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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ART
2014
RESEARCH PAPER

THE PEAK OF THE ABYSS

by
Lillian O'Neil

December 2014
Statement

This paper is a record of my research undertaken for the degree of Masters of Fine Art at Sydney College of Art, University of Sydney
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Abstract

This studio research examines processes of collecting, arrangement and collage. It looks into the relationship between memory and collecting to consider how we order and construct meaning. It investigates how when used as a medium collage can function to bring latent content to a conscious plane.
INTRODUCTION

This research is about collage and its relationship to memory, engaging the specific recurring images and themes of romance and tragedy in my work. The paper explores the area that exists in the overlap between the ambiguities of memory and the nature of collection and collage. The idea will develop (and go on tangents) by looking at artists whose works sit in this field and by using my own work as a vehicle to discuss these ideas. There are several stages to making a collage including:

- Memory
- Collecting
- Arrangement
- Romance

And these stages will be the chapter headings that structure this paper.

Reflecting the non-linear nature of my collages I draw from a wide range of sources including philosophers Paul Ricoeur and Henri Bergson, art historian Aby Warburg, artists Simons and Burke, Patrick Pound, Hilma af Klint, Max Ernst, Hannah Höch, Kurt Schwitters, Matt Bryans, Alisdair McLuckie, Tobias Buche, and my personal memories and collages. A broad range of ideas written in the last 102 years will clash and form allegiances. I am attracted to collections of writing and thought that function as collage: Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* and Rowland Barthes *A Lovers Discourse*.

I begin with the chapter, Memory. With the help of Paul Ricoeur I establish a loose definition of memory as a binary of fictions and realities. I then introduce the idea of memory as a collection and give romance as a key example. Bart Cassiman then provides a key to the duality of forgetting and remembering and how this can be utilised by artists.

In the next chapter, Collecting, I use personal memories to discuss where the
impulse to collect comes from, and this leads to the work of Tobias Buche and his examples of collection-as-autobiography. I consider the inherent obsolescence of the printed image, via the work of Matt Bryans, and the generative nature of the Internet via the work of Simmons and Burke.

I then move on to examine collecting as personal atlas, demonstrated by my personal experiences, and the collections of Patrick Pound and Gerhard Richter. These examples lead into the chapter **Arrangement**, a discussion of how systems of arrangement are used to create meaning.

I introduce my own work as a means to explain these ideas in the chapter **Romance** and look at the work of Hilma af Klint to explore symmetry as a means to form wholes. I briefly look into art, spiritualism and science for overlapping explanations of mirror symmetry and its ability to reconcile dualities. I examine how collage has parallels with falling in love and use the words of Max Ernst and Alphonse Allais to assist me. Several examples of my own work are used to demonstrate how latent personal memories can be realised through collage and how a sense of solace can be found when personal memories are mirrored in found imagery. Our innate need to thematise memory in order for it to make sense is discussed in the final chapter where tragedy, comedy and romance conclude the essay.

Recent exhibitions of contemporary collage in Australia show a flare in interest for the medium. For example, the Hiedi Museum of Modern Art’s **Collage: The Heidi Collection**\(^1\), 2013, curated by Lesley Harding, featured historic and contemporary Australian collage artists including: Damiano Bertoli, Elizabeth Gower, Mike Brown and Sidney Nolan. In 2013 at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Hannah Mathews curated the international collage exhibition **IN THE CUT Collage as Concept**\(^2\), featuring works by Ellen Gallagher and Linder and Australian artists Richard Larter, Ry Hastings and myself. Collage also featured heavily in the 2014 Sydney Biennale\(^3\) with major works by

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3. 19th Biennale of Sydney, Artistic director: Julian Enberg, **YOU IMAGINE WHAT YOU DESIRE.** Sydney
English artist John Stezaker, Swiss artists Gerda Steiner & Jörg Lenzlinger and Australian artist Deborah Kelly. These exhibitions and the large number of international and Australian artists working in collage demonstrate that collage continues to be an important medium in contemporary art.

Photo collage is a young medium. It began with modernisation and the development of mass printing machines and since its earliest days has been used for its ability to aggregate mass imagery into personal and political narratives and for its unique immediacy. At the beginning of the twentieth century, collage emerged from the world of craft and started its evolution into the art form we know it as today. The Big Bang of collage happened when Picasso and Braque radically rejected the harmonious pictorial plane for one that was, “an idiographic logic culminating in an order of spatial disposition totally opposed to discursive juxtaposition.”4 This exploration of spatial fragmentation allowed figure, ground, paint and collage to sit on the same plane and introduced collage as a legitimate art form.

Diane Waldman elaborates,

In jettisoning the hierarchical form and content of conventional painting and sculpture, Braque and Picasso proposed a new type of painting in which the mundane world of the café collided with the surface plane of the painting...in the process, they invented collage.5

This rejection of institutionalised methods and materials is further drawn to attention by the way the found material promotes the actual surface of the work as purposefully two-dimensional. Although craftsmen and women had used collage at home, it wasn't until Cubism that collage burst forth as one of the most important mediums to emerge from the twentieth century and one that as Guillaume Apollinaire says so evocatively, “was already soaked with humanity.”6

21 March-10 June 2014

4 Apollinaire, Guillaume, quoted in McIntyre, Arthur Contemporary Australian Collage, 1987 P15


6 Apollinaire, Guillaume, Les peintres cubistes: Méditations esthétiques, 1913, quoted in Waldman,
Braque and Picasso introduced collage as a conceptual medium, however, it wasn't until Dada that the full immediate, personal, humorous and political potential of collage developed. In the same way that Duchamp dragged a urinal into the gallery and called it art, artists like Höch, Hausman, Schwitters, Citroënon and Ernst dragged in mass printed newspapers, catalogues and magazines and thus radically questioned traditional art values and the institutions that supported them. The anarchist collages of Dada developed the use of fragment, accumulation, and satire to make deeply personal and socially critical collages that examined the political situation in Germany during the early Wiemar Republic following the period after the First World War. In Cut with the Kitchen (cake) Knife Dada through Germany's Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch, Höch uses the dislocating/cutting/relocating process of collage, and its potential for anarchic absurdity, in order to mock the establishment. The cutting and re-contextualising of newsprint photographs of politicians and journalists generates a kind of punkish disassociation/irreverence. Ernst says, “We young people came back from war in a state of stupefaction, and our rage had to find expression somehow or other. This we did quite naturally through attacks on the foundations of the civilization responsible for the war.” The actual act of cutting creates a symbolic separation and through re-contextualising these fragments, Dada artists created a space for individual humour, opinion and imagination that was separate and opposed to bourgeois culture and social values.

In the 1950s and 1960s, American artists recognised collage as a seminal material for dealing with the impact of mass culture. Examples of this are Richard Hamilton’s Just What Is It That Makes Today’s Homes so Different, So Appealing? and Eduardo Paolozzi’s I was a Rich Man’s Plaything. In these works, and many others, collage materials are used for their ability to satire the

7 Höch, Hannah, Cut with the Kitchen (Cake) Knife through Germany’s Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch. 1919. Collage, 447/8” x 353/8”. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz: Nationalgalerie, Berlin
10 Paolozzi, Eduardo. I was a Rich Man’s Plaything. 1947. Collage, Postcard, magazine cover, and advertisements 14 x 9 ¾” The Tate Gallery London.
culture that produces that same material. Collage’s absurd juxtapositions translate the oppositional nature of mass media imagery. For example, in the contemporary work of Martha Rosler, high fashion models meet the horrors of war in her 2004 series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*. She says, “Fragmentation besets the modern world and collage/montage is a symptom, a strategy, and a form of resistance.”

