

Film Montage  
and the Principle  
of Montage in  
Non-Cinematic  
Media:  
The Early Collages  
of Jiří Kolář

TOMÁŠ POSPISZYL

*Tomáš Pospiszyl is a Czech critic and art historian who is head of the Department of Theory and History of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. His chapter examines a series of collages by Czech artist Jiří Kolář produced between 1947 and early 1953, in which pictures are taken from various sources and laid beside one another, on paper, in a sequence. Pospiszyl examines the extent to which Kolář was influenced by film language and the principles of montage as defined by classic Soviet film theory. Tracing various manifestations of montage techniques as these were adopted by print media, including in pictorial magazines and film books, Pospiszyl suggests that Kolář was more influenced by this wider appropriation of montage than by film montage specifically, and that these collages were guided less by the montagist's concern to create new meanings than by a deconstructive principle of media critique. This essay was first published in the Czech journal Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny in 2017.<sup>1</sup> (JO)*

### **Film Montage and the Principle of Montage in Non-Cinematic Media: The Early Collages of Jiří Kolář**

What is the relationship between non-cinematic artworks whose structure evokes the principles of film montage, and actual works of cinema? If we take as our example certain types of collage from the mid-twentieth century, can we possibly relate these to the film theory and practice of that era? To what extent is it possible to show or consider such inspiration as conscious and what does this reveal to us about the connections between various artistic media in that era? What led me to these questions was my exploration of the collage work of Jiří Kolář from between 1947 and 1953.<sup>2</sup> This extensive body of works on paper is based around the compositionally-simple arrangement of picture cut-outs from popular magazines on a sheet of paper. Most of these works present two, three or more pictures of the most diverse content, generally arranged along a horizontal or vertical axis. The cut-outs do not overlap but are placed side by side. They come from different places and different times. They do not create a single pictorial space, but rather a sequence of scenes.

Marie Klimešová, in her book *The Years in the Days (Roky v dnech)*, offered an initial interpretative framework for this series of Kolář's works.<sup>3</sup> Klimešová relates the concept of 'confrontage' ('konfrontáž')—Kolář's own term, one we can apply to the majority of his work—to the principles of narrative figuration and serial painting, as in the work of West-European and American exponents of Pop Art. The viewer's perception of Kolář's collages from the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, according to Klimešová, occurs in two phases. It consists first of 'the pleasure of reading the individual compositional elements, and then of the search for the cryptic meaning of the whole'.<sup>4</sup> At the same time Klimešová emphasises the formal principles behind the organisation of the cut-outs, which, according to her, anticipate minimalist or conceptual art. This particular series of works by Jiří Kolář can be considered as just one among the possible examples of that period's search for new approaches to the language of visual art. A range of other artists, both Czech and international, worked in a surprisingly similar spirit at roughly the same time, though for the most part independently of one another.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, Jiří Kolář's artistic methods from the turn of the 1940s and 1950s can be related not only to as-yet-unformed artistic directions of the future like minimalism or conceptual art. The more I examined these collages, the more they provoked the kinds of reflection indicated in the introduction to this text. The meaning of Kolář's pictorial sequences is not at all created by the sum of the individual pictures' contents, but rather—as Klimešová wrote—arises from their mutual confrontation. Such a method is also typical of film language. The possible parallel with film editing, where individual shots are set into mutual relation so as to create a greater meaningful whole, struck me as more substantial than any possible basis in the compositional principles of fine art. It seemed to me that Kolář was far more concerned with new possibilities for the creation of content than with the formal aspect of these (at the time) difficult-to-classify works.

Today, Jiří Kolář is undoubtedly perceived as a key figure in modern Czech culture. From the perspective of the artistic and literary values of their time, his collages from the turn

of the 1940s and 1950s present a dubious and not-entirely-successful undertaking.<sup>6</sup> In them we find an echo of several Surrealist methods ('exquisite corpse' (*cadavre exquis*), automatism, *découpé* or cut-up techniques), yet it is difficult to grasp them either as independent art works or as a fully formed series of pictorial poems. Given that they elude fine-art and literary traditions and that their chief aim is to experiment with the creation of meaning by means of the sequence, is it perhaps necessary to refer to another artistic medium: film? To what extent is it possible to support and argue out this comparison between Kolář's collages and film editing? Does not this comparison nevertheless offer—even if we do not discover any direct relationship—an insight into the contemporary conception of the image and of the expressive possibilities enabled by sequential arrangement?

