



MIGHTY JOE CASTRO

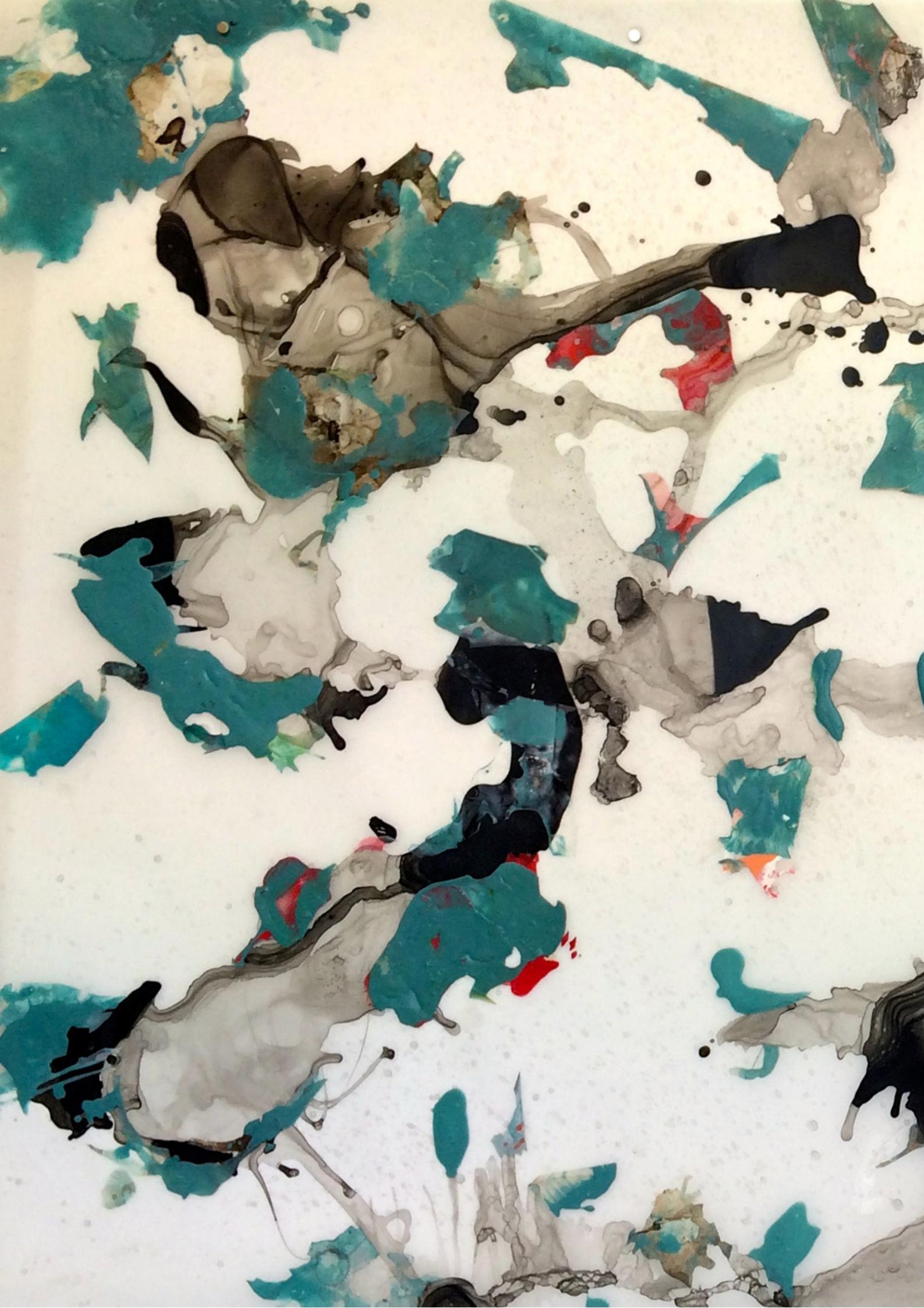
LINDA LEE NICHOLAS

SIMONE ZIMMERMANN

LAYERS OF MEANING

CONFRONTING MODERNISM AND MODERNITY
IN CONTEMPORARY COLLAGE PRACTICES





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Kingsborough Art Museum

This catalogue coincides with *Layers of Meaning: Confronting Modernism and Modernity in Contemporary Collage Practices*, an exhibition organized by the Kingsborough Art Museum at Kingsborough Community College, CUNY. The exhibition was on view from March 22 - May 18, 2023.

