

The New York Times



Jim Jarmusch, center, signing copies of his book during his exhibition “Some More Collages” at James Fuentes Gallery in Los Angeles on Saturday. Credit: Alex Welsh for The New York Times

JIM JARMUSCH, NEW YORK FIXTURE, SHOWED HIS ART IN LOS ANGELES. HIS FANS SHOWED UP.

Angelenos flocked to meet the artist and filmmaker, who came to the West Coast for the opening of his solo exhibition “Some More Collages.”

By Juno Carmel

Hundreds of film and art lovers convened at James Fuentes Gallery to celebrate the opening of “Some More Collages,” Jim Jarmusch’s first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.

It was Saturday night, and chatter bounced off the concrete floors of the gallery as visitors sipped wine and seltzer and tried to snap photos with Mr. Jarmusch, the New York filmmaker and indie luminary.

Twenty-eight of Mr. Jarmusch’s small, minimal newsprint collages hung on the walls, along with three larger lithograph edition prints. (Though he’s not picky about which papers he collages with, he often uses The New York Times.)

“I find Jim to be extremely original and innovative,” Scarlet Sobranie, 68, said as she explored the cavernous space. “He has a huge fan base here in Los Angeles.”

Mr. Jarmusch, 72, has made more than a dozen films, including “Down by Law” (1986) and “Coffee and Cigarettes” (2003) — often capturing strangers as they wander through one another’s orbits in different cities. He has also produced music, written poetry and created visual art, specifically hundreds of collages. In a room buzzing with devotees, he was a quietly commanding presence who naturally stuck out with a distinct crop of white hair.

He shared his small, surrealist collages with the public in 2021, when he held his first solo show at James Fuentes Gallery in New York.

While those pieces were abstract compositions that layered newsprint and celebrity heads on mismatched bodies, his newer work is a bit more eerie, leaving black cutouts in the place of people’s faces.

“I’m not analytical or very precise in my procedure, you know, intentionally — that’s my strength,” Mr. Jarmusch said as he drank a glass of white wine. “I like imperfection, and that’s why I love newsprint.”

Although Mr. Jarmusch is rooted in New York, he has an abiding appreciation for Los Angeles.

“I love cities, and I have people I love here,” Mr. Jarmusch said. “It’s not



Mr. Jarmusch's small, minimal collages are made with newsprint. Credit: Alex Welsh for The New York Times

really the Hollywood scene — more musicians and artists that I know — but I like L.A. because it's so itself. It's particular."

Tay Trong, a 51-year-old artist dressed in black overalls and a hat covered in dozens of multicolored sunglasses arms, said he first encountered Mr. Jarmusch's work in college, and found inspiration in Mr. Jarmusch's candid perspective on originality.

"He says, 'Take from everything, because not everyone can be original, and that makes everyone original,'" Mr. Trong said, paraphrasing one of Mr. Jarmusch's most popular quotes.

"He gives you a good starting point, and you don't have to be guilty about it," Mr. Trong added. "But then it's ironic, because he's totally original."

Aralia Molina, 37, who drove from Tijuana, Mexico, and her friend Maria Cochinita, 51, who traveled from San Diego, said the show was worth the drive.

"Growing up, watching films of Jim Jarmusch was always part of my youth culture, and it was counterculture," said Mx. Cochinita. "But I'm glad that this is happening. I'm glad that he's getting that recognition."



Mr. Jarmusch with Talani Diggs and RZA during a party at the Italian restaurant Ètra. Credit: Alex Welsh for The New York Times

Throughout the night, a crowd orbited around Mr. Jarmusch, as people politely tried to grab a moment of his time.

Brianna Lara, the metalsmith behind Fumsup Silver, was waiting for an opportune moment to give him a piece of jewelry that was inspired by his 2013 movie, "Only Lovers Left Alive."

"I want my pieces to exist among certain people that I admire," Ms. Lara, 27, said. "I think he has an eye for nuance and probably appreciates something that came from someone that was cut from the same cloth."

After the reception, Mr. Jarmusch's friends and colleagues walked over to the Italian restaurant Ètra for a relaxed dinner party.

As LCD Soundsystem played softly over the restaurant speakers, guests settled into cozy booths and clustered around tables. Mr. Jarmusch sat alongside RZA, the Grammy-winning musician and the chief architect of the Wu-Tang Clan, and his wife, Talani Diggs.

"I'm loving the collages," said RZA, who composed music for Mr. Jarmusch's 1999 cult classic "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai." "Me and my wife, we see two that we want to try to bring home with us."

Los Angeles Times



Indie filmmaker Jim Jarmusch, who considers collage-making a solitary escape, avoids looking back on all his creative endeavors. (Sara Driver)

JIM JARMUSCH GETS DARK: INDIE FILMMAKER REVEALS HIS LATEST ARTISTIC TURN IN L.A. SHOW

By Renée Reizman

Jim Jarmusch can't stop collaging. The celebrated independent filmmaker, known for movies such as Cannes Grand Prix winner "Broken Flowers" and "Stranger Than Paradise," has been dabbling in the art form for decades, amassing hundreds of works.

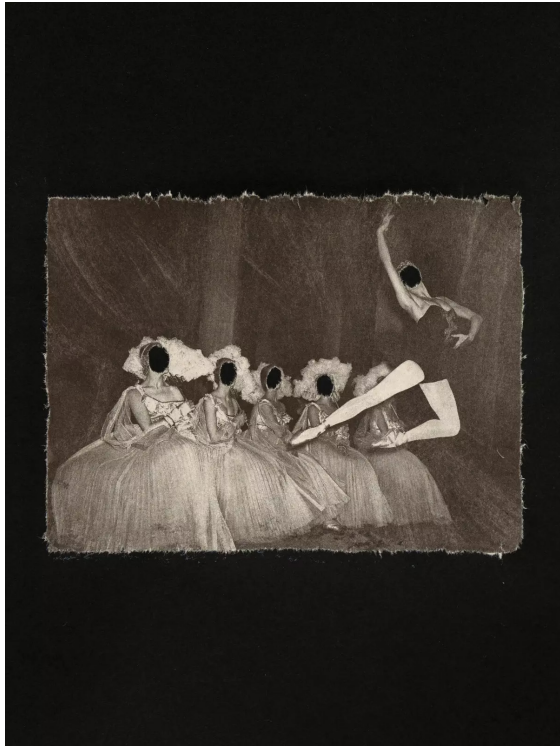
Creating collages is almost a compulsion, a way for Jarmusch to escape from the world and nestle into self-reflection. He scours newspapers for faces, tears them out with his hands and mounts them to sparse, solid-colored backgrounds. Jarmusch never imagined anyone would see the works, but in 2021, he had his art-world debut with an exhibition, "Some Collages," at James Fuentes gallery in New York. That show coincided with a book of the same name, published by Anthology.

Since then, Jarmusch has stepped further into the art world. His band Sqürl, a collaboration with his producer and composer Carter Logan, created a new original score for a restored quartet of Man Ray's experimental short films, releasing "Music for Man Ray" last May. In November, Jarmusch added curator to his multihyphenate list of talents: To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Surrealism, he selected 34 images from the Grand Palais' collection to highlight at Paris Photo, one of the most renowned photography art fairs in the world.

And, of course, Jarmusch has continued to collage. In the last few years, his collages have taken on a darker tone — figuratively and literally, as he now affixes his delicate compositions to black paper instead of a warm manila — and he has sent them to art fairs in France, Hong Kong and Los Angeles. Now he's presenting his second formal exhibition, "Some More Collages," which opens March 29 at the James Fuentes gallery in Los Angeles with a book signing. We caught up with Jarmusch to ask him about his collage process, Surrealism and his future as an artist.

The following Q&A has been edited for clarity.

You've curated a show and now you've had two art exhibitions. Do you feel like you are now officially in the art world?



Untitled newsprint collage by Jim Jarmusch, 2023 (All images courtesy of the artist and James Fuentes, Los Angeles and New York)

I move through different worlds. I grew up in rock 'n' roll clubs, I went through hip-hop worlds, and I obviously went through the film world. I've had a lot of friends who are artists since I was young, so I'm sort of in that world without being part of it.

What encouraged you to do another collage exhibition?

My first book was "Some Collages," which I got to design with Arielle de Saint Phalle and the people from Anthology, who published it. I wasn't expecting to have a book or a show, but Arielle de Saint Phalle encouraged me during the pandemic. I've been making these minimal newsprint collages for quite a few years now, and I did it mostly for a kind of solitary escape, a form of automatic writing, but with reappropriating visual things. I wanted a new show and hopefully a new small book. The previous show

was about reappropriating things and replacements, mostly the heads. The new ones I've been making for the last year or so are a little more somber and involve removal with black left behind. They're sort of a different feel. But I don't analyze them. They are what they are. I also have a few lithographs in the show.

Why did they get more somber? Are you affected by the state of the world?

I'm sure that has some effect, but they are pretty intuitively created. I don't like to think about them much when I'm making them. They come out of somewhere that's not analyzed. When I opened my first show, if the collages seemed overtly political or proselytizing in some way, I would remove them. I tried not to be too obvious about anything,

Why are all the faces removed?

