

Seven in Collage - New Art Center in Newton, MA  
Press Release

**Seven in Collage January 14 - March 6, 2005**

*The sensation of physically operating on the world is very strong in the medium of the papier colle or collage, in which various kinds of paper are pasted to the canvas. One cuts and chooses and shifts and pastes, and sometimes tears off and begins again. In any case, shaping and arranging such a relational structure obliterates the need, and often the awareness of representation. Without reference to likenesses, it possesses feeling because all the decisions in regard to it are ultimately made on the grounds of feeling.* - Robert Motherwell, from "Beyond the Aesthetic" 1946

The seven artists exhibiting in this show explore the formal and abstract elements of collage without reference to pictorial representation or the use of text. These works have a history to their surface, evident in the marriage between paint and paper, finding meaning and content in the play between color and shapes.

The work of John Grillo exemplifies this collage sensibility. He has been called "a leading master of the second generation of Abstract Expressionists" by Donald Kuspit. Today he is acknowledged as "the first and purist Action Painter on the West Coast and one of the most influential painters of San Francisco's School of Abstract Expressionism" by Susan Landauer. Grillo played a seminal role in the Bay Area in the late 1940's, when his explorations paralleled and, in many cases, anticipated the developments in the New York School. Grillo was an early influence on Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, and John Hultberg, to name just a few. His work was featured along with that of Pollock, Kline, de Kooning, etc. in the Guggenheim Museum's retrospective of Abstract Expressionism in 1961.

A contemporary of Motherwell's, Grillo was prolific in his use of collage. In the 50's and 60's he produced some of the strongest collages of the New York School. Often dramatic in their structural tension, these works achieve a tactile quality through the juxtaposition of fragments in paper, paint, and found objects.

Suzanne H. Ulrich's collages exhibit an intimacy in scale one associates with the great modernist work of Kurt Schwitters and Anne Ryan. Ulrich's sensitivity to the picture plane and her compositional "ordering" give her collages a subtle elegance and grace. However, on closer viewing, Ulrich's collages prove to be also very physical in their making with great nuance in their surface and layering. Like Grillo, she is masterful with color.

Dawn Southworth's work is well known to the Boston audience. She has created a substantial body of work that involved imagery, symbolic references as text. It is, however, her work where these elements are essentially absent which is most interesting. Southworth's work with cloth and salvaged fabric, which she sews, stitches, mends, and layers are redolent of history, the passage of time, and recollection. The lyricism and the play of shapes on the "field" in this work is quite different than that of her more imagistic work.

Tim Harney owes a debt not only to Schwitters, Ryan, and Grillo, but also to Indian miniatures. While a great deal of his work has involved the figure and collage on a large scale, the more abstract pieces are smaller and explore the scale of the miniature. A sense of loss and recollection, the passage of time, a history; are just a few of the feelings his works evoke. A major consideration is given not only to the marriage of differences, but also to the correspondences between formal and abstract elements.

**Carol Gove is an emerging artist who, in only a very short time, has created a substantial body of work. She explores a mix of paint and collage while achieving work on a large scale. Gove's handling of paint, color, and shape is as varied and considered as the materials she integrates. Her work, particularly those executed on wood, have a great physical presence and yet retain their nuance and specificity.**

Karen Clarke is another young artist who has created an impressive amount of work in collage. Her pieces reveal some of the sensitivity and intimacy evident in Suzanne Ulrich's work. Clarke's palette is subtle and idiosyncratic, while her vocabulary of shape and form is full of invention.

Robert LaBranche has been making strong mixed media collages since 1997. Like **Carol Gove**, his work exhibits a great integration of paint and collage. Though relatively small in dimension, LaBranche's collages feel large in scale due to his explosive play of color and gesture.

The formal strength in this exhibition is due in large part to the fact that these seven artists are primarily painters. All approach their materials as though they were using paint: adding, subtracting, shifting, and layering. The experience of this group is reflected not only in their use of color and relationships, but also in their recognition of the picture plane and their subsequent decisions regarding color and composition.

There are many affinities among these artists. Seen together their works reveal rich correspondences, as well as marked differences in a contemporary approach to collage.

Timothy Harney, Curator