



74 Max Ernst, *Europe after the Rain II* (detail), 1942, oil on canvas, 54 × 146 cm. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.

“Press hostile or silent, public recalcitrant, zero sales”:
Max Ernst at the Valentine Gallery, Spring 1942

Julia Drost

At the legendary exhibition, “Artists in Exile” at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in March 1942, each of the artists showed only one picture. The spectacular concept of the gallerist also required that the work be a painting completed in exile. Max Ernst was therefore aware that only one emblematic work, and one with a large format, would catch the attention of critics and the public, and that it would likely lead to sales and the possibility of more exhibitions. The painting *Europe after the Rain II*, which Ernst started in Europe in 1940 and completed in New York in 1942, fulfilled both criteria (fig. 74).¹ This monumental canvas gives an apocalyptic vision of a destroyed civilization in which hybrid feathered creatures and monsters are the only survivors.

The title makes reference to an earlier version of the scene from 1933 (fig. 75), which depicts the European continent as if afflicted by a catastrophe in an entirely displaced geography. By reviving the subject matter and title while in exile in the United States, the artist to a certain extent confirmed the premonitory statement of this first painting.² The catastrophe did come.

Europe after the Rain II is a testimony to devastation and it touched American critics. Hardly a discussion took place in which the work was

1 Max Ernst himself asserted the direct link between work and exile. On this subject, he wrote in a letter to the new director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1946, “Europe after the Rain: started in my country home in southern France (Saint-Martin d’Ardèche) two months before the collapse of France, interrupted by an involuntary stay in French concentration camps (May–July 1940) and its aftereffects, continued late in 1940, and finished in New York, December 1941 and January 1942.” Archive held in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. Thanks to Oliver Tostmann for bringing this letter to my attention. See also Oliver Tostmann, “The Surrealists and their Monsters in a ‘Time of Distress,’” in Oliver Tostmann and Oliver Shell, eds., *Monsters & Myths. Surrealism and War in the 1930s and 1940s*, exh. cat. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; New York: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2018), pp. 19–45.

2 The painting’s first owner, Carola Giedion-Welcker in Zurich, who bought it in 1936, interpreted it as a “precognition.” See *Max Ernst*, Carola Giedion-Welcker, ed., exh. cat. (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz Museum; Zurich: Kunsthaus Zurich, 1962), p. 15.



74 Max Ernst, *Europe after the Rain II*, 1942, oil on canvas, 54 × 146 cm.
Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.



75 Max Ernst, *Europe after the Rain*, 1933, oil and plaster on wood, 101 × 149 cm.
Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe.

not addressed. *ARTnews* published the picture during the first month of the show under the heading “First Fruits of Exile: What Recent Émigré Artists Have Done in America”³ and the *New York Sun* described it as “one of the most triumphant manifestations of free spirit.”⁴ *Time*

3 Rosamund Frost, “First Fruits of Exile: What Recent Émigré Artists Have Done in America,” *ARTnews*, March 15, 1942, p. 32.

4 “Attractions in the Galleries,” *New York Sun*, March 6, 1942.



76 Max Ernst, *Napoleon in the Wilderness*, 1946, oil on canvas, 46 × 38 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

magazine wrote, “Most notable of last week’s surrealist shows was that of the 51-year-old, white-haired German-born Max Ernst, who joined the ism 18 years ago, and has since become its master technician and high priest. Surrealist Ernst depicted a rock-candy fairyland peopled with crawling monsters and dismembered nudes in feathery fur coats.”⁵

Max Ernst had therefore guessed correctly about the impact the work with the emblematic title would have. Chick Austin, director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, purchased it for his museum.⁶ Another of the artist’s paintings, *Napoleon in the Wilderness* (1941), was acquired the same year by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (fig. 76). Like *Europe after the Rain II*, this work is also a symbol of flight and war, and addresses the status of the artist in a strange land. Ernst stated that this was the first picture he had started in Europe

5 “Surrealists in Exile,” *Time*, no. 39 (April 20, 1942), p. 48ff.

6 Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), p. 203.

and finished in exile,⁷ explaining, “I had just come from Europe and dictators. The final painting is possibly an unconscious expression of my feelings at the time, for its central figure is not a triumphal Napoleon, but a Napoleon in the wilderness on St. Helena in exile and defeat.”⁸ In the December 1941 issue of *ARTnews*, the painting was reproduced in an article by Nicolas Calas on surrealism and German Romanticism; a few months later, in the spring of 1942, it was shown at New York’s Valentine Gallery in the first solo exhibition of the exiled artist.⁹ Under the title “Europe in America,” the Boston Institute of Modern Art ultimately brought the two works produced in exile together again for the duration of an exhibition in 1943.¹⁰

The response in the press and from museums described here jars with what Ernst recalled in his *Biographical Notes* about this period of his New York exile, especially the year of 1942: “Press hostile or silent, public recalcitrant, zero sales” was what he wrote.¹¹ It is curious that his participation in such important shows as “Art of This Century” and “First Papers of Surrealism,” both held in New York in 1942, is completely overlooked in his recollections.¹² While these two group exhibitions have been given due attention in scholarship, Max Ernst’s first solo exhibition after arriving in New York at the Valentine Gallery in the spring of 1942, which included *Napoleon in the Wilderness* along with thirty other paintings, has, to date, been ignored. The artist himself only fleetingly referred to it in his *Biographical Notes* as an “exhibition in New York” and a “*four complet*” (complete flop).¹³

However, in his notes he made particular mention of the “Max Ernst” special edition that *View* magazine dedicated to him in spring 1942—admittedly without explaining that it doubled as a catalogue for the Valentine Gallery show. For this reason, Ernst’s biographers have for decades treated the exhibition and the special issue as separate entities—Patrick Waldberg does not acknowledge the exhibition at all, and, for John Russell, the show was “a total failure, at least as sales were

7 Martin Schieder, “Transplanted Talent. Max Ernst in the Wilderness,” in Burçu Dogramaci and Elizabeth Otto, eds., *Passagen des Exils, Exile Research. An International Yearbook* (Munich: Text + Kritik, 2017), pp. 211–229, here p. 219.

8 Max Ernst, “Eleven Europeans in America,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, no. 13/4–5 (1946), pp. 16–18, here p. 16.