Kingsborough Art Museum
The City University of New York
Dr. Brian E. Hack, Director
Thomas Eaton, Art Department Chair
www.kccartmuseum.org

Catalogue design: Brian Edward Hack
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Acknowledgements

The Kingsborough Art Museum thanks the following for their invaluable assistance during the creation, installation, and promotion of this exhibition: Mighty Joe Castro, Linda Lee Nicholas, and Simone Zimmermann; Sable Spellman; The Office of Student Life; Kim Sanchez and Sabrina Santiago, KCC Association; Rodney Moye; Mario Caruso and Edgar Mendez; The Buildings & Grounds Department; Office of Public Safety; Olga Zaky; April Leventhal; Events Management; Fred Worden Trucking; Jazz and Print; The KAM Committee; The College Art Committee; Vice President Ed Rios; President Claudia Schrader; Nadine Browne; Cathy Galeano; Olivia Hercules; Rafael De Marco Teixeira; Tom Eaton; and Dr. Caterina Y. Pierre.

Front Cover: Joe Castro, *Grace, Dignity, and Thunder*, 2020, collage (left); Linda Lee Nicholas, *In Flight*, 2015, acrylic and acrylic cutouts on Sintra board (center); and Simone Zimmermann, *But I Loved You*, digital collage, 2019.

Inside Front Cover: Linda Lee Nicholas, *Making Honey*, 2015. Acrylic and acrylic cut outs mounted on aluminum.

Inside Back Cover: Mighty Joe Castro, *Collapsing Under Your Own Gravity*, March 2017. Cut paper collage on paper.

Back Cover: Simone Zimmermann, *Unsolved 01*, 2018. Pigment based archival inks on fine art archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100% cotton fiber 330 g/m² paper.

DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

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It is my great pleasure to welcome you to *Layers of Meaning: Confronting Modernism and Modernity in Contemporary Collage Practices*. This exhibition features the work of collage-based artists Mighty Joe Castro, Linda Lee Nicholas, and Simone Zimmermann. Each has a different approach to this time-honored medium: photomontage (Castro); painting (Nicholas); and digital collage (Zimmermann).

Collage emerged as an art practice in the early twentieth century, through the revolutionary explorations of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) in Paris. Seeking a new pictorial language, they created still-life compositions with *papier collé* (pasted paper) that called into the question not only the old absolutes of originality and the necessity of the artist's hand in creating art, but also of the very nature of perceived reality itself. Other artists would take up collage in different but in no less compelling ways, for instance the German artists Hannah Hoch (1889-1978) and John Heartfield (1891-1968), and, later in the century, the Harlem Renaissance painter Romare Bearden (1911-1988).

Collage offers for artists and non-artists alike a deep investigation of how images suggest meaning(s), and how those meanings shift when collage objects are brought together. A juxtaposition of the seemingly incongruous, collage assembly is akin to creating a new language, using words from various tongues to create sentences that inexplicably make sense, albeit in a manner that is hard to successfully or succinctly express.

Collage is its own unique form of visual poetics, where metaphors are soldered through scissors and materialized through Mod Podge. The nuanced beauty of collage hinges on the depths of its suggestions: the associations the viewer weaves into the pieces, and into the collage as a whole, that elicit meanings and provoke thought.

