

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Collages in the Time of Quarantine

Alessandra Bava · Wednesday, April 8th, 2020

It has been over three weeks that here in Italy the government decided to put the country under lock down in order to avoid the further spreading of the Covid-19 virus, which has hit our country hard.

Except for people whose work is deemed essential, the rest of the population is quarantined at home. As a translator I am used to remote working, but the situation we are living these days is truly exceptional for us all.

Having a lot of time to themselves, Italians have resorted to [singing in choir from their balconies](#) and even to playing instruments. The [video](#) of a young man playing a theme by Morricone with his electric guitar from his apartment overlooking an empty Piazza Navona, usually one of the most bustling areas of the center, has become viral.

As for myself, in the past few weeks I have been asked to take part in two creative endeavors.

In the former, I have joined a 7-people writing group from Italy and the States, started by [Edvige Giunta](#), author and Professor whose work branches across Italian American studies, memoir and feminism. The aim is writing 100 words once a week. Each person is assigned a day and must take the lead from the words of the person writing the previous day. If it were a drawing, it would be a *cadavre exquis* of some sort.

The latter outlet has become very dear to me. My friend, poet and performer, [Gaia Casanova](#) started a FB group, named [Gli Scollati di Gaia](#) (loosely Gaia's Unglued People). People who join the group are asked to create collages, which may either be handcrafted or digital.

I have embraced the task with great enthusiasm. As a child I used to love doing collages, mostly because I was a complete disaster at drawing and painting.

In these quarantine days I have discovered that creating collages, i.e. keeping myself manually busy, gives me great focus. On average I make a collage a day, but if I am particularly inspired, I can make even two. Luckily, when lock down begun, I had two glue sticks at home and a pile of literary reviews from two of Italy's leading newspapers which my dad gives me every Sunday once he has read them. They are printed on quality paper and they are chockfull of artistic drawings, paintings and photographs. I spend hours leafing through them, seeking inspiration, in search of the perfect image. It can be a photograph in black and white, a famous painting, the image of an event. It is like in a theater show: once I have the perfect backdrop, I add details to it: actors, scenery and

properties. It is a very visual and aesthetic process. I take all the time I need; I never feel the urge of rushing a project. Sometimes I add lines from poems, creating little found poems.

It is a surreal experience – some would say almost Dada – which allows me to connect to some of my psychic elements, digging into the oneiric world of my unconscious.

At this time, when I must stay home and cannot enjoy a stroll in the center of Rome to admire its artistic beauties, I resort to surrounding myself with the craft and art of collages. I hope this experience may encourage others to follow the same path and join our FB group!

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You're Always a Genius all the Time –Tribute to Marina Abramovic

In this collage Marina Abramovic is sitting while performing *The Artist is Present* at the MOMA Museum in New York in 2010. To her right there is a girl wearing angel's wings. The background is an imaginary island and a ship at sea. I have added a found poem from lines by Patti Smith: *May your bowing head/scatter the laughter/of a lotus.*



Mexican Dream

In this collage I have added a colored photo of actress Yalitza Aparicio on the background of a black-and-white picture of a Mexican house with a hanging sombrero. I have added a white flower in Aparicio's hair, a snake from an artwork by Kiki Smith, Mary Magdalene as depicted by Georges de la Tour and a ladder with a pink flower at the top.



Christina's World Revisited

To Andrew Wyeth's iconic painting *Christina's World*, I have added actresses Judy Garland and Audrey Hepburn, as well as a girl from an early 19th century painting. I have also included two scattered lines from a poem by Robert Walser that read: *I just know that here is all silence/I feel well here.*



Stranded in the Woods

In this collage a girl is sitting on the back seat of a car in the woods. I have included Queen Victoria and her daughters to the picture, as well as a found poem from lines by Charles Bukowski: *When God created love,/he created you lying in fire./He was high./He made the bed, His Blessed Universe*



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