

A complex collage artwork featuring a central face. The face is composed of various geometric shapes, including triangles, squares, and circles, in shades of brown, tan, and grey. The background is a mix of textures, including a woven pattern at the bottom and a thick, braided rope-like border at the top. The overall style is abstract and layered.

Making New Meanings

The History of Collage

What is Collage?

- Collage is an art form that involves an artist taking parts of premade materials and reassembling them into a new artwork.
- Artists who make collages use a variety of different materials to create their artworks. Some of the most popular materials include:
 - Newspapers
 - Magazines
 - Photographs



Pablo Picasso, *Guitar, Sheet Music, and Glass*, 1912, collage and charcoal on board, McNay Museum, San Antonio, Texas.

What does the word “collage” mean?

- “Collage” comes from the French word “coller,” which means “to glue”
- The word was invented in the early 1900s when the artists Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso began including materials like wallpaper and cabinet lining in their artworks



When did artists begin making collages?

- Artists began making collages after Chinese craftsmen invented paper in 105 AD
- Artists in Asia and Europe used paper to make experimental art
- For example, notice how the artist who made this print of St. Dorothea decorated the trees, border, and St. Dorothea's dress with tinsel and crystals



Unknown artist, *St. Dorothea*, 1450-1500 CE, hand-colored woodcut print with tinsel and crystals, The British Museum, London.

Modern Art Collage

- “Modern Art” was an art period that began in the late 1800s and ended in the early 1900s
- Artists working during this time made very experimental artworks
 - They used artistic techniques that were less traditional than painting and sculpture
- Modern artists especially loved making collages!
 - They considered collage to be an experimental artistic technique



Pablo Picasso, *Guitar*, 1913, newspaper, wallpaper, paper, ink, chalk, charcoal, and pencil on colored paper, Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York.

The Cubists | The First Modern Art Collages

- Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque (who were part of the artistic group called the “Cubists”) made the first Modern Art collages in 1912
- Take a look at their collages. Can you tell where they glued in new materials?



Above: Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912, oil on oil-cloth over canvas edged with rope, Musée Picasso, Paris, France.
Left: Georges Braque, *Fruit Dish and Glass*, 1912, charcoal, printed wallpaper, gouache, on white laid paper, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

The Dadaists | Using Collage to Say Something

- In the late 1910s, Modern Artists in Germany (who were also known as “Dadaists”) began making collages that made statements about politics and society
 - In the collage to the right, artist Raoul Hausmann glued a machine part over the man’s head in order to say that people had become too reliant on factories
- The artists called these collages “photomontages” because they made them using mainly photographs



Raoul Hausmann, *Self-Portrait of the Dadasoph*, 1920, photomontage on Japanese paper, private collection

The Surrealists | Dreaming Collage

- In France, a group of Modern Artists known as the “Surrealists” used collage to represent the inner workings of the human mind
 - Their collages often show groups of people in funny, dream-like situations
- Take a look at this collage made by the Surrealist artist Max Ernst
 - How many people do you see in the collage?
 - How many animals do you see in the collage?
 - Can you make a story about what is happening in the collage?



Using Collage to Change the Meaning of Images

- When an artist combines images in a collage, they make a new artwork that often has a different meaning than any of the original images
- Look at the collage on the right
 - Do you recognize any of the images or symbols that artist Hannah Höch has included in her collage?
 - Do you think that she has changed the meanings of the images or symbols by combining them into a collage?
 - What do you think she meant for the collage to say?



Right: Hannah Höch, *The Beautiful Girl*, 1920, photomontage, private collection.