**Inclusive Arts Vermont**

**Artist Talk with Madcollage**

**Featuring: Madcollage and Megan Bent**

**Megan:** Hi! this is Megan Bent here with Inclusive ArtsVermont. I recently joined the team as the Digital Content Manager and I'm excited to be here today for one of the MASKED virtual artist interviews with Madcollage, who we will introduce in a moment. I wanted to begin by giving a quick verbal description of myself and my surrounding. I am a pale woman, and I have shoulder-length kind of like brown/blondish hair. I’m, wearing a black tank top and on my right shoulder, are some flower tattoos. I have white headphones in my ears so the chords are kind of like coming down below my chin, and my background is blurred. So everything behind me is in soft focus.

So We're here today with artist Madcollage. Madcollage is part of the MASKED exhibition, which is part of our biennial exhibitions that feature the art of artists with disabilities. For this biennial exhibition, artists were encouraged to interpret the theme of masked. Each piece offers the artist's creative expression of that title which arose in the early moments of the global pandemic. The work included are as complex and layered as the meaning of the word masked itself. MASKED features visual artwork by 22 Vermont artists with disabilities, and it's traveling to 7 venues around the State. So without further adieu, I am going to ask Madcollage to introduce themselves today.

**Madcollage:** All right. Thank you so much for having me today. Hi Megan because I had, I hadn't met you before. So hello, again. And what can I say about myself? I am a collage artist predominantly, and I am from Madrid, Spain and I've lived here for many many years, and the last 7 years in Vermont and yeah I mean I don't know. I make collages, I’m a maker of things. I write, and my focus is on creativity as as part of the toolkit that everyone needs to manage you know difficulties in life it's different for everyone whether you're talking about health problems or anything else. And, and that's that's what I do.

**Megan:** Thank you so much for sharing that introduction.

So, Madcollage you're joining us today over audio, so you don't have video present. Would you mind just offering a verbal description of yourself and your surroundings for us today?

**Madcollage:** Of course. Well, right now, I'm sitting in front of, of a window, you can see the building across the street from where I am. I'm coming to you from Montreal. It's a pretty sunny day. I don't know how it is down there today, and yeah it's not very not very hot, it’s not very cold, it's a nice temperature. I think I'm gonna go for a walk afterwards. And I a woman, I guess, with a short hair and I have a lot of metal in my mouth at the moment because I'm undergoing some treatment. I hope that you can understand everything that I say because that in combination with my accent it makes it pretty difficult. And I'm just sitting on, on a stool, and I'm wearing, I'll come clean and say I'm wearing a pajama top that is red and has cherries on it.

**Megan:** Sounds so nice and comfy. It’s nice and sunny where I am today, too.

**Madcollage:** Oh, cool, that's great

**Megan:** Yeah, Okay, so we have some images from that Madcollage that we will screen share and I was thinking we would start with your piece that is, in the MASKED exhibition.

**Madcollage:** Sure.

**Megan:** So Madcollage Would you like to do a verbal description of this piece for the audience?

**Madcollage:** Sure,I will try my best to do that. The piece is a rectangular piece. There’s a layer of blue, sky blue, very intense blue paint covering the background. Onto that, I glued pieces of paper with different shapes. Most of them are rectangular but there are some circles as well. As far as the motifs you can see on the collage you have a few circles with flowers, you have a big rectangle with some text that is from Life Magazine. And old Life magazine and the text is upside down so you can’t really read it, it become something else it becomes just a graphic reference and not real text. You know, your brain can’t make sense of it. Then there are some other rectangles. Most of them they have in common the color blue. It is this hospital gown blue. And then you have some faces, a man and a woman and they are just fragmented faces, mostly eyes. There’s a reference in a central rectangle with a hand, like I said somebody that’s obviously dressed in scrubs, with the same type of blue. And you can see a hand pulling down a mask, actually.

**Megan:** Thank you for that. So my first question is - In creating this piece, *Life Upside Down*, what were you thinking about in relationship to the Masked theme? How does this work relate to the masked theme of the exhibition?

