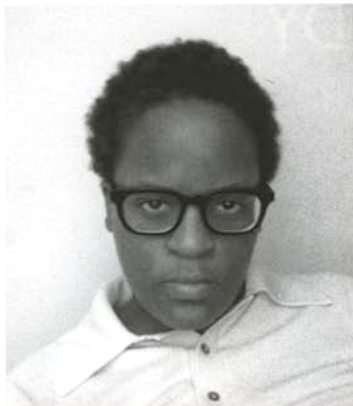
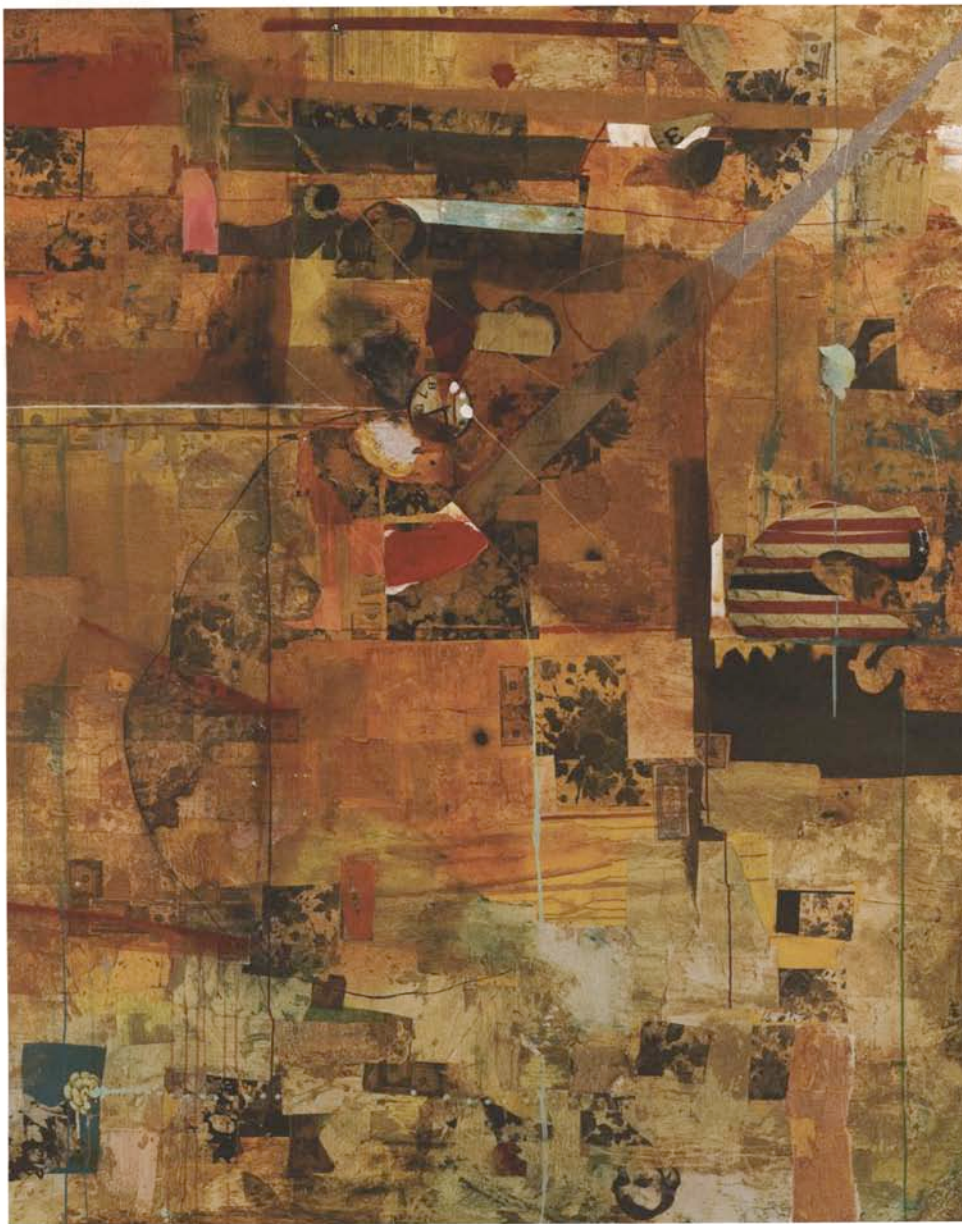


Bell, Kim. "Artist Profile: Brenna Youngblood." *art ltd.* (November/December 2008), p. 68 - 69.



