



AROUND THE WORLD

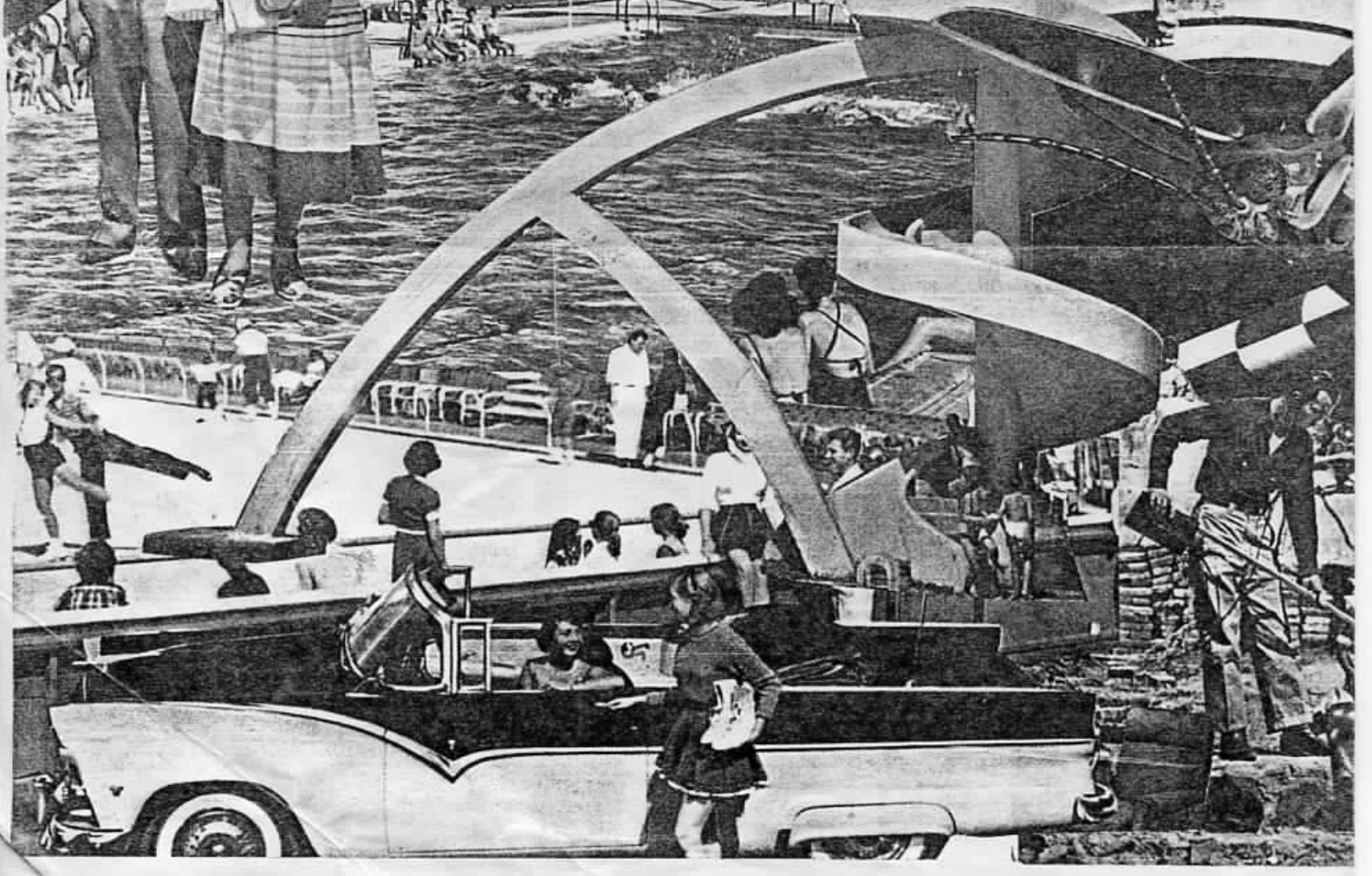
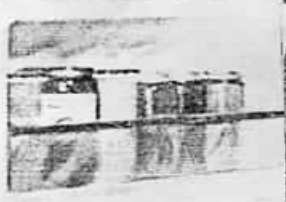
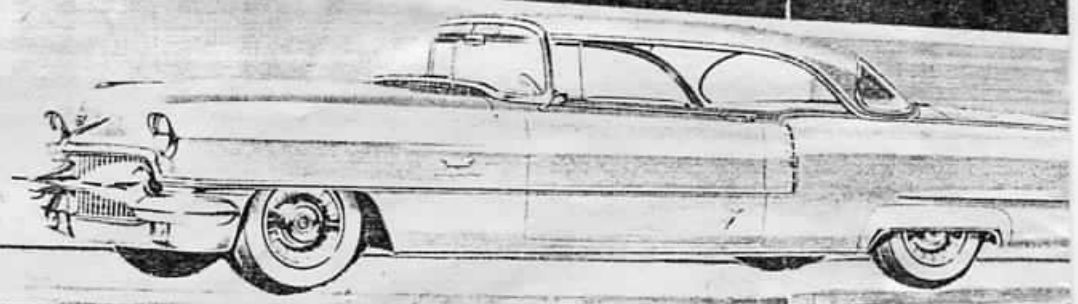
YOUR OWN WAY

