



School: School of Design

Researcher: Alex Williamson

Project Title: US Editorial Illustration and *Untitled/Re-assembled* Exhibition

UOA: 32 - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

300-Word Statement

This collection is a body of illustrations comprising American editorial commissions since 2014, specialising in contemporary socio-political issues, and Williamson's 2019 solo exhibition, *Untitled/Re-assembled*, highlighting his collage-based methodology. Through reappropriation and assemblage, using digital and analogue print and collage techniques, Williamson explores the intersections between multiple graphic elements to ask:

1. How might a collage based approach to non linear storytelling contribute towards a new visual language to communicate contemporary socio political issues?
2. In an era of post truth can the potential of collage to create an "eruption of contradictions within the Real" (Louis Aragon 1926) have contemporary resonance ?
3. Drawing on Schwitters principle of Merz, might further experimentation with this 'graphic equivalence' generate new experiential possibilities of illustration?

Williamson's US editorial commissions include those from The New Yorker, Rolling Stone, The Wall Street Journal, and the Southern Poverty Law Centre to create collage based illustrations on LGBTQ rights, the Black Lives Matter Movement, Climate Change, and the Alt Right. Influenced by Rauschenberg and Romek Marber, Williamson interprets editorial imagery through an experimental iterative process of layering and juxtaposition, seeking an immediacy to the final artwork, prompting questions on these significant issues.

Initiated by his widely disseminated 2014 LGBTQ artwork for the New Yorker, the Windgate Gallery, Arkansas hosted Williamson's first US solo exhibition in 2019. Referencing Schwitter's MERZ principle of equal evaluation, the exhibition presented deconstructed works in progress with 'final' artworks as a series of randomly juxtaposed posters, highlighting their dissonance and potential for generating new experiential possibilities. An invitation from the AIGA to talk on editorial design in a post-truth society accompanied the exhibition.

Williamson's approach to image making and open ended investigative configurations in the gallery space move toward a new visual language questioning what and how we see.