Brenna Youngblood's studio, at the end of the makeshift hallway in an artists' collective in downtown Los Angeles, is an explosion of materials and works in progress. Scraps of paper and partially finished canvases obscure the walls and carpet the floor of this small space. Youngblood is not exaggerating when she says, "There are a trillion things going on in my studio, so usually I come and sit here and look at it for a long time." As we speak, she is preparing for her second solo show at Margo Leavin Gallery as well as for a remote site exhibition at the University Art Museum at UCSB as part of the 2008 California Biennial. Looking around her studio, Youngblood gestures at a selection of work. "I'm working on that piece on the wall right there, this one, that one in the corner." She laughs, "I'm working on all this stuff, basically."

During her third year in the MFA program at UCLA, Youngblood was invited to show in the Hammer Projects series. The photcollage pieces that she exhibited included work done by hand: the photographs individually cut out and organized, overlapping like fish scales, then varnished to a high sheen. These works suggested enormous depth with their profusion of colorful layers. Their subject matter, ordinary subjects like incandescent light bulbs or trucks, are reminiscent of the overflow of vernacular



"A SPECIAL WAY TO FOLD THE FLAG"
2008

COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS, ACRYLIC,
PAINT/MEDIUM, SPRAY PAINT
AND COLLAGE ON CANVAS
92½" x 72½" x 1½"

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MARGO LEAVIN GALLERY

snapshots that proliferated in the decades before digital photography.

Concurrent to the Hammer show, Youngblood was also preparing a group of collages for her MFA show at UCLA. These works, in the same vein as those that she is making today, rely less on the specificity of images and more on role of her materials. In these new pieces, Youngblood doesn't just build depth by fully covering the surface of the canvas, she also reveals their depth, like an archaeologist, cutting and peeling back layers of paper to reveal a diachronic relationship with what came before.

"I usually start by adding white typing paper. It'll start out like this," Youngblood explains, pointing to a piece of white, textured board that is underneath the foot of the folding chair that she set out for me. I am shocked, and quickly shift off the corner of the board. She shrugs and continues, "I have a box of funky paper and a box of cut down photographs. So, first I'll start off with that, then I'll add washes of paint, add images, then add more paint, then maybe add more paper, then cut it off." The result feels historic, like peeling back wallpaper in an old house and discovering layer upon layer of information about the former inhabitants.

Trained as a photographer, Youngblood has always rebelled against the expectation of photographic mimesis. Making pictures that looked just like the object represented was "boring," she says. "I always wanted to add something to my pictures." Youngblood's complex new large-scale collages certainly achieve this desire for augmentation. Even in the few so-called 'straight photographs' that Youngblood has been working on of late, her take on realism is fully evident. The glowing yellow of a chandelier, blurred by the soft focus of her lens, lends a particularly dramatic and emotional effect to the photograph.

Youngblood's abiding interest in music is also inspired by the cut-and-paste aesthetic. While individual themes emerge, just as in her creation of visual art, Youngblood prefers to work with loop-based compositions, dissecting and reconfiguring existing pieces to create an audio collage. All of these facets of Youngblood's practice combine to reveal an artist of great courage and curiosity, for whom this substantial body of work represents just the beginning.

—KIM BEIL

Brenna Youngblood's new work was recently on view at the Margo Leavin Gallery, in Los Angeles, from September 6 - October 4, 2008. Her work can also be seen as part of the 2008 California Biennial, at the University Art Museum, at UC Santa Barbara, from October 29, 2008 - March 1, 2009.