PHOTOMONTAGE PRINTS BY KEN BULL

JOHN MILLS NATIONAL: MAY 22nd—JUNE 4th, 1987.



Drink
Coca-Cola





This series of photomontages represents what originally began as a means of reassembling and transposing diverse written and graphic material collected during visits I made to India, South-East Asia and Sri Lanka in 1979 and 1983, and pieced together as a scrapbook/diary. The first prints evolved in the form of collective images of loosely serialized, humorous intention. They are hectic and garish in the mode of much of the traditional and contemporary Indian graphics. The intriguing monumental scale and banality of hectares of movie poster billboards in Madras, Colombo and Bombay played a large part in the source and development of the series which extended somewhat randomly into world glimpses of a rather whimsical nature.

I reproduced the original photomontages in limited editions of ten each with the aid of a Canon photocopier as this proved an ideal and straightforward means of producing full colour prints on a small scale. With a working understanding of the visual transpositions inherent in this process, many positive results may be obtained. The tonal range being increased from the original, a greater degree of definition is possible. Chromatic qualities are enhanced, the colours become deeper due to actual enrichment in the process as well as the subjective change as the result of altered tonal qualities. For my own pictorial intentions the most useful result is the homogenization of surface qualities of the montage. Paint, cloth, photographs, cardboard and tinfoil merge their separate textural identity, blending into a more strictly 2-dimensional reality. This is a rather different world from the physically sensuous and evocativeness of the collages of Kurt Schwitters. His work I do admire greatly, but my concerns are more with the change of identity of imagery and materials as they pass through several processes of reproduction, and the ironies and obscure visual puns resultant along the way. I am, in fact, seeking a more seamless world of improbable elements in which an obscure disquiet pervades within a tension between humour and a means of representation.

The works evolved, not as separately hermetic, visual statements, but more in the sense of regular installments in a diary, or perhaps a storyboard for a moving picture. It is a search for a sense of continuity but not necessarily a narrative, to look for as much in these images would prove fruitless. Nor do I here wish to make specific political or sociological statements.

The busyness and overall intensity of most of these prints is a means of projection of the constituent grain of the source imagery, particularly that of the pioneer efforts of the offset printer. This "grain" extends itself into a self-referential pictorial format. In a way it assumes a highly ambiguous, hallucinatory quality of relentless intensity. Such delirium is more inclined to manifest itself as the shadeless, teeming hell than the reductive terseness of the Zen ideogram. The apparent density and over-all tension of visual forces is a deliberate and systematic extension of my earlier work in which abstraction reduced figure-ground relationships to a colour "field" based on unifying grid structures. This serves to create a sense of ariel topography, lacking perspective and having affinities with various forms of tribal art. In this diagrammatic world elements of language, imagery and symbolism integrate with their very means of expression, such as in traditional, ritual earthworks of certain Aboriginal desert tribes of central Australia.

Anyway, don't take the prints too seriously, folks. I hope you'll find them a lot of fun.

Ken Bull, 1987

