

Scott Ellis

For Font's Sake

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Commentary by Julie Oakes
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Scott Ellis

Julie Oakes

Minding your own business doesn't leave as much room to be your brother's keeper as Scott Ellis needs to continue to edit his understanding of things. He strikes with a dogmatic lash and the resounding snap is hopefully going to cause someone to wake up. How many times does the world have to be told that what is happening is coming through, loud and clear and off center, before reaction sets in and the inevitable revolution begins? Maybe the revolution has begun, quietly, in the collage imagery of Scott Ellis. If the world ends with a whimper rather than a bang it's because the meek have been told that they will inherit the earth and that noise, commotion and rabble rousing will be of no avail when the final tally is made. Scott knows this so he quietly snips and glues, allowing the muffled groan of art, with historical precedent, to once again speak its mind. It is repeating the words of the song of the sixties "Something is happening here and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones."

The work is statement oriented, message saturated, obsessively executed and well researched. He has his nose to the ground, his ear to the wall and his artistic discipline intact so that what he over-hears can be retold from a scrutinized vantage point. His work is didactic, opinionated, monomaniacal, and obstinate in regard to the matter spoken of - and proud to be so! It is also open, embracing, tolerant, and consummated within the act of making art, a vested belief. There is heart, soul and passion behind these reconstructed media images. The context has changed, the pictures, accepted by the public relations boards that mediate world events have been cut out, rearranged and pasted into a brand new position with the result being another new world order, another dreaded acronym flipped!

It veers between desperation and control. There is an unsettling loss of balance and a desire to comprehend in a glance. There is too much to deal with. The initial flash of daunting recognition is taken over by a slow dawning that reveals a sense out of the nonsensical overload of information, a comprehension and a wonder. Has Scott Ellis managed to reign in the dissonance of information and present a clear picture? The task appears too ambitious. It is, in fact, impossible to be able to understand *precisely* what it is that he is saying. The wonder is that he has managed to put it all together, to design and to execute it - to make such perspicacious artwork.

His methodology begins by addressing a subject, and in doing so he makes an initial step towards organization. But even here his choice creates a balk. Subject matter; World War One, World War Two, Industrialization, Religion, Manufacturing, Globalization - Scott has taken on the grand themes. Deconstructing an overall miasma of media images, paying attention to the parts, committing to an order, refusing to ignore language - a new politic emerges. He has assumed a plenipotentiary position, taking upon himself full authorization to control and handle our diplomatic relations to both our history and current social and political status.

Whereas the media's encapsulation of world events tends to be parasympathetic, like the contraction of the pupil of the eye, Scott's oeuvre has an expanded pupil that in turn stimulates a form of psychedelic perception. Just as with the use of hallucinogens, the miracle of earthly existence becomes an acceptable revelation - in the tranced state there is no avoiding it - so Ellis' barrage of thing ness and happenings brings about an acceptance despite the queasiness. That we are able to live within this jumble of information, a combination of synchronism and memorable images - seems a wonder. His commentary vacillates between topical and historical. It is a wonder that his head doesn't explode or that he doesn't become tongue tied, intimidated by his task. It is because that which comes about with a psychedelic infusion is a loosening of the tongue. As the synopsis of the brain go crazy, connecting along new pathways and assuming an illogic of an independent nature, the programming becomes rerouted. The master board is discombobulated. The brain machine is shorting out and the result is enlightening, freeing, for there is no longer a valid reason to stay within the confines of historical reference. No longer is the axon of one neuron and the dendrite of another connecting in sequence. There is a new route along which there are no totally objective, immutable signposts. There is, in the place of that truth, endless possibilities.

Consider the moon, waxing and waning. Sometimes, Scott Ellis is showing a haunted specter of the day time's reality; sometimes he is more obscure than the darkening night, holding back the clues as to the pathways that we are accustomed to traveling. It is a paraselene, a bright, moonlike spot on the lunar halo that overrides the presence of the moon. World events, dimmed by time and existing in the half-light of the past, already exist as hazy, often personalized interpretations of those events. Does he believe that we will be able to find our way out of the convoluted pathways of heavily laden imagery? Has he done the work for us and charted a direction, or is the flashlight dim, a lunar trance-like light that makes our pupils grow large in order to encompass the blast?

Scott has something to say. He is like a factory where the raw material goes in the door and then comes out the other end, reshaped, refurbished with a fresh slant and yet skewed by the unique re-combination of parts. Taking outdated as well as current media sources he rearranges the puzzle pieces so that the resulting message has a semblance of familiarity, as if the message is straight, but not quite. He inserts his point of view, the private illuminations of a stealthy sleuth into the permutations of mass media messaging. As glib in real life as he is in his visual dispensation, Scott brings the full punch of a lively mind to bear and compresses it into a tightly wound ball of information.

