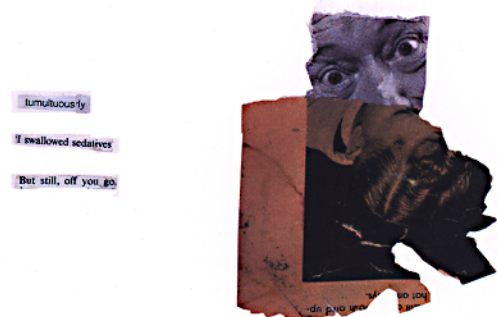


Yoon Cho
Enrique Fernández Cervantes
Carolina Kile
Stephen Marc
Gordon Young



legacy of photomontage

engineering the photograph

This exhibition features work by artists Yoon Cho, Austin, Texas; Carolina Kile, Forney, Texas; Enrique Fernández Cervantes, Dallas, Texas; Stephen Marc, Tempe, Arizona; and Gordon Young, Dallas, Texas. These contemporary artists expand upon the practice of photomontage: they infuse their experiments with new cultural influences; they adopt critical frameworks for examining their subjects; and they continue to discover innovative digital processes for the combination and alteration of photographs. New or unexpected associations permitted via montage foster reinterpretations of the photograph or image fragment.

All of these artists employ digital processes in the generation of their images, acknowledging the potential of new technology to expand the creative potential of montage. Their inspiration comes from theater, music, performance, poetry, fiction, and historical narrative. From political critique, to the generation of stories, to a challenge to our concepts of reality, these images pose questions about the methods we rely upon to construct meaning.



Yoon Cho, Thumbprint, 70" x 32", digital c-print, ©2006



Carolina Kile, Untitled, 25" x 37", digital print, 2006

Montage, a modernist practice, refers to cut-and-paste methods for the combination and alteration of photographs and film. Photomontage was "invented" by the Berlin Dada artists who, according to Dadaist Raoul Hausmann, thought of themselves as engineers seeking "to construct, to assemble" their works. As art historian Dawn Ades notes, "Montage in German means 'fitting' or 'assembly line', and Monteur 'mechanic', 'engineer'."¹ The biting, satirical works of these innovators—as in John Heartfield's critiques of Nazi Germany—occupy an unique place in art history. Dawn Ades quotes Sergei Tretyakov who in 1936 writes about Dada artist John Heartfield :

It is important to note that a photomontage need not necessarily be a montage of photos. No: it can be photo and text, photo and colour, photo and drawing...If the photograph, under the influence of the text, expresses not simply the fact which it shows, but also the social tendency expressed by the fact, then this is already a photomontage.²

Tretyakov's definition of photomontage presents a model unconstrained by an emphasis on technique. Ades affirms that "the ideal use of photomontage is dialectical and that above all the idea behind it must be clear."³ Montage represents the response of early 20th century artists to the expanding picture press in Weimar Germany. The initiation of these avenues of distribution for magazine images from across the globe parallels our ready access to information via the internet, only our experience is amplified by factors such as speed and quantity. The engineer was the ideal figure for the modern era. So do we now embrace the programmer, the hacker, the gamer, and navigator of networks? Art historian Maud Lavin presents a cautionary note regarding early 20th century attitudes regarding the engineer: "[D]ivisions between workers and management were elided by the mythic creation of the celebrated engineer, an amalgam of labor and management: creator, producer, thinker, doer, above all--the efficient man."⁴ How do current models for innovation coincide with our frameworks for how we now define creativity?

Contemporary image assembly encompasses and exceeds modern methods. By categorizing various "flavors" of photomontage, both past and present, we may consider how these techniques foster our reading and interpretation of images. From additive to subtractive methods, from abrupt juxtaposition to subtle superimposition, from overlay to merging to fusion, the combination of image fragments in new digital photography has never been so varied. Gordon Young combines image and text to craft his *Haiku Hermeticum Series*. Paralleling the concise Japanese poetic form, Young limits the number of elements that appear in each montage and encourages the viewer to generate associations between visual and textual information. He assembles small fragments to intentionally frustrate interpretation, to explore what he describes as "the arbitrary nature of meaning--meaning as an artificial construction."⁵ Young's work recalls John Baldessari and Roy Lichtenstein: snippets of figures and voices reveal characters who populate these composites. Like comics, the matching of text and image suggests a narrative, yet we continue to search for a clear message. Psychological states suggested through the depiction of a lone chair in one image, a pair of bulging eyes which return our gaze in another, are echoed by disjointed text fragments.

Enrique Fernández Cervantes is an avid storyteller, both a fiction writer and a creator of narrative images. He notes how he responds to stories by Italo Calvino "that join together the real and the invented by creating a unique world where tangible reality coexists with allegorical, magical and surreal elements."⁶ Fernández Cervantes' characters appear on theatrical stage sets; he combines elements from past, present and pure fantasy, in the tradition of magical realism. In *Trinidad*, Fernández Cervantes fulfills the dream of his mother, who always wanted to see the ocean. Seagulls burst across a field, like a soul released from the constraints of the body; an image of his mother at age 23 beckons to the viewer. Fernández Cervantes explores a reality that is not physically possible, but that appears believable nonetheless.