It must first be stated that the principle of sequentially-ordered images does not apply to all Kolář's works in the period discussed. In several cases, which the artist described as found collages, only a single picture is placed on the background paper. Within the picture we then observe a scene that in itself suggests a coexistence of discordant elements: a real head and a wax head, a real human being and a mechanical being, a city and the backdrop of a city. To achieve the desired confrontation of elements, which together lead to a higher meaning, the author thus did not necessarily need a sequence of images, such as would evoke the ordering of film shots. One suitable example of a work by Kolář that, to my mind, offers up a connection with film montage could be found in an undated and untitled collage from between 1948 and 1952.<sup>7</sup> On a square of paper there appear a total of eight cut-out pictures of identical size, evenly organised into two columns in such a way as to leave strips of empty paper visible between the individual panels. With one exception, all the pictures are connected by the motif of winter. Two pictures derive from reproductions of historical artworks: a section cut out from a Dutch Renaissance painting and a detail of the exalted face of a woman from a religious painting. Three pictures depict winter outdoor or sporting activity, another an exotic snowy landscape with a stream, and another an improvised woodland altar. One picture shows a London policeman controlling road traffic in very low-visibility conditions.<sup>8</sup> We intuitively read this set of pictures like a text, i.e. from top to bottom and from left to right. In the gaps between the individual images we also tend to infer mutual connections and continuities. Even though the pictures come from different publications and different contexts, they are arranged into a single dream-like story about a wintry world in which unusual, contrasting, and perhaps apocalyptic phenomena occur, leading to a scene of piety at the end. Kolář's apparently mechanical, unartistic method of arranging his pictures is able to evoke an emotional response and create a new, connected meaning, even if this is a little enigmatic. The whole does not create an unambiguous story; different viewers can read this series of photographs in different ways. But they would clearly agree on the fact that it is not possible to consider the individual elements of the collage independently, but only in terms of their mutual connections. Of course we can find examples of artistic works that construct meaning from their different parts all through the history of fine art. However, in the case of collages composed of geometric sequences of photographs, it is easy to perceive the whole work as paraphrasing the language of film or of film montage specifically.

At the same time, Jiří Kolář himself never mentioned being influenced by film montage or by film as such in any of the existing sources about his work. He did recall the influence of literary collage, such as appears in the work of T.S. Eliot, above all in 'The Waste Land'. Zdeněk Urbánek, in a memoir, described the emergence of a specific form of collage within the Czech art scene at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s: spontaneously, without conscious reference to any aspect of film, he began experimenting with the juxtaposition of pairs of pictures, or of a greater number, so as to allow relationships of contrast to develop between the realities depicted. Urbánek's methods, according to Urbánek himself, were adopted by others and even turned into group activities.<sup>9</sup> Whoever was the true initiator of this approach, the several hundred preserved collages by Jiří Kolář present a fascinating collection whose semantics allow for repeated comparisons with film.

A group of Soviet film directors began using the term montage in the 1920s to describe a method of cinematic narration based on the techniques of film editing.<sup>10</sup> By means of differently-

composed sequences of shots they expressed complex ideas that exceeded the contents of the individual shots. They not only developed these techniques in their own films, but in parallel to this they attempted to analyse them in their journalistic activity and in their mutual polemics. Thus, there emerged a deeper, if far from systematic or unified, set of theoretical reflections on montage. While fine artists approached collage or photomontage for the most part in an intuitive manner, or in the context of traditional artistic disciplines, Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Dziga Vertov, and above all Sergei Eisenstein established a specific theory of film montage, which remains influential to this day.<sup>11</sup> Even if the individual exponents of Soviet film theory parted company in many specific aspects of their opinions, they agreed on the idea that film's principal means of expression is editing. This conviction derived from these artists' own practical experiments and experiences. At the turn of the 1910s and 1920s, Lev Kuleshov had already discovered the ambiguous character of the film shot: even if each individual shot, through a photochemical process, captures the filmed reality, its meaning is only created through editing, that is through its combination with the other shots in the work as a whole. This was illustrated by the so-called 'Kuleshov effect'. Kuleshov showed his viewers a film in which shots of a bowl of soup, a coffin, and a voluptuous woman lying on a bed were alternated with the same shot of the face of popular pre-revolutionary actor Ivan Mozzhukhin, showing a neutral expression. With this repeated, completely identical shot, the audience interpreted the actor as giving a masterful performance of, alternately, hunger, sorrow, and desire.<sup>12</sup>

