

## Deborah F. Lawrence: Artist Statement

I have been using found imagery and text in my artwork for a long time. I consider it my job to enhance a picture's original meaning as I use it to report on social, emotional, historic and current events. The narrative changes as I explore the paradox between a florid utopian archetype and a bleak, worst-case scenario. Since the moment I adopted collage as a medium, my frustration with the status quo, defiance of authority, rebellion against political conservatism, impatience with the art establishment, attempts at spiritual transformation and interpersonal relationships have all been asserted in my work in one way or another.

I am not a landscape painter, but my vision of the sublime is related to landscape and the people who occupy space in it. I long to find the thread that connects me to everybody else. My artwork is a manifestation of that craving, and I can't make pretty pictures without facing this fact. I hope my earnestness is leavened by humor.

A typical work might appear on the surface to be a quotation from art history, or perhaps a political cartoon, but I'm really trying to reconcile my bilious personal misanthropy and cynicism with my optimistic, civic-minded urge to nurture, decorate, and explain. I find support in the historical tradition of collage as a medium which originated out of the political outrage and detachment experienced by European artists following World War I.

Text--whether I write it myself or quote other sources--I employ as a framing device and decorative complement to imagery, as well as a tool of propaganda. If there is subtlety or nuance to be found in my artwork (which I do not claim), this may be where it is located, in the juxtaposition of text with image, or in one image's dissonance or harmony with another. At the best of times, the way the elements fall into place is a coincidence of organic randomness in concert with didacticism.

Years ago, a favorite crusty college professor suggested I put aside the meticulous watercolor paintings I was making, and save time by cutting things out of magazines. I objected strenuously (I was a very obstinate art student, and it was a time of campus upheaval). But economy and efficiency eroded my resistance, and collage became my medium of choice. I quickly developed a regard for randomness, which, along with a sense of order, has kept me loyal to the medium--and has fed the link I feel with the artists of the historic Dada and Surrealist collage and assemblage movements. I flatter myself that I am appropriating and recontextualizing pictures and text in the spirit of masters like Hannah Hoch, Romare Bearden, and Max Ernst: politically detached and bemused; passionately outraged and invigorated.