Dan Eldon

Dan Eldon was an adventurer, traveler, artist, photojournalist, and activist. He managed to travel to over 40 countries in his lifetime. He was born September 18, 1970 in London, England. When he was 7, his family moved to Nairobi, Kenya. He grew up there and always thought of Africa as home. While going to school in Kenya, he was exposed to students from 46 different nationalities. This experience helped to shape him into the adventurous and open-minded person he became. Growing up, his mother allowed him to come on her journalism projects with her to take photos. Throughout his life, Eldon was very compassionate and fundraised for various causes. Sadly, Eldon and three of his companions were killed in 1993 while covering a bombing in Mogadishu. The way in which Eldon lived his life, of 22 years, so fearlessly and compassionately has inspired many, and his journals continue to tell his story.
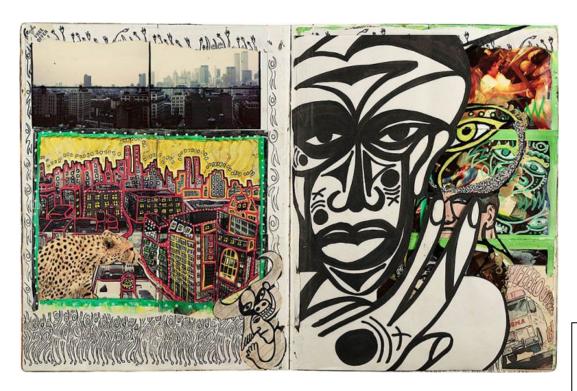
Critical Study:

He began creating his journals when he was around 15 years old, and made 17 journals in his short life. Through his artwork, Eldon intended to document his travel experiences. He was particularly interested in social issues, the people that he met, and sharing the challenges that they faced. His journals combined photos, drawings, writings, and clippings in a unique and bold style. His artwork and words invite his audience into his world, where he was intensely present in each moment.

It was his artistic talents in journaling that caught the attention of the art director at Mademoiselle Magazine, and at 17, he moved to New York for a graphic design internship. During this time, Eldon created these pages in his journal. It is a self-portrait.

Cultural Frame:
What does Eldon's use of color and patterning tell you about his life and his identity?

What are some cultures represented in this work, and how do you know?

Structural Frame:
Why do you think Eldon chose to combine a cityscape with bright colors and bold designs in this work?

How does the division of the page contribute to the meaning of the work?

Vocabulary:

Humanitarian – a person who believes in and advocates for fair treatment and kindness towards all human beings

Activist - a person who strives to create social, political, economic or environmental change

Journalist - a person who collects, organizes and distributes news information to the public

Collage - a visual art technique that arranges a variety of mediums into one artwork

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Art-making:
Think of a story about a journey, imagined or real. Then alter a book, using at least 3 different techniques, that communicates your story.

Structural Frame:
How does Blackwell's use of lighting and background enhance her book sculpture?

Do you think the 3D elements in Blackwell's art are more or less successful at communicating her stories than Eldon's flatter, collaged style, why or why not?

Why do you think Eldon did not choose to use more 3D elements in his artwork?

Subjective Frame:
How is Blackwell's book sculpture about a journey?

Which of the two artists do you think captures the feeling of a journey more in their artwork, and why?

Structural Frame:
What are some of the images, words, and symbols collaged in this page?

How does the layered and crowded composition influence the work?

Cultural Frame:
What do some of these symbols mean to you?

Do you think they meant the same thing to Eldon, why or why not?

Treasure Island, Su Blackwell, 2013

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