I'm interested in juxtapositions that are not obvious. I worked on a film about William Burroughs many years ago, in the late '70s, by Howard Brookner, called "Burroughs." We spent a lot of time, over a year or more, with Burroughs, and I used to sit with him when he was working on his scrapbooks, which were cut-ups from newspapers, magazines and different sources. He would find these unexpected juxtapositions. That was a lingering inspiration.

I've always loved Surrealism. I love the disruption of logic. I love masks, and when I switched heads around, it was like playing with masks as well. But now, removing [the heads], they seem stronger. I like my new show more than my previous one, but I don't look back on anything I do. For example, once my films are completed, have reached a paying audience and [are] distributed, I never look at them again.

There's just one collage in the show that has faces in it. Could you talk more about that work?

That sneaked into the show, and it's maybe a little doorway into the next series. I always use text from where the image is sourced. There are two faces, I think they're some kind of billionaire, AI entrepreneur guys. The text refers to them. I don't know what they mean. I think e.e. cummings said

you can understand the poem without knowing what it means. That's true probably of all my work.

Are you tearing out the faces with your hands, or are you using a tool?

My little tool kit can fit in a briefcase. It has tweezers, whatever backgrounds I'm working with and cutting tools that are usually ballpoint pens that have run out of ink.

What materials do you use?

I love newsprint, because when I was very young, my parents gave me a microscope and the first thing I looked at was the edge of a torn newspaper. It was a jungle of thread. It was very striking, and I still have the image in my head. The fragility of newsprint appeals to me as a tactile substance.

Where are you sourcing the newspapers?

Mostly from the New York Times, but I'll take them from anywhere. For a while I was making some only from Chinese newspapers that I got from Chinatown. I like the idea that I'm subverting the idea of information and making something else.

What attracts you to this minimalist, highly edited approach?

I love the idea of taking things from other places and making something else out of them, which is why I love sampling and hip-hop or certain schools of poetry that involve game structures. I've always loved these head removal and replacements that I find in a lot of artists that I love, like Bruce Conner, Richard Prince, Ray Johnson, John Baldessari and David Wojnarowicz.

I saw that one of the lithographs uses Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon." Could you talk about that?

A lot of my collages refer to art. There's a Frank Stella reference in my book and a number of Warhol references. I use images of art, then basically damage them. I'm not a huge Picasso fan — I respect him, but he's a little



Untitled newsprint collage by Jim Jarmusch, 2023 (All images courtesy of the artist and James Fuentes, Los Angeles and New York)

too ego-oriented for me as an artist — but that is one of his most beautiful paintings.

I wanted to make some larger images from the small newsprint collages. In L.A., the small originals are part of the show, and then you can see the lithographs, which are enlargements. Maurice [Sanchez of Derriere L'Etoile Studios] makes them with a very special technique. He re-creates the collages and then fixes them onto the black backgrounds in a similar way to the way I create. Maurice creates lithos in Long Island City for everybody. Every artist you've ever heard of goes to him.

All the newsprint [collages] are originals, and they're very delicate, very small. There aren't multiples of any of them. I like the idea of making a few larger ones that could be reproduced.

Are there any Surrealists or Dadaists who really inspire you in particular?



Untitled newsprint collage by Jim Jarmusch, 2023 (All images courtesy of the artist and James Fuentes, Los Angeles and New York)

Collage-wise, Max Ernst is probably my favorite. There was recently a show at the Pompidou Center, a really exhaustive retrospective of Surrealism. The very early Max Ernst collages were taken out of catalogs, and there was a whole wall of them. It creates a dream world. You disrupt the perceived logic of things in a very minimal way. I love repetition and unexpected connections.

Do the themes in your collages reoccur in your poetry, music or films?

I don't really think about themes, honestly. When I write a script, I don't start with the story. I start with characters and actors. I start gathering details — little pieces of dialogue, little ideas, places — and I gather them for quite a long time, sometimes for years. Then I write the scripts very fast. I do the same thing with music, because I'm not a trained musician and structure is not my strength. Sometimes I will lay down, for example, a sort of psychedelic guitar track, and then I'll lay a second track down without listening first. Then I see what they become. When is the structure kind of aligned? When does it depart? It seems like everything I make has a similar thing, and the collages are just the most reduced illustration of my procedure.

What's the plan for the new collages?

I would love to make a new book. The only thing I would change [about my first book] is that I put too many collages into it.

Anything else you'd like to share?

I'm not hierarchical about things. I'm a self-proclaimed dilettante. What's high art, what's low art, all of that means nothing to me. There's something about collages — they're very accessible. They can be primitive or sophisticated or they can be complicated or obscure. I love the collage form because it's so universal. I've made collages alongside children, and we're all in the same boat.

artnet

DIRECTOR JIM JARMUSCH SHARES THE SURREALIST PHOTOS THAT INFLUENCED HIS FILMS

The "*Stranger than Paradise*" director says Surrealism was a "revelation." He selected works by artists such as David Hockney, Man Ray, Peter Hujar, and Robert Frank for this week's Paris Photo fair."

By Margaret Carrigan

Jim Jarmusch is known for his deadpan films that feature oddball characters and ask big existential questions. Among his best-known works in this vein are *Stranger than Paradise* (1984), a black-and-white minimalist comedy with a cult following, and *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999), the tale of a principled hitman and pigeon keeper who finds himself marked by the mafia. His cinematography also often employs surreal storytelling devices, such as the trail of pink objects in *Broken Flowers* (2005) that reveals important character-defining clues throughout the movie but offers little in the way of plot resolution.

Given the quiet absurdism of many of his films, it comes as no surprise that the American director has a long-standing affinity for Surrealism. "The beauty of Surrealism is looking at things in a different way," Jarmusch said. "It's about juxtaposing the mundane and fantastical."

As a teenager, Surrealism was a "revelation" to the burgeoning director, first in its visual forms and then its literary ones. In his early twenties, it drew him to Paris, "where I repeatedly used [André] Breton's "*Nadja*" as a kind of walking map through the mysterious nocturnal streets of the city," he said.

Jarmusch returns to Paris this week for Paris Photo, where he has curated a selection of 34 photos at the fair to celebrate the centenary of the Surrealism movement. His picks, Jarmusch added, are not purely Surrealist, but "reflect its tenets of the transformation of the ordinary into the dreamlike, and at times vice-versa."

There are plenty of recognizable works among Jarmusch's highlights, from David Hockney's 1970s swimming pool photos, brought by Equinox Gallery, to Peter Hujar's eerie catacomb images at Stephen Daiter's booth.

Robert Frank's portrait of Jack Kerouac at Pace is part of a fair-wide dedication to the late Swiss-American photographer and documentary filmmaker in honor of his 100th birthday; Jarmusch was a close friend of Frank and credits him as an influence in his own work.



David Hockney, *John St. Clair Swimming* (1972). Courtesy Equinox Gallery.

Several works foreground outsider figures, akin to the characters that Jarmusch tends to feature in his films. Japanese photographer Kenshichi Heshiki's scenes of mid-century Okinawa and those living on its margins stun at Ibasho's booth. Lisetta Carmi's subversive images of Genoa's trans community in the 1960s, brought by Martini and Ronchetti, are both gritty and joyful.

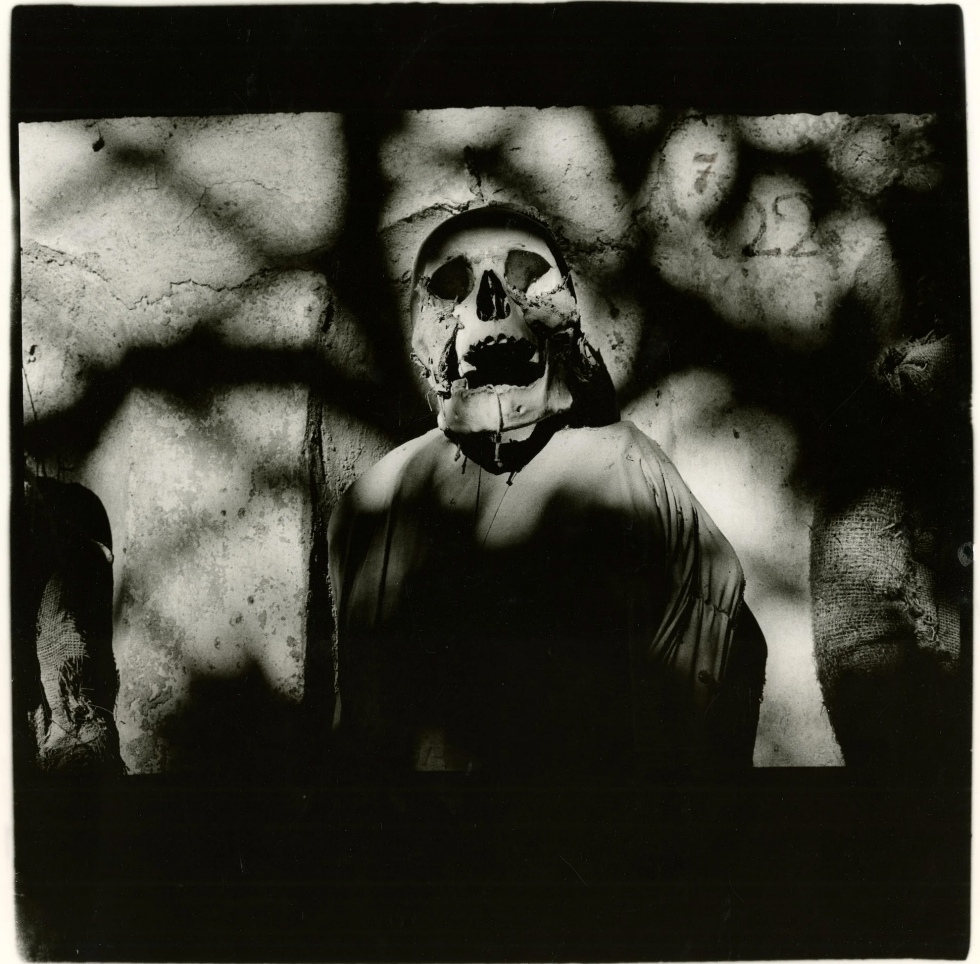
More contemporary inclusions range from Zanele Muholi's explorations of race, as seen in her portrait *OwakheX*, *Sheraton, Brooklyn, New York* (2019), at Yancey Richardson to Dawoud Bey's ominously dusky shot of an all-American house ringed by a white picket fence at Stephen Daiter.

