

Toward a New “Human Consciousness”: The Exhibition “Adventures in Surrealist Painting During the Last Four Years” at the New School for Social Research in New York, March 1941

Caterina Caputo

On January 6, 1941, the *New School for Social Research Bulletin* announced a series of forthcoming surrealist exhibitions and lectures (fig. 68):

“*Surrealist Painting: An Adventure into Human Consciousness*; 4 sessions, alternate Wednesdays. Far more than other modern artists, the Surrealists have adventured in tapping the unconscious psychic world. The aim of these lectures is to follow their work as a psychological barometer registering the desire and impulses of the community. In a series of exhibitions contemporaneous with the lectures, recently imported original paintings are shown and discussed with a view to discovering underlying ideas and impulses. Drawings on the blackboard are also used, and covered slides of work unavailable for exhibition.”¹

From January 22 to March 19, on the third floor of the New School for Social Research at 66 West Twelfth Street in New York City, six exhibitions were held presenting a total of thirty-six surrealist paintings, most of which had been recently brought over from Europe by the British surrealist painter Gordon Onslow Ford,² who accompanied the shows with four lectures.³ The surrealist events, arranged by surrealists themselves with the help of the New School for Social Research, had

¹ *New School for Social Research Bulletin*, no. 6 (1941), unpaginated.

² For additional biographical details related to Gordon Onslow Ford, see Harvey L. Jones, ed., *Gordon Onslow Ford: Retrospective Exhibition*, exh. cat. (Oakland, CA: Oakland Museum, 1980); Josefina Alix Trueba and Maria Lluïsa Borràs, eds., *Gordon Onslow Ford: mirando en lo profundo*, exh. cat. (Santiago de Compostela: Fundación Eugenio Granell, 1998); Martica Sawin and Fariba Bogzaran, eds., *Gordon Onslow Ford. Paintings and Works on Paper 1939–1951*, exh. cat. (New York: Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, 2010), Fariba Bogzaran, ed., *Gordon Onslow Ford. A Man On a Green Island* (Inverness: The Lucid Art Foundation, 2019).

³ Onslow Ford wrote, “Pour avoir une raison de rester ici [à New York] il a fallu donner une série de conférences à la New School for Social Research que j’ai appelée ‘Surrealist Painting—An Adventure Into Human Consciousness’” (“To have a reason to stay here [in New York], I had to

New Year's. No great victory has distinguished the day. No saint has hallowed it. The place of the day in the calendar is wrong; for it was on December 21 that primitive man celebrated the limit in the sun's southward course and the beginning of his blessed return. Yet what day of the year stirs more hope in the breast of man? One turns a hostile eye upon the year that has gone before: a year of blood and fire, flood and pestilence. The new year, we feel, is bound to be better.

Everybody may be wrong, in some sense, but not in every sense. It may be that 1941 will be cursed with more crime and disaster than even 1940. It may be that before the end of 1941 the Axis will have won; or that England, though winning, will have become so demoralized through her excessive sufferings that she will not know how to use victory wisely. It may be that the obscurantists, reactionaries, purgers and persecutors will have multiplied in the United States like thistles in a neglected field. Many things we do not desire will thrust themselves upon us in 1941. And yet we do well to greet the year with happiness and hope.

For the world we live in is, after all, an unsinkable ship. On its illimitable plains the grass and the young corn will spring to the early sun; the myriad birds will chant in the billions of budding trees; lambs will frisk and little children will play hide and seek, all unknowing of the brutalities and crimes of those obscene vultures the war makers. Those vultures are but creatures of a day, though a dark and desperate day. The drama of the renewal of the year and the spring goes on forever.

And so the New School bids its friends a happy New Year, knowing that under the harsh crust of the world of this now the spring is germinating, to bring forth its blossoms of hope, whatever may happen to the pages of history.

ALVIN JOHNSON

MODERN SCIENCE IN THE MAKING
7 sessions. Alternate Tuesdays (except January 28), 8:20-10 P.M. \$3.50. Single admission: 60 cents.

Beginning January 21. This series of lectures attempts to present science to a lay audience of fair head. The aim is not a systematic survey but a glimpse of modern science in the making. Accordingly areas of contemporary scientific progress are selected for presentation by those who are contributing toward it, actually doing the work.

Enough elementary historical background is given to make the problems meaningful.

In consideration of the very rare opportunity which this course affords, the New School has departed from its usual range of fees in order to permit all those to attend who would like to take advantage of so rare an occasion.

The lectures are variously illustrated by slides, motion pictures and experiments.

CHEMISTRY

Jan. 21 *The nature of chemical forces*—Leonor Michaelis, member emerita, Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research; work chiefly in the application of physical chemistry to biology and biochemistry.

Jan. 28 *Outlines of biochemistry*—Leonor Michaelis.

BIOLOGY

Feb. 18 *Developments in the study of metabolism*—Rudolph Schoenheimer, professor of Biochemistry, Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Mar. 4 *The transmission of nervous and other messages throughout the body*—George H. Parker, professor emeritus of zoology, Harvard University; work chiefly in the color changes of animals in relation to the nervous system.

Mar. 18 *Modern ideas on evolution and the origin of species*—Albert F. Blakeslee, director, department of genetics, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Cold Spring Harbor, L. I.; president, American Association for the Advancement of Science; work chiefly in the physiology of development and reproduction in plants, and in plant genetics; recently in human inheritance of taste thresholds.

April 1 *Recent advances in the study of heredity*—L. C. Dunn, professor of zoology, Columbia University; editor of *Genetics*; recent experiments on the house mouse to discover how hereditary factors produce their effects during embryo development.

April 15 *The basic nature of the visual process*—Sally Mackay, professor of physiology, Columbia University; work chiefly in the basic chemical and physical nature of the processes underlying vision in animals including man.

SURREALIST PAINTING:
An Adventure Into Human Consciousness
4 weeks. Alternate Wednesdays, 8:20-10 P. M. \$4.
GORDON M. ONSLOW-FORD

Beginning January 22. Far more than other modern artists, the surrealists have advanced in tapping the unconscious psychic world. The aim of these lectures is to follow their work as a psychological barometer registering the desires and impulses of the community.

In a series of exhibitions contemporaneous with the lectures, recently acquired original paintings are shown and discussed with a view to discovering underlying ideas and impulses. Drawings on the blackboard are also used, and colored slides of work available for exhibition.

Jan. 22 *Giorgio di Chirico—the child of dreams.*
Exhibition of ten paintings including *Portrait of the Artist*, *The Jewish Angel*, *The Melancholia of Despair*.