**Madcollage:** Well, one thing that came first when I started thinking about the show and how to approach the theme, obviously the reference to life with the word Life in the piece even though it's upside down, Hence the title. Umm, that was a very quick reference an obvious reference that I came by and then I built on that.  When I was thinking about all the different connotations that the word masked can have I was brainstorming and I came up with first the obvious ones. The way a mask hides, maybe it’s used as a disguise, obscures something from view. But then it was inevitable that thinking about it in the present moment my thinking turned to masking as a means of protection. I started thinking about how controversial its been, the use of masks and the politics that have been involved something that’s simple to do so easy to do, and something that kept you safe and other people safe as well and with so very little sacrifice involved really. And it has been a huge controversy from the beginning of the pandemic and it remains so. Which is amazing, and I also thought about the health workers in the front lines particularly during the first wave when no one knew what the illness was about. How to take care of it how to stop it, treat it deal with it and how very scary it must have been for those who were seeing the effect of the illness directly in the first person. It must have been incredibly scary not being able to help these people not knowing what to do with them, And you know, the whole idea of the mask translated into a collage. A collage it is a conglomerate it’s a bringing together of a bunch of different pieces that sometimes more often than not are disparate pieces that don’t have anything to do with each other.  You create this relationship among these pieces. And that’s what I did. To me the idea of the flowers epitomizes the idea of life, you know. But they got through like we all do they go through a there’s a progression - they start as a seed and they grow and they bloom and then they produce seed and then they die. It's kind of like the same arc that animals people you know we all have and somehow this was all interrupted by the disease. And so there are references to life and there are references to death. So, I forgot to mention earlier there is an old-fashioned lamppost in one of the corners which is not lit. And the idea of light being snuffed out, being exhausted, the lamppost being dark. And the brick wall which appears both in the circle at the top left-hand side corner and behind the lamppost. So there are references both to life, the difficulty of treating Covid, being stonewalled in a way, and to a certain degree also hope.  Because even though the people in the collage seem, the man, in particular, seems quite tired and exhausted the woman is smiling so there is a glimmer of hope there. At least I wanted it to be so, I didn’t want the piece to be completely bereft of any glimmer of hope.

**Megan:** Thank you for that. I think it’s such an important piece because I feel like we are at a point where people are just ready to move on but it's so important to remember everything that has happened and is still continuing to happen. And just on a personal note when you were talking about the relationship of the flowers and the natural cycles of life and how that felt when we were in the very beginning of the pandemic when so much was unknown. I remember that kind of like a big solace for me and I think for a lot of people was going outside and going for a walk and it was March, you know, when everything was first happening - at least where I was on the East Coast of the United States. And seeing the flowers blooming it was like this mixture of being so happy and having some relief in life blooming and a sense of weirdness that this was happening in the Spring when everything is emerging during this very scary time when there is so much uncertainty.

**Madcollage:** Yeah well, I think that a little bit of what the pandemic did, and of course we can have I think particularly in the west we didn’t have a close enough reference to compare with. So in that sense, it was like the proverbial frying pan in the face because we didn’t even see it coming. I guess one of the things, that if anyone is paying attention at least it’s taught me or reinforced the idea that we are actually very small and things will go on with or without us. And just like you were saying, Spring came the flowers bloomed you know things were there doing what they do, and we were hunkering down, you know? People were dying and yeah it's very humbling I think. And what’s very sad in my option at least, now that we have hit a lull in the pandemic, because it's still here it hasn’t ended yet. I don’t know what the end looks like but it certainly doesn’t look like where we are right now. And what is very sad is that people choose the route of denial. I get it, it's exceedingly human to try to deny, to try and put aside things that are uncomfortable and scary. We do it all the time in our private lives but do that collectively for a pandemic or for something that is having and has had such enormous global implications it’s really not the way to go. And you know it's very interesting because to this day when I leave my house which is not very often I am afraid of, of course of contracting Covid. I have had all my vaccinations, even the fourth one already. Fourth booster. But I am concerned because of my health and I have to receive treatment and I have to go to the doctor, those are the times I leave. Sometimes I have to remove my mask and it's very uncomfortable but of course, I have no choice. A lot of people have no choices. And when I’m masked going back to the title of the show, when I am masked and I go to the store, for instance, I get a lot of eye rolls. And nobody has to this day come up to me and said anything directly, maybe because I look a little scary (laughter). Not because of the mask but just because I look a little scary, just me my usual self. I'm a pretty serious tall person so not easily approachable. But I have seen people get in scuffs - scuffles? Is that how you say it in English?