Of course, there are classic Surrealist works grounding Jarmusch's curatorial strategy, 10 of which can be found at Edwynn Houk's booth, where an entire wall has been given over to Surrealism. Among the highlights are Dora Maar's *Photo Mode II* (1931) and several photos by Man Ray.

The evening before the photo fair opened to VIPs, Jarmusch also hosted a preview of *Le Retour à la raison*, a compendium of four short silent films made by Man Ray in the 1920s that have been restored and scored to post-rock music by SQÜRL, Jarmusch's experimental guitar band with Carter Logan.

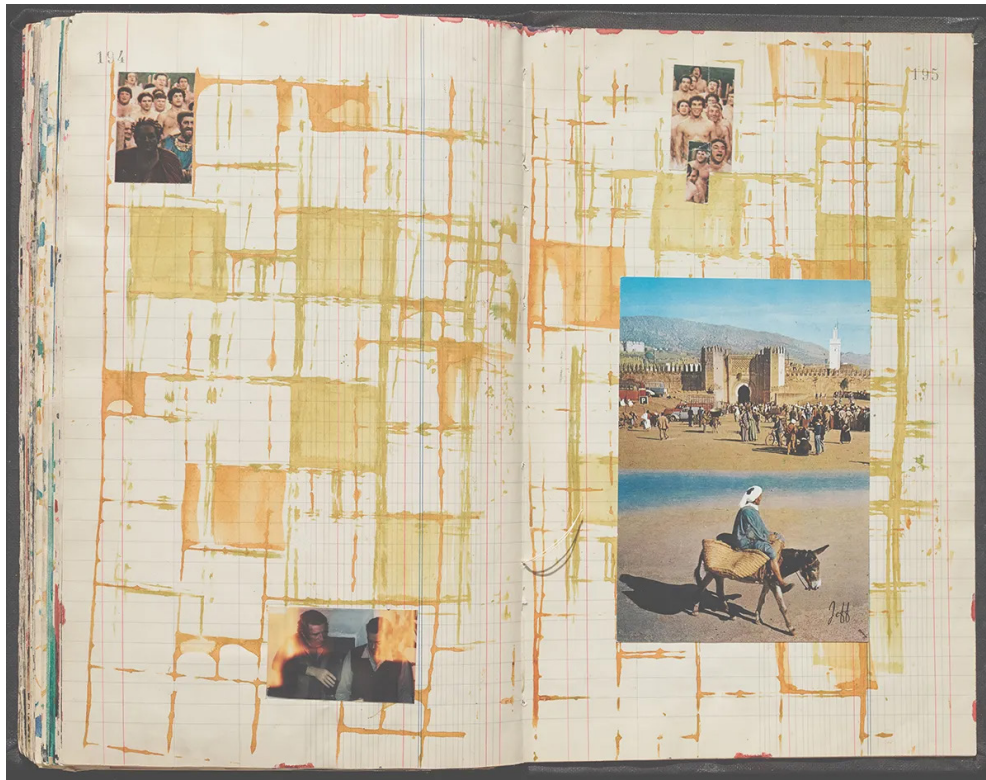
"I love how Man Ray experimented with photography and film, and treated the camera as a toy," Jarmusch said before the screening, adding that he had been playing improvisational music to these films for over a decade. The resulting score, guided by Jarmusch's feedback-heavy guitar and Logan's synthesizer and occasional drumbeat, feels perfectly in sync with the 100-year-old film. SQÜRL recorded it at Centre Pompidou, which is currently hosting a blockbuster Surrealism exhibition.

Alongside his cinematic work, Jarmusch is also a practicing visual artist specializing in photography and collage. He has an upcoming exhibition with James Fuentes Gallery in Los Angeles next year.



Peter Hujar, *Catacomb Palermo* (1963). ©Peter Hujar Archive, LLC; Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Courtesy Stephen Daiter

Art in America



Collaged scrapbook by William Burroughs. Courtesy Andrew Roth Inc.

JIM JARMUSCH ON CREATIVE PROCESS, EARLY INFLUENCES, AND PANDEMIC INSPIRATIONS

By Jim Jarmusch

My collages are sourced from newsprint. The physical material of newsprint is almost becoming obsolete, which I find interesting. And now our news is delivered in many other ways, mostly digital. But I don't analyze my collages or think about them too critically. These collages are just kind of fun, little dream worlds that I go into to calm myself and escape from things.

The way I make my collages can provide some insight into my usual creative process. Whether it's writing a script, making a piece of music, or shooting a film, I'm always drawn toward variations and repetitions. Very often with all of these forms, I try to place seemingly disparate elements beside one another. I always start by gathering materials for quite a long time that relate to some idea that I'm starting to form. Once I have enough of these things gathered, then I sit down and, say, write a script out of them. It's not exactly the same procedure between each medium, but my work is definitely defined by this process of gathering before making.

The Criterion channel is my drug of choice, as I try to watch at least one film every day. I'm a fan of crime novels, especially Donald Westlake's, and I recently watched a film I had never seen before made from his [1970] book *The Hot Rock*. The film of the same title, directed by Peter Yates in 1972, stars Robert Redford and George Segal, who try to steal a priceless diamond from the Brooklyn Museum. It was very entertaining, and Robert Redford's performance was fantastic!

I saw William Burroughs make his journals and scrapbooks while I was working on the set [*of Burroughs: The Movie* (1983)]. They were all cutups and a kind of re-manipulation of information, both images and words. He and Brion Gysin used these methods to construct their own texts. Seeing this firsthand impacted the way I work and, of course, the collages I'm making today.

I've been revisiting some love poems by Rene Ricard that were recently republished. He was a very young star of the Andy Warhol crowd. I met him many years ago while doing the sound for Howard Brookner's [1983] documentary film about William Burroughs. We were both lucky to spend a lot of time with Burroughs. We lost Ricard some years back, but I always liked his poems.

One of my must-watch movies is *The Music Room* [1958] by Indian film director Satyajit Ray. It's the story of a formerly wealthy man who spends the last of his money by inviting classical musicians to perform in his home. The inclusion of live performances really contributes to the film's impact.

I've been somewhat isolated at my home in the Catskills, where I record music and make art. Radio L'envie invited me to make a playlist and I put together an eclectic selection that ranges from Icelandic rock to female reggae. Icelandic music is very atmospheric. I saw the band Dead Skeletons play live while I was visiting Iceland a few years ago. I started my playlist with an eight-minute drone song by them.

—*As told to Francesca Aton*

The New York Times



Jim Jarmusch likes removing heads in his tiny collages with newsprint. He's been making them for 20 years and mostly keeping them to himself — until now. Credit: Josefina Santos for The New York Times

JIM JARMUSCH'S COLLAGES ARE READY FOR THEIR CLOSE-UP

The filmmaker has been quietly making small, eerie collages on newsprint for 20 years, with faces switched onto other bodies. Now they're finally on view."

By Max Lakin

Jim Jarmusch likes removing the heads. He likes to swap the heads of world leaders with Picassos or Basquiats, or simply excise them entirely, leaving a head-shaped void. A man with a coyote's head rides in the back of a car, rather dejected. Warhol's head is a favorite motif: twin Andys in sunglasses standing stoically in a tunnel; Warhol's head grafted onto a state official striding a tarmac; a man slouched in a chair, one of the artist's Brillo boxes fixed where his head should be.

Jarmusch is best known for writing and directing pleasingly downbeat films like "Night on Earth" and "Down by Law," in which laconic protagonists meander through the weirder corners of the world, encountering fellow travelers, or simply the uncanny. For the past 20 years he's also been quietly producing collages like these, notecard-size pieces of delicately layered newsprint on cardstock that echo a similar worldview, scrambling imagery to create alternately deadpan and revelatory compositions.

"I never intended to do anything with these," Jarmusch, whose thatch of chalk white hair and blackout shades are still a familiar presence on the downtown scene, said in an interview this summer. "But I thought, well, why not share them? See if they amuse anyone."