Feb. 5 *Max Ernst—the creative forces of evil.*
Ten paintings including *Oedipus Rex*, *The Tethering Women*, *The Joy of Life*.

Jan. 19 *Joan Miró—the primitive in the subhuman.*
Six paintings including *The Family*, *Maternity*.

Feb. 19 *René Magritte—poetry of the object.*
Six paintings including *The Tempest*, *The Portrait*.

Yves Tanguy—the internal landscape.
Ten paintings including *The Lost Balls*, *Out of the Blue*, *Second Thoughts*.

Mar. 5 *Adventures in surrealist painting during the last four years.*
Special attention is given to young artists at present little known in America: Oshias, Brauner, Peiken, Hayler, Saligmann, Matta, Onslow-Ford, Francis.

AFTER LECTURE TEAS
Faculty and students are invited to the teas in the fifth floor lounge at 10 P.M. on

Monday, January 13
Wednesday, January 15
Friday, January 17
Tuesday, January 21
Thursday, January 23

PROFESSIONAL WRITING
GORHAM MUNSON
10 weeks. Fridays, 8:20-10 P.M. \$15.
Single lecture: \$1.75.

Beginning January 24. This course applies a unique principle in the teaching of writing, eschewing both conventional literary criticism and instruction in writing according to a mechanical formula. It is strictly practical. The aim is to stimulate the writer to greater production and to provide him with a considerable number of practical tips drawn from the experience of the instructor as publisher's editor, popular magazine editor, journalist and author. Since the craft of writing can only be self-taught, it is a course for those who are willing to teach themselves by constant practice the technique of producing with written words intended effects upon intended readers. The spirit and standards of the course are professional, and it is expected that a nucleus of professional writers in the group will set the pace. Membership, however, is open to amateurs and beginners.

The submission of manuscripts is not obligatory, nor is it required that prospective members give evidence in advance of ability to write. The meetings consist of lectures on phases of writing followed by public but anonymous criticism of the manuscripts submitted in previous weeks. In the lectures the practical psychology of writing is emphasized. The course is restricted to prose forms but of these any form may be submitted, from the aphorism to chapters and outlines of novels. The work may be published or unpublished, in progress or completed. Letters, advertising copy, diaries, fables, plays, any prose form is welcomed.

Jan. 24 *The fascinating difficulties of writing*
Jan. 31 *The psychology of the reader*
Feb. 7 *The eye for subject and form*
Feb. 14 *On finding a native style*
Feb. 21 *The storyable element*
Feb. 28 *How to write articles*
Mar. 7 *Words and their environment*
Mar. 14 *Prose rhythm and other considerations*
Mar. 21 *Fustian and other faults*
Mar. 28 *Journalism, prose and scripture*

68 *The New School for Social Research Bulletin*, no. 6, January 6, 1941. New York, The New School Archives and Special Collections.

a dual purpose: on one hand, educating audiences about surrealism by showing them how surrealist artists created their works, and, on the other, a desire to share their ideology and poetics with a young generation of artists living in the United States in the name of cultural renewal.

To understand the genesis and organization of these exhibitions and lectures it is necessary to go back to 1939, when Onslow Ford, still living in London, was looking for a way to obtain a visa to enter the United States and join his Chilean surrealist friend Roberto Matta Echaurren.⁴ Matta, who had left Paris to take refuge in the United States in 1939, was the link between the New School for Social Research and the 1941

4 While in London, between 1939 and 1940, Onslow Ford not only took part in the activities of the surrealist British group but also purchased several paintings from the London Gallery, specifically *L'Apparition du cheval*, *Portrait de l'artiste*, *L'Incertitude du poète*, and *La Guerre* by Giorgio de Chirico; *La Femme chancelante* by Max Ernst; *Pastorale* by Joan Miró; *Dérivés d'Azur* by Yves Tanguy; *Portrait* by René Magritte; *Pen Drawing* and *Reclining Figure* by Henry Moore; and *Les Femmes des eaux*, *Le Miroir*, and *Les Femmes et les lamps* by Paul Delvaux. Furthermore, he bought additional paintings in other British art galleries. For a detailed list, see Caterina Caputo, *Collezione e mercato: la London Gallery e la diffusione dell'arte surrealista (1938–1950)* (Florence: Pontecorboli, 2018), pp. 214–221.

surrealism exhibitions.⁵ When Matta moved to New York, the diaspora of artists leaving Europe for the United States because of the war was already underway. On their arrival in the United States, many surrealists quickly established themselves in New York through exhibitions of their work, mainly in commercial galleries such as those run by Julien Levy and Pierre Matisse—their aim was to promote their work and build a network of collectors interested in acquiring their paintings.⁶ However, in addition to their commercial activities, the artists were also looking for a way to continue painting and soon formed a circle of friends made up of both European refugees and American artists, usually meeting up in their own homes or their studios.⁷

Before he left Europe, Matta lived in Paris, where he met Onslow Ford in 1937. The two painters had embarked on an artistic collaboration based on their shared interest in psychoanalysis and surrealist automatism. As a result, in association with Spanish painter Esteban Francés, they developed a theory they named “psychological morphology,” according to which the phenomenological world was only a small section of a larger structure of existence in which every part was linked to every other part in a mystical, invisible whole.⁸ At the same time, they believed that the generation of forms on the canvas was due not only to a psychological automatism, but also to a visionary process active in the inner world that belonged to all artists. While Breton’s automatism was primarily based on Freudian psychoanalysis, Matta’s and Onslow Ford’s focus was on the notions of time and space. Indeed, the two young painters were experimenting with an unknown synthesis that involved both science and mysticism.⁹ In the late 1930s, surrealists were shaping a new programmatic ideology that had its roots in pure automatism as well as a scientific approach. Breton highlighted this new surrealist direction in 1939 in his article “Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste,” published in the journal *Minotaure*:

“The fact that the young painters of today have opted unequivocally for automatism has by no means precluded them from devoting their fullest attention to the most far-ranging problems. Though, in their

5 On Matta’s surrealist activities, see Emmanuel Guigon and Georges Sebbag, “Matta, l’être hommonde,” in *Matta du surréalisme à l’histoire*, ed. Roberto Sebastian Matta (Marseille: Snoeck, 2013), pp. 22–31; Marine Nédélec, “Matta, le non-peintre de l’être-à-tout,” in *ibid.*, pp. 170–185; and Michele Greet, *Transatlantic Encounters: Latin American Artists in Paris Between the Wars* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 230–236.

6 In April 1940 Matta had a solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, and one at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in the mid-1940s.