Closer to home, Melbourne collage artists Damiano Bertolo and Zoe Crogon, both consider our relationship to urban environments by placing found images of the figure, or groupings of figures, in retro-futuristic architectural landscapes. In Sydney, Todd McMillan evokes romantic/poetic relationship between landscape and human experience in beautifully simple combinations of two found images, for example, two small black and white images of waterfalls called *Crying*. Stuart Ringholt uses found portraits that he dissects and layers, forming worlds within worlds, or worlds within people.

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev describes Ringholt’s *Circle Head* collages as,

not so much a critique of the mass media or popular culture (in the modern tradition of artistic collage) as a deflected self-portrait registering both a kind of violent confusion and an attempt to work through it with small, poetic acts of reconnection.

Contemporary Australian collage seems to use the mass printed image not so much as a comment only on the ills of image saturation but to find a personal poetic resonance in the discarded printed images of the last century. These artists delete, or relocate, all, or part of the image to adhere a new personal connection or reading of the work. Perhaps Australian artists feel especially comfortable cobbling together, and transferring meaning to the printed image, because our formative education in art history is via flattened reproductions of

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13 McMillan, Todd *Crying*, 2012 Sarah Cottier gallery, Sydney
photographed artwork.

In my own work, I refer to how the nature of collage has been invented or exposed throughout its history. I use its ability to aggregate and relocate mass imagery. I use absurd juxtapositions and their ability to illicit humour. I use the immediacy of found images and their potential to open personal narratives and I alter the fixed meaning of the found image by methods of relocation.
MEMORY

In the following chapter I will briefly discuss how fiction and memory, collection and imagination circle around each other and how this choreography is mirrored in the process of making a collage. We conjure images in our mind’s eye: past events, people and things. Casting out a line, we pull up an old television that flicks stations between real images and fictions. We filter experience through desire, creating endless variables between the objective real and the real that exists in our memories. These loose 'realities' are then stored in memory and presented as accurate recollections when the time is right. Memory is what is left after imagination processes reality. In the following chapter I will demonstrate that collage functions in a similar way to this objective reality/fictionalised memory circuit.

Fiction

In philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s *The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality*, 1974, we find the exploration of how and why a fiction might first occur. Ricoeur proposes that the purpose of creating a fictive narrative is to allow us to realise reality. He states that “real action, of real physical bodies on a real human body”, combined with, “the repeat action of those stimuli”, forms a “trace” which then creates a “belief in the existence of the thing.”\(^{16}\) Once this image exists the imagination sets to work in forming fictions. Ricoeur continues to explain, “Fictions ... proceed from simple images by the means of new combinations. Fictions are merely complex ideas whose components are derived from previous experience.”\(^{17}\) Meaningful personal narratives - such as falling in love - are created this way. When I make a collage the same process is played with. Latent content is transformed onto a conscious plane via collected components and systems of arrangement. Through this system new and old memories/realities can be realised.

\(^{16}\) Ricoeur, Paul, *The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality*, Man and World Vol. 12, Iss. 2. Springer Netherlands 1979, 125
\(^{17}\) Ibid. p.125
Memory as collection

The idea of memory as a collection is examined in the work of Melbourne artist/collector Patrick Pound. He says of his collections, “They make up a constellation. They’re found to converse. Meaning can be found in the accumulation of details.”21 By linking images together via a system of poetic reasoning Pound’s collections and “galleries of poetic constraints”22, mirror the process of how we gather together the images that accumulate into meaningful memories.

Memory is the original collection. It is memory that structures my collection of found images. Henri Bergson goes further, explaining that collecting memories to form emotional narratives is what makes up who we are, he talks about the role of memory in guiding our soul, thought, and action, “Doubtless we think with only a small part of our past, but it is with our entire past, including the original bent of our soul, that we desire, will and act. Our past, then, as a whole, is made manifest to us in an impulse.”23 This mysterious impulse, generated by accumulated past experience and the trace images these experiences leave in the memory, is the pulse that I want my collages to beat with. When I select images to collage, each image correlates to a pre-existing memory. The impulse to connect found images to personalise experience Ricoeur calls “reproductive imagination”24. It is reproductive imagination that allows us to extrapolate reality and attach meaningful emotional narratives to found images. Ricoeur describes the relationship between image and reproductive imagination as “parasitic”25.

A collection creates links, like a spider web, in which threads are gathered together at one point and then cast out again to connect at another point. At these junctures I place an image and then continue to cast out lines, selecting images that act as flares or markers for the reconstruction and fabrication of memories; the found image acts as the catalyst for memory recall and connections. In this analogy I am a giant spider weaving a web of lost and

21 Pound, Patrick The Gallery of Air, Artist talk, Melbourne Now, National Gallery Victoria 2013
22 Ibid.
24 Ricoeur, Paul, The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality, 1979, p128
25 Ibid.
found memories in an attempt to make a map of half forgotten relationships, emotions and encounters. The memories that lurk at the edges of forgetting are illuminated by the images I find and collect.

WARNING

*Parasite: A parasite lives in a close relationship with another organism, its host, and causes it harm.*

Romance is a reoccurring theme in my collages. Ricoeur’s 'parasite' suggests that romance feeds off hard reality for a more emotionally acceptable narrative. Romantic fiction outweighing reality recurs in my life and work. Romance is dangerous and the best thing since sliced bread. For example, a few years ago I got engaged with a $2 ring after two dates. Both of those dates consisted of eating kebabs at midnight. Through the eyes of an unromantic it might have looked like two cold, drunk, hungry people eating kebabs under fluorescent lights, but through my powerful romance-vision I saw the street lights flooding the rainy streets in a cinematic gold wash, the $2 ring “the biggest diamond that I could afford” glistening on my finger.

I can't really decipher between the truth and the fiction in memory. My works generate their own version of events but have no solution. They are a sort-of-map to a sort-of-land of memory.

**Forgetting**

Forgetting, the 'nothing', darkness, these are the shades that give memories their form. French writer and philosopher Maurice Blanchot sums up this binary beautifully in *Forgetful Memory* when he says, “Memory, the peak of the abyss.”

Bart Cassiman in his catalogue introduction for an exhibition titled *The Sublime void, memory and imagination* elaborates on the idea that memory is an illumination possible only in the void of forgetting, and how artists can utilise

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26 University of Arizona, *What is a parasite?*. [http://student.biology.arizona.edu/honors98/group15/whatisaparasite.htm](http://student.biology.arizona.edu/honors98/group15/whatisaparasite.htm) accessed 29th October, 2013

this chiaroscuro,

“The highly imaginative/creative nature of memory ... involves forgetfulness and loss. It is only through this forgetfulness, however, that the past can appear in a manner that is not entirely sterile and thematic, or merely quotational. Such an appearance- shaped to a crucial extent by absence – can rightly be called a sublime void, because it preserves the past in the stratification of its multiple layers and its essential irreconcilability ... Their art neither thematizes nor consecrates the iconographical vocabulary, but allows it to resonate – almost imperceptibly, yet all the more intensely as a result. We are not talking here about explicit reminiscences – an eclectic, post modern feast at the table of history – but an echo that shimmers throughout the work, while never expressly betraying its origin. Their works (the artists) do not describe, they evoke, which is why memory is subjected here to such a radical process of imag(in)ing, leaving it hovering over the edge of total absence.”