9 Nicolas Calas, “Incurable and Curable Romantics,” *ARTnews*, no. 1–14 (December 1941), pp. 26–28.

10 Philip C. Johnson, *Europe in America*, exhibition brochure (Boston: Institute of Modern Art, 1943), quoted in Schieder, “Transplanted Talent” (note 7), p. 225.

11 Max Ernst, “Notes biographiques,” in Werner Spies, *Max Ernst: vie et œuvre* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2007), p. 171. Translated from the French. (“Presse hostile ou silencieuse, public récalcitrant, vente nulle.”)

12 Two other shows in Chicago and New Orleans are only mentioned briefly.

13 Max Ernst, “Notes biographiques,” in Spies, *Max Ernst: vie et œuvre* (note 11), p. 171.

concerned, and the critical opinion was very divided,” while the special issue does not even gain a mention.¹⁴

Yet the interplay between the exhibition and the special issue of *View* is particularly meaningful as it reveals the networks that Max Ernst was able to draw upon during his American exile. An examination of the organization of this show can enrich our understanding of Ernst’s artistic and commercial success in New York by contributing important information about the artist’s marketing strategies and motivations, the role of Peggy Guggenheim, the solidarity between exiled artists, the involvement of American collectors and museums, and the launch of surrealism in the United States.

The Valentine Gallery

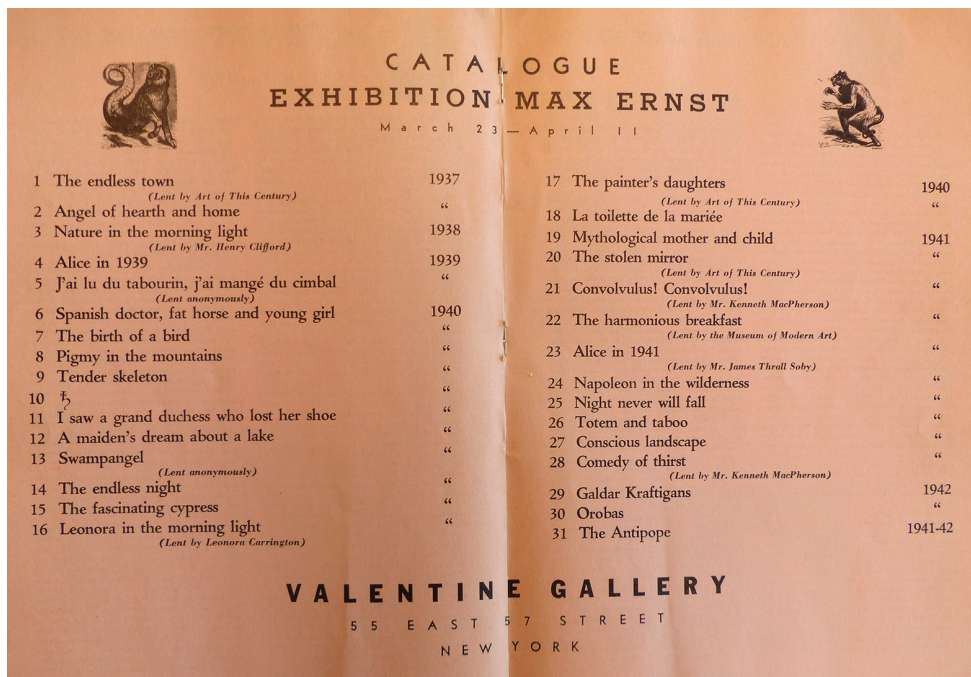
The “Max Ernst” exhibition at the Valentine Gallery, which ran from March 27 to April 11, 1942, presented a total of thirty-one paintings from 1937 to 1942; the decalcomania pictures from the latter two years dominated, representing the technique most used by Ernst at that time (fig. 77). But how did the exhibition at the Valentine Gallery come about, opening only a few days before the end of the group show “Artists in Exile” at the Pierre Matisse Gallery? Why and how was Max Ernst given the opportunity to present his work in a solo exhibition, only months before the opening of the group shows “Art of This Century” and “First Papers of Surrealism”? Why did he not exhibit in the gallery owned by Julien Levy, who had represented his work in the United States since 1932? And was the press really as hostile and dismissive as he maintained in his *Biographical Notes*? Furthermore, how did it come about that a special issue of *View* was published instead of a catalogue, and what significance did this have for the reception of surrealist art in the United States?

The archive of the Valentine Gallery, which was located on Fifty-Seventh Street, a short distance from the large well-established New York galleries, has unfortunately not been preserved.¹⁵ We can therefore only reconstruct the success of, and response to, the show with the help of contemporary witnesses’ reports and recollections. Jimmy Ernst stated that after his arrival in New York, his father Max complained about the fact that the city showed little interest in modern art.¹⁶ Ernst senior

14 Patrick Waldberg, *Max Ernst* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1958); John Russell, *Max Ernst. Life and Work* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1967), p. 131.

15 Thanks to Julia May Boddewyn (New York) for her interest and stimulating discussion in Paris, as well as for generously sharing her knowledge of the Valentine Gallery with me.

16 Jimmy Ernst, *Nicht gerade ein Stilleben. Erinnerungen an meinen Vater Max Ernst* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1985), p. 254.



77 List of works by Max Ernst shown at the Valentine Gallery, double page in *View*, special “Max Ernst” issue, series II, no. 1, April 1942.

lamented to his friend Joë Bousquet in a letter, “It is probably difficult for you and others to have any idea of the intellectual famine that exists even in an ‘intellectual center’ like New York.”¹⁷ Yet in 1930s New York, Valentine Dudensing, Pierre Matisse, Paul Rosenberg, and many others were already actively dealing in European and American paintings.¹⁸ Important American collectors like Albert C. Barnes, Walter P. Chrysler, Joseph Pulitzer, Henry Clifford, Solomon Guggenheim, and James Thrall Soby were among the Valentine Gallery’s regular clients.¹⁹ In search of works for her museum, Peggy Guggenheim also spent many hours in the gallery in the winter of 1941–42, where she purchased a Picasso in November 1941 and a Mondrian in January 1942.²⁰

17 Letter from Max Ernst to Joë Bousquet, Sedona, Arizona, March 9 [1946], private collection. Translated from the French. (“Il est probablement difficile pour vous autres de vous faire une idée de la famine intellectuelle existant même dans un ‘centre intellectuel’ comme N.Y.”)