7 See Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 150–193.

8 See Jones, *Gordon Onslow Ford* (note 2), pp. 7–10.

9 *Ibid.*



69 Photographer unknown, installation view of the exhibition “Surrealism To-Day,” London, Zwemmer Gallery, 1940. Edinburgh, The National Galleries of Scotland.

forays into the realm of science, the accuracy of their pronouncements remains largely unconfirmed, the important thing is that they all share the same deep yearning to transcend the three-dimensional universe.”¹⁰

Breton’s text explains the surrealist program in the visual arts by presenting new artists affiliated with the movement in the late 1930s: Esteban Francés, Roberto Matta, Victor Brauner, Wolfgang Paalen, Oscar Dominguez, Kurt Seligmann, and Gordon Onslow Ford. The new course that surrealism was undertaking was further consolidated in London in June 1940, when the work of these artists promoted by Breton was exhibited at the Zwemmer Gallery in a show arranged by Onslow Ford and the two British surrealist group leaders, E. L. T. Mesens and

10 André Breton, “Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste,” *Minotaure*, no. 12–13 (May 1939), p. 17: “De la part des jeunes peintres d’aujourd’hui, le fait d’opter on ne peut plus nettement pour l’automatisme n’exclut pas, bien au contraire, la prise en considération des problèmes les plus ambitieux. Si, lorsqu’ils s’aventurent dans le domaine scientifique, la précision de leur langage est assez sujette à caution, on ne peut nier que leur aspiration commune, fondamentale, soit de passer outre à l’univers à trois dimensions.” English translation: André Breton, “The Most Recent Tendencies in Surrealist Painting,” in *Surrealism and Painting* (Boston: MFA Publications, 1965/2002), p. 148.

Roland Penrose (fig. 69).¹¹ The exhibition, significantly titled “Surrealism Today,” was accompanied by the publication of the latest issue of the British surrealist journal *London Bulletin*, which ideologically and visually reinforced the new program focused on pure automatism.¹²

When Onslow Ford decided to leave England in 1940 he was therefore one of the most active members of the surrealist group, personally close to André Breton and his ideological stance.¹³ The British painter wished to continue his artistic research, but the war had reached London and artists were no longer able to pursue their activities. Matta, after arriving in New York in 1939, remained in contact with Onslow Ford through letters, and in March 1940, he wrote, in somewhat broken English, “America could be the ground where you could seed your ideas, but you don’t get any psychological help in finding them. The solution will come from Europe, and from a desperated [*sic*] Europe.”¹⁴ To help Onslow Ford secure a visa, Matta informed his friend that he had found an opportunity for him to hold a series of art lectures and exhibitions in the United States. The tour would be organized by Kay Sage with the aim of disseminating and promoting European culture in America, funded by government sponsorship. Thus it was arranged that Onslow Ford would serve as a “cultural emissary” for the Society of European Culture, taking on a somewhat public role as a representative of art made in Europe.¹⁵ The challenge was to find a location in which to hold the sponsored events.

11 See London Gallery, ed., *Surrealism Today*, exh. cat. (London: Zwemmer Gallery, 1940). The exhibition “Surrealism Today” was organized by E. L. T. Mesens, Roland Penrose, and Onslow Ford in order to reshape the dissolved British surrealist group. The show opened with a talk by Onslow Ford and took place during a time of instability in the British group. “Surrealism Today” displayed the work of old and new British surrealist members, as well as continental affiliates: Eileen Agar, John Banting, John Buckland-Wright, Edward Burra, S. W. Hayter, Len Lye, F. E. McWilliam, Conroy Maddox, John Melville, Henry Moore, Roland Penrose, Edith Rimmington, A. C. Sewter, E. L. T. Mesens, Gordon Onslow Ford, Elisabeth Onslow Ford, Victor Brauner, Roberto Matta, Esteban Francés, Rita Kernn-Larsen, Lee Miller, Paul Nash, Briery Russell, Yves Tanguy, John Tunnard, and Werner. See Caputo, *Collezionismo e mercato* (note 4), pp. 210–214.

12 See Gordon Onslow Ford, “The Painter Looks Within Himself,” *London Bulletin*, 18–20 (1940), pp. 30–31.

13 An important period of discussion on the new ideology of the surrealist group took place during the summer of 1939, when Breton, his wife Jacqueline, and their daughter Aube, together with Yves Tanguy, Esteban Francés, Gordon Onslow Ford, Roberto Matta, and his wife Anne spent some weeks in France in Chemillieu, at a residence Onslow Ford leased for himself and his friends. The group received numerous visits from other friends, including Gertrude Stein, Alice Toklas, Thornton Wilder, Kay Sage, Pierre Mabile, Marcel Jean, and Ithell Colquhoun. This time spent in Chemillieu was extremely productive, and according to Martica Sawin it was in Chemillieu that the surrealists shaped their new poetic of “absolute automatism.” See Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile* (note 7), p. 57.

14 Letter from Roberto Matta to Gordon Onslow Ford, March 12, 1940, The Lucid Art Foundation, Inverness, California (hereafter cited as Lucid Art Foundation). [Grammatical errors in Matta’s letters have been silently corrected, where appropriate.]

15 Letter from Matta to Onslow Ford, October 17, 1939, Lucid Art Foundation.

The idea to involve the New School for Social Research came from Matta when, in 1940, he was looking for a place to organize an exhibition of Onslow Ford's paintings. He wrote to Onslow Ford:

“This morning I took your pictures to the “New School for Social Research,” a place directed by a mural painter who is very interested in surrealism (is thinking of giving a big show like Paris 1938 in the fall). Seligmann currently has a show there, and we fixed a date for your exhibition, May the 7th.”¹⁶

The mural painter Matta referred to was the Ecuadorian artist Camilo Egas, who at the time headed the school's art department¹⁷ and mounted solo exhibitions in 1940 of work by surrealists exiled in New York: Kurt Seligmann in March,¹⁸ Onslow Ford in May,¹⁹ and Stanley William Hayter in October.²⁰ Given the interest the school showed in surrealism, it was most probably following Onslow Ford's solo show that Egas made the decision to arrange the series of surrealist exhibitions and lectures that would take place just few months later.

The New School for Social Research

Due to its progressive and politicized cultural environment, the New School for Social Research was no doubt seen by the surrealists as the most suitable venue to host a surrealist “action” that would enable them to share their ideology and artistic activities in the United States.

The school was founded in 1918 at “a time of great confusion of economic, social, and political ideas”²¹ by a group of dissident academics who had left Columbia University and become associated with the journal the *New Republic*.²² Its two principle founders were Charles A. Beard and James Harvey Robinson,²³ who, after resigning from Columbia, were looking for an environment that combined teaching and the

¹⁶ Matta to Onslow Ford, April 2, 1940, Lucid Art Foundation.

