

Peggy Guggenheim and Howard Putzel. Partners in Purchasing

Susan Davidson

I would like to say that Putzel had much more influence over me than I over him. . . . He was in a way my master; surely not my pupil.

Peggy Guggenheim*

“A picture a day” was the oft-repeated aphorism Peggy Guggenheim used to describe how she amassed her collection of abstract and surrealist art during the tumultuous years surrounding the Second World War.¹ Perhaps no other individual in the history of twentieth-century collecting has made such an audacious statement, let alone (nearly) achieved such a herculean task. Guggenheim’s extraordinarily rapid journey into collecting—conducted primarily in two frenetic spurts, first in Paris and then in New York—was driven by her focus and determination. She relied not only on her wits but on the advocacy of three key individuals—Nelly van Doesburg, Marcel Duchamp, and today a relatively unknown player: the blond, bespectacled Californian art dealer Howard Putzel (fig. 57).² While the circumstances of how Guggenheim formed her collection—now a public institution on Venice’s Grand Canal—are well documented,³ this text shines a spotlight on the art-fueled alliance

* Epigraph: Letter from Peggy Guggenheim to Hermine Benhaim, March 7, 1966. Microfilm 3482, Hermine Benhaim Papers, 1945–1966, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as AAA).

1 Guggenheim coined this phrase in her autobiography, *Out of This Century. Confessions of an Art Addict* (New York: Universe Books, 1979), p. 209. Her statement would become the single most identified observation about her enthusiasm as an art collector.

2 For many years, scholars have relied on two principle sources for Putzel’s biography: the Hermine Benhaim Papers, AAA, and the well-researched article by Melvin P. Lader, “Howard Putzel. Proponent of Surrealism and Early Abstract Expressionism in America,” *Arts Magazine* 56/7, March 1982, pp. 85–96. For a lighthearted recounting of Putzel’s story, see James Kalm, “Brooklyn Dispatches. I Wish They All Could be California . . .,” *Brooklyn Rail*, November 5, 2010, <https://brooklynrail.org/2010/11/artseen/brooklyn-dispatches-i-wish-they-all-could-be-california>, accessed October 2, 2018. Today, the processing of records from several mid-century galleries and the digitization of newspapers have significantly increased access to documentation of Putzel’s activities, much of it presented here for the first time.

3 The first publication to catalogue Guggenheim’s collection post her death in 1979 was Angelica Zander Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation* (New York: Harry N. Abrams; Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1985). For the many gifts Guggenheim donated from her collection, see *Peggy Guggenheim’s Other Legacy*, Melvin P. Lader



57 Charles Seliger, *Portrait of Howard Putzel*, 1943, pencil and ink on paper, 12.7 × 7.6 cm. Venice, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

between Guggenheim and Putzel as they scouted galleries and cajoled artists. Their intense friendship, cut short by Putzel's untimely death in 1945, often resulted in endless bickering and, at times, childish stand-offs as they sought to acquire the best pictures for Guggenheim's "M.M.M.M." project (her acronym for "my much misunderstood museum").⁴ Her quest to open a modern art museum in Europe continued regardless of the odd predicament of attempting to do so without actually owning a collection to display in it.

and Fred Licht, eds., exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1987). For a detailed account of Guggenheim's collecting patterns and her acquisitions, see Susan Davidson, "Focusing an Instinct. The Collecting of Peggy Guggenheim," in Susan Davidson and Philip Rylands, eds., *Peggy Guggenheim and Frederick Kiesler. The Story of Art of This Century* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2004), pp. 50–89. Some portions of that text are adapted here.

- 4 Guggenheim's acronym revealed that she presciently sensed the museum project would "soon be the root of my life." See letter from Peggy Guggenheim to Emily Coleman, n.d. (ca. early April 1939), Emily Holmes Coleman Papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware. Guggenheim characterized their relationship: "Since I have known him I have been doing everything he wants, or resisting him with all my strength. The latter weakens me so much that I have no energy left for more important matters." See Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 216.

Before delving into the details surrounding the acquisitions Peggy and Putzel made together, it is worthwhile to review in broad outline the biographical facts known about the elegant, aesthete Putzel. He was a force behind some of Guggenheim's most significant surrealist purchases and, just as importantly, a stimulus in helping Guggenheim establish America's artistic preeminence after World War II, accomplished by her nurturing of abstract expressionism.

Peggy was startled to learn that Putzel was "nearly my twin in age" in that he, too, was born two years before the twentieth century dawned.⁵ Howard Julius Putzel arrived on August 20, 1898, in Allenhurst, New Jersey, a wealthy hamlet along the New Jersey shore, a short commuting distance from New York City's Penn Station. Putzel's father Gustave, a German émigré, was a businessman employed by the Einstein-Wolff Company that specialized in the manufacture of embroideries, lace, and novelties, and he later became a partner in the newly-formed firm of B.B.K. Mfg. located at 1170 Broadway.⁶ Sometime between 1911 and 1917, Putzel, his younger brother Myron, and his mother Estelle, moved to San Francisco, where members of her family (the Brownsteins) resided.⁷

Little is known about Putzel's formal education. However, the family must have enjoyed some wealth and thereby exposure to the arts as Putzel developed at an early age a discerning eye, a love of classical music, and a penchant for systematic collecting.⁸ Initially, to earn a living, he worked as a clerk in the California Packing Corporation and later may have joined his brother in the Standard Biscuit Company, where he was

5 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 215.

6 *Dry Goods Reporter* 47/1, January 1, 1916, p. 22.

7 Gustave's death was provided in Howard's *New York Times* obituary as 1913 and henceforth has been repeated in the literature. The news contained in the *Dry Goods Reporter* contradicts this date. Online genealogy searches provide Gustave's death as September 27, 1918 (aged 66), <https://www.geni.com/people/Gustav-Putzel/>, accessed October 2, 2018. The exact date of the family's arrival in San Francisco is therefore also at odds. Benhaim and Lader both provide the date as 1913. However, the move may have been precipitated by the parents' separation, which could have occurred as early as 1911, since an article by Howard Putzel, "Collecting Airship Pictures," in *Junior Call, San Francisco Call*, was published on June 24, 1911. This commentary instructing young boys how to create a scrapbook by "collecting" images was written by a precocious thirteen-year-old Putzel, whose insights into the value of art and collecting in general were already in play. The mother and two brothers were certainly settled in San Francisco by 1917 when "Myron Putzel of San Francisco" was visiting friends. See *Post-Crescent*, Appleton, Wisconsin, October 15, 1917.