**Megan:** Yeah.

**Madcollage:** In scuffles in stores over masking because somebody starts saying something. And it is so incredibly sad because masking is like the lowest common denominator. Like the first line of protection. It requires so very little from everyone and still, a lot of us are not willing to be inconvenienced in that way for the sake of others who like I said have no choice. Yeah, Covid has taken a snapshot of humanity and we don’t look very good in it. We don’t look very nice at all.  I think this show, you know just gave me the opportunity to revisit a lot of this, themes about what it meant, what this two and half almost three year meant for a lot of us.

**Megan:** Yeah a lot of what you just said really resonated with me. I don’t go out very much either and still wear a mask and definitely get you know, sometimes I’m the only person, you know if I have to go out and run an errand and have people looking at me..

**Madcollage:** Yeah, yeah.

**Megan:** But also in hearing you speak about those things it brought up this new layer for me in this piece, which is - Thinking about the flowers and the nature that’s present in it and how nature is very interdependent in the way it exists and thrives. And the way that plants help support each other. And this idea of masking - I see it as a signal of interdependence where its not just about me protecting myself its also about understanding that is I can do this one small thing, I’m taking a step to help protect my community. So you know I think that’s such a moving and very interesting parallel to have in the imagery of the piece.

**Madcollage:** I did think about that a lot when I was making it. There’s a lot of editing that happens when you are working on a collage. This is actually a collage that is fairly unusual for me because it does have a lot of moving parts. And I don’t usually work in blocks like this. It's constructed in a very unusual way for me. It’s very vertical for one thing even though the circles break the verticality of the image. It’s a little awkward, it makes me feel like the image is awkward because it’s out of the norm for me. But I thought well maybe that is exactly the way it needs to make me feel and I wonder if it will make anybody else feel that way. The sharp corners that you see are really intentionally left sharp and visible. Yeah, I don’t know and like I think the grid which is very random, the appearance of that grid in blue and white versus the flowers, and the upside text. Yeah, it was an unusual - I made three collages in this series actually and this was the one that was entered. They were all along the same lines and I can which one was made first, I can tell in which order they were made actually because they change slightly. There’s a build-up that happens.

I don’t know, right away I thought of people that did care and did try to help, and were taking the brunt of the pandemic. And at the same time how there was a huge, huge chunk of the population that was revealed to be quite selfish and really very much in tune with this interdependence that you explained so eloquently because we are interdependent. And I know it is a characteristic that is very important to Americans, a sense of independence. A sense of standing on your own two feet and doing things on your own but it really is a mirage. Nobody does anything on their own.

**Megan:** Absolutely, yeah.

**Madcollage:** And you know, everybody has to lean on somebody else and somebody has walked the path that you are walking before you, that is why there is a path there at all! You know? So we’re always building on what somebody else did before us, always. And that think that you are in any way a pioneer, you know we throw around those ideas very freely, particularly freely here I think. Number one, the pioneering, the best, all those things and there’s no such thing. There’s a gradation, of course, there’s a spectrum for everything. Certainly for this. We’re not particularly unique, we are all replaceable to a certain extent if you think about it in terms of nature, just a little tiny speck right? I feel, I feel, like it put us in our right place, you know the pandemic in a way.  And yes we should take care of each other a little bit more because and a little bit better because we are small and what makes us a little bigger and a little better is being together, doing things together, and helping each other. And not, we don’t need to step over each other to get to the top. Which is also an idea that I think is very engrained, I don’t think anybody has a monopoly for that idea. Civilizations in general have trampled over each other for, you know, eons so. But yeah, I think its, yeah you know if you go back in history and see the times of famine, see the times of war, see the times of pandemics and you know things of this nature, we see the best but we certainly get to see the worst in humanity as well.

**Megan:** Thank you so much for sharing that, very beautiful said and very resonate conversation**.** We have a few more pieces from you so I'm going to go to the next image. Would you like to do verbal description for this? Or would you like need to provide a verbal description of the image images?

**Madcollage:** I can go ahead. I think I'll get better as we go on. and if there's no more planes or trains or cars, or people honking down below or anything like that, that'll be okay, This is a commission actually that an image that was created as a commission, and it has a rather emblematic, you know, the image of Frida Kahlo, as the you know, the, the one the beginning the the the kernel you know, the initial seed for it. And it's made with, part of it is drawn, part of it is transparencies, the face is It has some full tattoos on the face, she's looking to my left and she's wearing what looks like I realize now a black turtle neck. It wasn't meant to be a black turtle neck, but there it is. It looks like it. And she has a sacred heart on the front. There are two birds She is in the center of two circles that overlap, and she's wearing a large crown of flowers, poppies, and I think there are some, some passions fruit flowers, and some other some other flowers. There's a banner at the bottom with a hand and a little banner that has her own writing from one of her diaries, and the under pattern is all green. If that if that helps.