¹⁷ *New School for Social Research Bulletin*, no. 13 (1939), unpaginated.

¹⁸ *Exhibition of Drawings and Etchings by Kurt Seligmann*, exh. cat. (New York: New School for Social Research, 1940).

¹⁹ See *Paintings by Onslow Ford*, exh. cat., New York, New School for Social Research (London: unknown publisher, 1940).

²⁰ *New School for Social Research Bulletin*, no. 3 (1940), unpaginated.

²¹ *New School for Social Research Curriculum* (Spring 1941), p. 7.

²² The *New Republic* was a journal founded in 1915 by Herbert Croly with financial backing from philanthropists Dorothy and Willard Straight.

²³ For historical information on the New School for Social Research, see Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott, *New School. A History of the New School for Social Research* (New York: Free Press, 1986); and Clauss-Dieter Krhon, *Intellectuals in Exile. Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

professional rewards of their previous academic life with the freedom and moral commitment of the *New Republic* group.²⁴ With the help of Herbert Croly and Dorothy Straight, two prominent members of the *New Republic*'s editorial board, they were able to realize their project to create a new institution of adult learning whose main purpose was to participate in the reordering of American society. They chose the term “New School” to express their belief that it would provide an alternative to conventional American university education.²⁵ It was envisaged as a self-governing community of scholars in which faculty and adult students would work together in a common enterprise.

In 1922 Beard and Robinson left the school board and Alvin Johnson took the helm, endeavoring to maintain the founders' ideals. In 1933 he created the University in Exile—an affiliated college that provided a base for a generation of European scholars exiled from totalitarian regimes, with a graduate faculty in the social sciences largely composed of German scholars fleeing the Nazis. It later became the host organization for the *École Libre des Hautes Études*, which was an offshoot of the Sorbonne and was staffed by French university professors in exile, including Henri Focillon, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Maritain, Roman Jakobson, and Jean Benoît-Lévy.²⁶ European thinking and methodologies had a deep impact on the school's educational programs, and consequently on the instruction received by its students.

The New School for Social Research was founded on the conviction that modern civilization could be maintained and advanced only through “an increasingly intensive cultivation of the arts and sciences, particularly the social sciences, by not only professional scholars but also by the intelligent citizen.”²⁷ Indeed, the school expected to generate a body of critical social science research that would contribute to the reconstruction of Western society along more egalitarian and scientific lines. Its methodology was based on the ideas summed up in its cofounder James Harvey Robinson's books *The New History* (1912) and *The Mind in the Making* (1921), which formed the ideological foundation of the school.²⁸ In both books, Robinson called for the adoption of the methods of natural scientists, characterized by a critical gaze toward sources, with the purpose of going beyond description in order to analyze the explanations for events. The school's founders, in their hope for fundamental social transformation, believed that social scientists, libe-

24 Beard and Robinson found at the *New Republic* the kind of intellectual discourse that at Columbia had made them feel stigmatized as political agitators.

25 Rutkoff and Scott, *New School* (note 23), pp. 10–11.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–171.

27 *New School Curriculum* (note 21), p. 7.

28 Rutkoff and Scott, *New School* (note 23), pp. 7–9.

rated from tradition, religion, and other interests, could use scientific methods to create a new world free from war, injustice, and ignorance.²⁹ The political challenge that the New School hoped to meet was to free social research from universities—which in the United States were almost exclusively controlled by business-oriented boards that penalized scholars who criticized existing social structures—and to organize research around social problems and instigate investigations into processes of true social reconstruction.

In keeping with such utopian enthusiasm, the New School was created for everyone—with the exception of advocates of what its founders considered as models of regression—and education was seen as the key to achieving their ambitions. The methodological approach in this field was substantially influenced by the ideas of John Dewey and Thorstein Veblen, both closely involved with the school from the outset and personal friends of Beard and Robinson. Dewey's theories on education, articulated in his books *School and Society* (1889) and *Democracy and Education* (1916), argued that “knowledge” was the instrument that would enable humans to understand their environment, and education therefore represented a means of developing “critical minds” in students.³⁰ But Dewey's philosophy of education was not his only contribution to Beard's and Robinson's school, as his views on art were also of fundamental importance. Dewey laid down his theory of art in his book *Art as Experience* (1934), which was included in the school's curriculum in the 1930s in courses such as “Literature and Art in the Modern World” taught by writer and critic Edgar Johnson.³¹ Dewey's “Art as Experience” theory was also taken up by Ralph Pearson, who was appointed in 1930 to supervise the school's art department. Continuing Dewey's ideas, Pearson published a book in 1941 titled *The New Art Education*, in which he stated that a teacher's primary responsibility was to help students to realize that as artists they “must infuse their works with an artistic vision,” one that was not restricted to the art elite, since all people were capable of artistic expression.³² Pearson believed that it was through education that art could become the turning point in modern society, declaring, “[T]hese activities of spirit, mind, and heart tap the deepest and richest veins of human experience. ... They allow men to achieve the civilized life.”³³

Under Alvin Johnson's leadership, supported by Pearson, the New School for Social Research tried to bring education out of the strict

29 Ibid.

30 Rutkoff and Scott, *New School* (note 23), pp. 60–63.

31 New School for Social Research Curriculum (Spring 1937), p. 33.

32 Ralph Pearson, *The New Art Education* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), p. 17.

33 Ibid.



70 Peter A. Juley & Son, *Artist's Rendering of Exterior of 66 West 12th Street Building of The New School*, 1930. New York, The New School Archives and Special Collections.

circle of intellectuals gravitating around universities. For a modest fee, anyone in New York could attend lectures by distinguished speakers, such as legal experts, poets, art patrons, art historians, painters, writers, composers, dancers, philosophers, anthropologists, and psychiatrists. Thus, the school not only gathered together New York intellectuals, but also brought them in contact with students and the general public. To these ends, the arts were as instrumental as the social sciences in bringing about change, and for this reason the director felt the necessity to expand the art department so that adults could appreciate new art forms, and even become artists themselves. In accordance with this goal, Johnson decided to move the school to a newly constructed modernist building designed by the exiled Austrian architect Joseph Urban (fig. 70).

On January 2, 1931, the school officially opened its doors in its new location at 66 West Twelfth Street.³⁴ The shift from social science to art was reflected in the modernist building itself, as well as in the furniture Urban had designed for it and the inclusion of murals inside the building painted by José Clemente Orozco and Hart Benton.³⁵ To celebrate the building's opening, the school sponsored two exhibitions—one of contemporary domestic furniture curated by Edwin Park and an international show of modern paintings organized by the Société Anonyme under the direction of Katherine Dreier, which included works by European and American modernists such as Léger, Kandinsky, Klee, Man Ray, Mondrian, Ernst, and Weber.³⁶ This was the first time that paintings by surrealists were on display at the school, and these exhibitions paved the way for its future art programs that combined modernism, on one hand, and functionalism on the other.