8 Estelle Putzel attended the afternoon performance of Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in December 1903. See *New York Times*, December 25, 1903, p. 2. Estelle also lent an edition of Maurice Vlaminck's lithograph *Heroville* to the "Thirty European Modernists" exhibition at the Oakland Art Gallery. See *Oakland Tribune*, January 8, 1928, p. 33. Kenneth MacPherson commented that Putzel's academic training "was of a high order for he was a most cultured and cultivated man." See letter from MacPherson to Benhaim, May 14, 1966, Hermine Benhaim Papers, AAA.

a principle stockholder.⁹ However, Putzel's lack of business acumen—a lifelong shortcoming—favored a less corporate career working first in journalism, where, by 1929 he had become a knowledgeable music and art critic in Bay Area newspapers, contributing articles on the merits of mural painting to an assessment of Ernst Bloch's musical genesis.¹⁰

Precisely how Putzel became an art dealer is a mystery, and why he chose to focus his best efforts on selling and exhibiting surrealist art is just as inexplicable.¹¹ While artists such as Lorser Feitelson and Helen Lundeborg did much to further surrealism on America's West Coast, Californians had to rely chiefly on reviews of European and East Coast exhibitions and the few available surrealist publications to learn about the movement—that is, until Putzel arrived on the scene.¹²

By May 1934, he was affiliated with Ethel “Etya” Gechtoff's East West Gallery on Filmore Street, where he presented the surrealist work of Spanish painter Joan Miró. This was the first of many avant-garde presentations organized by the talented Putzel that enlightened West Coast art lovers would experience. Putzel's fellow journalists, however, were not impressed by the abstract planes of color punctuated by “lines, dashes, and dots.”¹³ Nonetheless, Miró's innovative style coupled with the dealer's daring attracted the attention of Paul and Eloise Elder, who convinced Putzel to organize similar exhibitions for their bookstore just

9 Howard Julius Putzel Draft Registration Card, September 20, 1918, <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/draft-registration>, accessed October 30, 2018; <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KZKM-2Y6>, accessed October 30, 2018. I am thankful to Don Quaintance for sourcing this document. Putzel did not serve in the military but was required by law to register. For Myron's business activities, see “Injunction Asked on Stock Purchases,” *Oakland Tribune*, February 18, 1928. The lawsuit was eventually settled and the company, one of seven comprising the Pacific Coast Biscuit Company, was purchased by the National Biscuit Company, later to become Nabisco.

10 Howard Putzel, “Ray Boynton's Mural Decorations at Mills College,” *American Magazine of Art*, June 20, 1929, pp. 35–38; and Howard Putzel, “Destiny Bows to Bloch,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 1929, p. 14. Putzel would continue his journalism activities in a series of articles written from Paris and published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, see note 29 below. Regarding Putzel's lack of business savvy, see note 48 below and artist and friend Gordon Onslow Ford's comment: “He had impeccable taste in painting . . . but he was not a business man.” Letter from Onslow Ford to Benhaim, March 29, 1966, Hermine Benhaim Papers, AAA.

11 Putzel may have been dealing art as early as 1927 or 1928 as suggested in his introductory letter to Pierre Matisse: “I had the pleasure of meeting you when you were here seven or eight years ago at a progressive dinner which ended (I believe) at [Bertram] Alanson's.” See letter from Howard Putzel to Pierre Matisse, June 15, 1935, MA 5020: Box 85.66, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Department of Literary and Historical Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

12 For more on surrealism in California, see Susan Ehrlich, “Currents of Surrealism and Fantasy in California Art, 1934–1957,” in *Pacific Dreams*, Susan Ehrlich, ed., exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, UCLA, 1995), pp. 15–37, and Susan M. Anderson, “Journey into the Sun. California Artists and Surrealism,” in Paul J. Karlstrom, ed., *On the Edge of America California Modernist Art 1900–1950* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press), 1996, pp. 180–209.

13 The Miró exhibition closed on June 2, 1934, as reported in the *Oakland Tribute*, May 27, 1934.

off the city's famed Union Square. Taking up his new post in September 1934, Putzel quickly introduced the work of both Salvador Dalí and Max Ernst to Californian audiences in the bookstore's art gallery that doubled as a lecture hall.¹⁴ In addition to showcasing surrealism, Putzel offered the city's avant-garde a diverse exhibition program that ranged from the photographs of Edward Weston to watercolors by Wassily Kandinsky.¹⁵ Putzel augmented his salary by dealing privately out of his Nob Hill residence at 1132 Clay Street, selling, for example, a Fernand Léger cubist painting to prominent collectors Walter and Louise Arensberg and taking on consignment works by Georges Braque, André Masson, and Odilon Redon for other clients.¹⁶ His legacy was secured in San Francisco by his donation of several artworks to the city's Museum of Art upon its opening and in honor of its powerhouse director, Grace L. McCann Morley, who was a close colleague.¹⁷ Putzel's effectiveness

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- 14 The Dalí exhibition was held in the month of September 1934. A second Dalí exhibition occurred February to March, 1935. See Lader, "Howard Putzel" (note 2), p. 95. With Duchamp's encouragement, Putzel sourced the second Dalí show from the Julien Levy Gallery, New York. See letter from Howard Putzel to Julien Levy, December 31, 1934, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives (hereafter cited as PMAA). This correspondence provides the earliest confirmed date for Duchamp and Putzel working together. I would like to thank Miriam Cady, Reference Archivist, for supplying this correspondence. The Ernst exhibition closed on October 13, 1934. See "Surrealism" *Art Digest*, no. 9, October 15, 1934, p. 17. For the history of the Paul Elder Bookstore, see <http://paulelder.org/>, accessed October 2, 2018. Unfortunately, the website does not address the bookstore's art activities, although I am grateful to David Mostardi for his efforts in helping sort out Putzel's programming (email correspondence to the author, June 26 and 29, 2018). Putzel's move to Paul Elder's also was precipitated by a raise in rent and a change in his commission basis at the East West Gallery. See letters from Putzel to Levy, July 23, 1934, and January 7, 1935, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, PMAA. I would like to thank to Anne Helmreich for supplying a copy of these letters.
- 15 The Kandinsky exhibition, arranged through Duchamp, occurred in March 1935. See "March 30, 1935" and "June 24, 1935," in Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, eds., *Ephemeres on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy, 1887–1968* (Milan: Bompiani, 1993), unpaginated. According to Kandinsky's Handlist, Putzel sold one work from the exhibition, *Unités*, to the Arensbergs for \$150 (the work is today in the Arensberg Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art). I am grateful to Vivian Endicott Barnett for supplying information on this sale (email correspondence to the author, July 11, 2018).
- 16 For the correspondence regarding the Léger sale, see Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, 1904–1978, bulk 1913–1974, Box 78, Folder 33, AAA. This folder also contains consignment discussions between Putzel and the gallery for works by Redon and Braque. Putzel requested the Masson consignment from Pierre Matisse. See letter from Putzel to Matisse, June 15, 1935, MA 5020: Box 85.66, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, The Morgan Library & Museum.
- 17 Putzel gifted four artworks to the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) in 1935. These were a painting by Rufino Tamayo, *The Window* (1932), and a watercolor by David Park, *Violinists* (1934). The other two works, lithographs by Utrillo and Toulouse-Lautrec, have since been deaccessioned. Putzel organized Park's first solo exhibition at the East West Gallery in June 1934, and it was most likely the occasion for acquiring this work. Putzel's program at the East West Gallery also showcased Mexican art (see *Oakland Tribune*, July 28, 1934, from which he may have acquired the Tamayo Painting. For the details on these donations, I am grateful to Sarah Roberts, Andrew W. Mellon, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and Sara Wessen Chang, Curatorial Assistant, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (email correspondence to the author, July 10, 2018).