Jarmusch says he was content to keep this practice to himself, creating upward of 500 collages, most of which haven't been publicly seen. But over the last year, while at the Catskills home he shares with his wife, the filmmaker Sara Driver, he was convinced, with the encouragement of Arielle de Saint Phalle, with whom he has worked for nearly 10 years, to organize and present this strain of his practice. The result is Jarmusch's first monograph, "Some Collages," published this month by Anthology Editions, which collects more recent examples made in the last seven years. "Newsprint Collages," a solo show of the original collages, his formal gallery debut, opens at James Fuentes on Wednesday.

And they are in fact highly amusing, in an spookily absurdist manner. They recall "La Boutique Obscure," the impressionistic dream diary the



“Untitled,” 2017. Is this Josef Albers’s head that’s gone missing from the artist’s body? Jim Jarmusch includes a newsprint clue that suggests so. Credit: Jim Jarmusch and James Fuentes; Anthology Editions

Oulipo writer Georges Perec kept between 1968 and 1972, hallucinatory, slightly terrifying, but also frequently funny. Jarmusch’s collages are manipulations of something originally presented as fact — a *détournement* of photojournalism serrated and spliced into surrealist scenes that collapse time (a Victorian-era woman in a modern hospital room), or illustrate some psychic fantasy (releasing a primal scream while an audience applauds).

Jarmusch has no qualms vivisectioning species like a paper-based Doctor Moreau (a man with the head of a Pomeranian led away in handcuffs). But one thing he doesn’t tamper with is scale. The collages dismantle the newsprint’s visual information but remain faithful to its original size, which means many of them are minuscule, some near-microscopically so. It also means the experience of looking at one is physically intimate. The images force you to crane your neck to decipher them, or bring the page closer to your face, as if receiving a secret. As objects go, “Some Collages” is

stout, a macabre photo album. It’s small enough to be considered portable, which gives it a utilitarian cast, ready to be produced to divine something important or true about the day’s news. As Joseph Cornell wrote, “Collage = reality.”

“The interesting thing about them is they reveal to me that my process of creating things is very similar, whether I’m writing a script or shooting a film or making a piece of music or writing a poem or making a collage,” Jarmusch said. “I gather the elements from which I will make the thing first. Like, shooting a film is just gathering the material from which you will edit the film, you know? The collages reduce it to the most minimal form of that procedure.”

Still, collage presents an attractive convenience. Whereas a film shoot necessitates sophisticated and heavy equipment, not to mention the cooperation of many people, the collages require only solitude and a copy of the paper, a movable feast of broadsheet. “Mostly I do it in between the rigors of making a film, when I need to be left alone, or maybe people around me want me to leave them alone,” Jarmusch said. “I made a lot of these over the last few years before my mother died, in Cleveland. I would stay with her in her house, and go into another room and work on them. It’s stepping aside the real world, so to speak.”

Jarmusch keeps an old metal flat file in his garage with drawers dedicated to backgrounds, saved cardboard and “paper I’m attracted to,” newspapers he’s yet to parse. “I have files of heads,” he added. He has a strict set of self-imposed rules: newspapers only (no magazines), no sharp cutting tools (he favors ballpoint pens that have gone dry, which “can cut in a crude way”). The effect is a fiber halo, the tears and separations leaving a roughness that makes the images appear to fuzz, as if in a dream. “I’m not quite sure why I even adhere to these things. It’s like an oblique strategy,” he said, referring to Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt’s card-based method for inspiring creativity.

Jarmusch’s collages fit within a rich art history, which joins with the art world tradition of appropriation, as sacred as it is misunderstood, from Kurt Schwitters, who assembled delirious assemblages from trash, to Hannah Hoch’s and Man Ray’s Dadaist compositions, to Ad Reinhardt’s clattering, modernist “Newsprint Collage.”

“Max Ernst, Picasso and Braque, particularly, bringing other textures into their work, which carries through to one of my favorite artists of all

time, Jasper Johns,” Jarmusch said. “I like that little kids can make them. You can make them so minimal. In some ways John Baldessari’s are even more minimal than mine because he didn’t even bother to replace faces but just put colored circles over them — some of those I think are very beautiful.”

He went on: “In some ways my favorite artists of the 20th century are, on a philosophical level, Duchamp for the first half and Warhol for the second half. I must say I still find it hilarious when people still don’t understand that because Richard Prince reappropriated a photograph, well, why wasn’t that photograph worth hundreds of thousands of dollars before that? How come he gets all that money?.”

Before he landed on filmmaking, Jarmusch intended to be a poet, studying under the New York School poet David Shapiro (who also made collages) and Kenneth Koch, and traces his animating principle to their strategies. “Koch once gave me a poem by Rilke, and said, bring me your translation in two days. I said, ‘But Kenneth, I don’t know any German.’ And he just looked at me with a kind of twinkle in his eye and said, ‘Exactly.’ And so the idea is take something, anything, and make a new thing out of it.”

Newsprint appeals to Jarmusch for its availability, but also its ephemerality. “I like it being so fragile,” he said. “You know, the old joke of yesterday’s newspaper you wrap the fish in or whatever, it’s something intended to be discarded. It reduces its own self-importance somehow.”

These qualities also give the project an elegiac air. As local newspapers around the country cease operations or migrate to digital-only formats, Jarmusch’s collages become a document of a rapidly evaporating medium. “I realized only recently that, gee, I’m using materials that are almost obsolete now,” he said. “There’s something soothing for me in handling the paper, I don’t know how to explain it. Digital is too cold for me. I love it for many things, my last films have been shot with digital cameras and I’ve been editing on digital machines since 1996. I’m not a total Luddite.”

Jarmusch is interested in the pure visual collision of collage, but his source material inevitably troubles their innocence. Politicians creep in, along with images of global strife, which can be interpreted as commentary. “I try not to think too much about the kind of juxtapositions I’m creating,” Jarmusch said. “If they seem too pointed or too cute or something, I get rid of them. Sometimes someone says, ‘Oh, do you realize that’s the former right-wing prime minister of Australia?’ No, I don’t know who that was. Or other times



“Untitled,” 2017. “I love Nico,” the artist said. “I’m saving her head.” Credit...Jim Jarmusch and James Fuentes; Anthology

I’ll just find a nice photo of Nico [the Velvet Underground singer]. I love Nico, I’m saving her head. And then I find something where I think, that would be nice for Nico. They’re kind of childlike, my way of putting them together. They’re playful.”

Yet he also admits, “Some of them are a little scary or dark. Some of them, I hope, are funny. The New York School poets taught me if there’s nothing funny in any of your stuff, then wow, how unfortunate for you.”

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

SOME COLLAGES



JIM JARMUSCH

Some Collages by Jim Jarmusch, published by Anthology Editions.

JIM JARMUSCH'S SOME COLLAGES

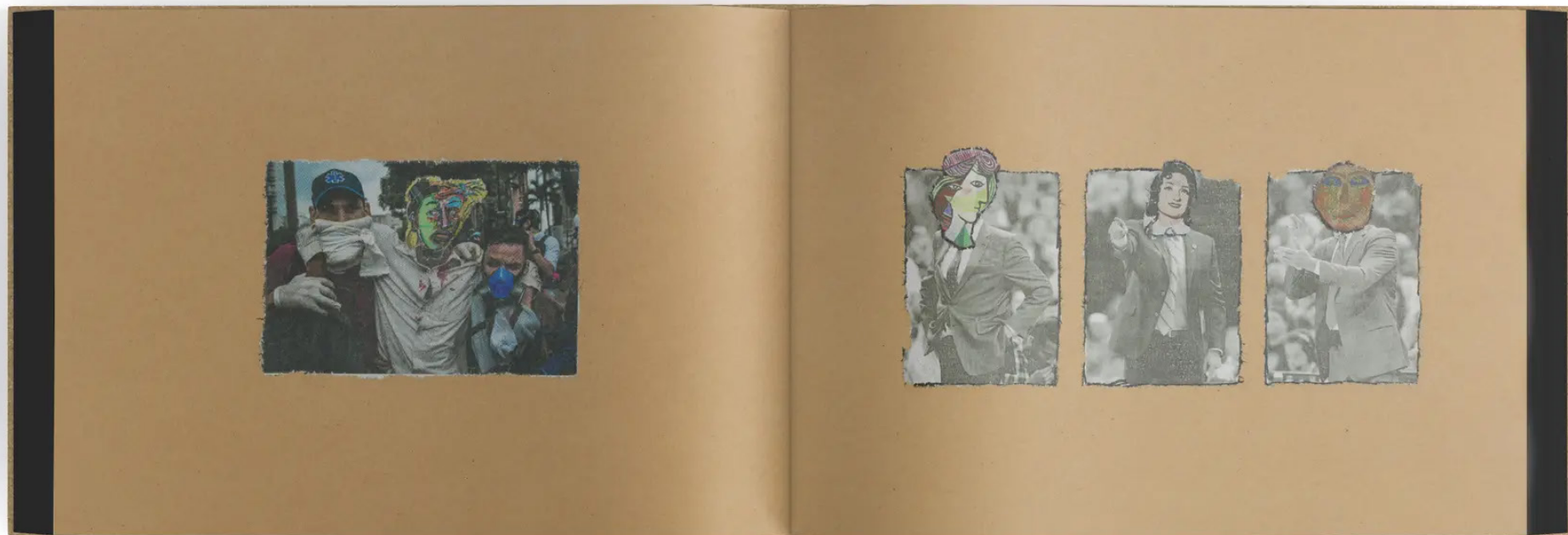
The tactics create fresh narratives out of overdetermined symbols, personae, and visual paradigms.

