



MIGHTY JOE CASTRO

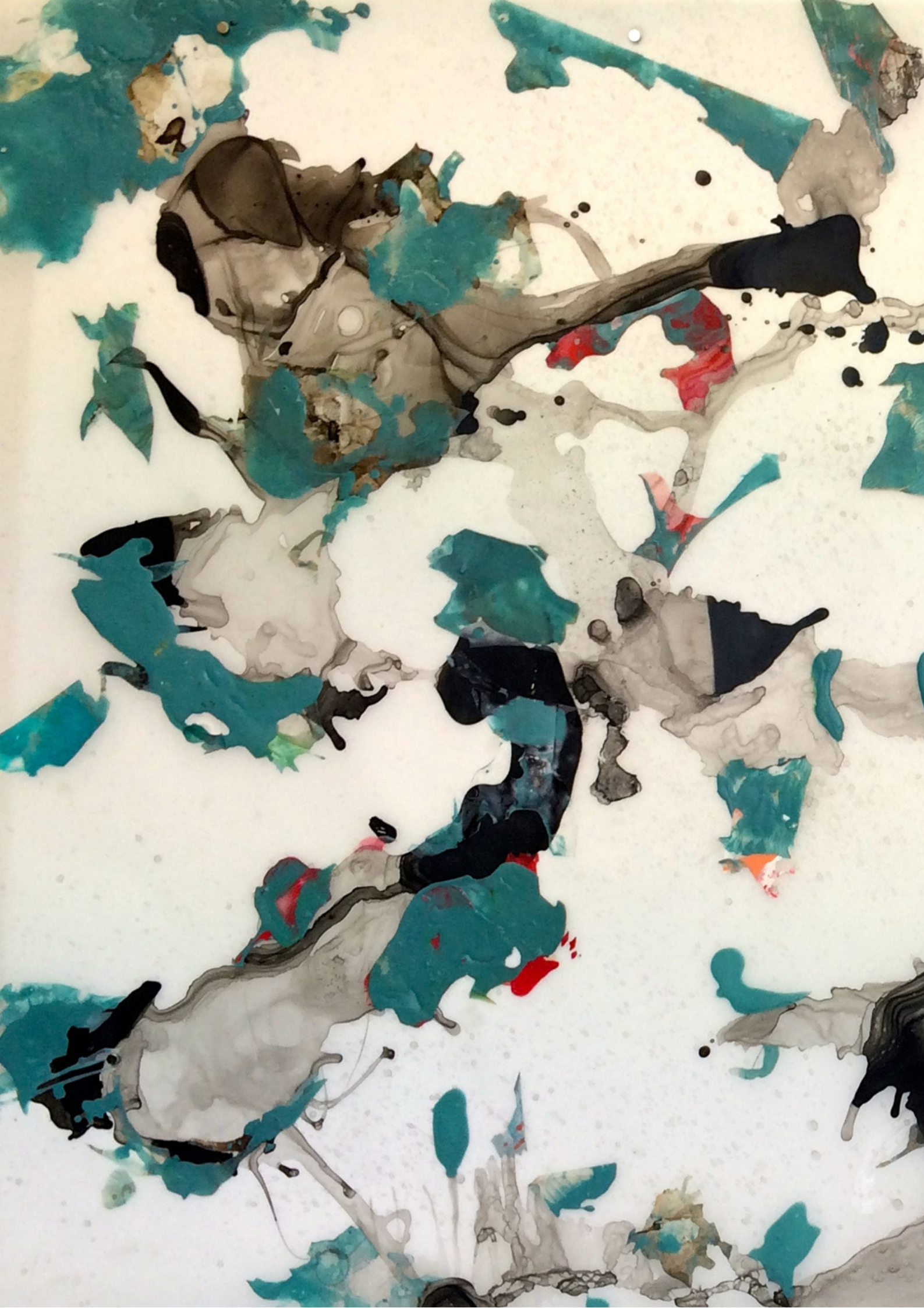
LINDA LEE NICHOLAS

SIMONE ZIMMERMANN

# LAYERS OF MEANING

CONFRONTING MODERNISM AND MODERNITY  
IN CONTEMPORARY COLLAGE PRACTICES





MIGHTY JOE CASTRO   LINDA LEE NICHOLAS   SIMONE ZIMMERMANN

# **LAYERS OF MEANING**

CONFRONTING MODERNISM AND MODERNITY  
IN CONTEMPORARY COLLAGE PRACTICES



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](http://www.kccartmuseum.org)

Catalogue design: Brian Edward Hack  
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### Acknowledgements

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**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/m<sup>2</sup> paper.

