



ANDREA BURGAY

INTERVIEW BY ELIZABETH PERRY

ELIZABETH PERRY: You were born, studied, and now work in New York. Do you find that the idea of home plays an important role in your work or your personal life?

ANDREA BURGAY: I was born in Syracuse, NY and grew up in a suburb called Liverpool. I spent a lot of my time at libraries reading and doing puzzles with my mother. My father is the organist and music director of a Catholic church where the stained glass and ceiling paintings were one of my first experiences of art. The green hills, fall leaves, muted blue skies, grey buildings and snow resonated with me as the colors of a classic landscape. In high school, I took as many art classes as I could. I started making collages then. My bedroom was covered with old magazine pages and photos. Music was a big influence—Patti Smith, Talking Heads, Pavement. Like many other suburban teenagers, my friends and I were forging our own world making art out of things we found around—old magazines from the garage, clothes from the thrift store, weird recording devices. I always wanted to be an artist, but didn't consider myself one then. Now, I look back on these experiences as crucial steps on the path I still follow.

EP: You are versed in many types of artistic media, including sculpture, printmaking, installation, drawing, and painting—as well as collage. Are there always all these different media inform each other?

AB: I have moved very slowly through experimentation with different types of artistic media. My studies at SUNY Purchase and SVA were primarily in drawing and painting. I made paintings with very flat layers of color, like topographical maps. I had one collage class at Purchase, but primarily made collages and books of cut-out images on my own, occasionally showing them alongside my drawings and paintings. At SVA I tried cartooning a little bit and took some sculpture classes. At that time, I was making delicate cut-outs of the models in my figure drawing classes and, arranging them in multiple formations. Translating silhouette-like forms into three di-

mensions intrigued me and I began experimenting with sculpture. For my thesis presentation, I showed a series of hand-sewn soft sculptures based on ghosts of stuffed animals. As I continued making art in my own studio, collage and sculpture surfaced as the ways I was most interested in working. Collage had always been a way for me to work out problems and ideas through an associative process, while sculpture concepts tend to come to me in a more direct manner. In the last year, after a fellowship at Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, I renewed my appreciation of paint. Working on a series of water-color monotypes reawakened an interest in gesture and mark making with a brush. I began to integrate pieces from these prints into my collage work, to paint over areas of the collages, and incorporate painted pieces into them.

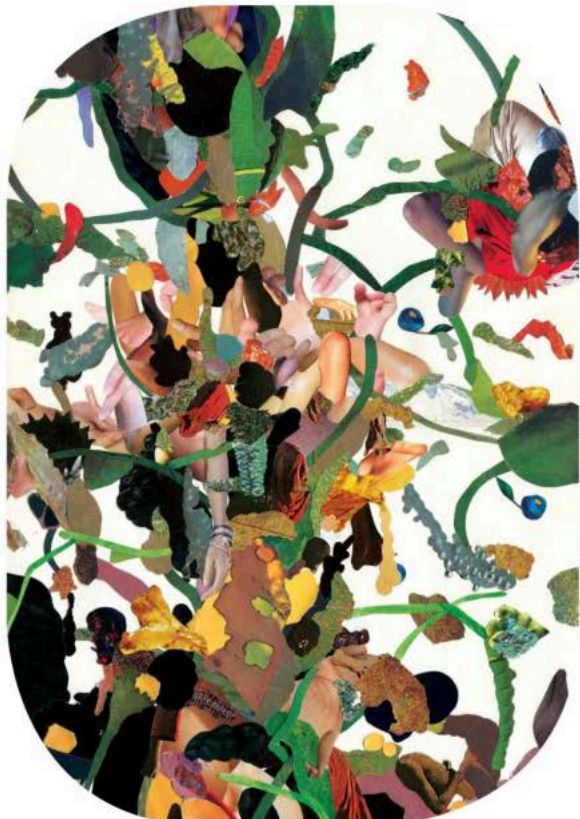
EP: For what reason(s) are you drawn in a particular moment to collage?