18 Ernst, *Nicht gerade ein Stilleben* (note 16), p. 254.

19 See www.thevalentinegallery.org, accessed April 10, 2018; and <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/leonard-lauder-research-center/programs-and-resources/index-of-cubist-art-collectors/valentine>, accessed July 12, 2018.

20 Susan Davidson, “Focusing an Instinct. The Collection 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, here p. 69.

Dudensing had opened the gallery in association with Pierre Matisse in 1926, whom he had met while on a trip to Europe.²¹ Thanks to his family, Matisse had a wide network of connections to artists in Europe, while Dudensing, as the son of an American art dealer, was familiar with the American art scene and the business side of things. The gallery, originally called the F. Valentine Dudensing Gallery and, from 1927 onward, simply the Valentine Gallery, had specialized since the 1920s in modern European and American art, mounting exhibitions of work by Henri Matisse (1927), Giorgio de Chirico (1928), and Joan Miró (1930), as well as American artists such as Louis Eilshemius, John Kane, and C. S. Price. In 1930, Dudensing and Matisse went their separate ways, and Matisse opened his own gallery in the Fuller Building on Fifty-Seventh Street, the Pierre Matisse Gallery. Valentine continued exhibiting the works of outstanding artists from the European modern art movement in New York with his wife Bibi, “Dudensing’s only partner.”²² One of his first endeavors was an exhibition of “Rare African Sculptures” from the collection of Paul Guillaume, held from March 24 to April 12, 1930, featuring statues and masks from the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Sudan, and Gabon.²³ In fall 1932, he presented works by Wassily Kandinsky. From Dudensing’s correspondence with Kandinsky in the early 1930s we can conclude that when he split from Matisse in 1930, Dudensing had already built up an important network of contacts in the European avant-garde scene.²⁴ The 1932 Kandinsky show took place almost ten years after the artist’s first exhibition in the United States, which had been organized by Katherine Dreier and the Société Anonyme in 1923.²⁵ The letters Dudensing wrote to Kandinsky in the lead-up to the exhibition contain interesting details concerning the way he thought about his profession. He explains that he would “prefer to spend money on certain publicity I know to be more valuable for actual results” than

21 Sabine Rewald, “Pierre Matisse, Faithful Son, Fearless Dealer,” in *The American Matisse: The Dealer, His Artists, His Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 3–23, here p. 6.

22 Sallie Saunders, “Middle Men of Art,” *Vogue* New York, vol. 91, iss. 6 (March 15, 1938), pp. 102, 154–155, here p. 154. Thanks to Anne Helmreich for providing me with this article.

23 See Julia May Boddewyn, “The Paul Guillaume Collection of African Art Comes to the Valentine Gallery,” <http://www.thevalentinegallery.org/blog/>, accessed April 10, 2018. See also Julia May Boddewyn, “A Valentine to European Modernism,” *Modernism Magazine*, vol. 4/2 (Summer 2001), pp. 42–48.

24 Letters from Valentine Dudensing to Wassily Kandinsky concerning the exhibition. Centre Georges Pompidou-MNAM-CCI, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Fonds Kandinsky, Paris (hereafter cited as Fonds Kandinsky).

25 “Kandinsky,” Galleries of the Société Anonyme, March 23–May 4, 1923. The exhibition traveled to Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, in November 1923. See list of exhibitions in Vivian Endicott Barnett, *Kandinsky. Catalogue raisonné. Aquarelles, 1922–1944* (Paris: Éditions Scala/Société Kandinsky, 1994), p. 548.

on the catalogue, which he felt should be “simple but efficient.”²⁶ After the exhibition closed, he informed Kandinsky that his work did not sell well, but that “From the point of view of artistic success I never had a more satisfactory exhibition. I did not keep the number of the attendance but it was many thousands. Of 1000 catalogues for the gallery use, I have only four left of which I include three. People took away these simple catalogues as something precious, so much they were impressed by the exhibition.”²⁷

Indeed, the gallery was notable for showing the latest avant-garde and modern French paintings. *Vogue* described it in 1938 as “spectacular,” and Valentine Dudensing as “suave, energetic, and genial,” traveling relentlessly to seek out new promising artists for his gallery.²⁸ Dudensing staged the first solo exhibition of Mondrian’s work in 1942, and was especially known for his interest in Picasso.²⁹ It was Dudensing who first presented Picasso’s exiled *Guernica* to the American public in May 1939.³⁰ His gallery was selected by the American Artists’ Congress under their chairman Sidney Janis to host the “Guernica” exhibition, not only because of its proximity to MoMA but because Dudensing “perhaps more than anyone in the United States, apart from Alfred H. Barr ... and Chick Austin ... had worked to promote Picasso.”³¹ During the exhibition the gallery organized a symposium on “Guernica in Situ” chaired by Walter Pach, at which art critics and artists such as Peter Blume and Arshile Gorky expressed their views on this major political and artistic event.³² Dorothea Tanning recalled in her memoirs that she had chanced upon this symposium “in one of our favorite galleries ... where there was already a little crowd of nobodies like us sitting on the floor before a large Picasso painting.”³³

26 Letter from Dudensing to Kandinsky, October 3, 1932, Fonds Kandinsky.

27 Dudensing to Kandinsky, December 8, 1932, Fonds Kandinsky.

28 Saunders, “Middle Men of Art” (note 22), p. 102.

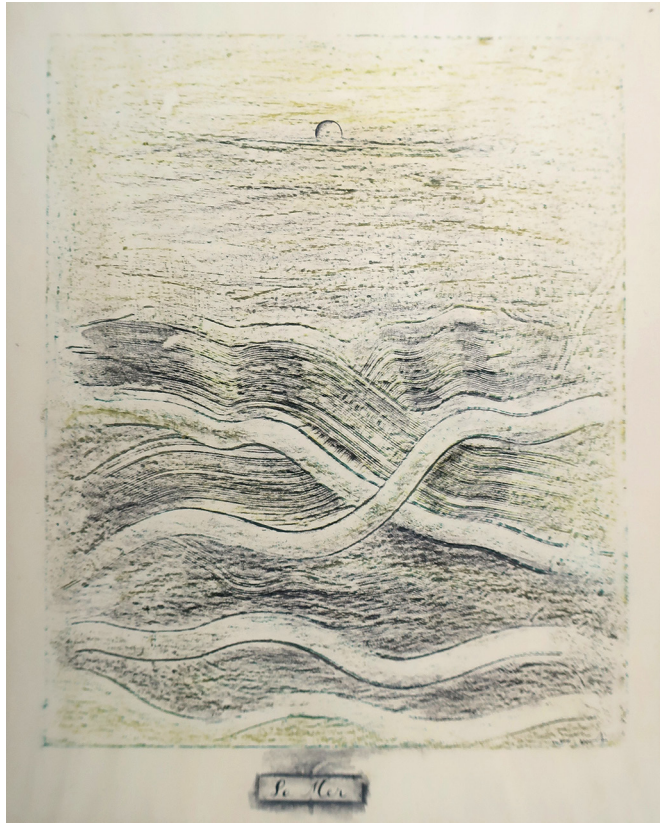
29 “Paintings and Drawings by Mondrian,” Valentine Gallery, New York, January 19–February 7, 1942.