In its approach to art, as in all its programs, the school's political predilections were clearly apparent.³⁷ Indeed, several exhibitions featured the work of painters belonging to the John Reed Club, a radical organization aligned to Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Communist Party.³⁸ Furthermore, in 1936, at Pearson's instigation, the school cosponsored the first American Artists' Congress: a united front organization of artists who opposed war, fascism, and reactionism.³⁹ In this politicized environment, teachers who joined the ranks of Pearson and Benton included the artist Camilo Egas, American photographer Berenice Abbott, painter Stuart Davis, Spanish sculptor José de Creeft, Lithuanian sculptor William Zorach, German painter Kurt Roesch, Japanese painter Yasuo Kuniyoshi, American sculptor Seymour Lipton, French painter Amédée Ozenfant, as well as art critics and historians such as Meyer Schapiro, who was undoubtedly a key figure in the introduction of surrealism to the school as he gave two seminars dedicated to the movement in January 1938.⁴⁰ Although Schapiro's interest in surrealism dates back to the mid-1930s, he only officially met Breton in June 1941, in New York, an encounter that the critic described as orchestrated by

34 Plans and photographs of the 66 West Twelfth Street building of the New School for Social Research are held in the New School Archives and Special Collections, New York.

35 *New School mural commission documentation*, New School Archives and Special Collections.

36 *New School for Social Research Bulletin* (1930–1940).

37 *Ibid.*

38 See V. Hagelstein Marquardt, "New Masses and John Reed Club Artists, 1929–1936: Evolution of Ideology, Subject Matter, and Style," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, vol. 12 (Spring, 1989), pp. 56–75.

39 The previous year, the New School for Social Research had sponsored the organizational meeting of the American Writers' Congress, the writers' equivalent of the Artists' Congress.

40 *New School for Social Research Bulletin*, no. 7 (1938).

their mutual friend Onslow Ford following his surrealism exhibitions and lectures:

“He [Breton] received me with a studied courtesy and graciousness. Gordon [Onslow Ford] was radiant with happiness in the presence of Breton, as if he were showing me his father of whom he was inordinately proud before the world, and he was also proud before Breton for having presented him to me. Breton discussed so many things that I can no longer remember the order of our conversations; we talked for three hours about painting, poetry, and psychology, and the personalities of some artists.”⁴¹

Surrealism entered the New School not only through seminars and courses, but, starting in 1940, through its exhibition program. The school’s interdisciplinary approach and interest in contemporary society and art made it an especially attractive institution for young artists. Hayter, for example, who relocated his printmaking studio Atelier 17 to the school in 1940,⁴² remembered his association with the institution as particularly fruitful owing to the presence on the faculty of Max Wertheimer, who lectured on the psychology of perception, and Ernst Kris, who taught a course titled “Problems in the Social Psychology of Art.”⁴³

Although it is not possible to confine the variety of artistic expression represented at the school during the 1930s to a single label, all the artists who taught there felt an affinity with the school’s approach and ideals. The New School for Social Research aimed above all to achieve human progress—according to the school’s definition of the term—and it is in this context that the series of exhibitions and lectures on surrealism held by Onslow Ford should be considered. Surrealism also sought to contribute to human progress, and, as Onslow Ford stressed in the title of his lectures, it was believed that this aim could be achieved only by bringing people back “into their human consciousness.”⁴⁴

41 Meyer Schapiro’s notes, 1934–1955, Meyer Schapiro Collection, New York, Columbia University, RBML, Box 340, Folder 27–28.

42 Stanley William Hayter founded Atelier 17 in 1927. Originally located in rue du Moulin Vert, Paris, the Atelier’s name was derived from its later location at 17, rue Campagne Première, where Hayter settled in the beginning of the 1930s. Hayter associated with the surrealist group in Paris, and many members of the group attended his Atelier, encouraged by Hayter’s insistence that printmaking was not necessarily a method of reproduction but, rather, a form of artistic creation. The artists involved in the Atelier often worked directly on printing plates and were constantly seeking new experiences and techniques. In 1939 Atelier 17 suspended its activities in Paris, and in 1940 moved to New York, where it became an important meeting place for both European and American artists. See Joann Moser, “The Impact of Stanley William Hayter on Postwar American Art,” *Archives of American Art Journal*, no. 18 (1978), pp. 2–11; and *Hayter et l’Atelier 17: quinze ans d’activité*, exh. cat. (Caen: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1981).

43 New School Curriculum (1941), p. 7.

44 *New School for Social Research Bulletin*, no. 6 (1941), unpaginated.

This epistemological approach to art and society was also emphasized in the school's curriculum program: “[A]rt, as all the other human fields (natural science, philosophy, literature, music, dance), is equally affected by the changing spirit of the times. ... [I]nfluences operated in these fields will play an important part in shaping the society of the future.”⁴⁵

“Surrealist Painting: An Adventure into Human Consciousness”—lectures and exhibitions

The 1934 *New School for Social Research Bulletin* read, “Art is no longer a thing apart, a serene escape from the turmoil. It asserts its rights to a share in the process of creating society.”⁴⁶ This humanistic affirmation of art as a form of rational inquiry and communication was shared by most of the artists who taught at the school in the late 1930s and the 1940s. Max Wertheimer’s course “The Psychology of Music and Art,” held in the 1930s, exemplifies this dual approach to artistic expression. In 1941, at the time when Onslow Ford held his lectures and exhibitions, the school also offered courses led by Erich Fromm titled “The Interpretation of Dreams” and “Society and Psychoanalysis,” both focused on Fromm’s recent theories of psychology that challenged Freud’s position by asserting that society, as well as culture, played a significant role in individual human development.⁴⁷ Onslow Ford’s introduction to his lectures shares common ground with the new theories taught by Fromm. The painter began his speech with an explanation of the meaning of dreams and their function in life and art:

“I believe that in order to lead a more exciting life it is necessary to know more about yourself. This self-investigation which I propose naturally turns to a study of your own dreams. ... While dreaming, you are reduced to the infinite resource of your own mind. ... Poets and painters that have listened to the voice of dreams have ... left in their works the feeling of nostalgia that is running through the collective unconscious.”⁴⁸

45 New School Curriculum (1941), p.7.

46 *New School for Social Research Bulletin* (1934), unpaginated.