Stephen Marc has travelled across the United States as well as Canada, photographing locales that housed the Underground Railroad, visualizing the hidden history embedded in the geography of these communities and the artifacts that remain. He has produced tens of thousands of photographs at historically documented sites that originally served as safe routes for slaves. Marc merges old and new, making references to different centuries within a given image. In his *Walking in the Footsteps Series*, documents labeled Mississippi, 1836, float over the color photograph. Graceful script, a shopping list hand-written with pen and ink, recalls the past. By contrast, the richly colored image of the Nishnabotna River pulls the viewer into the present, guiding a re-reading of this 100 year old text from a contemporary perspective. The first names of slaves and corresponding numbers are superimposed over the central road, fields, and blue sky. Measurements for shoes function as a document implying travel, while a reconstructed landscape reveals a path crossing the river. Shoes purchased by a slave owner ironically may facilitate his servants' flight to freedom. Marc combines images of places, artifacts and individuals to produce rich visual narratives.

Yoon Cho employs photography and performance to document the self. Her overlay of graphic elements onto her photographs facilitates her references to culture and identity, and produces a hybrid method of montage. She comments that her "themes focus on the loss of and search for identity, the conflicts that occur when building a new identity, and conforming to social surroundings."⁷ She locates herself in space, both externally through markers--compass or neighborhood street grid--and internally, with medical imaging that records her physical state. The positions of profile, back and front underscore this examination of the human form, in a method parallel to scientific documentation. The diagrams and graphs foster a connection between body and site.



Enrique Fernández Cervantes, *Twenty-three Written Stories*, 12" x 16" digital print, 2006

Carolina Kile's physical response to music guides her selection and arrangement of figures and objects within a seascape. The overturned piano and tossed waves imply sounds as she locates a visual equivalent to notes and rhythm. Her seamless composition reminiscent of Surrealist photo montage merges dream and reality. Kile places herself, or her understudy, into the landscape. The human figure resembles a glyph; the body becomes expressive form.

These artists embrace the intersection of digital technology and photography to investigate the legacy of 20th century practice and 21st century innovation. The resulting combinations of image fragments and text extend the potential for creative expression while providing contemporary responses to our shared world.

--Marilyn Waligore, 2007

¹ Dawn Ades. *Photomontage*. New York: Thames and Hudson. 1976. 12.
² Ades 17.
³ Ades 17.
⁴ Maud Lavin. "Photomontage, Mass Culture, and Modernity: Utopianism in the Circle of New Advertising Designers." in *Montage and Modern Life: 1919-1942*, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. 1992. 45.
⁵ Gordon Young. Artist's statement, 2007.
⁶ Enrique Fernández Cervantes. Artist's statement, 2007.
⁷ Yoon Cho. Artist's statement, 2007.

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march 16 - april 13, 2007
curated by: Marilyn Waligore
exhibition reception:
friday, march 23, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

This lecture is co-sponsored by the School of Arts and Humanities and by Richland College in conjunction with The Parallel Festival
<http://www.richlandcollege.edu/multimedia>

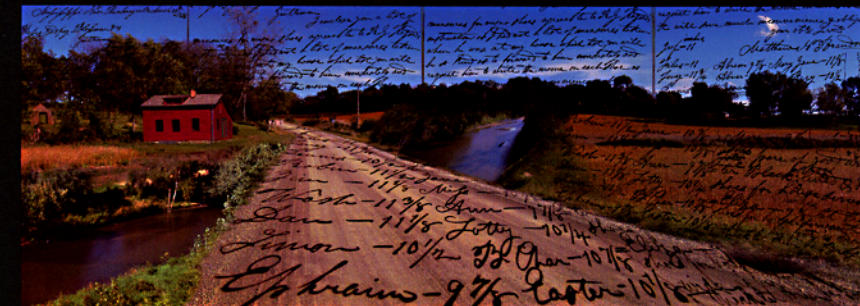
Honored Speaker
april 4 - Stephen Marc
7:00 p.m., Jonsson Performance Hall, JO 2.604

Walking in the Footsteps: Dealing with Remnants of Slavery and the Underground Railroad

Stephen Marc, photographer and art professor at Arizona State University's Herberger College of Art, will lecture on his imagery, which references the African Diaspora and the history of the Underground Railroad in North America.



Stephen Marc, *Walking in the Footsteps Series*, 18" x 52", digital print, 2006



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Cover images:
Top: Yoon Cho
Hysterosalpingogram
Center: Gordon Young,
Haiku Hermeticum Series