By Jennie Waldow

Jim Jarmusch's *Some Collages* opens with a black-and-white photograph of two men and a dog outdoors. Based on the men's clothing—black pants, a white shirt, and a tie blown askew for one, a rugged work coat for the other—we are looking into an image of the past, perhaps set in the 1930s. Strikingly, the faces of all three figures have been removed, leaving head-shaped voids like those in a carnival cut-out. Despite this seeming act of visual violence, an air of droll humor pervades the composition, an impression compounded by the following two collages, in which the faces of the cast of *The Wizard of Oz* and three diminutive snowmen have been similarly removed. Who are these figures now, and who could they be?

Known as the director and writer of *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), *Dead Man* (1995), *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003), *Broken Flowers* (2005), and *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), among other films, Jarmusch has made newsprint collages for around twenty years. *Some Collages* features recent selections from the past three years of his production, reproducing 146 collages in a compact, album-size compendium. As the scholar Juan A. Suarez describes, Jarmusch's work as a filmmaker "fuses the experimental modernist repertoire with street styles—punk, new wave club culture, and hip-hop" and this kaleidoscopic, DIY spirit comes across in his droll rearrangements of newsprint clippings.

Jarmusch's modus operandi as a collagist is to cut out the faces in the original newsprint photographs, most sourced from the *New York Times*, and replace them with others, newspaper text, or negative space. The seams of this transposition show: colors don't match, resolutions are out of whack, and scale is distorted, imparting a cartoon-like sense of textured unreality. Jarmusch's compositional tactics create fresh narratives out of overdetermined symbols, personae, and visual paradigms; as Luc Sante 1 writes in the foreword, "You could say that Jarmusch, ever the director, is engaging in exploratory casting." The collages, which are reproduced in the book at a slightly smaller scale, are marked by an impression of movement and distinguished by ragged, feathery edges,



from *Some Collages* by Jim Jarmusch, published by Anthology Editions.

caused by Jarmusch's use of an empty ballpoint pen as a cutting device. The main body of the book is printed on textured brown paper, reminiscent of the kind used for lunch bags or wrapping material, complementing the casual, spontaneous feeling of the works within.

The sequencing of the collages appears somewhat random at first, but as the book goes on, it becomes essential in conveying Jarmusch's artistic rhythm and absurdist humor. Animal heads, a smiley face, Picasso portraits, and even a Brillo box are transposed upon human bodies in action and repose: staring in a mirror, speaking to a gaggle of reporters, reclining in a chair. The heads of Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Albert Einstein, Prince, David Bowie, and Andy Warhol appear in new contexts and time periods, untethered from their typical backdrops and behaviors. As the viewer becomes accustomed to the sly tone and altered domain of the collages, the facial expressions of the cut-out faces seem to correspond with the body language of the appendages below.

It's not necessary to know exactly who or what is contained within the compositions to appreciate their wry mood of possibility, as Jarmusch explained in an interview in *Vogue*: "I'm more interested in variations and repetitions—in all the things I create: in films and music, but in these things [collages] especially so. In a lot of these pieces, I don't know who the people are, and some of the ones I think are the best are the most abstract."

The collages' mischievous use of ephemeral media is a key element of their impact. In his introductory essay, Randy Kennedy describes how "the simultaneous significance and worthlessness of newsprint—a practically negligible distance between knowledge and garbage—has always constituted its chief allure," citing Walter Robinson and Edit DeAk's *Art-Rite* magazine, Tristan Tzara's newspaper compositions, and William Burroughs and Brion Gysin's poetic collaborations as influences on Jarmusch's approach to the newspaper as raw material. Despite the strangeness of the world Jarmusch presents in these works, we recognize their visual modes from the conventions of print; this is a sort of imagery "where the photography conveys not so much a slice of life as

a sense of ritual,” as Sante puts it. The tropes of events that merit photographic documentation and textual explication in the newspaper are recognizable, like thrusting microphones to represent an article about a news conference, a solo shot of a reclining individual to accompany an interview, or a zoomed-in image of a guitar to be paired with a concert review. But by virtue of Jarmusch’s novel “castings,” the figures undertaking these activities are entirely unexpected, funny, and peculiar. Instead of a dour commentary on the proliferation of “fake news,” Jarmusch’s collages unlock the more imaginative, joyful capabilities in the scrambling of photographic codes, historical moments, and everyday materials.

Endnotes

1. Lucy Sante (she), heretofore Luc Sante.

AnOther

JIM JARMUSCH'S COLLAGES ARE AS WEIRD, WITTY AND WONDERFUL AS HIS FILMS

This week marks the release of a new art book by the American indie filmmaker: a compelling collection of collages that oscillate from the surreal to the satirical

By Daisy Woodward



From *Some Collages* by Jim Jarmusch. Courtesy of Anthology Editions

Ever since the release of his first feature, *Permanent Vacation* (1980), American auteur Jim Jarmusch has delighted film fans with his witty, soulful, and distinctly unique take on the world. Whether he's championing the outsider à la *Down By Law* or *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, putting his typically deadpan spin on genre movies (think: his postmodern western *Dead Man* or his 2019 zombie dramedy *The Dead Don't Die*), or presenting us with poetic musings on human existence in films like *Broken Flowers* and *Paterson*, you'll know a Jarmusch offering when you see one.

Less associated with the director, however, is his capacity for cut-outs, yet Jarmusch has been making what he terms "small very minimal collages" for years. Up until now he's kept this pastime private, but this week marks the release of a new art book, titled *Some Collages*, showcasing a curated selection of these compelling miniature montages.

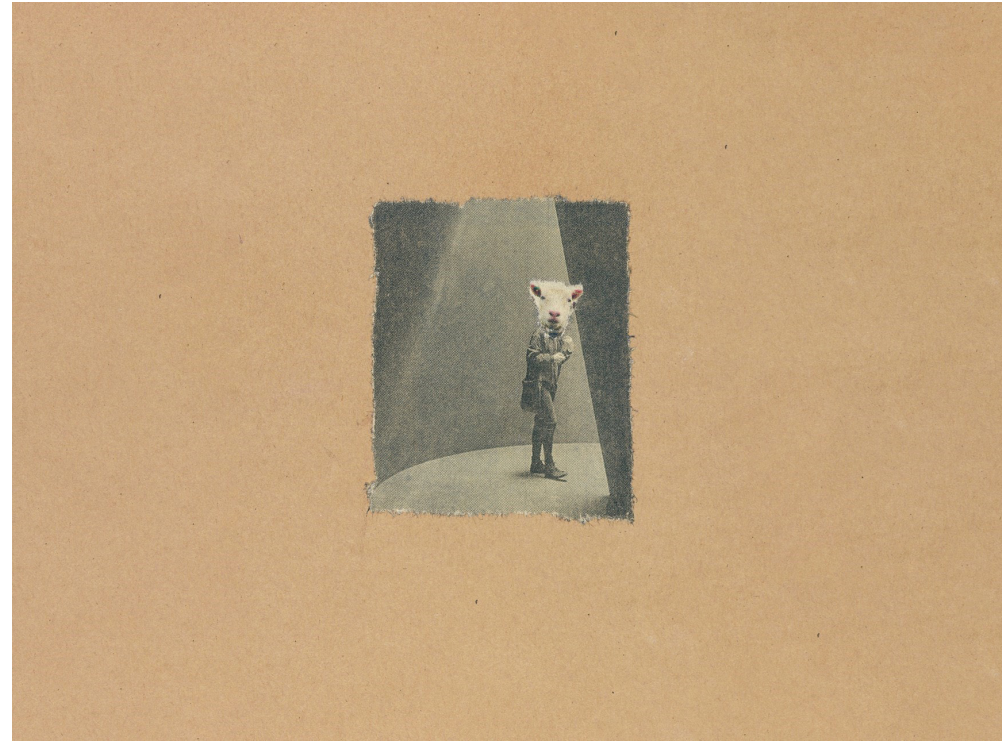
A small, pleasingly thick tome, the book presents Jarmusch's artworks on his preferred backdrop, "rough brown paper." Each collage is assembled from images or texts extracted from old newspapers using the nib of an empty ballpoint pen – with deliberately ragged results. "As a kid, I received a microscope for my birthday," Jarmusch explains in a text accompanying the book's release. "The first thing I examined ... was a tiny scrap of torn newspaper. I was astounded. Instead of a single, solid sheet-like material, it was in fact a tangled mass of threadlike fibers, a chaotic jungle of microscopic pulp."

The majority of the director's cut-outs comprise a square or rectangular picture of a figure, or multiple figures, with only their faces doctored. In Jarmusch's words, "the removal and/or replacement of heads [is] possibly the most minimal way of reorganising visual information. Faces and heads become masks for me, and I can change or switch identities, details and even species."