Forgetting is the darkness that enables memories to be illuminated.

COLLECTING

I come from a family of collectors. Or more accurately, junk hoarders. My family seems to have an obsessive compulsion to collect junk items and re-place them in a new home. Growing up, my mum would talk about the stories that came attached to second-hand flotsam and jetsam; the long thin indentations around the legs of our kitchen table became the knife marks of pirates sharpening their blades before a terrible feast. A dress up box full of past lives contained a stripy jumper that used to belong to the king of Spain. Mum’s collection of dress-ups, lovingly restored furniture, vases, weird table cloths, shells and vintage drinking glasses (over the years hundreds of coloured glasses have passed through the house and big bowls full of cowry shells collected over thirty years of daily beach walks are overflowing) is limited to the house. Dad’s collection is confined to the shed, which is filled with boxes of photographs, old friend’s artwork, slides, cameras, his dad’s beautiful collection of tools, scraps of wood, half filled paint cans etc. The value of these objects is always in the story of their history. They range from out and out fiction (as above) to “saw it on the other side of the road and did a uwie across the highway” to “I met a few boyfriends in this dress Lil, maybe you’ll get some too. (Thanks mum).” Now my brother Miles collects other people’s holiday footage from the 60’s and 70’s and re-edits them to make ultimate holidays for the now very old or very dead, “Lil! Neil bloody Diamonds in this one!” Both of my grandparents’ houses had a spooky, dusty, ‘spare room’ full of every kind of human accumulation imaginable: paintings, jewellery, hankies, handbags, mismatched chairs, all odd angles lit by Venetian blind stripes. These rooms silenced my brother and I with the weight of time and the endless narrative possibilities attached to every object. The experience of sorting through these rooms after my grandparents died highlighted the minutiae and magnificence of a life and the objects that define it. And I have filled a spare room floor-to-ceiling with books from which I pilfer images to make big collages that are mostly about love and heartache. The incidentals of life become worlds within the world, like each carefully selected image in a collage.

Although more consciously constructed, collage has the same possibilities of an accumulative autobiography; the nature of memory is mirrored in the
combining of found imagery to form new narratives. German artist Tobias Buche uses collected images as a kind of aggregated self-portrait, (Fig. 1). These images, displayed in loose grids on cork display boards, form a personal record of time, place, and relationship. Collected image as a record of self is something that I have kept in mind as I amassed and assembled my pictures. The images that make up my work, for example Funeraria (Fig. 2), have a sense of displacement, they are fragmented and now belong to a new and personal narrative. The images are torn between two worlds. We wonder at their original context whilst we experience their place in the subterranean autobiography they are now part of. The viewer is aware of a subjective emotional foundation to the composition, yet the chosen images are ‘public domain’, so to speak, so there is recognition, a direct way for the viewer to access the work.

I use images found in old publications. The difference in place and time offers a moment of dislocation from the viewer’s present reality. Further to this, multiple pasts are pasted side by side. There are areas in my work that are seamlessly coordinated by colour and scale. The compression and cohesion works to essentialise a subject. A Chinese city skyline from the 90’s combines with a German street scene from the 60’s to represent ‘city’. A side effect of this is the work naively telling the story of technology for a large part of the twentieth century. Again, the game is one of memory, the memory of our shared aesthetic history presented humorously, apocryphally, and with shameless romance. Joining in this game is the actual materiality of the images – paper quality, printing inks, their natural aging. I collect photographic images from books printed approximately between 1920-1996, which places them roughly in the pre-internet age. This is a time before images became pixelated. This is the end of an era. This is romance.
Fig 1. Tobias Buche, *Untitled*, 2007, photocopies, photographs, collages, computer prints on movable walls. 201 x 307 x103cm.
Fig. 2. Lillian O’Neil, *Funeraria*, 2012, Collage, 180cm x 180cm
The Internet

The ability of collage to densify vast amounts of information is a recurring theme of the medium. It can be seen today in the work of Los Angeles-based collaborative duo Simmons and Burke whose kaleidoscopic internet-search collages boggle the mind with their intensity, for example see Fig. 3. Simons and Burke make collages that align aesthetically with the Internet's self-generative nature and seeming immortality. Their work examines the very nature of the Internet and the kind of Bosch-esque nightmare visual culture it creates. They appear like apocalyptic landscapes bustling with the internet's darkest secrets and loudest buzzfeeds, where celebrities, babies and animals sit side by side with extreme violence, sex and mass consumerism; Theirs is a new kind of compressed collage, one that queries the reaches and depths of the internet and how we interact with this new form of image-search and access. Because we live in the age of the Internet I feel I should give an explanation as to why I don’t Google all my images.

Collages that use images found on the Internet are antithetical to those that use printed (machine) images. – The Internet has no concept of decay, whereas the printed image is innately temporal - time fades and eventually turns the images to dust. This temporality corresponds to an awareness of our own mortality; this is the crux of the found image. The Internet image generates whereas the printed image degenerates. These two methods of collage talk of what accumulated images demonstrate about humans, but they are oppositional in their metaphors of time and our relationship to it. German media theorist Wolfgang Ernst elaborates,

“ The modernist aesthetic was a machine aesthetic. It is being replaced through the alliance of computers and electricity by a trans-classical information aesthetic.... Image sorting in the digital field creates aesthetic and epistemological options that are alien to the mechanical model of montage,... The collage is based on pieces of iconically intact images. Pixel images, however...function of the computing medium itself. Essentially, these no longer have anything at all to do with images, merely to mathematical functions.”

29 Ernst, Wolfgang. The Dynamization of Knowledge Collages in the Age of Electronic Media, essay in,
Fig. 3. Simmons & Burke, *If Not Summer #1*, 2010, Lightjet print & Custom Audio Software, 145.5cm x 228.6cm.

Brains and Atlases

The Internet is a kind of brain. However, the idea of a world brain wasn’t born with the Internet. “In 1912 Nobel Prize laureate Wilhelm Ostwald (Chemistry) had envisioned a “world brain” that would establish the connection of knowledge in a functional rather than mechanical way.” In 1938 H.G Wells explored this idea again in World Brain, which saw a “permanent world encyclopaedia.” The impulse to create all-knowing brains, or, visual systems of knowledge such as an Atlas, can be traced to Aby Warburg’s Mnemosyne Atlas, (Fig. 4.) - Mnemosyne being the embodiment of memory in the form of a Goddess. By accumulating fragments we create an atlas of memories. Another slave to collecting, who amassed perhaps one of the biggest collections of photographs the world has ever bothered to look at, is Gerhard Richter. In Warburg’s footsteps he has called it Atlas. In the book Gerhard Richter, Atlas Helmut Friedel writes, “Gerhard Richter has been collecting since the beginning” and it does appear to be an epic attempt to collect his entire life through image. His collection is so vast, so well catalogued and so poetically arranged that the photographs become not only about his life but also about what it is like as a human to live on planet Earth. His collections become like a search for the moment when the aggregated image becomes a poetic metaphor – an archetype. This line of thought about collection also runs through the work of Hannah Höch and her huge albums of images; in Douglas Huebler’s attempts to collect all the people in the world in his series of works Variable Piece, and more recently in Geoffrey Farmer’s Leaves of Grass; and in Patrick Pound’s “Museums of poetic constraints”. These large collections form worlds of their own. Richter in particular arranges the images to tell a narrative of the world through photography. They are records of lives and human interest; explanatory time capsules.

