

Eight Surrealist Collages and Poems

elin o'Hara slavick

'These collages were made while travelling – in Canada, France, Turkey, Germany, Brazil, the Netherlands and in the United States. They can be found in some of the many travel journals I have kept since 1983 and continue to make. Throughout the journals I also found these poems – not that these particular poems were written to illustrate these specific collages – they were not. Here, they provide a heterotopic context, another hysterical surprise, a fragmented landscape, a subconscious or delirious layer, an automatic narrative in the surrealist spirit. Like travelling, poetry and collage are means to collide times, simultaneously forgetting and remembering, to whimsically collect and discard scraps of everything, to combine the unconscious space of dreams and the foreigner's zone with the stranger's perspective and desire to spin a magical narrative out of organic elements, tape, childhood drawings, playing cards, discarded books, book covers, postcards, art historical reproductions, magazines, Xerox transfers, anatomic illustrations, an old bible...'



Obninsk

I picture you looking up
at the hovering Russian
glass stars that grow light
and reflect history at the school entrance.
You want to take one star,
bring it home to me
where it will collect dust
and be a lonely artifact.
You are where I should be
but the makers of the stars
have all died
and the glass keepers deny my visit.
You are in a forgotten city,
where Tarkovsky hid his spirit —
old breaths and spoiled weeds,
nuclear steam, accidents.
A world to destroy a world,
where a man is lost
just by being there.





Dead Father-in-Law

The day breeds us late,
old heavy animals dragging
from one small room to tiny other.
We collect gold leaf
and blank paper,
our skin stained with dust.

We do not know what to do with our time
so we sift through a dead man's photographs –
half naked women
pretending to be dead,
tied to the tracks in high heels,
buried on the stone beach up to the ankles
or hanging upside down,
unable to tell the difference
between blood and blush,
gravity and artificial wind.

The photographs of his family
are evidence of the time
before the blindness.
We carry boxes of pornography and linen to the street.





Sex

The scar I trace is a line of light,
as if erased.
I count your body
in pieces –
Byzantine belly, thick fingers,
uneven lips,
the holes in your lobes,
the pattern of hair down your chest
to be recognized as clouds,
singular and crowded.

You tell me to touch myself
as if you were not there.
I touch the slippery nest, the soggy gutter,
the wet ruby road.
You hold yourself and pull,
quicksilver, mercury glass.



Going Home In Your Dreams

There are three people in a room
talking about flying and how
as a last resort you swim,
kick air and slap clouds.

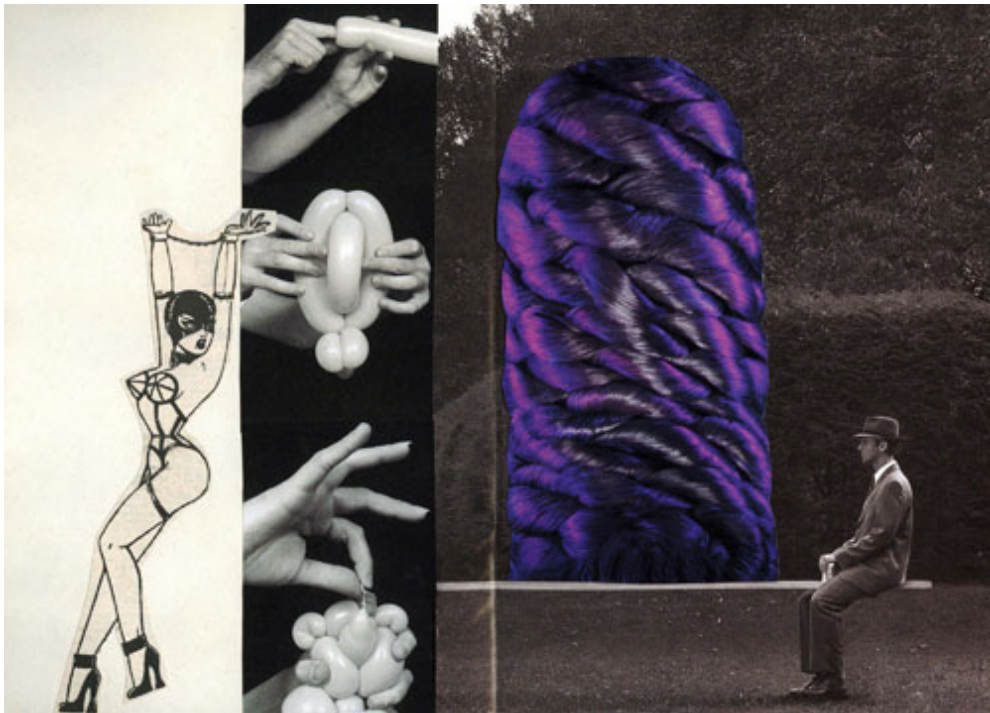
Two people sit against a wall
drinking tea, waving.
You know them as you
take the wind to the top of the door,
fall to the knob.

You are the one to fly
like a horse off a cliff,
straddling the lukewarm green sea.
You believe your limbs to be wings.

You hold them against yourself
and still you float.
A mystery. You knock on a door
upon which is written,
'A teaching man and his precious wife.'

You enter laughing so wide
the table falls in.





Greek Bus

Flowers suck ivory dry to dust.
Exhaust chokes the ocean
and the lady with her legs up on the seat,
collecting sun in the lap of her dress,
sewing her fingers into the hem
while her husband counts the hairs on his legs.

Nothing is happening.
The ocean licks itself clean
like the night cat sucking rabbit bones dry.
Distance never measures itself.





David's Dream

A poet standing on a platform
in front of a crowd of miners
at a funeral service for a workers poet says,
'We are not today
what we were yesterday.'

The workers shout, 'Speak clearly.
We do not understand you.'

The poet says, 'Today is not like yesterday.
We have lost our red violin.'
Everyone knows the red violin
is the dead poet who wrote poems
they would play folk tunes to
on their violins.

The workers shout,
'Speak clearly. We can not understand you.'

The poet tries again,
'We can't hear the red violin.'
The miners shout back,
'The blue today is as blue as blue.
The sand beneath our feet
when we come up from underground
is the sound of a thousand
triangles being murdered.'

The poet stops.
He knows this is the dead poet's poem.
The poet picks up the violin and starts playing.



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