According to Dziga Vertov, montage was capable of transcending the space and time of the individual montage elements. If shots of waving workers filmed within a particular time and place are connected, through editing, with a shot of different waving workers, filmed elsewhere and at another time, we can evoke within the film's viewers the impression of a mutual greeting between both groups, even if this did not and could not actually happen.<sup>13</sup> This example not only concerns the mere fact of a greeting between two groups of people, but also represents an expression of the global solidarity of the working class, a solidarity that overcomes all obstacles. Montage has a great potential to arouse emotion and the capacity to convey complex ideas. The Soviet montagists grasped editing not only as an artistic technique, but also as a mechanism for enhancing human cognitive abilities. Vsevolod Pudovkin, in reference to his own conception of montage, stated: 'If we define montage in its most general form as the revelation of internal connections, we thereby make an equation between montage and any process of thought in whatever field'.<sup>14</sup> Film art thus becomes a collective act of cognition of reality and of the revelation of its internal relationships.

For Sergei Eisenstein the principle of montage consisted in the reality that 'two pieces of any kind, placed beside one another, unavoidably combine into a new idea, which arises from this juxtaposition as a new quality'.<sup>15</sup> In his no-less-important continuation of this widely-familiar quote Eisenstein stated: 'However this is by no means some purely cinematic matter, but rather a phenomenon that we must inevitably encounter whenever we are dealing with the juxtaposition of two facts, scenes or objects'.<sup>16</sup> According to Eisenstein the revolutionary character of the principle of montage must be seen in its unprecedented universality. We can thus observe that during the twentieth century the term montage was indeed applied to words, sounds, images, and objects: in other words, to media traditionally belonging to different forms of art. These various media could suddenly be treated in similar terms, with the construction of the whole governed by related rules regardless of the character of the compositional elements. Pudovkin too was convinced that it was possible to apply the starting points and principles of film montage to any kind of art and even to thought as such.<sup>17</sup>

Such far-reaching conclusions were not limited only to these Soviet revolutionaries of filmmaking: we also encounter them in the period under consideration, and even in the present day. Film and its formal methods are here not only perceived in relation to the concrete development of audio-visual technology, but they also become synonymous with a wider realm of phenomena. Perhaps this can be attributed to a single word—montage—a term derived from French that originally meant assembly or connection. With the onset of the twentieth century, the term montage abandoned the realm of industrial production and was promoted to a method

of cultural production, and even, as we shall see shortly, to a means of theoretical reflection on the latter. Elements of montage are thus ascribed not only to film, but also to literature, music, graphic design, and fine art. The poets Guillaume Apollinaire and T.S. Eliot are associated with literary montage, montage elements are discerned in the musical compositions of Claude Debussy and Leoš Janáček, and E.F. Burian himself designated part of his work as montage for the stage. In the 1930s, other avant-garde artists, primarily from the Soviet Union and Germany, explicitly linked their work in the fields of collage and photomontage to film montage.<sup>18</sup> Thus film montage became a symbol of the modern age, and not only for artists but also for art theoreticians and the wider public.

One example of the identification of film montage with the modern age in general could be found in a classic work by art historian Arnold Hauser, first published in 1951 (in other words at the same time when Jiří Kolář was producing his collages in Prague). In his still-cited book *The Social History of Art (Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur)*, Hauser attempted an ambitious overview of the relations between society and art from prehistoric times to the present day. He designates the first half of the twentieth century as 'The Film Age' and traces dramatic changes back to film techniques, changes that impacted not only on modern theatre, literature, and painting, but also on such areas as philosophy and human perceptions of time and space. Thanks to film, the world presents itself to modern humankind as a discontinuous and kaleidoscopic vision and art responds by making ever greater use of montage technique.<sup>19</sup> According to Hauser, montage quickly established itself in the history of film as the medium's fundamental means of expression, and deeply influenced the culture of its era. Cinematic effects (narrative 'cuts', temporal discontinuities) appeared in the novels of Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, in avant-garde visual art and elsewhere.