33 Höch, Hannah, Hannah Höch Archive, Berlinische Galerie, 1889-1978.
34 Huebler, Douglas, Variable Piece #70, Synthetic polymer paint on cut-and-pasted paper on gelatin silver print, typewriting and pencil on printed paper, and pressure-sensitive stickers on gelatin silver print, all mounted in mat. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1973
35 Farmer, Geoffrey. Leaves of Grass, 2013, Life magazines (1935–85), tall grass, wood, glue dimensions variable, documenta (13)
Fig. 4. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas, Boards of Rembrandt Exhibition*, 1927.
ARRANGEMENT

After finding images, collage artists begin arranging. Arrangement is used to experiment with possible combinations and is part of the process of shifting or dislodging the fixed meaning of found images by altering their context and/or associations. Methods of arrangement are unique to the artist. For example, Hannah Höch ordered her images into large albums that have since been reproduced in the book *Album*, in which her selections and combinations are extremely intimate. John Stezaker’s combinations of landscapes and people in his series *Masks,* was discovered by arranging images of landscapes on his left and people on his right that he then held together until they created a schism that necessitated a revaluation of the original image. In the case of Todd MacMillan, Patrick Pound and Gerhard Richter, it is the arrangement of complete (uncut) images that evoke new readings. The individual images are kept whole and by arranging the images into groupings and combinations new meaning is found.

I use two methods of arrangement: the accumulated fragment, E.g., the Gerhard Richter method, and the poetic gesture, E.g., the Patrick Pound method. The accumulated fragment means that I look through books and cut out images of the same subject. For example, I have hundreds of images of the ocean, of cities at night, of space, of cliff faces, etc. This allows me to make vast landscapes that essentialise that subject and allows me to use that landscape as a metaphor. The poetic gesture is a more intuitive method. I look through books, waiting for a moment of recognition or resonance from the image. It might be that it creates a schism, or connection with another found image, or that I can piece together emotional narratives and humour. These methods of arrangement prevent me from ‘drowning’ in disconnected images. Instead, new combinations and relationships are made clear, and from these arrangements I can begin to map a collage. Richter arranges his collection via subject into gridded albums, for example, in *Atlas – Städte (Cities)* Atlas Sheet 107, (Fig. 5), the cities become, not a record of one city, but, through mass, the essence of the subject. Another example is his *Bäume (Trees),* 1970, Atlas Sheet 157, (Fig. 6). The arrangement

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shows not a tree but all trees compressed into one essence of 'tree'. The entire
Atlas is arranged like this, building a kind of bible of human essences. The
desire to search for quintessences is acknowledged by Henri Bergson when he
says that the human intellect will “no longer (reconstruct) reality itself ... but
only an imitation of the real, or rather a symbolic image; the essence of things
escapes us”39 In my own work I try and find the moment when the fragment
accumulates to the point of the whole. This works for large areas of landscape
where mountain, ocean and sky scapes collected from hundreds of images form
one mass. For example in Moon Lovers, Fig. 7, the collection of images of the
ocean is comprehensive / vast enough to complete the idea of the ocean in its
entirety. Multiple images of the ocean collect to the point that it is
demonstrative of The Ocean, enough for it to be used as a metaphor.

1912. P. xi
Fig. 5. Gerhard Richter, *Atlas – Städte (Cities)* Atlas Sheet 107, 51.7cm x 66.7cm.
Fig. 6. Gerhard Richter, *Bäume (Trees)*, 1970, Atlas Sheet 157, 51.7cm x 66.7cm
Fig.7. Lillian O’Neil, Moon Lovers, 2013, Collage, 390cm x 104cm
Patrick Pound’s system of arrangement takes a different approach to categorisation, he works via ‘poetic constraints’ for example in his work *Air*, 2013, Fig. 8, he collects images of the action of air, of the idea of air. He creates poetic combinations by placing discrete images together to form new associations. For example, a photograph of a woman standing next to a blowhole beside a photo of a man with his tie blowing in the wind. Poetic association is how I first begin to order my collection and from these combinations and sparks of difference I arrange the collage pieces. Ordering images this way allows me to build associations and narratives between previously unrelated imagery. Through these processes of systematic and intuitive ordering (sorting, patterning, linking) my work attempts to transform the impersonal, oppositional and chaotic into unified polarisations and personal story telling. Selecting the poetic constraint of love allows me to gather images that contain the idea of heartache, lust, romance, loneliness etc. and combine them into a snapshot of what love memories look like.
Fig. 8. Patrick Pound, *The gallery of air*, 2013, (details) collection of found images and objects, sizes variable.
Obsolescence

Some of the earliest images in Richter's *Atlas* are already beginning to fade and crack. The nature of printed photographs is to snap a moment in time and then begin to fade. The passage of time disintegrates the image, London based artist Matt Bryans speeds up this process by collecting newspaper fragments (which are extremely fragile to begin with) from which he selectively erases information and assembles them into wall-sized panoramas. Hundreds of snippets fill the walls, erased facial features and disappeared headlines form a unique landscape of fading events and people, Fig. 9 & 10. If the Internet can’t fade then the newspaper offers the opposite - its fragility, the temporality of the content and the material create an aesthetic of obsolescence. By virtue of the advent of the computer based, pixelated image, a metaphor of mortality is now found for us in the printed form. There is something spooky in Bryans' work; the erased faces form ghostly worlds as the paper curls and yellows. In his landscape works he builds huge panoramas out of tiny pieces. Like Richter, there are so many individual pieces that they become not an image of a patch of sky but a record of all sky, every sky. His images, through accumulation, through fragment, become representative of the whole.

Within my practice, the temporal/historical significance of photographic images within offset printing materials is significant, in that the printed images sit in a time that is the not too distant past but is no longer the present. This neither-land represents a tangible sense of time lost or passing, not old enough to be from 'another time,' they are fading/slipping, yet still recognisable. In order to understand the tone/meaning of the work, one has to have a sense of the original context. What is shown is often just as important as what is not, and paper qualities and printing methods act as clues to the original context. It seems the future of offset printing lies in small artisanal runs, rather than printing mass numbers of books for the general populace to purchase. This specific type of mass reproduced photograph is found in many books including, but not limited to: encyclopedias, travel books and 'How To' manuals of the DIY variety. Nor I do not collect personal photographs, as I am more interested in the function of mass photographic reproductions as source of information and how this has changed since the advent of the Internet. Like so many artist
who have worked or are working in collage, I am seeking and collecting mass
printed imagery as a means of collating/patching together the discarded
fragments of not to distant pasts.