**Megan:** No, that was a great, that's a great description. And that's really cool I mean looking at the image earlier I saw the text, but I didn't realize that it was her own handwriting from her diary. And that's very impactful to learn that. So one of the things in looking at your work that came up for me was just wanting to know more about your process. Like here, you said you started with Frida’s face and then sounds kind of like the image grew out of that initial picture. Just is that always the way it goes? Or you know, Is it kind of like you say, with the Life Upside Down, that is kind of like putting together a puzzle? And I was also wondering, if this is not too much, how do you know when a piece is done?

**Madcollage:** Well, that's a very interesting question actually because I really don't know when the when the piece is done. Sometimes the piece stops breathing you know maybe it's a bad metaphor at this moment but that it does. So I kind of set it aside it's it it stays kind of in suspended animation, and some of them come back, and some don't actually to tell you the truth. And then I work where the need for intervention takes me. so it's really not so much having a plan as it is just and going where the need is. And what I do is I keep thinking about a number of pieces that I'm working on simultaneously. I think about them all the time. and you know those reels that are so popular now on, on social media? But my head is full of reels it's always been full of reels, and I mean, and they're all going at the same time, and they can be a little bit taxing at times. But because it's like binge-watching everything it's like binge-watching several series at the same time.

But, you know I have ideas. I have things that I wanna do, and that's why I move from one piece to the next, to the next, to the next, and then I come back and, and like I said some of them never actually come to fruition. They just shrivel up and die a lonely death in the corner of a studio. You know sometimes what I do is that I rework them into something else.

**Megan:** Thank you so much for sharing that. And do you ever kind of like archive the evolution of an image? Or is it just you let the process go where it is and it's really about you know the finality, or, as you said, not the finality because sometimes you come back to them and add on, or rework them. But just not so much about archiving the the progression of it but just kind of letting it be this like living, breathing thing that keeps evolving?

**Madcollage:** It's interesting that you say that it's it is more, you know this might sound a little selfish, although I mean I don't see it that way. But I'm not really thinking about what things are going to look like in the end or - Of course, if it's a commission you approach the work very differently than if you're working you know as I do daily with no other idea in mind than, than spending the time, you know, creating something for my own edification really. But it is, it is, it's about the, it's about the process. It's about the, the search for elements it's about Hmm that, you know, making the small connections the the the the sparks that happen when you're working, and you can see things all of a sudden that speak to each other, and it’s that search.

And what I found is that they require first of all they required you to show up every day, because otherwise it just doesn't happen it just doesn’t. There are days that, that it just doesn't happen at all and so the more times you're there giving it the, the chance to you know to surface the better, obviously, and the more time you spend the better.

And then it also requires for me at least, I don't work with other distractions I can't even work if there are other people in the room. But they're not you know it's not it's not something that I do with an idea that I'm going to you know this is a piece that's gonna be seen or it's gonna be purchased or it's going to be reproduced. It's more about what's happening while I'm making it, and not a distraction I wouldn't call it a distraction cause that’s minimizing the process really. Like maybe it's like you know infantilizing Oh, just get distracted. No, it's not about being distracted so it's, it's so much more than that it’s It's, it's about digesting some you know some information, some emotions, and some feelings, and I'm making something out of them. It's a way of making sense of things and I make sense of things that maybe are not very pleasant by making images. That's why I do.

**Megan:** I love that just that whole idea that it's not necessarily about what happened or what it's gonna look like at the end. But it's about showing up every day and it's about engaging with the process, and and having the process be a part of you know, digesting what's happening around.

**Madcollage:** Yeah. that’s, that's what it is it’s I cannot you know sometimes I've been asked why the work is so different. I couldn't tell you I just I just go where it takes me, and it, it tells what it needs and sometimes people ask me Well, why don't you make more like this one and I said I, I couldn't just like turn them out. You know I can’t make more like this one because this one you know I I'm not feeling the way I was feeling when I made this one. I can't just copy them I can't even copy myself.