When assembled by a consummate artist of the medium, the elements of a collage become a visual symphony. Pieces which on their own convey one set of meanings suddenly assume others when placed side by side. Thus collage is both an object lesson in the arbitrariness of meaning and in the visual poetry of what paradoxically could be called harmonious dissonance. Meanings are forged, welded, and brought into being in visually arresting ways--a strange alchemy of images and ideas.

Meaning in collage is not fixed, but is rather a nebulous realm where interpretation is often gleaned by the viewer (and perhaps by the artist) through intuition, as opposed to through reason or established narratives. It is difficult to articulate such visual assessments into firm verbal translations. One senses in collage the hints of a political persuasion, or a philosophical point of view; just as often collage surprises us with its uncanny surrealism, its creation of other visual dimensions of the imagination.

The artists in this exhibition were chosen because of the strength of their work, and of the diversity of their working methods. Throughout all three artists is a sense of confronting the art and culture of the twentieth century, of using, in the case of Mighty Joe Castro and Simone Zimmermann, the ephemera of that century to create images that are neither nostalgic nor dated, but rather bold and timeless. As their medium is largely mid-twentieth-century mass media magazine imagery, there is a tangible aura of admiration for the era, a permeating vintage sensibility. Their work, however, also speaks to our current moment in terms of gender roles, national identity, and international politics.

Mighty Joe Castro's distinctive, hard-hitting collages reveal glimpses of global issues, from war and its refugees to political discord and social unrest. That the images used to convey these ideas are from decades past further reflects their timelessness. Compositionally these bold collages emerge from their centers like a time-lapse film of blossoming flowers. A formidable musician as well as artist, Castro uses collage and music to offer glimpses into the beauty and horrors of existence.

Within Simone Zimmermann's digital collages there resides a similar but different artistic sensibility, an amalgamation of uncanny, sexually-charged vignettes, film noir stills, and imagery suggesting the folly of 1950s gender roles and stereotypes. Oddly dangerous and dangerously odd, Zimmermann's collages offer a critique of twentieth-century modernity that well serves the contemporary desire to reexamine and repair it. For *Layers of Meaning* she has created an installation--a collage of collages. The eclectic choice of frames, many of them vintage and evocative of those found in 1950s and 1960s domestic interiors, pairs well stylistically with her collages.

While largely non-representational in her collage-constructed paintings, Linda Lee Nicholas still sees much of her work in anthropomorphic terms, with her assembled pieces forming various creatures who exist in a world ravaged by global pollution and climate change. Her working method--painting acrylic shapes on clear sheets that are later peeled and applied to canvas--is an intriguing response to the forceful gestural, painterly gasconade of the Abstract Expressionists and their descendants. No less bold, Nicholas's canvases evoke worlds of careful deliberation that are nevertheless spontaneous and free in spirit.

I welcome you to find connections among the paintings and collages of these three contemporary artists, and to generate your own layers of meanings within these works. As with our previous exhibition (*Contemporary Linocuts*, fall 2022), we hope that *Layers of Meaning* inspires viewers to find their own creative voice through this challenging yet accessible medium.

Dr. Brian Edward Hack
Director
Kingsborough Art Museum

THE ARTISTS

MIGHTY JOE CASTRO

Mighty Joe Castro is an accomplished Pennsylvania-based collage artist, musician (Mighty Joe Castro and the Gravamen) and designer. His artwork has been shown in galleries and art spaces across North America and Europe and have been described as "a controlled explosion, aggressive and pensive (Kolaj Magazine)" and "bold and diverse... one of those collage artists whose works you recognize immediately... (Toombes.com)." His work has appeared in *The Age of Collage: Contemporary Collage in Modern Art* (Gestalten), *Arkitip* (0062), *The Baffler* (issues 35 & 45), *Esquire*, *GQ Style*, *Glamour*, *Kolaj Magazine*, *The Artist Catalogue* (cover artist – Fall 2013), *Color Magazine* (Canada), as well as on a board series for Element skateboards. He is a signature member of the National Collage Society. For more information, please visit mightyjoecastro.com