Fig 9. Matt Bryans, *Untitled*, 2002-3 Erased newspapers. Detail

Fig. 10. Matt Bryans, *Untitled*, 2002-3 Erased newspapers. Installation View.
What the Internet does easily is amass enormous amounts of images, which has been a concern of collage from the very beginning. One of the earliest photo collages ever made, by Hans Christian Anderson between 1873-74 (Fig. 11), features vast fields of layered imagery on multi panelled screens showing each continent represented by thousands of images in a swirling cacophony of civilisation. The accumulated snapshot is seen again and again throughout collage's history, for example, in Hannah Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen (cake) Knife Dada through Germany's Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch, 1919*⁴⁰; Paul Citroen's *Metropolis*⁴¹, 1923; Christian Boltanski’s *Photography Album of the Family D*⁴², 1930-1964 and pretty much Thomas Hirschhorn's entire oeuvre. It's like looking through a thousand windows at once to gather an account of place and people.

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⁴⁰ Höch, Hannah *Cut with the Kitchen (cake) Knife Dada through Germany’s Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch, 1919-20*, photomontage and collage with watercolour, 44-7/8” x 35-7/16”, Staatliche Museen Zu Berlin.

⁴¹ Citroen, Paul *Metropolis*, 1923, Gelatin silver print, (original photomontage lost), 20.3 x 15.3cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Fig. 11. Hans Christian Andersen, *The Great Screen*: Germany/Austria; France; England; The Orient; Sweden/Norway; Denmark; Danes; Childhood. 1873-74, Collage on canvas, four panels, each panel 154cm x 62cm.
Material

Over the past few years, I have moved between Torquay (the seaside town where I grew up, famous for being the home of Bells Beach as featured in the popular movie *Point Break* starring heart throbs, Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze) Melbourne and Sydney. In each town or city I have endlessly trawled second-hand bookshops, op-shops and garage sales for books, magazines and pictures. Collecting these images is partly an attempt to collect the place itself, like an anthropological study of where I have been, as Walter Benjamin noted, “And I travel in order to get to know my geography.”43 Interestingly, Sydney has offered myriad books on disaster and medical injury – whether it is an obsession of Sydney or my penchant for hypochondria is hard to tell. My hometown has a lot of fantastic seventies travel books; Melbourne has a lot of great encyclopaedias. I sort through these discarded books to find images that jump out, these images connect with memories, remembered or half forgotten. I sometimes alter their size and orientation to create greater synthesis between these previously unrelated images.

Fig. 12. Lillian O’Neil, *Attack of the Romance*, 2012, Collage, 360cm x 240cm.
ROMANCE

The first time I combined my life with somebody else’s in the name of love, I made a work to mark the occasion. In the collage, *Attack of the Romance*, Fig 12, which is epic in scale (380 cm x 240 cm) and grand in narrative (someone suggested that an opera track start playing when people get too close), the world sits between the two figures, combined but separate, and not quite - but nearly – symmetrical. The world is compressed and defined between their two bodies, two halves of the whole that are the same but completely different. Microcosm and macrocosm form on the same plane. Multiple horizon lines lead to nowhere and everywhere. This ordering allows me to compress and connect disparate images of places and people, space and time, as it is understood between two lovers. Every image has its opposite and matching piece: it’s made up of halves that form the whole. The work is concerned with the dualities of mirror symmetry.

Symmetries are what the universe is made up of, Professor Marcus du Sautoy explains, “(symmetry) is fundamental across sciences: chemists use symmetry to understand crystal structures; physicists can predict what they may see in the Large Hadron Collider at CERN because of a strange symmetrical object in multidimensional space; biologists discovered that the virulence of many viruses is down to their symmetrical shape.”

The laws of symmetry apply to both the smallest atom and the enormity of space. The universe is constructed out of symmetrical geometries and this is how we have come to begin to understand it. Galileo explains, “The universe stands continually open to our gaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns...the language. It is written in... triangles, circles, and other geometric figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one is wandering about in a dark labyrinth.”

There are several different types of symmetry (There are actually only 17 different symmetries and all of them can be found in the Alhambra), for example, mirror symmetry, defined in physics as, “ an example of a general phenomenon known as duality, which occurs

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when two seemingly different physical systems are isomorphic (similar) in a non-trivial way.”

Mathematicians and physicists use symmetry to understand the universe. In a far more impulsive and intuitive way, artists use it to find their own understanding. In this way we are not left to wander the dark labyrinth. For example, the use of symmetry as a means to reconcile dualities into harmonious wholes is used by Hilma af Klint in a series of 192 paintings titled Painting for the Temple (1906-1915) Fig. 13, 14 & 15. In these paintings af Klint uses the language of symmetry, including geometries, to demonstrate the inter-connectedness of the universe and the unknown spiritual realm with the tangible/physical realm. The curator of Hilma af Klint: Pioneer of Abstraction at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Iris Müller-Westermann explains,

“She’s exploring the world and how things are connected. And she moves between cosmic dimensions and micro dimensions... To her, the microcosm and macrocosm are linked... These works are about us living in a polarised world. Everything we perceive is based on the notions that there is male and female, day and night, heat and cold. We can’t see the world in any other way than polarised. But she and others believed that behind all this everything is interlinked and all things correspond to each other. And beyond all this invisible to us is a world in which everything is as one.”

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Fig. 13. Hilma af Klint, Alterpiece, No1, Group X, Alterpieces, 1915
Fig. 14. Hilma af Klint, The Large Figure Paintings, No5, Group III, The Key to All Works to Date, The WU / Rose Series, 1907
Af Klint uses symmetry as a unifying device for opposites. The rule is repeated over and over again, for example in Fig. 13, 14 & 15. Her use of dualities and symmetry was guided by her fascination with spiritualism and the occult. Af Klint “channelled psychic and esoteric messages from the so called High Masters – who existed in another dimension - into abstract paintings”\textsuperscript{48}. In my own work I have linked together masses of imagery by means of highly structured compositions. With a similar logic to the linking of opposites in af Klint’s work, I often use male and female halves that form a whole. These halves are linked together by a vast range of images that attempt to compress the world, and the male and female, into one. For example, the two figures in \textit{Attack of the Romance} have been cleanly severed at the waist and switched, they are both woman AND man, both sexes contained in each body. Symmetry provides the language with which I explore dualities and wholes.

The fusion of two discrete individuals in love - the combining of bodies, objects, memories, and futures - has parallels in the way images link when a collage is forming. They are both a process of slicing and recombining, cutting away and making whole. Images form couplings, links, and new narratives. To be honest, the shift from being one solo human into a conglomerate couple was both beautiful and terrifying. The grotesqueness of this process is succinctly expressed in the story \textit{Collage} (1891) by French humourist Alphonse Allais. In the story, a surgeon-husband of an unfaithful wife surgically combines her and her lover.

\textit{“(The wife writes to her lover) “To be with you forever, never separated, a single entity composed of our two beings.” After dinner he anaesthetised the two, removed her right arm and right leg, and his left arm and left leg and seared the two together.”}\textsuperscript{49}


In this story, the surgeon, rejected by love undoes Zeus’s soul splitting handy-work (Aristophanes, in Plato’s Symposium, tells how man and woman were one whole beast,

Fig.15. Hilma af Klint, Svanen, No1, Group IX/SUW, 1915
an Androgyny. Their misbehaving lead Zeus to split them in two – man, woman – destined to roam the planet for all eternity, in search of their lost half) and in the process, as the title of the story suggests, creates the ultimate collage. This is the relationship between collage and love – to take two separate images and refine (cut) them until they either smoothly or forcefully come together to form a complete whole. In this way, the medium of collage aligns itself with the theme of love.