47 Fromm’s first book on his recent theories was *Escape from Freedom*, published in New York by Farrar and Rinehart in 1941.

48 A transcription of Onslow Ford’s “Introduction” was published in Sawin and Bogzaran, *Gordon Onslow Ford* (note 2), here p. 56. As far as the lectures were concerned, since Onslow Ford had no experience in the field he preferred to write out in advance the commentary he would read out to accompany slides of surrealist paintings, which the photographer Francis Lee had prepared for him at the school.

The talk continued with an overview of artistic practice:

“During these lectures I am going to talk about and show the work of some of those painters who have had faith in their thoughts and sufficient courage to act on them. . . . They have closed the circuit between dream and waking state and established communication between the interior and exterior world, between the I and the not I. They have enlarged human consciousness.”⁴⁹

Surrealism’s interest in automatism and dreams was nonetheless discussed through the filter of Onslow Ford’s own theories of the inner world and external reality that he had recently explained in his *London Bulletin* article,⁵⁰ and which he had already introduced in *Minotaure*.⁵¹ However, Breton entirely approved of the lectures.⁵²

Onslow Ford’s artistic vision and methodology were demonstrated in New York through a selection of surrealist paintings and drawings mainly chosen from his own collection.⁵³ The meaning he assigned to this corpus, which was the core of the project he had in mind and sought to realize at the New School for Social Research was outlined in a letter he wrote to the gallerist Julien Levy soon after arriving in the United States:

“I hope to start a dream of analytical research, and to present to the public in simple language the philosophy of painters and poets. I feel it is most necessary to show the present word crisis as predicted on canvas and to propose a future world based on modern science. Looking forward to meeting you in the early autumn and to discuss the enormous projects in my mind.”⁵⁴

Significantly, Onslow Ford also highlighted the importance of “modern science” in the field of the humanities, and aimed to lay the foundations for an analytical investigation of the inner world (the unconscious) based on modern psychoanalytical methodology. His project was further

49 Ibid.

50 See Ford, *The Painter Looks Within Himself* (note 12), pp. 30–31.

51 “On peut constater que la matière n’est que l’ombre informe de la réalité” (“We can state that matter is just the formless shadow of reality,” English translation by the author), Gordon Onslow Ford, *Minotaure*, no. 12–13 (May 1939), unpaginated.

52 See letter from André Breton to Wolfgang Paalen, July 31, 1941, Lucid Art Foundation.

53 Onslow Ford’s art collection and his role in the context of surrealism in the 1940s are the subjects of my current postdoctoral research project, supported by the Leon Levy Fellowship Program at the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Collection and Art Reference Library, New York.

54 Letter from Onslow Ford to Julien Levy, July 1940, Julien Levy Gallery Records, 1857–1982, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

explained in a letter of October 1940 to the American critic and arts patron James Thrall Soby:

“I think that life’s major problems have been [called into] question in the creations of the last thirty years, and I feel that their message in the light of modern science should now be given to the public. I am trying to find a suitable place for a gallery of research where the most important creations of the century can be studied, and where the inquiry into the universe of the human mind can be continued. We hope later to publish a review and hold debates, lectures, and exhibitions, and so make a constructive contribution toward the formation of the new world.”⁵⁵

Onslow Ford’s undertaking consisted of setting up an art gallery space that would serve as a space of research, just as, nearly twenty years earlier, the surrealist group had tried to achieve in Paris with their “Bureau des recherches.”⁵⁶ He believed that approaching art through “modern science” could be a solution to one of the main concerns of the surrealists regarding methodologies for “knowing the self,” an issue that had already been highlighted by the British artist and psychiatrist Grace Pailthorpe, when, in 1938, she wrote in the *London Bulletin*, “[A]ll the sages of the past have advocated self-knowledge, but they have not shown us how to reach that ideal.”⁵⁷ In line with this goal, Onslow Ford wished to introduce New York audiences to automatism as a technical practice for achieving self-knowledge and, as a consequence, for changing art and society. Automatism, as a field of psychological study, was approached as a scientific method by Onslow Ford, who, like the school’s founders,⁵⁸ sincerely believed in the efficacy of scientific methodology when applied to social issues. In his talks, he analyzed the entire production of the surrealists as an automatic practice, even including the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, who never actually used this technique in his work—a point stressed by Robert Motherwell, who attended the lecture:

“As I remember, the lecture was a very good one, intelligent, clear, and filled with an enthusiasm that bordered on Onslow Ford’s sense of an ultimate revelation. He did demonstrate automatism on the blackboard, in a most unexpected way. ... Onslow Ford began with lines seemingly at random and very rapidly drawn. At a certain critical

55 Letter from Onslow Ford to James Thrall Soby, October 29, 1940, JTS, II.C.2.3, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

56 See Paule Thévenin, ed., *Bureau de recherches surréalistes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

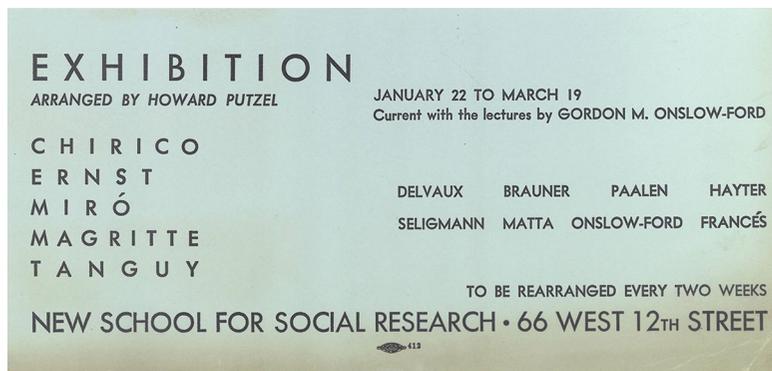
57 Grace W. Pailthorpe, “The Scientific Aspect of Surrealism,” *London Bulletin*, no. 7 (1939), p. 16.