in bringing high-caliber modernism, and surrealist art in particular, to California was unparalleled at the time. “As to my plans: I haven’t any, except to show the best exhibitions I can get, concentrating as far as possible on the surrealists [*sic*]. . . . So far as that idea goes, I am doing pioneer work in this town.”¹⁸

His reputation as one of San Francisco’s avant-garde impresarios continued in Los Angeles, where he moved in September 1935. His new venue was again a respected bookshop, this one belonging to the legendary book dealer and literary agent Stanley Rose. Putzel debuted with an Ernst exhibition followed by Miró, and later, the work of Giorgio de Chirico.¹⁹ As in San Francisco, his program also featured impressionist exhibitions of Renoir, Van Gogh, and Cézanne, and modernist shows of the work of Picasso, Chagall, and Klee, among others. After a year with Rose, Putzel opened an eponymous gallery one block west at 6729 Hollywood Boulevard where other firsts occurred, for example, exhibitions of the work of John Ferren, Jean Hélion, and, prophetically for his relationship with Guggenheim, Yves Tanguy. Growing tired of running a commercial gallery and in search of new talent, Putzel shuttered his operation in the late summer of 1938 to move to Paris, never to return to California. His contributions in breaking ground for presenting surrealist art on the West Coast are often overlooked and credit instead is attributed to William Copley’s short-lived Los Angeles gallery that operated a decade later.²⁰

Although Putzel’s exhibition program in California was of the highest order, he struggled to sell enough pictures to make a truly decent living. His clientele in Los Angeles, admittedly better, was still limited to a few transplants, such as the Arensbergs, Ruth Maitland, Hugh Walpole, and a handful of Hollywood actors, directors, and writers.²¹ Putzel’s ability

18 Letter from Putzel to Levy, January 7, 1935, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, PMAA. Again, I would like to thank to Anne Helmreich for supplying a copy of this letter.

19 The exact dates for the Ernst exhibition are unknown. Putzel sold the Arensbergs Ernst’s *The Forest* (1923; Philadelphia Museum of Art) either from this exhibition or his second Ernst show held in late April to May, 1937. The Miró exhibition was October 21 to November 9, 1935, and was sourced from both Duchamp and Pierre Matisse. The de Chirico exhibition occurred during May 1936.

20 For more on the Copley Gallery, see William N. Copley, *Reflections on a Past Life* (Houston: Rice Museum. Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1979); Jonathan Griffin, “The Surrealist Bungalow. William N. Copley and the Copley Galleries (1948–49),” <https://jonathangriffin.org>, accessed October 2, 2018; and Jonathan Griffin, “Homage and Lunacy. A Different Kind of Patron,” in Germano Celant, ed., *William N. Copley, The World According to CPLY* (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2016), pp. 50–55.

21 On what must have been an early scouting trip to the Stanley Rose Bookshop, Putzel wrote Levy, “I am considering taking over this gallery myself, because there’s so much more business here, and in this case I will move down here.” See letter from Putzel to Levy, May 31, 1935, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, PMAA. Later that summer, he wrote Levy again of his plans: “There is a little

to provide artworks to those thirsty for the “ultramoderns” would prove beneficial once he connected with Guggenheim.²² Also of importance to his future relationship with Guggenheim was his connection to the artists whose work he showed. Although only Dalí traveled to California during Putzel’s tenure, once in Paris, Putzel’s knowledgeable eye and enthusiasm—not to mention the prospect of sales—were always welcomed in artists’ studios. Later, once Guggenheim and Putzel were both settled in New York and her exhibition program at Art of This Century was in full swing, Putzel would play a major role in bringing new, distinctly American talent forward.²³

By all accounts, Putzel was a fascinating character with an extensive network of connections in the New York and European art worlds. In spite of few known records from the 1930s of his travels to New York or Europe to conduct business, the most respected dealers of the day readily offered him stock for sale, often without requiring any purchase guarantee. He frequently requested consignments of important modernist pictures from the likes of Julien Levy, Pierre Matisse, and Jacques Seligmann in New York; Paul Cassirer in Amsterdam; or the Galerie Durand-Ruel in Paris.

Unquestionably, Putzel’s most meaningful contact was Marcel Duchamp, that inimitable artist/facilitator and quasi-dealer with whom Putzel conducted regular business almost from the start of his art-selling days. How, when, and where the two were first introduced to one another remains unclear. They appear to have enjoyed a genuine friendship, Duchamp going out of his way to greet Putzel upon the latter’s arrival

more wall space than there is here. ... I start there with a better clientele than I have managed to build up here.” See letter from Putzel to Levy, August 27, 1935, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, PMAA. Thanks again to Anne Helmreich for supplying copies of these letters. Evidently, Putzel sold surrealist pictures to actor Edward G. Robinson, although he was mostly known as a collector of impressionist art. The director Billy Wilder purchased Tanguy’s *Globe de glace* (1934), which he may have first encountered at Putzel’s Tanguy exhibition at the Stanley Rose Gallery (November 25–December 7, 1935). Actor and singer Bing Crosby appeared one day at the gallery unannounced and was “mystified” by the works of Jean Hélicon then on view. See letters from Howard Putzel to Pierre Matisse, March 12, 1936, and March 13, 1936, MA 5020, Box 85.68, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, The Morgan Library & Museum. Putzel sold Hélicon’s *Red Tensions* (1933; Philadelphia Museum of Art) to the Arensbergs either from this show or the artist’s next in 1937.