LINDA LEE NICHOLAS

Linda Lee Nicholas is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in New York. Her practice engages non-traditional processes in mixed media that speaks about nature, and the environment. Linda has a BFA from the School of Visual Arts, NYC and an MFA from Brooklyn College. Her work has been exhibited though out the US and Europe, including The Monmouth Museum, Lindcroft, New Jersey, The Stambaugh Gallery, Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio, The Everhart Museum, Scranton , PA, the Roberson Museum, Binghamton, NY and The Schneider Museum of Art in coordination with a catalog, Art Inspired by Science: Imaging the Natural World, which has been published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and The Pinch Journal, University of Memphis. Nicholas' latest awards and honors include an Ora Lerman Trust Grant, Artist in Residence at the Golden Foundation in New Berlin, New York, A Cerf-Ravenel Travel Grant, a Residency Fellowship at the Museum Techniki in Mileniec, Poland, and Virginia Creative Center for the Arts, Amherst, Virginia, and most recent fellowship at I Park, East Haddam, CT, and Soaring Gardens, Laceyville, PA. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Golden Foundation, Monmouth Museum (NJ), the City of Rahway (NJ), the Everhart Museum in Pennsylvania and Brooklyn College. Nicholas lives in New York City, and has a studio at the Brooklyn Army Terminal through Chashama's Space to Create Program.

Artist Statement

My work refers to the abstract representation that speaks about my ongoing interest with our food, water, and air and the affect it has on our bodies, and environment. In our current state of existence the food, water and air that we depend upon, have survived upon, have effectively turned against us. I have imagined a cast of hybrid creature/forms and parallel universes in which my sweet biomorphic beings who try to survive in an environment which offers false, even dangerous sustenance. I look to the natural world for inspiration: Invented hybrid forms that suggest disturbed organic creature-like beings trying to survive in an environment that remains indefinable, weaving and shifting between whole and part, questioning and challenging our perception. The work is a window into a complex understanding of the world in which we live and the one towards which we are heading.

www.lindaleenicholas.com

SIMONE ZIMMERMANN

Simone Zimmermann is a German-born Visual Artist based in New York City, with a Masters in Art & Design from the University of Wuppertal, Germany. She has shown her work in group and solo exhibitions around Europe and New York. Simone is the Co-owner and Creative Director of RGB Mission Control, a Creative Agency in New York City.

She works as a Video Editor, Graphic Artist, Photographer and Music Promoter at Apfel/Krebs/Simone Presents.

Artist Statement

My collages are sometimes dark and sometimes sexy, often exploring the divide between fantasy and reality in a playful, ironic, humorous and human way. Common motifs in my work are identity, the art of portraiture, eroticism and pop culture. I see my images as snapshots from a surreal movie whose viewers can then create their own narrative.

In a fast paced world I want the viewer to stand still just for a moment and get inspired. Instead of using the traditional analog process of cutting out and putting different elements together using scissors and glue, I recreate the same workflow digitally to have more freedom of changing the scene, but still preserving the manual look of the final work.

www.simonezimmermannart.com

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST



1

Linda Lee Nicholas

Red Grid

2014

54 x 40 inches; each 12 x 12 inches

Acrylic on clay board



2

Linda Lee Nicholas

In Flight

2016

30 x 24 inches

Acrylic and acrylic cut outs on Sintra



3

Linda Lee Nicholas

Making Honey

2015

36 x 70"

