

ubu

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FOTOMONTAGE: European & Russian Collage, 1920–1950

January 10 – February 14, 1998

Ubu Gallery presents the exhibition **Fotomontage: European and Russian Collage, 1920-1950**, which will contain a selection of over thirty original collages, incorporating images from both original photographs and sources such as newspapers and magazines. The exhibition focuses on the juxtaposition of unrelated images, still considering the political and graphic design uses of the medium.

The Berlin Dadaists conceived Fotomontage just after World War I. The term reflects their aversion to "playing" the bourgeois artist; they viewed themselves as engineers or mechanics who constructed or assembled (*montieren*, in German) their works. The Dadaists' philosophy of fotomontage had "attitude"—disdaining their view of existing artistic hierarchies and reacting against traditional art forms, which they deemed essentially "unrepeatable, private and exclusive."

The Berlin Dadaists' successors, the Russian Constructivists and the French (and satellite) Surrealists, employed fotomontage for completely different reasons—one, propaganda and the other an exploration of the unconscious—but through the same process, i.e., incorporating "ready-made" images, pasting, lettering and drawing on them to form chaotic, explosive images. The Constructivists emphasized the links between fotomontage and both revolutionary politics and industrial and technological progress. Among the Surrealists, fotomontage was used to disrupt our perception of the normal world and create marvelous images.

The title of the exhibition—employing the term *fotomontage*—is deliberately chosen to reflect the original conception of the process with its concern for cutting up and reassembling photographs. The contemporary usage of the term "photomontage" refers to cut-up and re-assembled photographs, which are in turn re-photographed to create a seamless, new entity. While still rare and interesting, they lack the handmade and tactile quality of the original. It is in this raw form that we can best appreciate what Gustav Klutsis, in the catalogue for the first Fotomontage show in Berlin in 1931, called the "art of agitation" that was, and still is, "fotomontage."

The exhibition includes collages by Blumenfeld, Brzeski, Galadjev, Hoepffner, Hofmann, Hugnet, Kazansky, Prevert, Racz, Roh, Styrsky, Teige, Telingater, Ubac, Zhitomersky, and others.