This kind of generalising reflection was not only to be found in the 1950s, though of course the arguments rarely went as deep as Hauser's. At the very end of the millennium the art historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloh set about such a project. His analysis of montage in the culture of the last century, devoted primarily to the German artist Gerhard Richter, was even presented with reference to the extension of montage principles into the realm of the social sciences. He recalled that Walter Benjamin likened his *Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk)* to montage. He confirmed that art historian Aby Warburg engaged with montage techniques at the end of the 1920s. Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* presented a series of shifting constellations of heterogeneous pictorial material, of cut-outs from classical paintings, the art of tribal societies, archaeological artefacts, modern art, and imagery from popular culture. Warburg's ambition was to use these ensembles of pictures to construct a model for the continuity of historical memory. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh further associated montage with the approaches of the Annales School. History, in the school's conception, is not interpreted as a chain of mutually-connected, clearly-defined events, but is rather perceived as a decentralised historical system, which which, according to Buchloh, qualified it for entry into the 'montagists' club'.<sup>20</sup> Connections between the *Mnemosyne Atlas* and film montage were also considered evident—even if, for me, these connections were not satisfactorily explored—by the curator of the Pompidou Centre's film collection Philippe-Alain Michaud.<sup>21</sup>

Montage principles have thus been historically applied to a whole range of non-filmic phenomena. Yet I cannot get rid of the feeling that the more the term montage is applied outside the realm of the film, the more such usage loses its explanatory value. The broad conception of montage, such as we find in Eisenstein or Vertov, was undoubtedly justified in its time: in this conception filmmaking was defined as the most progressive art, an art that not only subjectively reflects the world but also shares in the revelation of its internal connections, an art that is an integral component of a new world. Montage represents the application of the principles of materialist dialectics to film.<sup>22</sup> No matter whether this conceptual basis, at the time of its emergence, was really intended sincerely or was merely an obligatory decoration, it would be difficult to find such a basis outside the world of leftist avant-gardists. I began to perceive the use of the term montage outside the world of film as similarly problematic. Such usage easily becomes a matter of mere



Fig. 25.1. Photo layout from *Pestrý týden* (*Colourful Week*), no. 12 (1928).

comparison or of loose reference to a specific cultural practice. I became aware of this in relation to my primary interest here, the analysis of Jiří Kolář's early collage work. Simply asserting these collages' affinity with film technique seemed inadequate to me, and I could not establish a more precise connection with film. While these collages do not constitute typical fine-art or literary works, they do remain tangible, pictorial artefacts far removed from the nature of film. The image may play an important role in film too, but we are dealing with an audio-visual and temporal art with its own specific effects. The creation of a new idea by means of the confrontation of two film shots or of two photographs is, despite a certain similarity, a very different process. How would I find a way out of such difficulties?

My liberation came in the form of a concept that the art historian Walter Grasskamp had recently used in his analysis of André Malraux's book *The Imaginary Museum* (*Le Musée imaginaire*). At the beginning of the 1950s, Malraux had attempted, by means of a book of full-page photographic reproductions, to tell the story of world sculpture. Given its use of photographic sequencing this text represented a further candidate for entry to the montage club. Grasskamp did mention that, according to art historian Georges Didi-Huberman, Malraux's work with photographic reproductions was influenced by film aesthetics, such as he knew them from the films of Sergei Eisenstein, and yet he went on to add the following important sentence: 'At the same time, one wonders whether the design of the *musée imaginaire* in fact needs to be explained at all in terms of the genealogy of film aesthetics or montage, and whether the short tradition of illustrated art books was not in itself quite sufficient as a source for the aesthetics

of Malraux's books'.<sup>23</sup> This is to say that, for Grasskamp, linking pictorial works to film montage overlooks the important source of books and magazines and their culture of the printed picture, and thus damages the overall argument by drawing too straightforward a connection between pictorial and cinematic art. In bravura fashion Grasskamp later revealed which models Malraux drew on from the field of book design and in what ways he modified them.