Acrylic and acrylic cut outs
mounted on aluminum

LINDA LEE NICHOLAS



4
Linda Lee Nicholas
Lunch Time
2015



5
Linda Lee Nicholas
Trumpet Coral in Neon
2016
18 x 24 inches
Acrylic vellum on clay board



6
Linda Lee Nicholas
Aqua Reef
2015
48 x 70 inches
Acrylic and Acrylic cut outs mounted
on aluminum



7
Linda Lee Nicholas
The Garden of Cosmic Speculation
2015
48 x 36 inches
Acrylic and acrylic cut outs on clay board



8

Linda Lee Nicholas
Pantone 021 in the Night

2015

48 x 73 inches

Acrylic cut outs mounted on aluminum



9

Linda Lee Nicholas
Underground #1

2016

30 x 16 inches

Acrylic and acrylic cut outs on
clay board

MIGHTY JOE CASTRO



10
Mighty Joe Castro
*El espíritu es más fuerte que
cualquier tormenta*
October 2017
Cut paper collage on paper



11
Mighty Joe Castro
Grace, Dignity and Thunder
July 2020
Cut paper collage on paper



12
Mighty Joe Castro
How Many More?
May 2022
Cut paper collage on paper



13
Mighty Joe Castro
Exodus
May 2019
Cut paper collage on paper



14
Mighty Joe Castro
Only the Living Can Die
August 2019
Cut paper collage on paper



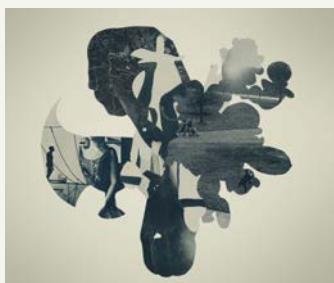
15
Mighty Joe Castro
Jackal
May 2014
Cut paper collage on paper



16
Mighty Joe Castro
The Coming Tide
March 2018
Cut paper collage on paper



17
Mighty Joe Castro
Onward and Onward
June 2019
Cut paper collage on paper



18
Mighty Joe Castro
Embers of Clarity
June 2016
Cut paper collage on paper



19
Mighty Joe Castro
Avalanche
January 2016
Cut paper collage on paper



20
Mighty Joe Castro
From Silence to Cinders
2017
Cut paper collage on paper



21
Mighty Joe Castro
Divided We Fall
November 2016
Cut paper collage on paper



22
Mighty Joe Castro
We Are Obsessed with Our Own disappearance
February 2016
Cut paper collage on paper



23
Mighty Joe Castro
30 Days
September 2015
Cut paper collage on paper



24
Mighty Joe Castro
Collapsing Under Your Own Gravity
March 2017
Cut paper collage on paper



B.Y

25
Simone Zimmermann
B.Y.
2020
8 x 10 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



26
Simone Zimmermann
Never Give Your Child a Gun
2019
22 x 22 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



27
Simone Zimmermann
Easy
2019
24 x 30 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper

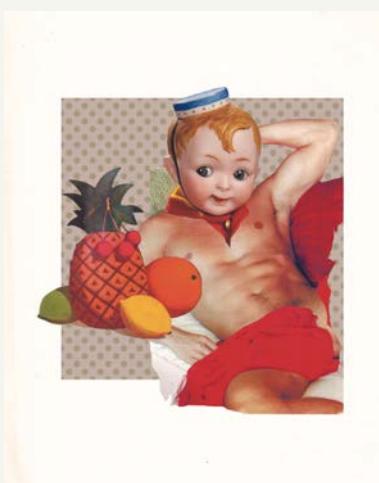
SIMONE ZIMMERMANN



28
Simone Zimmermann
Flower
2019
8 x 10 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte
paper



29
Simone Zimmermann
Sheep's Clothing
2019
24 x 36 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte
paper



30
Simone Zimmermann
Juicy
2019
11 x 14 inches
Pigment based archival inks on fine art
archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100%
cotton fiber 330 g/m² paper



31
Simone Zimmermann
Sick Puppy
2019
12 x 12 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte
paper



32
Simone Zimmermann
It Was Just One of These Days
2018
16 x 20 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte
paper



33
Simone Zimmermann
Jumble
2020
8 x 10 inches
Pigment based archival inks on fine art
archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100%
cotton fiber 330 g/m² paper