30 An exhibition in Paris recently demonstrated the extent to which Valentine Dudensing has been forgotten, even though he seems to have been a competent and knowledgeable dealer for artists in their early careers, such as Mondrian and even Picasso. The “Guernica” exhibition at the Picasso Museum in Paris, which ran from March 27 to July 29, 2018, cited New York as the first city to have shown Picasso’s monumental paintings, but did not mention the Valentine Gallery.

31 Gijss van Hensbergen, *Guernica, the Biography of a Twentieth Century Icon* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 107–108.

32 A second symposium was organized at MoMA. See also the Peter Blume Papers, 1870–2001, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Box 3, Folder 6: Talk given by Peter Blume at the Valentine Gallery on Picasso’s *Guernica*, ca. 1948.

33 Dorothea Tanning, *Between Lives, An Artist and Her World* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2001), p. 47.



78 Max Ernst, *The Sea*, 1925, frottage. Private collection.

These examples emphasize the paramount importance and impact that the Valentine Gallery had for the art of the avant-garde in New York. It is hardly surprising, then, that the gallery showed an interest in surrealist artists, even though they were known to be represented by Julien Levy, and, to a lesser extent, Dudensing's former partner Pierre Matisse. It seems most likely that Dudensing suggested to Ernst that he hold a show in his gallery. The Valentine had exhibited drawings by Man Ray in 1936, and one auction catalogue proves that Dudensing's wife already owned a work by Ernst in the early 1930s, which she sold to Walter P. Chrysler in 1935–36 (fig. 78).³⁴ Chrysler then auctioned it in 1945, and as the irony of fate would have it, the Pierre Matisse Gallery bought the picture.³⁵ The Dudensing's clearly knew and appreciated Ernst, whose work they had probably also seen at one of the numerous solo and group exhibitions held at the Levy Gallery since 1932.

³⁴ Thanks to Julia May Boddewyn in New York for sharing this information with me.

³⁵ Parke Bernet Auction, New York, no. 6, March 22, 1945.

Max Ernst, Peggy Guggenheim, and the New York dealers

When he arrived in New York, Max Ernst was anything but an unknown artist. His collaboration with Levy, and especially his participation in the exhibition “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” at the Museum of Modern Art in the winter of 1936–37, in which he was the most-represented artist with forty-seven works displayed, had garnered a great deal of attention in the press. Of all the artists in the MoMA show, his works, along with those of Salvador Dalí, seem to be the ones most reproduced in newspapers and art magazines. His work was also exhibited in Levy’s show “A Decade of Painting, 1929–1939,” which the *New Yorker* described as just as ambitious in terms of surrealism as the large MoMA exhibition. In this review, Ernst was given special emphasis: “[T]here are times when I almost think that surrealism might have begun and ended with Max Ernst, and been the better for it.”³⁶

When Ernst came to the United States as a refugee in 1941, he was able to build on this network, and it grew considerably thanks to his liaison with the wealthy heiress Peggy Guggenheim. Guggenheim self-confidently claimed to be the artist’s sole representative in New York. In July 1941, immediately after Ernst’s arrival, she told Levy that she would now be representing the works of her future husband as his dealer, in her own gallery.³⁷ Levy fought to maintain his cooperation with Ernst, as he recorded in his memoirs: “I intended to talk the business over with him. If not his honor, then at least my reputation was in the balance.”³⁸ But Ernst obviously interrupted their collaboration. A little later that year, Levy temporarily moved to the West Coast with a “traveling gallery.” There, according to his own account, he organized exhibitions in San Francisco and Hollywood that were “pretty unsuccessful.”³⁹

During that time, seeking more harmonious relations, Ernst attempted to cater to both networks and work with both dealers. We know this from a letter he wrote to his friend Roland Penrose, whom he asked in November 1941 to lend works for two different projects: “I wanted to ask you if, for an upcoming show I’m supposed to do in Peggy Guggenheim’s museum, you could lend me some pictures ...

36 “The Sagging Surrealists,” *New Yorker*, February 14, 1940, p. 57.

37 Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1977), p. 254.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 254–255.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 255. See also Ingrid Schaffner, “Alchemy of the Gallery,” in Ingrid Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs, eds., *Julien Levy. Portrait of an Art Gallery* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 20–59, here p. 42f.

and, also, if you could lend me some recent pictures for a solo show I'm doing at Julien Levy's in April 1942."⁴⁰

But neither the show with Peggy Guggenheim nor the one with Levy finally took place. "Art of This Century," as we know, was to open in November 1942 and Guggenheim arranged a collaboration with Dudensing for the period in between. Guggenheim denied responsibility for Ernst's new affiliation, and asked Jimmy Ernst, "Would you please tell Julien Levy to stop blaming me for the fact that Max has changed over from his gallery to Valentine Dudensing?"⁴¹ However, she obviously played a major role in the falling-out between Levy and Ernst, indeed causing them to part ways, as she recounted in her memoirs:

"After Julien Levy came back from California he took a small gallery on Fifty-Seventh Street. He had not been very successful in the west. We were annoyed with him because he had sold one of Max's paintings much too cheaply. Max did not want to exhibit in his gallery in New York as it was too small, so he decided to show with Dudensing's instead. This was my idea; I had talked Max into accepting Dudensing's offer."⁴²

Guggenheim also confided in a letter to her friend, the writer Emily Coleman, that she wanted to make Max a big success, which was not possible with Julien Levy:

"Max is having a great success. I have fixed up his affairs for him and found him a good gallery to show his paintings. They were crazy to have him. So I made him leave Julien Levy who is no longer any good. He will have a show in March, which will go to Chicago afterwards. Now he is showing in St Louis. He sold a lot of paintings too and the Modern Museum bought one [*Napoleon in the Wilderness*, 1941]."⁴³

In sum, after arriving in the United States, Max Ernst was under the influence of his patron and lover, and this gave rise to conflicts with his

40 Letter from Max Ernst to Roland Penrose, quoted in Werner Spies, ed., *Max Ernst. Life and Work* (Cologne: Dumont, 2005), p. 170. Translated from the French. ("Je voulais te demander si, pour une prochaine exposition que je dois faire dans le musée de Peggy Guggenheim, tu veux me prêter des tableaux [...] et si d'autre part tu veux me prêter quelques tableaux récents pour une exposition particulière que j'aurai chez Julien Levy en avril 1942")

41 Ernst, *Nicht gerade ein Stillleben* (note 16), p. 371.

42 Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions of an Art Addict* (London: André Deutsch, 1987), p. 260.