The investigation of the influence of film on other, predominantly print-based media, comprises a relatively new direction in academic research, connected with the need for an interdisciplinary approach to modern cultural phenomena.<sup>24</sup> This perspective must at the same time remain aware of the specificities of the media being compared. The expansion of film technology strongly influenced the whole of Western society, including newspapers and magazines. These media changed their form, but they still remained newspapers and magazines. In France, changes in the paradigm of printed reportage took place almost in parallel with the first film presentations. While in more traditional pictorial magazines like *L'Illustration* the composition of the accompanying illustrations derived from conventional methods of presenting fine art—the illustrations here were perceived as a means of presenting standalone artworks—by the end of the nineteenth century, periodicals of a new kind were already gaining in popularity, as represented by the weekly *La Vie illustrée (Illustrated Life)*. This journal put a greater emphasis



Fig. 25.2. Photo layout from *Světovzor (World-View)*, no. 13 (1928).



Fig. 25.3. Photo layout from *Pestrý týden*, no. 8 (1928).

on its illustrations than did *L'Illustration*. It used up to twice as many of them, they were more likely to be original photographs, and above all they connected to one another across the pages: the illustrated reportage mediated events by means of sequential narration. This was manifested in the magazine's very layout. In place of a single, synthesising illustration it employed sequences of images. Events are literally observed from many angles and the magazine as a whole was better suited for browsing through than for reading, something that evoked the heterogeneous quality of the first film presentations; political events alternated with sports reporting, scenes from the lives of the famous with visual curiosities. French researcher Thierry Gervais has connected these changes of layout with the form of the first film newsreels (he used the word 'montage' when describing the latter).<sup>25</sup> This process of the 'filmification' of the press during the interwar period would reach its peak in magazines like *Paris-Soir*, *Vu*, *Paris Match* and *Life*. The image, or more precisely the series of images, here played a major role and the methods of their arrangement often evoked film techniques. Through the use of sequential arrangement these photo-reportages deployed temporal succession, brought to life through the alternation of the whole and the detail, and the arrangements created meaning through the use of contrasts.

Czech pictorial magazines went through similar transformations, with little if any delay, and these served as primary source material for Jiří Kolář. For the most part he used older issues of Czech magazines like *Světovzor* (*World-View*) or *Pestrý týden* (*Colourful Week*) (Fig. 25.1). In the original illustrations of the pre-war *Světovzor* we already find that dramatic alternation of genres of photographs so characteristic of the film newsreel (Fig. 25.2). At the turn of the 1920s and



1930s, *Pestrý týden* had become a particular platform for the new concept of photojournalism and for a form of graphic design that emphasised pictorial reportage. The organisation of *Pestrý týden*'s so-called 'photo-saturated' pages, in its diversity, lived up to the periodical's name and at the same time referred back to film (Fig. 25.3). Jindřich Toman discussed a double-page spread in the second issue of the first volume of *Pestrý týden*, where we find a 'scrum' of twenty-five illustrations. Without any clear hierarchy, political reportage here alternated with information from the worlds of culture and celebrity, and even with shots from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potemkin*, 1925), a conscious reference to film montage techniques.<sup>26</sup> The covers and even the inside pages of these magazines were constructed as pictorial sequences and the more extensive photo-reportages suggest a film in photograph form. In interwar film and popular periodicals we find material that consciously sought to remediate cinematic works by means of graphic design. Surprisingly, however, Jiří Kolář was not drawn to this kind of magazine design and did not choose to imitate it in his work. The compositional style of his collages is much closer to the layout of the illustrated pages in the more conservative *Světobzor*, specifically in its issues from the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> For the most part, this style consisted of simple symmetrical arrangements of two, three or four photographs on a piece of paper, the material Kolář then preferred to use for his collages. He thus looked not to compositions that evoked a sense of cinematic construction, but rather to the more traditional pictorial model of this older magazine. It is also impossible not to notice that, insofar as we do find cinematic principles at work in Jiří Kolář's collages, the author responsible was often not Kolář himself. The contrasts were found ready-made within the frame of the individual source photographs. These found 'cuts' were then presented as standalone cut-out images or within more complex collages. Kolář was struck, for instance, by a photograph of a giant promotional bottle in the middle of a town square; by the confrontation of a mechanical human figure and a real person; by a pair of compositionally-identical shots depicting turtles on a beach and the movement of tanks across a landscape; and by other similar material, with which the magazines were then richly stocked. In the case of these cut-outs Kolář was presenting 'cuts' that he had found ready-made in the magazine.