Collage is so often associated with violence, the cut but it is also a process of harmonious fusing, smoothing and ordering. Rather than a violent act I see the cut as more of a freeing action, freed from the pre-existing context to find a new combination and one that is often far juicier.

Max Ernst noticed a similar structure when a mass of catalogue images he found combined in such a way as to resemble “love memories”.

“One rainy day in 1919, finding myself in a village on the Rhine, I was struck by the obsession which held under my excited gaze the pages of an illustrated catalogue showing objects designed for anthropologic, microscopic, physiologic, mineralogic, and palaeontologic demonstration. There I found, brought together, elements of figuration so remote that the sheer absurdity of that collection provoked a sudden intensification of the visionary faculties in me and brought forth an illusive succession of contradictory images, double, triple, and multiple images, piling up on each other with the persistence and rapidity which are peculiar to love memories and visions of half-sleep.”

Ernst recognised that the aesthetic of collage, that of combining disparate image to form new wholes, is specific to love memories. Love is the area of memory I am most concerned with. Ernst’s collages are unique in their seamlessness... In *Attack of the Romance* (Fig 12) the hundreds of fragmented images that sit

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51 Ibid.
between the two figures are arranged in such a way that they appear to somehow belong together in seamless configuration of colour, scale and line. The colours and compositional lines are taken from Raphael’s *Disputa* (1509-1510) in which heaven and earth are given equal wall space. I wanted to make an altarpiece for love. Borrowing from compositions used in religious painting and altarpieces allows me, for better or worse, to equate love to a religious experience.

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52 Raphael, *Disputa*, or *The Disputation of the Sacrament Fresco*. The Vatican. 1509-1510.
Fig. 16. Lillian O’Neil, *Volcano*, 2012, Collage, 180cm x 180cm
Volcano (Fig. 16.)

The images I selected to collage in *Attack of the Romance* relate to falling in love, to personal love memories. Over the course of this research I’ve also fallen out of love. Fallen. That is the right word. In Susan Sontag’s fiction novel *The Volcano Lover* she says of the central metaphor, the volcano,

"Perhaps we attend to a volcano for its elevation, like ballet. How high the molten rocks soar, how far above the mushroom cloud. The thrill is that the mountain blows itself up, even if it must then like a dancer return to earth; even if it does not simply descend - it falls..." 53

Here, the volcano represents both mortality and love. It is neither man nor woman, but both as a perfect explosive balance. For the work *Volcano*, Fig. 16, I wanted to compress an entire relationship into one work, from the first hints of love, romance, the sex, the explosions, the fear, the apocalypse (at least the wipe out of the world of the relationship), while the lovers are blissfully unawares of what they are churning up. I chose the moment of volcanic explosion, as this is the moment of “elevation”, the very moment, the spilt second, in which gravity is both defied and adhered to in the same moment. I fell to earth and went back to Melbourne.

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Fig 17. Lillian O'Neil, *Flowers*, 2013, Collage, 180cm x 60cm
Flowers (Fig. 17.)

This is the moment just before the end of the relationship, the exhaustion. I wanted to make a visual elegy, using flowers as the poetic metaphor. Laying flowers on a coffin symbolises a life cycle and their beauty acts as a solace, or at least their beauty makes sense. Jacqueline Milner explains, “An elegiac work of art induces a sense of the universality of suffering and loss and this provides a form of solace.”54 The beauty of the flowers asserts knowledge of sadness. Art critic Arthur Danto talks about internal beauty, how when a work is regarded as beautiful it contains an idea that corresponds morally with the visual beauty of the piece. - The idea, or mood, in the work is somehow morally balanced with the aesthetic of the work and it is this balance that enables an artwork to be moving or to 'ring true'. In line with Danto the beauty in the work is intended to transform grief into something more endurable.55

Fig. 18. Lillian O’Neil, Jungle Fever, 2013, Collage, 200cm x 200cm
**Jungle Fever** (Fig. 18.)

Jungle Fever, Heart of Darkness. This composition is a tondo because I wanted to make a world. It has the same arrangement of symmetrical dualities as *Attack of the Romance* and uses the circle, square and triangle in its composition to hint at the shapes that compose the world. The expanding use of scale allows the viewer to pull in and out of this world. The human-sized man gives access on a human scale whereas the small intricate areas of landscape, and the use of multiple horizon lines, allow it to be read as a totality of the whole earth. The viewer zooms-out on the over-all image and zooms-in on individual pieces. The first image selected for this collage and the one at the centre of the top half is of a foggy room (behind the sexy woman in the gold bikini). This room reminded me of 'The Room' in the Tarkovsky film *Stalker*\(^{56}\). In the film 'the room' fulfils all desires but can also destroy everything. It is in 'the zone', an area reminiscent of chemically contaminated landscapes and entry is forbidden. The Stalker is the man who leads people to The Room. The idea of the room is equitable to forgotten memories; if we could remember everything we would have the key to everything, but by the same token, it would destroy us. It is a reminder of the mysteries, the darknesess, in memory and forgetting. In my collage the bikini clad woman holding eggs is the gatekeeper to this room. The egg functions as Hitchcock’s “McGuffin” - the mystery object that the narrative hinges upon, the goal that is never disclosed. Higher up in the work there is another egg, this one is frying on a man's body. The egg is a cell, the world contained in a perfect shell.

Some images in my work speak specifically to how accumulated images represent meaningful memories. When collecting and repeating images I am attempting to find the crux/truth/centre/essence of a meaningful memory. For example, in my work the image of geographically isolated women who are either dead or lost repeats over and over again. The memory that makes me collect and arrange these images is a tragic one. When I was 13 my mum and her sisters told me the story of their cousin Robin who was murdered in 1972. She was 18. The retelling of her disappearance and the attendant images, have

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\(^{56}\) Tarkovsky, Andrei, *Stalker*, Film, Soviet Union. 1979
lodged themselves in the very centre of my heart and brain. Better said in mum's words,

“Robin was 18 when she moved down from far North Qld (Bowen) to live with Aunty Joyce (who lived in the mansion that backed onto the Royal Melb Golf club) in Beaumaris. She went to Prahran College to study graphic design and decided to hitch hike back to Bowen with a friend Anita who she had met down here. I am not sure who she told that she was hitchhiking, if anyone. She disappeared and then her body was found near Charters Towers I think. They never found the killer.”

