Project 1

synthesized meaning is an exploration of the impact on communication when images are recombined, repositioned and reprocessed, when the lines of "reality" are blurred. Students will collect and assemble found or original images into a Photoshop montage. The original "meaning" of each original image will evolve in relation to the others. It will be seen that meaning itself can never be fixed, but that it changes relative to the point of view of the observer, cultural preconceptions, and the context in which it is perceived.

Montage [Fr.: "mounting"]. Assemblage that results from the overlapping or joining of various materials, images or objects to form a new single picture.

Timothy Druckrey wrote in the article From Dada to Digital that "one of the central considerations in the emergence of electronic montage is the redefinition of narrative. Sequential or arrayed, information is created in forms that suggest that the single image is not sufficient to serve as a record of an event but rather, that events are themselves complex configurations of experience, intention, and interpretation. Images suggest transition and not resolution."

Montage is the acquisition, deconstruction and reassembly of a group of images into a single, unified composition. For over 150 years montage has been a powerful tool for artistic expression. Artists such as John Heartfield, Man Ray, Robert Rauschenberg and David Hockney have used montage to comment on war, love, life and death. Today artists such as Martina Lopez and Calum Colvin have advanced the art of montage into the digital age.

Theme

Hyperreality (from Wikipedia)— According to Baudrillard, America has constructed itself a world that is more 'real' than real, and where those inhabiting it are obsessed with timelessness, perfection, and objectification of the self. Furthermore, authenticity has been replaced by copy (thus reality is replaced by a substitute), and nothing is "real," though those engaged in the illusion are incapable of seeing it. Instead of having experiences, people observe spectacles, via real or metaphorical control screens. Instead of the real, we have simulation and simulacra.

Simulacrum [Latin simulacrum (from simulare, to simulate)].

1. Originally meaning a material object representing something (such as an idol representing a deity, or a painted still-life of a bowl of fruit).

2. By the 1800s it developed a sense of a "mere" image, an empty form devoid of spirit, and descended to a specious or fallow representation.

3. Postmodern definition (from wikipedia): Baudrillard claims that our society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that in fact all that we know as real is actually a simulation of reality. The simulacra that Baudrillard refers to are signs of culture and media that create the reality that we perceive.

A specific analogy that Baudrillard uses is a fable derived from the work of Jorge Luis Borges. In it, a great Empire created a map that was so detailed it was as large as the Empire itself. The actual map grew and decayed as the Empire itself conquered or lost territory. When the Empire crumbled, all that was left was the map. In Baudrillard's rendition, it is the map that we are living in, the simulation of reality, and it is reality that is crumbling away from disuse.

The Matrix, a popular sci-fi film, makes many connections to Simulacra and Simulation. In fact, the principal character of The Matrix, Neo, can be seen with a copy of Simulacra and Simulation, although the book in The Matrix was designed with the chapter "On Nihilism" to be in the middle, and not at the end where it is located in the real book. Morpheus also refers to the real world
outside of the Matrix as the "desert of the real", a direct reference to Baudrillard's work. In the original script, Morpheus referenced Baudrillard's book specifically. In an interview, Baudrillard claimed that "The Matrix" has nothing to do with his work.

The text of Simulations, by Jean Baudrillard, is available here.

Create a montage in Photoshop that relates to the theme of hyperreality and simulacrum.

Requirements

In this project students will take the essential portions of at least eight different images and combine them to create a single montage.

The structure of the composition can be:

- Photorealistic (see uelsmann)
- Graphic (see moholy-nagy)
- Fantastic (see dave mckean)

Technical details

- One montage (150 ppi Photoshop RGB image). Layers must remain intact and editable.
- Dimensions must be at least 7" x 7" but not greater than 9" x 15", unless the Epson 10000 is used.
- Montage must include at least 8 separate images. If imagery is appropriated, you must maintain a record of the source of the material, and be able to supply credits.
- Present an emailed proposal in class (date TBA)
- Review your selected imagery with the instructor (date TBA)
- For Critique, present a PSD file (layers preserved) to the server

Submit:

1. Submit a full sized color print to your instructor. The montage may be in the state of your choosing.

2. Post this image to your Web portfolio, resized and optimized as necessary, accompanied by your artist's statement and credits for any appropriated material.

   Note: Always keep a copy of your work in Photoshop format with layers intact. You may need this later for further editing or repurposing.
Grading

This project will be graded on (in order of importance):

• creative and effective approach to your subject matter
• demonstration of technical proficiency with advanced Photoshop procedures
• fulfillment of project requirements
• effective visual and oral presentation of solution
• involvement in group critique
• punctuality.