As in his films, Jarmusch alludes to different eras, cultures, realms and

subcultures throughout the works, but whether or not you're familiar with these references has no bearing on the collages' overall ability to cast a spell. Bauhaus doyen Josef Albers sits in his studio, his visage made up of text; suited men's heads are replaced by artworks (an asymmetric Picasso face here, a Basquiat mask there) that break free of the central frame; a lone man in the back of a car wears the forlorn head of a fox.

Sometimes the effect is surreal, almost Dada, at others wonderfully silly, sometimes it's distinctly unsettling, at others strangely melancholic. In every case, the composition is immaculate, the inherent narrative suggestion enticing. Nevertheless, in true Jarmusch style, we're always left free to form our own conclusions. Because, in the words of *Permanent Vacation*'s meandering protagonist Chris Parker, "What's a story anyway, except one of those connect-the-dot drawings that in the end forms a picture of something?"



From Some Collages by Jim Jarmusch. Courtesy of Anthology Editions

DAZED



Images courtesy of Anthology Editions

JIM JARMUSCH ON HARNESSING THE CHAOS OF THE NEWS IN HIS NEW COLLAGE BOOK

Some Collages came together during lockdown and is the culmination of years of newspaper collaging

By Jack Mills

In a small and secluded art studio, in the annex of his house in New York's wooded Ulster County, surrounded by dust, paper, scissors and glue, Jim Jarmusch is hiding from the news. "I go there while the others watch it," the director, no wave poet, fine artist and Lower East Side conversation-alist says of his hideout. "I can't really deal with it."

Over the phone, Jarmusch's voice seems to pan over the world, detached and weightless, thoughts uncoiling like a stop-motion rose. He's calling me to talk about the way he processes the news, and how this process formed the basis of his first ever artbook, *Some Collages*, which comes out today.

Some Collages rescrambles the kind of information and imagery we have become bombarded with in the nonlinear, digital-first present: a surgeon's head in a Covid mask on a suedehead's body; Oz's brainless scarecrow in a fashion shoot, a Lucha libre fighter lost on a Film Noir set; Salman Rushdie with a nine-iron. In generatively wild times, it's the kind of art you didn't know you needed. For Jarmusch, just like the racket and magnitude of his New York, at least with madness you know where you are. It's sense through a squint.

The book pulls together some of your archive newsprint collages. You've been doing this for years now - what made you decide to compile them in this way?

Jim Jarmusch: The ones in the book are really from the last few years and it wasn't 'til lockdown of last year that I kind of had extra time to (work through them) - I couldn't really shoot a film, or prepare for one. They're really for my own escape sometimes, or to send to friends, things like that. So I think of them more as a kind of amusement than my entrance into the art world [laughs], you know? I liked the cultural ephemera of these newspaper sources, I was making little jokes for myself or minimalist juxtapositions. I'm inspired very much often by variations and repetitions of

things, and childlike reappropriation.

Sometimes when they seem too pointed or a little too intentional, I usually put them aside or lose interest in them. Obviously everything is political on some level, and some of these are more pointedly political, but I really try not to think too much about them. I try to use childlike strategies: why did I choose to put this head on that body, or remove this head completely?

A few cultural touchstones repeat in the book, like *The Wizard of Oz*. How did these motifs arrive in your mind?

Jim Jarmusch: I don't really know how to explain it. I gather what I consider the backgrounds first. I have envelopes full of what I call 'replacement heads', and I have backgrounds of photographic images that I want to appropriate or alter. You know, it's like the surrealist tenet of disrupting logic or perceived reality by just altering it in some sort of obvious way. It's funny, I was gathering things with masks, not just surgical masks, for years, so I have lots of people wearing hospital masks in there. I kind of shied away from putting too many in because I didn't want it to seem as though, 'Oh, that's a pandemic reference.' In fact, it started long before that. I like bandaged people, and I love masks in general: indigenous masks, Chinese ceremonial masks, phantom masks, the masks of superheroes, or the Green Hornet or even Subcomandante Marcos.

So that's always been a kind of theme for me. It's true of my writing and my filmmaking. The worst thing, for me, is to try to analyze them. I just try to create them and try to use instinct over analysis, which isn't really my strength.

In his intro to the book, Randy Kennedy references William Burroughs' technique, *The Cut-Ups*. What got you thinking about collage in the first place?

Jim Jarmusch: As a teenager, I became obsessed with the Dadaists and Surrealists, people like Kurt Schwitters and Max Ernst, and Picabia, and Hannah Höch, Joseph Cornell and André Breton, and Man Ray, certainly. Then I studied under Kenneth Koch and David Shapiro who are associated with what's called the New York School of Poets. They introduced me to

Oulipo and certain poetic forms where they were cutting up things, rearranging things. Their kind of playfulness is still in me. I consider the New York School Poets my artistic godfathers, for sure. In the late seventies, I spent a lot of time with Burroughs, both in New York City and in Colorado. I was already a Burroughs fan, especially Burroughs and Brion Gysin's manipulation and reorganization of information.

On a few occasions, I got to sit with Burroughs when he was working on his journals, which are collages he pulled apart from magazines, newspapers and books. They'd have all these hidden juxtapositions that were revealed by how he placed things together and connections he would find. I know he used to do this just to calm down or escape from other things he was supposed to be doing.

It's certainly been an onslaught of information this year, because the world is treading some pretty tenuous new ground. Was it nice to focus on something physical?

Jim Jarmusch: I keep (going back to the) fact that even children can make collages. It's not something that requires any virtuosity, visually. Last year, especially in the US but all around the globe, untruths were promoted as truth through repetition, until somehow they were accepted and not even questioned properly. I wasn't doing anything analytical or I'm not polemical about it, but in a minor way I'm investigating it.

One of the images that really stands out is the businessman in the VR headset. It's what the Oculus Rift symbolises: the future of work, communication, socializing, money, sex, and how all of this has accelerated under lockdown. What does that image represent to you, though?

Jim Jarmusch: I think technology is incredibly important, but that image is kind of strange because it's very simple. It is contradictory because it is looking deeper into something by blocking it out and not looking at what is physically there: you are isolated and open to new things and maybe new solutions and thoughts. When I see people walking around New York City and they're oblivious to where they are because they're looking at their device, I think it's because humans can't adapt physically fast enough. So they are adapting using technology, which is logical in a way. Insects can

communicate with each other across long distances in various ways - ants can leave a chemical language that is packed with very, very explicit information that can be followed by any other ant following that path. Humans need desperately to communicate across the planet - we have the internet, and that's a very positive thing.

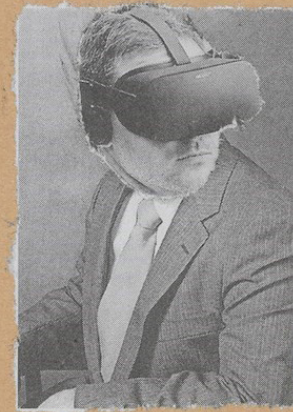
And yet what it's used for is to track us for capitalistic reasons. Our information can kind of enclose us and we can be exploited, you know? So the beauty of the thing also contains its worst nightmare, somehow. And that simple image contains those contradictions because this human being is looking into something with a device that is enabling him to... what? Do all the things mentioned potentially, but it's divorcing him from the actual physical world that he's inhabiting. Those contradictions are interesting to me.

I think another thing that really brings humour to your book is the rhythm of it, the surprises and the pacing. There's something almost musical about the layout and the image ordering.

Jim Jarmusch: Yeah. I'm so happy you say that, because it's something we spent a lot of time and consideration on. So yes, it was musical in a sense, you want them to speak to each other in a way, and then other times, you don't want to make that sort of obvious connection.

Did you have access to archive newspaper cuttings for Some Collages?

Jim Jarmusch: No, I just gathered mostly *The New York Times* and some others. I have a big, incredible filing cabinet of flat drawers here right next to me. I gather things and store them away. I have some Chinese and Arabic newspapers and stuff, I kind of squirrel them away. I don't go too far back in time and I'm never looking for anything specific. It's more like a treasure hunt. I'm just looking for what catches my eye and I'm not looking for any certain theme. Like, if I see someone with a bandaged head, I say, 'Oh, I'm going to take that head!' I don't know why. I often like people with hats on, or people wearing masks. I try to keep busy, so I don't have to watch the news...



THE PARIS REVIEW

JIM JARMUSCH'S COLLAGES

By Lucy Sante



From *Some Collages*, by Jim Jarmusch, published by Anthology Editions.

Jim Jarmusch's small, eerie collages are all about faces. And about the bodies attached to those faces. And about what happens when faces get switched off onto other bodies. You could say that Jarmusch, ever the director, is engaging in exploratory casting. He wants to see Stanley Kubrick in the role of a golfer, and Nico as a Vegas crooner, and Jane Austen winding up on the mound, and Albert Einstein as a rock star, and Bernie Sanders as a dog. Andy Warhol, meanwhile, just goes ahead and casts himself in every role, turning all of them into "Andy Warhol."