There is no choice but to receive the messages. They operate on many levels: the work ethic that is evidenced with the thousands of cut-outs, the color combinations providing aesthetic clues as to where to look next, the metaphors in the choice of materials (burnt holes in a globe, gasmasks, children's blocks, vintage magazine and newspaper illustrations) and the ever-present realization of the dedicated focus that Ellis has brought to the subject. As an author, he has invited us on a visual read - a veritable tome! - and with absolute conscience, he has put a dedicated effort into the story that he has elected to tell. He has promised that he will not waste our time and that the time that we spend walking through the maze that he has reconstructed from recycled media reportage, will not be for naught. He has granted us choices, the possibilities seen from a psychedelic brain.

It is not a philosophy where 'nothing is sacred' and all can be expropriated. It is a philosophy where everything is sacred, needing to be rescued. Having been given the license to create, Ellis is upping up the ante with a clarion wake-up call. He is walking us through the tunnels of things, in a junk yard of old news events, in the heart of a city of variables, in a country brimming with potential, in a world of various combinations, in a galaxy of interpretations, in the universe of Scott Ellis.



Master of The Universe - collage - 37x57 inches - 2007



Scientific Progress - collage - 18x20 inches - 2002



Popular Culture - collage - 20x20 inches - 2004



Bunker Love 1 - collage - 24x24 inches - 1998



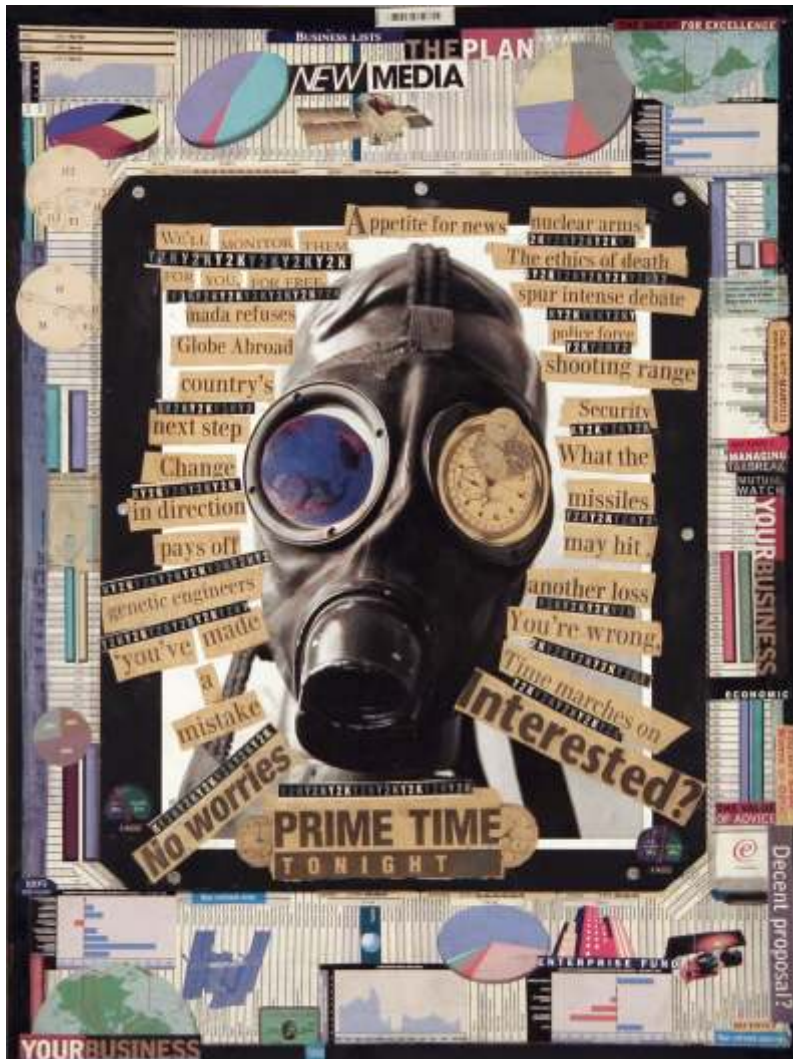
Bunker Love 2 - collage - 24x24 inches - 1998



Grace General - collage - 24x24 inches - 1998



Big Brother - collage - 26x19 inches - 1998



Sister Media - collage - 23x18 inches - 1998



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