43 Letter from Peggy Guggenheim to Emily Coleman, January 19, 1942, Emily Holmes Coleman Papers, quoted in Davidson, "Focusing an Instinct" (note 20), p. 87.



79 Poster for the "Max Ernst Surrealist Exhibition," 1936, New York, Julien Levy Gallery.

existing networks. Added to this was his desire—a legitimate wish for any artist—to exhibit and sell his works successfully. The correspondence between Ernst and Levy shows us that relations had not always been easy between the artist and his dealer. Ernst regularly complained that Levy had not consulted him enough, and that he had not promoted his work efficiently enough.

In the fall of 1936, Levy planned a two-person show of work by Max Ernst and Leonor Fini to take place in the run-up to MoMA's "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." In Paris at the time, Ernst wrote to Levy to express his annoyance at not being given a solo show, adding, "I would also have preferred that my show open after Barr's exhibition."⁴⁴ It was clearly important to him to have the exhibition *alone* and *not*

44 French text of the quotation cited: "Je préférerais aussi que mon exposition ouvre après l'ouverture de l'exposition de Barr." Excerpted from "Je dois vous avouer une chose: j'étais plutôt étonné que vous avez décidé, sans me demander mon avis, de faire mon exposition en même temps que celle de Leonor Fini. ... [J]e crois avoir de sérieuses raisons pour vous demander de changer ce projet. ... [P]our le succès extérieur, je crois inopportun un pareil arrangement; et un peu injuste aussi qu'on ne m'accorde pas assez d'importance pour faire une exposition tout seul." Letter from Max Ernst to Julien Levy, Paris, October 23 [1936?], Julien Levy Gallery Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

before the MoMA event. Understandably, Ernst thought that after the MoMA show they would be able to achieve better sales.⁴⁵ In his letter, he explains that a special issue of the journal *Cahiers d'art* would also be released following the MoMA show, making it an excellent addition to the MoMA catalogue. These letters reveal how Ernst endeavored to strategically position himself. Far from placing his trust in the expertise and experience of a dealer, he had his own ideas about marketing his works. But Levy did not give up and his show did indeed take place prior to the MoMA event. However, the two artists were presented in separate rooms, with individual posters produced for each artist (fig. 79).⁴⁶ In addition, Levy issued a press release in which he emphasized that the two artists would be participating in the upcoming MoMA show.⁴⁷ Interestingly, the New York press reproduced the phrasing in Levy's press release, celebrating Max Ernst as "one of the leaders,"⁴⁸ "the well-known modernist,"⁴⁹ and "one of the pioneers of surrealism,"⁵⁰ while the younger Leonor Fini was introduced as "the newcomer,"⁵¹ or "one of his younger followers."⁵² Possibly as compensation for not succumbing to the artist's wish to exhibit alone, a few weeks later Levy organized a solo exhibition for Ernst at the Gimbel Galleries in Philadelphia, in January to February, 1937.⁵³ This time, the show coincided with "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," which, under slightly different names, toured the country after its launch in New York, with its first stop in Philadelphia.⁵⁴

Guggenheim's rivalries and her fight to gain a foothold and cement her position in the New York scene also form the background against which Ernst's exhibition at the Valentine Gallery took place, opening at the end of March 1942. Guggenheim's manipulative attempts are presumably also the reason why the show is downplayed as a peripheral event in Ernst's *Biographical Notes*. The couple subsequently split up, and

45 *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

46 *New York Times*, November 18, 1936, p. 22.

47 Max Ernst and Leonor Fini, press release from the Julien Levy Gallery, Julien Levy Records, Archives of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Thanks to Anne Helmreich for sharing this information with me.

48 Margaret Breuning, "Current exhibitions," *Parnassus*, 8, no. 7 (December 1936), pp. 26–32, p. 31.

49 *New York Sun*, November 26, 1936.

50 "Two Surrealists," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 22, 1936.

51 *New York Sun*, November 26, 1936.

52 "Two Surrealists," *New York Herald Tribune* (note 50).

53 The solo exhibition took place under the title "Max Ernst. Surrealist Exhibition," courtesy of the Julien Levy Gallery, from January 25 to February 13, 1937, in the Gimbel Galleries in Philadelphia.

54 The Philadelphia show was called "Surrealism. Art of the Fantastic and the Marvelous," Pennsylvania Museum of Art, January 30–March 1, 1937.

Levy exhibited Ernst's drawings in May 1943, followed by another show in 1944. Levy summed up the situation in his autobiography: "After he left Peggy Guggenheim, Max was soon back with my gallery, to stay until I closed in 1948."⁵⁵

An arresting display of surrealism

Unfortunately, there are no visual records or descriptions of how Ernst's works were hung at the Valentine Gallery, but the *New York Herald Tribune* praised what its critic saw as "an arresting display of surrealism."⁵⁶ The *New Yorker* printed a biographical piece about the émigré artist,⁵⁷ stating that the exhibition of works by the "best modern technician" was an ideal means for bringing about a reconciliation between the critics and surrealism.⁵⁸ Like the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times* recommended the show, but not without aiming caustic arrows at surrealism: "Msillaerrus is nothing alarmingly or taxingly new. It is just Surrealism spelled backward. One can try anything once in an effort to squeeze yet a drop of novelty from a desiccated sponge."⁵⁹ The reviewer at the *Times* also stressed Ernst's closeness to abstraction, something that the *Sun*, on the other hand, sharply criticized.⁶⁰ At the same time, critics expressed concern that the Metropolitan Museum of Art might buy one of the works with a leaning toward the abstract. And if they did, they wrote, then hopefully not *The Antipope*, but preferably "the more sober picture entitled *The Endless Town* or that other one called *Swampangel*."⁶¹ As we know, such a purchase did not eventuate. *ARTnews* ultimately gave Max Ernst the title of "King of the Surrealists" who had laid claim to his position through his solo exhibition.⁶² In one of the few reviews to do so, *ARTnews* also drew attention to the special issue on Max Ernst published by *View* magazine.