Personalities can transfer their qualities to other modes of life, and you are invited to imagine the results of the ensuing cognitive dissonance. When there is little discernible personality, or when parties have abandoned their personalities in favor of a position—political or legal or corporate or academic—they simply become their blather. You imagine that those thumbprints of text, sitting above shoulders, are excerpts from an endless gray ribbon of rhetoric that unspools continuously. And then there are those humans whose heads are empty, the same color as the mount. Since some are villains and some are heroes, that does not seem to carry a moral implication. Maybe they represent all those who suffer from stomach troubles.

Jarmusch's canvases are tiny, but they encompass at least two hundred years of news, culture, and entertainment. Anything in our collective memory can be reconfigured at will. A line of jokers headed by Claude Monet step out in minidresses printed with the faces of the 1968 U.S. presidential candidates, simply because they can. The mood might be postapocalyptic; history is over and it is now time to swap out its parts, looking for a better fit. We can run rampant all over the stage of what used to be called civilization. At last even ciphers and smiley faces and cocker spaniels can become celebrated heroes and beauties!

The modest proportions of Jarmusch's collages also make them pass for news, in the old sense: murky little gray pictures on some inner page of the newspaper, where the photography conveys not so much a slice of life as a sense of ritual. Under those circumstances, if a sufficient number of men in suits are crowded together it really doesn't matter to your scanning eye whether they are legislators or mafiosi—they are enacting

importance, and they do so every day regardless of the weather. Seeing Jarmusch's collages is like flipping through the *Daily Bugle* and suddenly realizing that the paper has been taken over by pranksters who are giving you the real news: those figures might wear suits but they are actually cocker spaniels! Your vision has been corrected. You are no longer semi-consciously scanning now, but sitting upright and paying attention. The world reveals itself for what it really is.



From *Some Collages*, by Jim Jarmusch, published by Anthology Editions.

VOGUE

DIRECTOR JIM JARMUSCH TALKS UP HIS LATEST PROJECT—A BOOK OF COLLAGES AND A GALLERY SHOW

By Corey Seymour



Sara Driver

While Jim Jarmusch may be most visible as the director of (most recently) feature films such as *The Dead Don't Die*, *Paterson*, and *Only Lovers Left Alive*, he's also a producer, an actor, a musician (in the band SŦURL and with the Dutch lutist Jozef van Wissem, with whom he's released three albums), a composer of music for film, an occasional poet and—unbeknownst to most until now—a dedicated collagist.

Next month sees the Anthology Editions publication of *Some Collages*, with a foreword by Luc Sante and an essay by the writer and curator Randy Kennedy, along with a show of Jarmusch's work at the James Fuentes Gallery. His collage work displays a very particular style, featuring grainy images pulled from the recent-ish newspapers, some of them more identifiable than others, with faces—some of them recognizable, from Prince and Patti Hearst to Andy Warhol and Christopher Walken, others not—transformed and identities switched or transmogrified.

We rang up Jarmusch at his studio in the upper Hudson Valley/lower Catskills—"where I have the best chance of creating things," as he told us—to learn a bit more about how, and why, he does what he does.

Vogue: How long have you been making collages—and what's the time frame of work represented in this book?

Jim Jarmusch: All of these are from the last three years or so, but I've been making collages for maybe 20 years off and on—I probably have 500 or 600 total—and I have some new series since the book that are a bit different—different backgrounds, a little more raw, on damaged cardboard and things like that.

You seem to have arrived at a very particular style. Are there any collagists or artists that have informed your work, or did you consciously set out to make this more of a punk DIY or *détournement* thing?

Almost all of them have been extremely minimal—removing something, replacing something, finding backgrounds that I find interesting. They're



Courtesy of: *SOME COLLAGES* by Jim Jarmusch, Published by ANTHOLOGY EDITIONS

kind of little dream worlds for me, and it's been therapeutic, because while I make them I'm solitary, and it's a way of remaining calm. The idea of dismantling basic information is something very interesting to me and goes back to when I knew William Burroughs—I worked on Howard Brookner's film [*Burroughs: The Movie*] in the late '70s, and we spent a lot of time with Burroughs, and I watched him constructing some of his journals and scrapbooks that he and Brion Gysin had been cutting up for years, manipulating information or finding it randomly reordered—but there have been many in the past doing similar things, from Tristan Tzara and the Dadaists to the OULIPO group in France that used a kind of *Oblique Strategies* for creating texts and poems.

I find them interesting because I can change so many things in one little move—I can reorient where the character or characters in the image are looking; I can change sizes, species...they're very simple and basic, but I find them very fun. I tend to like the ones where people can't quite tell—"What

did you do to this one?"—over the ones which might be a bit more obvious. I've shelved or discarded the ones that I found a little too cute, or that looked like they had a bit too much intention behind them. For me it's more like a surrealist procedure of automatic writing, in a way—I try not to analyze what I'm doing and just react.

I recognize some faces and backgrounds in your work, but most of them seem like they're just on the edge of my memory...should I really be knowing more about who these people are, or what news event the background setting was pulled from?

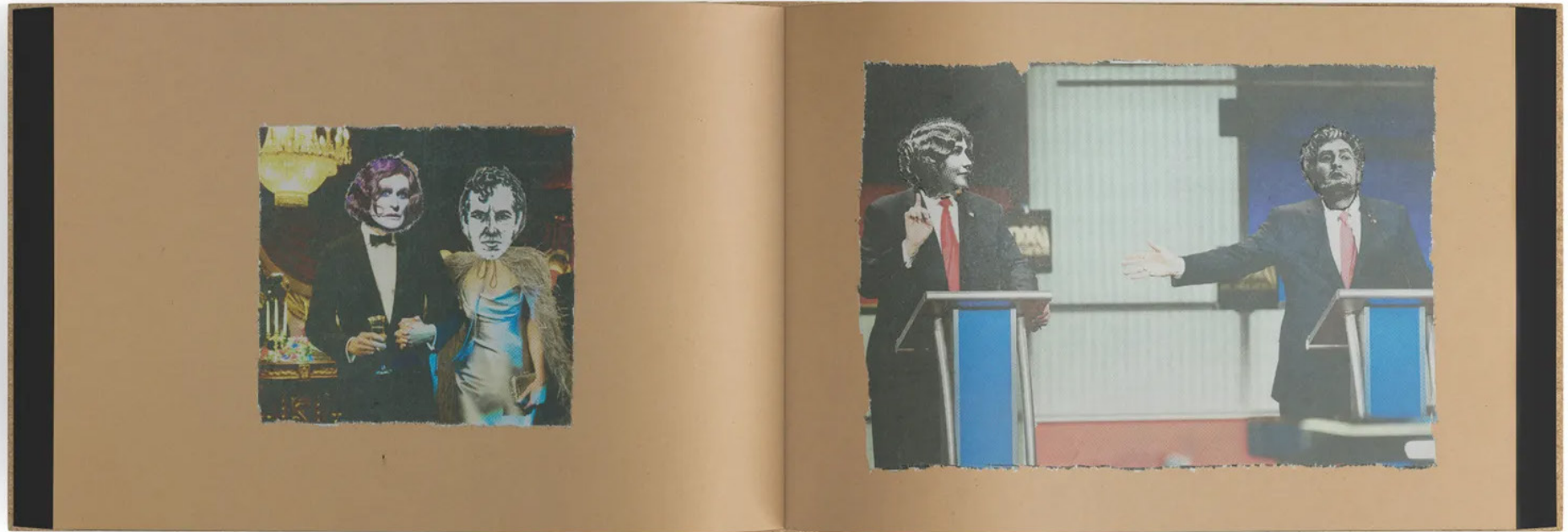
No—sometimes people identify subjects in them that I wasn't aware of, such as the former prime minister of Australia—I didn't realize who that was. I'm more interested in variations and repetitions—in all the things that I create: in films and music, but in these things especially so. In a lot of these pieces, I don't know who the people are, and some of the ones I think are the best are the most abstract, when you don't know who it is, or if it's even a collage—for me, anyway.

That's a relief—I was concerned that maybe I was just too dense to figure out the play you were making with some of these people.

If it's like that, I'm also too dense to figure it out [laughs].

Where and when do you make these?

I have a portable collaging case—cutting tools, tweezers, backgrounds—and if I'm going on a trip I'll take it along, and if I have a chance, I'll make some. And I also have a place in my art and recording studio that's basically one bay of a former car garage where I have all my musical equipment, but I've got a big art table there. Some years ago my mother in Ohio was not doing well, and I would stay with her, and I made a lot of collages upstairs in her house as I spent time with her in her last years. But I can do them anywhere—though I can't do them in a moving vehicle: Some of these are very tiny, and you only get one shot at gluing the head or whatever you're doing onto another piece. Obviously my approach to them isn't perfectionistic—I like it when some of them are a little crooked, or when I make a



Courtesy of: *SOME COLLAGES* by Jim Jarmusch, Published by ANTHOLOGY EDITIONS

slight mistake or tear pieces by accident—but I at least have to have a stable surface, so no moving trains or things like that.

What else have you been working on this summer?

