

ubu

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Jacques Villeglé: Fifty Years of Décollage

September 14 – October 23, 1999

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**Ubu Gallery** will present an exhibition of the unique form of *décollage*, literally “un-pasting” and the opposite of the built-up layering of collage, practiced by **Jacques Villeglé** since 1949. Appropriating sections of torn posters salvaged from the street, Villeglé chooses those which best incorporate the “spontaneous, iconoclastic gestures of passersby—a whole repertoire of rips, scratches, slashes, scrawls, smears, gashes, gougings, abrasions, inscriptions and over-pastings” and the ravaging effects of the elements. What derives is an abstract, “ready-made,” raw and impromptu form of “concrete” or visual poetry.

Focused on the everyday object rather than on traditional artist’s “craftsmanship,” Villeglé’s aesthetic is the “action” of “choosing” and “appropriating” from the large pool of anonymously torn (“lacéré anonyme”) street posters and the subsequent decision in his studio regarding their presentation or “cropping.” In 1957, Villeglé and Raymond Hains, an early collaborator, exhibited their *décollages* for the first time and, in 1959, along with another “*affichiste*,” François Dufrene, attracted widespread attention with their participation in the first Paris Biennial. Along with others working in different media, but sharing common artistic goals—such as Arman, Christo, Yves Klien and Niki de Saint Phalle—they exhibited in Milan in 1960 under the banner of “*Nouveaux Réalistes*.” This movement, a European precursor to American Pop Art, initiated and defined a seminal change in the art of the time.

The immediacy of *décollage* embodied the post-War concern with “authenticity” that pervaded abstraction and existentialism. This concern persists and Villeglé’s *décollages* remain immediate and fresh. They derive from “low,” ephemeral, commercial imagery; they incorporate gestural abstraction—particularly calligraphy and graffiti; they weave text into pictorial space; they are raw and make no pretense to a “finished” state; they are enthusiastic in their reception to chance and accident; and they are “ready-mades”—springing from the artist’s recognition and choice of everyday objects.

Villeglé has been exhibited and collected widely in Europe. Although less exposed in the U.S., his influence has been acknowledged and defined in such exhibitions as “High & Low” at the Museum of Modern Art in 1990. His works are also part of the permanent collection of MoMA.

This exhibition has been organized in association with Chloé R. Ziegler.