⁵⁵ Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 37), p. 265.

⁵⁶ "Ernst's Surrealism," *New York World Telegram*, March 28, 1942.

⁵⁷ "Expatriate," *New Yorker*, April 4, 1942, p. 7.

⁵⁸ "Max Ernst," *New York Herald Tribune*, March 29, 1942.

⁵⁹ Edward Alden Jewell, "Max Ernst Gives Surrealism Show; Most of Paintings on View Are Said to Be Far Removed From Clinical Aspect," *New York Times*, March 28, 1942, p. 15.

⁶⁰ *New York Sun*, March 27, 1942.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Doris Brian, "The Passing Shows: Max Not in Dead Ernst," *ARTnews*, April 1–14, 1942, p. 25.

View: The special Max Ernst issue

The Valentine Gallery clearly contributed to financing the special issue of the avant-garde magazine,⁶³ with the remaining costs covered by several pages of advertisements for New York galleries—Nierendorf, Julien Levy, Bignou, Pierre Matisse, Buchholz, and others. The *New York Sun* humorously recommended reading the issue as a kind of instruction booklet for understanding the exhibition: “If you have any qualms, doubts, misgivings, fears or ignorances in regard to the Max Ernst exhibition in the Valentine Galleries, consult the present issue of the magazine and all your inhibitions—or whatever it is you have—will be eased off.”⁶⁴

In fact, this issue of the magazine was a comprehensive monographic presentation of the artist, the first to be published in English, edited by Charles Henri Ford expressly for the exhibition, which the gallery handed out for 35 cents, or even free of charge.⁶⁵ *View* magazine, which published thirty-six issues between 1940 and 1947, was one of the first forums in New York to discover the European surrealists.⁶⁶ Ford’s coeditor Parker Tyler defined *View* as a journal that aimed to combine the dissemination of artistic avant-gardes and luxurious quality, following the lead of the European role models *Minotaure* and *Verve*.⁶⁷

Shortly after his arrival in New York, André Breton did an interview for the magazine with the Greek surrealist Nicolas Calas—the only one during his entire period of exile—and contributed to the design of one issue, which he later described as “a little surrealist issue of *View*.”⁶⁸ Breton and Ford had already crossed paths in Europe when Ford was working in London as the American editor of the *London Gallery Bulletin*.⁶⁹ Once in New York, Breton had pinned his hopes on Ford to bring about a realignment of *View* as the magazine representing surrealism,

63 Ibid.

64 “A Brave New World,” *New York Sun*, March 27, 1942.

65 Max Ernst Number, *View*, series II, no. 1 (April 1942).

66 Breton worked on issue no. 7/8 of the magazine, which was released before the special issue (see Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen. Surrealism and the American avant-garde, 1920–1950* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995), p. 191.

67 Catrina Neiman, “Introduction. View Magazine: Transatlantic Pact,” in Charles Henri Ford, ed., *View. Parade of the Avant-Garde. An Anthology of View Magazine (1940–1947)* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1991), pp. xi–xvi, here p. xii.

68 Gérard Roche, *Correspondance André Breton—Benjamin Péret, 1920–1959* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), p. 111. In a letter to Roland Penrose, Roche describes the issue as “le premier numéro surréaliste de *View*” (“the first surrealist issue of *View*”); Breton to Penrose, November 7, 1941, quoted in *André Breton*, Agnès de la Beaumelle, ed., exh. cat. (Paris: Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1991), p. 351.

69 Neiman, “Introduction” (note 67), pp. xi–xvi.

but his hopes were soon dashed.⁷⁰ Breton accused *View* of eclecticism, and decided to concentrate his energies on creating his own magazine, *Triple V*, or *VVV*, whose first issue was released in June 1942, edited by David Hare.⁷¹

The plans to bring out a special issue dedicated to Ernst therefore appear to coincide with the period in which *View* was pursuing the goal of affiliation with surrealism. The first issue in its second series, this special edition combined the theme of surrealism in Europe and America with a focus on Ernst, who was regarded as the first European surrealist to arrive in the United States and, unlike the banished Dalí, was also seen as closely linked to the movement of surrealism in exile associated with Breton. More lavishly illustrated than previous issues, it ended up taking the form of a retrospective publication, presenting the full creative spectrum of the artist's work.

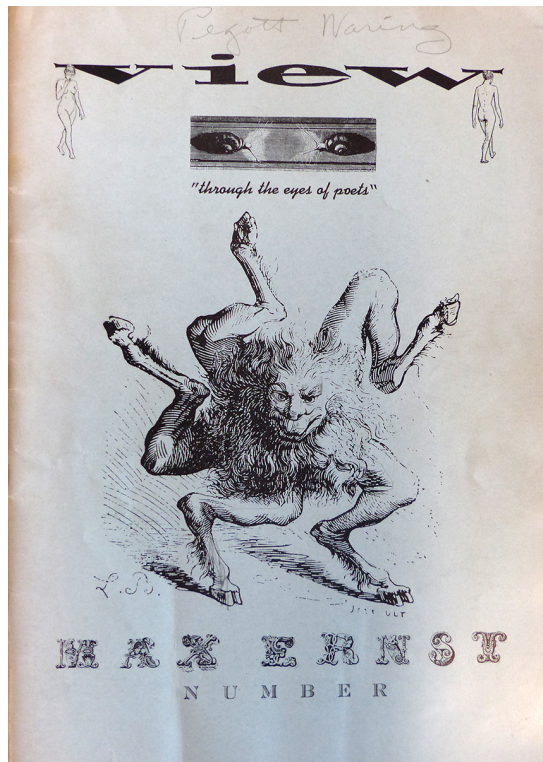
By subsidizing and distributing the monograph, the Valentine Gallery also boosted its own publicity. The Max Ernst edition was followed by a second issue with a similar concept, introducing two artists, Yves Tanguy and Pavel Tchelitchew, and also effectively served as the catalogue for their monographic exhibitions at the Pierre Matisse and Julien Levy galleries.⁷² The last two issues of the second series were the thematic booklets *Vertigo* (no. 3, October 1942) and *Americana Fantastica Issue* (no. 4, January 1943).