22 “Putzel comes here from the Paul Elder Gallery in the north and specializes in exhibits of ultramoderns. A hint of the quality of work he will display may be gained from the fine landscape by Derain and the Cézanne study for a portrait of Mme. Cézanne at present in the Stanley Rose window.” See Arthur Millier, “Art and Artists: Brush Strokes” *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 1935, p. A9.

23 For a full history of the exhibitions at Art of This Century, see Jasper Sharp, “Serving the Future. The Exhibitions at Art of This Century,” in Susan Davidson and Philip Rylands, eds., *Peggy Guggenheim and Frederick Kiesler. The Story of Art of This Century* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2004), pp. 288–362.

in Paris, making him feel at home almost immediately.²⁴ Duchamp not only served as the intermediary to his numerous artist friends, but he also identified pictures for exhibitions directly from galleries, typically making arrangements through the Parisian shipper Lefebvre-Foinet.²⁵

Indeed, it was through Duchamp's acquaintance that Putzel first met Guggenheim at the rue Hallé home of Mary Reynolds (Duchamp's girlfriend), where Guggenheim occasionally resided when she was in Paris. After a dinner party hosted by Reynolds and Duchamp for the artist Benno, whom Peggy had shown in London at Guggenheim Jeune (May 31–June 18, 1938), Putzel joyously recounted that “the three of them roared at my foolish chatter.”²⁶ Peggy arrived later in the evening from an assignation with her then lover Samuel Beckett. She was surprised that the Californian “was the opposite, physically, of what I had imagined he was going to be. I had expected to meet a little black hunchback. Instead of this he turned out to be a big, fat blond. At first he was nearly incoherent, but little by little I realized the great passion for modern art that lurked behind his incomprehensible conversation and behavior.”²⁷ Putzel immediately ingratiated himself to Peggy, having gleaned from Duchamp the nature of her mission to assemble a quality art collection. Newly arrived in Paris in search of new art and working as an agent for several American clients, Putzel was only too happy to scout pictures of excellence for Peggy, which in turn lent clout to his own endeavors.²⁸ During his two-year sojourn in the French capital,

24 See Howard Putzel, “Impressions from Paris from Art's Not Secret Agent,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 27, 1938, p. 32. Also: “I can't begin to tell you how happy I am here, or how kind Duchamp is to me.” Letter from Putzel to Arensberg, October 24, 1938, Box 15, Folder 32, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Arensberg Archives, PMAA. Again, I would like to thank Miriam Cady for her assistance. Duchamp traveled to Los Angeles in the first weeks of August 1936 to visit the Arensbergs. He would have certainly spent an afternoon at Putzel's newly opened gallery, which was just a few blocks from the Arensbergs' residence, discussing mutual business.

25 See note 15 above.

26 Letter from Putzel to Arensberg, October 24, 1938, Box 15, Folder 32, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Arensberg Archives, PMAA.

27 Peggy recalled the meeting of their acquaintance as “the winter of 1938, when he wrote me from Hollywood. . . . I met him a few months later.” See Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 215. Her sense of time is confused as Putzel did not arrive in Paris until late October 1938 (see note 24). Guggenheim's reference to Putzel's incoherent speaking style may be attributed to the epilepsy he suffered from throughout his life.

28 Chief among Putzel's clients were the Arensbergs, whom he offered early pictures by Picasso and Braque and a sculpture by Arp, all approved by Duchamp. “Before going on I want to tell you that Duchamp and I have a perfectly amicable agreement concerning things I find that seem exciting enough to call your attention to. Further, I show him every picture that looks to me as though it should belong to you, and will definitely accept his censorship.” See letter from Putzel to Arensberg, October 27, 1938, Box 15, Folder 32, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Arensberg Archives, PMAA. Putzel also offered Louis and Annette Kaufman artworks by Rouault, Derain, and Dufy. Kaufman was an off-screen violinist whose movie credits included *Wuthering Heights* (1939) and *Our Town* (1940). See letter from Putzel to Louis and Annette Kaufman, January 4, 1939, Louis and Annette Kaufman Papers, 1931–2000, AAA.



58 Yves Tanguy, *Promontory Palace*, 1931, oil on canvas, 73 × 60 cm. Venice, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

Putzel resumed his journalistic activities as well, contributing the occasional dispatch about all that was new and happening in the Parisian art world to his hometown San Francisco newspaper readers.²⁹

Peggy and Putzel had corresponded the year before, when, in January 1938, he wired his congratulations on the opening of Guggenheim Jeune on London's Cork Street. Duchamp surely encouraged the friendship, knowing that Guggenheim would value Putzel's experience as she assumed the mantle of an art dealer, however short-lived.³⁰ Later that summer, again at Duchamp's urging, Putzel offered Guggenheim two paintings from his second Tanguy show for her London premiere

29 Putzel wrote at least four articles from Paris for the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "Impressions from Paris from Art's Not Secret Agent," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 27, 1938, p. 32; "A Lament for Artists with Brickbats," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 1, 1939, p. 24; "Picasso in Profusion," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 12, 1939, p. 29; and "Letter with a French Stamp," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 2, 1939, p. 28. I am grateful to JD of the Magazines and Newspapers Center at the San Francisco Public Library for accessing these articles on microfilm.

30 Guggenheim Jeune operated from January 1938 until June 1939 at 30 Cork Street, Mayfair. The gallery produced twenty-one exhibitions during that period.

of the artist's work.³¹ Putzel, in the midst of closing his own gallery and, although busy preparing his move to France, found time for *Promontory Palace* (*Palais promontoire*, 1931) and *Now I Shall Bite* (*Finir par mordre*, 1935) to be shipped to London. Peggy coveted *Promontory Palace* from the moment she unpacked the unusual landscape that had been inspired by the artist's journey to North Africa (fig. 58). On that occasion, Putzel was unable to conclude its sale no doubt because Guggenheim had begun a liaison with Tanguy, and his wife Jeannette was not inclined to part with such a rare picture, especially to the woman to whom she had (momentarily) lost her husband. Putzel and Peggy resumed their negotiations for the painting in the fall of 1939 when, by this time Tanguy had sailed for America with Kay Sage, leaving Jeannette who was greatly in need of money. It joined the two Tanguy pictures Peggy had previously acquired from the Guggenheim Jeune exhibition that were among her earliest surrealist acquisitions.³²

