VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Gallery Social: Wittgenstein in New York. From As is When by Eduardo Paolozzi.

Video two: Artist Duncan Robertson creates a collage inspired by his choice of artwork.

2020
[13:32]

Duncan Robertson:

Hello, my name is Duncan Robertson. I am an artist and sculptor, and one of the Freelance Gallery Educators that helps deliver on the Gallery Social Programme for the National Galleries of Scotland. This is part two, where we’re going to do a little collage inspired by the work of Sir Eduardo Paolozzi. We’re going to do a little collage based to the work we looked at earlier on, Wittgenstein, and the video will take about 10-15 minutes to do a very quick overview of the collage processes, some of the hints and tips that I know from Eduardo Paolozzi! I was in Eduardo Paolozzi’s class in Munich, as I said earlier, and thus got this print behind me, a present from Sir Eduardo Paolozzi. He was a bit of a serial giver of presents actually. I’ve got some plaster cast I got from Eduardo. These things he would often give them to you, and he would ask this question, ‘Would you like to have this?’ As if you would say ‘No’ as if there was some kind of question to getting a present from Eduardo Paolozzi. He was a very generous person, generous with techniques and his knowledge as well.

So, for today we are going to need a glue stick, one of these very handy things, a glue stick that we will need for a workspace. A pair of scissors, just ordinary everyday scissors, actually I think these were sold for the kitchen. And the other thing we will need, and you’ll probably have this in your house hopefully as well is the recycling box, you know the box you have for recycling paper. I keep a special one for keeping recycled magazines, old periodicals and things, you know, the type of prints that are quite interesting, someone’s taken a lot of time selecting this stuff probably. There’s an image for a leaflet here for the National Gallery. Sometimes you get quite interesting things through the post, a bit hard just to just throw away. Invitation to openings, advisement magazine, a beautiful silver envelope! Which is very pretty, I think anyway. And these are very useful things; an old auction catalogue from auction houses they spend quite a lot of money on illustration and they’re very useful to keep in a special box just for doing collages.

One thing that Eduardo Paolozzi said to me one day when we were having a cup of coffee in the KunstAkademie Munich, the art school in Munich, (which is a wonderful café, it’s a very
beautiful place to have a café) is, ‘when you get really stuck, when you get stuck really stuck for something to do, a good idea is making somebody little a present, make a little present for someone, and that’s a way of as a way of getting over this.’

So, I thought today we could, I’ve got a sheet of paper here and I’m folding it in half to make our college on and we can make it into a card for someone. I’m using this large piece of paper here because it’s very useful for demonstration purposes to work a bit bigger, but you could work on any size you like.

I’ve got some examples here I have made in the past. There are these prints here, these are all just images from found catalogues, collaged together and played with together, silvery bit of paper there. There’s more, these are from old advertisements, the type of thing you get advertising events, just cut out and pasted together. This little card waiting for that special person’s birthday, they are handy things to have. I’ve got quite a collection; a little box of them that I give sometimes to friends and family when they have birthdays and so on. It’s a little bit handy and saves going to the shop and saves a little bit of money. So, it’s a bit of recycling.

So, first thing to do is to look through your magazines and articles that we’ve got here. I’ve got this action catalogue; I find these a great favourite to look through. A tip when looking through things that this is to look at them upside down. Sometimes you get so enthralled in an image and text and things, when you look at things upside down you tend to see more the form than the shape, so it lets you to decide on what you’re really interested in and anything that takes your fancy. It sounds quite brutal but actually there’s a lot of destruction in art is simply to rip the page out of the book. The image I’m going to go for is this little chair, this interests me right now, cut round the image when it’s on its own, cut very roughly round the shape, I’m not really worried too much, just using the outside about detail right now. Here I’ve got this wonderfully old chair.

And then, I have this little box, a container that I keep beside myself. It’s actually the lid of this one, that I keep my extra images in. I keep a selection of images together. It is worth collecting about half a dozen or a dozen images of things that you find interesting, and have these at the side, otherwise you get so caught in magazines it’s hard to get on to the artwork.

So, from my little collage bits here, I’m going to pull them out and put them on the paper. Sometimes it’s quite good to put them on the paper very randomly. Sort of throw them on and see which ones come out. Play around with things. Here’s the chair that I’ve just found and put the things inside. Once you’ve got a few things on the piece of paper, it’s good to play around with the objects and start finding what you see. I think a good approach to this is not to think too much what you expect to see, more finding what you find in front of yourself from throwing the objects in. Sometimes things can quite surprisingly come together, and a good idea quite early on is to turn the image upside down. Eduardo said to me one day that you should turn
every piece of work you do upside down to have a look at it. Sometimes it’s nonsense, but sometimes it gives you ideas.

He was very into surrealism. Surrealism is a way of putting things together that adds subconscious imagination. Sometimes you can’t be conscious of what you’re doing, and why you have chosen something, it’s maybe even more apparent to the other person than yourself. Play around with the major images. First of all, see what you think might come out of the different objects, and play around with the different things and eventually some type of sculpture and collage might arrive. Really, I think the main word with this is play, to play with the artwork. I think with Eduardo a lot of his work, is playing a lot of time, he was always very gregarious and playing with the different materials that he used. A lot of these images other people throw away to be dispersed, you’re giving them another breath of life, so you don’t have to feel too bad about cutting them out again.

Now I think it’s a good idea first of all when you’re fairly sure what you want to do, sort of think backwards. Take your design apart backwards. I’m thinking maybe this mirror, and I’m liking this shelf very much. So, take your glue stick.

Another tip is to take a separate piece of paper, so you can work on it, turn the image over and take your glue stick and work right to the edge of the paper, pulling the glue right to the edge of the image, first of all. It stops mess getting on to your page and lets you get to the edges, right to the edges of things. Now this glue stick is quite forgiving actually. You can stick it on and change your mind for a few seconds, it lets you decide what you want to do, so, I’m going to somehow put these two down together. I’m thinking here that part could be the body, might be a bit of a head...crown perhaps a chandelier crown!

Again, turning it upside down and working right to the edge of the piece of paper. Sometimes you can get away with peeling back and putting this thing down, and then doing it with these bits as well, and really there’s no rights or wrongs of doing this. I tend to like to stay on the page, as a practical side, and use the side of the page as a boundary but you don’t have to do this, you can come off the side of the page.

Quite often I’m surprised with the images that I come up with as well, because you never really know what’s going to happen when you do this random putting things together. It can be fun and entertaining. I quite like the recycling aspect of it. Eduardo was very into recycling long before it was fashionable, long before there was a fashion for recycling. One thing he said to me that I will always remember is, ‘Never go past a skip without having a rake in it, you can always find interesting things for sculptures in skips, you can find different kinds of materials, you can find wood, that’s been thrown away.’

Eyes on there.
This barcode, remember from our cornflakes packet? I thought we could incorporate that, as a Paolozziesque element. Maybe use that down the bottom there, as a base.

Et voila! Here we have got an interesting collage! A little bit maybe robotic and using recycled images!

Well, hopefully you enjoyed this very short introduction to doing collage and collage techniques, and I have inspired you not to go to the shop to buy your next birthday or Christmas card and to do a little bit of recycling.

And again, thanks very much for listening. Cheers to everyone in the gallery social hopefully we’ll have you back in the galleries again soon. We are looking forward to seeing you again and sharing it cup of tea and some shortbread. Wishing you all the best of health and have a creative time until we see each other again in the galleries! Ok, thank you very much, bye.