Ernst's special issue is particularly significant for the ways in which different perspectives from both sides of the Atlantic merge with one another. Space was given to both protagonists of surrealism in Europe and modern art specialists in the United States. Breton and Calas wrote programmatic texts about myths and/or magic in surrealism and concepts of femininity, and assigned Max Ernst a central role in the future direction of surrealism. The art critic Sidney Janis positioned *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* (*Deux Enfants sont menacés par un rossignol*, 1923) as an early prototypical surrealist work, and used this to make American readers aware of the influence of Freud, cubist collages, and de Chirico on the work of Max Ernst and surrealism. It is interesting

70 In a letter to Roland Penrose, Breton explicitly stressed the necessity for a magazine to hold the group together: "Depuis mon arrivée ici, il y a cinq mois, je n'ai cessé de réclamer la publication d'une revue qui nous exprime tous et je compte absolument qu'elle va se faire" ("Since my arrival here five months ago, I have repeatedly stated the need for the publication of a journal that expresses the views of all of us, and I have every intention of making this happen"). Breton to Penrose, November 7, 1941, quoted in Beaumelle, *André Breton* (note 68), pp. 350–351.

71 André Breton and Max Ernst presented themselves as editorial advisers, and Marcel Duchamp joined them a little later. The correspondence between Breton and Péret, published in 2017, contains numerous references to the creation of *VVV*.

72 See Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, Françoise le Roux, and Maïté Vienne, *Inventaire analytique de revues surréalistes ou apparentées. Le surréalisme autour du monde* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1994).



80 Cover of the special issue devoted to Max Ernst, *View*, series II, no. 1, April 1942.

that Julien Levy also contributed a poetic text to the issue. Back in 1936, Levy had signed the first monography on surrealism in English, fashioning himself not only as an art dealer, but also as a poet.⁷³ While Levy cannot be described as a member of the surrealist movement, he was nonetheless closely allied to it, a spiritual proximity that is also underlined in Dorothea Tanning's recollections.⁷⁴

Ernst also wrote an autobiographical text and designed the cover, as he had done for *Cahiers d'art* in 1937 (fig. 80). He chose the cover motif with great deliberation and care, as the occasion and timing of the publication were so important: like his *Fireside Angel*, the five-footed demon depicted practically jumps out at the onlooker, and, like the painting, this collage is also a commentary on the historical situation. The motif came from a new source the artist found in exile, the *Dictionnaire infernal* by Jacques Auguste Simon Collin de Plancy (1863), from which he also took two vignettes for his tribute featured in the magazine titled "Max

73 Julien Levy, *Surrealism* (New York: Black Sun Press, 1936).

74 Dorothea Tanning, "The Julien Levy I Knew," in Schaffner, "Alchemy of the Gallery" (note 39), p. 15.

Ernst's Favorite Poets and Painters," which is reminiscent of the idea of an overall filiation as proposed by Alfred Barr in 1936.⁷⁵ The mix of texts and authors in this issue leads one to assume that Ernst was actively involved in its conceptualization.

While researchers have frequently highlighted the similarities between *View* and the European journal *Minotaure*, something that was openly acknowledged by *View*'s publishers, it seems more likely that their special issues on individual artists were modeled after *Cahiers d'art*. Created in 1926 by Christian Zervos, *Cahiers d'art* was one of the first Parisian avant-garde magazines, and has been noted for the quality of its articles and illustrations that promoted modern art and literature in France for over thirty years.

In 1937, *Cahiers d'art* had devoted a special issue to Ernst. The parallels between the special editions of *View* and *Cahiers d'art* are striking. Both magazines extensively document the work of the artist in text and images; both feature articles by André Breton, Max Ernst himself, and allied poets—including, in the case of the somewhat more comprehensive *Cahiers d'art*, Paul Éluard, Georges Hugnet, Benjamin Péret, and Tristan Tzara, among others, and in *View*, Henry Miller, Leonora Carrington, Parker Tyler, and Joseph Cornell. *View* published a poem written by Ernst's dealer Levy, while in a similar way the agent Jacques Viot, who had acted for Ernst in Paris in the 1920s to set up contacts with galleries and collectors, contributed a text as an art critic for *Cahiers d'art*. The English art historian and consultant for Peggy Guggenheim's collection, Herbert Read, also wrote a piece for *Cahiers d'art*, in which he assigns Max Ernst a position in international art history in the tradition of the symbolists and William Blake.⁷⁶

For *Cahiers d'art*, it was customary for monographic issues to act as exhibition catalogues, such as in June 1932 when a special issue was published on Picasso at the time of his exhibition at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris.⁷⁷ Although Ernst did not exhibit in the *Cahiers d'art*'s gallery space in 1937, it is clear from his correspondence with the journal's founders Yvonne and Christian Zervos that an issue dedicated to Ernst had originally been planned for late 1934, presumably to coincide with the two exhibitions held in the *Cahiers d'art* gallery in 1934 and 1935.⁷⁸

75 Werner Spies, *Vox Angelica. Max Ernst und die Surrealisten in Amerika* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2014), pp. 134–135.

76 Herbert Read, "Max Ernst: Œuvres de 1919 à 1936," *Cahiers d'art*, numéro spécial, 1937, pp. 104–105.

77 "Picasso, exposition d'œuvres de Picasso aux galeries Georges Petit," *Cahiers d'art*, special issue, 1932.

78 Letter from Max Ernst to Yvonne Zervos, October 1934, Fonds Zervos, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris.