And this police report from the Queensland Police Department

**CIRCUMSTANCES:**

On 4 July 1972 Robin Jeanne Hoinville-Bartram left Melbourne in company with Anita Cunningham for a hitchhiking holiday to visit her mother in Bowen. On 15 November 1972, Hoinville-Bartram’s remains were located in Sensible Creek under a bridge on the Flinders Highway, approximately 80 kilometres west of Charters Towers. She has been shot twice in the head by a .22 calibre rifle. No trace of Anita Cunningham has been found.57

I was born in 1985 so I have no memory of Robin, but when as a teenager I was told about her, very strong images were created. The images that exist in my memory of her are fictions because I have never seen crime scene photos, or photos of her hitching up the coast, or photos of the killer. Robin's murder makes me stop and collect images of women lost in landscapes, and women who are dead. Through collecting and combining images of similar tragedies, I am trying to find a common truth (essence) to this kind of universal tragedy. Perhaps a kind of solace

For example, one image I found, which became the central image in the bottom half of Jungle Fever, is that of 17-year-old Juliane Koepcke wading through a

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river in dense jungle. Koepcke is the sole survivor of a 1971 plane crash who lived for eleven days in the Peruvian jungle by wading down a river with a broken collar bone and flesh eating insects in her back and arms. In the Werner Herzog documentary on Juliane Koepcke called Wings of Hope, the man who led the original search team, on what happened to be Christmas Eve, Dr. Juan Zaplana Ramirez recalls,

“It was a dramatic and heart wrenching experience when we arrived at the site of the disaster. We found the wide spread fragments of the wreckage, and there we saw trees hung with the belongings of the travellers, suitcases had opened in mid air and the presents hung in the branches as if these where Christmas Trees decorated for a sad holy night... A super destiny had been pre-ordained for this Christmas and the trees stood as a funeral rite for those who had perished.” 58

The sorrowful beauty of this off-the-cuff elegy somehow aligns with the enormity of the tragedy, and in doing so creates a solace. The doctor stumbles upon a tragedy. It is a shocking, discombobulating sight: wreckage meets nature. It is a collage. The doctor identifies the poetry in the collage: absurd Christmas trees, a funeral rite. He elegises the tragedy by reinterpreting the visuals and in so doing, allows solace.

In a similar way, by collecting, ordering and collaging, I want my work to align poetically with the enormity of the tragedy of Robin’s murder - to make a visual elegy. The obsessive amounts of sorting and ordering in my work are an attempt to find meaning in chaos, in other people’s images, and memories. I collect images that link to strong memories: murder, love, landscape and alcohol seem to be the strongest reoccurring themes. Ordering memories into themed narratives allows us to structure memory and be natural storytellers. This allows us to universalise our experience and better connect with one another.

Tragic Comedy

Humans have an innate need to structure memories into themed narratives. Tragedy, comedy, romance - theatrical themes that we slot our memories into. Collage master-mind Kurt Schwitters went so far as to create set-like rooms out of detritus in his Merzbau, with themed rooms called The Cathedral of Erotic Misery, Lavatory Attendant of Life, Great Grotto of Love and the Sex-Murder Cave. He created an immersive environment that he staged his life in. We categorise our experiences into themes to employ some sort of control. The ability to distil the chaotic mess of personal memory through a filter of grand narratives, in order to grasp and interpret them, has a parallel in how I construct collage. Here I will talk briefly about tragedy and comedy and the combination of the two because these themes are often present in my work. I find tragicomedy’s narrative genre particularly engaging as it focuses on elucidating human relationships with each other and the world. By its very nature, collage lends itself to the genre by constructing new visually dynamic and strangely humorous associations.

Melbourne artist Alasdair McLuckie balances tragedy and comedy beautifully in his work *The highest mountain peaks right before dawn* (Fig. 19 & 20). The work is a twenty-panel drawing in black biro on wooden board of his invented apocalyptic prophecy. Patient vultures surround tiny figures stranded on little rocks in a lightening storm yelling “This looks down right delicious,” and “Pick over the bones.” The human figures yell to each other, “This don’t look good,” and, “The end is nigh.” This work is an example of humour in the face of the tragic. The dramatic environment and epic narrative is broken up by the hysterical little figures yelling their guts out into McLuckie’s invented apocalyptic forecast. The humour springs from the tragic, we have been sized up by the environmentally epic and in this position of puniness we can only ever be humorously way out of our depth.

In my own work I have drawn this into focus by placing images of extreme industrial or natural beauty/chaos alongside the oddities and pursuits of humans. For example, playing bowls in the abyss of space, or a huge man on a mass of tiny mountains who’s so attractive his body can generate enough heat to fry an egg (Fig 18). I often use large areas of outer space in my work because it sets the correct scale for the rest of the images, as Henri Bergson sums it, “It is along this thread (the thread that attaches the sun to the universe) that is transmitted down to the smallest particle of the world in which we live the duration immanent to the whole of the universe.”

Set on this scale the pursuits of humans look like absurd tiny particles in endless time. The relationship between comedy and tragedy is poignant: tragedy is at pains to understand the incomprehensible, while comedy grapples with human relationships. Tragedy often takes the form of human’s diminutive power when faced with the inability to understand fate or randomness. At its centre is a shattering realisation. For example the words King Lear cries as he emerges from prison carrying Cordelia’s body in his arms:

*Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:*

*Had I your tongues and eyes, I’d use them so*

*That heaven’s vault should crack. She’s gone forever!*

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Comedy, on the other hand, seeks to understand meaning in relationships and to demonstrate interpersonal narratives. It is often an effort to unite disparate ideas temporarily in order to more clearly understand relationships or individuals. For example, in the television show Seinfeld, the character of George says, "This woman hates me so much, I'm starting to like her." When the genre of tragedy and comedy are united they examine the meaning of facing the void alone or facing it together. In my work I have attempted to assemble this duality in order to form pockets of narrative in a gesture of temporary coalescence.

In an attempt to reconcile the fictions of love represented in genre - to identify the borderlines between the real love and romantic fiction - I have looked to science to find a different explanation. I felt there was something innate that was missing in Hollywood-ised definitions, the high level of romantic imagery in my work spoke of a more complex emotional narrative. Anthropologist Dr. Helen Fisher's research into human love suggests that there are three stages to our emotion-motivation system: lust, attraction and attachment. She explains falling in love as a brain system motivated by breeding and proposes that:

This brain system is one of three primary mating drives which interact in many ways and which have evolved in mammalian and avian species to direct various aspects of reproduction.

1. The sex drive evolved to motivate individuals to seek copulation with a range of partners
2. Courtship attraction/romantic love evolved to enable 'display choosers' to focus their mating energy on specific mates, thereby conserving courtship time and metabolic energy, and
3. Partner attachment evolved to motivate mating individuals to

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remain together long enough to perform species specific parental duties (Fisher 1998).”

This seems reassuringly simple, and while it aligns somewhat with the rom-com narrative, it is general enough to leave room for interpretation. Further research revealed that scientists have been mapping mating ritual gestures, psychologist Dr. Peter Lovatt, has been going to American university night clubs and filming people dancing, he then blurs out all features and gets women and men to rate who has the most seductive dance moves. He has found that men with high testosterone and women with low testosterone make the most attractive dancers. Men with high testosterone make bolder more coordinated movements whilst women with low testosterone make small intricate hip movements. These studies not only suggest that scientists may be researching their way to the top of the dating game, but that genetic fitness is integral to mating rituals.

This may be the reality, but all kinds of people mate and fall in love. Dr. Fisher’s research into the neural mechanisms of romantic love suggests that, “Romantic love begins as an individual starts to regard another individual as special and unique ... the lover aggrandises the beloved's worthy traits and over-looks or minimises his/hers flaws.” Fisher hypothesises that this is due to “dopaminergic reward and motivation pathways.” This implies that we have an inbuilt chemical love-fictionaliser and that when we fall in love, the fictions are just as important as the realities.

