

# Brief Biography and Artist's Statement

**Steven McCarthy, MFA**

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Steven McCarthy has an MFA in Art/Design from Stanford University, and a BFA in Sculpture/Drawing from Bradley University. He is professor emeritus of graphic design at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus. His long-standing interest in theories of design authorship – as both scholar and practitioner – led to lectures, exhibits, publications and grant-funded research on six continents. His book on the topic, *The Designer As... Author, Producer, Activist, Entrepreneur, Curator and Collaborator: New Models for Communicating* was published in 2013 by BIS Publishers, Amsterdam.

McCarthy has been in over 150 juried and invitational exhibitions and his artist's books are in these collections, among others: Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, UCLA, University of California–Berkeley, University of Washington, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, University of Alabama, University of Cincinnati, the Banff Centre and the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Visual and Concrete Poetry. In 2017 he received the Minnesota Book Artist Award.

**A full CV is available at <http://stevenmccarthy.design/S-McCarthy-CV.pdf>**

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Collage is a method of combining disparate visual elements, typically cut and torn paper glued to a substrate. Existing images and texts are then remediated into new meaning and expression through juxtaposition. Often credited to the early and mid-twentieth century artwork of Georges Braque, Kurt Schwitters, Hannah Höch and John Heartfield, for example, collage methodology has since been embraced across media. Collage-making enables me to take elements from the past and remix them into speculations on an unknown future. In a way, collage is 'un'graphic design as it reverse-engineers the considered layouts of others. I delight in proposing new meaning and emotion through image and text relationships, often employing the "incongruity theory of humor."

I have a history of both working in collage as a medium and theorizing on the what the process of collage might mean. My collage work has been manifest in traditional paper-based cut-and-paste techniques and in digital artifacts resulting from software code manipulation, montage, interactivity and animation. This has resulted in collage-based artist's books, free-standing collages the size of posters, assemblages of relief materials, and large scale collages that exist in the environment. I have written for and have had works featured in Montréal-based *Kojaj* magazine, and have had academic papers about collage published in the journals *Visual Communication* and *Message*. I received the Minnesota Book Artist Award for my collage/assemblage work *Wee Go Library*.

My collage process involves three distinct stages: harvest, flux and commitment. When I harvest, I mine books, magazines, junk mail, packaging, etc. for texts, images, patterns, colors, textures and other graphic and literal content. I tear, cut, compile and group when I harvest. During the flux stage, I create numerous compositions with all of the elements still in play. Rarely do I have a specific intention – this speculative stage allows relationships to emerge, humor to present itself, critical commentary to be expressed. As the collage takes final shape – nothing is glued yet – I photograph it to record it at its resolved state, referring to the snapshot as a guide. I then begin adhering elements, always allowing for change, happenstance and embellishment.