Alongside the designs of the popular magazines, the first half of the twentieth century was also rich in conscious attempts at translating film art to book format. In 1925 László Moholy-Nagy, in a section of his book *Painting, Photography, Film* (*Malerei Photographie Film*) called 'The Dynamics of a Metropolis', created a counterpart to avant-garde cinema in book form. Hans Richter and Werner Gräff, in their 1929 book *Enemy of Film Today—Friend of Film Tomorrow* (*Filmgegner von heute—Filmfreunde von morgen*), reconstructed the so-called Kuleshov effect with photographs: instead of film shots they simply used a sequence of photographs. El Lissitzky in his 1928 book *Japanese Film* (*Japonskoe kino*) as well as Varvara Stepanova and Alexander Rodchenko in their 1935 publication *Soviet Film* (*Sovetskoe kino*) mediate film works or the techniques of film language. Such avant-garde experiments to create films by means of print media did not bypass the Czech context either.<sup>28</sup> But neither did Kolář respond to these radical experiments of the interwar period. If we were to try and find some book that foreshadowed his collages from the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, the closest equivalent would be the typographically-conventional book *Film Photos as Never Before* (*Film-Photos wie noch nie*) from 1929.<sup>29</sup> This book gathered together twelve hundred photographs relating to various aspects of film art. The films selected were presented by means of individual photographic sequences capturing the most important moments of the story. Other pages used series of photographs to demonstrate selected film techniques or to recall the roles created by famous actors. Even these functional pictorial arrangements succeed in building tension between the individual images and force us to think about their mutual relationships. The pragmatic layout of this book corresponds to the later practices of Kolář.

In the case of those books that consciously attempted to remediate the formal practices of film, historian François Albera asserts that the author must partly surrender control over how the work is read. The perception of such a work cannot be programmed in its entirety as a film shown in a cinema can, and the viewer is given greater choice in the way he or she consumes and interprets the work as a whole.<sup>30</sup> We find a similar approach in Kolář's work at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s.

In his poems and his collages he proved to be fascinated by the act of citation; in his conception the artist is a mere eyewitness and it is left to the viewer to decide how to take the artist's testimony, how to fit together its individual parts and what kind of significance to ascribe to it. With the exception of such collages as the one described at the beginning, depicting a winter environment, the majority of Kolář's work resembles card-filing systems, archives for the classification and preservation of pictorial information. Seen in relation to the fine art of the period, the monotony and often even randomness of the majority of Kolář's pictorial compositions problematises the very use of the category of collage. At this time the collage was perceived predominantly as a pictorial work and not as an aid for the cognition of reality, an aid demanding that the viewer engage his or her own intellect in connecting the individual components, in 'reading' the whole as presented. Kolář was not interested in this period in creating an aesthetically-pleasing display, nor in simply amassing and organising pictorial material. His ultimate aim was not simply to create an archive, but rather to analyse of the image content of modern reportage, an intuitive attempt to critically reflect on its function in modern society. Kolář was no idealistic montagist combining the meanings of his chosen images and of their sequential arrangements; rather he was calling the message of these images into question and unmasking them for his viewers. This is affirmed by the predominant themes of his works from this period: war, human brutality, intellect-numbing visual sensation, and photography's capacity to manipulate the viewer's consciousness.

Kolář was not, then, influenced by progressive film techniques and their theorisation as such. Rather he was influenced by popular culture as found embodied in the pictorial magazines and, in a secondary fashion, by those cinematic methods that had penetrated into it. For that reason I feel the questions posed in the introduction to this text have proven too narrowly defined and at root essentialist. They sought to find a causal relationship between the form of a specific series of artistic works and montage, a stylistic element of film language. Yet this relationship was assumed to have existed within a context itself already saturated with references to film. I am convinced that Kolář was not using his collages to realise his secret filmmaking ambitions. He was not interested in the technical aspects of film montage and he felt no need to remediate his found images into film form. Above all he was drawn to the ideological impacts, functions, and possibilities of the visual language of modern society. His early work is an artist's reaction to the world as it is apprehended through weekly film journals and above all through pictorial magazines and their changing graphic formats. In this sense I believe his work resembles that of other artists of the international neo-avant-garde, who were concerned with a similar type of collage.