In order to better interpret/create meaning from events that inform our memories we shuffle and arrange them into themed narratives, such as romance, tragedy and comedy. My collages are at the same time real and fictitious versions of themed memories. The sociological “Thomas Theorem” which fits nicely with love-explains, “If men define a situation as real, they are real in the consequences for them.” Fiction and reality entwine and we feel satisfied at the sense it makes.

66 Lovatt, Peter: Dance and Testosterone. [Accessed on 08/01/2011]
68 O'Keele, Robert, Social Interaction and Social Structure, [Accessed on 10/07/2012]
CONCLUSION

In this research paper I have gathered the ideas of artist, philosophers, writers, collectors, scientists and mathematicians in order to better understand and explain my work. These ideas speak to the central concerns of the work; collection, arrangement and collage. Early in the paper I demonstrated that it is the very nature of memory that collection mirrors; the process of forming who we are is a collection of past experience. In my work each image selected connects to a pre-existing memory - real or imagined. This allows the work to function as a personal Atlas, or a map of memory. I have investigated how when used as a medium, collection, arrangement, and collage can function to bring latent content to a conscious plane.

For me this begins with collecting images that pre-date the Internet, the significance of this (as discussed in relation to Simon and Burkes’ digital collages), is the inherent obsolescence of the printed image versus the generative nature of the Internet. Printed images fade and this temporality relates to the predominant themes in my works. I have used personal accounts to demonstrate where the impulse to make the work comes from and describe how the found image can function in a similar way to the incidental objects/photographs we collect throughout life. Despite the final works being incredibly personal, the images I use are iconically intact and therefore the imagery remains open for the viewer to insert their own meaning.

The second stage in my work is the arrangement of these collected images. Through the work of Gerhard Richter and Patrick Pound I have described two methods of arrangement that I engage in my practise – the fragment and the poetic constraint. I have found that the fragment can accumulate enough to essentialise a subject and once this core is found it can act as metaphor. Poetic constraint, on the other hand, is to combine two or more images via a poetic rational and thus open new potential readings of how we assemble meaning. The poetics of each image can only be revealed by its relationship to what is placed next. I combine these two methods of arrangement in order to explore the themes of love memories, tragic memories and humour.

My large compositions form contained worlds and these are understood via
symmetry. In the chapter *Romance*, I discuss the use of symmetry in Hilma af Klint’s *Painting for the Temple*. I have focussed on af Klint’s use of symmetry as a means to explain the dualities that make up the universe. Dualities of man and woman, micro and macro, romance and tragedy, are defined by their relationship with each other. In my work I balance dualities in order to form wholes. In these wholes and essences, a kind of solace can be found.

I have created monolithic collages that present dizzying depictions of the strange area where collage meets memory and romance meets true love. Throughout this paper I have used a wide range of examples to demonstrate that collage has a unique ability to mirror how we experience memories. These collages use the memories that rest in both fact and fiction and attempt to conjure the real via accumulation. The aesthetic of memory, of fading and warping, of sharp bursts and strange combinations, is mirrored in the poetic rationales I engaged when making a collage. The works are both anthropological specimens and autobiographical collections that open new potential readings of how we create experience emotional narratives/memory. Like collage, like love, like cells, it’s about splitting and dissecting in order to reform into new wholes.
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**Works & Exhibitions**

19th Bienalle of Sydney, Artistic director: Julian Enberg, *YOU IMAGINE WHAT YOU DESIRE*. Sydney 21 March- 10 June 2014


Citroën, Paul *Metropolis*, 1923, Gelatin silver print, (original photomontage lost), 20.3 x 15.3cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York


Höch, Hannah, Hannah Höch Archive, Berlinische Galerie, 1889-1978.

Höch, Hannah *Cut with the Kitchen (cake) Knife Dada through Germany’s Last Weimer Beer Belly Cultural Epoch, 1919-1020*, photomontage and collage with watercolour, 44-7/8” x 35-7/16”, Staatliche Museeun Zu Berlin.


McMillan, Todd *Crying*, 2012 Sarah Cottier gallery, Sydney


Raphael, *Disputa*, or *The Disputation of the Sacrament Fresco*. The Vatican. 1509-1510.


Tarkovsky, Andrei, *Stalker*, Film, Soviet Union. 1979
**IMAGE LIST**

**Fig 1.** Tobias Buche, *Untitled*, 2007, photocopies, photographs, collages, computer prints on movable walls. 201 x 307 x 103 cm.

**Fig. 2.** Lillian O’Neil, *Funeraria*, 2012, Collage, 180 cm x 180 cm.

**Fig. 3.** Simmons & Burke, *If Not Summer #1*, 2010, Lightjet print & Custom Audio Software, 145.5 cm x 228.6 cm.

**Fig 4.** Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas, Boards of Rembrandt Exhibition*, 1927.

**Fig. 5.** Gerhard Richter, *Atlas – Städte (Cities)* Atlas Sheet 107, 51.7 cm x 66.7 cm. http://www.gerhard-richter.com/art/atlas/atlas.

**Fig. 6.** Gerhard Richter, *Bäume (Trees)*, 1970, Atlas Sheet 157, 51.7 cm x 66.7 cm.

**Fig. 7.** Lillian O’Neil, *Moon Lovers*, 2013, Collage, 390 cm x 104 cm.

**Fig. 8.** Patrick Pound, *Air*, 2013, (detail) collection of found images, size variable.

**Fig. 9.** Matt Bryans, *Untitled*, 2002-3 Erased newspapers. Detail.

**Fig. 10.** Matt Bryans, *Untitled*, 2002-3 Erased newspapers. Installation View.

**Fig 11.** Hans Christian Andersen, *The Great Screen: Germany/Austria; France; England; The Orient; Sweden/Norway; Denmark; Danes; Childhood*. 1873-74, Collage on canvas, four panels, each panel 154 cm x 62 cm.

**Fig 12.** Lillian O’Neil, *Attack of the Romance*, 2012, Collage. 360 cm x 240 cm.

**Fig 13.** Hilma af Klint, *Altarpiece, No 1, Group X*, Altarpieces, 1915. Copyright Stiftelsen Hilma af Klins Verk/Photo: Moderna Museet, Albin Dahlström.

**Fig 14.** Hilma af Klint, *The Large Figure Paintings*, No. 5, Group III, The Key to All Works to Date, The WU/Rose Series, 1907. Copyright Stiftelsen Hilma af Klins Verk/Photo: Moderna Museet, Albin Dahlström.

**Fig 15.** Hilma af Klint, *Svanen*, No. 1, Group IX/SUW, 1915. Copyright Stiftelsen Hilma af Klins Verk/Photo: Moderna Museet, Albin Dahlström.

**Fig 16.** Lillian O’Neil, *Volcano*, 2012, Collage, 180 cm x 180 cm.

**Fig 17.** Lillian O’Neil, *Flowers*, 2012, Collage, 180 cm x 60 cm.
Fig 18. Lillian O’Neil, Jungle Fever, 2012, Collage, 200cm x 200cm

Fig. 19. Alistair McLuckie, *The Highest Mountain Peaks Right Before Dawn*, 2010, Biro on wood. Install.

Fig. 20. Alistair McLuckie, *The Highest Mountain Peaks Right Before Dawn*, 2010, Biro on wood. Detail.