Quite a few things: I'm working on various musical projects, one of which is a new collaboration with Jozef van Wissem. And I'm creating some new tracks with Carter Logan for our band SQÜRL. We're preparing a little tour of Europe, several weeks in early February where we play live scores to the surrealist films of Man Ray. I'm also remixing something—well, maybe I'm not allowed to talk about that yet...and I'm working on a new script, which I'm still preparing to write: I do it in the same way as I make collages: I gather a lot of things and all of my ideas, and then when I'm ready I sit down and write them in the script. I'm almost ready to do that, so by the

end of the year I will have a new script written. I'm working slowly on a book of poems. What else? Lots of stuff going on, I must say—I've been trying to keep busy. And a new series of collages, which I continue to make.

Will we see them at some point?

I don't know! The first book is called *Some Collages*, and I've been teasing the guys at Anthology: "Okay—the next one's going to be called *Some More Collages*, and the third book can be called *Even More Collages*, and we can have three of them and put them together in a boxed set. [laughs] I don't know—we'll see how this one does. But I'll continue to make them, because it's something that helps me—not quite as much as doing tai-chi, I must say, but it's something positive for me to create them.

W



Jim Jarmusch Photographed by Sara Driver. Courtesy Anthology Editions.

FOR JIM JARMUSCH, PRINT IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE
The filmmaker's surrealist collages are the subject of a new art book and exhibition.

By Gillian Sagansky

Jim Jarmusch has been creating collages since the eighties but it wasn't until recently that it became a dedicated practice. "I got excited in the last five years to make more and more of them," the director behind such films as *Broken Flowers*, *Only Lovers Left Alive*, *Paterson*, and *Stranger than Paradise* says over the phone from his home in the Catskills. *Some Collages* marks Jarmusch's inaugural monograph and the first formal showing of his artwork, which he refers to as "little dreamscapes." Composed of newspaper clippings layered on cardstock, the mini works are phantasmagorias of surrealistic ephemera; heads are cut out and disjointedly placed on foreign bodies, and identities are both transformed and rendered obsolete. Suited men have brown paper faces, Stanley Kubrick becomes a golfer, Bernie Sanders turns into a dog, and animal heads replace those of humans. "I love when I have an image and then all I do is put a different head on. I get very excited about how I changed something and made it into something new." To coincide with the release of the book, Jarmusch will have an accompanying solo show at New York's James Fuentes Gallery opening September 29 and running through October 31.

I love how your collages render time and space obsolete. You have different personalities from different periods interacting with each other. They're actually quite filmic. Do see your collages as an extension of your work as a director, or if they're their own thing entirely?

I'm not really self-analytical. I follow my intuition and I try not to analyze why I do anything. But there is a distinct relationship between all the things I make, the collages, the films, the music, and the poems that I create. I gather elements and then make something out of it. So even if I'm writing a script, I'm not sure if I know what the storyline will be when I'm gathering elements, scraps of dialogue, ideas of themes. And I know some film critics think, "he never really does put the story together, does he?" (*laughs*). But that's okay because that is of secondary priority to me. When shooting a film, I always consider the shooting is all of us as a team, gathering the

things from which we will make the film later.

I'm working on a book of poems and my strategy is that I have a long list of titles. I start with the title and then write a poem from it. These kinds of little strategies are the same with my collages. I gather a lot of material, so far, only newsprint, but I gather elements from which I want to make things and I don't really know what they're going to be. With the collages I have to turn off my brain and just follow my own amusement.

My biggest formal procedures are variations and repetitions of things and you see that in the collages. That's something I love, and why I love certain artists like Jasper Johns, or Warhol's use of repeating variations or Bach's variations. These things really inspire me.

Yeah, I also found your collages have this Exquisite Corpse-like subconscious element to them, coupled with a nod to the absurdist collages of Dada artists like Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch.

Oh certainly, I love all those early Dada sort of collages, like Kurt Schwitters, Hannah Höch, and I love Joseph Cornell and El Lissitzky. As a teenager, it was Dadaism and then Surrealism that really blew my mind and opened me up to so many things, just as someone who appreciates human expression, not necessarily informing my own work, but yeah, I love all of those people's creations.

Did the absurdity of their work in any way validate the inner workings of your mind, in their outrageousness, that you can juxtapose these forms and that there is sense in nonsense?

Yes, because in a reductive way, my collages are little dreamscapes. If they're too pointed, I discard them or put them aside. I like the ones that are a little more abstract. So what you're saying is true, because I like them to have more of a dream logic more than any other kind of logic and that's the heartbeat of Surrealism certainly, and the playfulness involved in Dadaism stays with me. One of my favorite guiding quotes from Oscar Wilde is 'life is far too important to be taken seriously.'

I read you would make these collages on the road or on set. What was the most obscure place you found inspiration and made a collage?

The place doesn't really matter because it's ongoing. I made a lot of them a few years ago in Ohio visiting my mother who was fading. I would stay upstairs in her house and just be listening for her, so I made quite a few of them there. Right now I'm in my little recording studio/art room up in the Catskills, which is my teenage dream. I love making them here, but I've made them all over the place. I just can't make them in moving vehicles because the pieces are too tiny and I get one shot when I'm gluing something. So no planes or trains or cars. All my little tools and materials can fit in a kind of briefcase, so I take them around and then when I have a moment where I can be left alone I make them.

Did you collect the images over time? Would you be reading a newspaper, stop and cut out a photo and save it for later? Or was it more in real time where you'd see two images and then get to work?

It's sort of both. After a point I would be taking newspapers out of the hands of friends or family. I'd say, "I'm sorry, I gotta take something out of here," much to their annoyance. I still have drawers of uncut newspapers. I have a lot of cut heads and backgrounds that I've selected. I have a little library of possibilities. So sometimes I don't even need new newspapers, I just start looking through things I have, playing around with them and trying to find juxtapositions that interest or distract me.

Are you ever surprised by what you come up with?

I'm hopefully surprised each time and a few times I found myself laughing out loud, which is always a good thing. I'll be looking through heads and I'll put one on there and think it's ridiculous and I'll leave it, but I don't really analyze it too much. I have to be drifting away and I like to listen to music if I can.

You've included politicians like Putin and Trump and cultural icons like Warhol and Prince, but you've also cast people you actually know in real life in the collages, like Nico.

I get really excited when I find people I know in the newspaper and I can take their head out. I still have a few heads of Mick Jones and Joe Strummer

that I haven't used yet, but it's really fun when you do that. Sometimes I use a head and I don't even know who it is. Somebody recently said, 'Oh, do you know, that's the former, like right wing prime minister of Australia?' and I had no idea. I have one of Philip Glass playing golf and then I have another one of Stanley Kubrick playing golf. You don't know them as golfers, so I kind of like that.

Do you ever send them to friends?

I sent one to Tom Waits some years ago, and Alison Mosshart from the Kills. She had sent me a little painting of hers, which I have right now over my art desk, so I sent her a little one recently. I like to send them out to friends but never with themselves in it. That would be a bit weird.

How do you choose which personalities to include or sometimes?

It's more intuition than thinking about what I'm doing. If I'm thinking about what I'm doing, I don't like doing it anymore. It's sort of like music. When I made a film with Neil Young and Crazy Horse, Neil said, "You know, man, when we're playing, we never think about it. We don't think about the music. If we think about it, we might as well just drop our instruments that walk off. You know, that's not what we're doing here. We're riding a train, we're feeling something." Obviously that's more dramatic and has much stronger results than the things that I'm making, but I like to turn off certain parts of my brain that are analyzing and use other parts. I love when I have an image and then all I do is put a different head on and it's looking in a different direction than the original. You do the tiniest thing and the whole meaning of the thing or how it affects your consciousness is totally changed.

Yeah, it's kind of like the butterfly effect of life too, the smallest thing makes the biggest difference in some capacity.

Yes. And as we're in this total climate breakdown of the planet and riding this capitalist suicide machine, I'm more and more interested in the deep stuff. So up here where I live in the woods, I'm interested in the details of nature. Those tiny things are really important. Even in the philosophical

sense, of appreciating the details in things. I think it runs through my films, but I don't self-analyze.

It reminds me of how the philosopher Walter Benjamin was so transfixed by the discarded and the overlooked. How he believed you can tell more about someone by what they throw away than you can by talking to them.

Exactly, and that's why I like newsprint because, what was of great importance is just thrown away. I love the quality of newsprint because it's so temporary. It's only supposed to last for a few days and then even as a substance it's not really stable.

For sure. And that's also what's so interesting to me about them is how they're so ephemeral, yet the events you cover are so big. Why show them now?

One person who works with me, Arielle de Saint Phalle, curated a few shows with me and asked if she could put a few collages in, which sold some years ago. She said, "this whole new series is really nice, why don't you make a book?" And I was like yeah, I don't know. We were locked down and remote, so started looking for different publishers and we found Anthology Editions who were the perfect people and she helped me with the selection of them, as well as with the show at James Feuntes. So I really have to say without Arielle, who's also a co-editor of the book, the book or show probably wouldn't exist because I keep putting them in the drawer!

What is next for you that you are particularly impassioned about?

I'm making a another record now with Jozef Van Wissem where I put wild or odd electric guitar or effects behind loop-like structures that he creates. Carter Logan and I have another tour, we play live scores to the films of Man Ray. And then Carter and I have a band, SQÜRL, we're preparing a new record. And then I'm writing a new script, gathering some poems together and making collages. I'm just trying to keep busy.