**Megan:** So we have another piece of yours to share. Is it okay, If I bring that up,

**Madcollage:** Sure, go ahead

**Megan:** And would you like to do an image description for this image, or would you be sure if I did?

**Madcollage:** No, I can do it.

**Megan:** Okay. great

**Madcollage:** This was in origin a smaller piece of rectangular piece vertical and it's made with a vintage image of a woman dressed in Victorian garb, and she has a big dahlia on her head and at lace collar and there's a little it looks like she's wearing, or there's a purple lavender color, I would say wrap, around her with a hand. And there's the head of a little green, yellowish-green bird poking from from the the wrap, and then there's a bubble like bubble from a comic book that has the telephones in it maybe she's making a call. I'm not sure. That’s basically it.

**Megan:** What was the inspiration that you know behind this collage on the inspiration behind the collage?

**Madcollage:** The inspiration for the collage?Well, these were a few collages that I made with some images from photographs that a friend of mine sent me. And these were all pictures from the turn of the century, so you can see the background is sepia colored, and they're portraits like the ones that people used to have in their, in their houses And you know, in the parlors or in the drawing rooms. And a lot of them had a floral theme going through, and they're very you know, trimmed down in the sense that there are not a lot of elements to them, and very edited, which, which I like they're very different from the, from the images that I entered into the show.

So again, as I was saying earlier sometimes I go in one direction, and I the next day I can go in a, in a very opposite direction, and the end result will be very different.

**Megan:** I like how your work is very versatile. One question that I have for you is as somebody who is personally interested collage, but I feel a little bit, I would say hesitant, in the sense that it's kind of like

cutting up images there's just like finality to that act, and I was wondering what your advice would be anyone in the audience or myself, anyone who is interested in the experimenting with collage like, what would your advice be?

**Madcollage:** Well, the, the Hmm. I'm not very good at giving advice. (Laughter) I, I like to talk about the work. I like to talk about creativity I like to talk about technical aspects of collage making. But I'm not very good at giving advice because whenever I’ve taught classes and this is absolutely true I always told everybody from the beginning that I was there. How was there to teach, obviously, and to engage the students, but I was also there to learn.

And it's true that that happens there's this loop that happens, you know, when you teach any workshop, any class, at least for me happens. And I learned just as much as the students are learning. So there's you know there are things that that they've discovered before I think can get there.

You know, and, and it's really nice to have that back and forth. So the one thing that I would say, from a technical standpoint is that you have to get comfortable with that, that finality that you were talking about. But there are some ways around it, as well, because you don't have to commit to your image, being final until you're completely sure that's what you want.

So you can cut things, you can also make multiples of something, and you can cut things and move things around and combine different elements off away from what's going to be your final you know, piece, and, and just play with that until you're happy with something, and only, only then at that point you commit to it, and then you glue it down. and you know that is the moment of truth.  Once you glued it down. Yes, then it is more or less final, you know, although you can always do things too after yeah the ,the piece. if you're not fully happy with it. And I think it's all about that. It’s about how you feel about the work rather than what it looks like. So a lot of people ask how do I know when it's finished. I can't tell anybody when their work is finished.They have to make that decision for themselves, And I also say something that sounds a little cryptic sometimes when I say, well, just listen to the piece. Listen to the image, and it will tell you when it's finished. Then, people go. What are you talking about? Are you crazy? And I said, Yes, I am but at the same time you need to listen to the image and, and you know, be comfortable, editing and taking things away when that is the way to go, and putting things on when it's a way to go. And another thing that I do tell them is that in with collage particularly, and I think maybe in other areas in life as well. But you know how people like to say, Oh, more is less-  No, no more is more and less is less, and with collage more is more and less is less. So you want to go for a very paired down very succinct and clean look, then you go from less obviously, and if you want to go for something that it's more, you know, aggressive in a way and more, you know, overwhelming for the viewer, then you go for more, and those are this you know choices that you have to make along the way, and it's all about making choices really. And that’s why collage is so fabulous for kids, because it gives them confidence you know in, in, in themselves, because they get to make choices that okay so something doesn't work out. I'm working with paper. I can restart. I can do it again. I can do something different next time. There's no you know there's no problem there, you know. But, but it's all about making choices and making decisions and it's a very good exercise that then you can translate into other areas of your life, And I think that for that reason collage is,is very valuable, not just for kids and teens, I mean, for anybody who decides to, to try their hand at it.