Peggy had been slow to accept the surrealist group, even refusing to attend the most important modern art show on view in London in 1936—the hugely successful “International Surrealist Exhibition” that comprehensively introduced the movement—complaining that she had had enough of surrealism in the 1920s, likely a reference to the artists' personal antics and not their artworks.³³ Little could Peggy predict her future personal engagement with the surrealist art that she was at that moment dismissing. She amended her view by the opening of Guggenheim Jeune, and during the eighteen months her gallery operated she presented the best surrealist artists in a number of solo and

31 Putzel's second Tanguy exhibition was November 16–December 2, 1936, at the Stanley Rose Gallery and the Guggenheim Jeune Tanguy exhibition was July 6–16, 1938. According to the forthcoming Tanguy Catalogue Raisonné, *Promontory Palace* returned to Tanguy in Paris after Putzel's exhibition and was then included in two European exhibitions leading up to the Guggenheim Jeune show: “First British Artists' Congress,” Conway Hall, London, March–April 1937; and “Mesens présente trois peintres surréalistes. René Magritte, Man Ray et Yves Tanguy,” Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, December 11–22, 1937. Therefore, it seems likely that Putzel made arrangements through Tanguy to have *Promontory Palace* sent from Paris to London rather than from Hollywood to London. I would like to thank Charles Stuckey, Head of Research, Yves Tanguy Catalogue Raisonné, for sharing this exhibition history ahead of its publication (email correspondence to the author, June 27, 2018).

32 As became her practice at Guggenheim Jeune, Peggy acquired at least one work from each exhibition in an effort to support the artist should nothing sell. Accordingly, from Tanguy's show she acquired *The Sun in Its Jewel Case*. (*Le soleil dans son écrin*) and *The Air in Her Mirror* (*Toilette de l'air*), both from 1937. At Putzel's urging, Peggy sold the latter painting to MacPherson in 1943. See Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 307; the work today is in the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany. Peggy also acquired a small gouache, *Untitled* (1938), from the exhibition that remains in her collection today, as does *The Sun in Its Jewel Case*. These were not her first acquisitions of surrealist art, however. That distinction belongs to Paul Delvaux's *The Break of Day* (*L'Aurore*, 1937), which she acquired earlier that summer from E. L. T. Mesens's London Gallery next door.

33 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 150. “International Surrealist Exhibition,” June 11–July 4, 1936, New Burlington Galleries, Piccadilly, London.



59 Rogi André, *Peggy Guggenheim's Île Saint-Louis Apartment, Paris, Spring 1940*. Works shown: *Dutch Interior II* by Joan Miró, 1928; *Composition on a Round Base* by César Domela, ca. 1936; and *The Numerous Family* by Max Ernst, 1926. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

group exhibitions.³⁴ By the time Peggy and Putzel started their diet of buying “a picture a day” in Paris, Guggenheim had embraced surrealism as a significant twentieth-century movement.

Guggenheim Jeune officially closed in July 1939 and Peggy ensconced herself once again in Paris. Undaunted by the Nazi aggression and despite her Jewish lineage, she held the opinion typical of many expatriates that the war was little more than a temporary inconvenience. She spent the next nine months with Putzel ticking off the artists on a list that the illustrious British art historian and critic Herbert Read had drawn up as a guide toward acquiring a distinguished collection for the “M.M.M.M” (reputedly with a budget of \$40,000). By January 1940, Guggenheim had rented Sage’s Île Saint-Louis apartment with its stunning rooftop views of Notre Dame (fig. 59). It was here that Putzel, who lived a short walk away at 27 rue Jacob, “used to arrive in the morning with several

34 Solo exhibitions were mounted of the Danish surrealist Rita Kernn-Larsen (May 31–June 18, 1938), the Austrian Wolfgang Paalen (February 15–March 11, 1939), and the American Charles Howard (April 14–May 6, 1939). For more on Kernn-Larsen, see *Rita Kernn-Larsen. Surrealist Paintings*, Grazina Subelyte, ed., exh. cat., Venice, Peggy Guggenheim Collection (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2017). Surrealist artists, such as Eileen Agar, Victor Brauner, Dalí, Ernst, René Magritte, Masson, and Miró were included in numerous group exhibitions.

things under his arm for my approval.”³⁵ He made her task of acquiring “a picture a day” significantly easier, bringing her countless examples of not just surrealist art but other modernist pictures gathered from his trolling of the city’s galleries and his frequent visits to artists’ studios. Though he sourced only the best, Peggy could be fickle, perhaps slightly intimidated by the Californian’s sophisticated eye; everyone knew that Putzel, as Gordon Onslow Ford described, had “impeccable taste as far as painting was concerned.”³⁶ Occasionally, Guggenheim exercised her willpower, and Putzel would be “hurt when I did not buy.”³⁷

In addition, Peggy’s friendship with Nelly van Doesburg, whose focus was geared toward the abstract works needed for the new collection, often got in the way: “[Putzel] and Nellie [*sic*] disliked each other only as rivals of extreme passions can,” Peggy rightly observed.³⁸ Undeterred, Putzel would often return in the evening to have supper with Peggy and Virgil Thomson (the former two shared the composer’s great love of music) while Putzel nattered excitedly about what he was planning for their next outing. “He also made me buy innumerable things that I didn’t want; but he found me many paintings I did need, and that balanced our account.”³⁹ He tried to protect her from the artists and dealers who offered her works, often at laughably cheap prices as people were anxious to liquidate assets for cash. It was undoubtedly a buyer’s market. Putzel, working on a 10-percent commission, recognized the galvanizing role her collecting habits were having on the art world of Paris.

Peggy found Putzel a “kind and noble soul and absolutely passionate about his work; a very intense man.”⁴⁰ His first order of business upon arriving in Paris was to visit most of the artists he had shown at his California establishments—Picasso, Braque, Ernst, Miró, Tanguy, and Brancusi, to name just a few.⁴¹ He tried to alleviate their newly uncertain circumstances by taking Peggy to visit their studios in the hopes she would buy their paintings, giving them needed cash while he earned a little money on commissions. He shared their activities with his readers: “From time to time one hears of fine things being done by a gallery in London. . . . Its proprietor, Peggy Guggenheim, is now in Paris, taking a sort of ‘post man’s’ holiday. I’ve brought her to the studios of numbers of

35 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 216.