34
Simone Zimmermann
Within 01
2018
9 x 18 inches
Pigment based archival inks on fine art
archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100% cotton
fiber 330 g/m² paper



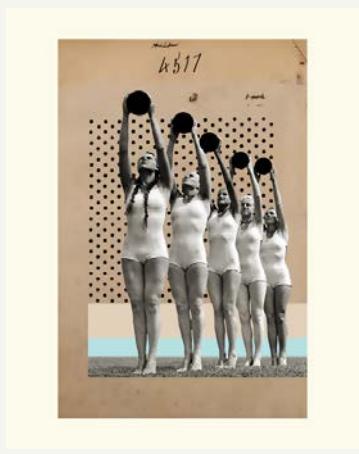
35
Simone Zimmermann
Within 02
2019
9 x 18 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



36
Simone Zimmermann
Hush
2019
13 x 19 inches
Pigment based archival inks on fine art
archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100%
cotton fiber 330 g/m² paper



37
Simone Zimmermann
44.99
2019
11 x 14 inches
Pigment based archival inks
on fine art archival, acid free,
lignin-free, 100% cotton fiber
330 g/m² paper



38
Simone Zimmermann
45.11
2019
8 x 10 inches
Museum-quality multicolor,
water-based inkjet print made
on 189 g/m² matte paper



39
Simone Zimmermann
The Universe is Yours
2019
18 x 24 inches
Museum-quality multicolor,
water-based inkjet print made
on 189 g/m² matte paper



40
Simone Zimmermann
But I Loved You
2019
24 x 36 inches
Museum-quality multicolor,
water-based inkjet print made
on 189 g/m² matte paper



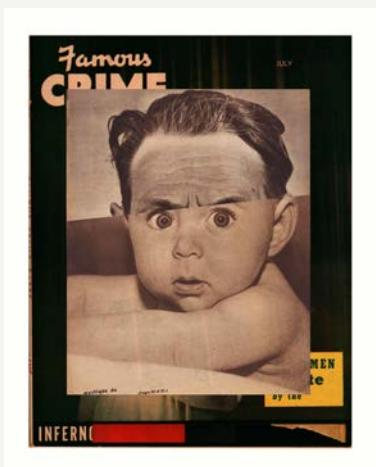
41
Simone Zimmermann
V.I.B.
2019
13 x 19 inches
Pigment based archival inks on fine
art archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100%
cotton fiber 330 g/m² paper



42
Simone Zimmermann
Polly Nation
2019
13 x 19 inches
Pigment based archival inks on fine
art archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100%
cotton fiber 330 g/m² paper



43
Simone Zimmermann
Unsolved 01
2018
11 x 14 inches
Pigment based archival inks on fine art
archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100%
cotton fiber 330 g/m² paper



44
Simone Zimmermann
Unsolved 02
2018
24 x 30 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



45
Simone Zimmermann
Unsolved 03
2019
24 x 36 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper

46

Simone Zimmermann

Never Smile at a Crocodile

24 x 30 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte
paper



47

Simone Zimmermann

Spring

2019

14 x 11 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



48

Simone Zimmermann

Quiet

2018

24 x 36 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper





49
Simone Zimmermann
Good Cop, Bad Cop
2020
14 x 11 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



50
Simone Zimmermann
The Love Nest
2020
14 x 11 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



51
Simone Zimmermann
The Great Escape
2020
24 x 36 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



52
Simone Zimmermann
If Walls Could Talk 02
2019
8 x 16 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



53
Simone Zimmermann
If Walls Could Talk 01
2019
22 x 14 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



54
Simone Zimmermann
*Hope Knew That Everything Will Be
Alright*
2020
24 x 36 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte
paper



55
Simone Zimmermann
Bow to Fate
2020
18x 24 inches
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based
inkjet print made on 189 g/m² matte paper



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J'AI III RRI

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