**Megan:** All of that made me really motivated try! That was really good advice.

**Madcollage:** I'm so glad. I I hope that that's the case there's you know. I never - it’s funny I mean I'm glad that you say that because a lot of people give up or they're very hard on themselves when they start making collage and they're like, Oh, well, you know it doesn't look like your work. Or it doesn't look like this person's work or I've, I've researched and all you know I look, at things on social media which is like the a death wish you know to do that you know and I feel really bad now that I cannot make my collages look like that or like this, and I always say, please do not look things up on social media. Don't compare yourself with anybody else because they're at a different stage in their, you know, in their, their journey. So you can’t really make a comparison. And you know don't, don't give up on yourself because everybody had a starting point, and I can get into you that that starting point was not stellar you know. Mine wasn’t stellar and and and you know I don't know it's it's just the, the interesting thing with collage is, is the progression The only thing that I would say is really an ingredient that you cannot substitute for anything else is perseverance. You have to show up and and, and keep working every day and it's not gonna be always fun. It's gonna be a little bit of a struggle at times, but it's a worthwhile struggle and then you start reaping the benefits, like everything else, like with everything else. And, and then it becomes rewarding, which I think is much more valuable than fun in my book.

**Megan:** Yeah, I agree. It can happen together, but not always.

Yeah. We have one final image of yours to share. Is it okay if I go to that one?

**Madcollage:** Yes, please.

**Megan:** Okay.And would you like to provide a verbal description of this image?

**Madcollage:** Yes, this is a square image, and it's actually rather small, the original. I think it's 4 by 4 inches, and there is, there are some superimposed, overlapping circles. They have some dark and light blue lines going through them, and there's a lot of gold marker lines made with marker, and also at the very center of the square, there is a gold leaf circle with a face superimposed on it, a face of a woman smiling mouth open. And you can see you only get a partial view of your face because there's a little bit of what looks like black lace coming down in a diagonal obscuring one of her eyes.

**Megan:** Thank you for that. And can you share some of the ideas or inspiration behind creating this image?

**Madcollage:** Sure! Well, this is part of oh, a collage that is actually a 3-dimensional collage, because this is the part that is just you know a flat traditional collage, but it's at the center is a you know a box or an assemblage type of, of collage of work that has ribbons of paper all around this central image that we're looking at. So the, this is, I think, the third piece in the series. The series is called *Because You Never Listen* and it's all different images of women's faces and different backgrounds, different colors. You know women who are from different ethnicities and it's just it's a very, it's a very complicated series to describe with words as well I'm finding right now because the, this image that you're seeing now on the computer or on the screen it's surrounded by a you know a, a, a whole lot of strands of paper that have been curled, and it's all words. And so you see all these curled pieces of paper all around it, and they all go into what it is a shadow box really that's what it is. And so it's the, the play between the, the image which in this case is a collage on canvas. It's a small canvas and that's mounted on board, and the paper is glued onto the board all around the canvas, and then there's a frame around it, so complicated from the technical standpoint because there's a lot of different techniques that you have to use. It's very, very, very, very time-consuming to finalize any of these pieces. They take a couple of months to make, even though the final shadow box is just a 9 by 9. And the idea behind it thematically was just this, this idea that people don't listen, and people don't really care. And that women in, particularly at me in particular, have to deal with that in, in many different spheres, you know, and the, the in the work, at home, you know, just in in in so many capacities right? And still put on that nice face and a happy face, and, and just keep going. And you know, live their lives not being heard. And, and you know that's why I, I call the series- each one of the images has a little subtitle. This one's called *Pardon my French* because I think she just said some interesting words before we capture her with that smile. It seems to me like she's you know getting back some of her, her power, you know.

It seems to me like she said a few choice words so it's called *Pardon My French.* But it's just a play between all, all those, those ideas the idea of being unheard, and then all the words that surround the image, and she seems to be happy. But she's really not. She's hurt she's sad but she puts a good front.

**Megan:** I saw some of those pieces on your Instagram and it was very powerful to look at. Seeing the title of the series and then for me looking at the collage in the middle, but then also that text you were describing. It's the way the text is ribboned into the frame. You're only getting these partial fragments of the text. And so it very much for me brought up, yeah, I'm not able to get the full story. I'm not, I'm like I'm only getting you know there's only a fragment that's coming through.

