

# FFOTO

## Peter Horvath: Artist Statement

After spending my formative years as a stills photographer, I happened across the work of John Heartfield, Hannah Höch and the 1920's Dadaists. Although I come from a lineage of photographers, and grew up camera in hand since age 6, I had never seen photography used in this way. These works inspired me to expand the narrative direction of my own photo-based work, through the use of collage.

As a child of the 1960's and 70's, I am drawn to the innocent optimism of advertisements from mass media of this era. Combining fragments of these ads with other imagery from my archive of mid-century material, I build pictures by deconstructing the originals, cutting and pasting elements out of their intended frame of reference. Juxtaposition and scale combine with saturated colour to produce surreal, hypnogogic and sometimes humorous re-workings.

Growing up in the sixties, I developed a fascination with the moon and cosmos through exposure to two specific events in popular culture; Kennedy orchestrating the moon shot, and Neil Armstrong the first to walk on the moon's surface. These two events came to represent infinite possibility. While my imagery is sourced from material that was originally conceived to impact influence, it is collaged with the intent of removing context and reason.

Coinciding with material from this more recent age, I also mine popular culture references from the 1940's. These earlier sources speak to me of my relationship with my late father, and his stories of escape from persecution in Hungary at that time. Optimistic narratives informed by childhood memories of, for instance, America's global potency, are represented in visual interventions. I view the current decline of the American Century's hegemony through this nostalgic lens. In *The Hitchhikers*, 2015, for example, two women hang on to the back of a 1940's era US Army plane, as it speeds through the sky; a surreal, fantasy based, escapist representation, culled from my father's tales of heroism and liberation. Through these constructions, I am drawn back to his anecdotes, encouraged to pose questions about my own history and identity.

A viewing of an exhibition of Alexander Calder's mobile sculptures inspires the series *Lines and Vectors*. After seeing Calder's sculptures at close range, and having the mobile shapes sever the view of the scene behind, I began overlaying linear, formal elements - drawn line, contour and translucent colour - on top of black and white collaged pictures. Dissecting and interrupting the

underlying image, I consider these an extension of my multi-screen New Media work, where video sequences are frequently suspended, disjunctive and blurred, distorting the viewer's visual and emotional sense of place. In *Lines and Vectors*, figure and form combine with superimposed elements, creating layers simultaneously obstructing and engaging the viewer's gaze.