DIRECTOR'S  
WELCOME

# DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

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](http://mightyjoecastro.com)

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# 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](http://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](http://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





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

MIGHTY JOE CASTRO



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



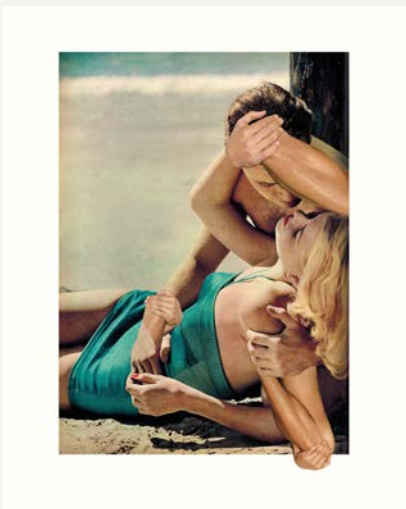
24  
Mighty Joe Castro  
*Collapsing Under Your Own Gravity*  
March 2017  
Cut paper collage on paper



25  
Simone Zimmermann  
*B.Y.*  
2020  
8 x 10 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> matte paper



27  
Simone Zimmermann  
*Easy*  
2019  
24 x 30 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> matte paper



28  
Simone Zimmermann  
*Flower*  
2019  
8 x 10 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> matte  
paper



29  
Simone Zimmermann  
*Sheep's Clothing*  
2019  
24 x 36 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> paper



31  
Simone Zimmermann  
*Sick Puppy*  
2019  
12 x 12 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> paper



35

Simone Zimmermann

*Within 02*

2019

9 x 18 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> paper



38  
Simone Zimmermann  
45.77  
2019  
8 x 10 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor,  
water-based inkjet print made  
on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> matte paper



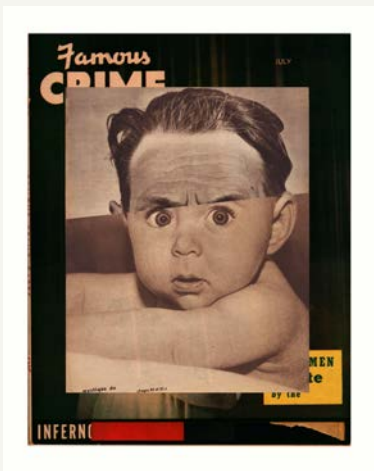
41  
Simone Zimmermann  
*V.I.B.*  
2019  
13 x 19 inches  
Pigment based archival inks on fine  
art archival, acid free, lignin-free, 100%  
cotton fiber 330 g/m<sup>2</sup> paper



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/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> paper



44  
Simone Zimmermann  
*Unsolved 02*  
2018  
24 x 30 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> matte paper



45  
Simone Zimmermann  
*Unsolved 03*  
2019  
24 x 36 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> matte  
paper



47

Simone Zimmermann  
*Spring*

2019

14 x 11 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> matte  
paper



48

Simone Zimmermann  
*Quiet*

2018

24 x 36 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> matte paper



50

Simone Zimmermann

*The Love Nest*

2020

14 x 11 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> matte paper



51

Simone Zimmermann

*The Great Escape*

2020

24 x 36 inches

Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> 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/m<sup>2</sup> matte  
paper



55  
Simone Zimmermann  
*Bow to Fate*  
2020  
18x 24 inches  
Museum-quality multicolor, water-based  
inkjet print made on 189 g/m<sup>2</sup> matte paper







TRINE CRIMAT

# DETECTIVE



J HI VO DRULER  
LA "MÉMÉ"

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LA "MEME"  
J'AI UN BRIL

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