Kolář's collages from the turn of the 1940s and 1950s emerged in close relation to his literary work, the result of his search for new poetic instruments at a time when the word 'poetry' had lost its original power. The nature of these collages anticipates our 'post-medium condition'.<sup>31</sup> The author arranged pictures on a page in the same way he would prepare a text. He transposed pictorial practices or adapted film techniques into a literary discourse, the result of which is a work of visual art. In our attempts to describe and interpret Kolář's early work it may be impossible to establish a direct connection with film, but a wider field emerges here in which Kolář's work and film montage are both situated. Film, as one of the defining phenomena of the modern era, made its mark on the form of twentieth-century culture. Film, or approaches influenced by film, were the basis of the mass communications media of the mid-twentieth century. Kolář was fascinated by the latter but at the same time took a critical stance towards it.<sup>32</sup> In this sense we can perhaps regard Kolář's collages as part of a wider apparatus of cinema: twenty-first century viewers might see Kolář as using his work to investigate cinematic codes of perception, which have entered into the relationships between the world, its representations and their spectators.

*Translated by Jonathan Owen*

- 1 Tomáš Pospiszyl, 'Filmová montáž a princip montáže v nefilmových oborech. Případová studie: rané koláže Jiřího Koláře', *Sešit pro umění, teorii a příbuzné zóny* 22 (2017): pp. 42–61. Available at: [http://vvp.avu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2017\\_22\\_Pospiszyl.pdf](http://vvp.avu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2017_22_Pospiszyl.pdf), accessed 30 October 2019.
- 2 Tomáš Pospiszyl, 'Koláže mezi generacemi. Jiří Kolář jako svědek modernosti a jeho současní pokračovatelé', in Tomáš Pospiszyl, *Asociativní dějepis umění* (Prague: tranzit.cz, 2014), pp. 14–50.
- 3 Marie Klimešová, *Roky ve dnech. České umění 1945–1957* (Řevnice: Arbor vitae, 2010), pp. 300–320 and elsewhere.
- 4 Klimešová, *Roky ve dnech*, p. 306.
- 5 The artists in question, while associated with many different artistic tendencies from Dada and modernism to Pop Art, created similar cut-out ensembles. Examples include Czech artists such as Zbyněk Sekal and Vladimír Fuku, the Germans Hannah Höch and Gerhard Richter, the British artist Eduardo Paolozzi, the Austrians Gerhard Rühm and Oswald Wiener and many others.
- 6 Such a conclusion might be derived from the fact that Kolář himself made no attempt, even in periods or contexts more favourable than Stalinist Czechoslovakia, to exhibit this extensive series. After 1954 he employed this principle of sequential pictorial narration only in a minor way. Several of Kolář's collages from 1948–1952 moreover strike one as unfinished, as mere sketches or preparatory material for possible later work.
- 7 See reproduction at: Tomáš Pospiszyl, 'Filmová montáž a princip montáže v nefilmových oborech', p. 44. Marie Klimešová, in her aforementioned book *The Years in the Days (Roky ve dnech)*, reproduced this work under the name *Ice Age (Doba ledová)* and gave the date of its production as 1952. As distinct from Kolář's other collages from this period this is a work containing an uncommonly large number of individual photographs, arranged within a geometric compositional matrix. For these very reasons it evokes a movie storyboard or a photo comic strip. The intriguing connection between Kolář's collages and comics, a related cultural form based around sequences of pictures, one that moreover had attained great popularity in Czechoslovakia between 1938 and 1948, must remain unexamined in this text for reasons of space.
- 8 In the case of the last scene mentioned, the hypothesis has been made that the photograph relates to the so-called Great London Fog of December 1952, which would enable us to date this work back to the winter of 1952–1953, and thus to the very end of the period when Kolář was experimenting with this type of collage.
- 9 Zdeněk Urbánek, *Ztracená země* (Prague: Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, 1992), pp. 481–482.
- 10 We do, however, already find elements and descriptions of montage techniques more than 10 years before the Soviet directors, in the work of one of film's pioneers, Georges Méliès, and even in the proto-cinematic apparatuses of Thomas A. Edison.
- 11 For example, Jan Kučera's *Editing Techniques in Film and Television* (Prague: NAMU 2016, third edition), the classic practical guide to editing within the Czech context, may seek to revise many of the approaches of the Soviet montage school, but a number of its own approaches remain drawn from that school's legacy.