36 Onslow Ford in Virginia M. Dortch, ed., *Peggy Guggenheim and Her Friends* (Milan: Berenice, 1994), p. 69.

37 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 216.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*

40 Letter from Guggenheim to Benhaim, 1966 (see epigraph).

41 For the complete list of artists Putzel visited, see Putzel, “Impressions from Paris”, and Putzel, “A Lament for Artists with Brickbats” (note 29).

painters who ... had astonished me by [their] considerable excellence, at the same time getting a wished-for second look for myself.”⁴²

Peggy first met her husband-to-be Ernst through Putzel, who had shown the German-born Dada and surrealist artist on several occasions at his various California venues. Although she had included Ernst’s work at Guggenheim Jeune and already owned one painting, she was keen to acquire a classic surrealist picture.⁴³ Their first visit, however, yielded only a painting by Ernst’s then girlfriend, Leonora Carrington: *The Horses of Lord Candlestick* (1939), that became the first work by a woman artist to enter her collection.⁴⁴ Peggy’s attraction to the charismatic Ernst piqued her desire to own more of his work. Eager to conclude a sale, Putzel located several pictures at the Galerie Van Leer, where Ernst regularly exhibited throughout the 1920s. Their stockroom contained some of the finest examples from the artist’s early surrealist period, including the four works Guggenheim quickly purchased for her collection: *The Numerous Family* (*La famille nombreuse*, 1926); *The Kiss* (*Le baiser*, 1927); *The Forest* (*La forêt*, 1927–28); and *Vision* (1931).⁴⁵ She would go on to amass significant Ernst holdings that became a cornerstone of her collection.

Unfortunately, both Guggenheim and Putzel lacked true record-keeping skills, and, accordingly, much information regarding their activities has been lost. The surrealist works discussed above are the only ones Peggy remembered that Putzel specifically identified for her collection. While Read’s list was the roadmap and Duchamp the mastermind, Putzel was the one, however, who spent his days squiring Peggy around Paris. He may have accompanied her and Tanguy to Victor Brauner’s studio, encouraging her to buy *Fascination* (1939),⁴⁶ or have taken her

42 Putzel, “Picasso in Profusion” (note 29).

43 Guggenheim acquired her first Ernst painting (sadly unidentified) from an auction in London organized to benefit the Republican fighters in the Spanish Civil War works.

44 Guggenheim gave the work to a family member at an unknown date.

45 Guggenheim disposed of *Vision* (Spies, 1976, no. 1797) by unknown means after Art of This Century opened. She gifted *The Numerous Family* to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1947 as she was closing Art of This Century and returning to Europe. *The Kiss* and *The Forest* remain in her collection today, joining the nine other paintings and two sculptures by the artist she acquired in her lifetime. During their marriage, Peggy received many more works directly from Ernst that were either sold (probably with Putzel’s assistance) and/or given away. For details on those works, see Davidson, “Focusing an Instinct” (note 3), p. 86, notes 74 and 75.

46 Peggy sold *Fascination* to a “Mrs. Connell” in 1944 for \$250, making a \$50 profit. See “Art of This Century Sales of Art Works for the Year Ended December 31, 1944,” Bernard and Rebecca Reis Papers, Research Library Special Collections & Visual Resources, The Getty Institute, Los Angeles. The painting is today in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Patricia Kane O’Connell was a photographer whose second marriage to Chilean surrealist artist Roberto Matta ended when Matta’s affair with the wife of Armenian abstract expressionist painter, Arshile Gorky, was revealed. O’Connell went on to enjoy a long marriage to art dealer Pierre Matisse (whose first wife, Teeny, would marry Duchamp in 1954) that began in October 1949 and ended with her death in October 1972.

to the Galerie Simon where she purchased Masson's *Armor* (1925), to Pierre Loeb's where Miró's *Dutch Interior II* (*Intérieur hollandais II*, 1928) was acquired, and to Henriette Gomès's gallery that had Dalí works on offer. Other surrealist purchases Putzel may have "approved" for Peggy were found in the collections of various friends who were readying their departures from Europe with the onset of war. For example, Dalí's *Birth of Liquid Desires* (*La Naissance des désirs liquides* (1931–32) was picked up from the artist's wife, Gala; de Chirico's *The Nostalgia of the Poet* (1914) from shipping heiress Nancy Cunard; and Brancusi's *Maiistra* (ca. 1912) from Denise Boulet, the former wife of couturier Paul Poiret, who once made dresses for Peggy.

As Putzel was engaged in dealing modernist—not just surrealist—artwork, it is highly probable, too, that his advisory role with her extended to other movements and artists in his vast orbit. During the time Guggenheim was "stationed" in Grenoble, she met Robert and Sonia Delaunay. Peggy had admired Robert's earlier synchronist work, inquiring whether he might have one available for her museum. Accustomed to bargains, she was appalled when Delaunay stated an exorbitant price. Putzel came to the rescue, locating at Paul Rosenberg's gallery the only oval version from Delaunay's *Window* (*Les fenêtres*) series for substantially less, which Guggenheim readily purchased.⁴⁷

Disillusioned with the state of contemporary art in France and concerned for his safety with the advancing war (he is believed to have been Jewish), Putzel left Paris on June 11, 1940. He arrived in New York City on the SS *Manhattan* July 18. He immediately sought work, and, when unsuccessful, resumed dealing privately to make ends meet.⁴⁸ Peggy spent the next year in unoccupied France working on the catalogue for her collection, less able without Putzel's help to acquire more for the collection. In the nine months they had been buying "a picture a day," Peggy had acquired approximately seventy-three works of art.⁴⁹ With Duchamp's assistance, she arranged for several wooden crates,

47 It is possible that the work was less expensive not only due to its condition (Delaunay was notorious for mistreating his works) but also because Rosenberg was closing his rue Boétie gallery to emigrate to America.

48 "For several years I had a gallery in Hollywood (called the Putzel Gallery). I was badly in debt when I closed the gallery. ... I'm no good at business though able to sell pictures. ... I want to work with and for art. Although I looked for new talent in Europe ... it seemed clear that for the first decade nothing really new was painted in Europe. (The exception of Picasso is, after all, an exception). This continent [North America] will very likely be the new home of art." Letter from Putzel to Edith Halpert, July 24, 1940, bulk 1926–1969, Correspondence, July–Oct., 1940, microfilm 5495, Box 3, Downtown Gallery Records, 1824–1974, AAA. For Putzel's activities as a private dealer in New York, see note 58 below.