Moreover, we know that Dudensing had been familiar with *Cahiers d'art* since the early 1930s, thus perhaps providing added motivation for the transfer of the Parisian model to the New York scene.⁷⁹

Lenders

In the “Max Ernst” issue of *View*, a double-page insert showing the works exhibited is a valuable source of information about their provenance and presence in American collections (fig. 77). Provenances are not given for all of the works, probably because those works were loaned by the artist. Of the thirty-one works exhibited, one third were in the hands of private or public collections. Art of This Century was listed as the lender of three works, yet Guggenheim’s museum-gallery did not open until seven months later. Two other works came from the collections of curators—*Alice in 1941*, owned by James Thrall Soby, and *Nature in the Morning Light*, owned by Henry Clifford, curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The movie enthusiast Kenneth McPherson, who had cosigned the affidavit in 1940 with Alfred Barr that had enabled Max Ernst to come to the United States, is listed twice as a lender. Leonora Carrington loaned her portrait as well. And the small version of *Fireplace Angel* (1937) also appeared on the list. This work later ended up in the collection of Elenore Lust, who went on to open the Norlyst Gallery with Jimmy Ernst in 1943 and occasionally included Ernst’s works in her program.⁸⁰ One lender chose to remain anonymous, but she is easily identifiable as the American striptease icon Gypsy Rose Lee, who loaned *J’ai bu du tabourin, j’ai mangé du cimbal* and *Swampangel*. She later bought a third picture, *A Maiden’s Dream About the Lake*, and commissioned Ernst to do a portrait of her. The famous New York performer was a regular guest of Peggy and Max. Jimmy’s memoirs humorously recount jealous scenes provoked by these visits: “We can’t send Gypsy Rose Lee a bill. Max gave her this picture as a gift. . . . No, I don’t know, if she paid for it in that form.”⁸¹ Lee had been introduced to the surrealist circle, and Dorothea Tanning reports that she was the first to buy one of her pictures—*Children’s Games*.⁸² She was one of the first

79 See the Fonds Cahiers d’art, CAPROV 96, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris.

80 See also the essay by Daniel Belasco in this publication.

81 Ernst, *Nicht gerade ein Stillleben* (note 16), p. 371.

82 *Dorothea Tanning*, Daniel Abadie, ed., exh. cat. (Paris: Établissement public du centre Beaubourg, 1974), p. 48. Translated and quoted in *elles@centrepompidou: Women Artists in the Collection of the Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre de Création Industrielle*, Camille Morineau, ed., exh. cat. (Paris: Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2009), p. 37.

collectors of Joseph Cornell's boxes, inviting people to "screenings of his [Cornell's] collage films in her Edwardian-styled Sixty-Third Street house."⁸³ At the "31 Women" exhibition, whose program was compiled by Ernst at Peggy's behest for the third show at her museum Art of This Century, Lee even participated as an artist by contributing a self-portrait.⁸⁴ The press praised the show, with one exception: "Alone Gypsy Rose Lee's *Self Portrait* and the fur-lined tea-cup come in the 'terribly terribly amusing' class. ... And the rest is just good art."⁸⁵ None of these events are mentioned in Gypsy Rose Lee's autobiography.⁸⁶ Her biographer recalls that Peggy and Max were guests at her second wedding in 1942 when she married author Alexander Kirkland, and that Ernst was photographed there by *Life* magazine.⁸⁷

The majority of the paintings were owned by Max Ernst or Peggy Guggenheim, *The Endless Town*, *Attirement of the Bride (L'habillement de la mariée)*, and *The Antipope* are still part of the Guggenheim collection today. According to the catalogue raisonné of Ernst's oeuvre, other works from the exhibition were later owned and sold by Julien Levy (*Convolvulus*, *Spanish Doctor*, *The Endless Night*), Alexander Iolas (*Orobas*), and William Copley (*Totem and Taboo*).⁸⁸ *The Harmonious Breakfast* was incorrectly listed as being on loan from MoMA. Although MoMA was interested in the painting, the museum decided after the show to purchase *Napoleon in the Wilderness* instead in exchange for a painting by Malevich, which Peggy wanted to acquire to complete her collection.

What ultimately were the intended strategies of Max Ernst and Peggy Guggenheim in this exhibition with regard to the lenders? We can assume that they hoped to attract new collectors among Dudensing's network of wealthy Americans. We do not know if the paintings already owned were on consignment with the gallery or if Ernst hoped that buyers would approach the dealer to purchase them. As for the remaining works, it is most likely that Ernst produced them on speculation in the hope of securing sales, as well for publicity reasons and to build his reputation.

83 Tanning, *Between Lives* (note 33), p. 88.

84 "31 Women," Art of This Century, New York, January 5–31, 1943.

85 "Thirty-Odd Women," *ARTnews*, no. 41 (January 15–31, 1943).

86 Gypsy Rose Lee, *A Memoir (1957)* (Berkeley: Frog Books, 1999).

87 Karen Abbott, *American Rose. A Nation laid Bare. The Life and Times of Gypsy Rose Lee* (New York: Random House, 2012), p. 121.

88 See the catalogue raisonné *Max Ernst 1939–1953*, Werner Spies, Sigrid and Günter Metken, eds. (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1987).

Europe after the Rain

In the end, the exhibition turned out to be a commercial disaster. Ironically, Guggenheim held Dudensing responsible: “[T]he pictures were not sold as they were priced too high and Dudensing had the wrong clientele for them.”⁸⁹

According to Guggenheim, she and her consultant Howard Putzel subsequently sold all of the works from her home. However, the exhibition did prompt MoMA to buy *Napoleon in the Wilderness* and the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford to buy *Europe after the Rain II*, the latter of which had not been shown in the exhibition. Unlike Ernst, Guggenheim realized that “the show had a great *succès d’estime*.”⁹⁰ It soon became clear that the American press was not so reserved in its judgments, and finally celebrated the exiled artist as a master of technique and of surrealist painting. The exhibition at Valentine remains a singular event for Max Ernst. The connection between the exhibition and the special issue of *View* enabled him to join the circle of his exiled colleagues and develop new opportunities at the side of Peggy Guggenheim. Lenders to the show were drawn from Dudensing’s and Ernst’s networks, as well as acquaintances of Guggenheim. Guggenheim and Ernst’s other American dealers, such as Julien Levy and, later, William Copley, as well as Knoedler and Alexander Iolas with his Hugo Gallery, ensured that the works were sold after the exhibition.⁹¹ After his separation from Guggenheim, Ernst returned to working with Levy. Their relationship remained as difficult as it had always been until Levy closed his gallery in 1949 and Ernst found himself blamed for it: “My show in NY didn’t go well enough to satisfy the demands of Mr. Levy, and so he has given up on me.”⁹²

89 Guggenheim, *Out of this Century* (note 42), p. 267.

90 Ibid.

91 See Spies et al., *Max Ernst 1939–1953* (note 88).

92 Postcard to Hans Richter, Hans Richter Records, Museum of Modern Art, New York.