- 12 The film described, assembled quickly by the director from various fragments of pre-revolutionary films, has not been preserved, and thus this first presentation of the Kuleshov effect has the air of an orally transmitted legend. Only later reconstructions of this experiment now exist.
- 13 Dziga Vertov, 'Revoluce Kinokú', in Antonín Navrátil, *Dziga Vertov. Revolucionář dokumentárního filmu* (Prague: Československý filmový ústav, 1974), p. 181.
- 14 Vsevolod Pudovkin, 'O montáži', in Jaroslav Brož and Ljubomír Oliva (eds.), *Film je umění. Sborník statí* (Prague: Orbis, 1963), p. 90.
- 15 Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montáž' (1938), in *Kamerou, tužkou, perem*, trans. Jiří Taufer (Praha: Orbis, 1961), p. 328.
- 16 Eisenstein, 'Montáž', p. 328.
- 17 Pudovkin, 'O montáži', p. 96.
- 18 Maud Lavin, 'Photomontage, Mass Culture, and Modernity', in Matthew Teitelbaum (ed.), *Montage and Modern Life. 1919–1942* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), p. 54.
- 19 Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, vol. 4: *Naturalism, Impressionism, The Film Age* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 226, 240–244.
- 20 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's Atlas. The Anomic Archive', *October* 88 (1999): pp. 117–145.
- 21 Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), pp. 282–287.
- 22 Pudovkin, 'O montáži', p. 91.
- 23 Walter Grasskamp, *The Book on the Floor. André Malraux and the Imaginary Museum* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016), p. 79.
- 24 David Campany's book *Photography and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008) can serve as an example of such attempts. In it the author looks at historical examples of the mutual relationship between photography and film, as represented by, among other things, photomontage, the design of photographic books, and even contemporary photographic and video work. Another inspiring approach is offered by a pair of film researchers, François Albera and Maria Tortajada. Albera and Tortajada's starting point is the investigation of historical apparatuses ('dispositifs'), that is of wider networks of relationships, which of course exceed the boundaries of the classical categories of art theory and other disciplines. This methodological approach thus enables them to productively examine phenomena at the interface of art, science, and technology, including chronophotography, early film, and even modernist literature.
- 25 He thus uses the term montage to describe material that predates the first use of this word for a form of editing composition, applying it to the earliest cinema presentations in general. See: Thierry Gervais, 'The Little Paper Cinema. The Transformations of Illustration in Belle Époque Periodicals', in Laurent Guido and Olivier Lugon (eds.), *Between Still and Moving Images* (New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing Ltd., 2012), pp. 152, 159, 164.
- 26 Jindřich Toman, *Foto/montáž tiskem* (Prague: Kant, 2009), pp. 264, 267.
- 27 Of course we also find more conservative, 'non-filmic' designs in numerous issues of *Pestrý týden*, whose graphic ambitiousness was most evident at the start of the journal's existence.
- 28 Karel Čiřař discussed cinematic effects in the book designs of Zdeněk Rossmann, Ladislav Sutnar and František Kalivoda and related them to the ideas of Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Karel Teige. Karel Čiřař, 'Tenká červená linie. Typografie a instalace výstav v Rossmannově Písmu a fotografii v reklamě', in Marta Sylvestrová and Jindřich Toman (eds.), *Zdeněk Rossmann. Horizonty modernismu* (Brno: Moravská galerie v Brně, 2015), pp. 151–157.
- 29 Edmond Bucher and Albrecht Kindt (eds.), *Film-Photos wie noch nie* (Giessen: Kindt und Bucher Verlag, 1929).
- 30 François Albera, 'From the Cinematic Book to the Film-Book', in Laurent Guido and Oliver Lugon (eds.), *Between Still and Moving Images: Photography and Cinema in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing Ltd., 2012), p. 198.
- 31 The term 'post-medium condition' was coined in 1999 by Rosalind Krauss in *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson 1999). The term is used to describe the situation of art in the 1970s, when the modernist concept of individual art forms as fields defined by a specific medium was falling apart.
- 32 We might talk today in a similar vein about the internet and its influence on culture and social life.

