

Depth Chambers: Linger in the shadows of the 'augmented collage spatial study'

Clive Knights

Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA

knightsc@pdx.edu



"A form cut out of a newspaper and integrated into a drawing or painting encloses the commonplace, the scrap of daily, ordinary reality in relation to the reality constructed by the mind. The difference among materials, which the eye is capable of transposing into a tactile sensation, lends the [work] a new depth."

Tristan Tzara

This workshop will introduce participants to the 'augmented collage spatial study,' a mode of creative studio practice that conjures new, imaginary, spatial worlds from found image fragments of everyday environments that are visually rich in material surface, light and shadow, perspectival depth, and human character.

Participants in the workshop will make collaborative collages as the surrealist poets created automatic poems, by way of extemporized additions to a common work. We will take visual phenomena already laden with meanings spawned by their existing contribution to everyday life, and re-awaken them through new configurations and alliances. As the poets borrow words from the general milieu and re-casts their relationships, so we will borrow images and materials and perform a similar poetic act. We will revel in fragmented graphic experience and, through the transformative power of metaphor, where likeness is discovered in things that differ, we will collectively configure new familiarities through imagined spatial settings that coalesce by means of the visual synthesis of the emergent collages.

The workshop will use a roundtable process that rotates collages through seven short (5-minute) collaborative stages whereby new extemporary additions are added to each work as they pass, speedily, through the imagination and collage-making input of each participant. Therefore, each collage becomes the work of a group of collaborators and aims to bring forth into visibility imaginary settings, invented chambers, alluring depth, and spatial drama inconceivable by a single collagist.

The process begins by each participant laying down an initial 'backdrop' surface (imagine the back wall of a room in a one-point perspective) in the center of an 11" x 11" sheet of paper. Then, these first collage gestures rotate clockwise around the table. The next stage of input proposes the floor surface of the chamber. Then throughout further rotations an overhead condition is added, then walls to the left and to the right. Each time openings, apertures, thresholds, doorways, windows can be included to modulate enclosing surfaces. Then after a further rotation, a human figure (or figures) is collaged inside the emergent chamber to imply dramatic disposition and scale. After one last rotation the final input is to synthesize the collage with the application of black and/or white dry pastel, enhancing tonal chiaroscuro qualities, and implying spatial structure with the application of edges and corners.

The workshop experience is improvisational in character so that excessive laboring over each stage of input is not possible. It is intended to loosen the grip of linear projection and pre-planning in imagining occupiable settings, while diminishing the hold of individual authorship in the visualization of possible environments. The proposer has offered the workshop successfully many times before, typically in the context of an architectural design studio. Some examples are included with this proposal.

Bring an open-minded, active body. All other necessary materials will be provided. A large studio work table around which 8-10 participants can gather to work standing up is needed. Some paper debris and pastel dust will be generated and require clean-up.