58 Rutkoff and Scott, *New School* (note 23), pp. 72–73.

moment, with the addition of several more lines, to my stupefaction, there appeared a typical classical de Chirico before one’s eyes.”⁵⁹

Most of the surrealist artworks presented at the school had not previously been shown in America. The exhibitions, accompanied by the seminal lectures, were a unique event in the United States in which the frontiers explored by surrealism were made available for the first time in New York for the purpose of “educating” the public about surrealism, not only through visual art and theory, but also through practical experience, since the event was organized as a kind of workshop: “I can only very inadequately express my feelings in words,” Onslow Ford explained, “however, I hope these lectures will show the way for other people to study that marvelous place.”⁶⁰

The shows were mounted with the help of American gallerist and art dealer Howard Putzel, who had arrived in New York from Paris in the summer of 1940, after working from the 1930s with Pierre Matisse for his art business and collaborating with Peggy Guggenheim in Paris.⁶¹ Putzel arranged loans for the exhibitions from the Museum of Modern Art, the Pierre Matisse Gallery, and the Julien Levy Gallery. The six shows were planned as a single event,⁶² with only one invitation card printed: its design reflected the artistic hierarchy of the movement, with the names of first-generation surrealists appearing on the left, and on the right,



71 Announcement for the exhibition “Surrealist Painting: An Adventure into Human Consciousness,” New School for Social Research, New York, 1941. New York, The New School Archives and Special Collections.

- 59 Stephanie Terenzio, ed., *The Collected Writings of Robert Mothenwell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 290, quoted in Nicol M. Mocchi, “New York, 22 gennaio 1941: Giorgio de Chirico – the child of dreams. Un carteggio inedito tra Gordon Onslow Ford, Howard Putzel e James Thrall Soby,” *Archivio dell’Arte Metafisica: Studi Online* 3/5-6 (2016): pp. 28–46, here p. 31.
- 60 Letter from Onslow Ford to Thrall Soby, October 28, 1940, JTS II.C.2.3, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 61 Howard Putzel, who worked as an art dealer first in California in the 1930s and later in Paris between 1938 and 1939, became the secretary of Peggy Guggenheim’s gallery in New York in 1943.
- 62 Putzel referred to the shows as different phases of a single exhibition. See letter from Howard Putzel to James Thrall Soby, January 20, 1941, JTS, II.C.2.3, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.



72 Photographer unknown, installation view of the Giorgio de Chirico exhibition at the New School for Social Research, New York, January 1941. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

arranged horizontally in smaller characters, the new members Paul Delvaux, Victor Brauner, Wolfgang Paalen, Stanley Hayter, Kurt Seligmann, Roberto Matta, Gordon Onslow Ford, and Esteban Francés (fig. 71). The exhibitions were set up in the board director's office located on the third floor of the school. The school could not afford to spend money on the exhibition installation or catalogues, and it was probably for this reason that the paintings were displayed in a very simple manner, hung over fabric resembling the drapes used to cover Benton's murals (fig. 72). No illustrated catalogues were published, with only a printed list of the works exhibited provided for each show (fig. 73).

The first event was inaugurated on January 22, 1941, devoted to Giorgio de Chirico as a "Child of Dreams."⁶³ De Chirico's paintings, Onslow Ford explained to the audience, could "revolutionize modern art and, to a great extent, inspire the surrealist movement and the works of many other poets and painters."⁶⁴ The Max Ernst exhibition ope-

63 See Mocchi, *New York, 22 gennaio 1941* (note 59), pp. 28–46.

64 A transcription of Onslow Ford's lecture on Giorgio de Chirico was published in Sawin and Bogzaran, *Gordon Onslow Ford* (note 2), here p. 58. The talk on de Chirico that Onslow Ford held at the New School for Social Research was presented again in May 1, 1941, at the American

ned on February 5, titled "The Creative Forces of Evil," followed by a show of six paintings by Miró grouped under the heading "The Primitive in the Subhuman." Then came the Magritte show, "Poetry of the Object," on February 19, followed by Tanguy, presented under the title "The Internal Landscape."⁶⁵ However, the most significant exhibition and accompanying talk was the final one, "Adventures in Surrealist Painting During the Last Four Years." Hung for the March 5 lecture, the show presented the new generation of surrealist painters, mostly

NEW SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH 36 West 12th Street New York	
EXHIBITION January 22 to March 19, 1941 Third Floor Arranged by Howard Putzel	
CATALOGUE	
CHIRICO	
1. Nostalgia of the Infinite (1911)	Loaned by the Museum of Modern Art
2. Self-portrait (1913)	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
3. Apparition of the Horse (1913)	" " " " " "
4. Toys of a Prince (1914)	" " the Museum of Modern Art
5. Torment of the Feet (1914)	" " Mrs. Yves Tanguy
6. Toys of a Prince (1915)	" " Pierre Matisse Gallery
7. Sea (1915)	" " " " " "
8. Pellic (1916)	" " Julien Levy Gallery
9. The Regret (1916)	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
10. The Mathematicians (1917)	" " Museum of Modern Art
11. Eternal Farewell	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
ARP	
12. Mountain, Table, Anchors, Naval	" " Museum of Modern Art
13. Heads, Quadruped, Landscape	" " Virgil Thomson
DELVAUX	
14. Psychological Spaces	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
DELVAUX	
15. Water Nymphs	" " " " " "
DOMINGUEZ	
16. Decalomania	" " Museum of Modern Art
ERUSE	
17. Pottery in Women (1923)	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
18. Henry IV, the Lion of Belfort and the War Veteran	" " " " " "
FRANCÉS	
19. Psychological Landscape	" " " " " "
20. Mother Sarah	" " " " " "
HAYTER	
21. Eubrace	" " the artist
22. Introduction	" " " " " "
23. Composition	" " " " " "
MAGRITTE	
24. Portrait	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
MATTA	
25. Forêt Bestiale de l'Esprit, or Unfinished Forest	" " the artist
26. Secretists, the Seductive Women, Always Distracted	" " " " " "
MIRÓ	
27. Printing on Sandpaper	" " George L. K. Morris
28. Plan for a Painting	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford

-2-	
MOORE	Loaned by Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
29. Drawing	" " " " " "
ONSLAW-FORD	
30. Propaganda for Love	" " the artist
31. Dream Mountains	" " " " " "
PAALLEN	
32. Satanic Angels Fighting	" " Julien Levy Gallery
SELIGMANN	
33. The Insects	" " the artist
34. Immoveable Object and Irresistable Force	" " " " " "
TANGUY	
35. Out of the Blue (1936*)	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford
36. Second Thoughts	" " " " " "

73 Checklist for exhibitions held in conjunction with Gordon Onslow Ford's series of lectures titled "Surrealist Painting: An Adventure into Human Consciousness," New School for Social Research, New York, 1941. New York, The New School Archives and Special Collections.

made up of surrealist *exilés*. On display were a total of fifteen works by Victor Brauner, Paul Delvaux, Esteban Francés, William Stanley Hayter, Wolfgang Paalen, Kurt Seligmann, Oscar Dominguez, Roberto Matta, and Onslow Ford himself; all artists who had arrived in New York from

Scandinavian Center of New York in an evening lecture titled "Chirico City," arranged by the art director of the center, Gunvor Bull-Teilman, who had probably attended the talk at the New School in January.

