

LAURENCE BRIAT

SOUTH OF FRANCE

PAINT

COLLAGE

PHOTOGRAPHS

ARTIST BOOKS

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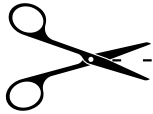
SOUTH OF FRANCE

LAURENCE BRIAT



Family

LAURENCE BRIAT



KIM TRIEDMAN > You live and work in France. What does your studio look like? What do you see out your window? Is your studio space organized or – like mine – out of control?

LAURENCE BRIAT > I live and work in the south of France, close to the Mediterranean sea and the city of Montpellier. I have the chance to have a light and quite large studio in a garden. So from my window I see trees, flowers, birds... It is a quiet place.

As I work with different mediums, I have to be well organized. I will say my studio is a “well-organized mess”. Over the years I have accumulated such a lot of material! I have a collection of old suitcases filled with all sorts of papers that I use for collage. Also, sometimes I host workshops in my studio, which need good organisation, too.

KT > I’ve always been so taken with the underlying tension of your pieces. You’re able to create meaning out of this odd conflation of simplicity and complexity: On the one hand, the cleanness and sparseness of your design elements, and on the other, the vast complexity of the ever-present human form. Each piece seems to convey so much with so little: the caged black-and-white image of a single human eye; fragments of truncated human bodies deliberately obscured by ink or paint or a

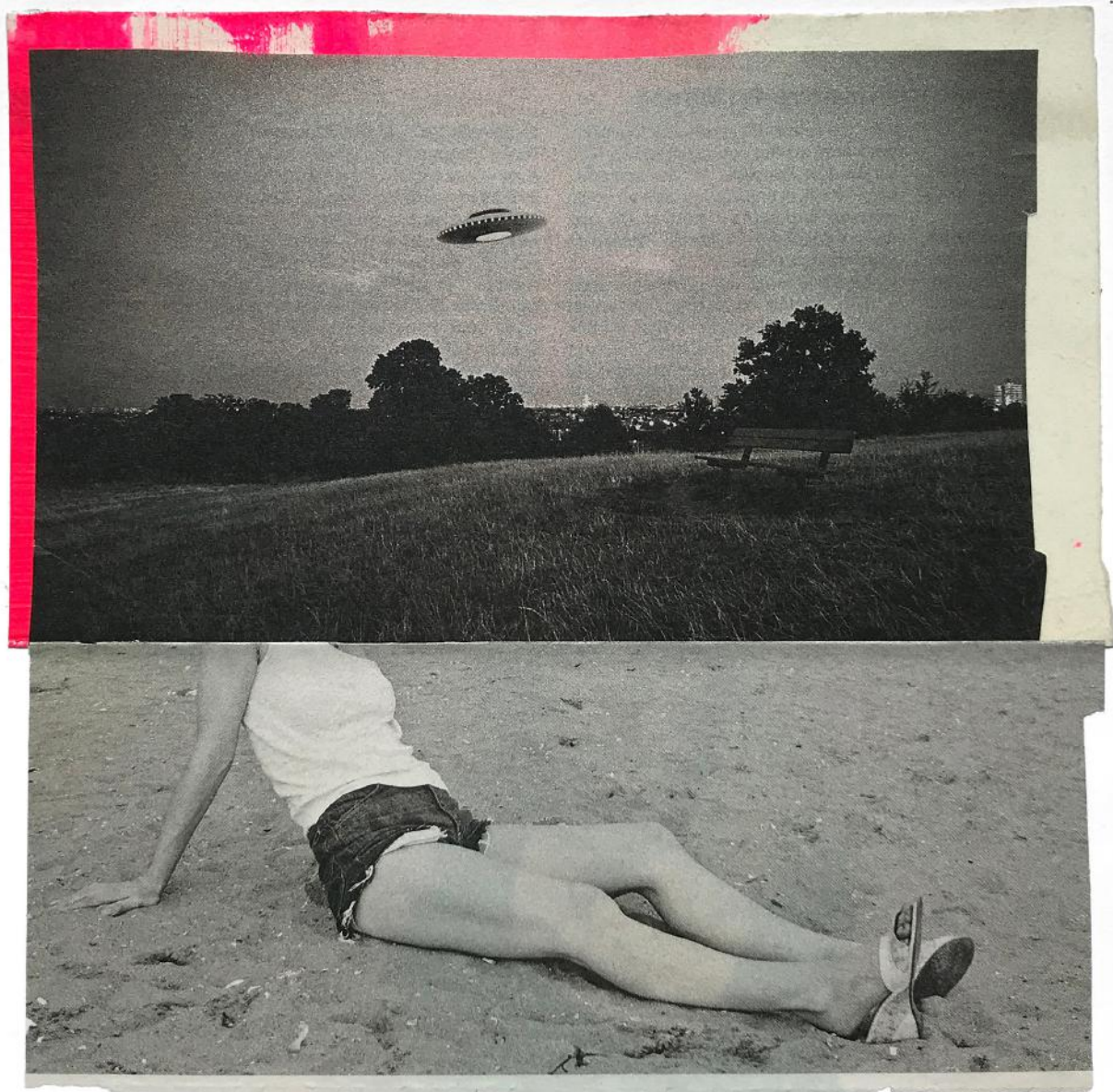
single bold slash of color. Can you talk a little about what you feel makes a collage successful in your eyes? When are you most satisfied with your own work?