AB: Collage conveys immediacy and makes connections between disparate elements. As well as colors, my palette can include images, textures, skin tones, aged papers, etc. These pieces stolen from photographs also have a deeper connection to a sense of reality that photography offers over painting. I have always been drawn to magazines and books and enjoyed the tactile experience of turning pages. The possibility of cutting apart, taking out parts, and using fragments is very appealing.

EP: To me, your works do not immediately expose themselves as "collages." Rather your works seem to appear as collections of connected colors and shapes that only upon closer examination are revealed to have a variety of origins and textures. Can you talk a bit about your work in relation to collage as a tradition?

AB: My background in drawing and painting has had a large influence on the direction my collage work has taken. The breakdown of collage elements into small pieces allows them to act as marks or brushstrokes, creating a larger form, movement or gesture. The collage *By the Window 2* features amassed skin tones and body parts. In a piece like this, the combination of a variety of body parts makes the human forms universal—they have no specific gender or nationality. They represent humanness, and have the potential that we all have to convey feeling and emotion, even in their altered state. The lack of clarity or a concrete understanding of what is happening allows for more interpretations or multiple readings of the piece.

EP: Which themes, ideas, or messages do you feel are par-



PAGE 34: INSIDE 200. CUT-PAPER COLLAGE
PAGE 36 ABOVE: A LITTLE GREEN (DETAIL) 201. CUT-PAPER COLLAGE
PAGE 37: EMOR 202. CUT-PAPER COLLAGE.



ticularly present or significant in your work?

AB: To me, each piece exists as a combination of place and of feeling merging to create an emotional landscape. Facing inevitable loss and moving forward through creation may be a broad way to break down what a lot of my work is getting at. Shedding light on things that are disturbing or fearful, such as our relationship to deterioration and decay, is a way for me to become comfortable with the truths of life.

EP: I am struck by the titles of many of your works, such as *No God, Only Religion, Only Place You Can Go, What Might Have Been Lost*, etc. Do you feel titles are important to experiencing your work?

AB: The titles are a very important way for me to encapsulate a feeling I associate with the work. I want the titles to evoke a specific idea, which adds another level to the way a viewer might understand a piece. I have lists of words that I think of when in the process of making a piece, and when reading or listening to unrelated things. Combining these words is an intuitive activity. Many of my titles are taken from song lyrics or titles. *No God, Only Religion* is a song by Spiritualized and *What Might Have Been Lost* is by Bon Iver. Music is a huge source of inspiration and in borrowing these words, I hope to commemorate and pay tribute to my muses.

EP: In describing your art, you mention "the cyclical nature of life, death, and decay, the states of change and flux beings exist in, and the possibility of transcending the earthly realm" as areas which your work explores. Can you talk a bit about these themes and how you express them?

AB: I am very afraid of losing people and memories. Sav-

ing objects and materials serve as a way to memorialize and preserve moments from the transience of time. Using these materials in my work is a way for me to transform them, focusing on creation and change. Imagery in my work also reflects these concerns. After making work that focuses on accepting the eventual breakdown and deterioration of our bodies, I wanted to explore what then makes life meaningful. Celebration and rituals are reasons for humans to gather, share, and express love and appreciation. Across most religions, as well as in secular life, celebrations are a way to mark important moments. They are also a way to feel connected to something greater, whether spiritually, or in a deeper sense of connection with others. These act as a counter to death and are all part of the cycles we endure as humans. Combining these elements in my work is a way for me to understand my life, which I hope may extend towards others.

EP: Is viewer-response important to you as an artist?

AB: It's interesting to me that I sometimes get very opposing reactions to my work. Some people are drawn to what they feel is beautiful in it. Others may respond to the visceral aspects and think it is disturbing or gross.

EP: What professional or artistic goals do you have as an artist? Are there particular ways in which you plan to challenge yourself in the future?

AB: I am searching for ways to present my work in a unified fashion. I am very interested in making books of my collages and am planning to learn new skills and expand into video. I have worked on several collaborative projects in the last year and enjoy having another artists' works as a starting point, or having mutual input into a project. I hope to create the potential for more collaboration, possibly in new and different environments.



NICHOLAS LOCKYER

INTERVIEW
BY EVA RICHTER