49 The packing list enumerated eighty-eight paintings and sculptures packed in six cases (including the fifteen works Guggenheim had acquired earlier in London). See Eugene and Maria Jolas Papers, Box 31, Folder 625, General Collection, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.



60 Max Ernst, *The Harmonious Breakfast (at Santa Monica)*, 1941, oil on canvas, 56 × 66.2 cm. Private collection.

cleverly identified by Huguenot names such as “Dupont” (as opposed to the obviously Jewish “Guggenheim”), to leave the Marseille port on March 4, 1941. Peggy breathed a sigh of relief and prayed, “God preserve them from the evils of the high seas.”⁵⁰ When she herself arrived in New York four months later along with Ernst and her extended family,

⁵⁰ “So now all the collection & my little Talbot car, which I hadn’t seen since October, will leave for America on March 4.” Letter from Guggenheim to Coleman, February 24, 1941 (postmark), University of Delaware, Emily Holmes Coleman Papers. For a description of Maurice Lefebvre-Foinet’s recollection of readying the collection for shipment, see Lefebvre-Foinet in Dortch, *Peggy Guggenheim* (note 36), pp. 56–57.

Putzel was at the LaGuardia Marine Air Terminal to greet them with the news that her collection was safe and sound.⁵¹ Peggy immediately set to work on finding a suitable home for the collection, traveling west, then east from California to New Orleans before settling on a space on Fifty-Seventh Street. While Guggenheim and Ernst were in San Francisco, Putzel arranged an introduction to an associate from whom Peggy acquired Ernst's *Zoomorphic Couple* (*Couple zoomorphe*, 1933).⁵²

Back in New York, Putzel was active in selling works of art for Ernst, who had become Guggenheim's husband that December. Putzel persuaded potential customers to accompany him to the couple's townhouse on Beekman Place, successfully selling many paintings for Ernst on the spot.⁵³ Ernst memorialized Putzel's support of his work by including him as the cloaked figure in his painting *The Harmonious Breakfast (at Santa Monica)* in 1941 (fig. 60).⁵⁴ Putzel's contacts were considerable for someone who had been in the city only a short time. He made it his business to know everyone and was always available to help Peggy however he could. In order to complete her collection, she made several key surrealist acquisitions in New York ahead of Art of This Century's opening, with Putzel either supplying introductions or confirming her selections. Picasso had rebuffed Peggy in Paris, even though Putzel thought him the most original artist he encountered there. Their greatest find in New York was at Dudensing's gallery where she acquired Picasso's *The Studio (L'atelier, 1928)*, an "austere and powerful work"⁵⁵ that the artist had left in America after an exhibition, fearing its return might result in its confiscation as "degenerate" art. To this, Guggenheim and Putzel added *On the Beach (La baignade, 1937)*, one of Picasso's magnificent surrealist masterpieces, sourced from the American sculptor and Picasso collector Mary Callery for \$10,000, becoming one of the most expensive artworks Peggy acquired. Guggenheim made most of her New York acquisitions (ten paintings and sculptures) from the

51 Information on the exact arrival date of Guggenheim's collection, as well as where it was stored before Art of This Century opened, has not been traced. Possible storage facilities in New York include W. S. Budworth & Sons, W. F. Collins & Co., and Hahn Brothers. Some of the art, however, was hung in Peggy's Beekman Place townhouse.

52 Guggenheim could not recall the name of Putzel's associate. See Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim Collection* (note 3), p. 298.

53 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), pp. 265, 267; and Lader, "Howard Putzel" (note 2), p. 90.

54 Jimmy Ernst, Max Ernst's son, identified Putzel in this guise and fondly remembered him as a "well-worn teddy bear." See Jimmy Ernst, *A Not-So-Still-Life. A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 205; and Jimmy Ernst in Dortch, *Peggy Guggenheim* (note 36), p. 81. The Museum of Modern Art's Board of Trustees wished to acquire this work from Peggy, however, the museum's director, Alfred H. Barr Jr. was more interested in another painting, *Napoleon in the Wilderness* (1941) that had failed to find a buyer at Ernst's recent show at the Dudensing Gallery. See Davidson, "Focusing an Instinct" (note 3), pp. 73, 88, note 110.

55 Robert Motherwell, quoted in Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim Collection* (note 3), p. 622, note 6.

Pierre Matisse Gallery, with whom Putzel had been doing business in surrealist works since 1935. He encouraged her to buy de Chirico's *The Gentle Afternoon* (*Le doux après-midi*, 1916) and Miró's *Seated Woman II* (*Femme assise II*, 1939), both secured through a protracted negotiation involving cash and exchanges of a de Chirico painting, *The Red Tower* (*La Tour Rouge*, 1913), that they had picked up recently from the Bignou Gallery.⁵⁶

Putzel casually mentioned to Peggy as she was struggling with how to organize the top floor of 30 West Fifty-Seventh Street into suitable spaces for her museum, "Why don't you get Kiesler to give you a few ideas about decorating your gallery?"⁵⁷ Little did Guggenheim realize where Kiesler's affirmative response would take her. She gave Kiesler great freedom to create a "new exhibition method" for her museum. After nine months of preparation, Art of This Century opened to great acclaim on October 20, 1942. Kiesler designed its four distinct gallery spaces for both Guggenheim's permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. The unusual setting generated almost as much publicity as the unveiling of the remarkable collection, which was judiciously split between the two long, main parallel spaces—the Abstract Gallery and the Surrealist Gallery. Undulating ultramarine canvas walls surrounded the Abstract Gallery, and both paintings and sculptures were suspended amid the space on rope and strap apparatuses. The paintings in the Surrealist Gallery projected out toward the viewer on adjustable wood arms anchored on concave wood walls, with lights blinking on and off, and an urban soundtrack of arriving trains piped in (fig. 61). Offering unprecedented access to European masterworks of abstract and surrealist art, Art of This Century would become a major cross-fertilization nexus among progressive European and American tendencies.

In the spring of 1943, Putzel officially went on salary as gallery director at Art of This Century, replacing Jimmy Ernst as secretary, while retaining his right to sell pictures that were not the focus of the gallery's exhibitions.⁵⁸ Ever the salesman, he continued to lure potential clients

56 In the end Peggy retained *The Red Tower* for her collection. For more on Guggenheim's acquisitions from Pierre Matisse, see Davidson, "Focusing an Instinct" (note 3), pp. 71–73.

57 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 270.