**Madcollage:** That's very interesting that you said that because I purposefully when I was thinking about doing the, the text, and I'm so glad that you've seen it. And now you realize how badly I explain this because you've seen that I'm so terrible. I know exactly what you're talking about, but I actually chose to use a textbook that I found that was in Greek because, I don't know, I can't read greek. And I didn't want to be reading everything that I was you know, I don't know how you say that the, the act of curling the paper. I didn't want to be reading each and every ribbon of paper. I didn't want to be preoccupied with what the word said. I can't read Greek so for me it's just you know, I know there are words I know that make sense, I know they're saying something but I don't know what it is. It's not very, you know, haphazard and at the same time, it's just graphically interesting. You know, and the result, and I don't really bother to think about what it's being said. I guess, I guess I'm not listening either in a way you know. So that's, that's the irony of it. But I'm not listening, because I don't understand what's being said. I don't understand what's written on those pieces of paper.

**Megan:** I was wondering in making the work does it you know you're talking about that some of the women depicted were like not being heard, but that you know specifically the one that we're looking at looks like maybe she said something that's helping her take back her power and her agency.

Do you feel like in making the work that there is this sense of like reclamation or empowerment that comes through in making this imagery, or making this series?

**Madcollage:** Oh, well, it's certainly comes I mean the idea doesn't come from, you know I don't pick up this idea from somebody else experience. I, I, I it, it comes to me from personal experience. I think it's it's an experience that is shared by I mean most people. Certainly women. And one thing that I was thinking when we were talking about suggestions earlier, or advice is that to me making art in general not just collages it's about making some connections. You make connections within yourself, you know thoughts, or emotions of things things that you have experienced, and you make connections among those, those experiences. But you also make connections with the viewer and you hope that you're getting you know an idea or a feeling across. Although I'm not very attached to that because I know that once the piece is out there is up for interpretation, and people are gonna read each one of the pieces with their own baggage and their own - through the lens of their own experience. So I'm not very you know bother about being very specific about this is what you need to get out of looking at this collage. I'm fine with you know whatever interpretation people want to, to, you know give the work. But, but I do believe that there are a lot of experiences that are shared because in the end, when we're talking about human connection we're more alike than we are different and because those both experiences are shared that's where the you know, that's where the meeting place is, you know? And I think that at some point or another, whether you, whether it happened while you were a child or during adolescence, or as an adult - as I was saying earlier in any sphere you know at home at work anywhere -You haven't been heard, you haven't you know people don't listen.

It's, it's just not a, a skill that is very developed in a lot of people you know listening, really listening, not hearing, which is a completely different thing, but listening. So yeah, I think that anybody can identify with that.

And, and say, yeah I remember, how that feels cause I've, I've been through that, perhaps more than once. And this particular woman I used her face, even though she looks - and you know I think she was in, in it was from an, an ad and old a printed ad I think with something about shampoo, or something like that. So she's, she's really full of herself she looks like she's really happy with herself, and she's really pleased, you know. So it. It seems counterintuitive that I would use her for something like this. But I for me what she's saying is yeah you didn't listen to me but you know what your loss. You didn't listen to me but it's your loss, and I'm gonna go on my merry way, and I’m gonna do what I want and I'm gonna do what I'm meant to be doing despite you know you not listening to me so? So that's why I chose her. I thought she was in a way you know hopeful. Not everything has to be bleak, even though the theme, the overall theme is kind of sad because people don't listen to each other.

**Megan:** We are getting close to time. So before we wrap up I was wondering if there's anything new that you're working on that you wanted to share with the audience?

**Madcollage:** Oh, well, there's lots that I'm working on despite flare-ups and spiked pain and despite everything, I - would say that I'm like a shark. I can't stop because I sink. And I don't particularly I'm not particularly fond of sharks. They scare me very much, but it is true that it's a you know it's an analogy that, that works for me because I need to keep swimming you know I need to keep - Maybe I'm like Dory that's a nicer nice comparison, you know, from, from Finding Nemo. I need to keep moving so I'm working on lots of different things.

I work on my podcast every day. It's something that I started doing a few months ago, and the podcast is called *Six Impossible Things with Madcollge* and I, I came to it through - It’s it's just the last iteration of something that I was doing before because I was teaching in person before Covid. And then, of course, that became impossible, and then I switched to a hybrid format. That was as you've been able to tell I'm not very good with technical things, and computers. So I was having a very difficult with a hybrid format. It was very labor intensive and my health just didn't allow me to do it for very long. And then I went on to do something that was called *Mad Talks*, and that one went really well, for about 6 / 7 months.