LB > Thanks, Kim, for these kind words. It’s true that I seek to find antagonistic and discordant elements in the same image: clean and grungy, simple and complex, calm and tensed, nonchalant and very precise, dense and light, a strong plastic effect, a nice palette, a real resonance between elements, a good composition... that makes a lot of things! Generally, I’m happy when I find one or two qualities in a collage.

It is important to be simple, which is the most difficult. I would like to be able to say a lot with a few words.

KT > The notions of memory and transience and passages seem to play a big role in your collages. Nothing is ever fully there or not there. Can you talk a little about how and why you believe these themes make such a strong showing in your work? Do you follow an idea when you start each piece, or does the image create itself and ultimately deliver you to this place?

LB > Since the beginning, my concerns are the same: the human presence, its fragility, the passage of time. You are



Look Forward



Memory Hole

right: the notion of memory is a primordial subject to me. I did not choose it, soft and rough, visual shock, harmony and disorder. This research for opposites is an inspiration engine to me. An interesting collage should have my way of thinking, to let the meaning and the narrative quality unfold. Everyone must be able to read it in their own way. I'm especially satisfied when I manage to slip in a little irony. In my opinion, the ideal collage should work with few elements and be clear. I use elements that can give a feeling between past and present.

KT > Most of your pieces revolve around one strong image - usually a cropped black

and white vintage photograph. Do you always begin with a photo and work out from there? Or is it the intersection between different elements that gets you started?

LB > I like to work with vintage stuff. I have a big collection of old magazines. I find old paper beautiful, fragile, and precious. My approach is totally intuitive. I work with freedom without worrying about the result. The randomness, how it suddenly works. This is the magic of collage! But often my interest pales over time, the collage becomes empty to my eyes and it does not interest me anymore. In this case I destroy it and start again. Destroy and build are two

"I work with freedom without worrying about the result. The randomness, how it suddenly works. This is the magic of collage!"



Link



Verticle

important things for me: creation... born often of destruction.

KT > I love the fact that there's a certain randomness in your cutting technique. Nothing is precise in these compositions, and the ephemera and photographs have a kind of "slashed" quality. Brutal. Haphazard. On top of that, you often aggressively erase or block out parts of images, which adds to the sense of unease. To me, this forms another kind of tension in your work, as this randomness flies in the face of the sharpness and economy of the emotional punch. Can you talk a little about whether you've always worked in this way? Has your aesthetic/technique evolved in significant ways over time?

LB > I completely agree with your interpretation of my work!

The concealment of part of the scene evokes the fragility of memory. When the face is hidden, the presence becomes more universal.

These gaps probably contribute to make the image enigmatic and intriguing, sometimes disturbing. Looking at a collage, I don't want to feel the work and effort. I like if it looks easy, and not finished. Chance plays a big role in my way of working. I can spend a very long time working on the same collage. I have worked this way for a long time, and it tends to enhance over time. These radical cuts and interruptions participate to characterize my artistic identity.



Look Lost

KT > In addition to working in collage, you are also a painter and a printmaker. How does working in different media inform your approach as a collage artist? In terms of timeline, were you a painter/printmaker first? What does collage give you as an artist that these other artforms do not?

LB > Yes, I was first a painter and printmaker, and it clearly influences my practice of collage, in particular for my concern with composition and colour. It is obvious that my different practices feed on each other. However, I really enjoy the recreational and spontaneous side of collage. It holds a very important place in my life. It is a space of freedom that has become indispensable to me. Also, the abundance of usable elements available is, for me, a source of infinite inspiration.

KT > Can you talk a little about which collage artists inspire you in your work? I find that I learn so much just by scrolling through images by my favorite artists - especially when I'm feeling stuck! Are there certain artists you search out when the well feels dry - or

just when you want to explore other techniques or ways of seeing?

LB > Of course I always admired the classics - Kurt Schwitters, Richard Hamilton... and, there is John Stezaker. The impact of his work really makes me see

things in a different way. It was a shock when I saw his collages for the first time, years ago! There are so many, many collagists on Instagram! I can't say who my favorites are. What I am sure of is that scrolling through images that I like makes me feel up to doing the work. <>