58 Putzel took on consignment a Picasso Rose-period painting and a 1930s Braque still life from Paul Rosenberg. See Consignment Invoice, November 4, 1944, Series II, Folder C.38, The Paul Rosenberg Archives, a gift of Elaine and Alexandre Rosenberg, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. I would like to thank Ilda François for supplying this material. Putzel also inquired about the availability of a cubist Picasso from Pierre Matisse. See letter from Putzel to Matisse, August 9, 1941, MA 5020: Box 85.70, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, The Morgan Library & Museum. That said, Putzel crossed the line, so to speak, taking consignments of Ernst and Tanguy works from Julien Levy while working at Art of This Century. See Memorandum, November 3, 1944, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, PMAA. Again, thanks to Miriam Cady for her help.



61 Berenice Abbott, installation view of the Surrealist Gallery, Art of This Century, looking south, 1942. Works shown on gallery walls, left to right: *The Antipope*, 1941–42, and *The Entire City*, 1935–37, by Max Ernst; *Armor* by André Masson, 1925; *Untitled* by Salvador Dalí, 1931; *The Nostalgia of the Poet* by Giorgio de Chirico, 1914; *Promontory Palace*, 1931, *If It Were*, 1939, and *The Sun in Its Jewel Case*, 1937, by Yves Tanguy; *The Numerous Family* by Max Ernst, 1926; *The Break of Day* by Paul Delvaux, 1937; *Dutch Interior II* by Joan Miró, 1928; *Zoomorphic Couple*, 1933, and *Landscape-Effect of Touch*, 1934, by Max Ernst; *Fascination* by Victor Brauner, 1939; *The Voice of Space* by René Magritte, 1931; *The Shepherdess of the Sphinxes* by Leonora Fini, 1941; *The Horses of Lord Candlestick* by Leonora Carrington, 1938; *The Studio* by Pablo Picasso, 1928; *The Red Tower* by Giorgio de Chirico, 1913; and, in the center of the gallery placed on *Correalist Rockers* designed by Frederick Kiesler, left to right: *Woman with Her Throat Cut* by Alberto Giacometti, 1932, cast 1940; *Vision* by Max Ernst, 1931; and *Head and Shell* by Jean Arp, ca. 1933. Vienna, Frederick Kiesler Foundation.

into the gallery, encouraging them to make purchases. Guggenheim had been slow to grant Putzel this authority, sensing that the situation could be “catastrophic.”⁵⁹ She was keenly aware of his inability to manage money.⁶⁰ Yet, Putzel’s energetic scouting of new talent offset this problem. His activities set the stage for Guggenheim’s introduction of such artists as Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko, artists whose leanings at this time were following a surrealist vein encouraged in part by Matta, and who were soon to become leaders of the abstract expressionist movement. As Putzel’s power in the gallery side of Guggenheim’s affairs rose, the tension in their friendship escalated; he

59 “I had resisted this catastrophe for two winters, but now I weakened, in view of the fact that this move would bring me nearer to Kenneth’s intimate life.” See Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 293.

60 Lader, “Howard Putzel” (note 2), p. 96, note 67.

could be quite temperamental and quarrelsome, and she standoffish and determined.

“I don’t want to be a sandwich boy! I want a gallery of my own!”⁶¹ Putzel screamed as he departed Art of This Century at the start of the gallery’s third season (October 1944) to form 67 Gallery just east of Madison Avenue, also on Fifty-Seventh Street and financially underwritten by Scottish filmmaker Kenneth MacPherson, one of Peggy’s former lovers and a great friend of the Californian. MacPherson had been a regular client, having purchased a number of works from Art of This Century at Putzel’s urging.⁶² In his new place, Putzel’s “creative eye for the future” showcased much of the new American talent he had been pushing at Art of This Century.⁶³ In its first season the gallery made a significant impact among New York’s intelligentsia. Artist Barnett Newman welcomed Putzel as a kindred spirit: “It was no easy task to [predict] the revolution that was taking place. . . . [I]t was a call to duty.”⁶⁴

A second season sadly was not to be. The gallery abruptly closed when its proprietor was found dead on August 5, 1945, in the space, which doubled as his residence; Putzel was only forty-six years of age. Heavyset and a drinker, he suffered from heart problems and epilepsy his entire life. His death occurred during the summer hiatus. Just a handful of people attended his funeral, whose service was “just music, color, and a few sentences,”⁶⁵ but neither Peggy nor Pollock were available. Duchamp penned a “very sad letter” to Putzel’s mother, who wrote of Duchamp, “that dear man was such a devoted friend to Howard.”⁶⁶

Putzel’s embrace of the new art developing in America is another story for another occasion.⁶⁷ However, as the present text intends to

61 Nell Blaine in Dortch, *Peggy Guggenheim* (note 36), p. 123.

62 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 307. For details of MacPherson’s involvement in 67 Gallery, see letter from Howard Putzel to Hans Hofmann, September 15, 1944, Hans Hofmann Papers, [ca. 1904]–2011, bulk 1945–2000, Box 3, Folder 30, AAA.

63 Betty Parsons in Dortch, *Peggy Guggenheim* (note 36), p. 128.

64 John P. O’Neill, ed., *Barnett Newman, Selected Writings and Interviews* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 96–98.

65 Letter from Lillian Olinsey (later Kiesler) to Hans Hoffman, August 10, 1945, Box 3, Folder 30, Hans Hofmann Papers, AAA.

66 Letter from Estelle Putzel to Hans Hofmann, August 30, 1945, Box 3, Folder 30, Hans Hofmann Papers, AAA.

67 For Guggenheim’s role in creating an art market for abstract expressionism, see Susan Davidson, “Feminism for the Most Masculine. How Two Women Launched an Art Market,” in *Abstract Expressionism*, David Anfam, ed., exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2016), pp. 86–103. For Putzel’s encouragement of new talent at Art of This Century, see Susan Davidson, “The Gesture of Intimate Scale: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper,” in *No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock: Paintings on Paper*, Susan Davidson, ed., exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2006), pp. 10–21; and Susan Davidson, “The Theorist and the Gallerist: Motherwell’s Early Career with Peggy Guggenheim,” in *Robert Motherwell: Early Collages*, Susan Davidson, ed., exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2013), pp. 12–29.

elucidate, Putzel's insights and resources profoundly shaped key aspects of Guggenheim's collection. His far-reaching network—blanketing the western and eastern United States and extending into Europe—of dealers, artists, and collectors intersected at a prescient moment with Guggenheim's pursuit to establish a modern art museum. The particulars of their alliance offer greater understanding of how patron and expeditor can forge a mutually beneficial relationship. Together, her vision and his ability assembled one of the most important art collections in the twentieth century.