But I was having problems reaching people because they couldn't be there at the time that the talk was taking place, and everybody was asking me for recordings and things that I didn't have because I didn't know how to do all that. And somebody suggested, Why, don't you just go on demand and do a podcast. and I said what's a podcast? (Laughter) That's the first thing I said cause I was more used to listening to audiobooks.

I knew what that was you know. but I, I didn't know but making a podcast or even listening to podcasts. I was just not familiar with any of that. And I just took the plunge, and I researched podcasts as I do with everything, cause I, I love research and I love learning. And then I just started doing it. You know I I I jumped in and it's doing really well. I wrote I, I write, you know the content. I interview people which is fabulous because I learn a lot, and the whole thing is about what, what we've been talking about this whole time is about creativity and persistence, and acquiring some discipline, cause that not always been a very disciplined person. I'm kinda like a cheerleader right? I just wanna give people the confidence to, you know, have their own creative practice and understand that they get a lot of benefits from having, cultivating a creative practice, and it doesn't have to be collage. Let me make that very clear. It can be anything that suits you. But I'm, I'm working on that and then you know I'm doing other work as the need arises, you know, managing my Madollage business, which is you know a big job because there are you know things that I need to fulfill and contacts I need to make and letters to write and text to reply to and things like that. It's just the, how the sausage is made you know? The things that we don't see it's a lot of work, and, and then trying to, to maintain a daily practice, because that's for my own benefit. That's you know that is as I was saying earlier the most selfish part of this whole thing because it, it gives me peace. It, it helps me manage my pain. it helps me manage my depression.  And you know it does, It does a lot of things for me that nothing else, nothing else even comes close to. So those are all the things that I'm trying to do.

**Megan:** Thank you for sharing all that. And I definitely yeah, having a daily practice can be so important for what I would call self care, you know. So we can share links to your podcast and to your website, and to your Instagram. Is there anywhere else people can find your work that you would like to share and have a share out?

**Madcollage:** No, I I'm actually just I'm the only elf in the workshop. One little elf, and I mean I I I do ask for help with a lot of things I need help with a lot of things. And I'm not afraid to ask for help. And I hope the people who listen to the podcast are not afraid to, to, you know, ask for help either. And that's my way of helping, too, because sometimes in the past you know I've needed help and I, I didn't have it. I didn't know where to go, right? So so yeah it's just me and my little Madcollage website, and my little studio outside and that's the only place where you can see the work and if, if you, you know, want to, well purchased some work, which is very welcome.

**Megan:** Absolutely. And before we wrap up, is there anything else that you would like to talk about today that we did not?

**Madcollage:** I don't know. I, I though there were so many interruptions initially, that I got I you know my I lost a little bit of my, my thinking my thread, but if I, I guess if I had to underscore anything. The number one takeaway from the conversation today would be that art, not my art, not my collages, but art in general any art, it’s about human connection. And, and you know I think about it I think about the pandemic and how we're not really out of the woods yet. I mean hopefully, it will improve soon you know? But I'm seeing I've seen in the last year a very, and I think the word is hedonistic you know a trend when people feel very entitled, then, you know they, they do things that make them feel good, regardless of of the consequences. And and, and this fear of missing out you know it's been amplified, you know, to the nth degree. And then, and maybe I'm just very naive. I don't know maybe I am very naive despite everything but I think it's so much better to encourage people and offer support and collaborate, and I'm hoping that that that's what I get to do through you know through art and sharing my artwork and I think it's so much more meaningful personally and just in general, and so much more lasting to do those things than to just look at your own belly button all the time, and do things that only, you know, only benefit you. So I just hope that even if it's a or very small scale my work helps, helps create connection, and maybe alleviates some pain like you do like it alleviates my pain, you know. And you know I, I just try to do something that you know, goes beyond my own experience, and maybe reaches other people. And, and that's all I always try to, to get across so that's the takeaway I guess.

**Megan:** Thank you for that, and I definitely feel that in your work, but also other pieces you've shared today like your wonderful advice, and you know, knowing that you're teaching workshops and also doing your podcast. So thank you for giving us art, but also, you know, tools and cheerleading for everyone to keep going as well.

**Madcollage:** I hope so. I try to be a a tiny cheerleader I'm not very flexible, but I can cheerlead, you know, from a distance.I guess. (Laughter)

**Megan:** Oh, it's so lovely to get the connect with you today, and you and we will have the live event next week, so we'll have more opportunity to share and talk. And thanks everybody for listening tonight.

**Madcollage:** Thank you so much for having me today.