65 *New School for Social Research Bulletin*, no. 6 (1941), unpaginated.

Europe between 1939 and 1940, with the exception of Delvaux, who had never been to the United States. In his last lecture, Onslow Ford differentiated between the aims of the older and younger members of the surrealist group by claiming that the new painters expressed the desires of the “collective unconscious” through new ways of looking at the world; they were able to do this because they had Freud and “the psychological adventures of the first part of surrealism in [their] blood.”⁶⁶ According to Onslow Ford, the young surrealists were beginning to nudge Freud aside to make way for Jung. The artist, he stated, “is expressing in forms and colors the sum total of the desires and impulses of the community. He is giving expression to the collective unconscious.”⁶⁷ Onslow Ford had begun his speech by stressing that the exhibition presented artists described by Breton as the new generation of surrealists,⁶⁸ although in the leader of the group’s own article he had not specified the influence of Carl Jung’s theory of a collective unconscious, to which Onslow Ford appears to have referred in his lectures.⁶⁹

Onslow Ford showed the audience artists who painted mysterious, hitherto unexplored regions of the human mind and established communication between the interior and exterior worlds, between the forms painted on the canvas and the inner depths of the artist. During the presentation of the painting *Invasion of the Night* by his friend Matta, he analyzed the canvas using a mix of cosmic, alchemical, and psychoanalytic imagery, evoking a collision of space and time that aimed to give primacy to subjectivity over objectivity.⁷⁰ In doing so, he tried to make the audience visualize the painter’s imagination, retracing the origin of Matta’s creative process to reconstruct the journey that resulted in the scene painted on the canvas. This could only be achieved by visualizing images: “This is but a glimpse of the world of Matta,” said Onslow Ford, “that marvelous world that is perhaps buried in each of us; once we can become aware of it, it can lead to a fuller life.”⁷¹ He constantly encouraged his listeners to look inside themselves at their internal landscape:

66 A section of the transcription of Onslow Ford’s lecture is published in Sawin and Bogzaran, *Gordon Onslow Ford* (note 2), here p. 71.

67 Ibid.

68 See Breton, “Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste,” (note 10).

69 During the 1940s the major essays by Carl Jung were translated into English, including the volume *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, written by Jung in association with Karl (Károly) Kerényi. The book contributed greatly to the spread of Jungian theory in the United States; however, the first English translation of *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious* dates back 1937, when it was published in a British medical journal. See *Journal of St. Bartholomew’s Hospital* XLIV (1936–37).

70 Quoted in Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile* (note 7), p. 162.

71 Ibid.

"Many of the pictures that I have shown you have been painted here in America and, I think you will agree, have taken you to places lurking deep in your mind, but of which we had not been conscious before and have opened a road that leads to the pulse of life."⁷²

Onslow Ford's presentation of abstract symbols as the product of the practice of automatism incited the young generation of artists living in the United States to further develop their own personal form of narrative expression, which they were already experimenting with at the time, also influenced by Hayter's Atelier 17. The talk concluded with a call to bring about an artistic revolution, and an expression of hope for change in the world: "I think I can speak for all my friends when I say we are completely confident in our work, and slowly but surely, with the collaboration of the young Americans we hope to make a vital contribution to the transformation of the world."⁷³ After the talk, the audience was invited to participate in the production of ad hoc automatic drawings, or *cadavres exquis*. The *New York Times* described the action in detail:

"The public will be invited to participate in the exhibition by executing composite drawings and composite poems. Pink and blue paper will be fastened to the walls (pink for drawings and blue for the poems). The participants will draw the form or forms occurring to them "in a split second after a few minutes of complete mental relaxation." These drawings will then be covered up with blank paper to the bottom edge and the next person will continue on the visible edge, and so on."⁷⁴

Thus, the educational purpose, in this case, was realized not through "knowledge" but through "experience." Although reports of the identities of the attendees at the lectures are imprecise, we can be certain of the presence of Alfred H. Barr Jr.,⁷⁵ Roberto Matta, William Baziotés, David Hare and his wife Susanna Wilson, Yves Tanguy, Kay Sage,

72 A transcription of Onslow Ford's lecture was published in Sawin and Bogzaran, *Gordon Onslow Ford* (note 2), here p. 71.

73 Quoted in Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile* (note 7), p. 166.

74 Harold Devree, "A Reviewer's Notebook: Brief Comment on Some of the Recently Opened Shows in the Galleries," *New York Times* (March 9, 1941), p. 10.

75 In April 1942, Alfred Barr wrote to Onslow Ford in Mexico asking if he could write down for him his interpretation of Max Ernst's *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* (*Deux Enfants sont menacés par un rossignol*) to store in the Museum of Modern Art files. Indeed, the work had belonged to the museum since 1937, when it was bought from its former owner Paul Éluard. Letter from Barr to Onslow Ford, April 14, 1942, AHB 2168.102, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

Nicolas Calas, Jimmy Ernst, and, as Onslow Ford confirmed later in an interview, Jackson Pollock and Arshile Gorky.⁷⁶ Other artists were also present, with Robert Motherwell, Gerome Kamrowski, and Peter Busa all responding to the workshop with various automatist gestures in their work.⁷⁷ Onslow Ford noted that the public was very impressed with surrealist automatism: “What happened to automatism in New York, for the painters there [was that] they took the technical side.”⁷⁸

In conclusion, Onslow Ford became an official spokesperson for surrealism in New York, and even if he would end up leaving the city within a year to relocate to Mexico, his surrealist exhibitions and lectures provided a strong impetus for a new generation of young artists belonging to the milieu of the New School for Social Research.⁷⁹ Crucially, two months after the opening of the surrealism show, he stated to Breton, “Experimental science is already lagging behind the poetic language of surrealism. In my preparation for the lectures, I learned a great deal that had been hidden beneath the dark surface of my own psychological landscape.”⁸⁰ The “scientific method” Onslow Ford adopted in New York defined science not as a body of “knowledge” but as a way through which artists could “experience” surrealist beliefs and practices and approach the inner world.

⁷⁶ See Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile* (note 7), pp. 166–167.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 167–170.

⁷⁸ Ted Lindeberg, *An Interview with Onslow Gordon Ford*, March 26, 1984, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

⁷⁹ See Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile* (note 7), pp. 150–193.

⁸⁰ Letter from Gordon Onslow Ford to André Breton, April 18, 1941, Fonds Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris. Translated from the French. (“Déjà la science expérimentale marche à côté de la poésie surréaliste. En préparant les conférences j’ai appris beaucoup de choses qui étaient cachées sous la surface noire de mon paysage psychique.”)