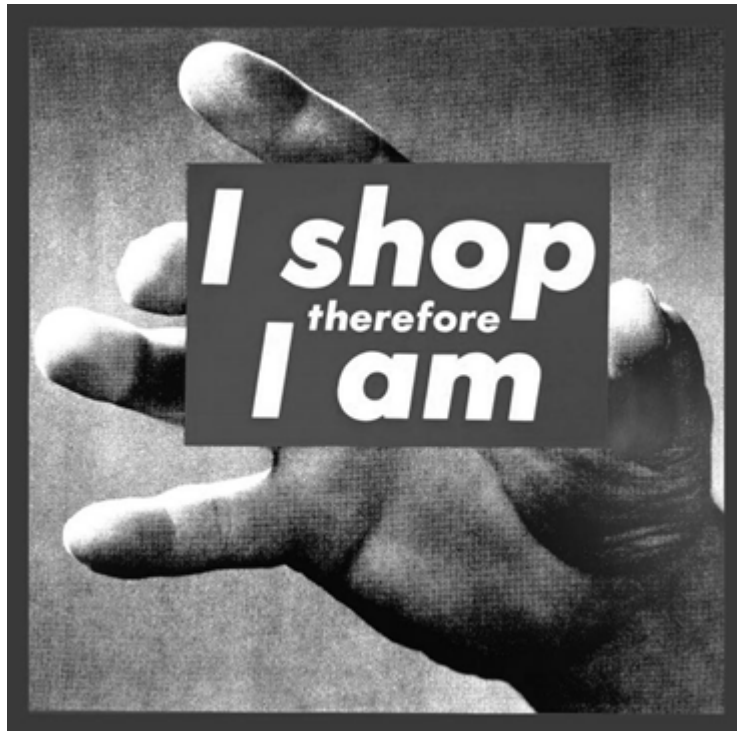
Barbara Kruger, Untitled (I shop, therefore I am), 1958

Kruger was involved in artistic activities in the 1980s and 90s, in the days when postmodern experimentations were highly popular, and most of the artists benefited from the images and photos created by others rather than re-creation of all of the images and photos. Postmodernism, challenges the possibility and charm of originality in art (Barrett, 2000).

Today, a new method to create uncanny and phantasy images have been emerged. The utilization of digital cameras and use of computer technology such as Photoshop has provided such possibility.

Conclusion

Influenced by arbitrary studies on photography art that led to the emergence of first photomontages and then Dadaists and Surrealists' utilization of them and all other expressive artistic procedures that are typically influenced by photomontage, now it could be acknowledged that flexibility and facilities provided by this procedure has been further exposed. Taking advantage of their own purpose and attitude, the artists influential on photomontage were able to achieve a new treatment of this expressive instrument.

Use of photomontage in the contemporary era does not follow a specific direction and framework. Based on its personal tendency, each artist has selected an approach similar to each of the styles and the procedures used in the photomontage during the passage of time. Some also take advantage of a combination of these procedures. Despite the presence of computer technology and ease of the use of them, contemporary artists use lesser traditional production practices for photomontage images.

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